

B.C. Mountaineering Club Newsletter



October 2009. Vol. 87, No. 10

Alpine start on Mt. Rainier
Photo: Gordon Esplin

EVENING SOCIAL MEETINGS

Evening socials are usually held in the ANZA club, upstairs room (corner of 8th Ave. and Ontario, Vancouver) starting at 7:30 p.m. Cookies, tea, and coffee are provided.

Tuesday 13 October - Author Mike Nash talks about George Evanoff, subject of his book: *The Mountain Knows No Expert*. Evanoff's relationship with mountains evolved from hunter to mountaineer to leader to hunted.

Tuesday 10 November - Gerry Kollmuss will present on the Salal Ck. area after the AGM.



Watersprite Lake
Photo: Paul Russell

British Columbia Mountaineering Club

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Esther and Martin Kafer

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

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SATELLITE PHONE	-PETER GUMPLINGER	604-733-8264
LIBRARY -	JOAN FORD	604-876-4255

CLUB EQUIPMENT FOR HIRE

Avalanche transceivers - First day - \$5 per day for members, \$7 for non-members then \$3 per subsequent day .

Snow shovels - \$3 per day.

Avalanche probes - \$3 per day.

VHF radios - \$8 per day, \$40 per week

Satellite phone - \$60 per week or \$10 per day plus \$300 refundable deposit, all payable in advance, then \$2 per minute use.

If the phone is returned damaged, the renter will be responsible for repair costs. If the phone is lost or damaged beyond repair, the renter will be responsible for reimbursing the club the \$2000 cost of the phone. Trip organizers should request a deposit from trip participants to cover this cost.

First priority for equipment rental is club camps and trips. Equipment is rented from Kit Griffin (604-736-8462) or Peter Gumplinger (604-733-8264), who should be contacted at least 2 days prior to the day the equipment is wanted, except for the satellite phone, which should be arranged at least 2 weeks prior to the day it is wanted.

The **BC MOUNTAINEERING CLUB NEWSLETTER** is an official publication of the B.C. Mountaineering Club and is published 10 times per year (every month except July and August). All material within this newsletter is copyright © British Columbia Mountaineering Club.

Submissions - of any written, drawn, or photographic material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club are welcome. If possible, submissions should be sent to the editor by email or on a diskette. Please note that images should be at least 60 pixels/cm (150 pixels/inch) for successful printing. Images with a lesser resolution will probably not be printed. Deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month preceding the publication month.

Send submissions to **Alice Purdey**

(ph. 604-293-2951, email - alicep.fred@gmail.com).

Editorial policy - All submitted written material relevant to the B.C. Mountaineering Club will be published unless the club executive decides otherwise. Submitted material may be edited for clarity or brevity, or for consistency with club policies.

Opinions and comments expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

Scheduled trips

Participation on club trips is open to any person with adequate skills and experience, subject to the approval of the trip organizer. All non-member participants must sign a disclosure and waiver form relieving the club and all other participants on the trip from any liability. A trip organizer is not a certified guide. The function of the organizer is to organize the trip, ensure that it gets underway, know the access to the area, and know a route or routes on the climb.

It is expected that each person on a club trip has the necessary skills, experience, fitness, and equipment. The organizer may specify certain equipment mandatory for participation in a trip. Any person who attempts to participate in a club trip without such mandatory equipment, may be requested to withdraw from the trip. Each person on a club trip is responsible for his or her own safety and for checking the equipment used. Please be considerate and call the trip organizer more than 1 day prior to the trip.

If you are given a ride, please remember to pay the driver your portion of the car costs. If you decide not to go on a trip for which you have previously registered, please be courteous and inform the trip organizer.

Trip Schedule

Please check the website for final updates.

October

Wed. night indoor climbing at Cliffhanger - Oct. 7,

14, 21, 28. A5. **Alex Gibbs** 604.970.1171

Oct. 10 A5.

