

Nazir Sabir Honorary Membership

32 years ago, on a remote unclimbed peak in the Pakistan Karakorum, two young climbers fought their way up the final slopes to the summit. The mountain was 6660m. Paiyu Peak and the first ascensionists were Colonel Manzoor led by an ambitious 20-year-old named Nazir Sabir. Their friend and technical mentor on that trip, Al Steck had chosen to hold back below the summit, partly because he was tired, but mainly because he wanted the Pakistanis to claim the virgin peak for their own. It was a move that would symbolize the unselfish attitude and camaraderie of their generation. This was the first time a major first ascent was made by Pakistani climbers, climbing for themselves and not as paid porters. It would also mark the beginning of an extraordinary career for Sabir who would go on to distinguish himself as Pakistan's most accomplished and celebrated high altitude mountaineer.

Over the next years he would make over 25 expeditions and in 1981, climbing with the Japanese, Eiho Otana, Nazir reached the summit of K2 via a new route on the West face and without supplementary oxygen. Short on daylight on the summit bid and in a daring display of strength and determination, they survived an open bivouac at nearly 28,000 feet without stove or sleeping bags.

The following year he would summit both GII and Broad Peak, climbed in pure alpine style with Reinhold Messner and close friend Sher Khan and with his ascent of GI the next year he would become the only Pakistani to reach the top of 4 out of the 5 8000 m. peaks in Pakistan. In 1992 Nazir received the prestigious President's Medal for outstanding achievements in Mountain sport and then the Star of Distinction and in 2000 when he became the first Pakistani to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

But Nazir's climbing is only half the story as he has dedicated himself to serving his community and climbers throughout his life. In the mid-80's, drawing on his knowledge and expertise of the high mountain areas, Nazir founded Nazir Sabir Expeditions, the premier trekking and climbing agency that would go on to organize and facilitate hundreds of successful expeditions from around the world.

As a natural leader of his Hunza people he was elected in 1994 to the Northern Area Legislative Council in a landslide vote where he has continued as an effective spokesperson and champion of Northern Areas. The following year, the government of Pakistan appointed Nazir Advisor for education and advisor the Tourism for the Northern areas.

Nazir has traveled extensively throughout Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Americas, lecturing on his amazing climbs and promoting sustainable tourism, conservation, and education in the mountain regions of Pakistan. In 2002, along with friend and AAC honorary member Harish Kapadia, Nazir participated in the UIAA sponsored first ever Indo-Peak peace climb held in the Swiss Alps to help focus awareness on the Siachen issues and pursue a solution to this long standing conflict.

4 years ago, Nazir was elected President to the PAC, the first non-military to assume the post. As President of the club, he has applied the same energy and passion he has for climbing to implementing positive change in club policy with major streamlining of foreign permit application processes, reduction in peak fees, and aggressive conservation approaches including a complete re-write of expedition procedure and protocol to embrace modern climbing approach.

At the end of my last climbing trip to Pakistan, Steve Swenson, Mansoor, Nazir, and myself sat around the PAC office and discussed the future. As we talked about the many ambitious projects our club might collaborate on. With great passion, Nazir recounted that first expedition to Paiyu, how grateful he was for the opportunity, the friendships with Americans like Al Steck, Nick Clinch, and Tom Hornbien to name a few, and mostly how committed he was to see the next generation of Pakistani youth and climbers enjoy that same kind of cooperative spirit in addressing the next challenges for climbers and the mountains we love.

Tonight we are very fortunate to have with us Nazir Sabir who has traveled a long way to be here, it is with great pleasure and distinct honor, on behalf of the AAC that present to Nazir Ahmed Sabir, our highest award, Honorary Membership to the American Alpine Club.