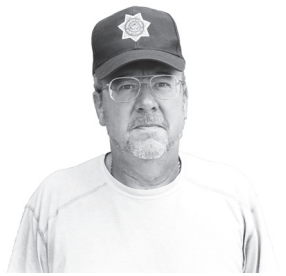


It's all uphill



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

My longtime friend Randy is often times the victim in my column. Randy lives a life to excess that would make Jerry Garcia appear conservative. I hound Randy about his physical condition because I care about him. Besides, if he croaks while on a hunting trip with me, I doubt I could carry him.

Randy comes out to hunt elk every year with me. He can't hike uphill, and anything over 50 yards leaves him sucking air from the rafters. I continually try and convince him to get a gym membership, and this past year, he finally agreed. He said he wants to climb those mountains and get an elk this year.

In an ideal outdoor world, you would do the uphill portion of your hike in the morning, leaving the return trip home all downhill. Anyone who lives and hikes in Colorado knows, there is no downhill side. It is always uphill. Since we have to spend all our time going uphill, I thought some tips, especially for

beginners would be in order. I plan on forwarding this to the new Randy, the gym rat.

Climbing hills on a trail can be overwhelming, not only on your legs and lungs, but it can take a mental toll. You start wondering if you are going to make it, does it ever level out, and so on. There are a few things you can do to make the climb easier, besides using a pickup truck.

It should go without saying, but I will mention it anyway, lighten the load. Carry only what you need in your pack and pockets. Loading yourself down with tons of stuff will only make the ascent more difficult. A heavy load can be problematic for a downhill hike too. Lighten up the load, leaving whatever is not absolutely necessary behind. Randy already does this. I even have to carry his rifle for him.

Trekking poles and hill climbing go well together, especially when you are carrying a load, like a backpack. Poles help bring your arms into the climb, by taking some of the load off your legs. As you ascend, push forward with the poles, giving yourself some extra boost as you climb. Getting one of those poles behind you, for an extra push, can really help.

Breaks to catch your breath are necessary on the trail, but don't be like Randy. On every break, he drops whatever he is carrying and lays down. Getting him upright and

moving after the break is a real chore.

Take a short break to catch your breath and give your legs a chance to stop throbbing. It is better to take shorter breaks, more often, than long breaks. Don't remove your pack for the break. Removing your pack and plopping your tired carcass on the ground will make it worse when you start up again. Your muscles will cramp, and it becomes much more difficult to get going when you stand.

Keep the pack on, find a nice tree to lean up against, or lean on your trekking poles, and give your breath a chance to get back to normal. I take a quick sip of water, a handful of trail mix, and get going. On a really steep climb, I stop for less than 60 seconds and get back into it.

Looking up at the top of the mountain, and how far you have to go, can be daunting. Move from landmark to landmark instead, short bursts. Pick a landmark a short distance up, like a stump or

a rock. As you reach that landmark, look uphill for the next one and repeat. I make it a little game, trying not to look at how far it still is, just power

Don't think about the hike looking all the way to the top. Just put one foot in front of the other and remember why you are there. Enjoy the scen-

to be his ability to climb that mountain and have a real chance at an elk.

When I picked up Randy at the airport, the day before opener, I was astonished as he walked down the con-course with his luggage. After a year of gym membership, he looked exactly the same. Still 75 pounds overweight, and completely out of breath from the short walk to the luggage carousel. I asked Randy to explain himself. He said, "Apparently purchasing an annual membership at the gym is not enough. You



This Colorado trail is typical of most trails in the state, it is almost always uphill. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

forward a few lengths at a time.

You have to put a little fuel in your tank as you climb because you are burning more calories than you think. A 200-pound person that walks at a normal pace for two hours will burn around 700 calories. If that same person straps on a 40-pound pack and climbs some hills on the hike, they will burn 1,400 calories. I really like those power bars, like Clif or Kate bars, and sometimes a candy bar. Just eat enough to keep up with what you are burning, but don't stop and gorge.

The hill climb is more mental than physical.

ery, fresh air, and wildlife.

Don't count footsteps either, in your head or on one of those phone apps. When you have been climbing for a half hour, and your phone says you have only gone 6009 steps, it can get depressing. Remember that half the reason you went on the hike was to get away from the world and ditching that phone helps you disconnect from your surroundings.

Randy kept complaining about how much his gym membership cost for the past year. I would encourage him throughout the year, reminding him of the goal. I kept telling him the reward was going

actually have to go to the gym once in a while."

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. Personal email is elkhunter77@icloud.com For information about the Posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org



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TELLURIDE

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has limited lower body mobility due to a neurological condition called transverse myelitis, opts for a monoski that allows him to carve up the mountain on his own while seated.

During the Enabling All program, students get a chance to try out the gear and techniques TASP instructors use in their lessons.

For example, they may practice how to give verbal cues to a blind skier, or get a feel for "outriggers": a device that looks like a crutch attached to a small ski that athletes can use for balance or breaks. While they didn't break them out for the class, there's even more gear in the locker room like snowboards with handlebars and various accessories instructors can use to get the job done.

But, many athletes who come to TASP don't use any of these things, and some of the most common lessons are done on plain old skis. No matter what they're riding, you'll see the TASP staff in blue jackets at

Telluride. And, wherever you're skiing or riding, you may see people with gear like "Blind Skier" vests or sit skis.

Sussman urged skiers and riders to share the trails safely, and said the best way to do that is by giving adaptive skiers and lessons some

space if you see them.

Sometimes, he said, "People want to get a closer look," and they may ski dangerously close without thinking much of it. And, some instructors use tethers to help guide their clients, which inattentive skiers may try to blast right through.

Sussman said if people are really curious about a technique or piece of gear they've never seen before, it's usually ok to ask questions— but save them for the lift line.

'No limits'

TASP is celebrating its 30th birthday this year, and Sussman was one of its original students— though back then he was just a guy traveling from the East Coast to try skiing with his friends.

Thirty years ago, disability awareness wasn't what it is today, and he wasn't sure how skiing would work. But, his buddies sold him on the plan by telling him the worst case scenario was drinking beer in the hot tub.

and two outriggers, a setup known as "four track" in the adaptive world. But, eventually, he took to the sit ski.

He moved out to Telluride around 10 years ago, and took a job in town while teaching at TASP and eventually becoming its president.

But, he still remembers the day he found out about Enabling All.

Just after moving to town, he was riding the gondola with two boys that were clearly whispering about him, saying "you ask him," "no, you ask him."

Sussman was expecting the usual question about what happened to his legs, when one of the boys said, "Four track or sit ski?"

He was so shocked they repeated the question, and explained they knew because they'd gone through this program in school.

Now, it's one of his favorite parts of TASP.

Decades after learning how to ski, he's conquered hike-to terrain by fixing ropes, jumped out of airplanes, and taught tons of other disabled athletes how to ski. This season, he was proud to be part of the group as TASP student and Burton athlete Holly Palmer, a snowboarder with a bone growth disorder called Achondroplasia, fulfilled the big goal of riding a black diamond called "Cimarron."

Each time Sussman sits with a new class of fifth graders and tells them one of his favorite trails is "Holy Cow," he wants them to understand one thing about disabled athletes: "There's really no limits."



Holly Palmer (center) and David Sussman (to her right) address Telluride fifth graders during the Enabling All program. (Courtesy Photo/Andrew Palmer)

When he reached out to the program, the instructor said she hadn't heard of his condition.

Still, "She said she could teach me how to ski— she just didn't know what it would look like."

For a while, Sussman skied with traditional skis