

Mountain Climber Faces New Kind of Climb



George McLeod in his room at Senior Housing Options in Park Hill is surrounded by mementos of his adventures, including a medal for bravery from Queen Elizabeth.

By Nancy Burkhart

George McLeod has climbed Colorado's Fourteener made an assault on Mount Everest and has been honored by royalty for saving lives. Now, at the age of 80, he heroically is facing a new climb with aplomb.

Although McLeod has Alzheimer's, he is upbeat and encouraging with his fellow residents at Senior Housing Option's Park Hill Residence, 1901 Eudora St. He loves to tell tales about his mountain climbing exploits and show off the memorabilia treasures that fill his room.

McLeod started his exploration adventures as an 18-year-old lad in Scotland, where he taught mountaineering. He took a geologist and a surveyor rock climbing. They were scheduled to take off for Antarctica, and McLeod decided to join them. He spent a total of seven years in the Antarctic in three stints of two, two and three years.

In Antarctica, McLeod was based at Fossil Bluff, on the Antarctic Peninsula closest to South America, an area where rock literally is plastered with fossils, he said. There, his group laid out a depot, and McLeod started getting to know the sled dogs and penguins.

"The only way to get around was by dog team," he explained. "We didn't have snowmobiles then. The dogs were safer to run, but one of them might fall through the ice. That was the scariest part of the whole show. If one falls, they all stop and you can rescue the one who fell.

"You don't tie up the puppies," he said. "You take meat bars with you. They know it and will follow you. The only way to keep them out of trouble was to hit them with snowballs."

Front Porch

Dining Guide

Average entree:
 \$ - less than \$10
 \$\$ - \$10 to \$15
 \$\$\$ - over \$15
 * - Family friendly

Meals served:
 B-Breakfast
 L-Lunch
 D-Dinner

American

The Berkshire

7352 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.321.4010 Serving refined comfort food in a comfortable & relaxed atmosphere. Visit www.theberkshirerestaurant.com. \$\$, LD, *

Casey's Bistro and Pub

7301 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 720.974.7350 Neighborhood Irish Bistro. Twice daily happy hour. Every Sunday kids eat free. \$\$, LD, *

Einstein Bagel Co

7300 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.322.2585 Not only bagels - also great for pizza. \$, BL, *

Famous Dave's BBQ

7557 East 36th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.399.3100 Most lip-smacking, finger-licking BBQ in Denver. Dine-in, take-out or catering. \$\$, LD, *

Solera Restaurant & Wine Bar

5410 East Colfax Ave (Park Hill)
 303.388.8429 A Nationally recognized restaurant with elegant American cuisine and an award-winning wine list. \$\$\$, D

The Copper Canyon Grill

(at Renaissance Denver Hotel) - Stapleton
 3801 Quebec St / 303.399.7500 Casual, upscale steakhouse in a beautiful atrium environment at the newly renovated Renaissance Hotel. \$\$\$, BL, D, *

Asian

Blue Fin Sushi

7303 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.333.4006 Happy Hour: \$2.50 on select hand rolls, sake 2 for 1, select beer \$2.25 \$\$, LD, *

Ling and Louie's Asian Bar & Grill

8354 Northfield Blvd 303 371-4644
 Happy Hour 3:30 - 6:30 Daily
 Award Winning Menu 5280, ABC's A-List, and Westword. L, D, \$\$, *

Taste of Asia

7505 East 35th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.388.8982. Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese cuisine for dine-in, take-out or delivery. \$, LD, *

Italian

Anthony's Pizza & Pasta

7472 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.398.2800. Friendly hometown service with pastas and NY style pizza in slices or whole pies. \$\$, LD, *

Mario N Wongs

6110 East Colfax Ave (Mayfair)
 303.393.1888. New concept in Italian cooking - Wok style Italian made with the freshest ingredients. \$, LD, *

The Cherry Tomato

4645 E. 23rd Ave (Park Hill) 303-377-1914 Join us and enjoy great Italian food, wine, and an enjoyable atmosphere. \$\$, D, *

Miscellaneous

Chipotle Mexican Grill

7400 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.316.0469 Food Fast with Integrity. Naturally raised meats. \$, LD, *

Noodles & Company

7401 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.780.0044 Open Sun - Thurs 11am-9pm & Fri-Sat 11am-10pm. Visit noodles.com for more info! \$, LD, *

Udi's Bread Café

7357 East 29th Ave (Stapleton)
 303.329.8888 Udi's offers fresh international cuisine for breakfast/lunch. M-F 7a-2:30p, Wkends 8:30a-2:30p. Be Udiful! \$\$, BL, *



