

# B.C. Mountaineering Club Newsletter



May 2010. Vol. 83, No. 5

Mt Overseer area  
Photo: Will Akerberg

## EVENING SOCIAL MEETINGS

Evening socials are held in the ANZA club, upstairs room (corner of 8th Ave. and Ontario St., Vancouver) from 7:30 pm. Cookies, tea and coffee are provided.

**Tuesday 11 May** - Brian Jones of Canada West Mountain School will talk about what it's like to lead a variety of clients up the highest summits on each and every continent.

**Tuesday 08 June** - To Be Announced



The Ledgeling (beyond Arnold Shives) and the Nai twins (on right), December 29, 1960.  
Photo: Glenn Woodsworth

**British Columbia Mountaineering Club**  
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**HONOURARY PRESIDENTS**  
*Esther and Martin Kafer*

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS**

|                             |                    |              |
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| <b>PAST-PRESIDENT:</b>      | TODD PONZINI       | 604-936-9369 |
| <b>VICE-PRESIDENT:</b>      | ROBERT WOODHOUSE   | 604-730-0371 |
| <b>SECRETARY:</b>           | ALICE PURDEY       | 604-293-2951 |
|                             | JANE WELLER        | 604-988-3618 |
| <b>TREASURER:</b>           | CRAIG KALNIN       | 604-787-5396 |
| <b>MEMBERSHIP:</b>          | SILVIA BAKOVIC     | 778-230-7528 |
|                             | FRANCIS ST. PIERRE | 604-224-0502 |
| <b>SOCIALS:</b>             | DONNA SCANLON      | 604-572-5051 |
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|                             | DAN CAREY          | 604-731-4048 |
| <b>CABIN/TRAILS:</b>        | EMANUELE PORRA     | 604-533-7723 |
| <b>CONSERVATION:</b>        | MONIKA BITTEL      | 604-983-3097 |
| <b>CAMPS:</b>               | ALENA DZUJKOVA     | 604-708-5385 |
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| <b>WEBMASTER:</b>           | KEVIN SWANSON      | 604-943-4364 |
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| -----                       |                    |              |
| <b>SAFETY EQUIPMENT:</b>    | KIT GRIFFIN        | 604-736-8462 |
| <b>SATELLITE PHONE:</b>     | PETER GUMPLINGER   | 604-733-8264 |
| <b>LIBRARY:</b>             | 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. 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: [editor@bcmc.ca](mailto:editor@bcmc.ca)

Members may upload articles, photos etc. for the editor at: <http://bcmc.ca/members/EditorUpload.asp>

**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. 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.

### May 2010

|       |                |  |       |                   |                    |
|-------|----------------|--|-------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Hiking         | Hector Ferguson Peak *                           | C/D2  | Marek Labecki     |                    |
| 1-2   | Skiing         | Mount Rohr                                       | C2/3  | Don Cann          | 604 324 5773       |
| 5     | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish             | A5    | Waldemar Jonsson  | 604 780 0296       |
| 7-9   | Mountaineering | Dreadnought Peak via North Face Couloir. *       | 4     | Serguei Okountsev | Not yet available. |
| 8     | Hiking         | Silver Star Mountain, WA *                       | B3    | Evelyn Feller     | 604-270-4050       |
| 8-9   | Rock Climbing  | Squamish Rock Climbing                           | 5     | Adrian Lazar      |                    |
| 12    | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish             | A5    | Paul Ng           | 604-434-3312       |
| 15    | Snowshoeing    | Sun God & Seven O'Clock Mt                       | C2    | Sabine Decamp     | 778-846-7735       |
| 16    | Skiing         | Cloudburst Mountain *                            | C3    | Don Cann          | 604 324 5773       |
| 19    | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish             | A5    | Waldemar Jonsson  | 604 780 0296       |
| 22-23 | Mountaineering | Mt. Shuksan (members only)                       | D4    | Stanislav Liarsky | 604-983-4476       |
| 22-30 | Mountaineering | Mount Robson: Ralph Forester Hut and above.<br>* | 4/5   | Serguei Okountsev |                    |
| 26    | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish             | A5    | Waldemar Jonsson  | 604 780 0296       |
| 29    | Hiking         | Tigger Peak                                      | D2    | Alastair Ferries  | 604-329-1637       |
| 29    | Hiking         | Golden Ears (date tentative)                     | C2(3) | Thomas Schroeder  | Not yet available. |
| 29-30 | Skiing         | Mt. Baker (Joint with ACC)                       | C3    | Dan Friedmann     |                    |

