



The

# Mountaineer

www.mountaineers.org

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## Discover The Mountaineers

If you are thinking of joining - or have joined and aren't sure where to start - why not attend an **information meeting?** Check the Go Guide branch sections for times and locations.

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## By rowboat, bike, climbing rope, Mountaineer follows his dream around the world

By Brad Stracener

Dreams. They have carried some to the top of the world, Everest. They have carried others across oceans. They carried a few to the moon. For Erden Eruc, a dream will carry him to all but the latter. However, he will not equivocate, blink or shift an eye when he says in his characteristically even, unwavering baritone that his journey around the world and on top of it is hardly different than going to the moon.

His human-powered trek across the globe, which officially started by biking from here to Mt. Denali and reaching its summit in 2003, "is not any different than an astronaut's in dark space who takes weeks to get to where he is going." For Erden, the journey may take seven years; he "will just be in a different medium."

His dream started when he was young, the native-born Turk says. When he was a freshman in high school he saw a *National Geographic* from 1963 and read about the Everest expedition which took the first American to its summit. "I came across a word I had never seen before - bivouac - and I had to look it up."

He said from that moment on, "this is what I wanted to do." But he is actually doing more than climbing Everest. He will bike and row to get there. And he is even doing more

## President's Work Party: Tasks set forth

Mountaineers members are invited to join Mountaineers President Ron Eng on the annual President's Work Party on Saturday, Sept. 25 at the Iron Goat Trail (IGT). Volunteers will be constructing a five-foot wide barrier-free section on the lower grade of the IGT, accessed from the planned Scenic trailhead on Highway 2. Following the trail work, a well-earned dinner at the Stevens Pass Lodge, featuring alder plank-baked salmon, will be served free to trail volunteers. The work party continues a tradition initiated in 1992 by former Mountaineers President Dianne

Continued on M8



Erden Eruc photo

Friend and mentor, the late Goran Kropp (right), helped inspire Erden Eruc, shown with Kropp above on a trip in Ouray, Colo.

than that. By the largess of technology, he is taking along anyone who wants to join him, whether in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean or on the highest peak in West New Guinea.

Via satellite phone and computers he plans to make himself a row-

## Erden Eruc

"Around-n-Over"

Thursday, September 9 ~ 7 p.m.

A free presentation at  
The Mountaineers Building

For more information, please visit  
www.around-n-over.org

ing, pedaling, climbing classroom for any student at any school who wishes to log onto his journey year in and year out of each grade level. It will not be like reading about Columbus or other history, says Erden, a Mountaineers member. They will be sharing in the history, traveling with it - "engaged," as Erden puts it. A student can be a part of the grunts, the tears, the

smiles and the gut checks which will confound, fuel and bemuse Erden along every mile. As they learn, in what he calls "a teachable moment," he will be learning, too. He will be learning about the human spirit that lives inside of him. He will be learning about rowing, about people around him and about nature itself. Ultimately though, he wants to be able to "wow" students with his journey and persuade them to "dare to dream and make sure you guard that dream."

Erden has had to guard his on a number of occasions. He received snubs from many a solicited sponsor. Others shook their heads and rolled their eyes when he shared his plans, and then 9/11 occurred. "Sept. 11 killed my original idea. I said to myself, maybe I'll have to sleep on this."

But his sense of duty, "having the courage to accept the challenge," and taking the torch from a

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# Upcoming

**A Conservation Division Open House** welcomes all Mountaineers to celebrate and learn about the club's efforts for preservation of resources. It will be held Wednesday, Sept. 29. See the ad on **M2**.

**The President's Work Party** and salmon bake will be held Saturday, Sept. 25. See article at left.

**KING-5 meteorologist** and outdoorsman Jeff Renner will visit The Mountaineers on Tuesday, Sept. 21. See **pg. 7** of the *Go Guide* for details.

**The Mountaineers Annual Meeting** is set for Sept. 15. See article and information on board elections on **pg. 2** of the *Go Guide*.

## The Mountaineers at Vertical World!

Don't miss this opportunity! The Mountaineers are sponsoring two introductory sessions at the Vertical World indoor climbing gym in Seattle. Indoor climbing is a fun and challenging way to stay in shape, and anyone can do it. Join us for these hands-on sessions to find out how.

For more information, see the Seattle Branchwide section of the *Go Guide*.

**VERTICAL WORLD**  
AMERICA'S FIRST CLIMBING GYM

# 'Journey of change' to be shared with students across the globe

Continued from M1

good friend and mentor who died strengthened his will to guard his dream from any foe, 9/11 or other. That good friend, Göran Kropp, had planned to kayak and climb with Erden, but a fall from the Sunshine Wall near Frenchman Coulee in September of 2002 dashed those plans. Erden was climbing with his friend and inspiration at the time he fell to his death. "That tragic loss shook me to my foundation, becoming the swift kick that I needed to start my life journey."

Kropp bicycled to Everest, climbed it and bicycled back to his home in Sweden in 1996. Erden met Kropp in 2001 at one of the latter's shows in Seattle. Erden said after myriad rejections by sponsors and the crazy looks from others, Göran was the first to ask questions that were assumptive about Erden's ability to reach his goals.

"When will you start?" Erden remembers Göran asking him and then, "Maybe we can kayak the Siberian shores together . . ." Erden said he soon knew he had "found a kindred spirit" in Göran. He learned from his talks with Göran and others who have succeeded at human-powered feats that experience is overrated. "The most important thing is commitment, the commitment to a plan and not to quit. To get up the next day and go at it again," stated Erden, sporting shortly cropped hair and a beard on the heavier side of a five-o'clock shadow. His bicycling to Denali and back helped to reinforce this notion. "When I was fighting hills in the Fraser River Canyon, I hated it. I couldn't get into a cadence on the bike. I would work up a terrible sweat going up each hill and then freeze from (being damp) as I went down the other side. All the while I saw this river down below just flowing level."

