

**INSIDE**

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# ROUNDUP

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||PILLARS||  
a profile series



# Living the High life

Pavillard's mark left on many facets of mountain-based recreation

**Will Shoemaker**  
*Times Editor*

**A**valanche education. A mountain-guiding company. And scores of experts who specialize in ensuring safe travel in the backcountry.

Jean Pavillard's influence extends to a myriad of companies, programs and individuals in the Gunnison Valley and beyond.

Pavillard is not a man of large stature. His humble nature is noted by those closest to him long before his lengthy list of climbing- and guiding-related accomplishments.

Pavillard's relentless pursuit of freedom is perhaps most pronounced in his choice of profession — safely guiding clients into dangerous mountain environments. He is no slouch and, even at 54, his schedule of excursions to the farthest corners of the globe is dizzying.

Last year, for example, included skiing in Japan in January. Climbing Aconcagua in February. Trekking and climbing Pyramide Carstenz in Papua in March. April ski touring in the Alps. Climbing in Bolivia in May.

And that was just the first half of the year.

Today, Pavillard bases himself in Gunnison — where his daughter, Francesca Pavillard-Cain, attends Western State Colorado University and is herself a high-flying member of Mountain Sports team's freeride crew.

From an early age, Pavillard had set his sights on avoiding any sort of traditional work setting.

Pavillard ▶ B12



From the summits of the world's tallest peaks to craggy outcroppings on numerous continents, Jean Pavillard has made a presence. But locally his influence is reflected in a myriad of mountain-based recreational institutions.

*Courtesy photos*

## SPORTS ▶ INSIDE

MORE SPORTS COVERAGE BEGINS ON B7



**FINDING  
A WAY  
FORWARD**

GHS girls break skid, win two in a row. ▶ **B7**



**'COSMIC'  
EXPERIENCE  
IN CB**

Uphill ski racers go all out. ▶ **B11**



**HOME  
STRETCH**  
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JUMPER SETS RECORD ▶ **B9**



# Pavillard

▶ from page B1

“I wanted to live in the mountains, there was no doubt in my mind,” he says.

## From Switzerland to the States

Pavillard was raised on the Swiss side of a small mountain range that forms the border between France and Switzerland.

He was involved with ski touring, climbing and other activities as part of the Swiss Alpine Club. At a young age, Pavillard and his three brothers lost their mother. Their father remarried, but for Jean, a family of support was found in the mountain-climbing community.

“The parents, they let you go climbing because they’re happy to see you do something healthy, away from the bar scene,” he explains. “However, they didn’t know really all the trouble we were in when we went climbing.”

At age 18, while scaling an icy couloir with a partner, Pavillard took a 1,200-foot fall on the south face of Mont Blanc. Luckily, he only received minor injuries during the fall.

His partner stopped climbing, but Pavillard’s plans to become a professional mountain guide weren’t encumbered by the harrowing incident.

After leaving home, Pavillard moved to the Swiss ski village of Leysin to begin his ski instructor and mountain-guide certification. While there, he met a girl from California, who would later become his wife.

During the ensuing years, Pavillard bounced between California, Telluride and Switzerland, where he eventually completed his mountain-guide certification.

Eventually, Pavillard was beckoned to Crested Butte by the then-director of the resort’s ski school, who was himself a Swiss-born skier. Pavillard began work as a ski instructor at Crested Butte Mountain Resort — a role that in 1985 landed him the director’s position.

But at the same time he started his own mountain-guiding company and by 1991 had quit his job to guide full-time. With a young family, leaving Crested Butte didn’t seem ideal. And, there was opportunity to be realized.

“Ski mountaineering was not part of the ski culture here,” Pavillard recalls. “People were doing ski touring, of course, but mostly skiing on tele gear.”

Pavillard took it upon himself to launch ski mountaineering around Crested Butte — purchasing 20 pairs of skis, 20 sets of bindings, skins and 60 pairs of boots, available for his clients to rent. At the same time, his guiding outfit taught avalanche courses.

## Following in his tracks

This single endeavor — a small mountain-guiding company — would branch into numerous organizations or companies that are still a vibrant part of the ski culture in Crested Butte today.

In 1990, a young ski instructor by the name of Alan

**“I wanted to live in the mountains, there was no doubt in my mind.”**

-Jean Pavillard

Bernholz found a mentor in Pavillard.

One frigid, windy morning Pavillard convinced Bernholz — who in later years would become Crested Butte’s mayor and founder of the Crested Butte Avalanche Center — to ski nearby Whetstone Mountain. Despite the young protegee’s reluctance, Pavillard affirmed that “anee wedder we go,” Bernholz recalls.

“He got so far in front of me that he could not hear my cries to run back,” Bernholz recounts. “The wind was blowing so hard I was barely able to stand up but we trudged forward.”

But Bernholz — who in about 2000 purchased Pavillard’s guiding operation, giving it the name Crested Butte Mountain Guides — isn’t the only current ski guide or avy expert with whom Pavillard’s influence has lingered.

When Pavillard was running his guiding company, Adventures to the Edge, he hired and trained many up-and-coming “stars” in the guiding profession — including a wide range of current guides and avy forecasters, according to Bernholz.

In the early ‘90s, Pavillard, Gunnison’s Tom Murphy and Canadian Karl Klassen came together to form an organization that would provide a unified, consistent standard for avalanche education.

The American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education (AIARE) — now recognized as the country’s foremost school for avy-related learning — is that group.

Murphy had worked previously in avalanche control when hired by Pavillard to be a ski instructor. At the time, Pavillard was also instructing guide courses for the American Mountain Guides Association — in an attempt to help that group become recognized by the larger International Federation of Mountain Guides Association.

“From a guiding perspective, what Jean brought to the United States was a milestone,” Murphy explains. “The guys who were involved here in the valley were some of the direct recipients of that.”

Pavillard still serves as AIARE’s president, but as the organization has taken flight, his attention has turned back to his initial pursuit — mountain guiding.

A few years ago, Pavillard completed with a longtime client the Seven Summits — climbing to the top of the highest points on each of the earth’s continents.

“It’s big in my life to feel a sense of freedom,” he says. “My job gives me a lot of freedom.”

(Will Shoemaker can be contacted at 970.641.1414 or editor@gunnisontimes.com)

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