### June 2010

|       |                |                                      |       |                  |                    |
|-------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------|------------------|--------------------|
| 2     | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish | A5    | Iveta Janot      | 778-847-3492       |
| 5-6   | Mixed          | Sky Pilot *                          | B 2/3 | James Clarke     | Not yet available. |
| 9     | Rock Climbing  | Wednesday night climbing in Squamish | A5    | Iveta Janot      | 778-847-3492       |
| 12    | Mountaineering | East Lion                            | C4/5  | Darlene Anderson | 604-789-8020       |
| 12    | Hiking         | Cypress Peak (members only)          | C3    | Neil Beattie     | Not yet available. |
| 12-13 | Mountaineering | Mt Baker - Tentative *               | C3    | Peter Malacarne  | Not yet available. |

## NOTICES ~ VARIOUS

### New Members

The club welcomes the following new members: Heidi Krajccek, Neil Pickup, Jonathan Rempel, Paul Richardson, Carly Stewart, Michael R. Stewart, Michael Waters, Taeko Yasui.

### Sign Up At Werner's Summer Partner List For Private Trips

Club member Werner Grzimek is putting together a Partner List for Hikers, Scramblers and Climbers of all sorts - for BCMC members only.

Via his list you can find:  Hikers for day trips or multi day traverses  Scramblers  Alpine Climbers for all difficulties  Rock Climbers  Sport Climbers  Boulderers  Aid Climbers  Week Day Climbers  Families

climbing or hiking with Kids or Teens ☐ Out Door Seniors ☐ Climbers or Hikers with dogs ☐ Kayakers ☐ Mountain Bikers ☐ Grouse Grinders...and all are members of the BCMC.

Members will be advertising for what specific routes they are looking for partners. Last year participants of our Alpine Climber List advertised over 50 alpine routes they searched partners for. Now this list is extended to find partners for all the different activities listed above.

There is a section where Hikers/Scramblers/Climbers can look for partners for their climbing/hiking vacations e.g.; Rockies first 2 weeks in August or 10 days Kayak/Climbing trip up Desolation Sound in early July or what ever you want to do as a private trip.

Werner currently puts the technicalities for the list together and plans to get the first list out in May...likely via Google Docs. If you want to be on the list in May please contact Werner now via his email [wernergr@shaw.ca](mailto:wernergr@shaw.ca)

## **Climbing to the Clouds: A People's History of B.C. Mountaineering**

The North Vancouver Museum and Archives recently launched a virtual museum on mountaineering. The website, organized into five sections, presents a look at how mountaineers were drawn to explore, map, enjoy and fight to conserve peaks and wilderness areas in southwestern BC and beyond. It even interacts with Google Earth. Members of the BCMC made significant contributions to the site, particularly in the section on "Voices". This online exhibit was developed in partnership with the Virtual Museum of Canada with support from many sources. Check it out at: [www.virtualmuseum.ca/exhibitions/climbing/](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/exhibitions/climbing/)

### **Fred Williams**

Fred Williams passed away on March 30, 2010 at the age of 92. Fred was an active BCMC member particularly during the 1940s. An avid skier, he became a charter member of the Mt. Seymour Ski Club in 1936. Fred joined with Norm (also a BCMC member) and Jack Kellas, to build a ski cabin on Mt. Seymour in the late 1930s. Fred contributed some of his mountaineering and ski gear to the BCMC Centennial exhibit at the North Vancouver Museum in 2007. This included a pack board fashioned from some old maple skis he had made from a tree he cut on North Vancouver's Maplewood Flats. Fred, a great storyteller about early days in the mountains, recounts the pack board story in a segment of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives recently launched online exhibit called "Climbing to the Clouds: A People's History of BC Mountaineering" ([www.northvanmuseum.ca](http://www.northvanmuseum.ca)). Fred's family has donated some documents to the BCMC archives and his mountaineering and ski gear to the North Vancouver Museum.

