

Climbing

# Lee Clark is a Con Artist

Rock Craggs to Denali

By Kevine Graves



## Introduction

Sports often reflect life and Lee's character in climbing directly matches his behaviour in life. From cheating in climbing in order to claim certain routes to almost sabotaging big climbs for others, his sporting life reflects his personal and public life. I was obviously not hurt in the way these ladies have been but I don't particularly appreciate being 'welshed' out of a \$600 loan or having my life put at risk for a jerk like Lee Clark. Yeah, I'm the guy on the right who looks like the stay puffed marshmallow man!

## Rock Cragging

Like a golfer who moves his ball from an impossible shot in the rough to the green while no one is looking, Lee constantly would clip a bolt with a quickdraw and yard up on it rather than put in the work to make the move. He cheated! None of us in the climbing club would ever do that. On top of that, he would make snarky remarks about the rest of us climbing so slow. We used to say he could win the

French free climbing Olympics ('French free' meaning pulling on gear). Most of us aid climb where required (big walls) but we're honest about when we do it and we simply don't do it on free climbs.

## **Denali**

I felt we needed 3 on a rope to safely navigate the crevasses on Denali. Lee told us he had climbed in the Himalayas. At the time, he had me fooled - tall, race car driver, strong climber, very fit, the best bikes, new climbing gear and an expensive AWD European SUV and of course the sweet, intelligent, athletic girlfriend. Yeah, we asked him to join us. What a mistake. I'll skip the irritating and go right to the maddening. He insisted we needed to consume 4,000 to 6,000 calories a day; I knew we could not eat much more than we did at sea level. I'd read that your body can't eat that much at altitude. The truth is, you just get skinny. My friend and I went along. My friend, John, also paid for Lee's share.

On summit day (after 10 days of skiing and hiking up the glaciers), I woke up early, fired up the stove, refueled the gas bottle (spilling gas on my finger) and made tea. I woke up my rope mates in the tent with a mug of hot tea. I then went to work making breakfast.

They got their packs ready and we split up items to carry leaving our tent up for our return. I cleaned dishes and then went to put on my crampons and get ready. We roped up with me first on the rope, my friend was 2nd and Lee was in the rear. It was 8:30am.

Lee: "It's too late, we're never going to summit"!

He then untied the rope and threw it down in a tantrum. I told my friend, "Go talk him in to staying if you like; but if not, get the stove out of his pack; we may need it."

He had the stove and a large Cadbury chocolate bar for the summit celebration. He bitched but he stayed... unfortunately. Remember, the sun is up 24 hours in the Alaska summer so leaving an hour past our target was basically irrelevant. I had frostbite on my finger due to the fuel spilling on it and it did take me longer to put on my crampons. We hiked on.

Two hours later, we came out of a gully and wrapped around a corner on to a ridge. The wind was blowing at over 40 miles per hour. We half crawled, stooped as we walked to present a smaller target to the wind. Shortly, John signaled to me to stop and came up and said that it was too windy and he and Lee thought we should turn back. We were only gone a few hours and already they wanted to quit. I wasn't having it. I convinced them to go a bit longer as we could always turn around and walk downhill. I

wanted to keep going but Lee complained of the cold. Now I was getting cold because we had stopped. You can't stop in the wind and you can't generate new heat by movement; you can only maintain it. I was becoming angry since stopping hadn't been necessary. I agreed to put on our heavy down gear. It was taking Lee forever. My bud and I were ready in 5 minutes. Lee was taking 20 minutes. I began to shiver uncontrollably.

Me: "What's the deal?"

John: "Lee has to take off his windsuit [unisuit, not separate pants] so he has to take off his crampons to get on his down gear."

Me: "What? Just tell him to put it on *over* his windsuit like us!"

No, he had to keep us there shivering at 18,000 feet in a gale while he changed clothes. WHY?

Finally, they both asked again if we shouldn't turn back. I could tell my buddy was game to keep going. He doesn't have any quit in him and I knew how strong he was. I just started forward and pulled the rope tight as my answer. We carried on; the wind died down towards noon and the sun came out. It was still cold but we were making good time and had a chance to rest.

I had told both of them, "You can't digest anything above 18,000 feet very easily so just bring honey or power gel packets".

They didn't. They both brought Cliff Bars. These, as I had told them, would be like bricks [frozen solid at altitude] so I shared out my 9 goo packets. We climbed to the summit, took the pics and then I asked Lee for the designated summit Cadbury Chocolate bar; he said he didn't bring it. Mind you, I broke trail the entire day to the summit. I was exhausted. I gave up two thirds of the energy I needed to refuel when I shared my goo. I bonked.

I told them, "Hey, my feet aren't doing what my brain is telling them so one of you guys needs to lead on the way down".

Lee responded, "The weakest man always goes first".

Really?

I stormed off, leading down. Near camp, we unroped (no crevasses) and I made my way to camp alone and crawled into my bag utterly exhausted; I don't remember dinner. Later, Lee asked me to take back

a couple of packs since I had airline luggage allowance. I looked into his summit pack and there was our huge summit chocolate bar! I could have eaten one third of it to lift myself past my caloric deficit and been safer descending to camp.

On the way down from camp, Lee took off and I looked up at my buddy John and said, "Gawd, I wish I'd known we could have safely done this as a two man team. Hey, why did he have to remove his windsuit to put on his down gear in the windstorm? What was that all about?"

John: "Because he didn't think it looked cool."

Me: "You mean I shivered uncontrollably and almost went hypothermic so he could have his GQ Moment at the summit."

John: "Yep."

Me: "What an asshole!"

John: "Yep."

On the third day of our descent on the glacier, we threw out hundreds of dollars of food that we had cached after slitting each bag and emptying it into a crevasse; there went the calories that, according to Lee, were so mandatory to eat every day. It was too much weight to carry down and fly back to Talkeetna and then home. By now, I can only hope it fed a sea otter.

Well, Lee asked me to go to his wedding with this sweet, innocent, attractive and funny gal from Bellingham (i.e., his next victim) that we got to know while in Anchorage. Not me; I was on the first plane home. I didn't want anything to do with such a travesty. Now, I understood why her Dad didn't care for Lee, but there was nothing I could do.

I never saw the \$600.00 he owed once we were back home. I know of at least 7 women who would have gladly counted out ten times that just to be rid of him, several of whom did. I count myself lucky.

Cheating, callousness, lying, welching, pretending, stealing, meanness; these are the hallmarks of a deeply disturbed sociopathic man. I sincerely hope the efforts of those behind this website prevent his destroying the time, innocence and hard work of his future potential 'marks'. I count myself so very lucky to have met a wonderful, beautiful, kind and innocent woman; that anyone would take such an

opportunity to destroy these traits for his own selfish vanity and financial gain simply baffles me. Hell, I married the single one I met!

I hope this perspective from another man rounds out this picture. So, yeah, my long winded story and my loss is insignificant, but KNOW THIS - THESE AREN'T THE MUSINGS OF ONE OR TWO SCORNED & BITTER WOMEN. LEE CLARK HAS OVER MULTIPLE RESTRAINING ORDERS IN MULTIPLE STATES! HE IS SIMPLY A BAD HUMAN BEING WHO HURTS GOOD PEOPLE.