3: Phelix Pk C3

Alastair Ferries 603.329.1637

3: Saturday rock climbing A5

Leif Marmolejo 604.2250.7039

3-4: Intro to ice climbing (FULL) WI 3-4

Jason Wheeler

3-4: Spius Basin "Far Out" & "Ainslie" B2

Karl Ricker 1.604.938.1107

4: Cypress Pk C3

Stansilav Liarski 604.983.4476

10: Sat. climbing Squamish weather permitting A5

Stanislav Liarsky 604.983.4476

10-12: Grimface Mtn. B3

Peter Gumplinger 604.733.8264

10-31: Red Rock Nevada climbing camp B5

Francis St. Pierre email

17-18: 21 Mile Ck. Madley Lk B2

Michael Feller 604.270.4050

31: Sat. climbing - Squamish weather permitting A5

Adrian Lazar, Ivana Sigur 778.240.1696

November

7: Twin Lakes Peaks C3

Alastair Ferries 604.329.1637

7: Sat. climbing - Squamish weather permitting A5

Waldemar Jonsson 604.780.0296

Member News

The club welcomes the following new members:

Jeff Han, Beth Denny, Monica Studnar, Nikolas Wall, Jia Li, Kelly Haddon, Chris Haddon, Michael Grigorian, Elizabeth Csollany, Mehran Ramsey, and Quirine Schuyff.

Watersprite Lake "Hut"

BCMC recently signed an agreement with the Gov't of BC that gives us a ten-year tenure on land at Watersprite Lake and permission to build a mountain hut. Watersprite Lake is just outside the south-west corner of Garibaldi Park and 23

km east of Squamish. The area is out of reach of snowmobiles and offers remote skiing, climbing and hiking.

Dave Scanlon has been working diligently since May 2003 (six years!) to acquire a suitable site for a BCMC centennial hut. He, and we, have finally won the bureaucratic battle. Now that the fun part is about to start – construction and related activities - Dave wants to turn over the project to another volunteer manager. He will offer lots of support, but can no longer carry the key role. Please contact Dave (604-572-5051) or the club president if you can help in any way.

Congratulations on your persistence and success Dave – and a HUGE Thank You.

Your Executive

The annual club elections will be held at the November Annual General Meeting. The past president is responsible for putting together a slate of candidates to ensure that the positions are filled. However, please remember that all active members have the right to run for office; the elections are meant to be just that – elections, not automatic shoe-ins. If you want a voice in how the club is managed, then do not hesitate to throw your name into the ring. Several of the long-standing executive members would be happy to make way for new blood and would offer support, especially if they are holding two positions!

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, except July and August, rotating amongst members' homes. Business is discussed from 7:30 to about 10 or 10:30 and then there is a bit of socializing, with snacks of course.

To see what positions are on the executive, check pg. 2 of the newsletter. Contact Past-President David Hughes or any of the executive members for further information.

Let's liven up the AGM with some voting!

Mary Macaree Bequest

Thank You Mary! Mary Macaree and her husband David wrote the original 103 Hikes and the 109 Walks guidebooks series, including updated editions. Mary recently joined David on life's final trail. She bequeathed the royalties on sales of the popular 109 Walks in BC's Lower Mainland, most recently revised in 2009 (6th edition), to the BCMC. We are grateful to Mary and David for their significant contributions to BC mountain enthusiasts and to their thoughtful and generous contributions to the BCMC.

Bernardo de Maceo

The club notes with sadness the recent passing away of Bernard de Macedo. Bernard joined the BCMC in 1974 and became a life member. When he could no longer participate, he continued to look forward to the club newsletters which gave him opportunities to reminisce about the many outings he did.

Happy trails, Bernardo.

FMCBC News

Update - *Brian Wood, President & BCMC rep.*

The FMCBC has been busy over the summer period, and below are some of our activities working on behalf of non-motorised or self-propelled outdoor recreation.

To start with the good news, as some of you probably know, the FMCBC was successful in obtaining funding from the 25 million dollar Federal Government Economic Stimulus Package for recreational trails, one third of which was designated specifically for non-motorised trails. We obtained \$150,000 for upgrading the Howe Sound Crest Trail, an old, scenically spectacular local trail which has deteriorated considerably. We also obtained \$1900 for winter signage for a new trail in the Callaghan Valley to help with changes arising from the Olympics. We should be thankful for the Office Administrator, Jodi Appleton, and those volunteers who slaved over paperwork to jump through the hoops in a very tight time-frame.

After many person hours spread over several years, the FMCBC and Knight Inlet Heli-sports have agreed upon a Joint User Agreement (JUA) for managing motorised activities in the Mount Waddington Region, the gem in the crown of BC Coast Mountain

wilderness. We offer our thanks to those hard working Recreation & Conservation Committee members who made this happen, particularly our R&C Chair, Monika Bittel.