### **Off-Road Vehicle Use**

The B.C. government is issuing notices throughout the province requesting responsible behaviour on the part of off-road vehicle (ORV) users and warning them that areas will be patrolled and fines can be issued for environmentally destructive activities. People witnessing environmentally destructive ORV use are asked to report it to the Province's toll-free, 24-hour, Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line at 1-877 952-7277. A brochure about responsible off-road vehicle use is at: [www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/hen/external/!publish/web/otherPublication/ProtectOurForestsAndRangeLand.pdf](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/hen/external/!publish/web/otherPublication/ProtectOurForestsAndRangeLand.pdf)

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## **Coast Mountain Names: The Sky Pilot Area**

From the summits of the North Shore mountains, early climbers could see a higher, ragged group of peaks beyond the head of the Seymour River. The **Sawtooth** (or **Sawteeth**) **Range**, they called it, or simply **The Sawteeth**. It's a good descriptive name, as anyone who has looked north from Crown or the Lions on a clear day knows. Today we call these peaks the Sky Pilot group. By 1908 or possibly earlier, the two highest peaks

(Sky Pilot and Ledge) were called **The Sisters**. (Names in **bold** are official names; those in **bold italics** are unofficial or obsolete.)

Trappers and prospectors explored the area before 1900. In 1898, Oliver Furry (~1855-1905), an illiterate trapper, staked the first claims to what would eventually become the Britannia Mine. Soon the area from the Stawamus and Indian Rivers south to the headwaters of the Capilano and Seymour Rivers was crawling with prospectors. Furry's name was given a few years later to **Furry Creek**, and many lakes and creeks in the region were named for the some of the resulting mineral claims. **Jane Creek**, **Cyrtila Creek**, and **Raven Lake** are a few examples. But this article is about the climbing, not mining, history of the area.

In August 1909, club members Fred Perry, Billy Gray, Charlie MacDonald, and Charlie Chapman travelled up the Seymour River to the lake at its head, then named **Summit Lake** because it's almost at the pass leading to the Stawamus River. They named the lake **Loch Lomond**, the Gaelic name for the largest lake in Scotland, but perhaps with a nod to the several Loch Lomonds in MacDonald's home province, Nova Scotia. The party also named and climbed nearby **Loch Lomond Head**, later changed to **Ben Lomond Mountain** and changed in 1955 to the present **Ben Lomond**.

The weather foiled their attempts on the Sisters. One rainy day Gray and MacDonald climbed a peak they named **Mt. Shear**, because "it shears the fleece from the passing clouds." Sometime soon after, the name became corrupted to **Mt. Sheer**, which also works well, given the precipitous east side of the mountain.

The highest peak in the Sawteeth, the **West Sister**, now **Sky Pilot Mountain**, was first climbed in 1910 via Shannon Creek in one very long day return from Howe Sound. But the first ascent didn't name it, and the name Sky Pilot didn't come into common use until about 1926. I am almost certain that it was not named by climbers, but rather by topographic surveyors S.C. McLean and K.G. Chipman, who climbed the peak in 1919. (Chipman Creek on southern Vancouver Island is named for him.) BCMC member Frank Smith, who lived in Britannia in the 1920s, wrote that the peak was named for the Sky Pilot mineral claim that covered part of its southern slopes, and there might well have been a claim of that name in the years 1920 to 1923, when Chipman was finalizing his map.

But why Sky Pilot for the mining claim? "Sky pilot" is a colloquial name for a minister or preacher, and the term was widely use in the first part of the last century. Possibly the prospector liked to read; many didn't have much formal education but were very well read. The 1899 frontier-adventure novel *The Sky Pilot* by Canadian author Ralph Connor sold a million copies world-wide; it and its 1919 sequel, *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, not to mention Connor's *The Prospector*, may have been the inspiration. Or possibly he was aware of the movie based on the original novel which was playing in 1921. Or it might have been named for the Presbyterian mission ship *Sky Pilot II*, which began mission work along the coast in 1922 and it may have visited Britannia in the first year or two of service.

