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# THE B.C. MOUNTAINEER

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1998



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**Front Cover:**

South ridge of Vicuña and Guanaco from Alpaca, Coldcoqu. Photo - K. Ricker.

**Inside Front Cover:**

Looking SE from camp on the Stahalam Glacier. Photo - P. Crean.

**Inside Back Cover:**

The ridge from the Tiedemann-Damocles col to Mt. Tiedemann. Photo - D. Hughes.

**Back Cover:**

Kwoiek Needle. Photo - L. Baile.

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## THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

### Club Philosophy

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club is an incorporated society founded in 1907. Its pioneer members did much of the early exploration and mapping of the then unexplored mountains near the young city of Vancouver. Most of the mountains near Vancouver were first climbed by B.C.M.C. members. This tradition has continued, so that over the years most of the mountains in the lower mainland of B.C. were first climbed by B.C.M.C. members.

Today, the B.C.M.C. is dedicated to the enjoyment and exploration of the mountains, valleys, and alpine regions of British Columbia through activities such as climbing, hiking, backpacking and ski touring. The primary mode of travel is by foot. Mechanized transport is secondary and is restricted to access only. The Club feels that pedestrian access allows the greatest appreciation of the mountains with the least impact.

In addition to direct involvement in the outdoors through trips and camps, the Club is active in conservation, trail and hut construction and maintenance, mountain safety, and education. The club has assisted in publishing several guidebooks including the Alpine Guide to Southwestern B.C., 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia, A Climber's Guide to the Squamish Chief, Guide to Climbing in South-

western British Columbia and the Stein Valley Wilderness Guidebook. Club members regularly act as volunteer instructors in basic summer and winter mountaineering courses offered by the club to its members.

The club has been very active in conservation land use issues almost from its inception. The existence today of Garibaldi Park is a direct result of the discovery and exploration of the area by the Club. Camps held in the area allowed people to become aware of the immense beauty of the alpine region. After the 1926 camp, members of the club petitioned the provincial government requesting protection of the area as a park, and in 1927, the Garibaldi Park Act was proclaimed.

More recently, in the 1970's it was a club member who first draw the attention of society to the values of the Stein Valley. During the 1980's it was club members who were most active in defending the interests of wilderness ski tourers against commercial heliskiers. Today, in the 1990's, club members are actively involved in B.C.'s Protected Area Strategy and have been instrumental in the establishment of Pinecone - Burke and Tantalus provincial parks, as well as others. The club continues to play an active role in land use issues relevant to B.C. mountaineering.



Camping on a ski trip to the Columbia Icefields. Photo - D. Scanlon

## Club Trips and Activities

The most important function of the Club is the running of an extensive schedule of hiking, climbing, and ski touring trips. Usually, a variety of overnight and day trips is scheduled each weekend throughout the year. These trips are all free and are also open to prospective members. All trips are graded in terms of the degree of physical fitness and technical competence required.

Club members organize yearly summer climbing camps to various parts of the province. Numerous climbs, many of them first ascents or new routes, have been made in such areas as the Kakwa, Kwadacha, and Monkman areas, N. Rockies, (1993-1995), the upper Lillooet (most recently in 1993), the Chilko Lake area (1992), the Pantheon Range (1991), Clendenning Ck. (1990), Banff park (1989), the Premier Range (1987), Lake Lovely water (1987), the Falls River/Tchaikazan region (1986, 1998), Ape Lake area (1983), the Mount Waddington area (most recently in 1995 and 1997), and the Howson Range (1981). Occasionally, expeditions are organized by the Club to more remote areas such as in Alaska or South America.

The ski touring program occurs throughout the winter and spring. Recent successful ski camps have gone to the Lillooet Icecap, Kokanee Glacier, Fairy Meadows, Columbia Ice Fields, Stanley Smith-Lord Glacier area, Franklin Glacier, the Southern Chilcotin and the Homathko icefield. A popular Christmas ski



A club member practising a self arrest on granodiorite. Photo - K. Ricker

camp is also organized every year, utilizing a large club tent and wood-burning stove.

Rock climbing practice is held mid-week during the summer months. Beginners can receive instruction and more advanced climbers can hone their skills. Rock practice is held in the evening at Lighthouse Park, Murrin Park, the Chief, or at Smoke Bluffs. In winter, mid-week night skiing is organized at the local ski hills.

To help the beginner in developing his or her climbing skills, the Club organizes instruction courses and from time to time organizes training climbs. The purpose of these climbs is to allow people to gain experience on roped climbs. All trips run by the club have an organizer who should be contacted well in advance of the trip departure. The organizer arranges car pools to and from the start of the trip. It is expected that passengers help to defray car driver's expenses including gas, oil, and wear and tear due to rough roads.

## Social Events

Social gatherings are held in the fall, winter, and spring on the second Tuesday of each month at 8 PM, usually in the upstairs room at the ANZA Club, corner of 8th Avenue and Ontario Street in Vancouver. The meetings are informal and the chairs comfortable. Beginning with general club business, there is usually a slide show, film, or talk on some aspect of mountaineering. In the past we have also featured product demonstrations by local mountaineering stores, auctions, and equipment swap meets. Refreshments and cookies are served. Beer can be obtained from the licenced premises below the meeting hall.

The September social event is usually held at Floral Hall, Van Dusen Botanical Garden at 37th Ave. and Oak St. Beer, wine, cheese, and light refreshments are supplied at these socials. At the November social the Club conducts its annual General Meeting.

Details of these events and other special activities are announced in advance in the monthly club newsletter.

## Membership

The B.C.M.C. has several categories of membership: active, associate, junior, life, senior, and honorary. Persons interested in joining the Club can obtain further information by phoning the Membership Chairman (268-9502) or by attending a club social event. Club social events and trips are open to non-members as well as members. The Membership

Chairman can also be contacted through the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. at 737-3053.

### Library and Publications

The Club maintains a library with an extensive collection of books, photographs, guide books, and periodicals on mountaineering. It is open to use by members and details about the collection and its use can be obtained by contacting the Club executive.

The Club produces ten issues per year of its newsletter. The newsletter contains club news, trip schedules, access information, trip reports and other news. This club journal, The B. C. Mountaineer, is produced every two years and contains accounts of recent climbs, camps, expeditions, photographs and other material. The Club solicits articles of interest written by members.

### Huts and Shelters

There are five B.C.M.C. huts, four of which are unlocked. All are open to the public. Shelters located in

Garibaldi Park have been donated to B.C. Parks and the people of British Columbia. Club shelters and their general locations are:

HIMMELSBACH :	Russet Lake, Garibaldi Park
MOUNTAIN LAKE:	Mount Sheer, Britannia Beach
NORTH CREEK:	North Creek, Lillooet Valley
PLUMMER:	Claw Ridge, Mt. Waddington
WEDGEMOUNT:	Wedgemount Lake, Garibaldi Park

### Conservation Guidelines

In order to conserve the alpine environment, the Club tries to adhere to the following guidelines for its trips:

1. Pack out all garbage.
2. Where pit toilets are not provided, select a screened spot at least 50 metres from any water and dig a hole 15 to 30 centimetres deep. Cover the hole with soil and ground cover. Keep water sources free of contamination.
3. Pets are not allowed on club trips. Pets are a threat to human life in bear country, a threat to alpine creatures and they spread communicable diseases such as giardiasis. Animals may abandon burrows bearing the scent of a domestic animal.
4. Alpine life, whether flora or fauna, is fragile and not in abundance. Plants and animals are not killed unless required in an emergency.
5. Stay on trails and do not cut corners on trail switchbacks to avoid erosion.
6. Light small campfires. Use only dead wood and remove traces of the fire site. Ensure that fires are properly extinguished. Do not light fires in alpine areas or in areas where fires are not allowed.
7. Camp in forests or on moraines to avoid damage to meadows, lake shores and stream banks.

## MOUNTAINEERING

### 1. POETRY

#### Not Alone

And in an instant  
it was gone  
up looked the same as down

but we were somewhere  
I only had my mind to tell me so  
and the rope wiggling in the cloud



Gourmet cooking on a BCMC trip. Photo - D. Hughes

yet strangely  
the world without sight  
still had sounds  
always a hiss or dull roar  
from someplace  
hopefully away from me  
always a sense of humility  
of self-doubt  
no matter how many times  
you feel it  
and the noise of the wind  
is the call of fear

hollow  
a stuttering yowl  
yet with a tone  
that knows you are there  
and you feel surrounded  
the cold  
each of us  
fight our own battles  
even on the flattest ground

the experienced know  
this is not a wonderland  
not as imagined  
or remembered

always unnatural  
perhaps the uncertainty makes it so  
and if you ever find where you are  
you may be surprised  
as to why  
there are so many ghosts  
and where they came from

*Chris Ludwig*

### **Rustling**

In a cacophony of bugs  
where strange things grow  
there is a space  
I've come to know  
autumn colored shrubs  
covered in insect slime  
and spider webs  
of intricate design

and in the leaves  
the branches grow  
twisted and weeping  
from winter's snow  
butterflies, berries  
roots and yew  
they all work together  
to make anew

but in this garden  
there is something amiss  
a rustling noise  
confusing the bliss

could it be the wind  
a vermin  
maybe a beast  
or merely a mind  
affected by heat

and in the dusk  
of sun and reason  
will inevitably come  
a change of season  
I reason

*Chris Ludwig*

### **Wanderer**

A shock it was  
to see his face  
somewhat surreal  
perhaps  
I like to think

I was sure we were alone  
in this wild place  
a step around the ridge  
into the yellow knarl  
of brush  
and there he was

the gun over his shoulder  
old rucksack  
Norwegian welts  
no map  
no compass  
no watch

at first I thought  
maybe he would shoot us

put us in a stew  
but he was more civilized than that  
perhaps more than we knew  
spoke a few words  
about the river  
the fish he knew  
  
a sun dried face  
like a shoe  
no hurry  
and we passed by  
one another  
our bright equipment  
seemed out of place  
  
he had no anger  
no disgrace  
was at home in this place  
traveling the unthinkable  
his only reward  
solitude  
and a full belly  
  
and different motivations  
thoughts of a different time  
lived in this dark valley  
peace of mind

*Chris Ludwig*

## 2. TRIPS OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY

### A MT. WHITNEY LOOP

October, 1996

by Gavin Thurston and Mary Prendergast

The summer of 1996 was a grind. Work commitments kept piling up, and we could not get away for an extended summer mountaineering trip until the second week of October, a time when many self-respecting mountaineers have their skis out. Fortunately, the Sierra Nevada is blessed with a very prolonged season. In fact, the autumn is my favorite time to go into the Sierra - the weather is often stable and mild, the crowds have thinned out, the bears are usually well fed, and the mountain air has a clarity and crispness that is lacking in the summer. We were blessed with a stretch of wonderfully stable and mild weather in October that year, so we decided to do a hiking/scrambling loop in the high peaks around Mt. Whitney in the southern Sierra. Our plan was to climb 7 peaks over 4100 m including Mt. Whitney, at 4420 m,

the highest peak in the lower 48 states.

We parked the cars at Whitney Portal (2560 m) above the town of Lone Pine, California, and started up the big trail that leads to the summit of Whitney. After only 400 m, we branched onto the "mountaineers track", a steep trail up a narrow valley. The sun made it seem like mid-July as we weaved up the gullies and ledges that eventually brought us to Upper Boy Scout Lake (3450 m). Our first objective was Mt. Russell (4300 m), a complex and beautiful granite peak just north of Mt. Whitney. We had the valley to ourselves that night, which is not uncommon in the Sierra if you are even a short distance off the main trails.

Early the next morning we headed up rock and scree slopes to the col between Mt. Russell and Mt. Carrillon. A dusting of snow from the previous week covered the rocks along the east ridge of Mt. Russell, and made some sections of the airy class 3 ridge quite interesting. We arrived at the summit blocks after an hour or so of scrambling along the ridge, and were able to soak up the morning sun and peer down the dramatic south face of Russell, which is home to several high quality alpine rock routes. To the south, the faces of Mt. Whitney reared up another 120 m above us. To the north, the striking deep blue of Tulainyo Lake (3900 m), one of the highest lakes in the Sierra, contrasted with the dust-colored landscape of the surrounding scree bowl. The desert heat from Owens valley, almost 3100 vertical meters below us, shimmered in the distance to the east. We retraced our steps down the east ridge of Russell and continued up big granite blocks to the summit of Mt. Carrillon (4130 m). After another fine view, we descended to our camp. We elected to move up that evening to the base of Mt. Whitney, which was our objective for the next day. A trudge up a huge scree valley got us to Iceberg Lake (3800 m), at the base of the imposing east face of Whitney. We were joined only by a couple of keen young climbers from Red Deer (!) who had intentions to climb the East Face of Mt. Whitney, one of Steve Roper's 50 Classic Climbs.

Our plan was to haul our packs up the Mountaineer's Route, a class 3 gully on the northeast flank of Whitney that was first climbed by John Muir in 1873. We had descended this gully several years previously after climbing the East Buttress of Whitney. We weaved our way up the gully early the next morning, reminiscing of that earlier climb and trying not to think of our heavy packs. The gully ends at an icy notch about 150 m below the summit. From here the route continues up grooves and ridges on the cold north side of the peak. The recent snow had left plenty

of verglas, so we roped up and carefully scrambled up the grooves to the broad summit plateau. We were on the summit by 10 am, a bit before the usual crowd of hikers, so we lounged in the sun in short sleeves for a while, breathing the rarefied air and soaking up the views. The view to the west included the Kaweah range, a group of very jagged and crumbling peaks that are high on our tick list. The main Whitney trail contours down to the south. After descending on the trail for 45 min, another peak, Mt. Muir (4270 m), loomed just a hundred meters or so above us, so we make a quick side trip up it. Then we headed down the many switchbacks, past the crowds at Trail Camp, the main camping area for Mt. Whitney hikers, and over to Consultation Lake (3560 m) where we set up another camp. Again, we had the lake and surrounding valley to ourselves, while just 1.5 km away the hordes of campers on the Mt. Whitney trail struggled to find spots. These localized crowds are typical for the Sierras even in peak season.

Very early the next morning we walked around the lake and trudged up a long, loose scree gully to Arc Pass (3930 m). From here we climbed up and over Mt. Mallory (4220 m), traversed a strange high plateau to Mt. LeConte (4260 m) which required a rope to summit, then skirted over to Mt. Irvine (4200 m) on the way back. Mt. LeConte was definitely the highlight of the three. After a tiresome descent of the scree gully, we arrived back at the tent by nightfall. The next day was a march back to the vehicle, then a short drive to one of the nearby hot springs. We tallied up the peaks while soaking our weary legs.

If October finds you not quite ready to put away the summer gear, or maybe you still need some "Mike Feller altitude points" to best your rivals, then head to the Sierra. (Ed.'s comment - 296 points for this trip vs 89 for Mt. Everest!) Most years the weather is still stable, the scrambling routes are eminently worthwhile, and even the alpine rock routes may still be in condition. And if all else fails, the hot springs can be a vacation in themselves.

## CHRISTMAS IN SPAIN - A CLIMBING TRIP TO EL CHORRO IN SOUTHERN SPAIN

Christmas 1996  
by Dave Morriss

Before moving to Vancouver in August, 1997, I was a member of the Swindon Mountaineering Club based in the Wiltshire town of Swindon, about 10 km west of London in the UK. A small club of about 80 members,

we would meet once a week in a local pub and our meets would take place every two weeks all over the UK, generally climbing in the summer and hiking during the winter. Most of our members are of modest ability, more interested in having a good weekend out than getting paranoid about climbing grades. Our trips also encompassed visits abroad to the Alps, Spain, France, and with one of our members making a couple of 1<sup>st</sup> British ascents in Bolivia in 1995.

With Christmas approaching, we decided that a typically British Christmas of passing out in front of the TV was out of the question and we would go in search of some winter sunshine and pass out with a suntan. So, two days before Christmas, our small party of seven headed to Gatwick Airport for our flight to Malaga. We had rented a couple of cottages from an expatriate British couple who owned a farm at El Chorro and rented out their workers' cottages to climbers, hikers visiting the El Chorro gorge. However, just before our flight, the owners' UK agents had called to warn us that due to heavy rain, we wouldn't be able to drive up to our cottages because of landslides on the approach road!!!

The arrival at Malaga Airport at 1 a.m. was followed by an hour's wait in the baggage hall and a further wait for the hire car formalities to be sorted out; it was also raining. So at 3:30 am, we finally set off for the hour's drive to El Chorro in our two hire cars and we soon realized why the agents had warned us about the landslides. As we got nearer to the gorge the road became blocked with boulders which we had to weave around or get out and push off the road. It had to happen sooner or later when Andy, driving the second car, hit a rather large boulder in the pouring rain writing off the rear offside tire but at least he managed to keep on the road and not tumble into the bottom of the gorge 60 m below. Finally, we arrived at El Chorro itself and found to our dismay that the road to our cottages was indeed blocked. We had to leave the cars at the railway station car park and ferry our kit up the hill for 2 km through the mud in the pouring rain to the cottages. It was 5 a.m. - what a fine start to our Christmas! However, the cottage owners had left a welcome note, together with a few bottles of wine and some fruit with an invite to their villa for drinks, on Christmas Eve.

El Chorro is basically a large gorge with the Guadalhorce River and a railway running through it. The lower and upper sections of the gorge are very impressive and where the harder climbing is to be found, with the central section more open with the



El Chorro. Photo - D. Morriss

routes at an easier angle. The climbing is accessed by walking along the railway tracks through a series of tunnels and bridges, (quite scary on first acquaintance, especially when you meet a train), or by taking a walk way known as The King's Way - dead scary, but more of that later. The routes are nearly all bolt protected, with the easier ones being quite "run out" and of dubious quality, so a small rack of wires is recommended together with about a dozen quickdraws.

Our team of seven consisted of myself, Colin Watts, his girl friend Janet Korsak, her brother Andy, Howard and Heather Benn, and last but not least Linda "I'll never get up that" Parsonage. After a few hours sleep

we awoke in daylight to get our first view of the gorge - it was still raining. What a sight it was. After seven days of continuous rain the dam at the bottom of the gorge was holding back a huge amount of brown, muddy water with the sides overflowing and the river below the dam busting its banks and flooding the lower lying orange groves. Climbing was out, at least for today, so we decided to do all our shopping in one hit in the nearby town of Alora, about 12 km away.

We wandered round the old town perched high on the hillside whilst the local people rushed round preparing themselves for the holiday. After finding a garage to replace the defective tire from our argument with the boulder, we got on with the shopping, even finding a turkey for our Christmas dinner. The butcher took great delight in beheading and gutting it whilst trying to converse in broken English and we, in our even more broken Spanish. As it was still raining and there was no probability of climbing for the day, we found a bar. No problem there, so a few beers and a plate of paella took precedence. On the drive back, the rain stopped and we had our first glimpse of the sun.

The small town of El Chorro is like something from a spaghetti western, dominated by the railway station complete with scavenging dogs. Grouped round the station bar instead of gunslingers were groups of climbers hanging around waiting for the crags to dry. The Brits and Germans were laughing and joking with each other sharing a few beers while the eastern Europeans, Russians maybe, sat aloof and sullen and didn't talk to us or anyone else for the whole time we were there. The scattering of houses around the station consisted of a climber's refugio, the Bar Garantua which has a few rooms for rent, and a couple of shops which are hidden amongst the few tiny streets and are quite hard to find at first try, even in such a small town. They do stock the basic essentials, speak no English but were very friendly, and the town of Alora has a small supermarket for more serious shopping. Above the town were our cottages and a really good crag, Les Encantadas, with a range of hard routes from 5.7 to 5.12b. A baker's van would wind its way up the dirt road to our cottages every morning with fresh bread for sale, still warm from the oven.

That evening, the sky cleared to reveal a myriad of stars and the lights of the Costa Del Sol just visible 60 km away. An early night was called for after the last almost sleepless 24 hours.

Our plan for the morning was to head for the middle of the gorge, Los Cotos, where the easier routes would give us an introduction to the Spanish limestone. We

had to get there first and this involved a hike along the railway tracks through three railway tunnels and over two bridges. Luckily, we didn't meet any trains on our first trip, but it was pretty scary first time around. We got used to it as the week wore on and meeting a train in the tunnels was no problem but there wasn't much room on the trestle bridges, which we always crossed as quickly as possible.

My climbing partner for the week was to be Linda, who hadn't climbed anything harder than 5.7 before. There weren't many routes of that grade or below so she was about to improve her climbing standards by quite a ways. On reaching Los Cotos, we decided to try the slabs above the railway called Cotos Medios and we completed about six single pitch routes from about 5.7 to 5.10a. All were bolted, with the exception of one route at 5.7 with one single bolt near the start. It was quite a runout then until I could get a wire in, so it pays to supplement your sport climbing rack with a few wires. My favorite route for the day was *Inominata* at 5.10a, a sustained route on tiny holds and well bolted compared to some of the others on the slab. The climbing below the railway, Cotos Bajos, sports some longer two-pitch routes at about 5.10/5.11, and the upper section of Los Cotos. Cotos Altos is rather smooth and featureless with the routes going somewhat harder from 5.9 to 5.12. All too soon we had to hit the railway tracks, dodge the odd train and head off back to Christmas Eve drinks with our landlord. A really great day's climbing was had by all, the weather being warm enough to climb in tee shirts for the best part of the day.

Our landlord and landlady lived in a really nice villa, 500 metres up the track from our cottages and had lived there for about 4 years. In their sixties, they were typical professional "ex pat" Brits, talked of England a lot, yet they had spent nearly all of their lives abroad in India and Argentina. They had some friends over from England and after we had supped some of their best wine we could sense they had done their duty to their fellow foreigners and it was time for us to leave. So, as we hadn't eaten, we went from the sublime to the ridiculous and headed to "downtown" El Chorro for chicken and chips at the station bar. The Brits and Germans were having a good time, the stray dogs were howling and the Russians were still on their single bottle of beer, topping it up from a bottle of Vodka hidden under the table. So we sat outside under the stars with a few beers, a plate of chicken, and chips swimming in grease and garlic and sang Christmas Carols to no one in particular.

Christmas Day, and trying to get the turkey into the tiny portable gas oven was harder than doing a 5.10 jamming crack. That achieved, we set out for what was for some, the scariest moments of their lives. We were going to walk to the top of the gorge via The King's Way - only a walk but it could be graded from "easy" to 5.12, depending on your head for heights!

The King's Way is a catwalk built in the 1920s to assist workers building a hydroelectric scheme in the gorge. It is attached to the cliff face 100 to 200 metres above the swirling river. It is called The King's Way, or Camino del Rey, as the King made a visit to view the progress of the hydroelectric scheme. The catwalk is built of concrete and, as far as I could see, roofing tiles. It appears to have received no maintenance since 1920 and none of the gaping holes that have appeared have been plugged, hence the need for the nervous, of a climbing harness, sling and karabiner. If you have ever seen the movie *Von Ryan's Express* which was filmed in the gorge, you'll see how the walkway was damaged (and never repaired), in the last few moments of the movie.

On reaching the first obstacle of the walkway, a huge gaping hole with the bottom of the gorge some 200 m below, Linda said that was enough for her and she would follow our progress from the opposite side by following the railway, meeting us further up. It got worse as we progressed further, at a series of bends far above the seething river below, we came across a pair of young English climbers starting a route - *Sangre Latina* - going at 5.11b. Belayed to the walkway must be more dangerous than climbing the route. This section of climbing is called Sector Santimonia and the routes here were thankfully beyond our abilities. Some of them start below the walkway and require a rappel from the disintegrating metal work. We had to cross the gorge at this point by means of a pipe bridge. Easy, but to get to it we had to navigate a huge hole. This is where most of our party clipped into a steel cable and foot traversed a rail track placed across the crumbling concrete.

Once everyone was across, we were shamed when a local guy came along on his mountain bike, casually put it on his shoulder, crossed the gap, hopped back on the bike and rode on, just to impress us, but we did see him walking his bike on the next section. After a few more scares and a wobbly bridge to cross, the gorge opened out to a wooded hillside before closing in again and finally reaching the dam at the top of the gorge. Collecting Linda at this point, we returned via the railway dodging the odd train to return to our now



Walking along the Camino del Rey.  
Photo - D. Morriss.

cooked turkey and a festive Christmas Dinner. No trip to El Chorro is complete without "doing the walkway" and it does get less frightening after a few trips, but try telling that to our Janet.

The next day we decided to leave El Chorro and try the climbing at El Torcal, a small national park some 20 km away. El Torcal is a limestone plateau at 1300 m. A geological curiosity, heavily eroded to form some typical "karst" scenery, and a real climbers' playground, I loved it. There is so much rock available that only a few areas have been developed and the scope for new routes, pinnacle bashing, and bouldering is endless. All the established routes are well bolted with lower offs. The guidebook had no mention of trade routes, although the cracks would take natural pro without problems - not the style of climbing in Spain unfortunately. It was a shame that we could only climb

here for an afternoon as the snow topped Sierra Nevada range and the Coast of Morocco were clearly visible along with hundreds of limestone towers in all directions giving an added dimension to the climbing. Linda and I managed only 3 routes that day, I'm afraid she struggled a bit here as the climbing was quite hard with sharp cracks and long reaches to rounded edges due, no doubt, to the nature of erosion. This took a bit of getting used to. The route of the day being *Segovia* going at 5.10b, an easy slab followed by a smooth wall crux then a pumpy section to the top, neat. Although Christmas and at high altitude, it was warm enough to climb in a tee shirt for the best part of the day. A word of warning - there are circular waymarked paths which prove quite handy for getting around as the place is like a maze, and you can easily get lost. All in all, well worth a visit if not for the climbing, the geology, flora fauna and the huge panorama are outstanding.

The following day, I had designs on doing a long route on Albercones, the cliff overlooking the town. I chose *El Amprax*, seven pitches at 170 m going at 5.10 with the crux on pitch 5. Linda, I found out afterwards, had had a sleepless night thinking about the route as it was very committing for her and she wasn't sure if she was up to it. After talking to some guys who had done the route the day before, they recommended quitting after the crux pitch as the last two are scruffy, loose and not worth the effort, besides, the rappel from the top is very difficult.

We set off to the start of the route to find a pair of Swedes gearing up and they politely let us go ahead of them, as they weren't sure if they were up to it. Nice of them, I thought. However, they backed off on the second pitch when things got a bit tougher. Things went well until pitch 5 when approaching the crux, I couldn't see the line of bolts past an overhang, I went up to the overhang, started to pull over when the hold I was grasping started to move. At the same instant, I noticed a bolt over to my left. I was on the wrong line, holding myself on the rock with my left hand and stopping the loose hold from falling in my right, I shouted a warning to Linda, and jumped. The hold stayed, and I came to rest about six feet below the last bolt I'd clipped, a bit shaken up but unhurt. It was the only loose rock I'd come across on the route, and with Linda directly below, as well as another pair on the first pitch, the consequences of a rock the size of a football falling were unimaginable, especially with me holding on to it. I went back up, following the right line over the overhang and up to the belay. Whilst taking in the ropes, I had a much closer look at the vultures



Scary gaps on the Camino del Rey. Photos - D. Morriss.

circling above which we'd seen every day. Linda had a bit of a nightmare on this pitch, falling off a couple of times and needing plenty of tight rope to breach the overhanging crux, but at last she made it, frightened a little, but exhilarated. She didn't stop talking about it for months. Getting off went without incident. Climbing Brit style on double 9 mm ropes meant we were down in three rappels, passing a couple of Brits on the way. Linda on cloud nine telling them what a great route it was. We also warned them of the loose rock.

During our minor epic, Colin and Andy had gone to the mid gorge area El Polverin, and had completed a 5 pitch 5.10a called *Paco Eugene* which they thought was the best route they'd done during our stay. They recommended carrying a selection of wires for the first two pitches, as there is no fixed gear.

Our last day opened with us cleaning the cottages before our departure. We took our time as it was

raining and our plans of getting a few routes in were out. With time to kill, we decided to take a look anyway, and headed off to a sheltered section near the railway station Sector Luna. We managed a 5.10 called *Instinto*, of which Linda said "easy" as I lowered her off and the rain got harder. Colin and Andy did a 5.10 to our left called *Big Fun* and it certainly was, as Andy threw every other hold down, Colin didn't even bother to second it. So that was that, off to the bar for a couple of beers and the airport.

#### Additional notes -

For anyone wishing to sample the climbing at El Chorro, there are two guidebooks in English to the area:

*Andalusian Rock Climbs* by Chris Craggs. Costa Blanca, Mallorca, El Chorro, (Rock Fax no 07) by Vertical Brian.

I have both books and you can contact me at



On top of El Torcal. Photo - D. Morriss.

732 9896 (or email [welsh@dowco.com](mailto:welsh@dowco.com)), or you can get them by looking at the British climbing mag "High" usually on sale at Mountain Equipment Co op, and looking for the 'ad' by High Mountain Library.

The cottages we stayed at (six in all) sleep between 2 and 5 people. There is also a swimming pool. The cottages are owned by Mr. & Mrs. Howard and can be booked through their agent, Mrs. Bell, in the UK on (UK number) 0181 998 0381.

#### MOUNT KINABALU, NORTH BORNEO AND PINNACLES, SARAWAK, April - May, 1997 by Martin Kafer

Abruptly the night sky is brightened up with quick flashes. Wild stabs of lightning pierce the tropical clouds which are threatening to extinguish the scant glow of the landing lights as the plane sets down at Kota Kinabalu (or KK as the locals call it) airport, North Borneo, at two in the morning. My wife, Esther, and I are both pretty bushed after the twenty-two-hour journey from Vancouver. We stretch slowly, carefully to get the old bones going and grab our daypacks as the doors are opened. The humid green smell of the equatorial heat hits us like a solid wall of steam. Thunder is rolling in waves across the concrete aprons.

We are quickly through the usual formalities, with passports examined and baggage given a cursory glance in the gloomy customs hall. Soon we find ourselves sitting on the traffic side of the local arrival

hall waiting with the very familiar mixture of much excitement, anticipation, and some apprehension, to start a new adventure in another country on another continent.

To climb Mount Kinabalu has been a dream of mine for many years, not because of its height or difficulty, but because it is such an unusual, solid granite block towering more than 4100 m above the tropical seas near the equator in a region of the world where all the other high mountains are volcanoes.

We don't have to wait long for excitement: as the decrepit taxi with the two of us aboard pulls out onto the highway leading to the centre of town, the rain starts pounding down in torrents. The roof starts leaking. The visibility goes down and is reduced immediately to just a few metres. All road markings are obscured completely, and the drive seems to take place in a dark tunnel of water feebly illuminated by the taxi's ineffective single headlight.