One item of bad news is that we were not able to obtain any BC Government "gaming" grant funds this year, and probably for the foreseeable future. Thus we have lost access to funds which were previously used to publish and mail the FMCBC newsletter, "Cloudburst". To reduce printing and mailing expenses, for future Cloudburst issues we are encouraging members of all clubs to access the Cloudburst on line and to forsake receiving a mailed paper copy. There will still be the option to receive a mailed paper copy but this will now require action on the individual member's part. For the BCMC, our members have been indicating their preference when they renew their BCMC membership in October and later, but we hope to pursue this option more effectively.

So, to access outside funding, the FMCBC must look elsewhere. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) has indicated an interest in discussing long term or "core funding" to support self-propelled backcountry recreation, and so I feel we should pursue this avenue. I am now looking for one volunteer, preferably living in the lower mainland area, to help me in negotiations with MEC sometime in this fall. Is anyone interested in joining me? Along with several other committees, the FMCBC Fund Raising Committee will become active again after the summer recess to investigate other funding sources. All the FMCBC committees could use more volunteers to help deal with important issues which impact self-propelled back country recreation. No previous committee experience is required-just enthusiasm and a willingness to help. This is a chance for club members to become more involved with the FMCBC and to improve their particular skills and advance our interests. For more information about the FMCBC, please see our website at: www.mountainclubs.org.

Another item of bad news is that the negotiations between the FMCBC and the District of Squamish relating to the transfer of the FMCBC's lands into the proposed Smoke Bluffs Park have stalled again. There was a change of personnel in the DOS Council, and it seems that we are almost back to square one. Monika and members of the Squamish Access Society and other interested organizations have been involved with this complex issue for several years.

The FMCBC is planning to publish the Fall/Winter issue of Cloudburst and is again looking for articles and photographs that would be of interest to our members. These articles could relate to a wide range of subjects such as our normal outdoor recreational activities, trip reports, club news, conservation matters, back country access problems such as resource road closures, problems with motorised back country users etc. Please submit your articles for the Cloudburst by the end of September to Jodi Appleton, preferably by email to FMCBC@mountainclubs.org or by mailing to PO Box 19673, Vancouver, BC, V5T 4E7.

Also, as the winter is approaching and club members will be out there enjoying the snow, please do not forget to submit all relevant details, photographs etc. of any incidents relating to back country conflict with motorised recreationists, eg snowmobiles, heli-skiers etc to BCMC member, Robin Tivy, at his website, www.bivouac.com.

Continuing Threats to our Provincial Parks while their Centenary approaches. *Brian Wood, President FMCBC*

Shortly after our club celebrated its first one hundred years of existence, another important centenary approaches. In 1911, BC established Strathcona Provincial Park, the first of a long list of parks which were to be established over the following one hundred years. Many of these parks protected relatively large areas of pristine wilderness and BC was justly proud of a system that was the envy of the world, especially the “over-developed” world that had lost most of its wild places.

Celebrations are proposed for this centenary, but we should not be lulled into a false sense of security for our parks because what was once a great recreation and wilderness protection system is being whittled away by neglect as essential funding is removed. If we are to preserve this system for future generations, we will have to raise public awareness of these continuing threats to our parks.

Below is a link to a short video of the history of BC's Parks; it includes a cautionary statement about the need for adequate funding if we are to be able to maintain our world-class system of outdoor recreation areas.

<http://ekoscommunications.com/node/723>

While I feel I am “preaching to the converted” in the BCMC, it is important that this information is widely distributed to the general public so please pass this link around to your friends to get the word out.

For those who are prepared to write letters, below is a letter from the Outdoor Recreation Council that was sent to Premier Campbell on July 24th, and cc'd to many of his ministers. The letter is self-explanatory and may inspire some of you to put pen to paper and write your letter(s), as that is the only way something will happen to improve things.

Dear Premier Campbell

Re: An Olympic legacy for BC's Provincial Parks

I am writing on behalf of the member organizations of the Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia, commonly referred to as ORC, with respect to a resolution passed unanimously at our recent Annual General Meeting. Our voting members consist of the principal outdoor recreation organizations in the Province. Although there are no more than two dozen of these, we estimate that more than 100,000 individuals and families belong to the clubs they represent. We regard these British Columbians as representing the outdoor recreation public, whose interests it is our mandate to promote.