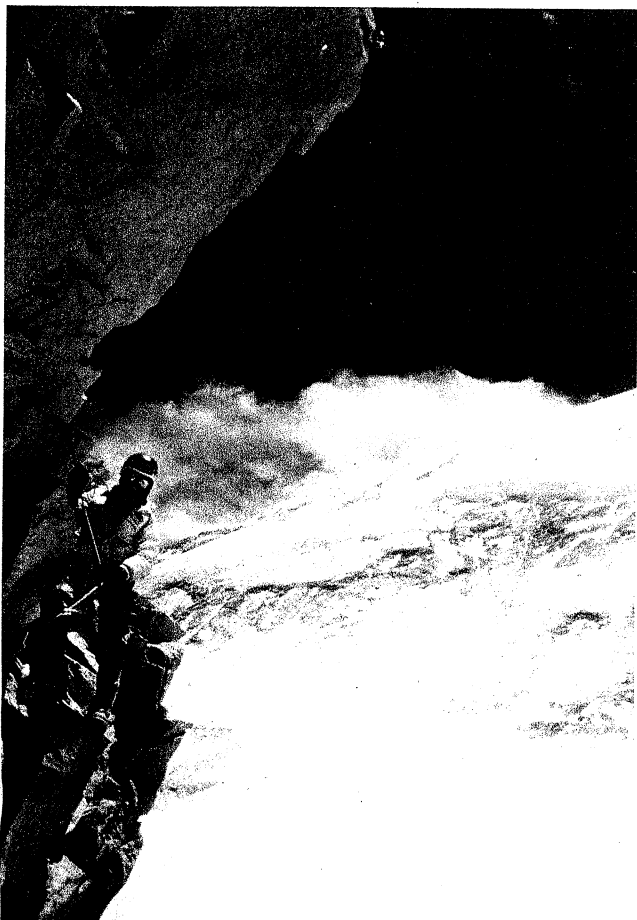
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The Stapleton community is not typical...



McLeod remembers reading a book while he sat next to a huge stack of snowballs. Besides the puppies, he would throw snowballs at skewer birds who stole penguin eggs.

"The penguins' only enemy is in water, except the skewer who eats penguin eggs," he explained. "I would throw snowballs at the skewer when it landed."



George McLeod climbing a rock face on Mount Everest.

McLeod recalls that they would use dog sleds to take four months' worth of food supplies to Fossil Bluff. If the food ran out before they did a return trip, they could eat seal and penguin eggs.

Although he never had driven a dog sled before, McLeod became familiar with the method of transportation, and later even joined the competition in the Alaskan Iditarod.

"I didn't do well," McLeod said of his Iditarod performance. "There's no excuse. If you know your dogs for even a month, they will run for you. But, I didn't even know their names. I didn't mind. I would sing my head off. I would yodel."

While McLeod was in Antarctica, he was called on to save the lives of three of his co-workers.

"It truly was basic common sense," McLeod said.

Three men were on a chunk of sea ice that broke away from the mass to drift, leaving them on the ocean and looking at a cold, damp death.

"I threw an axe and a rope to all of them and told them to lie on their bellies and wriggle across," he said.

Queen Elizabeth II thought McLeod's feat was more than plain common sense. She awarded him a medal for bravery for



McLeod, in the center of the bottom row, is shown with his colleagues at a camp in Antarctica.



McLeod in the Antarctic

his actions.

"She said, 'You brave, young fellow,'" McLeod remembered. "And when I told her it was just common sense, she said, 'Don't you dare talk back to me.'"

There also is a rumor about an unruly kilt in the presence of the queen, but that story remains unconfirmed, according to those closest to McLeod.

In later years, McLeod moved to Boulder, where he continued his mountaineering career. Both his sons, Ian and Scott, have followed in his footsteps, although he says "Scotty is shy and often goes off in a kayak by himself."

Today, McLeod's Alzheimer's is kept stable with living consistency and drugs. He wears a Project Lifesaver tracking device in case he gets lost during his wanderings, although he knows the neighborhood quite well and thus far has had no difficulties, according to Iva Prinsen, Administrator at the Park Hill Residence.

"He's encouraging," Prinsen said. "He goes out and does things. He doesn't give up. Even though he's got this big challenge in life, he doesn't give up."

Park Hill Residence and Senior Housing Options information can be obtained from Deborah Cameron at 303-595-4464, extension 14.

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