The driver, on the other hand, appears unfazed by it all and cheerfully explains that there has been a drought, all the trees and flowers have been suffering, and this is the first rain in a month! He also suggests that the hotel we picked out of the Lonely Planet Guide book is too expensive. We should go to the "Full Hua". It is nicer and cheaper, "you will like better!" he assures us. We accept his help, too weary to resist and in no mood to chase around town in the downpour at three in the morning in a strange place. It turns out his advice is good and we stay at the Full Hua as long as we remain in Kota Kinabalu.

As always seems to happen at least once on each trip, there is a hitch: a holy Muslim holiday is being celebrated the next day and the National Park Office and all the banks are closed. We get up late and spend the day walking around, seeing the sights, including the fish and fruit markets, and getting used to the heat, humidity and smells of the tropics.

Next day we are the first ones calling at the Office, and before breakfast get our reservations in order for the stay at Kinabalu Park headquarters and at the Laban Rata huts for the night on the mountain. A quick trip to the bank next door and finally we are ready to finally have breakfast. We get our first taste of "roti cenai telur", a swirled egg wrapped in a tasty, extra thin, large crepe fried on a very hot tin plate, a local Malay speciality we enjoyed with coffee whenever we had the chance during our visit.

By next morning, under clear skies, we are on the way south to the high country in a minibus. The humid plain with the heavy traffic is gradually left behind as we climb on the winding road through lush fields and mud-hut villages onto the upper plateau. The mountain suddenly appears through the branches, partly hidden in puffy morning clouds. As we draw nearer it looms ponderously out of its green jungle mantle like a grey granite monster crowned with many pinnacles.

The Park headquarters at about 1500 m with its cabins, hostels and restaurants turns out to be an ideal place to ease the remnants of jet lag and acclimatise for the push to the top more than 2500 m higher. So during the next three days we take long hikes in the surrounding jungle hills. The walks on good trails are not only just excellent exercise, but also give us an opportunity to delight in the variety of exotic flowering trees, many with enormous trunks reaching high into the canopy. There is an abundance of exquisite orchids and myriads of creepy-crawlies like spiders, ants, moths and butterflies. Our most unusual find is a Trilobite beetle larva, a beautiful black and red creature. When we describe this find to a visiting entomologist, he is quite jealous, since it is such a rare and elusive insect.

Now finally the day of the climb has arrived. We pack up early, have a hasty breakfast, pay our climbing and insurance fees and pick up our friendly guide, Urian, a 55-year-old local, who has been on top more than a hundred times. At least we are not going to get lost! His pleasant smile together with his twenty or so words of English suffice to make our time together a memorable one.

The steeply ascending trail leads through a riot of tropical trees, lianas, bushes, orchids, tree ferns and rhododendron trees. At about 2700 m in the cloud forest zone Urian leads us off the trail for a surprise: two large patches of pitcher plants. With their gaping red and green over-size cups they look ready to swallow larger prey than just flies.

We are not alone on this trek - about a hundred other tourists are strewn all up the mountain. They are struggling, running, gasping, resting, going up or down, and they come from all over the world: The strangest sight is a family of about twenty Taiwanese pilgrims in yellow robes, including two tiny kids in sling-carriers. We are told that they will perform a religious ceremony on top the next day. Another group of about fifteen from a Korean climbing club has some stragglers as we get higher. The oldest is a 63-year old man who seems to be fading, but gamely struggles on. The altitude of over 3000 m begins to be felt by most of the trekkers: a very young Dutch fellow, who passed us earlier in the day, confesses that he feels rotten.

We have our well-deserved lunch as we reach the first open patches, where only colourful shrubbery reminds us of the jungle below. The peak is completely obscured by heavy afternoon clouds, but our guide assures us: "tomorrow morning sunshine!"

Our newly acquired friend Leung, "My name is Eric Leung, call me Leung", the Malaysian businessman said as he introduced himself as our neighbour in the chalets the night before, - has pulled out a cell-phone and is busy calling his wife and his associate in Kuala Lumpur: "Hi, I am at 3,000 m here on Mount Kinabalu and will get to the top tomorrow!" he proudly proclaims, - but he also became a victim of the altitude a few hundred meters or so short of the summit.

Laban Rata is a collection of plywood-covered huts. The two larger ones include heated bunk accommodation and a restaurant. The restaurant serves varied and excellent food, - quite amazing at this altitude, since all the supplies are carried up the trail by local women porters every day.

We spend the rest of the afternoon talking to other hikers and get our appetite whetted for the next adventure in North Borneo. We learn from the few who have managed to make the trek that the climb to the fantastic limestone pinnacles in Mulu Park is appreciably more strenuous and much less accessible than Kinabalu.

We have been assigned to a small tin shack, where we spend a shivery night with three mattresses and two sleeping bags each. No matter, though, since we

are up at 3 a.m. and start the trek with headlamps and all our clothes on.

The trail leads steeply up through scrub forest with numerous wooden steps and ladders. Our guide cheerfully leads on with his feeble flashlight over the granite slabs festooned with hemp ropes, some just to show the way. Others, on steeper cliffs, are useful handholds, especially at a section called Panar Laban, where *"more desolate rock-faces await the string of climbers stretched out in the dark, trying to keep warm, hold ropes and juggle torches,"* as the Lonely Planet Guide puts it.



Sunrise just below the summit of Mt. Kinabalu.  
Photo - M. Kafer.

After two hours of stumbling, grabbing ropes and scrambling up the polished slabs, we are ready for a rest just as the first fragments of dawn reveal the chilly gray of the steep slopes to come. The cold is penetrating, the respite short, and soon we are off again following the trusty ropes that from now on lead all the way to the peak.

A further hour of steep scrambling in the gradually increasing light brings us to the wide summit plateau of weathered granite with its ancient glacier grooves. To our surprise, some are filled with feather ice. The flat granite slabs are a delight to walk on, especially after the strenuous stretches below. The thin air now slows quite a few parties to a painful crawl. In spite of

the easier terrain, some climbers have to sit for long periods. A Korean woman has to be escorted down by one of the local guides.

The sunrise surprises us in the notch just a hundred meters or so below the summit and we stop to welcome the first rays peeking above the horizon. Then follows a short scramble up the blocky summit pyramid and we are on top, where about twenty other climbers are resting, chatting, enjoying the sun, and admiring the view.

Wow, and what a view! At our feet, the countryside is obscured by thick haze and the morning shadow of Kinabalu projects a giant triangle onto the bed of clouds. Beyond lies an expanse of jungle-covered hills, with the South China sea in the far distance.

The summit rest is well deserved, the air a touch warmer, the view infinite, and the talk around us reflects the pleasure, and a contentment of a job well done. One of the older Koreans inquires politely: "How old are you?" He appears amazed when I tell him that my seventieth birthday is next week. "If you had been living in Korea, you would be under the ground already!" is his wry comment.

As we descend in bright sunshine, we begin to appreciate the steepness of the granite slopes and happily use the ropes to slide down occasionally. At about ten we reach Laban Rata huts again, pack up and wander over to the restaurant. When Esther and I enter, the whole group of Koreans breaks out in spontaneous applause. We are a bit stunned by that unexpected attention, but then bow politely and sit down to a late breakfast liberally washed down with the hot Chinese tea provided for free by the restaurant.

The descent is a further 1600 m of steep, often slippery trail, with more than a thousand wooden steps, so we are told. Just imagine that in the Kinabalu Mountain race the fastest time is below three hours, from bottom to the top and back! We took about fifteen hours hiking in all, had many stops and photo breaks and an overnight stay (although it was a very short night).

We then spend another very pleasant night at the park and next morning catch the public bus back to KK, - back to the heat and humidity, back to the traffic and the noise. We have a picnic lunch of bottled water and sweet buns on a public park bench and wile away a few hours in a cool shopping mall. Then it is off to the airport again, this time in sunny weather, for a flight to Eastern Sarawak, the jumping-off point for our next trek: the climb to the Mulu Pinnacles.



On the summit of Mt. Kinabalu. Photo - M. Kafer.

To quote the Lonely Planet Guide again - "*Gunung Api (1750 m) is the highest limestone mountain in Malaysia and its great attraction is the towering limestone Pinnacles, an incredible stone forest standing 45 metres high, halfway up the side of the mountain. If you want to see the Pinnacles - unless you are part of a group - you're in for a very expensive three-day trek by boat and foot. However, you will see some spectacular scenery*". After reading about the trek to the Pinnacles, and having talked with other travellers who rave about the incredible jungle walk and the really tough climb involved, we decide that this is what we have to do next.

We spend part of the first day in Miri chasing after Esther's lost pack, which en route took an overnight detour to Kuching, and had some anxious moments about the potential loss of half our travelling gear. Fortunately, we are lucky today and can retrieve the pack at the airport around lunchtime. When the very obliging Malaysian Airlines manager voluntarily grants us an "incidental claim" of 80 Malaysian Ringgit (about Can \$45), we are pleasantly surprised and mollified, in spite of the nuisance created by the mishandled baggage.

A few hours and a trip to the bank later, we have organized a four-day trip to Mulu Pinnacles: the cost is way over our normal budget, but we hope the adventure will prove to be worth it! After a walk to the fish market on the waterfront and a visit to one of the ornate dragon-covered Chinese temples, we celebrate our day of luck with a sumptuous meal at a Chinese restaurant.

The low-level flight to Mulu airstrip in a twin engine Otter takes us over a vast area of many rivers and partly logged tropical forest, where lots of gravel tracks crisscross the jungle. As we get closer to the park, we spot some untouched virgin forest which is wonderful to see. Soon we are landing on the dirt strip where we meet our guide - Sham (guides are compulsory on this trek, as on Kinabalu, often a make-work project for the local men). Sham, who has grade 12 and speaks excellent English, was a bank employee until nine months previously, but prefers to work in the forest; a really nice fellow and an excellent cook.

Next follows a short drive to the "Royal Mulu Resort", where we experience the kind of extravagance that we don't normally enjoy on our trips: Japanese



Esther and guide descending from the summit.  
Photo - M. Kafer.

money has created an oasis in the wilderness. The whole resort with restaurants, lounges, pool, walkways and guest rooms is elevated about five metres above the ground, keeping the riffraff and the jungle creatures at a distance.

Let me quote from my diary: *"We get checked into the lap of luxury in the jungle, a large wood panelled room with three beds and a balcony overlooking the Manilau river, quiet central air con., mini bar, large t.v.; marble counter in the big bathroom with filtered hot and cold water; room service, really much better than we are used to. We settle in and decide to have a splash in the swimming pool before lunch, a lovely layout with jacuzzi jets at one end - a refreshing moment in the sun"*.

In the afternoon we visit two of the enormous limestone caves, one of which, Deer Cave, is especially famous for its large cavern and million or so bats inside, the ground inside is covered with foul smelling bat guano and the walkways are quite slippery.

Dinner and breakfast are buffet style and in keeping with the luxurious surroundings. After having returned from an early morning boat trip to another set of caves

filled with a stunning collection of limestone formations, we pack our grubby hiking gear and depart the luxury resort in a 4-wheel drive jeep, together with our guide Sham. He will carry all the food for the three of us and his own clothes in a hand woven rattan pack equipped with ridiculous string carrying straps. When we express our concern for his poor shoulders, Sham just laughs at us: "I'm used to it" he says, "no problem".

We carry our large day packs with our clothes, rain gear, camera equipment and the sarongs we bought in Bali two years ago; sleeping mats are supposed to be at the hut "Camp 5", where we will spend two nights.

The logging road is very rough, full of mud and pot holes, and once the jeep gets stuck in the mud. Luckily, the driver manages to bull his way through with an empty vehicle. About an hour later we get dropped near the river, but on the opposite side of the trail to Camp 5. With no bridge in sight, that means a river crossing on foot. We roll up our pants, remove boots and socks, and wade the river at a relatively shallow spot, using our walking poles to great advantage, as the water is above our knees, the current swift and the boulders slippery - this trek starts with a bang.

Nine km of muddy forest trail and two smaller side river crossings later, we arrive at the huts. To our dismay there are neither foamies nor mats, and we will sleep only fitfully for the two nights on the bare wooden platforms. Sham is very contrite about this blunder; his friend was supposed to leave the mats, but must have forgotten, etc; his apologies do not soften the boards one bit. Fortunately, I have a purloined aircraft pillow which makes a somewhat softer spot under the hip and slightly lessens the agony.

The sun has been out all day and the river beckons, so we decide to have a swim from the dock as soon as we finish our tea. Less than half an hour later, while we are still enjoying the soothing swim, heavy clouds gather over the precipitous mountains which close off the narrow canyon above the camp. The deluge begins in short order, a tropical rain that comes in dense sheets, unrelenting and deafening, and lasts until late evening. The air feels solid with dampness, and we sweat in the humid heat while just sitting around.

We don't have to wait long for our dinner, which Sham is cooking with great aplomb in the dark kitchen; the battery for the lights is too low and switches off every few minutes since there was not enough sunshine for the photo-voltic cells to charge the system. We enjoy an excellent meal of fried chicken, rice, and two



Esther on the "trail" up Mulu Pinnacles. Photo - M. Kafer.



Esther and the Mulu Pinnacles. Photo - M. Kafer.

different vegetables, followed by coffee, tea with fresh pineapple and cookies, a real treat considering the setting.

My diary (Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997) relates: "the long night is a real nightmare of short naps - hip on American Airlines cushion - shoulder on day pack - head on piled-up clothing, the no-see-ums fortunately stopped their activities in the dark, the rain drums unceasingly on the tin roof, my feet get sore from the plank! Daylight comes and it is a relief to get up at about 6 a.m. to have breakfast and fill our water bottles ....the air is hot already but the rain has stopped, lacy mists drift in and out the mountain slopes above.

We are setting off slowly on the jungle trail at the same time as the Park Warden and another party of two Aussies with a guide. At first there is a gradual traverse but soon the grade steepens, the trail is filled with tangled roots, limestone boulders and many man-made wooden steps in dirt. We hold onto trees, branches and are always careful to step only onto solid stuff and to avoid prickly "hat-grabber" fern palms and other thorny nuisances. There is positively no flat country - trees, ferns, bushes, lianas, boulders, roots along a rough and muddy trail marked with red paint on trees or rocks going straight up - unrelenting is the word, a real sweat. Perspiration is pouring off us continuously and our clothes are soaked through. This is a brutal climb in the tropical heat with 100% humidity, not for faint hearts or unfit Sunday tourists.

Jacob, the other guide, offers to take my pack when we stop after the first hour for a drink and to have a few bites of dried fruit. Sham insists on taking the pack but naturally I hang onto my camera bag. He gives some of his gear to Jacob - a more experienced guide. Sham still has to learn how to cater to his clients.

We are glad to have our trusty hiking sticks even if they are dangling from our wrists when we tackle the numerous ladders (fifteen of them says Jacob who helped to install them) and fixed ropes during the last hour, after a somewhat flatter section. We have to negotiate over and past many big pits and deep holes in the Karst limestone. Some have been bridged with narrow slippery planks and metal beams - quite a workout for the old arms and legs. The whole ascent route is deeply shrouded in a wild and tangled tropical forest with many giant jungle trees forming a solid canopy above. A very subdued daylight barely filters down.

After an exhausting, sweaty and heart-popping climb, we arrive at the top viewpoint, congratulations all around, picture and chow time. The two young but not so fit Malaysians, who now live in Australia, arrive a few minutes after us. The soaring pinnacles are extremely impressive, dozens of slender towers of gray-white limestone, eroded into airy yet solid stone pillars reaching way above the surrounding lush green jungle with patches of mountain fog

floating above and below. This is a unique sight, which, considering the effort needed to attain it, we will not likely forget for a long time."

While we admire the view and have our lunch we also enjoy the display of flowers: there is a beautiful pitcher plant, the biggest we have seen so far and a garden of large *Impatiens* blooms. Their delicate mauve colour blends well into the luxuriant greenery around us.

After half an hour or so at the top the promised clouds arrive and, like a curtain, quickly obscure the splendid view, so we get ready to go down again. We descend very carefully under the watchful eyes of the Park Warden and Sham. A fall on the slippery rocks or ladders so far from civilization would be a real disaster.

About halfway down the steep top part, I get lucky and finally have a chance to photograph a snake, a bright green slender thing about 40 cm long, curled up along the side of a large tree root. It must be scared since it is holding so still. I hope I don't shake too much in the dim light.

The four of us pass the young fellows again on the way down. The descent takes about the same time as the ascent, nearly 4 hours. We are tired but happy when we get back to Camp 5 for another swim, a wash, tea and cookies and a rest on the planks.

The clouds have gathered, thunder and lightning appear to bounce off the steep rock faces all around us and the rain starts again. A tropical downpour that dumps masses of water at an incredible rate - we marvel that the tiny swallows which swoop low over the river can fly in this waterfall.

Dinner is by candle light again, two veggies, beef curry, rice and fruit. With the coffee we toast Sham's cooking and our successful climb. The rain continues all night, but the air is quite warm all the same. Our silk underwear together with the sarongs keeps us really comfortable. I sleep a little better being really tired, yet I still wake very often to ease the painful pressure on the aching hip and shoulder.

It is very wet and still pouring as we get up and clouds hang low in the valley. Breakfast is the same as yesterday, except we have only tea, the coffee ran out. A very damp, muggy day greets us as we say goodbye to the stark huts of camp 5 and slosh along the now inundated trail. We have draped our rain jackets over the packs and hike with hoods over our heads for most of the 2½-hour trek under the big trees.

We are completely soaked again, though today it is from the rain. With the rain come the leeches. Since

Sham walks at the front he collects only three, Esther in the middle has five and, being tailend Charlie, I count six of the ugly creatures. Forget all that nonsense with the matches or cigarettes – pull it off without delay as soon as you notice it Sham advises. It works, believe me!

All the creeks are higher, we can hear the Manilau River roar in the rougher sections and fortunately the boat is waiting at the upper landing. The boatman had no trouble making it upriver and the jeep road is impassable in any case.

The boatman has brought a picnic lunch for us and just then at the right time the rain eases, but we only have tea and some of the tasty red bean cakes. A swift boat ride follows down the swollen river past the Penan longhouse village, past the caves and back to the airport jetty from where we walk over to the airport buildings. We change into dry clothes and repack our gear into the big travel sacks that we had stored at the resort and which Sham retrieved for us. Now it is time to relax in the airport café eat our prepared somewhat meagre meal of rice and vegetable curry, washed down with an Anchor beer.

By about three o'clock we are back in Miri having had another bird's eye view of the forests, the many rivers and the ever present logging roads.



Lunch at the boat prior to the ride out. Photo – M. Kafer.

### 3. TRIPS IN AND AROUND B.C.

#### Southern Coast Mountains/Cascades

##### MATTERS OF OPINION – THE KAUTZ GLACIER ROUTE ON MT. RAINIER

July-August, 1997

by Chris Ludwig

For some reason, no matter how hard one tries, things never quite seem as one had imagined them. Perhaps of more concern is how one story can be so different from another. Such problems lead to horrendous uncertainty and leave one to ponder whether or not it is wise to leave the couch ever again. Fortunately these matters have never stopped me before.

Yes.....

Before I knew it I found myself crossing the Canada-U.S. border, leaving the comfort of my television and futon couch in a cloud of exhaust fumes. Fumes of the mind, so to say, creeping along through pathetic organizational skills and the concept of leadership, whatever that is. And there we were again, in Mt. Rainier National Park. For some reason it felt little different than the angry carpet of mini-malls and Taco Bells that spanned this perplexing nation. Perhaps one always feels this way when far away from home; at least it felt so to me. As usual, the other car got lost and arrived two hours later than the rest of us, leaving Dean Neuman and I to ponder the immensity of the hoagie we purchased in some nameless town along the way. Most brilliant of all were the stars at Paradise. Never before had I seen so many stars so close. Perhaps it was a sign of my heightened sense of vanity that I would absurdly think I could reach them.

With a turn of the head and the thrash of cramped limbs in the truck, we attempted to find some rest. It is quite difficult to obtain peaceful dreams while sleeping in a tin can under the stars I can assure you. One can almost feel the heat being sucked out of the box into space.

Missing. My other rope team was missing. This had never happened to me before. Find them, they could stay in bed forever for all I could care. Or perhaps they had the right idea...

We crawled out of our mechanized cocoons and swaggered over to the ranger station where all sorts of strange route information lay. In good shape for what I ask? Steeper than usual?!?!? What on earth does that tell you?

Do I need my ice screws sir? How about belays, surely everyone could use a belay in their lives. Fine, be that way, I am going to improvise.

And the ranger station does not sell maps. No, it most certainly doesn't. That left us stuck in the parking lot until 8:40 a.m. when Dean finally cajoled a clerk to open the doors at Paradise early. We don't take Canadian money" said the clerk. So we coughed up our pennies and scraped enough together for a topographic map. Now two hours behind schedule, we set off with dreams of the summit.

Cement trails and plastic boots do not mix. Don't get me wrong, knees need exercise too, but such indulgences do put a damper on the concept of wilderness. And so we trundled along the cement trails without excessively heavy packs watching an army of running shoes and cameras roam about in a strange state of wonderment. Now on any given July long weekend there is a veritable army of climbers heading for Camp Muir (known as the dog route by locals). I personally think it should be nicknamed the hog route instead. Fortunately, we would be engulfed in the caravan for less than half an hour. Pretty soon we forged off to the west and descended to the Moraine trail above the lower Nisqually Glacier, leaving the cement of reason behind.

We descended from the alpine tourist plateau and traversed a little way until the trail began to steeply wander up a massive pile of debris left behind by the Nisqually Glacier. Moraines are always dusty hot places and our large packs didn't provide a remedy to the problem. Mountains after all are supposed to be cold places, right? According to the map there was supposed to be glacier below, but rather there was a broad empty valley. I figure the glacier sublimated and melted away into the abyss of some modern reasoning.

Whatever the case, after passing a human feces barrel we shortly came upon the lower remnants of the glacier. Above lay the route to Camp Hazard, the highest official camp on Mt. Rainier. The fact that we could only see two other groups heading up our route was a sign of encouragement for me. Hmmm.

The first step was to cross the lower Nisqually Glacier. Surely a low angle chunk of ice would pose no problems, I reasoned. As matter of course, we chose to put on our helmets, harnesses, and rope up. Granted, one is likely to feel like a freak if found using a rope and helmet on an American glacier. I was certainly willing to accept the risks associated with being ostracized.

The glacier was flat and hot with few redeeming features about it. In fact, it was so sickly and retreating so significantly, it was hard to tell what was glacier and what was snow covered rubble. Perhaps it doesn't matter anyway.

The glacier was, however, far more broken up on the west side, especially this late in the year. Much to my surprise, I suddenly found myself staring at a large hole in the ice with no apparent way around it. Now these moments are certainly among the more entertaining for rope leaders. In my laziness, I chose to jump the crevasse with my nearly seventy pound pack. Fortunately, there was a little chunk of ice in the side of the crevasse which provided a good launching pad for my foot. I remember distinctly caring little as I clawed on the other side of the hole, nearly falling back into it. My partners behind appeared equally as oblivious. As a matter of course, a picket was stomped in so the others could also have the joy of jumping cavities with full packs. How metaphorical it all is!

After crossing the glacier we climbed a modestly steep chute of snow and rubble which lasted over 300 m. At the top, the route crossed the haphazardly crevassed Wilson Glacier. This section of the route involved over 600 m of elevation gain and included a lengthy traverse in the middle of a slope on the glacier. In certain places I had visions of being dragged down into a crevasse, or enjoying a 300 m slide down to the Nisqually glacier below. I'm sure if I thought about it enough, it was bound to happen. Some time during this period our attention was drawn to the dull rumble of a military helicopter passing over the summit in front of us. The previous weekend, two climbers climbed Liberty Ridge successfully to reach the summit but became lost and disoriented in cloud cover high on the Emmons glacier.

As time passed, we realized that reaching Camp Hazard was going to be an impossibility because of our slowness (mental and physical). I then decided to place Dean in the front of the rope, because he was the slowest (and proud of it - keep on trucking Dean!). going at half the speed, I suddenly found myself enjoying the trip much more. Finally, after contouring around a crevasse or two, we arrived at Camp Wilson (2900 m) at the top of the Wilson Glacier. In reality Camp Wilson is no more than three little flat spots on a ridge looking out towards China. It is also the starting point for the Fuhrer Finger Route (affectionately named the Feces Finger due to the cleanliness of these high camps). We would be the only climbers at Camp Wilson that night.

I remember sitting on the rocks, looking down into the valleys below late in the evening. A warm breeze came up from somewhere making it comfortable to lounge around in a T-shirt even at 9 p.m. Yet some part of me wondered if this heat came from the city or some other generator. Maybe there was a hidden heat duct somewhere nearby that I wasn't aware of. All the while a golden backlight was cast on the ridge on the horizon where a stream of climbers flooded in and out of Camp Muir under the darkened contrast of distance and light. Golden chariots isolated from one another in a familiar light blackened by the limits of imagination; the same imagination which had brought me to Camp Wilson.

In the morning we packed up our bags and trundled onwards towards Camp Hazard. After spending an intermediate night at 2900 m I was sure we would have little difficulty with altitude. Above the Wilson Glacier came a patch of snow called the Turtle Snowfield. I now know it is called this because it takes seemingly forever to climb the thing. The only interesting part of the journey was the two American teams on their way down that we talked to. The first declared in glory that they had summited and the route was in fine shape. The second group claimed it was the most miserable climb of their lives and that they were showered with icefall forcing them to turn back in a daze of confusion. Could this be the same route?

After the snow patch came the final pile of rubble leading to Camp Hazard. I decided at this point to blast ahead of my team so as to be able to hurl insults about how weak and worthless they were from above. I firmly believe that it is important for a leader to boost morale in this manner. Camp Hazard turned out to be a miserable pile of rubble and human waste at 3500 m. It is situated below a 250 m icefall and while the guidebook states that the camp is safe, we later found

out that the entire site is occasionally obliterated by falling seracs. This might explain why we were the only climbers at the camp. One other team wisely camped a hundred metres or so below us for safety. The icefall was conspicuously quiet while we were there: not a piping peep, which gave me the creeps to say the least. In order to reach the summit of Mt. Rainier one must cross a chute where most of the falling ice travels, then contour under a series of seracs. One may then access a modestly steep ramp to gain the relatively easy summit glacier. The other option is to cross through the seracs to connect directly to the ramp. Either option seemed undesirable to me and after considerable debate and disagreement, we decided to sleep it through.

I felt strongly that to climb the route safely, one would need to summit and return to camp before 8 a.m. Clearly we were all too slow, worthless, weak, and any other climbing insults I could think of. Maybe this weak and worthless phenomenon is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Throughout the night I found my -20° sleeping bag to be much too hot even for this elevation. I have little doubt that I would have died from dehydration had I remained in the bag for long. In the morning I arose quickly to discover that my brain was not functioning normally. Yes, despite earlier claims of might and invincibility, I too was susceptible to altitude and was experiencing dizziness and a nice headache that took my smile away. I like to believe that most of my problems could be blamed on my sleeping bag which had turned me into a prune. Drinking lots of water is important at altitude, but at Camp Hazard drinking can be hazardous because of all the human excrement around. I was thankful Dean had brought a filter along for the ride.

Fortunately there was a plenteous supply of snow from the fallen seracs next to Paul's tent. Sleep well Paul?

Much to my surprise I woke up the next morning to notice climbers descending through the icefall. Several times I was entertained to witness two of the climbers on the team fall on their buttock with a frightful vengeance as they were crossing under the icefall. Some of them had neither crampons nor helmets for this unpleasant climb. I believe that some of these climbers had lost some of their faculties on route or had abandoned them in the parking lot altogether. That night, lenticular cloud had formed on the summit, destroying the visibility on the top 1200 m of the mountain. These climbers, after having crossed the icefall, were forced to retreat because of the poor



Camp Wilson. Photo - L. Nordstrom.

visibility. All the while I was sleeping in my quiet single wall tent. Unfortunately, Paul's Snowfield, which was erected some 15 m away, flapped so loudly as to disrupt the sleep of anyone within a km. of the camp. Lenticular cloud is common on Rainier.

Often it can form with even a slight drop in air pressure and can be accompanied by very high winds.



Hazardous feet at Camp Hazard.  
Photo - L. Nordstrom

Being disgusted with the whole concept of Camp Hazard, we decided to descend back down to Paradise. No sooner than we had packed up camp and were about to descend, a loud crack rang out from above. Since there was limited visibility, all I was able to see was the toe of a large block of ice flowing down the chute some 6 m away from us. Had those climbers been another 45 minutes, they would have been wiped out. The same holds true for us obviously, if we had been late in descending the route. What if, and what then? Who really knows anyway?

As we began our journey back down, we ran into one lone climber who had camped a hundred metres or so below us that night. He asked if we had seen the rest of his team, which had passed by our camp to attempt the summit while we were sawing logs. Unfortunately, we had to conclude that they were stranded further up the mountain in the shadows of the Lenticular cloud cap, unable to descend because of the icefall hazard.

Somehow this news affected me little. Perhaps it is a sign of having spent too much time in the mountains; the same old stories and the same old problems - other people's problems. Yet in a way, such obliviousness may be a reflection of a great selfishness; a condition we climbers live with our entire lives. And on we go.

We emerged from the lenticular cloud at around 3000 m into another brilliant sunny day. The rest of the trip down was uneventful and included finding a better way through the crevasse field on the Nisqually Glacier. If one descends a little further and travels



The Chute and icefall. Photo - L. Nordstrom

parallel to and between the crevasses, it is possible to avoid any drama.

Finally we were mildly amused to have run into the Microsoft Climbing Team which had returned en masse from Camp Muir on the tourist plateau (all 100 of them). I am sure they all summited and am sure they are all perfect, just like the software they build. Oops, did I say that?

And the last step was to check in to the ranger station to sign out. With a twist of the head and summit now clear from clouds, I passed from one reality into another. There a shadowed face beneath a nifty hat asked me "Did you summit?". No, I replied habitually, together with a pause and the flick of a pen. "Some people did." he grumbled.

Shiny shoes and shiny buttons were all I could think of for some reason. Opinions and reasons boiled down to a number in a database anointed by some grand masculine insecurity. Is this all there is to it?

And they will continue marching on to Camp Muir under the expectation of image and accomplishment. Relate it all to what has been done and to what others

are doing. March them on in a sea of footsteps leading to decals and the buttons on a park ranger's jacket. Would you be as disappointed on the summit as in the parking lot? Would you ever know the difference anyway?