Given the diversity of our membership, ORC does not usually pretend to represent the views of its members on a particular issue, but in the case of a resolution passed at its AGM there is no question that we can speak for our members, especially when it is unanimous, as it was in this case. We have attached a copy of Resolution 2009 - 02, which speaks for itself, but we would like to emphasize the following:

1. There appears to have been a progressive reduction in the budget for BC's Provincial Parks with the result that their infrastructure is visibly deteriorating, a fact which has not gone unnoticed by the public and by visitors to the Province.
2. BC,s Provincial Parks are an incredibly important resource for the physical and mental health of the BC public.
3. The 100th Anniversary of BC Parks in 2011 will be an opportunity to provide an important focus for British Columbians and visitors after the Winter Olympics.

4. We have often been assured that the Winter Olympics will provide a legacy for all British Columbians There could be no finer legacy than a significant improvement in the state of the wildlife habitat, trails and recreation facilities in BC's extraordinary Provincial Parks.

We are also sending a copy of this letter to those other members of the BC Cabinet who have responsibilities related to the Parks system, tourism and health, but we urge you to give this proposal your urgent and personal attention.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy McCall, Executive Director

(copied to four government ministers.)

OUTDOOR RECREATION COUNCIL 2009 AGM - RESOLUTION 2009 - 02

WHEREAS the recent reduction in its already inadequate operating budget has reduced BC Parks' capability so it can no longer maintain its infrastructure and its services at even a minimally acceptable standard; and

WHEREAS the BC Parks system has through the years demonstrated that in addition to providing important services to the BC public it is able to contribute to the provincial economy many times what adequate maintenance and services cost; and

WHEREAS BC Parks can provide a post - Olympic draw and economic development for British Columbians and the Province of British Columbia; and

WHEREAS the 100th anniversary of BC Parks will take place in 2011 immediately after the Olympics and will provide opportunities to enhance and support BC's health, wealth, and natural capital; and

WHEREAS British Columbians have been assured that the 2010 Winter Olympics would provide legacies for all British Columbians, and not just in locations where the Olympic events are held:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ORC urge the Provincial Government to ensure that the Olympic legacies include an adequately maintained BC Parks system, including infrastructure and services.

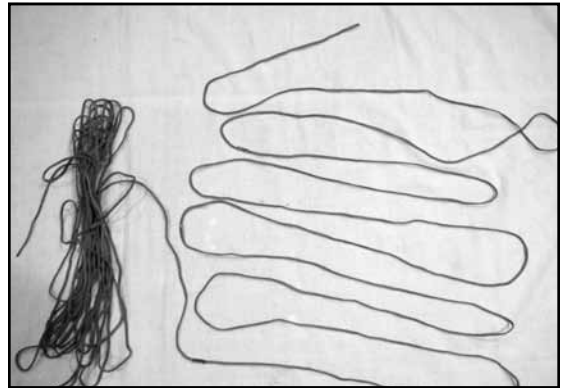
If you got this far in my article, thanks for hanging in there! Now do something about it!

The ORC is at: 47 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V5Y 1P1. Tel: 604-873-5546 E-mail: outdoorrec@orc.bc.ca

Olympic Park Access

As of September 1, 2009 and until after the Paralympic games in March 2010 the Whistler Olympic Park access will be closed at the main gate just past the Callaghan Lake road at Alexander Falls. Access to Callaghan and Madely lakes will still be open. Cross country trails and backcountry access will be via Callaghan Country's base at Alexander Falls.

What is it? (Hint: It's red with strategically placed, crimped-on metal bits.)



Snowmobiling in the Sea to Sky Corridor

At the Whistler Forest and Wildland Advisory Committee (FWAC) meeting on Wednesday it was revealed that there is apparently a coalition of 6 B.C. ministries that are developing a new "snowmobiling strategy" to expand and develop snowmobiling in the Sea to Sky corridor. Apparently VANOC will be doubling the size of the snowmobilers' parking lot in Brandywine near Whistler's new garbage transfer station and adding a second new parking area the

same size off the new road to the Nordic centre just past the current one. The new and expanded parking areas will be used for the Olympics the VANOC is proposing to leave them as a legacy for the sledders.

