



ALPIN NYTURSMÅKARE

MED SIKTE PÅ SVERIGE

Att "samla" på toppar har alltid varit populärt, till exempel de skotska topparna över 3000 feet, som blev Munroes. Messner och Kukuczka tog "the 14 great ones". Daniel Griffith knep Seven Summits på rekordtid. Bergsport ställde några frågor till Marko Prezelj, en nyturssamlare av stor dignitet som kommer till Sverige på föredragsturné i början av december. För datum och platser se sidan 6.

When and how did you pick up climbing and at what point did you get involved with alpinism?

– I started visiting mountains with my father in 1972 and I joined the local Kamnik climbing club ten years later when I realized that my father does not know enough about mountains. Curiosity leads me through life. I was lucky to start in a very strong climbing "tribe" near my home – in the Kamnik / Savinja Alps where I had to get through old school alpinism. Those were the days when one could get the real status in the tribe only with action on the mountains and not with skilled talking in the bar. Concentration on a climbing moment was close to ideal since we didn't care much about the personal past or the future when we were on the mountains.

Which is the greatest challenge when alpine-style climbing; huge or extremely remote mountains?

– In life, when everything depends on me and my decisions without too many backup options, I consider this a real challenge - the appeal of unknown. To realize the idea with plenty of uncertainty, makes the game of searching for possibilities really interesting. There are many possibilities to experience on the mountains for the people with fresh ideas and inspiration. The "size / im-

portance" of "challenges" in the mountains changes with time and people. Personally, with the experiences and knowledge that I have at the moment, I think that pushing the free climbing standards onto long routes and to the altitude is inspiring. And I think that with a fair approach there are still many things to do in climbing. On "huge or extremely remote mountains" in particular.

Many of the climbs that you have done are according to the pictures steep and do often hold technical rock-ground in contrast to the established routes in general. What is the key to climb difficulty technical ground on-sight with speed at altitude?

– It takes time to develop skills and knowledge. Step by step I learned what I like and how to do it to make it happen. Big part of my climbing history are failures and I keep climbing and learning. It is still fun. From fair approach perspective there are significant similarities between sport climbing and alpine climbing - the scale, weather, protection, logistics etc is of course totally different, but the "on-sight" moves and the moving process are the same. I like different places. Curiosity is my general motivation in life. In the mountains I like all forms of "on-sight" free moving.

We've got the impression that you are alpine-style climbing. Did you at times consider capsul-style, demanding time to put up fixed ropes connecting high point with the highest camp?

– I learned through experience that alpine style is a good style for me. In 1987 on my first expedition to Himalaya (Lhotse Shar) I experienced fixed ropes tactics and I learned that it is not much fun, I tried capsule style on my first trip to Patagonia (Paine) where I learned that capsule style is not something I want to go for. I tried aid climbing and I know now that pure aid climbing is not on my "like" list either. I like all kinds of free climbing: climbs where I can put on test my knowledge, intuition and my skills. Long alpine mixed routes where I can climb free (with or without ice axes).

Commercial organizers do by via ferrata-like routes take participating clients to the summits of many mountains such as Shishapangma Central summit (foresummit), Broad Peak and Mt Everest. Yourself you could probably qualify for guiding such walkable routes. What is your point of view on this matter?

– Commercial rules doesn't really fit to the core spirit of alpinism. Guiding with the aim to reach certain point is not my per-

sonal choice but I can understand that we have different idea(l)s. A certain problem occurs due to the fact that many commercial expeditions changes the experience of other people present on the same place because they use different approach and many times live a lot of trash behind. As a UIAGM/IFMGA mountain guide I'm not interested to guide on routes with fixed ropes and oxygen bottles. My current guiding maxim is to upgrade and enrich guests joy for the mountains and climbing. I can understand that some are motivated by the top only but I'm not one of them.

What is your opinion on various styles i.e. alpine, capsule, siege, aidclimbing etc. used on the big mountains?

– The climbing game is first very personal. Everyone choose what kind of experience he/she wants and everyone who want to pretend or “cheat” is fooling first of all himself/herself. In a modern era, you can use a cable or helicopter instead, if it is just about reaching certain point and not about the way of experiencing things. In an era when ambition for public attention is a common social standard, it is not so simple to stay honest.