Party: Dean Neuman, Paul Ng, Lois Nordstrom, and Chris Ludwig.

## A QUARTER CENTURY ON "COLDCOQU"

by Karl Ricker

### Introduction

A new form of Andean high altitude hallucinatory medicine, or just plain substance abuse? Not quite, but it's near to it. Addictive? Apparently so, the initial "rush", the follow-up euphoria (with colour and riotous rivalry, or ribaldery), the lasting after-effects (of pleasant dreams, and then the pounding desire, for more). Withdrawal symptoms are also severe, and can be accompanied by severe depression when you miss a "trip" (as in 1985, when Ed had to run the gambit).

What is this stuff anyhow, and where are we in this blur, which continues from one year after the next? And can we kick the habit? It comes crisp and clear, each autumn in spirited colours, on the leeward side of the Coast and Cascade Mountains.

The news of this magic mercurial vapour is now out, found exclusively but in the nebulous "no name" ranges of the Cascade Mountains of B.C. So how can we buy it with an address like that? Indeed, that is the mystery, and why it has taken us 25 years to find, test and define the product — elusive it is: "Coldcoqu". From the Andes, as the name would certainly suggest, it is not. There are, however, Andean beasts of burden which found their way to "aspiring" names in these ranges which are known as the "Lamoid Group", as opposed to their Alpine brethren in the adjacent Anderson River Group. Ah, yes "Coldcoqu" does strange things putting one onto several continents at the same time.

How did all this begin anyway and surely there must be a cure? It begins with "that" railway; no not that railway again! Yep, the bloody blunderbuss of them all, the CPR (or the "Sleepy R" when it's late or wasting your time) which again threw caution to the wind and decided that another round of avalanche busting was overdue, after finally taming the Selkirks at accountant-disguised astronomical expense. ("Let's defer the cost to the Coquihalla project"). The new line was supposed to



Karl getting high in the "Coldcoqu". Photo - K. Ricker collection.

traverse the southern part of the province, grabbing its mineral wealth along the way in one form or another, and moving avalanches should only be a sideline. But — they forgot to ask the hardy miners close at hand who were working the gold prospects of the Coquihalla, which needs only an occasional horse, rather than one train, to move the metal (gold) to market. Not only was the metal hard to come by, but also the local snowfall was an added factor in making their efforts to find it approach the futility barrier! Some cynics suspect that the miners were extracting revenge and duped the CPR into building a line on the Coquihalla Corridor. Let's see, here we go again: 12 tunnels of about 1000 m, 16 snowsheds of 2500 m, and several magnificent trestle bridges on 59 km at maximum allowable grade to reach the pass, constructed over a six-year construction period, at \$85,000/km. And the line was constantly blocked by washouts, with trains being re-routed up the canyon to Spences Bridge, and then to Merritt on the Nicola Valley line and then south to join the Coke at Brookmere. The Coquihalla Division of the Kettle Valley line required a bottomless kettle of cash to fix, and with no local commodities to haul between Hope and Brookmere the giant finally saw the light and shut it down after more disastrous washouts in 1959. But the CPR takes its time in many ways; not until 1962 was it official - "Permanently

Closed", and yet another 15 years to dismantle the rail bed and salvage(?) the bridges. Activity on the Coquihalla arose during this temptuous period: a bigger gold mine (early 1970s) which also went bankrupt, several pipeline stringing exercises, invasion of logging roads into sacred historical haunts, and by 1986, the toll highway. Ripping up the CPR had its pains as well. Soon to disappear were the quaintly named Shakespearean whistle stops: Lear, Jessica, Iago, Romeo, Juliet, etc. The railbed then became "our" road, until the pipeliners said it was theirs and put locked gates on the useful portions in 1986. The citizenry of Merritt quickly grabbed onto the road idea, and with several cavalcades to Hope they pressed the government to build a real road. We mountaineers joined this fray in the early 70s, with my first taste in 1972. And that is where we thought it all began, for the mountaineers, as blind as we are.

Mountains with few names, and no references to them in the guidebook (Culbert 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), initiated the interest after the drive through, as did a few pictures of Needle Peak hanging in some geologist's office. So in the summer of 1973 a recce trip up Mt. Outram on the south edge of the Coquihalla provided the necessary view of the lay of the land and what massifs might be of interest. A bird's eye perspective admittedly, but it spurred us into buying a few maps and reviewing a few geological reports. At that time

the preservation of the Brigade Trail in the Sowaqua tributary was the big environmental thrust, and undoubtedly the use of the trail in the 1850s may have spawned an ascent of peaks adjacent to it – especially Mt. Davis where the trail switchbacks over its northwest shoulder to infamous Palmer Pond. As the summer of 1973 wound down, the late Stu Fall asked if I could lead his September schedule weekend trip, and with the Coquihalla fresh on my mind it was very easy to say yes, and it was scheduled for a last weekend in September.

That first Saturday drive along the Coquihalla and into the Coldwater was a knockout. The right air temperature in brilliant autumn colours, showing the follies of the CPR simply grabbed the soul and soles (head to toe so to speak). The trip was scheduled for Stoyoma Mtn., the second highest in this part of the Cascades, which is the obvious "giant" when seen from Merritt. Also, we had a Merritt forester, Norm Hansen, who knew the local roads to put vehicles at alpine level for a bush-free romp to its summit. The weekend was so smooth on the psyche it was soon to make autumn crusades an obsession – hooked on the historical, ethereal ambience of "Coldcoqu". And so the "event" appeared with monotonous regularity on the ACC-BCMC schedules as a joint club trip up to 1980, and solely thereafter as a BCMC trip. The last weekend of September or first weekend of October were the favoured time slots in order to see those special colours which is what "Coldcoqu" is all about. Organizing a trip for that timeframe, however, is never easy. Many other organizers want the same weekends, and as geologists we are still out in the field in the more lucrative years. In this article we can try to define this special area, its participants and where we are going. Someone else can take on the environmental issues, because it's increasingly complex with the overpopulated mainlanders of Vancouver shoving and tussling with interior dwellers on how to use and share "their" land.

### **The Area**

North of the Skagit Ranges (boundary = Sumallo-Nicolom Rivers) and west of the Hozomeen Ranges (Tulameen-Coldwater divide), lies the "no name ranges" of the north extension of the Cascade Mountains. That's it, on the physiographic maps the area is outlined on its own without a given name! Sometimes they are referred to as the "Anderson River" (Cairnes and Camsell's reports) or "Boston Bar" Ranges but neither name is officially recognized, yet. Maps,

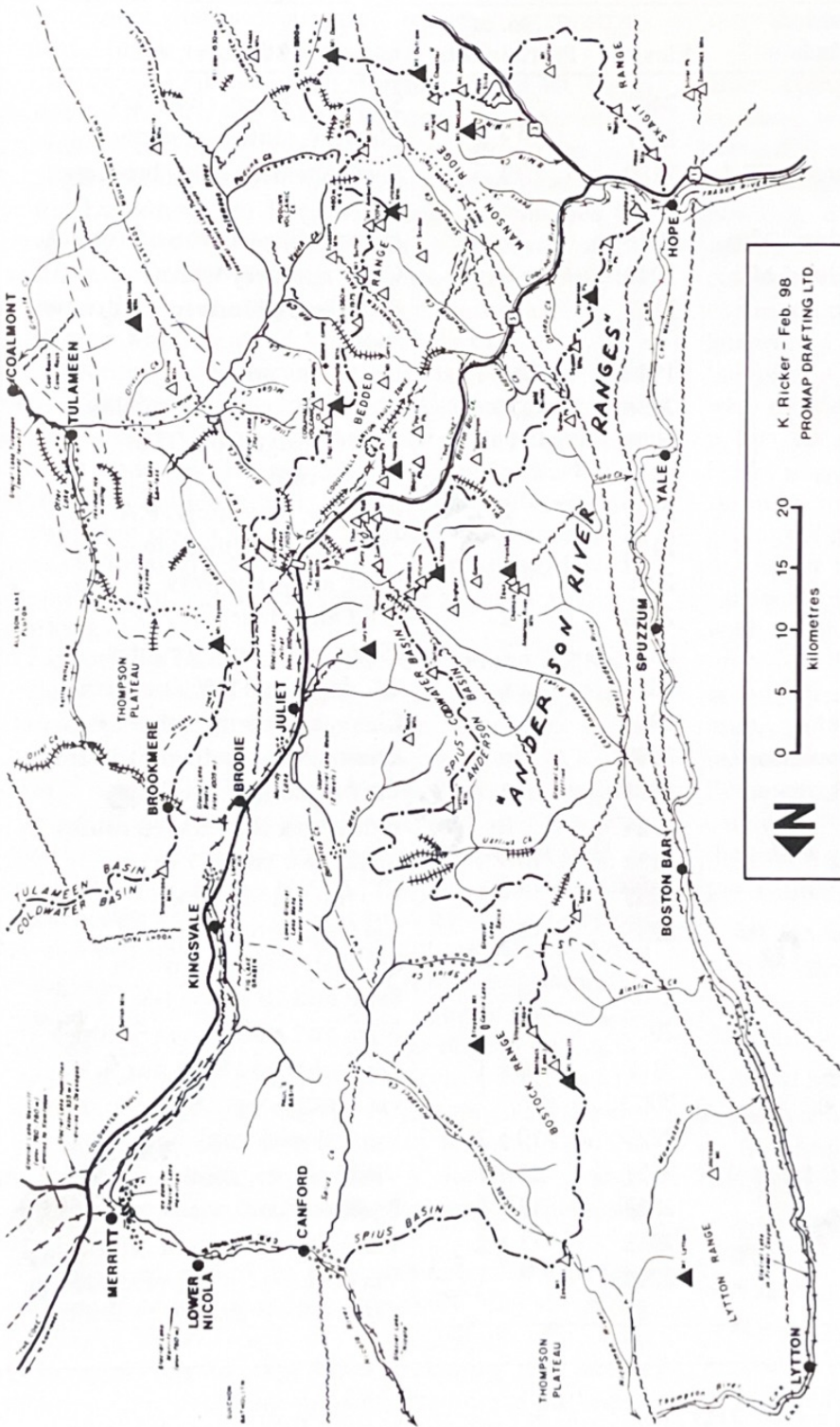
however, do show a Bedded Range for the area along the southeast side of the Coquihalla drainage (Coquihalla Mtn. To Tulameen Mountain), which has a reasonable explanation; the rocks are layered units of sediments or volcanic strata. Historically, however, the explorers called this the "Hope Range", but the name was discarded. The far northwest end of the system, lying on the south side of the Thompson River, is locally known as the Bostock Range, so named after a prominent senator and rancher of the early 1900s, Hewitt Bostock. His son rose into the upper echelons of the Geological Survey of Canada during the 1930s to 1950s. He was the first to outline the "no-name" ranges as a distinct physiographic unit, and others (Holland, Mathews) have followed this lead.


Much of the area is drained by the Coldwater and Coquihalla Rivers, with cattle trails and the CPR providing the original access. On the north end, however, the high peaks are on the adjacent Spius Creek basin to the west, and here the Coldwater slices through the Interior Plateau on the east. That is, both rivers cut through the "no-name ranges" obliquely. For autumn trips we have avoided the Fraser River side of the ranges because the access is not nearly so interesting and there was no magical abandoned railway element in the trip.

Most of the mountains of interest in this vast sea of ridges are in the 2000 - 2300 m elevation range, the exception being Mt. Outram at 2461 m (see Table 1). The average summit elevation throughout the area, however, is about 1950 m, or roughly 300 to 400 m above the norm about Vancouver. Elevations tend to "sag" a bit on the westside of the Coquihalla, and between July Mtn. and Mt. Stoyoma on the Coldwater-Spius; accordingly, we have yet to go to these "lessers" despite the recently opened logging road access to the barren ridge crests in the headwaters of the Spius, Maka and Uztlius basins.

### **Mountaineering History**

Guidebook authors have yet to pick up old geological maps to see if any peaks of consequence could have been ascended by geologists or their forerunner prospectors. For that matter "trig" and camera stations on old topographic maps are a dead give-away. Helicopters weren't around before World War II and were not used for high altitude work until the late 1950s! and so the summits were ascended by the unsung. In the Cascades of British Columbia this has become an embarrassment, as inspection of many old maps lead to the obvious: the geologic




  
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**GEO-ALPINE SKETCH MAP OF THE NORTHERN CASCADE RANGES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**LEGEND**

**TERRANE CODES**

B	Bridge River
C	Cascades Core Zone
H	Holowayton
M	Melrose
NPP	Nearctic Peak Purton
O	Okanagan
QEP	Q-Eagle Plutonic Complex
QMLP	Q-Mt. Lytton Plutonic Complex
QNV	Q-Nicola Volcanics
QT	Q-Tulamen Complex
S	Shuswap (Crest Mt. Plutonic Complex)
YR/O	Younger rock covering Okanagan

**MAP SYMBOLS**

	Intrusive granitic rocks (1-45 million years)
	Extensive volcanic rocks (ca. 22 million years)
	Cascade Mountain Front (east margin of Eagle Plutonic C+)
	Terrane Boundary (fractured intrusive contacts)
	Younger covering rock (overlying terrane)
	Fault Zone (showing relative movement)
	Drainage Divide (marked in busy areas)
	Glacial meltwater (unroof) channels (active channels / with elevations)
	Major rock slides

**LINE PATTERN CODES (SEE INDEX)**  
(with heavy blocking on map)

	Principles and other peaks
	Mainline railways (as identified)
	Abandoned railway lines
	Highways
	Foot trail

Table 1. Trip Chronology - Coldcoqu

Year	Area	Peak Ascended/ Attempted	Elev.*	No. of Participants	Weather, etc.
1973	Hozameen Range	Mt. Outram	2461	3	Summer, recce, clear day
1973	Bostock Range	Stoyoma Mtn.	2287	9 + 2	Blustery, skiff new snow
1974	Bostock Range	Mt. Hewitt Bostock, SE & NW peaks	2180 2183	3	Basins below peaks, brisk cool day
1975	Bostock Range	"Stoyoma's Widow" Mtn.	2248	7	Heavy blizzard, forced retreat
1976	Bostock Range	"Stoyoma's Widow" Mtn.	2248	9	Clear and very warm
1977	Coquihalla Group	Coquihalla Mtn.	2157	5	From west, blustery, cool, new snow
1978	Zopkios Ridge	Thar Peak	1940	12 + 1	Brisk, new snow
1979	Zopkios Ridge	Yak Peak	2038	13	Warm and clear, from Nak
		Nak Peak	2009	13	Via NE ridge from Thar
1980	Lamoid Group	"Bestias Andinos"	-	0	Rained out!
1981	Lamoid Group	Guanaco Peak	2127	7	Blustery, new snow, F.A.
		Vicuña Peak	2126	4	2 to top, snow melting
1982	W. Interior Plateau	Mt. Thynne	2020	2	Cold, snow showers
1983	Lamoid Group	Vicuña Peak	2126	2	Cold and clear
1984	Lamoid Group	Alpaca Peak	2083	7	Clear and warm, 2 routes
1985	Zopkios Ridge	Yak Peak	2038	6	OK day, from SW Zum recce
1986	Needle Pk Group	"Markhor" Peak	1994	6	Clear and warm; esthetic
		Needle Peak Traverse	2090	6	From salt shed, descent W ridge
1987	Needle Pk Group	"Markhor" Peak	1994	3	Via N side slabs, cool day
1988	Shakespeare Group	July Mtn.	2124	6	Warm and clear day, 3 routes
1989	Bedded Range	"Amberty" Mtn.	2134	10 + 1	Brisk, new snow, 7 to top
		Tulameen Mtn.	2285	10 + 1	1 to top via SE slopes
1990	Bedded Range	Tulameen Mtn.	2285	14 + 1	Via "Amberty" Mtn. and N. buttress, clear and warm
1991	Coquihalla Group	Mt. "Jim Kelly"	2107	9 + 1	Brisk and clear, via J-K Ck.
1992	Coquihalla Group	"Illal" Mtn.	2020	18 + 1	Brisk and cloudy, via S slopes
		Coquihalla Mtn.	2157	18 + 1	East ridge and SW spur
1993	Coquihalla Group	Mt. "Carry"	2002	7	via E ridge, very warm and clear
1994	Manson Ridge	Mt. Hatfield	2227	10 + 2	Via S slopes, cold, new snow
1995	Manson Ridge	Mt. "Chantler" (Manson)	2151	12 + 1	Via N slopes, snowing
1996	Shakespeare Group	"Romeo" Peak	2028	15 + 2	Brisk and cool, via N buttress
		"Juliet" Peak	2053	11 + 2	Via S slopes, descent NE ridge
1997	Hozameen Range	Mt. Dewdney	2244	6 + 1	Via N slopes, weathered off due to new snow and no visibility

SUMMARY					
25 yrs	10 areas	25 peaks ascended (double ascents on 6)	ave = 2127 m on peaks ascended/ attempted	$\sum$ 201 ave = 8	11 trips warm ( $\pm$ ) and clear 11 trips brisk, new snow, cloudy 4 trips socked-in and stormy

\*All elevations in metres, taken from TRIM 1:20,000 scale maps which usually agree to other map trig point elevations to  $\pm$  3m (Mt. Thynne being a glaring exception).

symbol on the summit of that mountain means that they had likely hammered their way to the top; and the average geologist is destructive, rather than constructive, and hence rarely builds a cairn.

Turning a blind eye to the aforementioned Mt. Davis ascent via the Brigade Trail, it appears that several first ascents were carried out by miners, promoters and geologists at the turn of the century in the headwaters of the Dewdney and Lawless Creek systems. For the Dewdney Creek area it was the lead/silver of the Summit Camp (1895) and Treasure Mtn. (1896) that drew in the activity and hence early ascents of Tulameen Mountain and Mt. Sutter are probable, and a fait accompli when federal geologists completed their field work by no later than 1920. For the Lawless, the Independence Camp was the scene of the driving of tunnels under Mt. Henning by 1901, and the peak is no more than a mere stroll. Some of the Independence Camp gang probably ridge-traversed northward to the next obvious target, Mt. Thynne, or southward to the Coquihalla massif where there are signs of very old workings.

Exploration for the CPR route began in the 1870s and became a serious venture in 1901 when Edgar Dewdney sent H.E. Carry to find an alternative to the Coquihalla Canyon. His alternative, Carry Ck. (he didn't name it) to Tulameen Valley, however, required a spiral tunnel to reduce the grade, and after two such exercises in the Rockies the engineers were not keen on building any more. From 1910 to 1916 the CPR construction era brought on a survey gang to carry out the rail bed levelling and possibly it was also tied to a triangulation net (established on ridges and summits). Needle Peak would be a target summit in such an exercise. And, in 1911 the discovery of gold on Ladner Creek brought on a rush of prospectors who scoured this basin from valley floor to ridge top, and so Spider Peak (and probably Squeah Mtn.) had visits at this time. Ladner basin, however, is hardly a mountaineering paradise, because the tree line reaches ridge top.

At the north end of the "no-name ranges" the original resource base was livestock, especially. The sprawling sentinel of the Nicola Valley was Stoyoma Mtn., with its luxuriant alpine vegetation beckoning as summer pasturage. From several ranches sheep were pushed in large flocks up to its alpine meadows, and a sod-roofed shelter was erected as early as 1911 at Cabin Lake (el. 1830 m) on the south east side of the summit massif. This cabin is still standing in useable shape, with a tree now growing on its roof. It is an easy one hour hike to

the summit from his hut, and hence Stoyoma Mtn., and possibly the adjacent high rambly type of summits, were all knocked off at this time.

The exploration for a CPR route took a new twist after completion. Some railway-government arm-twisting was likely involved, but federal geologists were dispatched to the railway corridor to help find those mineral resources the railway wanted to haul. Needing a topographic map to carry out accurate surveys, a field party of surveyors led by Falconer commenced work in 1917 - 1918, while Dr. C. Camsell examined mineral properties. After one season, however, Camsell bowed out of the rugged terrain in favour of a young aspiring Ph.D. student, C.E. Cairnes, who took over in 1919. Using the railway as staging points, he and assistant, W.E. Chantler, over two full field seasons methodically ascended ridges and summits to compile a detailed mile to the inch scale geological map of much of the Coquihalla basin (except the upper Sowaqua) and the south rim of the upper Coldwater (Zopkios Ridge). How many of the summits were visited by the topographic surveyors who preceded them a year or two earlier is not known because their stations are not shown on the geological map, and tracking down the original topographic manuscript in Ottawa is not an easy exercise. Reviewing Cairnes' report and geological map together carefully, it's safe to say that he and/or Chantler visited the following summits, perhaps preceded by the survey party (their elevations in brackets, cf. Table 1):

- Mt. Hatfield (7284 ft.) - then unnamed
- "Mt. Manson" (7115') (= Mt. MacLeod)
- Tulameen Mtn. (7490'); and "Mt. Amberty"
- "Fossil Hill" (SW peak of Tulameen Mtn.)
- "Goat Mtn." (6700') (= Mt. Snider)
- Ogilvie Mtn. (5545')
- "Ten Mile Hill" (6000') (= Jorgenson Pk.)
- Squeah Mtn. (no elev.)
- Nak Peak (6700')
- Thar Peak
- Yak Peak
- "Coldwater Hill" (6200') (= Zum Pk.)
- Zoa Pk.
- Needle Peak (6868')
- Coquihalla Mtn. (7080')
- "Mt. Jim Kelly" (at a later survey in 1922)
- "Mt. Carry" (6500')
- Mt. Sutter and adjacent bumps

- "Mt. Chantler" ("Marson" in error) (i.e. NW of Outram)
- Spider Pk. (5900')
- Probably "Ironing Board", "Thimble" or "Markhor", "Portia" and "Bomb Tram" Mtn.
- Also to south in Skagit Range: Hope Mtn., Isollilock Mtn., Silver Pk., and Mt. Wells.

And so the Cairnes' campaign was significant, but it did not end in the early 1920s. There were another 20 years of periodic visits in the "no-name ranges", as he continued the mapping north to latitude 50°00', publishing it in 1944 (GSC Map 737A) without report, on a 4 mile/inch scale. Hence, the map lacks the detail to show his traverse routes or sites for note taking and sampling. We can only guess that he ascended other peaks to the north, with July Mtn. being a prime suspect, whereas those in the Anderson River group are unlikely. The records of Dr. Cairnes are probably in the archives of the Geological Survey, and would certainly indicate the route and summits of his traverses. Obviously he thrived on "Coldcoqu" (24 years), but he won't admit to that in stodgy old notebooks.

Formal mountaineering in the "no-name ranges" had to await the development of logging roads. The ever-watchful eye of Dick Culbert saw their first penetration into the upper Anderson River basins, and in 1961 he set out alone from distant road end into the Anderson River group. Anderson River Peak (already ascended by surveyors) was traversed to reach Steinbok (then unnamed). In a following year he returned with cohorts to ascend Ibex and Chamois. The forays, however, were downplayed in the first guidebook, which cast disparaging remarks about the general unsuitability of climbing anything east of the Fraser. For his 1974 guide, however, he changed his tune with favourable comments on the granitic rock, which he encountered on the slabs of Yak Peak (then unnamed). By 1974 the Anderson River Group was much more accessible, with Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik leading the charge to clean out the first ascents, including those which straddled the Anderson - Coldwater divide (Lamoid Group). Others followed in their wake to establish the harder routes, culminating with the ascent of the northeast buttress of Steinbok by Flavelle and Howe in 1979. Somewhere in this period our own forays of the autumn season slide into this historical chronology, with the drawback that they are repeating other efforts. Suffice it to say the area is under constant scrutiny by Fred Beckey who hounds us all for new information on revisions to his Cascade Guide.

## The Geology

The Cascade Mountains are made up of a mixed-up assemblage of rocks, courtesy of their far-flung beginnings in various locations throughout the Pacific oceanic basin. These are small pieces or micro-continents which rose out of the oceanic floor on accumulating piles of volcanic rocks, "mixed" or inter-layered with oceanic ooze sediment. The "root" of the Cascades is a collision of a few micro-continents in their drift toward western North America over 10s to 100s of millions of years. Micro-continents were given local names: (1) Quesnellia which was the first to arrive, followed by (2) Methow-Tyaungton and (3) Bridge River (or Hozomeen). Quesnellia is the largest, roughly the size of Madagascar, which arose from the sea as an arc of volcanoes over a lengthy period, between 400 and 150 million years ago. Its highly deformed western edge would become the eastern margin of the Cascades, after some heavy duty squeezing and folding at great depths, but basically it's the plate which underlies the Interior Plateau of the province, exposed here and there where younger "cover" rocks have been stripped away by erosion. The Methow, next in the docking procedure, is made up of sedimentary and some volcanic rocks (and unusual deep-seated granitic/volcanic rocks known as ophiolites) deposited as a west facing slope from eroding volcanoes located near present-day California-Nevada - about 215 - 165 million years ago. Just try and find those volcanoes now! The rocks are softer, hence more erodible, and have slid into final position along faults (Chuwanten, Hozomeen) which run northwest-southeast through the Coquihalla basin. A younger sandstone (Jackass - Pasayten) caps this terrain, derived from the erosion of adjacent Quesnellia. The arrival of the Hozomeen or Bridge River block, which owes its origin to deep sea volcanism and oceanic ooze accumulations roughly 250 to 185 million years ago, completed the docking exercise on the east side of the Cascades. The palaeo oceanographic position of this terrane was in the South Pacific, before arrival at North America some 150 million years ago. The peaks north and east of Hope are the remnants of this block but it stretches south to Ross Lake.

The union of the blocks (and others to the west of Hope) is the precursor to the mountain system which arose much later. On the western margin of Quesnellia severe deformation at significant crustal depths transformed the assemblage of volcanics and sediments into gneisses; and, with continuing compressive

stresses under increased temperatures the outermost margin of gneisses were transformed to granitic rocks, and hence the name: Eagle Plutonic Complex (150 MY), which is a long linear belt of granodiorite, diorites and "honest" granites that merge with the slightly older (200 MY) Mt. Lytton Complex to the northeast, near Stoyoma Mtn. This belt of rock defines the eastern margin of the Cascade Mtns., but not all terrain within it has a rugged mountainous character; because the rock has been highly fractured through several subsequent cycles of brittle deformation (faulting, folding, etc.), making it prone to erosion, and climber anxiety when scrambling on it.

So, by the termination of the "big bang" event (65 MY ago) all the terranes had locked together and had undergone significant changes due to crustal compression. What followed was relatively short and sweet, as far as mountain building is concerned:

1. Intrusion at depth, in relatively rugged terrain; of the Mt. Outram and Needle Peak Plutons (the rugged spires of the Anderson River Group and magnificent granitic slabs of Boston Bar Creek, etc.) roughly 45 million years ago.
2. Explosive eruption of the Coquihalla Mtn. strata volcano (22 million years ago) onto a rolling landscape that had undergone 20 million years of erosion and probable "unroofing" of part of the Needle Peak Pluton (volcanics overlie the granitic rocks); the volcano probably had the dimensions of Mt. Rainier, but 20 million years of erosion have reduced it to expose its diorite throat, and flanking basal beds of volcanic ejecta.
3. Northeast directed "extension" faulting with horizontal displacements of land on either side of the wide fault zones (Coquihalla Canyon F.Z., Murray Lake - Maka Valley F.Z., the Fig Lake "graben" and the Coldwater F.Z., and other less lengthy faults found throughout the Anderson River Ranges); the exact timing of the faulting is unknown, but post volcanic eruption of the Coquihalla massif and pre-glaciation (1.64 M.Y.) are the window of opportunity.
4. Continual erosion of the landscape to a base level "peneplain" throughout the Cascades and adjacent Interior Plateau.
5. 1200 to 1800 metres (and locally greater) of "rapid" uplift during the late Pliocene - early Pleistocene Epochs (2 to 5 MY ago), which was differentially tilted from west to east.
6. Dissection of the new topography by river cutting processes in the late Tertiary - Pleistocene period.

7. Inundation of the Cordillera by local ice sheets in response to climate change, beginning about 2 million years ago, which sharpened the topography around the more resistant rocks and honed the topography around the erosion-susceptible lithologies, with extra gouging on the forementioned fault zones.

The number of ice sheets covering the Cascades is unknown but evidence of four have been found at nearby Merritt, and the last phase (the Fraser Glaciation was initiated between 25,000 and 30,000 years ago) culminating with a fully extended Puget Lobe by 15,000 years ago. At this fully developed stage Cairnes found evidence showing that ice levels did not exceed 1950 - 2000 m elevation in the Coquihalla basin, at Mt. Hatfield, and ice was generally below all those mountain tops which exceeded 2000 metres. Our work, however, has put some refinements on the above assessment. Gravelly discoloured granitic "grus" on top of Needle Peak (2090 m) would indicate that the ice sheet did not reach its top to scrape away this detritus. On neighbouring "Markhor" (1994 m), however, "perched" glacial erratics on the summit suggest that ice cover was present and so the ice cap level was likely at about 2050 m in this area on the south side of the highway. Across the street, however, smooth polished ridge top granitic slabs, interrupted by esthetic "chattermark" gouges, indicate that the surface of the ice sheet was substantially higher than the summit of Alpaca (2127 m), and similar features found on the summit of Stoyoma Mtn. (2287 m) suggest that the ice cap thickened to the north (approaching 3000 m on the Chilcotin Plateau).

Melting of the last ice sheet has brought out a plethora of interesting features: dry box canyons, glacial lake beds of white silt, dry channels, kettle basins, esker ridges, hummocky piles of gravel, and early post-glacial landslides. Driving up Boston Bar valley, a dry box canyon enters on the west near the snowshed. This was once occupied by a glacial river carrying runoff from the upper valley slopes of the entire Anderson River basin, while the Fraser Canyon was still choked with decaying ice. (For that matter differential ice decay diverted the outlet of the Coquihalla around the Othello tunnel canyon, instead of straight through the old outlet at Kawakawa Lake.) The Anderson River runoff was supplemented by copious meltwater outflow from the Stoyoma Mountain area carried via the passes at Spius and Uztlius Creeks (especially the latter where this was a glacial lake basin). This cross mountain axis diversion

of water was in essence the initiation of the meltdown phase of the Cordilleran ice sheet, which covered the Interior Plateau.

Continuing up the highway, it is bridged at Dry Gulch, just short of the tollbooth. This is another, but earlier, meltwater channel which carried meltwater out of the Anderson River system in a convoluted manner. In this case during the initial stages of deglaciation meltwater ran along the ridge top-adjacent stagnating ice sheet interface to the col located between Guanaco and the ridge connecting "Romeo" and "Juliet" peaks. The water passed from the Anderson into the upper Coldwater, flowing over the ice of the latter, to enter the head of Dry Gulch, and then spewed out into the Coquihalla Canyon. Why this way? The mouth of the upper Coldwater and the Coquihalla Lakes were blocked by a thick "block" of stagnating ice, and for that matter local runoff in that area was directed over the divide into the Britton Creek drainage of the Tulameen.