Wildflowers

Want to identify that wildflower? Check the website: <http://www.clunet.edu/cr>. Wildflowers of western Canada are included and are listed by common, scientific, and family names; there is also a search engine.

Trip Reports

Mt. Rainier, Sept. 11 – 13, 2009 *Gordon Esplin*

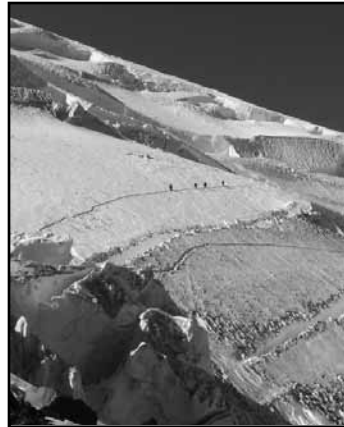
At first there were 24 of us, 24 hoping to climb to the top of Mt. Rainier on the Labor Day weekend. Since the maximum legal group size on Rainier is a dozen, we had to split the 24 hopefuls into a dozen led by the author and a dozen led by Marc Hewitt. We had sweated on the trip-planning details for the weekend but then the weather forecast turned ugly – a low-pressure trough aloft was to bring high winds and snow to the mountain. Years ago, when I was low on experience but high on determination I almost succumbed to hypothermia under similar conditions on Rainier and I have learned to leave the big mountains alone unless there is a high-pressure ridge nearby.

Following the Labor Day weekend the forecast predicted that the desired high-pressure ridge would replace the low-pressure trough aloft and that we would have a window of opportunity of a few days to do the climb the next weekend. But on such short notice only 11 of the initial 24 hopefuls could make it. The game plan was to leave Vancouver Friday morning, bivy at Camp Muir that evening, do the climb Saturday and hike out and drive home on Sunday. It is possible to do it in 2 days if everything goes well but that did not happen. We had an accident on the mountain.

It took about 5 hours for us to make our way up to Camp Muir from the Paradise Ranger Station, where we pitched tents and melted snow. Ilze and Stephanie elected to sleep in the stone mountaineer's hut and were protected from strong winds that gusted

throughout the night. The downside of sleeping in the hut is the noise caused by climbers getting up and leaving at 1 or 2 AM in the morning. We, being Canadians of sound mind and good temper, did not awake until 5AM and left Muir at 6:15 AM, just as a smudge of red was lighting the eastern horizon.

The standard Disappointment Cleaver route was in excellent condition. A dump of fresh snow from the



previous weekend had covered icy sections and filled in the smaller cracks. And the professional guides do a tremendous job making the route safe for their clients by relocating wands, fixing ropes through sections of seracs and, where necessary, placing ladders across crevasses. So all we had to do was to place one foot in front of the other and follow the guide's path. (This is one good reason to leave late: let the hordes create a well-beaten path to the top. The other good reason is to enjoy incredible scenery illuminated by the sun's ample photons.)

After about 6 hours of heavy breathing we reached the summit crater. Some were feeling the effects of altitude but everyone persisted on to the summit, where we were treated to incredible views and 50 kph winds. The sky overhead was a deep, deep blue while far below us were the browns and greens of a distant world. Due to the cold wind we quickly left the summit for the sanctuary of the crater below, and then descended back to Camp Muir.

Our group was split three ropes consisting of 4, 4 and 3 climbers. We strung the ropes out while crossing glaciers and then took in coils to shorten the ropes while traversing rock – such as on Cathedral Gap and Disappointment Cleaver. We also left our crampons

on as it was a nuisance to keep taking them off and putting them back on. The downside of short-roping is that if there is a hazard, such as sudden rock-fall, it is difficult for individuals to take avoiding action. Or if one person suddenly falls, he could drag the others down with him.



So we had an accident. It was the end of the climb and we were descending the final loose, steep part of Cathedral Gap down to Camp Muir below us. I was trying to identify my tent among the other tents when suddenly I was pitched headfirst down the mountain. During my inattention a crampon had caught. While falling I managed to grab onto a big rock and glanced up, hoping that I had not pulled others with me. Stephanie's was uphill of me and her eyes were as big as saucers as she hung onto the rope for dear life. I managed to pull myself back up onto the trail but my left ankle was in agony. (X-rays later showed that it was broken.) There was nothing else to do but suck it up and continue on down to camp.

