

# The adventures of Jim Bridwell

By Steve Lee  
Of The Print

Jim Bridwell, one of the five best climbers in the world, described two of his many mountain climbing expeditions and illustrated his lecture with a slide show Friday.

Bridwell has climbed mountains, cliffs and peaks in Europe, South America, the continental U.S. and Alaska. He has climbed with many world-class climbers, including Joe Brown, Ron Kouk (lately of "That's Incredible" fame), Royal Robbins and Yvon Chouinard (inventor of much of the modern climbing equipment extant in the world today); to name a few.

With 19 years experience in climbing, Bridwell is good at what he does, and "Wide World of Sports" knows it. Yesterday he left for Alaska to do a climb that they will be filming for future use on the air.

This is not the only time Bridwell has been asked to do a spot on television. In a movie entitled "High Ice," starring David Janssen, Bridwell and some of his cohorts were called in to do stunts and to set up the rigging for the camera crews. Now you know how all those fast-motion shots were filmed.

Furthermore, he hopes to work with Mike Hoover, Academy Award winner on a Hoover film called "Solo." Hoover has also done two spots for "Wide World of Sports," and was the cameraman for "Eiger Sanction," with Clint Eastwood.

As if that weren't enough, the Mountaineers Publishing Company of Seattle, the largest publisher of mountaineering books in the world, wants him to write his autobiography and a documentary-style book on his adventures while climbing Cerro Torre in Argentina.

About his expedition to Argentina, he said, "I thought about it for a long time," 10 years to be exact. It cost him several thousand dollars to get down there with all of his

equipment and his partners, and to get across the country to his base camp. Previous to his assault on the mountain, there had only been three major ascents without fixed ropes.

To use fixed ropes means to hang the climbing rope at both ends, rather than letting it hang free as in most climbs, in order to keep it from flying around in the fierce winds that abound in the area. The wind can sometimes reach 300 miles an hour. "Sometimes the wind gets so bad that a rope can get worn out in only five days," Bridwell said.

The whole adventure surrounding his Cerro Torre climb was filled with problems and setbacks. To start with, after landing in Argentina, he and his friends rented a bus to transport them and their gear to Cerro Torre. The engine "gave up the ghost" out in the middle of the Pampas with no help to be found.

Finally, another bus came by and gave them all a lift to a town, a little further down the road, where Bridwell and company rented a truck on which the shocks promptly broke. After sliding off of the road and into a ditch a few times, the group made it to their destination—a small town at the base of the mountain.

There they met an Italian expedition, which was both a curse and a blessing, for at any given time they were invaluable as a source of aid or advice, yet without batting an eye would steal bits of equipment as occasion granted.

After hiking to the base of the peak, a snow storm came and forced them to leave some equipment in a snowcave while they sought shelter in the town below. Returning to the site of their buried equipment, they dug a hole about 40 feet square and four feet deep in search of it. They lost all \$2,000 worth of it. "As far as I know, it's still there," he said.

Disgusted, his partners came



Staff photo by Brenda Feltman

**Jim Bridwell took time to answer questions after his slide show.**

back to the U.S., and Bridwell found a new partner, one Steve Bowen. Bowen was an expert ice climber, so he led the climb whenever there was any ice on the route. Bridwell led on the rock.

With some difficulty, they summited the peak and started down. At one point Bridwell slipped and fell 150 feet, stretching his rope 30 feet. A couple of well tied knots were the only thing that saved him. He broke three ribs, and dislocated some joints, and cut and bruised up many other parts of his body. He was in deep pain, but he had to get down off of the

mountain immediately because a heavy storm was moving in.

Bridwell's hands were so battered from his accident and from exposure that he did nothing but rest for about a week after the climb. Altogether, Bowen and Bridwell did over 5,500 feet of climbing.

Of technical merit is the fact that Bridwell wore a wetsuit to climb in. He was testing the Vapor Barrier Theory (heat loss through sweat, very basically) to see if a wetsuit would help him retain his body heat, yet keep him warm. He was satisfied with the results

and said he didn't think it would be too long before there are some major breakthroughs in mountaineering clothing as a result of the testing going on these days with wetsuits.

Contrasting the old days of climbing to the present times, Bridwell said, "We can thank the 'New Wave' climbers for all of the equipment that gets stolen now. In the early '60s and '70s, we used to be able to leave ropes, packs and other gear at the base of a climb and not worry about it, but now if you leave anything it'll get stolen by social degenerates I call 'New Wave' climbers."

## The beauty of sign language comes to life

By Steve Lee  
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"One of the most beautiful forms of communication is sign language, for it requires total concentration on the part of all parties involved, and the eye appeal is in itself a wonderment," said a student in the College's intermediate sign language class.

This beautiful language comes to life on Tuesday nights in Clairmont Hall. Between 15 and 20 students are actively learning the art of signing, tutored by Henry Stack, a deaf man highly skilled in signing.

This is Stack's second term as sign instructor for the College. From the time he was a

little boy, Stack has been communicating through signing every day of his life. In fact, he was hired by KGW when Channel "8" News to sign on each broadcast for nine years, until this past September when he came to work for the College.

As a result of his being with Channel "8" News, Stack had the opportunity to make many educational films about sign language. These films are used in his classes as instructional aids.

When asked why they are taking the class, students' responses included: "We have a deaf son and we want to communicate with him better" (Hans and Marianne Witz-

burg); "I'm going to be a doctor and sign language will broaden my ability to communicate with my patients" (Thad); "I know some deaf people"; "I want to further my education."

They also volunteered much about the difficulty of the class. "It's easier to sign than to read sign. In a foreign language, for example, it's easier to hear and understand the language than to speak it." In answer to that statement, Stack said that he often has to help his students, because "signing is difficult to the untrained eye."

The average person doesn't take sign language, which says something about the caliber of

student who does. It takes a special type of person, with a special love for people, to put in the time and effort to learn to communicate in sign language.

Stack says, "You have to have a strong feeling, and notice small things."

One thing many people may have wondered about is whether deaf people in different regions of the country have any kind of an "accent" in

their signing. The answer is yes, to a limited extent. Stack says that deaf people in Oregon may do a few signs differently than those in Washington, but the difference

is so slight that it doesn't pose much of a problem.

In fact, a person familiar with sign language can be more at ease in a foreign country than a person speaking with his voice. France is a good example, since many of the signs used in American Sign Language (ASL) were originally developed by the French (FSL).

Stack will be teaching advanced sign language next term. The class will meet on Tuesdays from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. in Clairmont. In a book by Beryl Lief, "Dancing, singing is called 'dancing without music.'" Think about it.