Ice disappeared from the headwaters of the Tulameen near Manning Park before melting out around the rugged canyon areas near Coalmont and Tulameen village. Large lakes were ponded in the upper basin and were drained through various passes on the north side of Manning Park. One such pass was Snass Valley where lake water runoff into its head flowed downvalley only to be diverted again into the near ice-free upper Sowaqua at 1510 m elevation, because the lower Snass (and Skagit) were still plugged with ice. As the ice sheet in the Tulameen withdrew down valley these upper outlets were abandoned and lake levels were reduced. The next lake level of interest to the mountaineer is that between Mt. Sutter and "Mt. Carry". Etched into the 'soft' sediment rocks (Methow terrane) of the Railroad - Carry Creek pass is a staggering straight meltwater channel of great depth and length that passed "Glacial Lake Tulameen" waters into the Coquihalla. The elevation here is 1355 - 1360 m or roughly a 150 m reduction in lake level from that draining to the Snass. However, tracing this contour on the Tulameen basin shows that at this level it was a very large glacial lake, with one arm extending into the Champion Creek tributary. By now one probably comprehends that the Coquihalla Canyon was a tremendously large meltwater sump for the melting of the ice sheet, carrying the runoff not only of the Coldwater-Coquihalla but also that of the Fraser and the Tulameen-Similkameen into the Fraser Lowland. Because the Coquihalla occupies a very erodible fault zone, these abrasive silt charged waters had no trouble in "carving" (sluicing) out the magnificent canyon we

see today, in all of its wall instability. Sometime after meltwater flow ameliorated, the volcanic "pile" between Hidden and Unknown Creeks collapsed by sagging and bulging out onto the floor of the Coquihalla, presenting an awesome headscarp overhead. This is clearly visible from the highway.

Getting back to the pass, the highway runs through kettled outwash gravels at the Coldwater cloverleaf, then it goes by the first of many glacial lake silt deposits which are better exposed on the east side of the valley. That is, the high elevation meltwater runoff regime on the south side of the pass now gives way to low valley floor glacial water runoff on the north along a chain of lakes. Like the Tulameen, a lower lake level successively developed down valley as the ice sheet retreated to the north. Our first lake, "Glacial Lake Juliet", (1110 - 1115 m) backed up waters from a dam just downstream of Juliet Creek (impressive silt terraces here) up to Coquihalla Lakes and then spilled over into the Coquihalla. The Henning Creek fan (rest area) now covers much of this outlet. "Glacial Lake Juliet" was also fed meltwater from "Glacial Lake Maka" by way of the Murray Lake outlet at Bottletop Creek. The next lake in the succession was "Glacial Lake Brodie", whose deposits are encountered on the climb to Larson Hill. Its elevation was almost 100 m lower (990 - 995 m) than "Juliet" and it spilled water into the Otter Creek drainage at Brookmere, and hence the canyonous defile of the Otter valley on the undersized Spearing Creek tributary. "Glacial Lake Brodie" was around for a long time because the lake bottom silt beds have a staggering thickness at Larson Hill. The outlet at Brookmere, however, has since been disguised by the meandering Brook Creek fan. Dropping off Larson Hill to the highway's Coldwater crossing a new set of lake levels is encountered (especially around Kingsvale). This is the well-documented "Glacial Lake Hamilton" (935 m locally) which extended downvalley to cover the entire Nicola basin at Merritt and surroundings. It drained not downstream into that still plugged up Thompson-Fraser canyon, but into the Okanagan basin by way of the Salmon River!

There is more to this glacial lake story but it's out of mountaineers' range excepting that of the alluded "Glacial Lake Maka". After the disappearance of "Glacial Lake Juliet", a lower level (ca 1080 m) of Glacial Lake Maka may have escaped into Glacial Lake Brodie because there was an ice dam in the Maka roughly 6 km north of Murray Lake. As the ice sheet (dam) dwindled to the north, however, the threshold

elevation at Murray Lake remained locally ponded while lower levels of the glacial lake were controlled to the north by leakage around the ice plugs at successive positions in the Spius Creek canyon. It does not appear likely that a lowest level of "Glacial Lake Maka" reached the junction of the Nicola at Canford, where a "Glacial Lake Merritt" in the Nicola valley existed at a level lower than aforementioned "Glacial Lake Hamilton". Drainage of all glacial lakes was probably completed by about 9000 years ago, and the ice sheet soon retracted into the higher Coast Mountains to the west, leaving only residual pockets of decayed ice to the east of the Fraser.

Over the last few thousand years there have been subtler changes on our mountain landscape. On the ridge crest between Hidden and Unknown Creeks there are "fossil" forest remains located well above present-day timberline, representing warmer climates than today of several millennia ago. With climatic cooling there has been the development of pocket glaciers in several cirques but only two (on Coquihalla Mtn. as noted by Dr. Cairnes) are still readily obvious, but both are in sad shape. Glacierets were also spotted on the west flank of Tulameen Mountain and the north side of Yak Peak and 7 permanent snow banks (ice underneath?) were encountered on the east side of "Stoyoma's Widow" and Mt. Hewitt Bostock. Because of the leeward aspect of this part of the Cascades the climate on the whole has been too dry to generate glaciers, and in its place we have "periglacial" features. These are landforms developed by frost action where the ground temperatures remain at or below 0°C for most of the year. This delicate freezing "line" is controlled by altitude, vegetation cover, exposure to the sun, ground conditions and other variables. On the Sowaqua it lies between 1825 and 2100 m whereas on the Bostock Range (Stoyoma massif) it drops to between 1700 and 1970 m, or roughly 125 m lower.

The most obvious periglacial features are "rock glaciers". Some are very active at a rate of movement measured in 10's of cm/year, whereas others are now dormant, possibly capable of re-activation when climate cooperates. These lobate furrows of blocky rock debris are found on the north side of Mt. Johnson on the 11-Mile Ck approach to Mt. Hatfield, an excellent display, but there are others on "Illal Mtn." and "Mt. Jim Kelly" of the Coquihalla massif. All are above the tree line, whereas the July Mtn. cirque (NE side) has a colossal apron of moving rock located below treeline which has to be skirted on the walk into the upper basin. Smaller rock glacier-like hummocks of blocky

debris are probably "protalus" (rocks rolling over residual snow aprons), but intergrades to true rock glaciers exist throughout the Stoyoma massif. Protalus is also well developed in several of the avalanche aprons in deep basins about Coquihalla Mountain. A curious feature on the northwest side of "Juliet Peak" appears to be thick rock rubble overlying glacier ice - or "debris covered glacier". Finally there are the smaller periglacial features which exude curious micro-topography. Above Cabin Lake on Stoyoma Mtn. one can find stone nets (festoons of rock necklaces enclosing pads of alpine turf). On more exposed slopes there are "stone stripes" of sorted particle sizes, and in the more continuous alpine meadows there are staircases of turf (solifluction lobes) which move when the overlying soil is saturated while the deeper material remains frozen.

To summarize, the geological evolution of this part of the Cascade Mountains has its own trademark, in that it shows the very indefinite transition to the Interior Plateau. While underlain by basically a crystalline core of granitic rocks, there are windows and cover of sedimentary formations and out-pouring of younger volcanics. Hence the earth scientists can't agree on the exact boundary between mountain and plateau because millions of years ago most of the area was part of a vast "peneplain", with the odd resistant rock knob protruding above the base level (so called monadnocks). Uplift of this surface brought about differential upwarping to the west. Roughly this change of slope is on a line marked by the Tulameen divide. To the north at Juliet-Murray Lakes, however, it jumps one valley farther west with Maka Creek becoming the approximate boundary, although there are plateau extensions into the upper Uztlius basin and onto the upper eastern flanks of Stoyoma Mtn. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that the underlying bedrock geology boundary/transition between Eagle granodiorites on the west and metamorphosed Nicola volcanics to the east defines the eastern edge of the Cascades. In this definition the unusual Thynne and Olivine Mountain massifs are actually outliers on the Interior Plateau.

Now back to range names: east of the Coquihalla River the peaks were historically called the "Hope Ranges" by the geologist at the turn of the century. That name fell by the wayside in favour of the Bedded Range, which is a subset of the Hozomeen Ranges, presumably because of the stratified layering on the principle peaks, Tulameen and Coquihalla Mtns. The modern day physiographers have been hesitant to offer



The Anderson River Group from Alpaca Pk. Photo - K. Ricker

(To left of climber heading clockwise, peaks are Serna, Gamuza, Steinbok, Ibex, Chamois, Gemse, and Reh.)

any new names as noted, but historically the area to the west of the Coldwater-Coquihalla has been called the Anderson River Ranges (which has my vote) except for the areas near Lytton (Lytton Range) and Canford (Bostock or Stoyoma Range). In one publication the term "Boston Bar Ranges" was also used, but it conflicted with Boston Bar Ridge - a name used by Cairnes for the area between Boston Bar Creek and the Coquihalla Canyon. Geographic names have been moved and changed throughout the turbulent history of exploration of the Cascades, perhaps brought out by the aura ("Coldcoqu") of dumbfoundedness in re-discovery!

#### The Mountains, The Peaks and The Names

Head and shoulders above everything else stands Mt. Outram (2461 m new TRIM map elev.) which for decades was noted on coarser scaled maps by the presence of an 8000 ft (2438 m) contour, or 2400 m contour on the metric versions. Outram was a name given by the Hudson Bay Company explorer, A.C. Anderson, based on family nepotism; he was an uncle who fought for the Empire in India, and is not the mountaineer's James Outram, who arrived in Canada 50 years later to do great exploits in the Canadian Rockies. This mountain (of Hozomeen assemblage rubble) offers a great view of the entire Coquihalla watershed, and fleeting perspectives of the Coldwater to the north, but as Sev Heiberg found from first-hand experience in the 1950s, it is too shattered and loose for any significant route development. An ascent by a BCMC party in 1924 is the first recorded ascent but because the Dewdney trail was put across its south flanks in 1861 it would not be surprising if it had been climbed before the turn of the century, because the normal route is a mere scramble at best.

Stoyoma Mtn. as it turns out is the highest peak in the Anderson River Ranges (we'll push for this name) which is shown by an authoritative 7486 ft. triangulation point on most of the older maps. However, the new TRIM series shows a spot elevation of 2287 m (7503 ft.) thereby making it the second highest peak in the Coquihalla-Coldwater-Spius watershed, barely "inching" out Tulameen Mtn. at 2285 m.

Perhaps we should clarify; new 1:20,000 scale maps have spot elevations on all high points and most lake surfaces. Sometimes the elevations are controlled with reference to a "trig" (triangulation) station, and at other places in this region the cartographers have ignored them, such as on Stoyoma. Usually the elevation discrepancies are only 2 to 3 m (e.g. "Juliet" Peak and Mt. "Carry" - too low and too high respectively), but on Stoyoma Mtn. the disagreement is 5.2 m suggesting to any "TRIM map believer" that this much leeway has to be recognized when using this series where there is considerable distance from a trig station ground control point used in the plotting of contours from aerial photos.

So who or what is Stoyoma? The B.C. place names book (G. and H. Akrigg) says it is a Thompson Indian (Interior Salish) word meaning "very bad or rough mountain". Climatically they are correct. According to foresters in the Merritt District, Pacific storm winds howl at incredible velocity at treeline in this area, and in recent years logging has almost reached this line (1860 m) with dire consequences. Otherwise, the mountain is disappointingly smooth on the south and east, and it is the "seat" of a large friendly cirque basin on its west. No wonder the shepherds pushed their flocks on to the alpine slopes at the turn of the century. On one of three trips to Stoyoma we were lashed by a

Pacific storm, which explains why they built the hut at Cabin Lake.

What peak elevations lie between the two high end points? There are roughly 60 - 70 peaks rising above tree line (1800-1850 m); and long rolling alpine ridges characterize the topography elsewhere on the Anderson River Ranges. At least 20 peaks exceed 2100 m and there are seven above 2200 m. Notwithstanding, Mt. Outram has a 175 m advantage on anything else. Surprisingly, Needle Peak at 2090 m does not make the top 20 and most of the good rock climbing is on the resistant and young granitic rock of 1800 to 2050 m in height. Why the cruddier rock peaks are higher is a mystery, but obviously it's a matter of tectonic uplift out-pacing their erodibility. There are on the whole more higher peaks on the Bedded Ranges (erodible rock), which include two in the Coquihalla massif. And for those who wonder; the east peak of Mt. MacLeod (formerly Mt. Manson) is one metre higher than its west peak (2175 m), an issue we couldn't resolve on our two trips in the Eleven Mile Creek basin. The northwest peak of Mt. Hewitt Bostock is 3 m higher than the southeast peak (2180 m). Otherwise peaks of 1950 m ( $\pm$  50 m) are equally distributed throughout the area but many lower ones between Stoyoma and July Mtns. lack official names.

In our quest to rectify the hiatus of mountain names in the region we have used two "programs". In 1975 the alpine ungulates of the world were slathered onto peaks within the spectacular Needle Peak pluton, because the early cragrats of the Anderson River group had a favourite warm-up climb on "Gemse". Phil Kubik and I took this name to heart and added to it in a big way, making the mistake of diverging from the "game" plan for the mountains around Needle Peak. There we switched to the tailor mode and the authorities rejected our applications. Had we stuck to animals, or deviated to the medicinal qualities of Coldcoqu, we might have had more luck (Hemp Pk.?). In another program we are now attempting to preserve the Shakespearean whistle stop names employed by the CPR. Where this ploy is out of reach, capitalizing on adjacent creek names for the highest peaks in those basins, and utilizing early pioneer names (who have had some direct activity in the basin) are the method of attack. Unfortunately there is already a Mt. Cairnes elsewhere in Western Canada (N. of Revelstoke, Yukon) but the surveyors, prospectors and field assistants of the turn of the century have given us Mt. Carry, Mt. Amberty, Mt. Chantler and Mt. Falconer, if the authorities will buy it. And no story would be complete without

explanation of the Manson folly. The original Mt. Manson was named after a Hudson Bay Company employee who worked at several widely scattered forts in British Columbia. In 1855 his tent site at the head of Peer Creek (mile 14 from Hope, Brigade Trail) was hit by a falling tree which killed his partner, Paul Fraser. Unfortunately the mountain topography at the time was ill-defined, being a 6000 ft hump at the head of the basin to the south of Fools Pass, but the mapping by the survey party for Camsell and Cairnes' work in 1918-1920 found a much higher peak to hang the name on in the next basin to the south (Eight Mile Creek). This was a tactical error; the Brigade Trail is forest bound, and there is no way that this higher peak could be easily seen from Manson's camp. But the historians seized the name again to re-name Manson Ridge to account for all of the low ridges bounding this section of the trail. (In my books neither Mt. Hatfield, nor Outram, are low ridges.) And so Cairnes' (or Falconer's) "Mt. Manson" then became a Mt. MacLeod (a World War vet) which was subject to a summit commemoration party of which Jack Bryceland took part in recent years. Now, grit your teeth, Cairnes' geological map actually positioned the name, Mt. Manson, near the unnamed (2151 m) high granitic halfdome between Mt. Outram and Mt. Hatfield - about the only granitic spired peak protruding from the largely covered Mt. Outram Pluton - and the 'm' on a photocopy of the map appeared as an 'r', to give us the guidebook (Beckey's) faux pas of the decade award. So "Mt. Marson" is enigmatic, and "Mt. Chantler" (Cairnes' field assistant - 2 seasons) is the obvious suggested substitute name.

New names are in the application stage with the provincial authorities, and thus the use of quotation marks for them on the map and accompanying Table 1. Undoubtedly there will be rejections and revised re-applications.

#### **Trip Schedule, The Weather, and Logistics**

It used to be simple: meet at Ryans at 10 am in Hope and we are on our way to chase colours on the forlorn Coquihalla road or railbed. In the first two or three years the autumn colours were outstanding and there was no buzz bomb of auto traffic to disturb the photography. It did not take long to discover that the guaranteed colours fell on the first weekend of October, although one or the other of the last two weekends of September were sometimes used as the trip date. How does the date agree with the weather, or vice versa (Table 1)? Indian summer and blazing heat on a few, cooler clear days or others; but about 50% of the time the air is cold, skies are cloudy, and skiffs of snow at



Fresh snow on Coquihalla Mtn. (above climbers) and Mt. Jim Kelly (to left). Photo - K. Ricker.

higher elevations discourage the rock climbing. Nonetheless, the air has an invigorating snap! There has also been a monsoon (outright cancelled trip), a full scale blizzard which threatened panic for fear our cars would be trapped for the winter, and two trips of misery have had low visibility and 150% saturated snow. So the stats for success are good, and the swilling of "Coldcoqu" is a sure-fire winner.

Trips characteristically began at Ryans Restaurant on the TransCan at the SW side of Hope. Passenger loads, etc. were re-adjusted there and unwanted vehicles were left behind (too obvious for malicious activity). With the advent of the Coquihalla bypass, it was a more troublesome rendezvous to find, and the food slid to sub-standard fare as business nose-dived. The November 25, 1995 floods did it a favour by knocking the place out of action with a debris flow, and we have since retreated up the old highway to the Home Restaurant and its better grub, but too popular with other faithful clientele. Processions up the Coquihalla canyon came to a close when the highway opened, and so the toll gate could not be bypassed, because the pipelines had locked off the rail route. This impediment was countered with a "park it-leave it" at the employee's carpark at the toll booths, and then walking through "the frontier" to vehicles brought in from Merritt! Unfortunately we lost one Merritt correspondent after the 1992 year, and so the largest vehicle from Vancouver is now loaded for the drive through.

Once off the main road the most usable side road was driven to road end, or washout and camp set-up in an old nearby log landing. In the Tulameen, upper Coldwater and at Cabin Lake on Stoyoma Mtn, official Forest service campsites were used, and for one trip to "Mt. Carry" an old mining camp was used by reaching it on bikes. For the Tulameen Mtn. ventures we actually packed in to some pond-studded avalanche meadows in the upper Amberty Creek basin. Normally, however, the Coquihalla trips do not require walk-in overnight camps for any peak, and because of the overnight snow often countered above or near tree line the walk-in tactic will usually waste rather than save time.

So far we have avoided the use of horses, oxen, choppers, skidoos, trail bikes, ATVs, camels, or any other artificial aids to reach a camp, but we are still looking for a yak or llama to help us out in the upper Coldwater. Horse trails, as we have found, have the habit of appearing in the middle of a route and then disappearing after sucking us in to use them! And we still haven't figured out who built the trails to Mt. Johnson and "Mt. Chantler" ("Marson") in Eleven Mile Creek basin without bothering to mark the route below timberline to the logging road! Which brings up a last point - the Brigade Trail has to cross the Sowaqua Forestry Road in order to initiate the ascent over Mt. Davis. Just try and find that trail crossing from the road!

#### The Participants and the Wildlife

Up to 1980 Coldcoqu ventures were joint ACC/BCMC trips, with a few diehards from each club usually coming out for the fun. Alfred Menninga would catch the weekend ferry from Vancouver Island while Ken Hunt and Don Lyon from the ACC were regulars, to be joined by a non-clubber and forester, Norm Hansen, of Merritt. The latter knew the logging roads and enjoyed the jesting with the hard-core environmental element to add spice to the evening campfire. With the exception of Norm, these early season diehards faded out at about the time the highway was opened, to be replaced by Bert Parke, Sev Heiberg, Ed Zenger, Roman Babicki, Blaine Bickell, John Sapac and Jenny Faulkner. Sev in fact often picked the destination! In 1992 Norm resorted to consulting to try and make ends meet. It quickly consumed all of his time and he, along with Roman, have dropped out, to be replaced by Jack Bryceland and other Chilliwackers. So we lost an 80 percenter, and the hard core at present are 50 percenters or less! Over the long haul the size of the trip group has averaged 8 (Table 1), varying from a low of 2 (on 2 occasions) to a high of 18 (Coquihalla,

second trip). Four-wheel drive roads usually bring out higher numbers, and more 4WD vehicles!

Not much wildlife is seen because they know when we are coming - it's hunting season! However, there has been the rare bear sighting, and large very fresh grizzly tracks were seen on the overnight snow of Mt. Hewitt Bostock about 200 m from the south-east summit. According to Norm, hunters cleaned out the goat herd on the Stoyoma massif but we have spotted them on the "Markhor"-Needle traverse and on the Tulameen massif. Rambunctious, virile, fully-racked mule(?) deer have twice tried to mame Sev Heiberg on the ridges about the Coquihalla massif. Moose, elk, sheep, wolf, cougar, wolverine have avoided us and the pika/marmot encounters are decidedly rare. The biggest bust for wildlife was the lengthy rolling ridge traverse between "Romeo" and "Juliet" peaks on the west side of July Creek Basin - not a track, and game trails were sketchy at best.

### The Trip Highlights

#### Bostock or Stoyoma Range

The north end of the Anderson River Ranges drew early interest (1973 - 1976) because of our Merritt connection. The quaint hut at Cabin Lake was also an attraction and the road to it gave quick access to lengthy ridges of alpine terrain. Lakes about the NW summit of Mt. Hewitt Bostock are gems, and the giant cirque between Stoyoma and its "Widow" is especially esthetic. However, the area is underlain by granitic rock of the ancient Eagle - Mt. Lytton complex, which is basically too shattered to offer any sport climbing, and so this part of the Anderson Ranges is more suited to alpine ridge rambling.

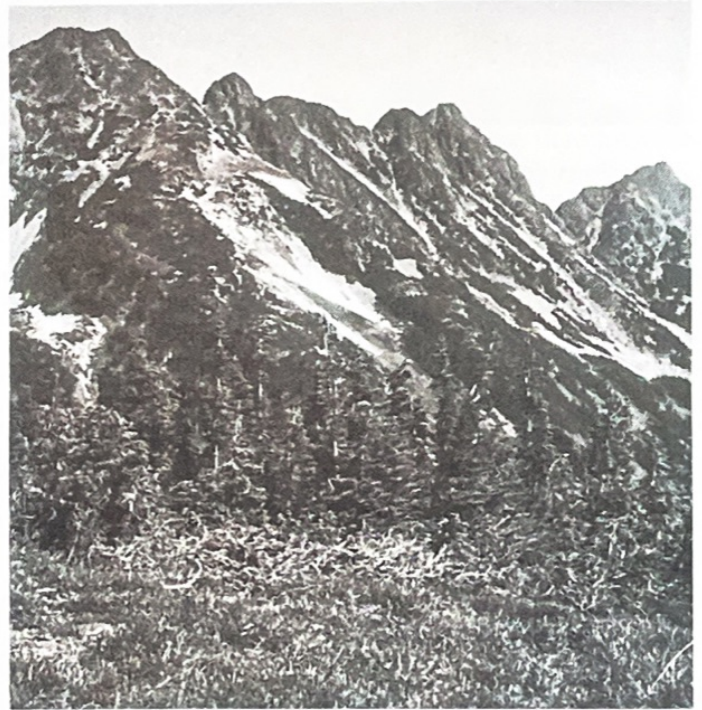
#### Coquihalla Massif

The first trip (1977) was begun out of the Coquihalla canyon. Out-maneuvering a large ancient rockslide to reach the ridge crest between Hidden and Unknown Creeks was the Vancouverite access to Coquihalla Mountain. This is a very esthetic but long ramble and a non-stop 10 hour day was needed to complete the climb which saw a final summit scramble through new snow. The summit record was sparse, but two entries in the 1930s were by Coalmont parties, and at that time this village was a going concern with dangerously operating coal mines in the Blakeburn Basin. Subsequent conversations with old timers at Princeton indicate that the Coquihalla massif was a popular summer retreat for many residents of the area, using the Jim Kelly Creek trail as the access. So, the subsequent trips used the Jim Kelly approach for two

climbs ("Jim Kelly" Peak, "Mt. Carry") which lead to the discovery of the Illal Creek approach, that is now heavily used by the locals, including an outfitter who has a cabin near the creek forks. Hence the second trip to Coquihalla Mtn. (1992), via Illal, saw a two route blitz (north-east ridge, south spur) plus a ramble to "Illal Mountain" which sits out to the north. The trail from logging road end to the alpine provides quick access. However, the access road along the Illal is a forester's nightmare of instability, and it will likely be closed unless the numerous recreational users make a persistent loud and clear protest to keep it open.

#### Needle Peak Massif

Views of this peak from the Coquihalla Canyon over exaggerate the ruggedness and the size of this monolith of granitic rock. Before the opening of the highway the



Coquihalla Mtn. (to left) and Mt. Jim Kelly (far right) from the SW. Photo - K. Ricker

normal route was to park at the base, near Needle Creek, and walk up to the immense railroad bridge which spanned it. Depending on the route, either side of the Creek was ascended, avoiding avalanche bush. The peak was easily topped from this basin making the ascent anti-climatic to what looked like a stupendous rock climb from below. With the opening of the highway it didn't take long to discover an esthetic north ridge rambling route which required some honest scrambling on the final summit approach



The S. Face of Yak Pk. and Nak Pk. from Markhor Pk. Photo - K. Ricker.

from the west. However, a variant from the highway was to ascend "Markhor" (formerly "Thimble") from the north north-west on easy slabs and then descend steeper slabs on the south to reach a basin separating the two peaks. Regaining the ridge which connects the two is easily done by ascending a thin line which is a steep gully marked by a few trees, but staying on the ridge may well be the better way to connect the traverse. Rock climbing on the magnificent slabs on the north side of the "Markhor" has also been done but it requires a very dry day. Dense, thick lichen cover in this area when damp or wet is no fun at all when friction is the main tool needed for these rock climbs.

#### Zopkios Ridge

The name was originally applied to the lower ridges to the west and north of Yak Peak, but map makers took liberties and shoved the name to include anything south and west of Falls Lake, and this has now been engrained into several ministries of the government with no chance of it being corrected. We now realize that Cairnes and his field assistant probably traversed every ridge throughout this system and probably exited it with a walk down the Coldwater Valley by descending Zum Peak, which he called "Coldwater Hill". The BCMC, several decades ago, may have had a camp at Falls Lake to provide the first recreational climbing in this area but written record of the venture

is elusive. Nonetheless, the usual south face slabs of Yak Peak lured the unsuspecting crag rats, including Culbert and his gang in the early 1970s. A shortage of cracks limits the use of hardware and the large feldspar crystals in the rock sometimes crumble with the intense edge pressure of climbing boots. We found Nak to be easy and esthetic, and the trip to adjacent Yak is a mere 20 minute stroll unless one short east face slab doesn't way lay the party (we spent hours on it!). On another trip Yak was climbed direct from the south west avoiding those fearsome south-facing slabs. The north face of Yak appears to have the required cracks for one of those dramatic dirrectisima ascents.

#### Lamoid Group

Anything in the Andes which cavorts like a llama is a "lamoid" - it has nothing to do with the modern over-used adjective "lame". The peaks mark the northwest rim of the Coldwater basin, and our clever Merritt forester soon discovered that a rival competitor was road building into the basin. Previously, Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik had approached them from the (west) Anderson basin, but that requires gate keys. Our first mission was run from a camp just upstream of the tollbooth, which had the potential to flood! Driving to road end below Guanaco Peak (still possible), the gang crashed the snow-covered sub-alpine shrubbery to reach an amphitheatre of slab grandeur, but in the

slippery whiteness underfoot, opted instead for a careful ascent of Guanaco (NTD), which lacked cairns. Descending, bravado increased and finally four broke ranks to go for Vicuña by an off and on northeast ridge route. Sev and John Gudaitus made it, the others retreated on a now well "pounded" trail to the vehicles. Two years later the same trail was easily relocated and Vicuña was ascended in a more civilized manner; only a one pitch belay is needed in dry conditions by the same route. However, the southwest ridge is 'the route' to take. Many have now ascended this pair of peaks with yet other routes, and in 1996 I discovered a new decommissioned complex road system leading around the north side of Guanaco from the east Anderson River. One to two-hour ascents via several routes are possible, and so there is no need to bushwhack out of the Coldwater to reach the northeast buttress of Guanaco!

Alpaca is one of those Yosemite-style slab promenades. The easiest access is from the upper Coldwater, beginning the walk-in before crossing the river on the road. One km of logged out slopes followed by gentle slabs leads to the Llama-Alpaca col; it's a great vista stroll from there to the top, and one BCMC party continued it to Bighorn Mtn. lying 3 km to the NW! However, Alpaca's other coat is a 3 km long northeast face roughly 150 - 200 m high with route



Vicuña (left) and Alpaca (right) Pks.  
from Guanaco Pk. Photo - K. Ricker.

potential galore. So far we have had one exercise, with two routes completed, which are likely the easiest. Both started side by side about 500 m southeast of the Vicuña-Alpaca col. Traversing the entire base of the face to start other routes is easy, but some are sloping slabs reminiscent of bowling alleys with a paucity of cracks! Obviously this face is "overdue" and the Coldwater road is in very good shape at present to get on with it!

#### "Shakespeare Group"

Everyone sees July Mtn. on the maps, and for that matter it's easy to see from any distant ridge to the east of it. Clearly it marks the eastern edge of the Cascade Mountains. Juliet Creek wraps around this massif but July Creek (not marked on 1:50,000 maps) on its northeast side is the one with logging roads to make it a short delightful trip. Again, Norm Hansen spotted this development, but noted to us that the Juliet Creek road is needed to reach those on July Creek. The highest logged area on the mountain is at the mouth of a huge cirque on its northeast side. In less than an hour the lake on the north side of the peak was reached by ridiculously easy walking from this road. So, the day became a rock climbing festival on the summit block, with sobering consequences. More shattered Eagle Complex granitics, and there were several bombarding, too-close-to-call, missiles of mega proportions on routes taken to the east and west of the summit block. We descended via an easy back door and relaxed at the lake before calling it a day. In 1996 geological work in the Juliet Creek basin uncovered easy road access to that long ridge to the west of July Mtn. which marks the "spine" of the Cascades. A trip on it came off the "reserve list" when our original objective (Dewdney) had a road washout. The peak marking the south end of Juliet valley ("Romeo") was quickly ascended from road end on a cool brisk day which threatened with morning snow flurries. It had a cairn with no record; hunters or prospectors from the mine area to the east are likely first visitors, but it could be more of Cairnes in his follow-up work. The 5 km traverse NW to "Juliet" encountered alpine rambling terrain but low bluffs along the way were found to be more of that loose granitic rock of the Eagle Complex to register our first casualty on a Coldcoqu trip. "Juliet" had a survey monument of 1980 vintage, but I suspect they used a helicopter to set it up. Nonetheless, logging roads wrap around the northeast ridge of the peak (our descent) and now make this objective an easy day for those who like unadulterated alpine ridge rambles.