At Muir we asked the ranger what our options were. Unless lives are at risk they don't do helicopter evacuations, as the cost would come out of Parks Department funds that are already depleted. They could use a litter but it would take about 10 hours down to Paradise. The best option for me seemed to be to hobble down under my own steam and worry about the ankle back in Vancouver.

After mitigating the evening's suffering with liberal doses of Advil and Appleton's best rum we arose the next morning and broke our gear down into bite-sized chunks. Every one pitched in and carried a part of my load. Ian kindly loaned his hiking poles and down we started, as slow as a herd of turtles. It took over 5 hours and numerous hits of Advil to get down. Everyone was super supportive - kicking steps in the snow and ice for me, getting water and giving

encouragement. It doesn't get any better.

On the way home the entire group stopped at a pub for Yankee beer and pub grub. Shortly thereafter we had to stop again and ingest DQ ice cream and coffee as an antidote. I arrived home with an ankle the size of a football and with memories of a great time with a super group of climbers. Thank you all!

Participants: Alan Brelsford, Stephanie Li, Ilze Rupners, Clayton Dunham, Brandon Boulier, Zhefeng Han (Jeff), Ian MacNab, Marc Hewitt, Alex Hudson, Katherine Wieckowski, Gordon Esplin (organizer and reporter)

Threading the Needle

August 19, 2009
Pamela Jenkins

I had heard about the Needle Peak trail from Vancouver friends. On one of my return drives back to Vernon a few years ago, I had found the trail head, across the highway from the Zopkios Rest area. I finally reached the summit after my third attempt with my friend Tom Crowley. I'd first met Tom and Connie, his ex wife, when with my ex husband in 1966 in the Bugaboo Mountains. Tom had phoned me in 2006, 40 years later, and we have been on hikes together since then.

Our first attempt was two years ago, when we reached the col between Needle and the Flat Iron, and had scrambled further up, but not found a route. Our next attempt was in July this year, when we had reached a similar place as the first time, but there happened to be a Chilliwack lady hiker, Yvonne., with a younger boy. She knew about a gully route up to the next level and warned us that we would need to scramble over a large boulder blocking the very loose steep gully at the top. She went ahead and I struggled up that same gully behind Tom. Tom used his short rope to help me get over the boulder. The trail continues up through meadows and past a small pond, then there's another steep bit, before the final rock ascent. The other two were coming down from the summit as we neared the last section. Then there were lightning streaks in the sky, so we had to return to our camp on the Coldwater River Road. For the descent we followed Yvonne and friend down an easier route. There was one steep section where I had problems getting down, even though we had first

lowered my pack. Tom and Yvonne made footholds for me with their hands, and the young boy carried my pack further down the trail. When I reached the col I needed a drink, but my pack was further down the trail. Eventually the guy waited for us to catch up. We stopped to have some refreshments. The other two went down ahead of us. I had problems negotiating tree roots on the trail lower down and did have a couple of falls, luckily with no major injuries. It rained heavily all night, so we had made the correct decision to abandon the climb.

In early August the fire situation and weather prevented us from making another attempt for a time., but eventually it was reasonable to try again. This time we drove to the Coquihalla park camp area across from the lodge., after we had parked at Zopkios, walked almost a kilometre back along the highway and found the Yak trail, which we followed across a wet area . It ascends extremely steeply through the trees , reaches large boulders , but we wanted to be ready for the Needle attempt, so we only went for about an hour. Some people were coming down, so we waited for them to pass, then returned to the car. Next morning we got to the trail ahead at 8.10am. It took me just over an hour to reach the first lookout, where there is a " No Fire" sign. Tom could no doubt go faster , but is willing to go at my slow speed. We reached the col before 11.0am. and afterwards did not use the gulley route . The very steep section was a lot easier to climb up than it was down and soon we reached what we'd thought was the last bit. However we climbed up steeply among meadows and more boulders to yet another meadow level, that took a long time to traverse.