At one point on that late winter day, he simply quit, set up camp alongside the road and ate an energy bar for dinner. "I woke up the next morning, looked at the next hill and it all seemed different. I told myself I can't fight these hills. Either accept them or stop complaining."

He believes this acceptance comes about a third of the way into a journey, when one stops resenting the pain and the challenge.

"I learned in Alaska that this is a journey of change, and change happens when there is acceptance." That acceptance comes from the melding of mind and body, he explained, so that the cold, the pain and the weariness do not serve to make one abandon his or her commitment to the task. "When the mind joins the body this way, it makes for one beautiful, powerful engine."



Photo by Foxits

*Betrothed, Nancy Board (left) and Eruc whisk away from the site they selected for their Alaskan wedding ceremony, conducted by a native facilitator, Alice (right).*

Erden, broad shouldered and stocky, looks at himself as an engine that will be scaling peaks and rowing over oceans, but an engine that can't fight nature. He must flow with it. "Once I am part of the elements, continuing on is not hard."

Never mind that the Pacific stretches for thousands of miles from South America to Irian Jaya (Western New Guinea). Never mind that Everest is 29,000 feet into the thinnest of earthbound air and that Carstenz Pyramid is a limestone face 5,000 meters high that is often as dry as a wall in a car wash. Never mind the entire breadth of the Atlantic Ocean. Those are challenges, says Erden, but the biggest challenge is mental.

Much of his commitment to the task is traceable to the legacy that Kropp left after he died. Kropp had been challenging his mind and body on trips such as Everest to help raise funds for a school in Nepal – the Göran Kropp Bishwa Darshan Primary School in Taptin, Chyangba, Solukhumbu.

Erden talked about picking up where Kropp left off in that regard. "The school is the charitable goal," he said of his Around-n-Over journey. The effort to keep the school running for 165 students and eight teachers was stalled by Göran's death. Erden relayed that issues such as power, water and health care for the school will require project management. He hopes to be able to visit the school when he gets to Nepal. But first, he must land his rowboat in either Ecuador or Peru, bicycle roundtrip to climb Aconcagua, then launch from there to row across the Pacific to Irian Jaya and Carstenz. It will then be landfall in India on the way to Everest and back in the boat to Africa where Mt. Kilimanjaro awaits him. His sixth and final summit will be Europe's Mt. Elbruz. The circumnavigation will be complete when he rows across the Atlantic to the U.S.

The physical and psychological

trials on such a trek, as well as the sheer logistics, are enough to daunt one's commitment to the plan. Erden, however, must face quite different challenges when he lands at places such as Irian Jaya. For one, he must communicate.

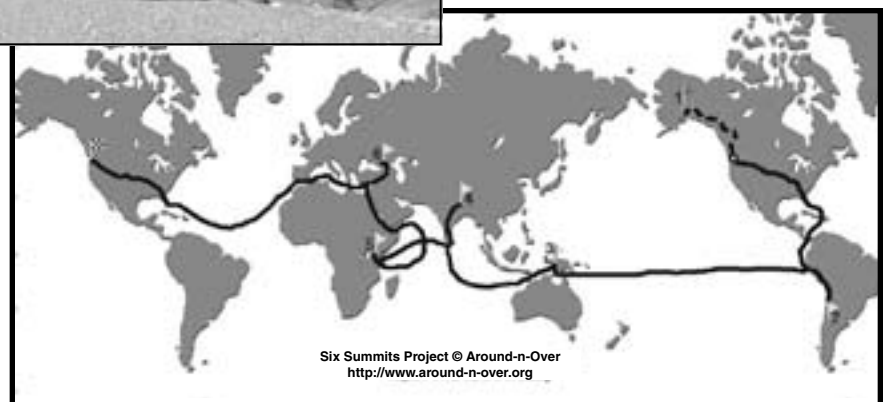
There are some 250 dialects of language on the island and a cannibal culture still exists there. Natives of the land have been forced from their forest homes by mining, logging and other resource extraction over the years that is supported and promoted by the government. In short, the social climate may be an unpredictable one for any visitor.

Climbing the slick rock of Carstenz Pyramid is just one of the foremost



Erden Eruc photo

*Eruc poses alongside his overflowing bike trailer on the Denali leg of his seven-year journey, the route illustrated on the map below.*



Six Summits Project © Around-n-Over  
<http://www.around-n-over.org>

challenges on his mind when thinking of Irian Jaya. He must sit down and talk to the tribal leaders when he has to discuss where to store his boat, then find his way through tropical ravines to the base of the mountain across tribal lands. Candidly, he says, he hasn't begun to tackle that part of the plan in detail yet.

Originally, he planned only to bike and row his way across the world. However, when Kropp died, he changed his objectives to include the Six Summits Project as a tribute to his friend and a fund-raiser for the school.

Marmot also supported in-kind.

For Erden, this is how one must accomplish his or her dream. There must be incorruptible commitment to it. But at the end of his vision, when he returns by bicycle to Seattle seven years from now, he will still be what he knows he was when he left, "just an ordinary person doing an out-of-the-ordinary thing." As a result, he hopes kids around the world, a school in Nepal and he will be the better for it.

*For more about Erden's journey, visit [www.around-n-over.org](http://www.around-n-over.org).*

*Brad Stracener is managing editor of The Mountaineer.*