### "Brigade Group"

Known on the maps as Manson Ridge, the peaks on the south rim of the Sowaqua have lots of surprises. The highest, Mt. Outram, is a "pile of garbage" and after a reconnaissance ascent it was ignored for autumn trips. But, running northwest from it, subsidiary peaks take on a different perspective because the core of the Outram Batholith is exposed and granitic rock changes the picture. Mt. Hatfield, in particular, looked very impressive from several vantagepoints to the north, but it is an unnamed feature on most maps. Access to this peak was discovered by accident; the maps showed a road on Eight Mile Creek, which couldn't be found because it was grown in and had a disguised entrance in a closed down gravel pit. Unwittingly the next access off the highway was near the Hope Slide, and the thought that it connected to Eight Mile was soon forgotten as it climbed an excessive grade into Eleven Mile Basin before levelling out near timberline. Months later at the highest logger's landing in the basin, we had a very chilly start on our quest for Hatfield. A short open forest ascent led to glades, alpine meadows and eventually a cold ridge crest between "Marson" and the objective. The route was obvious: ramble onward to the north and outflank the rock steps on the south ridge by veering into gullies on its east side. A large wooden sign welcomed us to the summit, and the cairn record revealed the historical significance of the peak. Harley Hatfield, a promoter of the preservation and re-opening of the Brigade and other trails nearby, was the source of the name. Somehow, we probably cheated the system by not using the Brigade Trail for our approach. In the following year we came back to climb "Marson" but the climb was steeper, exposed and not the place to be with new snow on smooth granitic rock.

### Tulameen Mountain or Bedded Range

Re-opening of the mine on lowly Treasure Mtn. by enterprising Norsks brought on this campaign. An autumn visit to the mine was to check on acid mine drainage, and in midwinter we returned to traverse the entire mountain on skis to check on wildlife movements. These forays showed us the way to Tulameen and in the following autumn vehicles were parked on the saddle between Treasure and Sutter Mountains. A trail was picked up to lead to old flattened cabin sites of the Summit Camp, established by John Sutter in 1895. We opted for a meadow with nearby ponds, curiously formed by avalanche activity, to make camp. New snow just above camp level spoiled the next day's fun. Reaching the head of

Amberty basin it was obvious that the first summit ("Amberty") would be a thrash in the slippery snow cover. Some of the party opted for hiking on adjacent south ridges of Mt. Sutter while the others chose a variety of harem-scarem ways to surmount the north peak of "Amberty". Karl and Bert Parke actually roped up when their route daylighted on exceptionally steep and slithery heather! The next summits of "Amberty" were a stroll, and the rock ridge connection to Tulameen (near trig point 7074) was a shade thin. Surveyors had left much residue including batteries for their EDM device at this station. Ahead was a magnificent syncline of bedding on the main peak of Tulameen, tilted in our favour. Alas, the new snow on the summit block stopped us cold as neither cracks or ledges could be found, and there was not one piton among our hardware-laden crew! Meanwhile Steve Grant avoided the direct head-on conflagration and ran an end run to climb the summit via its SE scree slopes. Well, we came back a year later on a much warmer day and did it our way, via the north buttress, with a bit of hardware (relatively easy as it turned out) and descended it via Steve's route. Even "Amberty" was a stroll on that day.

### "Monadnocks"

The interior of the province was a low level plain before uplift in the last 5 to 10 million years of which the Cascade Mountains were the outer edge (as hills). But some parts of this plain were "hard-core", being underlain by more erosion resistant granitic rocks and hence part of the Coldcoqu affinity. They lie on the east side of the Cascade Mountain-Interior Plateau boundary (Coldwater-Maka, Britton Creek, Champion Creek, etc.) and are significant mountains (as isolated massifs) on their own. Selish Mtn., Mt. Thynne, Mt. Henning, Olivine Mtn. and Lodestone Mtn. are the main ones, and Mt. Thynne (2020 or 2026 m) has an elevation comparable to many in the Cascades to the west. Monadnock ventures are saved for those days when all else is closed out by weather. On one trip the participants abandoned ship at the pass, leaving the tardy leader to wait for the Merritt contingent alone, and a following day of exploration on Mt. Thynne. Camp was set up in Brookmere's spacious campground (no rain there!). From Brookmere the road is driveable for any vehicle right to the summit forestry lookout. (In the first visit in the early 1980s it sported only one microwave repeater station, but by 1996 it was a maze of electronic Christmas trees which lead one to think that they might be on a displaced DEW line site!). Mt. Thynne. was originally accessed by a long trail from

the east out of the Otter Valley, before the summit road was punched out. Our first visit was spent on old trails about the peak and looking for rock climbing pitches (there are several), as well as admiring the socked-in view to the west. On a nice day Mt. Thynne offers an incredible view of the Cascades to the west, as well as the Interior Plateau to the north-east and south-east. If you go, you too will find the true meaning of a monadnock - hallucinating in its own perspective look at things.

#### After One Quarter Century, What's Left?

At our current pace of visits it may take another 25 years to clean out the loose ends of the Coldcoqu Siege. With the exception of two peaks, most of the high targets have been climbed. Curiously these two are at opposite ends of the system: Mt. Dewdney (2244 m) the fifth highest at the very south-east corner and Mt. Lytton (2044 m) on the north-west end. Ah, yes Fred Beckey has a fascination with nearby Mt. Zakwaski (2043 m), which is a borderline Cascade summit, or monadnock, on the east. Its summit is almost in total tree cover (?) and Fred's fascination must stem from the name only - we'll give it a miss.

Starting from the south end we'll note the gaps in our coverage, beginning at Hope. Mts. Squeah, Jorgenson and Ogilvie on its doorstep have been ignored because approaches had been from the Fraser, rather than the 'Coke'. However new logging roads along Deneau Creek have changed this situation, and Squeah could have easily been climbed via the Caroline Mine road - so our excuse is a cop-out! Heading north, the Boston Bar Creek leg of the highway runs between two high granitic peaks without names: "Bombtram" or "Falstaff" on the west and "Portia" ("Bhoral") on the east (to the south of Needle Peak). Farther east, Mt. Snider (2036 m) (Cairnes - "Goat Mtn.") is an easy ascent from either the Sowaqua or Dewdney Creek approaches (if the road is ever repaired). And while flirting with the Treasure - Tulameen Mtn. Missions, Mt. Sutter (1951 m) and a higher unnamed pal (1974 m) to the north are a set-up for bad weather weekend rambling. The Coquihalla massif, however, is cleaned out, but there are more routes to do on the main peak. North and west of the highway the low rambling ridges of Zopkios Ridge await rock school/scramble weekends, but Alpaca's north face requires much more work. Between July and Stoyoma Mountains there is an endless sea of alpine rambler ridges, but distinct objectives are few. This is the area of the Spius, Uztlius and Maka watersheds; the ascent of the highest peak in each ["Spius" (1943 m), "Uztlius" (1992 m) and "Maka"

(1989 m)] would be easy day rambles from nearby roads, and should fill in a big gap of our coverage. History, however, should also have a hand. Both Mt. Davis (Brigade Trail) and Jackass Mtn. (Cariboo Wagon Road) lie within our confines, warranting respect with a visit.

As you can see this long tale has no end, but 25 years from now an 87 year old will be hard pressed to tell it all again! The power of "Coldcoqu", however, is a bigger lure than my writing. I'll see you there.

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## SOUTH STEIN - MEHATL TRAVERSE

19 August - 6 September, 1996

by Peter Pare and Lisa Baile

The Mehatl valley had just been protected forever (!) through the controversial RPAC process, so we decided that a celebratory journey from the headwaters to its confluence with the Nahatlatch was appropriate. But since that would be an arboreal exploration we included as an alpine appetizer, the South Stein Divide. Since we planned on taking two weeks, one across the divide and one down the valley, a food drop seemed necessary. However, in the interests of environmental friendliness (and to save \$) we decided to do the "drop" by foot.

With a promise of improving weather during the week we left Vancouver at 8 am on August 19th in low overcast, fueled up with a giant bran muffin at Pemberton General Store, and reached Lizzie Lake trailhead by 1pm. As we ascended toward the cabin with 10 days worth of food we entered low cloud. Confident that we could easily find Arrowhead Lake by Braille we pressed on, and indeed we soon stumbled on a lake...however, it eventually became apparent, in worsening rain, that it was Long Lake, almost 180 degrees off course!!! It was then only a matter of finding a flat camping spot before we became too wet.

The next day we were off at 7 am, bound for Figure of Eight Lake to leave the food drop. It wasn't raining and by 8 am we were at Arrowhead Lake, climbed through swirling mist and light snow to the benches below Anemone peak, and descended into Cherry Pit Pass, catching glimpses of Rodger's Creek valley. We reached Caltha Lake by 11 am where we met a dispirited huddling group wondering what to do next. They told us of a smallish forest fire burning in the lower Stein, but we didn't give it too much thought given the dampish conditions. By 1 pm we reached Figure of Eight Lake and lessened our load by caching 8 days worth of food, turned tail and headed back to Long Lake again. We mingled with a family of Ptarmagin below Anemone Peak and were back in camp by 7 pm for a quick swim (Peter shivered for an hour afterward). August 21 dawned clear and we had a lovely hike out to the car and a pleasant drive over the Duffey Lake road for BLTs at the Shantyman restaurant outside Lillooet. Then on to the Reo Rafting Company operation on the lower Nahatlatch where we met Brian Fogelman and Dave who were both very helpful in facilitating our trip. We watched hordes of rafters descend the raging torrents and camped in a quiet spot by the river.

At 6:30 the next morning, in perfect weather, Dave drove us in our car to 1700 m on a spur road off Log Creek Main and dropped us virtually in alpine meadows beneath Pyramid Peak on the Nahatlatch - Kwoiek divide. As he drove off promising to leave our car at the junction of the Mehatl and Nahatlatch 14 days later, we were over-whelmed with the silence and the grandeur of our situation. To the west was Kwoiek Needle and beyond it the impressive Chochiwa glacier and the peaks along the divide that we would be traversing in the coming days; Kukman, Kwoiek Peak (separate from the Needle, and the highest point on the traverse at 2734 m), Tiarra Tower and Mehatl Peak. To the south in the far distance we could see Mt.



Camp 1 with Kwoiek Needle behind. Photo - L. Baile.

Breakenridge and the line of peaks to the West of Harrison Lake. Looking back we could see smoky haze over the lower Nahatlatch and Fraser rivers. Must be a fire somewhere. We headed west along a roller coaster meadowed ridge toward Kwoiek Needle. The flowers were at their best and we identified three types of *Penstemon*, as well as *Phlox*, buttercup, saxifrage, *Sedum*, *Claytonia*, scrophulariaceae, lupines, pussy toes, monkey flowers and more, as we wandered through small stands of white pine and the occasional mountain ash. Camp 1 was well situated at 2100 m on a bit of flat grass just before the start of the small glacier leading up to Kwoiek Needle. We were quickly made aware of one of the hazards of ridge walks however - the availability of water! There was no running or standing water to be seen but we noticed that small rivulets were streaming off the remains of a large cornice on the ridge, so while the sun still shone we placed pots, water bottles, plastic bags etc. under the drips and soon had enough for supper and the morning. The sun set behind the north ridge of Kwoiek Needle, the ridge we hoped to climb the next day.

We awoke to perfect weather and the snow on the glacier was soft enough that crampons weren't necessary. As it happened the approach to the north ridge proved the hairiest portion of the entire traverse. After an easy walk across the glacier we found that to

reach the ridge crest we had to pull ourselves up and around large loose jagged rocks which were tenuously imbedded in loose, moist, sandy, black soil. It only took 20 minutes to reach the ridge crest but it seemed much longer. A quick recce by Lisa up the ridge suggested that we would be better off traversing further west around the mountain before making a summit attempt. On the other side of the ridge was a snow field which narrowed into a snow gully as it ascended to meet the west ridge 300 m above us and just 100 m below the summit ..... off we went with "big foot" Peter kicking the steps. It was easy at first but as the fully narrowed and steepened the snow became firmer and firmer..... "too steep to put on campons now." Kick, kick, kick, step, etc. with occasional expletives!

Lunch was had at the ridge crest (2500 m) and a pckless scramble to the summit afforded splendid views of our approach route and the fun to come. It was then that we first noticed the enormous plume of smoke rising from the middle Stein, it looked like an enormous mushroom shaped cloud and although it tended to die down each night it grew again each afternoon over the following days and eventually prevented us from seeing anything very far away despite the flawless weather. At the base of the west ridge (2000 m) we found a delightful melt pool and

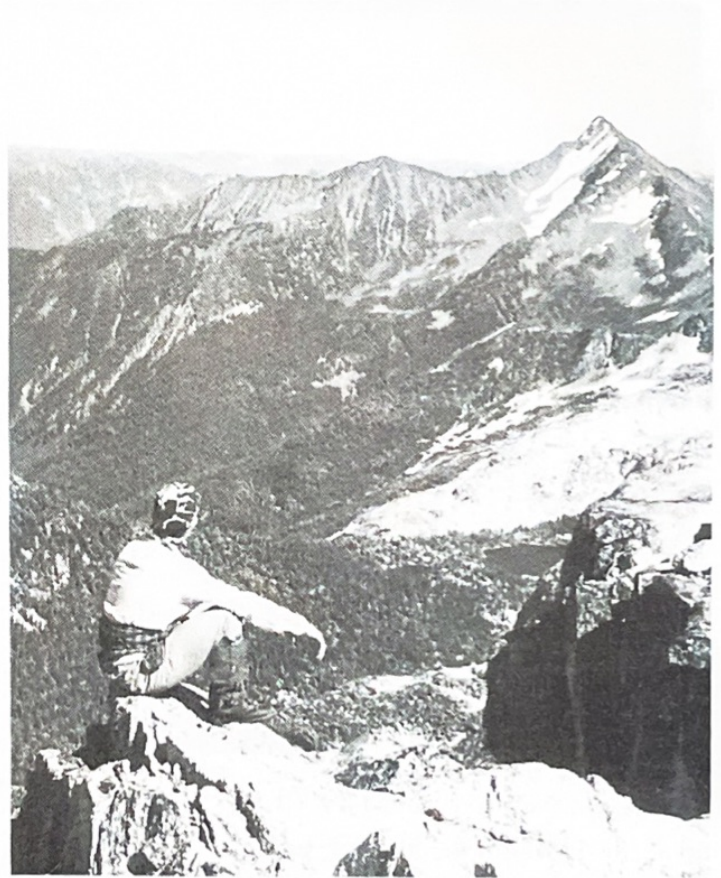
after a wash and curried salmon, watched the stars briefly.

Day 3 took us over a small summit and then down onto the bare ice of the toe of the Chowchiwa glacier at 1860 m. We donned crampons, roped up and slogged for 3 hours to a col at 2400 m for lunch. We then contoured around Kukman (2700 m) and gained the main divide immediately above the headwaters of North Mehatl Creek. At last we could see no logging roads. Gazing down into its marshy upper reaches and the broad-forested slopes which curved south and west to join the main Mehatl, and realizing that it was protected, provided a special moment, and despite the controversy we silently blessed the RPAC process.

Our camp that night was unique; at 2500 m we were perched on a flat rock exactly the size of the tent so that there was a 1.5 m drop out the front door and then an unobstructed view down the North Mehatl. It was balmy enough to wander about in t-shirts and marvel at the patterns that the sun, setting through the smoky haze of the Stein fire, made on the graceful wind cirques at the apex of the glacier. A balmy night, half moon, stars and little gnawing sounds - related, as we later found, to a pika (or pack rat?) nibbling at Peter's ice axe strap.

Day 4 we ambled across the glacier to the western slopes of Kwoiek Peak where we got excellent views down the Rutledge Glacier and Rutledge Creek into the smoldering middle Stein. Dropping packs we ascended easy snow slopes and chunky rock to the summit where the altimeter read 2745 m (2735 m officially). During a summit snack, with the binoculars, we could see individual trees exploding into flame in lower Rutledge Creek and once more the mushroom shaped cloud rose towering thousands of metres above us. We were surprised at the lack of evidence of firefighting (no helicopters) but later learned that the fire had been left to burn since now that it was in a park it was no longer marketable timber! We had lunch after regaining the divide just west of the spectacular Tiarra Tower, which Lisa threatened to scamper up, but since we had only traveled 2 km as the crow flies that day I convinced her to continue along the divide. After much up and downing we reached a 2600 m peak just east of Mehatl Peak at 5 pm and finding an airy flat spot made our highest camp. No water but lots of slushy snow on the hot rocks and another smoky sunset.

Day 5 we quickly ascended Mehatl Peak and then had to lower our packs down some cliffs to the south of the divide to gain a more easily angled snow slope.



Looking back to Kwoiek Needle from Kwoiek Pk.

Photo - L. Baile.

Following fresh goat prints we were able to bypass some of the more jagged parts of the ridge crest. Lisa found some wonderful black - collared daisies and eventually we did catch sight of the goat as he/she effortlessly went on before us. Early evening brought us to a wonderful flatish spot on the divide strewn with boulders, moss covered flat slabs, a big flat rock to camp by, and even a small stream and washing pond! What should have been wonderful views down into the main Mehatl Creek below us were obscured by haze, and we were torn between hoping for rain to put out the fire or fair weather to complete the high traverse. The sunset was spectacular thanks to the smoke, and as we dozed off an enormous orange moon rolled down the ridge to the east of us.

Day 6 was warm and sunny again and we made good time, bypassing the main crest by snow slopes to the south and then regained the crest above three lovely lakes, the uppermost of which was still partially frozen, draining via a precipitous cascade into the green jungle of Mehatl Creek...shades of week two! We



Tiarra Tower. Photo - L. Baile.

finally stopped above a fourth lake just shy of the large glacier which was to be our highway "home" the next day. Just before dark a large owl (Spotted? Barred?) circled the tent about 3 times before swooping away into the dusk.

Day 7 the weather changed; a yellow moon set over the Mehatl and clouds and wind came from the southeast. We donned crampons to cross the 11 km of glacier, which surprisingly has no name on the map. We chose to call it Elton glacier in honor of the wonderful cerulean blue lake into which its mid-portion drains. After climbing one of the 2400 m peaks which guards the eastern approach to the glacier, we slogged across the snow. Ahead of us flocks of birds descended onto the surface and arranged in a long row methodically moved downslope gobbling up the copious insects on the snow. Eventually Elton Lake

came into view, more the color of Tundra Lake than we remembered it from an earlier visit; perhaps because it was later in the season and had less fresh glacial silt in it. We climbed Mount Klackarpun in deteriorating weather and after a breezy lunch put on rain gear to continue the crossing. It got quite dark and the visibility dropped enough to make us entertain thoughts of camping on the glacier, but as we passed Crevasse Crag it started to clear again. Passing south of Mount Skook Jim, we finally reached the west-facing glacier that drains into the headwaters of the east branch of Rodgers Creek. As we plunged down the glacier towards the mostly frozen newly forming glacial lake at its snout, a raven flew overhead doing fantastic aerobatics, chortling with joy after each tumble! To be a bird!!! From the lake at the base of the glacier, water gushed between two walls of rock and raced in a rocky bubbling torrent 300 m down a headwall into a most wonderful meadow and lake, which subsequently drained into Rodger's Creek. The lake was on our projected route to the headwaters of the Mehatl and we resolved to camp there the next night after reclaiming the food drop. After crossing the creek on a snow bridge we staggered up to the west facing ridge that leads back north toward Figure of Eight Lake and at 2180 m found a wonderful perched camping spot replete with small stream and a spectacular sunset in clearer skies to the west. We had crossed the South Stein Divide. Bring on Mehatl Creek.

The next day dawned perfect, slightly cooler than it had been on the traverse and we tromped along the ridge with empty packs to Figure of Eight Lake to find the food intact. We spied a small blue tent down by the lake but we were too bushed to make contact. Back at camp we loaded the once again heavy packs, strapped the empty bucket to the back of Peter's pack and tottered down into the meadow by the lake. The 2-3 ha of meadow are flat and braided by branches of the stream, surrounded on 3 sides by steep red rocky walls and bounded on the south by the largish blue lake backed by snow capped peaks. The meadow was full of pink and yellow mimulus, giant sores, *Arnica* and more. We set up camp 8 about 200 m from the lake at 1700 m and joined 4 ducks for a swim.

There was lightning that night and at 6:30 am the storm hit. At first we thought it might blow through quickly but it rained off and on for 30 hours. Although we had hoped to spend a rest day exploring the valley we were not too upset knowing that at last the Stein fire would be quenched.



Looking back towards Kwoiek Needle. Photo - L. Baile.



Smoke over the Stein valley from the top of the Chowchiwa Glacier. Photo - L. Baile.



Leaving the headwaters of Rodgers Ck.  
Photo. L. Baile.

On Day 10, in the swirling mists of morning we did a recon up to the 2100 m pass to the east that we had to traverse to reach the upper reaches of the Mehatl; at the top we could see three rather barren looking lakes below us and billowing clouds interspersed with streaks of blue over the lower valley. Half way up to the pass is an additional small lake, which is mistakenly situated in the meadow on the map. On returning to the tent we reluctantly decided that we had better leave during a

slight lifting of the clouds. Back over the pass and then down steeply in a gully flanked by sheer conglomerate rock walls. At 1700 m we reached subalpine fir forest and just as Lisa said "John Clarke would say 'this is just as it was before Columbus came' we came across a flagged and spray painted 30 cm diameter tree. "They" had been planning to log the valley to the alpine. A multitude of converging silver creeks met eventually and at 1500 m we camped, having reached the main Mehatl, which is fordable at this altitude. Lots of bear scat!

Day 11 was cool and the forest was damp as we passed through patches of blueberry, gooseberry, currant, salmonberry, pacific elderberry and raspberry. No wonder this is bear country. Never had we seen such an abundance and variety of berries. The going was not too bad until the outlet of a small lake at 1400 m where we encountered our first serious bush. We descended 450 m steeply through forest - real tree swinging stuff - and after a bit of a thrash through forest that we decided was best left to the animals, came out into the open at a wide braided side creek. We camped, at 900 m on gravel in between the braids, and on our little island there was a large patch of raspberries which we saved for next morning's breakfast, Yum! We had only traveled 5 km, as the crow flies, that day (Oh to be a bird).

Day 12 the Mehatl sent us to bush travel school. Initially we decided to try keeping fairly close to the river, but extensive windfall interspersed with marshy ground hidden by lush, berry-laden Devil's Club sent us up the valley side where we learned a new meaning of "the maple leaf forever" - swaths of low vine maple, just beginning to change color and lovely to behold, barred our passage and had the uncanny ability to occasionally flip the bucket on Peter's pack up over his head. Down again toward the valley bottom we experienced the joys of willow, alder, yew, dogwood, wasp's nests and a black bear at about 30 m. We saw him/her, he/she saw us and we all stood on our hind legs awhile wondering what to do. Eventually we made a lot of noise and he/she found a way of bypassing us. At 6 pm, having started at 8:30 am we consulted the map, concluded that we had traveled only 4 km and found a flatish spot by the river to camp. Tiny little biting no-see-um type flies came out at night beside the river.

It started raining at 5:30 am on Day 13 and rained off and on all day; in fact after the bush was wet it didn't matter if it was raining or not, everything was slippery and wet. We started with another patch of bush and



The headwaters of the Mehatl. Photo - L. Baile.

then some easier going in mature forest. We crossed 3 streams that day; one by straddling a slippery log and sliding across and another by tiptoeing across on a maze of willow which was suspended above the water. When we did stop and look around, the valley was a most marvelous place - not a sign of human disturbance, and a rich mixture of forest plants and animals perfectly adapted to the landscape, as of course they would be after 10,000 years of trying. We saw squirrels, wrens, a stellar jay, carpets of step-moss, fungi and lots of trees. In fact, aside from a few large cedars in groves we were not overly impressed with the timber values - which may have been the reason the industry gave it up without more of a fight. Despite the difficulty of travel, it was a wonderful and unspoiled valley and we felt privileged to be able to walk down it for 6 days knowing it was the same as it was hundreds of years ago, and more importantly as it could be hundreds of years hence. We camped in the middle of the forest on a bed of moss by a small creeklet at 760 m. Lisa buried her "dead" cotton shirt. She was chilled all

day, only 8-10 degrees then, and it dropped to 4 degrees overnight. We weren't precisely sure where we were since we had only side creeks to judge by and there appeared to be more of those than were shown on the map.

By noon on day 14 we reached what we presumed was North Mehatl Creek - a roaring, ebullient cascade. The crossing provided some excitement, straddling a large log again, but this time there were branches sticking up at awkward points. Lisa managed to slip over the obstacles, but Peter had to do a mid-stream ice axe delimiting before proceeding. After the crossing the going got easier as we stayed high in relatively open forest with lots of white pine. Our final camp was on a ledge 3 m above the now large Mehatl. The sound of water and moving rocks in the water lulled us to sleep.

On day 15 we headed up to higher ground again and the going became progressively easier as the forest changed to pine and kinnikinnick. Finally we arrived at the spectacular lower canyon, a marvelous mixture of moss-covered rocks and waterfalls, very beautiful

but also fragile. We came across the riverside trail and by 2:30 we saw our car at the end of the logging road. A quick swim in the Nahatlatch lakes and a stop at Reo Rafting to thank them completed the circle.

THE SOUTHWEST RIDGE OF  
NORTH HOZOMEEN  
20 September, 1997  
by Don McPherson

Hot with clear skies. Richard Suddaby and I flop down for a breather about 15 m below the brownish rock above us, which appears to reach unending to the top 900+ m above. There is a very steep looking wall splotted with yellow lichen way above and slightly to our right. Far higher is another wall with a similar yellowish tinge. We momentarily look at each other. His face is quite red and we are both still sucking in all the air we can. He looks bushed. I must look worse. A possible flat bivouac site is spotted diagonally above and 100 m to our left. With some effort I get up and am confronted with a 30° band of bedrock covered with too many small brown marbles like stones. For a metre or so I am on all 4's, then grab another handful of prickly currant bush very momentarily, swear, and take a few more careful steps upward. I kick hard into deeper sandy gravel and walk upright again. Soon I am at the bivouac spot. Perfect. Little danger from possible rockfall and we are about 12 m from where the rock climb will begin.

Isn't life great? We come here looking for adventure, and it sure looks like adventure up there. Fairley's Guidebook says Dick Culbert and Alice Purdy climbed it in 1968 and no known 2<sup>nd</sup> ascent as of 1989. "An outstanding alpine climb." September '97 now. We are both psyched. Summer has nearly passed and we haven't yet got any of our climbing "To do list". Last kick at the can.

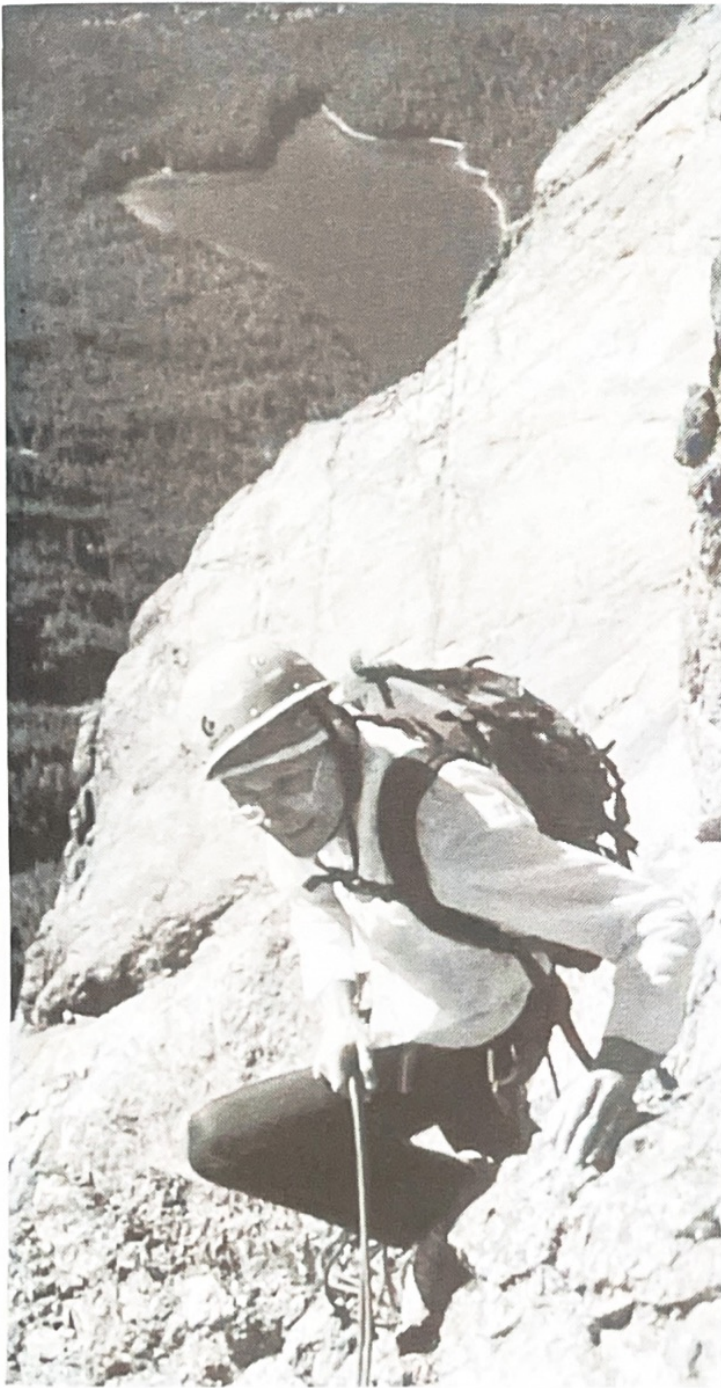
To get here we had left the Hozomeen campground at 2 pm and hiked up the Hozomeen Lake trail for about 3 km to where the big golden face of N. Hozomeen was directly across from us. We cut off the trail into the woods, heading slightly downward to Hozomeen Creek. We crossed it on windfalls and ascended the northern slope. Just past the creek we encountered a small gully with a trickle of clear water, where we filled our water bottles. We each carried 3.5 litres of water as we expected a dry camp that night. We resumed our hike up the hill, veering left by instinct until we came to a steep boulder field, which gave us a partial view of the S.W. Ridge. The boulder

field became steeper treed terrain, mostly covered with slippery pine needles. This tricky footing soon became class 3 bluffs. Upward we moved toward the aforementioned bivouac spot with a magnificent view. From our proposed camp we looked up at the hugeness above us and we realized we may have underestimated the climb. 6 pm and we began leveling our campsite at about 1500 m.