Several other ideas have been suggested. Referring to the conspicuous gendarme just below the summit of the mountain, Don Munday wondered, "Did this gendarme inspire the name of the mining claim Sky Pilot?" Another possibility is that the mountain is named for *Phacelia sericea*, an attractive alpine flower; Skypilot is one of its common names, but there's no evidence to support this idea.

In 1912, Frank Smith, Don Munday, and C. Field made the first ascent of **Ledge Mountain**, the other big peak in the Sawteeth. Mountaineers soon began to refer to the peak as Ledge, in honour of the famous ledge that allows easy ascent, and the old name **East Sister** faded away. Ledge and the adjacent minor peaks were shown correctly on topographic maps made in the 1920s. But in a major blunder, the standard 1:50,000 map of the area completely missed all summits east of Sky Pilot, including Ledge. As a result, the name was not officially recognized until 1987.

The 1912 party also climbed the attractive granitic horn north of Sky Pilot, **Mt. Habrich**. They called it **Eagle Head**, after its appearance. But Eagle Head didn't stick, nor did **Stamus Peak**, after a rendering of the

name of the river at its foot, the **Stawamus River**. (“Stawamus,” or “St’a7mes,” is a Squamish name meaning “birthplace of the winds.” Stamish and Straamus are other old spelling variants.) Eventually, the peak was named for Sigmund Habrich (1876-1950), a prospector who from about 1913 into the Depression maintained the pack trail up the Stawamus River to his claims. Some accounts say the claims were held by John Habrich (or Habrick), but I can find no record of him. Maybe he was a relative, or possibly Sigmund was also known as John.

Between Sky Pilot and **Goat Ridge** (a prospector’s or hunter’s term, probably dating from about 1900) sits the small and sharp crag known as **The Copilot**. This name is obviously a riff on Sky Pilot, but by whom? The name seems to have been unknown to Smith and Munday, but it was in common use by 1950 and was officially adopted in 1987.

In the late 1950s, junior BCMC member Dick Culbert began climbing in the Sawteeth. Culbert had a knack for catchy, alliterative monikers, and his names are found from Vancouver to the Nass River. One of his earliest is **The Ledgeling**, a small peak east of Ledge that resembles a diminutive Ledge Mountain, complete with ramps that lead to the summit. Another early Culbert name is **The Ledgelette**, for the epaulette-like west shoulder of Ledge.

The last summits in the Sawteeth to be climbed were the two round knobs east of the Ledgeling. Arnold Shives and I, both very junior members of the BCMC, climbed them in 1960 and referred to them as “Twin Breasts.” It’s an appropriately descriptive term but seemed a bit racy to us teenage boys. We returned to these peaks the following spring with fellow junior member Frank de Bruyn, who was then dabbling in Mandarin with a friend. They translated “twin breasts” as “liang nai,” and wrote out the Chinese characters. We no doubt thought this was quite clever, and so the peaks were named. But the “Liang” part of the name was soon dropped, and the peaks became known simply as **The Nai**, obscuring the original meaning. I’ve been told that the single character “nai” translates best as “milk” or “bosom,” resulting in one of the more bizarre names in the Coast Mountains.



Frank de Bruyn on the top of Tombstone Tower, June 4, 1961.  
Photo: Glenn Woodsworth

On the 1912 first ascent of Ledge, the party noticed a steep tower in the gully between Ledge and the Ledgelette, which they named the **Witch’s Tooth**. The 1958 first ascent party of Dick Culbert, John Owen, and Elfrida Pigou didn’t know the old name, which was just as well because there are several other teeth of witches around. They give the pinnacle the fine descriptive name of **Tombstone Tower**. For Culbert, the name took on added meaning: this was the last climb that the threesome made; Elfrida and John were killed on Mt. Waddington in the summer of 1960. The second ascent of the tower was in 1961 by Arnold Shives, Frank de Bruyn and me, following the original route. As with the first ascent, this was our last climb together. Frank was killed on Mt. Garibaldi a couple of months later, and the Tombstone acquired a deeper and dark significance for Arnold and me.