As we had left the parking spot two young boys were already on the trail ahead. They were coming down as we reached the higher meadows. Another party of four overtook us before we reached the final rock climb. We watched their route. Tom went ahead and I followed. He insisted I be roped up, remembering that I had been involved in an horrendous mountain accident in 1998. The first scrambly bit was steep, but then we reached the eye of the needle. There are large slabs of rock at a 45 degree angle with a crack between which you ease your body, also negotiating the rocks and jagged boulders below your feet, with various gaps to straddle. When you emerge from this chasm, there's a short easier bit before the

next vertical scramble. Tom went ahead and I was struggling up the next bit, when the other four were coming down. They simply had to wait for me to get up to the next ledge. More steep stuff and eventually we were on the summit rocky ridge. By this time my legs were shaking as I stumbled slowly to the summit cairn. It was 2.10pm, and had taken me 6 hours. The " 103 hikes" book suggests the whole trip could be done in 7 hours. It also took me 10 hours to get down. Most people do it a lot faster than me.



The rock climb at the top was easier coming down. Back near the small pond we stopped to drink tea and ribena juice. Sadly I spilled some of my tea. Then we had to get down the steep bit , where on the previous attempt Yvonne and Tom had held my feet and I hadn't mentioned that I'd ripped the seat of my pants and had gone down the rest of the trail with a bare behind. We reached the col about 7.0pm. The sun was a huge orange ball near the horizon, getting lower as we descended through the meadows. We met a man with a dog ,who told us he had come to take sunset pictures with his new digital camera. About 8.30pm we found ourselves descending through white rhododendron, a hikers nightmare on bushwhacking trips. The man and his dog passed us with a flashlight and asked if we had lights. Then we got our headlights out. Somehow we hadn't noticed the No Fires sign, and were back in the trees in darkness. Coming up it had taken about an hour to reach this spot, but going down took me considerably longer, My knees and hip hurt, so I tiptoed very gingerly between the tree roots. Tom walked close by, with me tied to a rope. He saved some stumbles , but it took me a very long time to get out in the dark. Back at my car I drank 5 mugs of Ribena juice my mouth was so dry. We also stopped at the Britton Creek Restroom area to fill up

the water containers, before going back to camp, Finally I'd got up Needle Peak and was back in my sleeping bag about 1.30am, after a very exciting adventure.

What is it? An avalanche cord! In the 1960s we tied such lengths of bright red, braided nylon cord to ourselves and dragged it behind us when crossing avalanche slopes. The one I still have is over 16 yards long (I don't recall the original length); at every yard is a crimped-on bit of metal with an arrow and a number, indicating direction and distance to the buried victim. These cords served other uses, too - emergency belt or bootlace, lashing cord to secure items on a packframe or secure a tent, and tester of patience as one tried to untangle the rat's nest with cold hands at the edge of a glacier - and tie in at the forward end of the arrows. Fortunately, the efficacy of mine never had to be tested. *Alice Purdey*

The Other Black Mountain: Washington. August 29-30, 2009 *Jane Weller*

Shadows sharpen till I could almost cut my thumbs on them. The horizon sparks and flares. The evening flicks on its kodachrome reds and oranges as a moon rises over a black ridge of fuzzy bristled larches. A lovely sight. Instead of sitting around the proverbial campfire (fires are banned here too) we sit in two orderly lines on each side of a dried up stream. Ed tells animated Austrian climber jokes. Ilze patriotically displays her Canadian flag socks. Denis snaps sunset shots. Freeze the moment. I want summer to go on and on.

The next morning half the group race sunward up the 3rd class standard route. They wait for Helen, Ed, Isabel, Denis, Ian and me as we finish an ascent of the NE ridge. This is a surprisingly solid rock route, yet is terribly exposed. It would be easy enough to solo the class 3-4 route were it not for the huge drops and sandy ledge traverses that get your head spinning. I am glad for the rope and running belays.

The summit is craggy and black – hence the unimaginative name: Black Mountain. The entire

group is on the top. We gaze at the view: the snow-fringed, ragged ridges that curve like graceful hyperboles into the valleys. We are surrounded by a seamless kingdom of mountains: Mts Torment, Eldorado, Forbidden, Hozomeen, Glacier Peak.

So we laze for over an hour on the summit, taking Christmas card shots of each other, of the tarns below, of the mountains. Ed tells more Austrian jokes. But he is Austrian so no one should mind too much.



Then we make a careful descent down a crumbly gully where rocks neurotically bounce with a will of their own. A brief respite at camp, then a hike back through the tedious talus. Once on the trail, however, the hike changes. Unlike BC, where a mix of devil's club and blueberry bushes crowd towards the light like paparazzi, the American foliage relents. Trails here are worn, wide and ponderously gentle on the downhill.