Six am. Morning dawns - perfect weather. Richard munches a dry sandwich and I crunch down some dry granola, as we are both concerned about having enough water to cook a cereal breakfast. I would sooner sip a half litre of water than chew and swallow it, and no evaporation. This seems logical at the moment anyway. We bundle up what gear we will leave.

Seven am and off we go with two 9 mm's, a smoked bluffs rack and an extra set of friends to 7.5 cm. We leave with light packs and the fairly heavy conviction that there will not be enough time to get up and down and back to the car today. We both have to be at work tomorrow. The decision is made to go hard until 10 am and then decide whether to head for the top or not. Starting up some clean solid 3<sup>rd</sup> class water grooves we climb unroped until we are forced left to some large stacked boulders ending on a corner facing left into a nasty looking chimney. A system traverses right beneath a short vertical cliff. We rope up. Me into the two ends and Richard into the middle of a 9 mm rope. I try to get something in on the traverse. No. The rope is placed behind several fairly solid, short flakes as I move to the right. I belay with no protection from a 1 cheek and 1 good foothold perch (5.5).

Richard leads up for 15 m then traverses left on an easy ledge. From here it's upward through a mildly bushy, gentle section of the route. We move together for about 100 m over easy steep grass, around some short trees and brush, and we come to a 30 m cliff with a sloping gravel apron at about 1700 m. We wander left towards a significant gully breaking the cliff, but just before it we spot an easy looking way through. We move together up the clean slabs (5.6) above and the angle eases onto a gentle buttress with a system of low angle roofs, which we pass on the left (5.0). We traverse left towards another gully on a large ledge. High above us I can see that the gully splits with one branch going diagonally right and up with what appears to be a cave and a worrisome looking section a 100 m or so beneath it. This proves to be true. The wide shallow gully is fun romping class 4 for about 80 m. From here the gully becomes steeper and less distinct for 30 m before



Don on Hozomeen, with Hozomeen Lake behind.  
Photo - R. Suddaby.

turning into a seam of rotting rock. I establish a solid friend belay surrounded on 3 sides by vertical/overhanging sparse seamed walls. Phew! Richard's lead. It's 9:15. Will this be our high point? We spot a dubious traverse right, and Richard goes for 6 unprotected metres (to 5.8) on a vague system leading to a blunt rib. 10 m of easier climbing, straight up the

rib, allows a fairly decent friend placement followed by a delicate move to surmount a bulge. He then gets back into the loosish rock gully above with an adequate belay. The next pitch leads to the cave with good protection. Loose & dirty spots can be avoided (5.8).

Since getting into the last gully we have been passing rappel webbing. Some of the anchors look retreat. I am in the mouth of the cave looking for a good belay spot, which in all appearances is a large lovely looking stone sticking out of steep sand with some well worn webbing attached around the stone-sand girth. I tug on this only possible belay protection I see, and it moves, way too much. I scoop a bit of a hole carefully from behind the rock, cautiously wiggle my butt into the rice-sized grains, and work my heels hard into the earth. With my back against the left wall of the cave I bring up Richard. With hope in my voice I point to a possible knife blade placement, just out of reach, on the right wall to beef up the belay. He doesn't answer, as the seam looks too shallow anyway, and extremely long arms would be needed. (We carry several K.B.'s with us, as we are uncertain of the "short aid section out of the cave.")

I will now switch to Richard's description of the lead. "We read about it, but it was uglier than we had pictured. A 3 m wide gully capped by a huge roof with rotten vertical walls on all sides. I decide it would be a good time to put on my rock shoes. I manage to climb (5.9) up to the roof of the cave by using some rotten looking holds on the right wall. Abandoning the thought of a free ascent, I launch myself onto a friend I had placed in the crack between the roof and the wall. I swung around the lip, clipped on an old angle piton, stood in a sling and free climbed onto the face above." Don arrives at the belay panting hard and dripping with sweat from retrieving a stuck friend.

The cave was the only place on the climb where we hauled packs. At this point we realize our odds of getting to the top had greatly increased, since it is still only 10 and we are closing in on 1/2 way. We move together on less steep ground still following the leftover line of the gully for 60 m of grassy class 3. I climb the now squarish gully to its terminus with a vast vertical drop on the right and unprotected steep climbing above. Downclimbing 15 m, I traverse left following the easiest line, clipping into an old piton (the 2<sup>nd</sup> we saw on the whole climb) and tie off a small tree (5.0). From here it is easy scrambling up to the base of a huge wall (about 2000 m). We traverse left and downward on a large dirt ledge to a rock gully on the left edge of the Huge Wall. From here we see that the

gully forks after 15 m with two choices - one straight up and another diagonally right, which we follow for about 200 m. Most of the time we move together over good rock (to 5.7), though twice we stop to belay, once for a high angle chimney with an overhanging exit, and once for a steep loosish section above.

At about 2150 m we come to a distinct ridge. Starting up the ridge, I look down 10 m to my right and am immediately filled with relief, as the gigantic sloping ramp under the Untouchable Towers appears. This is one of the major features Culbert describes. Traversing the sloped ramp involves careful 3<sup>rd</sup> class walking downward with 300 m of vertical void below. We follow it for 75 m to where I can start climbing up the clean, dry slabby intervening corner at the base of the ramp. The guidebook suggests climbing to the notch then up for a couple of pitches. Instead I lead to a stance above and to the right of the notch and am unable to traverse back to it. Richard follows up on beautiful rock with no cracks. He describes me as belaying on a sloping foothold from a piece of gravel. The 200 m void below the sloping ramp is all too apparent. I pretend to belay and he pretends to climb straight up. Eventually he diagonals right to a vague ramp (5.4) leading back to the broadening ridge above the notch. We cross the ridge and climb some steep 4<sup>th</sup> class into an easy, friendly gully. It is 11:30 so we stop for another sandwich in the warm sun, looking down on the Untouchables. Richard switches back into runners, and we coil up the rope. Scrambling to the top of the gully, we leave our packs at a place where we can descend onto the east side of the mountain. Taking the camera, we climb the last 30 m of steep class 4 to the summit, where we arrive at 12:10 pm.

Spending just 10 minutes on the summit in the clearest of sun & sky, we return quickly to our packs and began our race with the coming darkness. Picking our way down a 4<sup>th</sup> class section onto the broad gently sloping ridge below, we stride to a gentle col with a snow patch on the north side. Here, we each pack snow into a nearly empty water bottle, then trot down steep rotten ribs of rock separated by unstable scree gullies. The angle increases as we descend into the gut of the large gnarley ravine described in the guidebook as an ascent route. Three rappels slow our downward flow. The good news is we find trickles, then small pools of clear, cool gourmet water to soothe dry, sticky mouths.

The gully is unyielding as we try to break out of it to get back to our camp. Finally, about 150 m below a giant chockstone, the awaited flaw appears and up and over the right rib we go, dropping a hundred metres or

so to avoid sections of bluffs under the south face. For half an hour we traverse on slippery slopes and rock outcrops then angle upwards and by luck arrive back at the camp without floundering. We do a speed repack and start down posthaste.

We descend via today's ascent from the gully, since it is easier than yesterday's route up to camp. Before getting back into the fan at the base of the Great Gully we travel straight down, then began angling back to our Hozomeen Creek crossing and by blind luck cross it on the same fallen trees we had used yesterday. It is still light at 6:30 when we arrive back at the car very content with the great route finding adventure.

### MT. RAHM (INTERNATIONAL PEAK)

10-11 May, 1998

by Jos van der Burg

When I read that Mt. Rahm was a superb ski destination, that was all I needed to hear. Now we had to find out about access. And after Jack's canceled trip to the mountain last year, because of a major washout on the Maselpanik Creek drainage, that was going to be a problem.

Then the thought occurred to come in from the west. Up Paleface Creek to a 1850 m pass, down 450 m to the upper Maselpanik drainage and then 1200 m up to the summit. Now we had to find out if it would work. We drove in on the November long weekend and found the road up Paleface Creek in good shape, being able to drive to 1200 m before we were stopped by snow. But the road carried on to a clear-cut at 1600 m. From there it looked like a short distance to the pass. I still did not know if it would go on the other side. That's when I called Paul Kubik to come along and check it out 2 weeks later. But winter came early in the valley and we were driving in up to 90 cm of powder in the Chilliwack Valley. We only made it a little way up Paleface Creek road before we had to park. After a long slog we made it to where we were able to drive 2 weeks earlier. That was it for the rest of the season. It was not going to melt high enough until spring.

On April 27<sup>th</sup> I called Paul again to give it a try but after only a little way we were stopped by several large avalanches across the Paleface Creek road. They were in places where you would not normally expect them. A legacy left over from last season's unusual winter. Now my trip was 2 weeks away and no alternative destination was in mind. We could walk the road but it was going to add up to 6 km. I decided to give it a go, hoping that it would melt enough that we would get

by. We could always spend our time on Custer Ridge (between Chilliwack Lake and Maselpalik creek) and explore it.

On May 10, after meeting in Abbotsford, 5 were willing to take a chance with me on this exploratory trip. The weather was shaping up to be beautiful. When we turned up Paleface Creek we were full of anticipation, hoping to get by those avalanches. To our great surprise they had been plowed. We did not know why because there was not much left to log, but we did not care. We were just happy to get by and were then able to drive to 1000 m before hitting snow.

Skis were put on and taken off on the road because of bare patches and several other large avalanches needed to be crossed. But the route worked like a charm and after 3 hours we were in the pass. Now we could see the other side. It looked like it would go, but it was a long way down and the peak a long way off. A good reason to take the rest of the afternoon off and sleep. It was too hot anyway to go up Mt. Dally. After 5 o'clock it cooled off enough to go up peak 2000 m to the north of the pass and get a better look at the area. It offers potential for a weekend ski along Custer Ridge with some moderate slopes. We had a good ski back to camp.

The next morning we decided to get up at 5 and get away by 6. After a windy night we were up somewhat earlier than planned but still got away at 6. Now came the route finding part and at one point it looked like we were not going to make the summit. We were wasting too much time, or so it seemed. Hans decided it was too much for him and had a relaxing time in camp for the rest of the day. We eventually did find a good route down and reached the bottom of the climb by 8:30. It was still possible to make it. We went into overdrive and climbed the 1200 m in 3 to 4 hours putting us on the summit by noon. Julian had decided he had had enough and stayed in the valley bottom. Reinhard had decided to go up the fourth class ridge but found out soon enough it was much harder than expected and he was not going to beat us. He left his poles behind on the ridge and expected us to get them on the way down. We had left our skis at about 2400 m because the slope got steep and snow conditions were not favorable. From there we kicked steps up the 40/45 degree glacier. We spent 45 minutes on the summit enjoying the sun and outstanding view.



Gerry and Jos on the summit of Mt. Rahm, with Mt. Spickard behind.

Photo - J. van der Burg collection.

Reinhard came staggering onto the summit just as we were planning to go down. We gave him 5 minutes and then we were off. When we reached our skis the snow had softened enough to allow for reasonable skiing. After some good turns and an exiting descent down a cliff we reached the bottom and met up with Julian. Now came the 450 m climb back up in the heat of the afternoon. We took a different way back which was much better than the one in the morning. It was gradual and we reached camp after 2 hours. We relaxed for 1.5 hours for some tea before leaving.

We had a good ski out in good snow despite the hot weather. All in all the day had taken 13.5 hours including breaks.

Party: Reinhard Fabische, Julian Lash, Gerry McGeough, Jeff Rabinovitch, Hans Veiel and Jos van der Burg (L & R).

## TANTALUS RANGE SKI TRAVERSE

6-10 June, 1997

by Paul Kubik

Five members of the BCMC successfully completed a five day traverse of the Tantalus Range in late spring. Despite its proximity to Vancouver, parts of the mountain range are seldom visited, protected by a total lack of roads, a major river, bush, cliffs, and glaciers.

### The People

Paul Kubik - the putative leader. His ambition is matched only by his folly. His destiny lay with the Lake Lovelywater cable crossing and a 10 cm steel biner.

Jos van der Burg - the 188 cm hot house grower from Maple Ridge spends his weekends cooling off in the mountains. His powerful tele-turns proved English Cucumber are mightier than Voile release bindings.

Blair Mitten - no stranger to mountaineering misfortune. His "point-counterpoint" critique of the organizer's route selection ensured we didn't return in body bags. Ultimately, the successful conclusion of the trip hinged on a 10 cm section of hacksaw blade he had carried for ten years in his emergency kit.

Ian Smith - the big wall climber, always with a card up his sleeve. His *aces* - a grand lead over a snow bridge on the Rumbling Glacier and remounting fractured tele bindings with a hand drill and a nail. Alpine Aire blueberry dessert in the sun at the Red Tit hut. His *joker* - a late night car shuttle after car keys were lost and all plans fell completely apart.

Gerry Egan - a relatively novice mountaineer although a good skier. He proved himself highly capable of sleeping twelve hours a night, except the last, when in typical Lake Lovelywater fashion the evening began to take on epic proportions.

### Afterworld

The organizer had been on approximately fifty trips into the Tantalus Range (climbing, skiing, hiking, bushwacking, canoeing, trail building) and I find I cannot recommend this traverse to anyone due to the severe objective danger and lack of safe alternative routes. It is a challenge to survive it, in my opinion. No one can reliably predict the behavior of the snow pack.

However, that being said, we were fortunate, in that, on the most critical day when we needed the weather and snow conditions to cooperate it all came together. In part, because of the risk, this is the most satisfying traverse I have completed. Its juxtaposition to the heavily travelled Squamish-Whistler corridor, the availability of avalanche beacons and cellular



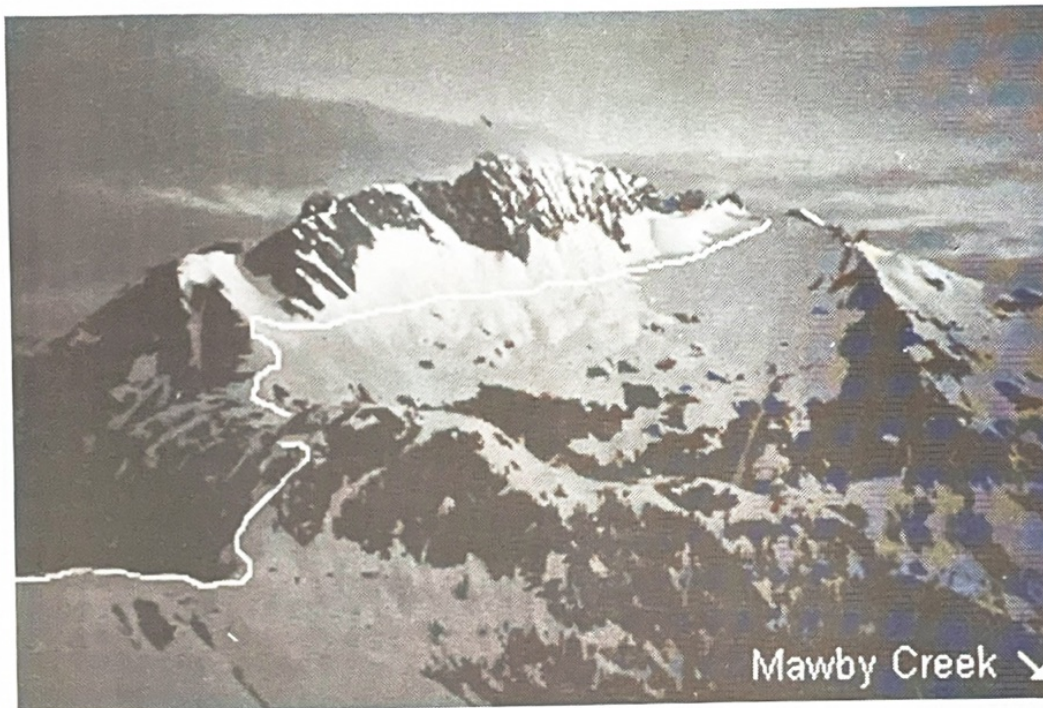
Photo - J. van der Burg, enhancement by P. Kubik.

technology and consequently the search and juggernaut mean little in a place as inaccessible and unforgiving as the Tantalus Range. The traverse fulfilled an ambition I've nurtured for many years and now as I reflect upon it each time I pass by the radar trap at the Tantalus Range lookout on Highway 99 my foot unconsciously eases off the accelerator and by the time I'm past it I realize it's just saved me from a \$125 speeding ticket.

### Sigurd Creek to Zenith Col

When we parked at the bottom of the Sigurd trail we met a guy working on tree spacing and pruning. His question to us was, 'Where's the snow?' It was about where I expected it - about 6 km up the trail around the 900 m level. The snow was consolidated and firm so we actually walked as far as the log crossing of the creek. The first day was a bit of a grunt. It was a 1460 m elevation gain to 'Mile High' camp - a wide shoulder on the north-west ridge of Pelion Mountain at the 1600 m level.

The weather was 'iffy' as it had been since the May long weekend. It rained on and off through the night but at the least we were dry in the tents. The next day dawned dry with a blue 'sucker hole' to the east. At the col on top of the NW ridge the wind was blowing cold and hard. We skied the south side of Pelion in a virtual whiteout. This was new terrain for me. We'd scouted it out the previous summer from the col but weather had prevented us from continuing to Zenith mountain. We also encountered a short pitch of down climbing through a steep, thick band of trees which was easy but awkward.



The route across the south side of Pelion as seen from Zenith Col.  
 Photo - J. van der Burg, enhancement by P. Kubik.

### Zenith Col - Rumbling Glacier

This is the col between the north ridge of Tantalus and Zenith Mountain. Camp was at 1800 m on an open shoulder. We had an unpleasant supper in rain and wet snow. Later that evening the weather began to clear. We got a good look at the rumbling glacier and our route for the morning. It was a spirit-lifter. I thought if it got cold our chances of success were good. I had a good rest until 3 am when I woke up feeling very warm. I went outside for a pee and it was warm and completely soaked in! I went back to sleep feeling very bad. When the alarm went off two hours later I didn't even bother getting out of the bag. I lay in my bag for a while thinking thoughts of retreat but I thought I had better stick my head out the door just to make certain about the weather. I just about fell out of the tent. Not a cloud in the sky! Quickly, I stumbled onto the snow and checked out the glacier. Not a cloud to be seen anywhere. All thoughts of defeat were gone for the moment. We'd have a chance. The route might not go but at least we'd know the answer by the end of the day.

The route drops a hundred metres from Zenith Col to get around some crevasses and some long fingers of rock dropping off the north ridge of Tantalus. A 2 km traverse to the icefall terminates in a gentle ramp leading to the Nunatuk. From the Nunatuk the ramp

swings up and left below seracs and cornices on Tantalus' east face. A traverse left through crevasses gains an upper ice field with an exit at its upper left edge.

The 2 km between Zenith Col and the Nunatuk are a death trap. It is truly the rim of a giant toilet bowl and you have ample time to reflect upon your folly as you stagger along gazing into its dark hole. Chaotic runnels of chewed up trees pile on top of one another, stripped from their tenuous perch on the continuous black cliff bands ringing the devil's own cirque. To attempt this portion when the snow is loose would be unwise in the most serious sense of the word. Pockets of smooth granite were exposed where snow

had cascaded to the depths leaving behind 3 m fractures in the crust. I was forced upwards. "Will it hold?" I ask myself. Ahead the snow steepens into a convex curve. "Weakening?" I ask rhetorically, ignoring the answer. The scenario repeats. I hear odd noises in the snowpack from my skis. It holds and I put it down to nerves. Punching through the frozen crust on a too steep side hill I hit a warm pocket of loose sugar snow. I must back up and try a different way. I skirt a hard gully on ski edges. A passing jet rumbles



Below the seracs. Photo - J. van der Burg

and I think "Avalanche!" before I place the sound. Don't look up, don't look down lest you lose your grip. I have thought of dead friends who perished on trips like this.

Nervous relief follows. A gentle ramp leads to the relative safety of the Nunatuk where we roped up. We weren't able to see this section of the route clearly the previous evening. It goes without difficulty. The terrain is more benign for skiing but huge seracs threaten from above. One giant block leans out at a crazy angle while icy behemoths dot the snow in front of the cliff. We pass below it.

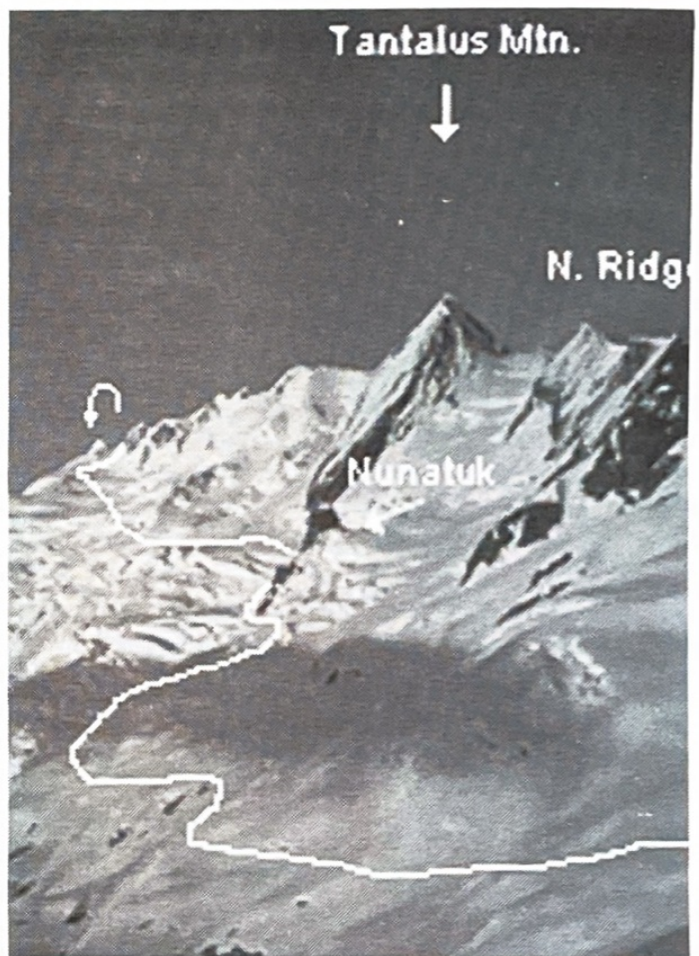
After a short breather near a bottomless crevasse we entered underneath the east face of Tantalus. Massive cornices remained above the face but the middle third had broken away and lay under our feet. It took twenty minutes or more to cross a debris area the size of a couple of football fields. Little chunks of ice the size of refrigerators and cars presented a polar ice trekker's challenge. Climbing Tantalus via the normal class 4 route was out of the question on this trip. Easing our way out of danger, one crevasse impeded our way, splitting the upper snowfield from edge to edge (about 500 m). A single snow bridge we had seen from Zenith Col enabled us to cross it. It was time consuming work but a welcome break. The climbing exercise was enjoyable, dealing with the known quantities of harness, belay and rope, giving us a chance to relax for a moment and recover from the nervous tension created by the unrelenting presence of danger and the uncertainty about the route which I'd felt all morning.

It was going very well. Too well, I began to think as we crawled up to what was looking like an easy exit off the glacier.

#### Red Tit to Tantalus Hut

A grim rock face stared down at me from the right as I climbed up to the col. I doffed my skis and anxiously climbed to the top of the widest of three gaps. Peering down to the Dione Glacier, "It goes", I thought. A scree slope dropped steeply to the other side and was covered mainly in snow. A wave of relief passed over me. This was the last of the critical "unknowns" of the route. Although I had crossed the SE ridge of Dione many years ago I believe it was further on and would have been difficult to reach from the Rumbling Glacier, as it was barred by a couple of serious crevasses. We stopped for lunch at the col and Blair called his dad and wife on the cell phone.

The Cantel phone worked as long as we were high enough to pick up the receiver in Vancouver. The previous evening we'd tried for a weather report from



The route around the east side of Tantalus.  
Photo - J. van der Burg, enhancement by P. Kubik.

Zenith col but couldn't get out. A BC Tel phone would have worked fine as we were able to connect onto their network but it wouldn't accept its competitor's call.

It was just getting better all the time. We schussed down the Dione glacier for 2 km to the Red Tit hut on delightful spring corn snow. This was the first really enjoyable skiing of the trip. I don't know what people were expecting in the way of a hut but our arrival at the Red Tit was a bit anti-climatic. Except with respect to its shape and the paint color suggesting its name.

A stable high pressure system contributed to our well being. We spent a lazy afternoon in the sun airing out smelly socks and giving our bruised feet a rest. While Ian cooked up his blueberry cobbler I opted for some lazy skiing in the corn snow until dusk.

In the morning, yesterday's corn snow was frozen hard. We needed to cross the col between Serratus and Ionia. It involved traversing the steep slopes below Serratus. After testing the slopes for skiing I didn't think I could hold the edges on the hard snow. The run-

out was unpleasant, plunging over exposed rocks. Everyone else seemed to feel we had the time to backtrack and heed the warning in Fairley's guidebook to drop low on skis around the base of Serratus. We lost 60 m of elevation, saved our bacon and even beat Ian to the col. He had opted to stay high and skirt the nose. Unfortunately for him the snow got even harder and the slope steeper, forcing him to laboriously chop steps before he could join us for lunch at the col. (This was a trip without crampons!)

Below us lay Lake Lovelywater and a possible exit to the Squamish River. It wasn't looking like we needed to use that escape route. We had perfect snow and weather. My misgivings from the day before seemed somewhat unjustified. We were looking at "Easy Street" ahead, or so I thought.

The original plan was to cross to the Crescent Glacier on the flank of Ionia and Pandareus. A long look at that route showed a difficult gap to cross on skis between the Crescent and the unnamed glacier below Ionia. There's also a brutal run-out over cliffs below the Crescent, which sort of clinched the alternative proposition. The alternative was to get some great skiing down the standard route leading towards the lake, crossing the head of the lake to the Niobe-Lydia col.

I was anxious to get going as the sun was warming things up. Pushing off we ran into some perfect corn. I couldn't even feel the heavy pack the snow was so good. I wanted to cruise the fall line but I knew we needed to skirt the almost perfect ring of cliffs below. I had climbed a lot in this area but hadn't been in this cirque for some years. Ahhh, how the memory fades! I had forgotten how far to the left one must traverse. It was tempting to just keep sliding down but I had a nasty suspicion we should really check it out slowly.

I could see a set of bear tracks leading further left into a snowless gully. I would have followed them if it wasn't a ski trip. I took off the skis, got out the ice axe and wandered down for a closer look. I was looking for a gully I imagined should be below. After traversing the top of a 100 meter cliff band for twenty minutes I returned back up to my skis. The standard approach gully was the one chosen by the bear and the only feasible descent off our perch. No big deal.

I made it to the snow-free zone. I was actually not unhappy because the gully didn't look bad at all. One by one everyone else slid in home. I was beginning to joke around a bit when I heard Jos groan. He had one ski off and in his hand. I could see it was missing a large piece of his binding, the missing piece being still stuck to his boot.

I remember years back when I skied on tele gear I had a pair of Rottefella bindings fail within about twenty minutes of each other on the same trip, and this after several years of rugged backcountry use. Well, Jos had had his for less than a year but when he took that second ski off, its binding sported a fracture the same as the first.

Metallurgically speaking, this proves the cucumber is mightier than the Voile release binding. No one had a spare tele binding along, let alone two, so it looked like we should repair to the hut to examine our options. From the hut we could easily exit to the Squamish River or perhaps find some tools to effect repairs. So repair we did. Jos was faster walking than the rest of us skiing because we rapidly started running out of snow on the trail. In trying to connect the snow patches with fall lines I ended up doing a lot of up and down in the vicinity of Lambda Lake.

#### Lake Lovelywater to Squamish River

There was an assortment of tools at the hut but no drill bits. That didn't stop Ian who sharpened a nail on a file. Jos dismantled his release mechanism down to just the toe piece and Ian got to work mounting them directly on the ski. That took some time and it got on late in the afternoon so we decided to stay at the hut for the night.

About half of us wanted to continue on to Sedgwick in the morning but a couple of people seemed to want to get back to work in the city. This was a bit of a problem since our cell phone was the wrong frequency for the area and we had no boat to cross the river. Gerry had actually arranged to go to work the next evening so he was starting to get a bit distracted. I didn't want to split up the group so we decided to go skiing the next morning and hike out the trail to the river. I had planned for this emergency and brought a steel locking biner big enough for the cable.

It's a great hut and even better when you've got it to yourselves. In the morning we went off to the Niobe basin. I certainly didn't regret our decision at this point. It was going to be a great run down.

The summit of Pelops involved a bit of ice axe work and kicking steps. Arriving at the top I sauntered over for a look at our planned route to Sedgwick. It certainly looked do-able. However, it would have to wait for another trip.

I didn't anticipate any further problems until the cable crossing. We got back to the hut in record time, this being my first trip in the area on skis. Sure beats walking. We had to savour it because there was no snow on the trail to the river and plastic mountaineering boots just don't cut it.



Skiing down from the Niobe-Pelops col.  
Photo - J. van der Burg.

That was the least of our worries. In the late afternoon we came to the edge of the old growth just a 100 meters or so above the river. I knew the lower reaches of the trail had been logged. It being private land there is no requirement to restore the area after harvesting, if you can call it that. This was high grading. Everything had been levelled to the ground but perhaps less than ten per cent of the fallen timber removed (by helicopter). I say that because if you'd ever walked through this area before it was mowed down you could see it was almost all deciduous. Only the cedar and spruce had been taken. What was left was three or more layers deep of criss-crossed trunks and limbs.

There was no sign of the trail so everyone started to pick their own way through the slash. What used to take about twenty minutes took over two hours to negotiate. Actually, we were somewhat spread out so it wasn't till about three hours after I first arrived at the logging that Jos finally showed up at the cable. He had gotten completely lost, at one point wading up to his chest in a slough because it was preferable to backtracking through the slash he had just crossed. When I got to him he was bushwacking parallel to the trail with his skis strapped on his pack fighting every step of the way with 2.5 m high red osier dogwood bushes and willow.

Well, there's nothing like the Lake Lovelywater area for giving a good thrashing. Unfortunately, it hadn't finished with us yet.

