Mountaineering #5.

REGULATION GARB

You, a faithful follower of this space, have been a mountaineer for some time now. You've studied the fundamentals, selected your gear and experimented with methodology. In short, you are nobody's fool. Nonetheless, you also know a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So you want to learn more. Smart thinking.

First, you must realize that once the basics of mountaineering are mastered, it is only nuance which distinguishes the true artist from the merely adequate. Therefore, attention to detail, especially in matters of clothing, is vital.

Always protect the head according to seasonal fluctuations. In winter: a warm hat is mandatory. (The head, after all, is the chimney of the body. Avoid cerebral heat loss — it diminishes your physio abilities.) In summertime, a sun visor or a billed cap will guarantee crucial visibility among the craggy peaks.

Pay particular regard to your footwear: Shoes should be sturdy and stable. A secure footing is of utmost importance. Without it, you're asking for trouble. Point of order: while mountaineering is pursued for fun, it is neverthe-

less serious business. If you are going to down the mountains, rather than vice versa, you must be confident of your standing.

Between the head and the feet lies the area known to pros as "the body." Mountaineering bodywear is usually based on personal preference. However, keep a keen eye out for one common criterion. Your clothes should be comfortable and flexible, allowing for open movement, specifically in the vicinity of the arms. A free and responsive arm is a mountaineer's best friend.

Certain accessories, of course, complement and complete the regulation garb. Expedition flags to mark your territory in public places, connecting ropes for those who prefer the security of mountaineering in tandem and backpacks filled with beer nuts, mugs, bottle openers and other paraphernalia. Beyond these standards, wardrobe styles range from the rustic to the refined. And well they might. For mountaineers are a rugged and individual lot, joined only by a common taste for excellence.

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Don't just reach for a beer. Head for the mountains.

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