We regroup in the parking lot by late afternoon and Ian nervously gulps down an Indian Pale Ale. Signs distinctly read "NO PETS. NO CYCLING. NO THROWING GARBAGE. And PAY TOUR PARKING FEE." I really doubt they'd say yes to beer drinking. But who among us cares?

Most people drove the five hours back to Vancouver that evening, perhaps with a stop at Marblemount for a buffalo burger. Helen, Ed and Isabel successfully climbed Cutthroat the next day. Ian and I went mountain biking in the Methow Valley. But this is another story. And for me, this was the last adventure of my summer.

Thank you Ilza for the superb organization and to others the outstanding company.

Participants:

South Ridge

Ilze Rupners (organizer), Ove Albinsson, Dan Carey, Mary Hearden, David Knight, Henny Coates, Monica Durigon

NE Ridge

Isabel Budke, Helen Habgood, Ed Fischer, Denis Lalonde, Ian Macgillivray, Jane Weller (reporter)

Avalanche probes *Michael Feller*

Earlier this year the Austrian Alpine Club conducted a review of avalanche probes. The results appeared in an article by M. Genswein and R. Eide, published in the Spring, 2009 issue of *Avalanche.ca*, the journal of the Canadian Avalanche Association. A summary of the results follows.

Thirteen different probes were tested. For backcountry travel, a probe should be as wide as possible and should not deform too much. Carbon probes, while lightweight, can bend too much if they have diameters less than 10.5 mm.

Spanning mechanisms – the spanning mechanism should allow minimal play at best. Too much play results in faster mechanical destruction of the probe and its overlapping sections. Textile-based spanning cords, such as Kevlar, are not sufficient. Least play occurs in threaded probes where the different sections screw together. However, such sections require frequent tightening. The internal spanning cable should be long enough that the probe sections can be easily folded in the collapsed state without damaging the cable or the probe sections.

Connection between sections – this connection influences how smoothly the probe can be assembled and how durable the probe will be. Sharp, open edges are inferior to smooth edges.

Locking mechanism – Many locking mechanisms are available. One must find a good balance between ease of use when wearing gloves, reliability, durability, and proper operation under icy conditions. Probes with threaded locking mechanisms are more time consuming to assemble and one must generally take off gloves to turn the locking nut.

Tip design – The tip of the probe should be replaceable

and be wider than the probe shaft. Probes with rounded tips are harder to push through hard layers in the snow than probes with pointed tips.

Proper probe use – involves deploying the probe vertically down using two hands so that the probe penetrates the snow quickly and firmly.

No probe tested appeared to be completely satisfactory, but for backcountry use the best probes were –

BCA SR3 Standard Probe (but it took time to assemble)

G3 Tech Probe 240 (this also took time to assemble and needs to be periodically retightened or it will unscrew itself).

Probes appearing less satisfactory were –

BCA Carbon 260 (bends easily, mechanically weak, scale printed on probe is not durable)

BCA SR3 Quick Draw (mechanically weak)

Black Diamond Carbon Quick Draw Probe 230 (shortest of the probes at 230 cm, hard to unlock, icing problems, cm scale stops at 185 cm)

Black Diamond Quick Draw Probe 300 (hard to unlock, icing problems, cm scale stops at 263 cm, wire between sections is easily damaged)

Mammut Expert (hard to unlock, short cm scale, generally weak)

Mammut Standard (no proper locking mechanism, probe bends easily, very weak in general)

Ortovox 320 (heaviest probe tested, not rigid enough, locking mechanism for the end of the cable does not work, slippery in wet snow)

Pieps Standard (short due to locking mechanism, hard to handle with big gloves, mechanically weak)

Voilé Tourlight (hard to unlock, locking mechanism fails, cm scale and internal wire are too short)

Two other probes were not fully tested as their locking mechanisms were not durable and the internal steel cable kept breaking above the metal spanning bolt. These probes were –

Ortovox Pro Steel 320

Ortovox Carbon Pro 240.



Crossing seracs on Mt. Rainier
Photo: Gordon Esplin



Pam Jenkins threading the Needle
Photo: Pam Jenkins collection



Mt. Rainier summiters
Photo: Ian MacNab



Black Mtn. WA



Black Mtn. Vista

Photos: Jane Weller collection