On Kangchenjunga South¹ you did abandon your own bivouac-equipment at high altitude (ca 7900 m) going up. That was a daring lowering of style, as one can hardly claim, that you were selfcontained, as you and Andrej Stremfelj on your descent by the ordinary route of the mountain made use of an abandoned tent left by others. Any reflections 17 years later?

– Yes, from the purist perspective we made lots of “sins” on that particular mountain – I've heard that reproach many times. The main sin was to stand on the summit since Kanch is a sacred mountain for the people from Sikkim. My reflections about the climb are the same now as they were when I returned to BC from that climb – we tried to do our best, we experienced something I will never forget and at the end we didn't care about style any more but just about our survival. The mountain (and unfortunately my exposed films in our bivi tent left on the mountain) is still there for everyone who want to have personal experience in respected style. The tent we used on the descent was not abandoned and we used also the track and some ropes from our friends – very “bad” if you want to be “selfcontained”. We should choose another mountain with nobody around if we wanted to play the “selfcontained” game, maybe even make our own equipment ...? I don't regret my decisions in my life. The past is finished

and I make my decisions under circumstances of the particular moment which is very simple to discuss from the warm distance of comfortable chair. The longer the time distance, the smarter the observer can be. My experiences, knowledge, equipment, society ... changed enormously in those 17 years, rich 17 years. I still feel happy to have a chance for the special experience on Kanch.

Do you have any reflections on the Tyrol Declaration, which was settled in Innsbruck september 2002?

– In Innsbruck, I was working in the group where we discussed style. Interesting experience. But in general I can say that words on paper or screen are simpler than the real life when many different ideas and motivations come together on the same place and time. Style or ethics are often associated with elitist shadow. I guess that in our group we managed to formulate quite clear guidelines about mountaineering style/ethics: “The quality of the experience and how we solve a problem is more important than whether we solve it. We strive to leave no trace.” In commercial reality of today, the ethics are often a laughingstock of those with lack of respect for the others. Falsehood is quite clear in the general public where there is still much glorifying of “numerical climbers/collectors” who are skilled in manipulating the basic mountaineering principles (“Stretch your limits, lift your spirits and aim for the top”). Tyrol Declaration was excellent attempt to educate people and I know that true understanding comes only through personal experience. The Declaration is simple and clear but we, people, are more complicated.

What do give you the greatest reward/pleasure of climbing?

– Nature keeps teaching me about respect, freedom, possibilities, patience and responsibility. Mountains, as non-indulgent mirror, answer unspoken questions about myself and inspire my mind. I learned in the mountains that if I want to make something happen, I have to take decisions and stay focused. Every “climb” require the first “move” which I have to make before I'm on the move - I have to start walking if I want to climb some mountain for instance. Another knowledge gained from the mountains is that my limits are in my head first - in the form of doubts, fears, excuses ... Responsibility for my decisions and respect for others is a true challenge. When I don't have inspiring ideas or I don't feel strong, I have to fight with my doubts and excuses – or do something else.



You are off to Nepal. What are your plans?

Makalu W Face² with Steve House and Vince Anderson. Climbing is an endless game of making choices/decisions and taking responsibility for them, without regrets – like human life in general. I will keep trying to push my limits in free spirit. Difficult to predict how many opportunities I will recognize along the journey through life with open mind.



We are many that are curious on the big mountains. Can you give us some advises to become strong alpinists creating new routes?

– I don't really like to give advises, since I don't consider myself as a shining example for other people who have a privilege to reject advises. Here is something what works for me but it might not work for many others. Life keeps going. So live! Now. It's the only chance. Find something that makes you alive, believe, stay focused in pushing the limits, work hard, be honest and try to have fun. And yes, stay persistent in curiosity. “When walking, walk; when eating, eat. – Zen maxim”

**Frågor: Rafael A Jensen
Bild: Copyright Marko Prezeli**

1: En 8.500 m förtopp

2: Climbing no 188 skrev s 138: “The 10.000-foot West Face of Makalu – is it even possible alpine style?”