If it hadn't been for the slash impeding me I could have got to the river about when a powerboat went by. As Blair showed up shortly behind me we had time to play with the cell phone again. There apparently were a few outfits in Squamish with boats that for a fee can ferry you across. If we could just get through to one of them we might be able to arrange a pick up that evening. As we found out that evening, 911 calls are picked up by BC Tel even if you're using a Cantel number. We ended up talking to a 911 coordinator at length in what turned out to be a fruitless search for someone with a boat willing to help us out for a fee. If this had been a bona fide emergency, Search and Rescue would have obliged us, but it wasn't. No one was missing or hurt and we weren't overdue.

In the end, the lengthy phone conversations led to nothing and ended up costing us valuable daylight. It was getting on in the evening by now and no one seemed to have any food left. I got motivated to give the cable a shot with the big biner. This is a tried and true method of a single person getting across the Squamish River. You basically sit in your climbing harness and hang off the cable on the steel biner. By pulling on the cable above your head you can slowly and tiresomely cross the 200 or 300 meters of water. It gets tougher after the half way point as you're now pulling yourself uphill on the cable. On the east side there is a locked cable car. A 10 cm length of hacksaw blade was lying near the chain securing the car to the frame of the structure and a link had been cut right through. I couldn't believe my good luck. I had been prepared to walk into Squamish with the keys to Jos' truck and drive to Blair's place and return to the river with his canoe and effect a midnight crossing alone of the Squamish River but now it didn't look like I'd have to.

In short order I was back across to the great surprise of the others. Amidst astonished gasps at our good fortune that evening we hurriedly loaded the car for the first of many trips ferrying people and packs across the river. When the last load was across it was completely dark, the proceedings conducted under the faint glow of headlamps.

The 911 coordinator had obliged us by calling Ian's wife, Shelley with news of our unexpected exit via the Squamish River. Ian's keys to his truck were lost on the Sigurd trail so messages were left and we expected Shelley to show up on the Squamish Valley Road sometime soon with the keys to his truck, still up the Ashlu River at the Sigurd trailhead. Our last conversation with the coordinator was when all of us

were still across the river so the message Shelley got was that we were stuck over there. Shelley phoned Ian's buddy who organized getting a raft to rescue us. At about 1 am that evening he showed up only to find us sitting on our packs on the valley road where the turnoff to the cable crossing intersects it. I believe we all got back home by 3 am and Gerry never did show up for work that evening.

### THE ASHLU CHAINSAW MASSACRE - THE CHARLIE-CHARLIE TRAIL SURVEY ROUTE by Chris Ludwig

A little over a year has passed since the mountains around Ashlu Creek first captured my imagination. Between Ashlu Creek and the Elaho River is a group of heavily glaciated peaks commonly referred to as the Ashlu-Elaho Divide. Initially I could find out very little about the area, despite its close proximity to Vancouver. Most of the climbers I knew had never given this area much thought. Perhaps one explanation can be found in Bruce Fairley's climbing guide in which he describes the area as being "...rather icy for hiking and rather bland for mountaineering". Regardless of this discouraging review, I decided to plunge into the bush and find out for myself.

My first two trips into this area proved discouraging indeed and I quickly came to understand why most people traditionally visit the area in winter. My partner (Gerry Egan) and I plunged into overgrown logging spurs on the north side of Ashlu Creek in an attempt to find a feasible route. Needless to say, we were able to chart just about every pattern and shape of slide alder, devil's club, and blueberry bush occurring in nature. It wasn't until a year later that I and two other climbers were able to conquer the bush and climb Mt. Charlie-Charlie (BCMC Newsletter, Nov 1997). Unfortunately, like most climbers, I started to notice the other peaks of the divide and realized that I would have to come back a few more times to climb them all. Most of the peaks with names in the divide are relatively gentle (class 3) with the exception of Ashlu Mtn. The divide features expansive open glacial terrain and is home to the largest series of glaciers between itself and Vancouver.

Between my silly ambitions and the summits, however, flourished several hours of skin ripping, temper testing bush. Clearly something would have to give. Then suddenly, a ridiculous idea came into my head.....

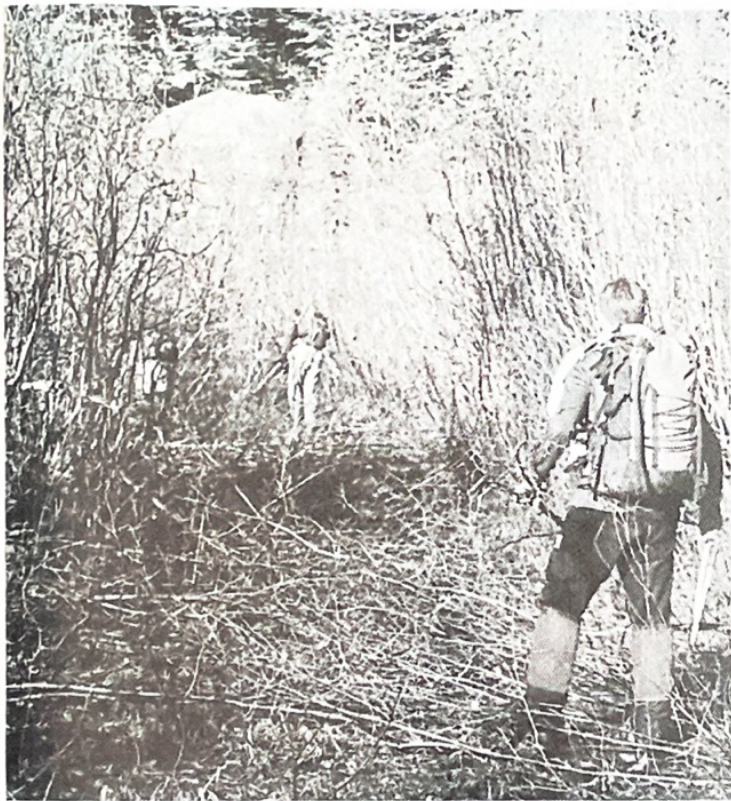
Two weeks later, together with four foolish friends, I began a journey into insanity that continues to this day.



A well maintained B.C. logging road - A700.  
Photo - R. Groom.

The most useful access to the central peaks of the Ashlu-Elaho divide would prove to be the A-700 and A-800 spur roads (miles 25.4 and 28 respectively). Unfortunately, A-700 was completely overgrown several kilometers before Pykett Creek. Our plans were to clear it and create a route to the alpine.

Week 1: Armed with arrogance and the club's pruning sheers we marched up A-700 (labeled as A-730 on Interfor's maps) right from the main line and began our path of destruction. A-700 is impassable shortly after the Ashlu main for all except narrow 4x4's that can squeeze past a large boulder on the road. Should one be successful in passing the king of rocks, further up is a major washout (known as Stuyvesant Creek) that even a tank would have difficulty conquering. The road was originally clear of bush until its final turn to the north towards Pykett Creek. Nevertheless, we did perform light maintenance on A-700 from the main line until the start of serious alder at approximately 950 m. The alder at this point was so thick, one could scarcely see a person standing 2 m away. This made the effort all the more satisfying. Quickly we discovered, however, that this was a much larger job than we previously imagined. Even worse was the realization of



A700 after some work.  
Photo - R. Groom

just how fast this weed could grown. Much to our dismay, a full day of work still left us about a kilometer before Pykett Creek.

Week 2: Three of us under threatening skies rumbled up the blasted logging road with overnight packs to continue the battle. In the pouring rain we continued to cut and shred our way up to Pykett Creek. Waking up in soaking wet sleeping bags while camped on a logging road is one of the less glamorous aspects of mountaineering. Nevertheless, the thought of such self-abuse brings a big smile to my face. Of particular interest was the small drip that came through Mike Peel's vestibule and landed consistently in his face all morning. In addition to clearing a 2 m wide swath to the creek, we were also able to clear a small portion of A-737 (another spur off A-700 now marked with yellow ribbon). Hopefully this will evolve into a route to the forested ridge leading to Mt. Storey and the rest of the Mt. Wood group in the near future. This route is briefly outlined in John Baldwin's guidebook.

Week 3: With a sense of stoicism and seriousness (ha!) I was able to coerce six other lunatics into joining me on yet another clearing trip. This time, however, a marvelous discovery was made. One could 4x4 up

A-800 to 900 m. Fairley's guide incorrectly states that this road only reaches 600 m. I speculate that the road may have only reached 600 m at the time of publication. Now we could park our vehicles 100 m below our bouncing baby route. It would have been nice five trips before to have known this, since A-700 adds at least an extra six kilometers each way to the trip. Ohh well, I guess it builds character or something...

Now there would be two ways into Pykett Creek. From the top of A-800 we flagged and stomped out a route to A-700 above through grotesquely slimy logging slash. This unpleasant section took only thirty minutes of grunting and cursing (except for some crazies I will not mention who were carrying mountain bikes). As such the battle commenced. We stormed past Pykett Creek into some of the mightiest alder ever to have cast a shadow on the earth. So powerful in fact, that my new \$150 shears, claimed to be unbreakable by the general logging community, blew helplessly apart (much to Tony Taccone's chagrin and guilt). One particular challenge was the section just after Pykett Creek, which tends to hold a fair amount of water. I would liken this section to a primal swamp; the birthplace of all insect life. This may also provide a partial explanantion as to how this road became so lush with plant life.

The hours wore on and we still hadn't reached the end of the road. Soon my patience began to falter as the wooden handles on Ron Groom's shears also succumbed to the might of the alder. Some force then drove me to begin violently ripping alder out of the ground with my bare hands. I also found that cursing to the heavens was also somewhat helpful. The thought of chewing on the roots that I had ripped from the bowels of the logging road even seemed modestly appealing. I remained strong, however, and refrained from doing so believing that my companions were more civilized than I and might be offended by the sight. When all was said and done, we had reached the start of the final cut block leading towards the alpine at 1150 m. This would be as far as we would need to clear on the logging road.

Week 4: Armed with a replacement set of shears and another group of six familiar fools, we set off to reach the alpine. This time, without a 4x4, we had to walk A-800. This road turned out to be barely an hour's walk and is a fantastic workout, gaining 400 m in scarcely four kilometers. Gerry blasted on ahead and flagged to the sub-alpine at 1500 m while the rest of us stomped

our way up the clear-cut above the end of A-700. This clear-cut is steep and would surely be a fantastic spot for healthy avalanches in the winter. Our route stays on the far east of the cut block and climbs a subtle yet significant ridge. Hopefully this part of the ridge will be much safer in winter than the rest of the clear-cut. This ridge is too small to appear on the 1:50,000 map but does show up clearly on Interfor's map.

Despite its steepness, the upper route proved to be quite enjoyable to hike and features unimpeded views of the entire Ashlu valley. In fact, the entire route from the bottom of A-800 to the top of the final cut-block is mostly open. I have yet to see a logging road both as spectacular and as depressing. The Ashlu valley has been ravaged beyond the imagination of the typical urban dweller by aggressive logging practices. Take a look at the creeks in the valley and you will notice that they have been stripped bare with little or no buffer zones. This valley has made me realize, finally, after having been a mountaineer since my high school years, that there are some issues far more important than climbing. These issues are alive in the Ashlu, and as such it is a good place to find clarity of purpose if you feel apathetic.

Presently the route is cleared to around 1400 m (about twenty minutes below the open sub-alpine). There are still some berry bushes in the upper part of the route from 1400 to 1500 m. This is probably just as well, since these berry bushes offer tasty treats during the summer months anyway. The route is also marked to the col at the base of the ridge leading to the main icefield (1700 m). From there, one can easily connect to the center of the main icefield at 2000 m by simply ascending the ridge.

Week 5: This has to be the only route I know of where the top was delineated first, and the bottom last; a remarkable representation of human folly. The slash between A-800 and A-700 would prove to be the most serious work of the entire route. The snows held back and on November 23, five of us attempted to establish a route between the two roads. We found that this presented special challenges. When you remove one log or pile of sticks, you usually discover four more layers underneath.

This group was a little different than previous ones that I had been with by virtue of their thoroughness and determination. Ground was stomped and swept, and steep sections were padded with rocks and steps. Wayne's recent trip to Nepal proved useful in that he now seemed to enjoy moving large rocks around. Before we knew it, a barkmulch-covered route

gradually wound its way between the two logging spurs. A thirty minute grunt of misery had been reduced to a casual ten minute stroll. The snowfall was appreciated that day as it kept my hot head cool for a change. The sight of a 3 m wide snow-covered swath winding its way up from the top of the new connector route was very satisfying.

Summary:

- 1) Ashlu main line to the top of A-800 spur (reaches 900 m): 4 km/400 m elevation gain/1 hour up. The Ashlu main line is in two wheel drive condition until A-800. A-700 is still useful in winter when the main line cannot be driven.
- 2) A-800 to A-700 (980m): Route up 100 m through logging slash/10 minutes up.
- 3) A-700 to final cut-block (1150 m): Old road clear of alder and flagged/50 minutes up. The bridge across Pykett Creek is currently intact (1100 m).
- 4) A-700 to the top of the cutblock (1500 m). steep route beat on and flagged through the logging slash/1-1.5 hours up.
- 5) Top of the cutblock to col (1700 m). Marked. Open heather and very pleasant/1 hour up.

Remarks: This is a rugged and unpredictable area and the bears are hungry - be warned! Don't forget to bring a pair of shears also for the ride, the jungle may grow back in a couple of weeks!

This route is hopefully a way of saying thanks to all the volunteers in the club who over the years have built trails and shared their experience and knowledge freely with me and countless others. I am forever grateful.

The Lunatics: Gerry Egan and hockey buddies, Tony Taccone, Ron Groom and brother, Bruno Scopazzo, Paul Ng, Mike Peel, Wayne Spence, Carrie Edward, Harriot, Shawn, and me.

Thanks for all your work guys, it has been a slash!

## MISTY ICEFIELDS

18-27 April, 1997

by Jon Ley

"The Misty Icefields.....sure I'm interested," was my reply to Greg in the corridors of SFU one rainy afternoon in January. Misty is one of those places you look at on a map, think to yourself it would be great to go there and then, in a more sober state, consider the access, and decide to forget it. Straddling the shared border of Garibaldi and Golden Ears parks, it is "Fairley" remote by southern Coast Mountain standards.

The previous year, five of us, including Greg and I, had attempted to do the same tour. In April 1996, rainy weather and what eventually became a two week storm cycle had sent us fleeing just a day and a half into the trip. We were convinced this year would be different.

Other than brief discussions with John Clarke and Barry Narod, we had only Fairley and Baldwin's written accounts to rely on for beta. John's beta consisted of: "Great peaks, poor access" and something along the lines of "I bet those old logging roads near Corbold Creek are REALLY overgrown by now." Barry claimed that, although he walked across the Misty Icefields in 1971, he didn't get a chance to see them - the weather was so bad that the lead person had to resort to kicking snow in front of him to judge the slope for the next step. This was quite encouraging. So after going through verbal and written beta, checking out topos, examining air photos, and booking a boat ride down Pitt Lake, we were pretty much committed. Again.

The route itself starts about 3 clicks west of the Lillooet River, across from Skookumchuk Hot Springs, follows a southwest trending ridge into the southeast corner of Garibaldi Park and then heads west onto the Ice mantle Glacier. From there, the safest path descends Roller Coaster Ridge to Snowcap Lake (with a shot at the east ridge of Mt. Pitt), goes across the lake, and climbs any of several routes to reach the Snowcap Glacier. Head south on the Snowcap - you can't miss the Misty Icefields. Continue on south to the Stave Glacier. Work your way off the Stave, heading southeast until you hit Remote Peak. Exit onto a logging road south of Remote Peak (near the "town" of Alvin at the north end of Pitt Lake).

April quickly rolled around and I found myself packing. This year there were six of us: Greg, Mike, Grant, Russell, Gaetan and myself. Gaetan, an options trader from Montreal, was flying in specifically for the tour - with a return ticket for April 29<sup>th</sup>. He had the most to lose if the weather turned sour. As I was going to be on Vancouver Island until the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, there was no opportunity for the whole group to get together before the trip. I could only hope that we would get along - knowing full well that good group chemistry is an important prerequisite to an enjoyable trip. Furthermore, none of us had previously done a ski traverse longer than three days, so we were all relatively green to this experience.

**Day 1: 18 April** - After brief introductions at the PetroCanada station in Pemberton on a sunny Friday morning, we headed south along the Lillooet River

road, arriving at the Chief Paul logging spur at 11 am. Gear explosion. All I could think of when strapping on my pack and doing up my buckle was: "What the heck am I getting myself into, and what did I put in my pack to make it so heavy?". I'm pretty sure the others felt the same way. Ten days of food, and way, way too much gear. Does more experience lighten the pack load?

We headed up a snowy logging road to a steep climb through open Forest. Within a few hours, we had found a decent tent site overlooking the Lillooet River valley. All of us were knackered - unused to carrying such large loads. Furthermore, some of us had practically come straight off the couch. It was pretty clear right from the outset that Baldwin's recommended pace might be a little optimistic for this group. Gaetan made the comment to me that evening, "You know Jon, I could be on the beaches of Cancun for the same price it cost me to be out here." We both laughed at the ridiculous comment and made our way to the tents. The last thing I remember is falling asleep listening to the sound of Greg and Mike planning out the route for the following days in their adjacent tent.

**Day 2: 19 April** - The next morning, the weather had taken a turn for the worse. Remembering the previous year, Greg and I feared we were hooped yet again. Although threatening, it stayed clear long enough for us to pack up and get on our way. When we hit the subalpine, we saw that we were about a click too far west. Unfortunately, we were also starting to lose visibility. Spindrift was starting to swirl around us and what looked like a wall of wet snow was approaching from the west. It was looking like 1996 all over again.

Baldwin's route description is somewhat vague. A prominent knoll splits the ridge we were moving along. He recommends "passing the knoll to the east". After some debate, we took this to mean that the knoll should be on the east, relative to us.... so we chose the west side. It quickly became apparent that we had decided incorrectly. In retrospect, all we should have done was take a close look at the map: the contours on the west side of the ridge were quite close. After getting into some steepening terrain, we decided against backtracking around the knoll. Rather, to save some time we descended an avalanche slope between a couple of cliff bands. Most of us were unwilling to try the first real run of the traverse on a 45 degree slope with fresh snow and really heavy packs. Greg made the whole episode rather amusing by rapping off a small tree (this took longer and required much more effort than just walking. At least he got to use his rope).

By the time we were all at the bottom, it was snowing heavily with the wet snow starting to sluff off an old rain crust. After lunch, we continued on until the point where we were all soaking wet and miserable. The words "déjà vu" were looming large for Greg and I as we set up our tents and meekly crawled into our sleeping bags trying to conserve heat and energy. We were still three to four hours from the Icemantle glacier and at the complete mercy of the weather. Again.

**Day 3: 20 April** - The next morning, the weather had not changed. At ten o'clock a hole formed in the clouds and it stopped snowing. In retrospect, we should have packed up our stuff and moved. This would have been an easier call with more experience - we were still quite green. In any case, we waffled. Eventually Gaetan and I decided to do a recce. The others stayed behind to sleep, dig pits, or just mellow out. Once Gaetan and I



Misty on Misty.

Photo - J. Ley, R. March, or M. Coyle.

were underway, weather conditions improved dramatically. Blue sky completely unveiled itself as we approached the Icemantle Glacier. We got to a point overlooking the western tongues of the glacier. Between us and the Icemantle was a large, deep creek drainage - Icemantle Creek. A treed ridge appeared to rise from the base of the drainage to a secondary peak beside the glacier. The ridge, although very steep in places, looked like the safest route. Baldwin suggests continuing along the ridge we were on and traversing the open slopes lying to the south of the Icemantle Glacier, gaining the glacier itself far above its terminus.

The fresh snow, most of it from the day and evening before, had us a little spooked. Gaetan had started a sluff on a shallow slope that had turned into a class one slide earlier that afternoon. The fresh stuff was sitting on a fair size rain crust about 20-25 cm down. The treed ridge itself involved dropping into the Icemantle drainage, and regaining all the lost height. Safe but strenuous.

We arrived back at the campsite a couple of hours later and told the others of the plan for the next day. Russell and Mike, who had both recently taken avalanche courses, had arrived at the same conclusion regarding the snowpack - rather high instability. Although we were carrying a VHF radio, we were unable to get a weather report. The clear skies had everyone primed. We would, at the very least, get onto the glacier this year. We would move the next morning - starting very early. After dinner, we celebrated Russell's birthday with fresh maple syrup (Gaetan's treat from Quebec!) toffee and chocolate.

**Day 4: 21 April** - At 3 am there was not a cloud in the sky.... high pressure! We left at 4:30 am in good spirits. At this point, we had established a pecking order: Gaetan was the first off in the morning, followed by Greg, Mike, Grant, Russell and me. There was little deviation from this pattern for the rest of the trip.

The scenery was amazing. Too bad the skiing was brutal. The cooler evening temperatures and sun from the previous afternoon had helped to form a breakable crust that had all of us down on several occasions. We arrived at the far point of the Day 3 recce by 7 am. Greg looked at my route down into the creek drainage and up the ridge on the other side and promptly suggested that we follow Baldwin's recommended path. However, the sun was now on those open slopes and we decided to stick to our original plan.

To get to the base of the ridge we had to ski down over 300 m into Icemantle Creek. Here were the first good turns for the trip. This was fun stuff! Once down at the creek floor, we stopped to grab a bite and watched a mangy coyote skulk around us from a hundred metres or so away. The first part of the following climb was not that difficult: skiing up avalanche debris in open forest on 25 degree slopes. However, the slopes steepened higher up, to the point where we had to kick steps in the now sluffing waist deep snow. We were in the sun, and the temperature was rising quickly. Although we were still somewhat sheltered in the trees, the situation became somewhat tense due to the snowpack becoming, we thought, dangerously unstable. Greg suggested the we officially

name the ridge "Unnecessary." We ended up enduring several hours of hazard rather than 20 minutes in the early morning on the open slopes that Baldwin recommends. I think Greg was a little bitter about the choice of route.

We followed the ridge to the top of a small bump. There we had a spectacular view of the Icemantle Glacier and surrounding mountains. I could not believe that this area was only 80 clicks from downtown Vancouver and has so rarely been visited. Mt. Greenmantle, Greymantle, and the Three Bears beckoned. We choose caution - it had taken us four days to reach this point and the conditions for climbing a peak were not very favorable. We were already well behind Baldwin's 5-8 day schedule for the traverse. In good conditions, with no nav errors, a strong party should be able to reach the glacier in a couple of days - not the four it took us.

From the peak, we skied down to the glacier where we were subjected to an albedo that must have been around 100%. Like other Coast Mountain glaciers, this one was in full retreat - the topos were not even close to the actual edge of the ice. The air temperature had also climbed to well over 20 degrees. We were almost out of water. Our goal of reaching the far end of the glacier that day seemed next to impossible and a couple of clicks up the glacier we all collapsed in a heap and called it a day. A 13 and a half hour day with around 900 m elevation gain. Completely spent, we quickly fell

asleep.

**Day 5: 22 April** - Up at 6 am, moving by 8 am. Gaetan was off like a racehorse and it took the rest of us a while to catch up to him. By the time we did, we were on Rollercoaster Ridge and witnessing one the most spectacular views I have ever seen. Mamquam and Wedge were in plain view and right in front of us was Mt. Pitt. I had dreamed about climbing this peak for ages. About 500 m below us was the figure 8 shaped Snowcap Lake - which had at least 4 glaciers pouring into it. Stunning!

A short discussion regarding the best way up to the Snowcap Icefield took place. Baldwin suggests using the broad ridge at the west end of Snowcap Lake. Fairley suggests either the narrower ridge immediately south of the sandbar dividing the lake in two or the Glacier de Fleur des Neiges. The Baldwin ridge is quite steep lower down. Furthermore, it looked like there was a large amount of wind loading on it. Fairley's narrow ridge looked to have one steep bit, but mellowed out once the Thunderclap Glacier was reached; the Glacier de Fleur des Neiges was at the eastern edge of the lake and would involve a significantly longer climb to reach the Snowcap Icefield. A route debate ensued with Fairley's eventually winning out. This was the first point in the traverse we were able to get a weather forecast. Snow and high winds that night, but sunny for the next 4 days! In some sense, this was our point-of-no-return



Grant on the Icemantle Glacier. Photo - J. Ley, R. March, or M. Coyle.

discussion. Once down off Rollercoaster Ridge and on Snowcap Lake, it was quicker to keep moving south to the Pitt River drainage than turning around and heading back. The decent weather forecast gave us enough time to make the Pitt valley - but left little time for climbing peaks.

We decided to skip Mt. Pitt and climb up to the Snowcap Icefield on the south side of Snowcap Lake. We were behind schedule, had to climb steep north facing slopes that were already loaded (with more snow forecast for that evening) as well as dealing with a line of clouds fast approaching from the southwest. Our abandonment of the Mt. Pitt climb was reinforced by the brutal snow conditions. It took us ages (as well as countless faceplants) to get off the ridge and down to Snowcap Lake. I made the mistake of tucking one section and landed on my bum with my pack in my lap. "How the hell did it get here?" My belt buckle had shattered. Lowe Alpine would get a letter after the trip. Fortunately, Mike poached his fanny pack buckle from his guidepack (Thanks to Serratus!). After getting off the ridge we crossed to the south side of the lake and started ascending the prominent, north facing ridge running up from the lake. The wind was picking up, and the route steepening. It was now overcast.

What happened next was a little crazy.... perhaps we should have camped overnight at the lake and ascended the slope in the early morning - but we were concerned with additional loading from the snow that was on the way. In retrospect, we made the right decision to ascend the slope.

I dug a quick pit and, after getting a moderate shear off the rain crust (now buried about 30 cm deep), gave Mike the go ahead to ascend the slope. He, Gaetan, and I started kicking steps up the 40 degree slope while Grant, Greg and Russ stayed behind. Russ dug his own pit - going a bit deeper.

The three of us reached a large bench and waited about 150 m above the others. A few minutes later Greg arrived with a concerned look on his face. He told us Russ had found another layer about a metre below the rain crust, which had scored a 1 in a Rutschblock test!

The party was now separated and the slope some of us had come up had yet to release. Russ and Grant had little choice but to ascend the slope - four of us had not set anything off. Fortunately when Russ later showed up, he said he had repeated the test and found that the layers were not as weak as he had thought, although he did have a bit of strange look on his face when he said it. Russ maintained that the slope really wasn't that unstable. The three of us who set off up the slope prematurely will never know. A scary moment halfway



**Climbing up from Snowcap Lake to the Misty Icefield, with Mt. Pitt behind.**

**Photo - J. Ley, R. March, or M. Coyle.**

up to the Snowcap Icefield.

Together once again, we climbed up to the icefield on gentler slopes for an hour after that. Eventually we managed to find a somewhat sheltered place and hunkered down - at about 2150 m. The winds were fierce and we just managed to get the tents set up before the forecast storm hit us.

It appeared that the dodgiest portion of the traverse was behind us. We had, after 5 days, finally reached an icefield. The route ahead looked like a cruise compared to the elevation we had gained and lost during the first half of the trip. An 11 hour day and another 1000 m or so elevation gain.

**Day 6: 23 April** - Absolute calm and partially cloudy skies. After two long days, we were all pretty knackered and did not get off until about 10 am. To make matters worse, Gaetan's Whisperlite was bugged. We were reduced to 2 stoves among 3 two-man food groups for the remainder of the trip. Furthermore, Gaetan kept singing those awful French

country songs like "Ackey Breaky Dance" (A tacky takeoff on Billy Ray Cyrus' famous tune).

We continued the climb up the Snowcap Icefield, towards Snowcap Peak, and got an awesome run off the gentle north facing ridge at the top of the icefield. We skied east around the ridge (topping out at 2300 m) and rounded the point. We were still heading south towards Misty and Stave Peaks.

The first views of the Misty Icefield left us awestruck. The sky was cloudy and all you could see were the peaks poking out of the mist - the place was living up to its name. I still could not believe that such a magical place is so close to Vancouver. Meanwhile, Gaetan kept reminding us (joking now) that he could be in Cancun right then. We were headed down about 300 m - Misty flows from the south to the north - we had to descend to its terminus and regain most of the altitude before being able to exit off its southern edge.

About 3:30 pm we were approaching the low point of the Misty Icefield. Visibility was very poor (at times only 15-20 m). We were on a ridge leading down to the main portion of icefield - with steep cliff bands on one side of us, and a huge cornice concealing a significant cliff band on the other. We poked around for a route down, but, from our perspective, the slope appeared to steepen in all directions. Given the poor vis, we decided to sit tight. After an hour or so of vegging, the visibility had improved enough to move and, after digging a pit, we descended a southeast facing slope. We were now on the flattest part of the icefield with what could be described as a perfect "pocket" peak right in front of us (peak 2300 m) - lying directly north of Stave and neatly splitting the icefield in two portions. Lots of photos. We skied to the base of it and camped.

**Day 7: 24 April** - We left late in the morning (8 am) and climbed to the east of peak 2300 (our second major navigational blunder - the first being on day two). We later determined that the Baldwin route went to the west of this peak and through the col separating Misty from Stave Peak. Dropping our packs, we scrambled up and bagged peak 2300 via the easy snow slopes on its eastern face. No steeper than 40 degrees. From the peak, most of the major summits in Garibaldi park were visible - including an interesting perspective on Mamquam. Descending was crazy - Grant and I had intended to ski the slopes below the summit but every step we took started sluffs that could have easily turned into point releases.

At this point, the group had worked itself into a frenzy over the snow conditions. It was warm and the

experience descending from the peak has raised everyone's hackles. The near miss on the steep slope above Snowcap lake was still fresh in our minds. This slowed forward progress to a crawl since we were hesitating to cross slopes greater than 20 degrees. However, we had yet to see anything large let loose. It was this point in the trip that more experience would have resulted in better decision making - but as we were all pretty much still "wet behind the ears" we were limited to playing it "too safe".

We reached a col on the divide between Misty Icefield and Stave glacier. We were too far east, although the contours indicated a gentler slope below (and significantly flatter than the Baldwin descent route farther to the west). We sat down and discussed our options. Two members of the group wanted to bail out into one of the escape routes early - either Shale Creek or Corbold Creek via the ridge along its western edge. I realized that fear had clouded our judgment and that we were being unnecessarily paranoid about the snow conditions. We had seen no fresh activity in four days and we had skied down north and south facing slopes without triggering any slides. Furthermore, it had been very warm, allowing for stabilization of the snowpack. Most of us wanted to finish the traverse and the escape route was not that much safer or quicker. We decided to stick to the original exit via Remote Peak in Golden Ears Park.

