



## AAC Publications

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### Kyle Dempster, 1983 – 2016

**It's been months since Kyle Dempster and Scott Adamson disappeared while attempting a new route on the Ogre II (Baintha Brakk II) in the Karakoram. The Utah climbing community is still reeling; two of our most promising climbers—but, more importantly, two of our most kind, humble, and supportive friends—are now gone. Many of us still catch ourselves including them in upcoming plans or picturing their faces when they hear of our latest success or failure, only to be painfully reminded that they are gone.**

Kyle was born in March 1983 to Terry and Tom Dempster. The Dempsters were not your average family. TV was shunned, and ball sports were not a part of daily life. Instead, the family introduced Kyle and his younger sister Molly to life in the outdoors: hiking, biking, camping, skiing. This is the venue where they learned cause and effect, the beauty of life, in all its forms, physical exhaustion, and other lessons. Kyle grew up encouraged to push himself, to embrace the unknown, and always choose adventure.

When he was 14, Kyle was introduced to climbing by his cousins, Drew and Erin Wilson and was instantly hooked. Having moved to Salt Lake City a few years earlier, his parents took him to the local gym, Rockreation, where he became a gym rat: sport climbing, bouldering, and spending hours pulling on plastic. In his 20s he started adding traditional climbing, big walling, mountaineering, and alpine and ice climbing to his skill set. His constant drive to better himself and push his personal boundaries led to a long list of accomplishments, including new routes in Canada, Venezuela, Alaska, and China. In Pakistan he did a new route on the Ogre (the third ascent of the legendary peak). He spent 24 days alone on the west face of 6,651-meter Tahu Rutum, coming up just short of the first ascent. He won a Piolet d'Or twice, in 2010 and 2013. He biked solo across Kyrgyzstan, putting up first ascents and capturing footage of the journey that would be edited into the classic film *The Road From Karakol*.

While these accomplishments were all a big part of Kyle's life, in reality they were only a fraction of who Kyle was.

In college, as Kyle was talking with a group of friends, a newcomer joined the group and the conversation moved to climbing. Someone mentioned the route Arm and Hammer in Bells Canyon, a multi-pitch Wasatch classic. Ian, the newcomer blurted out, "Ah, man, I wanna do that thing!" Kyle looked at him and said, "You wanna do it right now?" Hours later, almost at midnight, the two returned to the car, a new friendship formed.

Kyle knew how experiences like this could affect others. He constantly challenged his friends and acquaintances to be better. To push deep into reserves that only he knew were there. Kyle's generosity and kindness were always out in the open. When you had a conversation with him, he made you feel as if you were the only person in the world. He'd deflect questions about his accomplishments and ask about your life, your accomplishments, dreams and desires. If possible, he helped make those dreams a reality.

Adventure was usually a big part of Kyle's travel plans, but just as important to him were the connections he made with those he met. You can see this in *The Road From Karakol*. His face fills

with joy as he races a young boy on his bike. Over five expeditions to Pakistan, Kyle became extremely close with his base camp manager, Abdul Ghafoor. After Kyle's death, Ghafoor traveled to America to spend time with Kyle's family. He was there to comfort them as much as they were comforting him.

Kyle grew up with literature playing a strong role in his life, but writing wasn't always his strongest suit—until he decided he wanted to be better. He worked hard, pushing his mind in the same way he pushed his body in physical training. This led to many articles in *Alpinist* and other magazines—introspective, reflective, and insightful stories. He truly honed his literary voice and bared his soul to the world.

This is the Kyle Dempster that his family and friends knew. While the greater climbing community mourns the loss of Kyle the climber. Kyle the adventurer. Kyle the character, his love, devotion, and caring toward his family and friends was greater than any award, summit, or platitude he had received. He was our friend.

Kyle often hand-wrote letters to his family and friends. In one that he wrote to me, he stated, "I do hope that my deep passion for adventure burns bright and encourages others in the same way that you have encouraged me. Thank you my friend, the journey has been joyous."

I can't think of a better way to end but to say to Kyle: Thank you my friend, the journey has been joyous.

– Nikki Smith

## Images



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