

Piolets d'Or 2017

An International Celebration of Grand Alpinism

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FOCUS

APRIL 2017

- Lifetime Achievement Award: Jeff Lowe
- International forum on the evolution of the Piolets d'Or charter

NOVEMBER 2017

- Film projection and award ceremony for 2016 ascents

Grenoble, Base Camp for the 2017 Piolets d'Or!

"Inspiration, action and sharing" will be the headlines for the 2017 edition of the Piolets d'Or.

Famed alpinist and Grenoble native Lionel Terray famously referred to alpinists as "Conquerors of the Useless". The Piolets d'Or are an annual celebration of a selection of the year's greatest alpine-style climbs, chosen both for their aesthetics and for the sense of exploration and innovation of those so-called conquerors of the useless.

This year, the Piolet d'Or is setting up its base camp in the city of Grenoble, the "capital of the Alps". Taking on a new form, the event will include hands-on workshops and hopes to offer a high-quality event that reaches an even larger audience.

The 2017 Piolet d'Or will take place in two parts

IN APRIL 2017, MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR TWO IMPORTANT PUBLIC EVENINGS:

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12TH - *Alpes Congrès*
JEFF LOWE, LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In 2017, the Piolets d'Or will celebrate the life and career of **Jeff Lowe**. An American mountaineer who revolutionised alpinism several times over, Jeff Lowe will receive the 9th Piolet d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award, following the Polish mountaineer, Wojciech Kurtyka, who received last year's award in La Grave. Below, a short summary of Lowe's career introduces this year's recipient. The evening will also feature the screening of the documentary film *Jeff Lowe's Metanoia* and we will be joined by some of Lowe's most important climbing companions.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13TH
AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE PIOLETS D'OR CHARTER

Organised by the **Groupe de Haute Montagne (GHM)** this forum will address in particular the issue of proof of ascents in high-level alpinism which, inspired by the work of specialised journalists such as Greg Child, Rolando Garibotti, Kelly Cordes or Rodolphe Popier, has become an increasingly heated topic of debate and is also related to the question of the evolution of professionalisation and media coverage of alpinism. We will hear from alpinists, journalists and historians. The GHM will moderate a discussion on the charter that guides the selection of Piolet d'Or recipients. Following the debate, the international jury will present their deliberations and announce the Piolets d'Or recipients for the most significant ascents of 2016.

FRIDAY 14TH AND SATURDAY 15TH APRIL
ACTIVITIES AND DISCOVERY COURSES IN ALPINISM

In addition, for guests, journalists and also for the public, the GHM and former Piolet d'Or recipients will organise activities and discovery courses in alpinism in the mountain ranges surrounding Grenoble.

Setting the world standard for ethics in Alpinism



NOVEMBER 2017

**FILM PROJECTION AND AWARD CEREMONY
FOR PIOLET D'OR RECIPIENTS**

During Grenoble's annual "Rencontre Ciné Montagne" film festival at the Palais des Sports, an entire evening will be dedicated to this year's Piolet d'Or recipients, including a screening of selected ascents from 2016 at which the teams will be present to receive their awards.



2017 Piolet d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award

Jeff Lowe: Portrait of a visionary

by Claude Gardien

One of Jeff Lowe's greatest climbs was a failure. In 1978, Jeff, his cousin George Lowe, Jim Donini and Michael Kennedy had to turn around only 150 meters from the summit of Latok 1, a magnificent peak that rises high above Pakistan's Biafo glacier. At the time, no rope team had ever reached the summit of Latok 1 (though it would be climbed the next year by a Japanese team), and the four Americans had chosen an alpine-style climb up the North Ridge: a clean, obvious and extremely difficult line. That was nearly 40 years ago. Since then, many other teams have made attempts, but the North Ridge of Latok 1 remains one of world's most coveted and elusive objectives. No other rope team has even come close to the point Jeff and his friends reached.

When it comes to successes, the list is long, and I've chosen just a few. Zion National Park's "world classic" route, Moonlight Buttress was put up by Jeff Lowe and Mike Weis in 1971. Jeff was only 21 years old. Three years later, when he and Mike made the first ascent of Bridal Veil, he became one of the pioneers of ice climbing, an activity in which he would truly shine. In 1979, he took part in an expedition to Ama Dablan, and soloed a new route on the south face. In 1982, on a new route on Kwangde Ri, another on Kangtega in 1986, and yet another on Taweche in winter 1989, Jeff confirmed his dominance and ease on glaciated terrain. These climbs were an early indication of the current trend in climbing where technical and aesthetic climbs are favored over the pursuit of reaching high altitude at all costs.

In 1991, Jeff Lowe embarked upon his greatest alpine adventure. With the goal of completing a solo first ascent of a direct route, he

Portrait of a visionary

Jeff Lowe descending Latok, 1978 | ©J.Lowe



threw himself into the austere winter universe on the north face of the Eiger. Making it to the top of Metanoia took all that he had and forced him dig deeper than ever before. This brush with fate inspired a profound introspection and a radical evolution in his mentality - hence the name of the route. Three years later, Jeff applied this same metanoia to a discipline that he loved: ice climbing. The image of a guy dangling from his ice axes below a rock roof before attacking a free-hanging ice dagger was seen around the world. That route, Octopussy in Vail Colorado, was a stroke of genius - it was the origin of a new sport (dry tooling) and would forever change practices in ice climbing, alpinism, and Himalayan climbing.

Jeff Lowe's contributions to mountaineering are not limited to his climbs. Early on, he took an interest in gear with the brands Lowe and Latok. Thanks to Jeff, we all replaced our figure eight descenders for the lightweight and compact tube-type belay devices. Footfangs were also quickly sought after as one of the first rigid crampons. Both Lowe's R.A.T.S screw (which could be used on poor-quality ice) and the Snarg (a pound-in ice screw) became wildly popular among an entire generation of ice climbers. An organizer of events and author of technical climbing books, Jeff Lowe has played a role in every aspect of the sport. He is one of the most important figures in the world of mountaineering and climbers all over the world were shocked to learn, a few years ago, that he had been diagnosed with a degenerative illness.

The young man who had racked up such an incredible list of feats with remarkable ease, now, as a grown man would have to face a climb even more challenging than the Eiger. He would have to live through a second metanoia. It is with amazing courage and humor that Jeff is facing his illness, a feat which gives new meaning to the words of another Piolet d'Or Lifetime Achievement Winner, Rober Paragot: *"At first I thought that to be an alpinist was to succeed on the most difficult routes possible. I later learned that it is much more than that."*



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