The third ascent was made in 1962, again by a party of three (including me), but this time by a different route. I don’t believe we have climbed together as a threesome since, but we are all alive and well. As far as I know, nobody else who has climbed the tower has yet died, but then nobody else has since followed the “cursed” first ascent route.

## OVERSEER MOUNTAIN VIA SOUTH CREEK May 16-18, 2009

On Saturday morning six individuals met at St. David's church in West Van for a 7:00 rendezvous. Everything went smoothly and predictably with the driving until we were well up the South Creek logging road on the south side of the Pemberton Valley. On a descent just short of crossing South Ck the road was blocked by a huge boulder lying a bit to the left of centre. It seemed that it might be possible to move it, but pushing didn't work. One of the party then came up with the idea of levering it. A pole was made and the group managed to get the boulder just far away enough from the lower edge so vehicles could get by. This all consumed about an hour but likely saved 45 minutes of walking.

Once parked higher up we managed an 11:30ish start. Will's idea of towing a sled soon came to an end when we realized that the road was going to alternate between snow and dirt for quite a while.

Two years ago I had been up the left fork of South Ck and the bridge across the creek was intact. Today we were in for a rude surprise when we found it to be out. Luckily the creek was low enough to ford barefoot. Another assumption I had made was that there would be snow on the ground leading into the right fork of South Ck which is the valley leading to Overseer from the east. At least the clearcut leading to the forest was fairly easy going having been recently slash-burned. The forest above was also straightforward without too much underbrush. At the first slope transition the snow began and pretty soon skis were donned. Fairly soon after this we popped out into an open avalanche deposition zone flat and saw a cliffy headwall ahead. It was apparent that an open moraine ridge and steepish forest on the left were the ticket to get around the headwall. Interestingly, this valley looks very gradual on the map. At the top of the forest bit which has some steep side-hilling we suddenly flattened out and came upon an open flat beside the creek. It looked pretty idyllic and as it was 7:20 we decided to camp. The usual camp activities commenced with tents being erected and dinners being made.

On Sunday it was up at 6:00 and moving by 7:30ish. The valley was now truly easy going and progress was steady. Once we began to clear the trees and close in on the glacier at the valley's head, Jos, who was getting way ahead, veered off to the right and headed up a large 25 degree draw. Higher up he proceeded to thread his way diagonally through a brief 45 deg. gap to attain the upper slopes. The rest of us, though well strung out, proceeded up the glacier with myself staying at the rear with the slowest members. Once at the top of the glacier the route goes right (north) to a brief stretch of ridge which had to be walked. This is essentially the col at the valley's head. From here we switch-backed up the left side of a slope below a sheer cliff and then tried using a ramp at the cliff's base to cross to the slope's right side. Here one had to thread through dotted rocks while still traversing. After this a 25 deg. gully head is crossed and the upper slopes attained. Then one curves left (west) and across a flat for one final slope to Overseer's summit. By the time the last in the party had summited at 3:00, Jos had already been on the top for three hours!

After close to an hour on top we descended in some very slushy snow. This was harder for the two snowshoers in the group. The crazy carpets I provided them to slide down the glacier were a failure as the snow was too soft. It was a very pleasant amble down the valley in low angle sunset to camp at about 6:30.

Our luck with the weather ran out on Monday as we woke to rain. My thoughts were of course on the level of the creek. We managed an 8:30 start and things went steadily but the rain continued. At the creek it became evident that we would be fording in ski boots. After the creek it was on/off with the skis for awhile until solid dirt was reached. The vehicles were reached about 12:30. All in all a great trip with cooperative weather and a good group of people. It should be noted that a strong party could do Overseer in a regular weekend by this route.

Party: Jos van der Burg, Michelle Cohen, John Duffy, Clayton Dunham, Will Ackerberg, Greg Stoltman (organizer and reporter)



Ski mountaineering to Mt. Overseer is ...



All photos by Will Akerberg