We descended down to the Stave Glacier on mellow slopes and crossed over to the south side towards the large unnamed peak at the southeast corner of the glacier. Cougar tracks were visible on the glacier - the first sign of wildlife other than the mangy coyote in Icemantle creek on day four. The tracks came from the south side of the glacier and headed northeast - down the Stave Glacier to the headwaters of the Stave River. The cougar had probably come out of the Pitt River Drainage and was going to see her boyfriend in the Stave for some spring lovin'. We also saw the remnants of a huge release (about 500 metres long and what looked to be 60 cm thick - and a couple of days old) that had come down the north side of the peak we had to ski over to reach Remote peak. This was the first evidence of large slides on north-facing slopes.

Approaching below the peak, we were caught in yet another cloudbank. This time visibility really sucked. We were on a flat bench but we thought there were some cornices above us. Once we were sure we were in a reasonably safe location, and that visibility was definitely not improving, we set up camp. Sleeping inside a ping-pong ball.



Camp on Misty Icefield with Pk 2300 m behind. Photo - J. Ley, R. March, or M. Coyle

Day 8: 25 April - 6:30am....peering outside the tent.....still socked in. Mike turned on the radio to get the weather. Conditions had changed. 60% chance of precipitation in Vancouver for the next 3 days - basically a 100% chance of more snow where we were - perched on the highest piece of land between the Stave glacier and the coast. The Pitt valley funneled the clouds right to us. By this point, we only had a couple of days of food left and were not prepared to wait out a storm cycle. We pow-wowed for a while and decided to split via Corbold Creek. Although we would miss a significant portion of the traverse, as Baldwin describes it, we just weren't prepared to sit the storm cycle out - and the route we would have to do to reach Remote peak required some complicated routefinding.

The shortest route out was to descend directly south into the middle arm of Corbold Creek and to follow the creek out of Golden Ears park to logging roads running up from the north end of Pitt Lake. (An escape route not used before?) Visibility was really quite bad. Fresh snow overnight to boot. We roped up and headed south - picking a compass heading by making sure we were in a straight line. After descending about 300 m the visibility improved to the point where we didn't need the compass. The slopes we were going down were steep, avalanche debris was everywhere, we were exposed to falling cornices, and the cliffs below us were overhung with cornices.... What the hell were we doing there?

I arbitrarily picked what seemed to be the best route down and we somehow managed to find our way to the flat part of a bowl at the top end of the creek

system. Looking back up the 600 m slope we realized how lucky we had been! We had successfully navigated a veritable minefield and scanning the slope above revealed there was really no other possible way down - short of rapping. Unfortunately, there were two more treacherous sections below us.

The first was a steep 200 m slope below us. As I started down it unroped, snow sluffed off the rain crust like a viscous fluid with every step I took. The only way I could prevent myself from sliding down with it was to whack the snow in front of me with my poles to set it in motion and then follow the slide path. This was nuts, but we had to get down somehow. While I was descending, the others heard avalanches and rockfall elsewhere in the valley. Time to hurry. Although not the safest route, this was the most direct.

Once at the bottom of the slope, we strapped on the skis once again and approached the final obstacle, which stood between us and the valley floor. Below us was a cliffband and further to the northwest was a line of trees that would allow a safe descent to the valley floor. However, between us and the safety of the trees was a prime avalanche slope littered with piles of debris. Cliff bands above it. Scary runout below it. We all looked at each other and Gaetan volunteered to go first.

Just as he started out we heard that characteristic crack above us. An avalanche cascaded down a gully above the slope we had intended to cross. It spilled out onto the slope above, eventually stopping about 30 m upslope from the line Gaetan was about to take. Rapping the cliff band directly below us was looking a

little more appetizing. Gaetan once again took the initiative. We quickly crossed the slope one by one and reached the trees without any mishaps.

At the bottom of the valley, there were smiles all around as we looked up at what we had just come down. The celebration was cut short, however, as we all wanted to get out that day. There were six clicks of valley bottom to go before we had a hope of hitting the old roads decommissioned in the 60's (These roads were used by Clarke for access in 1971).

The first three clicks went fairly quickly - skiing. As we were skiing along the valley floor we kept getting whiffs of sulfur. There might be an undiscovered hot springs farther upstream but we were not in the mood to go poking around for it.

When we took off our skis, we almost immediately encountered some of the worst bush I have ever experienced. The slide alder was as dense as a mat and forward progress was only achieved by a series of acrobatic contortions and brute force. Oh, what I would have given for a chainsaw at that moment! At 7 pm we ate the remainder of our food and prepared for an epic walk out on logging roads. If only we could find them. (We were on the south side of the creek and from Fairley's description of the old logging roads, we believed that one was on our side of the creek about 1 or 2 clicks downstream - We were dead wrong. That side of the creek does have roads but at about 300 m above the creek).

However, by 8:30 pm we had only managed to thrash another 750 meters; it was getting dark, and we were beat. In our fatigued states, we found a cramped place to camp and cooked a hodgepodge of leftover dinners.

**Day 9: 26 April** - We were awakened by the sound of chainsaws and blasting. That was strange - it was Saturday. And of course, chainsaws means roads! We were on the south side of the creek and the noise was coming from the north side! We still believed that the roads were on our side....but a chainsaw means roads so.....time to find a stream crossing. The saws became quiet before we could get underway.

We packed up our equipment and started out for the last time. About 100 m from the campsite we stepped onto the debris from an old slide - it formed a bridge over the creek. We crossed over and I did a quick recon to find out where the blasting had come from. It did not take long to find the \*NEW\* road being built - although by now everyone who had been making noise earlier had left. I raced back, gathered the others and walked to the road. Once there, Greg suggested that we get

some pictures for Nick Vipond - a member of the 1996 abortive attempt. We set out to burn a happy face on the road with our extra white gas. Out came the cameras, and a one liter fuel bottle was emptied and lit up. Not a smart thing to do. No harm done however - we did get some good snaps before we put the thing out. Burning logging road is quite strange.

The remainder of the trip consisted of a typical slog down the logging road. We arrived at the Pitt Lake Lodge where we were greeted by the owners, Dan and Lee Gerak. They were kind enough to offer us a brew - good buzz off a single beer! Dan gave us a lift down the lake and from there, Mike and Russ talked some drunken boaters into giving us a lift to Maple Ridge. These guys obviously thought we were freaks with skis and packs but they offered us beer anyway. The buzz got better. One of them asked Gaetan: "Hey, do you guys live in the woods?" Gaetan deadpanned: "Yes, we're just going into town to get some groceries."

My only suggestion to anyone else who wishes to do this highly recommended tour is that they start from the south - most of glaciers start in north facing bowls and gradually carve their way north. The runs would be much longer on the S-to- N version as opposed to the "standard" North to South variety. You run the risk of paying for two boat rides but the quicker speed might pay off in a bigger peak than we managed

Party: Mike Coyle, Grant Burns, Russell March, Gaetan Lauzan, Jon Ley and Greg Hamilton (organizer).

## GARIBALDI PARK TRAVERSES

by Peter Stange

Wedgemount Lake to Russet Lake, 11-23 Aug, 1996

Planning to make it at least to the top of Mt. Sir Richard we left the car on the hot Wedgemount Creek parking lot and arrived a few hours later at the cabin in the rain. The cabin was unoccupied and amazingly clean.

12 August - Explored the route ahead in brilliant sunshine, climbing Mt. Weart by the long route via the Weart Glacier. The glaciers were in good shape but from that side we certainly didn't see much of the route down to Wedge Pass. A route via Mt. Turner / Berna Lake looked O.K. too.

13 August - Decided to go for the Wedge - Parkhurst Col (the heavy packs helped with the decision making process). This route to Wedge Pass is a mountaineers dream - extended glacier travel, ice swamps, steep boulder fields, lots of sidehilling, no water, thick and

steep slide alder and many loose, dry and steep creek beds. Progress was slower than expected. Camped about 1.5 km from the pass on a rocky, buggy and almost flat spot.

14 August - Wedge Pass was easily reached through open forest and a few swamps. Took a bit of careful route finding to locate the valley leading to the Shudder/Shatter Glacier. This valley offers two routes; we picked the east side. After a couple of creek crossings we scrambled up a steep (darn steep) moraine to a campsite on a bump next to the Shatter Glacier.

15 August - Rain and low cloud. Good day to do a recce in a whiteout: more white stuff ahead, must be snow and cloud.

16 August - Much better - visibility almost all the way to top of Quiver. Wind and cloud increased with altitude. Hoped to make it at least to the Naden Glacier but somehow travel was again slower than expected. Conditions on the lower Ripsaw Glacier made it easy to forget about crossing it. The only other obvious route is

over the top of Mt. Quiver. In worsening weather conditions we set up camp at about 2300 m and made a quick dash for the two peaks of Quiver to find a route to the Naden Glacier. We didn't see much but a route, if somewhat steep, seemed possible.

17 August - Snowed about 2 cm overnight. Driving rain mixed with snow in zero visibility didn't make it too difficult to endure a boring day in the tent. Here we encountered the only wildlife on the trip. Some unseen wool-eating monster made off with one of our socks and chewed a big hole in the other one.

18 August - In spite of still more snow and whiteout conditions we scraped most of the ice off the fly and packed up. We were using too much fuel and food at this altitude. Heading straight up a snow slope led us to the connecting ridge of the Quiver peaks. Downclimbing to the Platform Glacier wasn't too difficult on snow covered rock. It took a couple of attempts to find a route over the Ripsaw Glacier and Ripsaw Ridge on to the Naden Glacier. Once on the



Looking down from the Shatter Glacier to Wedge Pass with Wedge and Lesser Wedge Mtns. behind.  
Photo - P. Stange.



Looking down across Naden Pass (to left) into the head of the Cheakamus valley. Photo - P. Stange.



On the Fitzsimmons Glacier. Photo - P. Stange.

Naden Glacier it seemed a lot warmer, snow turned to rain and visibility improved as we lost altitude down to Naden Pass. What a beautiful place to be in lousy (any) weather; flat gravel camp spots and almost no wind - still raining though.

19 - 21 August - Rain. We used the short breaks in the weather for cooking and a few short sightseeing trips: Nannygoat Lake, Cheakamus River and Mt. Iago. The weather never improved enough to encourage us to move on up to the MacBride Glacier.

22 August - Clear skies - the usual West Coast scenario - to go home. Hiked and scrambled out to Russet Lake via the Iago, Fitzsimmons and Overlord Glaciers. Steep moraines and smooth slippery bluffs around the upper shelf of the Overlord kept us interested and entertained right to the end of our trip.

23 August - A quick run up Fissile in gorgeous sunshine and then down the trail to a couple of mugs of brew to wash down two weeks of bug juice. Mt. Sir Richard would have to wait until next summer!

#### Helm Creek to Helm Creek (a circumnavigation of Garibaldi Lake), 3-14 August, 1997

(or an attempt on Sir Richard from the other side)

3 August - Heavy packs didn't prevent us from reaching Gentian Pass on the first day. With lots of prodding from the local bugs we set up camp and cooked supper in almost no time.

4 August - The bugs assisted in a speedy pack up and they kept us going all the way up Polemonium Ridge. Away from the bugs we took a good look at the route ahead. The plan was to traverse high, below Castle Towers to the top of the Sphinx Glacier. A new, untried, uncomfortable, and unstable pack played a major role in our decision to give up on this route. We decided to drop down to Sphinx camp and check out the route to the Forger Glacier from there. It didn't take long to get down to the moraine above the Sphinx Camp cabin. We set up camp about 1 ½ km above the cabin, just below the Sphinx Glacier.

5 August - It's a surprisingly long way on a hot, sunny day to the top of the Sphinx Glacier. To get a better look at a possible route to Drop Pass we scrambled up Mt. Carr. Didn't look too great. Seems we were a bit too late. Crevasses on the Gray/Isosceles Glaciers were wide open. Looking at the mountains around us made it quite easy to stay put and for once spend some time in this beautiful area.

6-11 August - Great weather! Mountaineering every day, climbed every mountain around us. Got caught on the one and only bad day - the famous thunderstorm,

exactly on top of the Sphinx. Not much activity back at this end of the Lake. The summit registers indicate very little climbing activity, at least in the summer. Saw two Park Rangers who had come across the lake in a canoe to successfully climb the east ridge of the Sphinx. Visited the cabin on our rest day. Looked clean and tidy. Just noticed one annoying thing; a note from some idiot inviting people to kill some poor mouse, the only living creature left around there. If it weren't for people like him, dumping garbage, the mouse probably wouldn't be there! As long as something moves kill it?

And then there were the daily, multiple, extremely annoying 'dustings' by Whistler Air. It was clear that they wanted to get rid of us!

12 August - Time to leave! Noticed some nice heather benches leading to Sentinel Bay from the top of Guard. Following these 'benches' got us into the only, but unforgettable, bushwhack of the trip. What's a mountaineering trip without a bushwhack? Ahh - the stuff memories are made of!

Cooled down at Sentinel Bay and surveyed the route up to the shoulder of The Table. Crawled up the steep heather, sometimes on all fours, to a nice grassy spot just below The Table. Here we inhaled the bugs along with the air. Climbing Table didn't look too inviting - seems to be made up of nothing but loose gravel - we passed.

13 August - Down into the gorgeous Clinker(?) Meadows and up the east ridge of Mt. Price. The end of the trip. Had a bit of trouble finding the start of the trail but that was probably due to the fact that we followed our noses for too long. Camped the last night at the very busy Garibaldi Lake campsite.

*Postscript:* Two extended trips in Garibaldi Park and we didn't even scratch the surface of this affordable, beautiful, and 'remote' mountaineering area. There is so much more to explore and to climb. Many of these mountains will be first mountaineers first ascents - for me - if I haven't climbed a mountain its unclimbed - for me. Too many 'climbers' need the satisfaction of a real 'first' of anything - regardless of cost in \$, life or injury. Somehow I believe that we are mountaineers first and climbers second.

The Park, away from the trails, is virtually empty of people and wildlife. Hunting was stopped some years ago for obvious reasons - there was nothing left to kill.

The backcountry is now the domain of very low flying aircraft, rich tourists carted around by totally insensitive pilots with \$\$\$\$ signs on their compasses, mostly based at Whistler. One, from Whistler Air was an absolute standout (call letters: C-GEJC). On clear



David on a Deception Pinnacle, with The Sphinx behind. Photo - P. Stange.



Camp with the bugs below The Table. Photo - P. Stange.

days he showed up at least half a dozen times. He seemed to be determined to kill the last few goats by chasing them, from 20 m above the glacier, from one side of the divide to the other. The goats (and mountaineers), of course, panic and race wildly across the glaciers and cliffs. The herd lost at least one member during our stay due to this moron.

A strong presence of the BCMC in the park could possibly discourage such irresponsible activities. A summer camp, all supplies carried in on our backs, would be a good start to reclaim the BCMC's heritage.

### MT. CHARLIE CHANDLER

(ca 2555 m, UTM 514200E, 554760N) 9-10 May, 98

by Karl Ricker

The name of the above destination was classified as a Coquihalla trip in a club newsletter; but phone queries asked if it was Mt. Charlie Charlie in the Ashlus! Close, but the above coordinates plot out to roughly 3 km north of Tremor Mtn. in Garibaldi Park. The curious said they would phone back with a decision. Translation: "If it's not in the guidebook do I really want to climb it?"

So who was Charlie C? The placards along the "Valley Trail" which extol the efforts of Whistler's pioneers tell it succinctly. Charlie arrived from Wisconsin in 1913 and homesteaded the land, which is now Rainbow Park at Whistler. Charlie sold the land to Alex and Myrtle Phillips soon after and he then took up the life of a trapper, building the trail up Wedge Creek to service his traplines along it and adjacent Billygoat Creek. "Mt. Charlie Chandler" stands as a sentinel over his trapline territory.

Winding our way up the Blackcomb lift system, the trip started with the mandatory coffee stop at Horstman Hut. Gerard Clement stopped in to say he left his overnight gear in town and would day trip it the next day to meet us. At the Blackcomb-Spearhead col a noisy white-tailed ptarmigan in full winter colour plumage raucously protested our presence, and down Decker Glacier we slithered to get out of his way. The recent spate of warm weather was born out by avalanche debris everywhere, plus a new lake with calving bergs opening up at the snout of the glacier (dammed behind a rock sill at elev. 2000 m). Down-valley from there, the descent was steep and we blundered by hanging onto the right hand side hoping to contour our way to a selected campsite (el. 1830 m) on the crest of the right lateral moraine of Tremor Glacier. But cornices and cliff bands made folly of those

plans, and there were too many moraines to cross, which also included those of Trorey Glacier. If we had stayed on the axis of the valley floor all the way down to the outwash flats (el. 1630 m) of the Trorey and Tremor, two hours of foolishness could have been avoided. It's the same old story; by not dropping that extra 200 metres we managed to go up and down another thou! Man was it hot!

The campsite was located above two small lakes at the steep snout of Tremor Glacier; a third lake was tucked on a bench in forest cover nearby. By 4 pm the tent was up and boulders on the moraine crest were re-arranged to provide cook shelters. It was warm and pleasant, but Ed couldn't stand the lassitude. "Let's go to the peak now, we have five hours of daylight left, and it's better than skinning our way up it on frozen snow in the morning." Definitely a very saleable point Ed, but whew! I was already shagged by the heat of the day. Grimly I followed the others up through the rock and tree islands of the lower west slopes of the mountain. There were old ski tracks everywhere as we ascended in lazy loops on the upper open slopes and then reverted to abrupt zig zags up the steeper west buttress, with Ed topping out on the summit just as his wrist watch alarm clock buzzed 1800 hours. That was the problem, he was on night shift! I punched the clock at 1820 hours to signify my day was over! Young Todd arrived a shade sooner on foot with skis on his back; his new fangled skins wouldn't stick on wet ski bases! I offered a duct tape and haywire solution but, alas, he hadn't reached that stage in life yet. Well, "Mt. Charlie Chandler" was not the imagined first ascent! Old ski tracks on the summit, via our route, plus another enterprising set of foot tracks heading out of the north cirque basin to the crest of the northeast ridge, also led to the summit! Who were these mysterious vagabonds and what were they doing in an awkward-to-reach north-facing cirque? And then the thought dawned on us... snowboarders jumping cornices?

"Charlie Chandler" offers one of the best panoramas to be had in Garibaldi Park: the full Spearhead Range to the south, with all of its north-facing glaciers except the Spearhead (though Saucer Lake is fully visible beside it); avalanche-strewn Billygoat Creek and Mt. Sir Richard to the east; the south faces of James Turner and Wedge-Lesser Wedge in your face thank-you; and Green Valley with Mt. Ipsoot behind it to the west. A colossal avalanche had swept about one third of the south slopes of Wedge, down to bedrock, leaving masses of dirty debris at Wedge Pass, probably in the last few days. Charlie had to build one heck of a lot of

trail up Wedge Creek to reach the pass; we were impressed by the effort and his ruggedness and indeed this viewpoint had to be "his" mountain. Ed built the cairn on the only point with exposed rock rubble, placed the cairn canister within it, explaining who Charlie was; then he woke up the sleeping trip organiser at 1650 hours, apologizing that night-shift was to start. Crafty Swiss and their timepieces were working against me.

Who ever heard of corn snow at 7 pm? None of us had, but it was there facing the evening sun as the crew coasted in sweeping turns through the full 540 m drop to the campsite, reached at 1910 hours! It was still warm at the camp long after dinner was finished and after twilight set in. At midnight the snow finally froze up and Ed again reasoned: if we wake up too early we will have to climb frozen snow to get out of here; and so it was a rather leisurely 8 a.m. awakening on a cloudless Sunday.

At 9:30 the packs were on our backs; swallowing pride and elevation loss we skimmed the frozen sun-cupped snow down to the valley floor where there were zillions of ski tracks. Obviously this was the helicopter pick-up point for those skijng the Tremor and Trorey Glaciers, but it was a quiet day. The headwall above us, to regain the Decker Glacier, was conveniently stepped, and just enough crust had softened to make it a relatively easy one hour ascent. Another hour of easy slogging brought us to the lowest col between Decker and Blackcomb Mountains. Todd elected to cache his pack at a nearby avalanche snow block and join three day-trippers (Gerard & 2 friends) for a run off Decker on a more sane route than those used by some yahoos who earlier in the week had been carving turns below cornices which were now breaking off. This left two of us to forge ahead.

Ed and I contoured around "Disease Ridge" to "Body Bag Bowl" and "Ziggy's Meadows", stumbling upon two large yurts with a hot tub on the deck between them! Apparently, Prince Charles and his two sons had over-nighted there during their recent spring vacation. Talk about opulence! Well, we countered with a ride back up the 7th Heaven lift for another Horstman Hut coffee before calling it a day. It was a hot one on the valley floor, but our final gesture for the conclusion of the trip was a visit to the placard at Rainbow Park to photograph the story of Charlie Chandler.

Party: Ed Zenger, Todd Ponzini, and Karl Ricker (organizer). First Recorded Ascent (unknown people ahead of us), via west slopes and buttress of "Mt. Charlie Chandler" - let's raise a final glass for Charlie!

## MELVIN CREEK, SPRING AND SUMMER

by Greg Stoltman

Spring, 12-13 April, 1997

Ever since hearing of ski area plans for the Melvin Ck. Valley, I had been somewhat curious to see this area, mainly due to the undisturbed nature of the Melvin Ck. Valley itself and the potential to discover some nice open rambling country. So, with this in mind, I had it put into the 1996/97 BCMC winter trip schedule.

As March rolled around Darlene Anderson and I made a trip to the Vancouver Public Library to get information on the ski area proposal. We left the library with some photocopied ski area maps from which we could compare the actual terrain.

A Saturday morning saw twelve of us in the parking lot with Meredith to be picked up in Whistler. After my Whistler pick up and a single group "PetroCanada stop" we were on our way driving to the D'arcy area from which I hoped to get a 10 am ski start. Not knowing just where the Haylmore Ck. road started had us stopping at the side of the highway, pouring over the only map we had which was of course the topo. Upon studying the map we promptly made U turns to drive back about ½ km on the highway to cross the Gates River on a bridge with a sign pointing us to the community of Devine. We continue on what was obviously the main road and where the pavement ended we were reassured by the Haylmore Creek Forest Service road sign. Shortly after we came to a fork which we found on the map. Still not knowing on what side on Haylmore Ck. the mainline would be on, we opted for the left fork which on the map appeared to go, but it soon dead ended at a chain link fence.

Now it seemed only logical that we should try the right fork and so we did for about another kilometer before running into a slidey stretch with rocks on the road. At this point I should have walked ahead to see if we could actually drive through. But I didn't. It somehow seemed sufficient to merrily stare ahead and pronounce the road impassable. My doubts and everyone else's it seemed were further "confirmed" by the map showing a road on each side of Haylmore Creek. Somehow we were convinced. Despite the Forest Service road sign, we felt we were on an impassable deactivated road and that walking from this low down in the valley was out of the question.

Absolutely convinced now that the road headed up from D'arcy we headed that way, recrossing the Gates River to the main highway. Soon enough we were in D'arcy and in sight of Anderson Lake. At this point I

knew something was wrong again as I had been looking for a junction 1 km from the lake. So we used the cultural information on the map and determined that there was supposed to be both a church and a cemetery at the junction. Thus began our third backtracking.

Things looked promising at the junction with both the church and cemetery being located and a nice wide gravel road leading off to the east seemingly up the Haylmore Valley. Soon, however, a junction turned wide into narrower which ultimately lead to a large, very sound, and very private looking gate. Thus began our fourth backtracking and it was time to ask the locals.

Locals one and two pointed us back to our original road through Devine but we needed further reassurance so we talked to a woodcutter at the side of the highway and he confirmed these directions. Hmm, something to be learned from all of this.

So now of course we ended up getting back to our slidey stretch of boulder strewn road and I was beginning to kick myself mentally. This time, since turning around was obviously no longer an option, I did what I should had done in the first place and that was to actually walk ahead and scout out the road which proved to be completely passable. More mental kicking here and 45 minutes wasted.

From here it was clear sailing up the road though the 2 wheel drives had to take it slowly through some shallow water bars. At about 600 m elevation we hit snow and at about 11:30 am we began skiing.

Our skiing was shortlived and we spent the next 1½ hours alternating but staying mainly on foot. As we headed up the road, numerous avalanches were crossed, some as deep as 3 m. Lunch was at about 1 pm on a rather nondescript waterless stretch of road.

I had been anticipating an 11 km slog up the road, but Darlene's map indicated a mining road heading up the Barclay Valley right to the head of Melvin Creek which meant more like 15 km of road. My map did not show this road and my visions of a pristine Barclay Valley were fading quickly.

The Barclay Valley road proved to be a pleasant surprise, however, after the initial logging slash-steep forest detour that we had to make to get to it. The road was narrow and low key in nature. Almost like a wide trail and at least there was no logging in this valley.

Camp was made at about 6 pm in the upper valley below the Crystal Creek junction. Water was available and so was a cabin. With the warm temperatures and impending weather the cabin might provide shelter

from a rainstorm. That evening made for the usual group socializing and a crack from Jeff about getting up at 5:30 the next morning.

At 6 am on Sunday morning I worked my head around to the tent door, took a look out, saw an intense snowstorm, poor visibility and no human activity, so, back to bed. At about 7 am I decided to get up and have breakfast in the cabin, soon to be joined by Thomas and Manu. As the morning wore on, more and more people were up and the weather began to improve, so it was decided that we would have a go at it.

Uphill group movement began at around 9:30 am with a big strung out group slowly merging into one. Jeff, however, was nowhere to be seen! I opted to go straight up the 20° grade of the Crystal Creek drainage with Tony following. In doing so we actually passed most of the group who were using the mining road switchbacks. Within an hour or so Darlene, I, Tony and Trevor had reached the head of the Melvin Cr. Valley at the Twin Lakes. Apparently from the northernmost twin lake, Cayoosh Resorts wants to build a lift up a nice bowl above the lake. Behind us the remaining group split with Thomas and Dominic summiting the 2500 m peak above us for a nice ski down too.

Darlene, Trevor, Tony and I opted to ski down to a large boulder to get out of the relentless wind and have lunch. This would also allow us to study the ski area plans in relation to the terrain. While the wind still proved fierce, we did manage to chow down and study the valley.

There did seem to be potential to develop what I could see as a very esthetic lift ski area geared mostly to overnight visitors. Of course what I could also see was a very pristine and beautiful subalpine valley which I would like to see again in such a state. The proposed ski area certainly wouldn't benefit backcountry skiers in any way and is too far from Vancouver for day use, making lift skiing there an expensive proposition. It also appears that a lot of avalanche control work would be required and that goat habitat might be affected.

After some brief turns in the valley by some members of the group we all headed back to camp for some quick camp breaking. By 3 pm the last of us were heading down the valley to arrive at the vehicles by 5:40. And what happened to Jeff? Well, apparently he had the best sleep in his life and just relaxed in camp all day.

Party: Monica Bittel, Fern Hietkamp, Dominic Stohl, Mike Peel, Jeff Rabinovitch, Trevor Lumley, John

Grant, Thomas and Manuala, Meredith Dalley, Tony Molynieux, Darlene Anderson, and Greg Stoltmann.

Summer, 26-27 July, 1997

A mistake in the BCMC schedule resulted in every caller enquiring about a day trip to Melvin Creek. Unfortunately, as I had scheduled it as a weekend trip I had to turn the callers down. But luckily one of the callers, a fellow by the name of David Peary, had some flexibility with his time so the weekend trip was on.

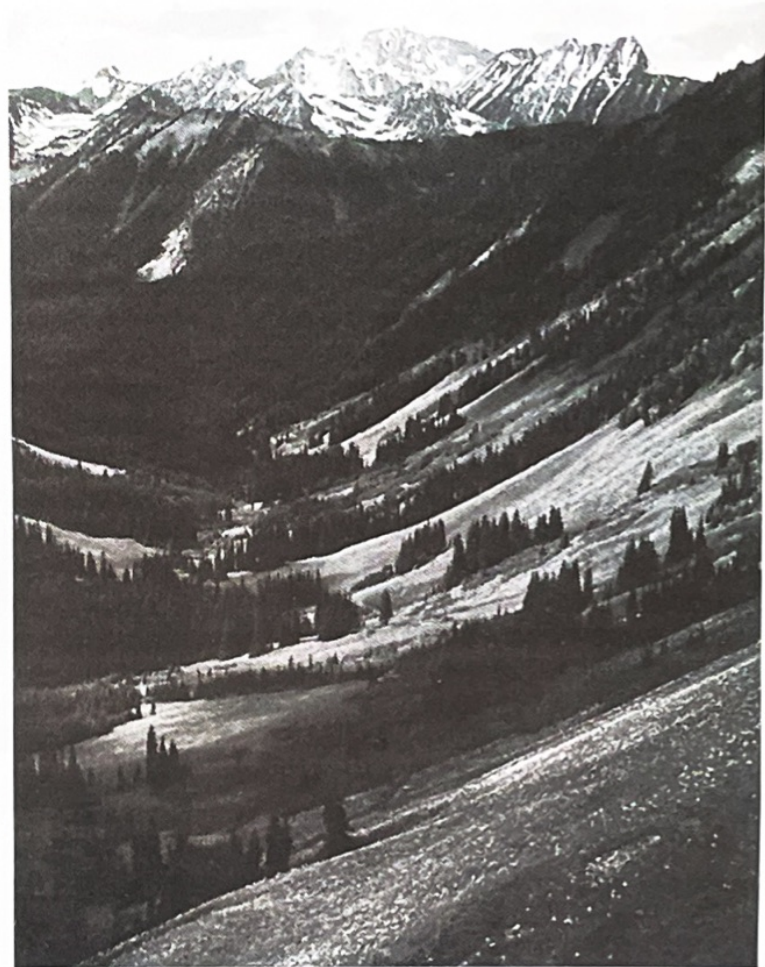
Saturday morning saw us leaving the church at Taylor Way at 6:30 heading for the D'arcy area. There was no trouble this time finding the Haylmore Ck. Forest Service road. My only concern was that the road might still be blocked by the winter's avalanche debris but these fears were soon alleviated as we passed the site of the first and largest avalanche and found that there was no snow to be seen. I decided to drive past the bottom of the Barclay Valley mining road, which provides access to the head of the Melvin Creek Valley and continued to a logging slash beyond which the truck was then parked. This provided a shortcut to the mining road, albeit a steep one.

Once the logging slash section with its usual mess was done with, we were provided with some very pleasant walking on the mining road which had actually reverted more to track status over the years, being only wide enough for an ATV or less. That the Barclay Valley was unlogged was an added bonus indeed.

After about 1½ hours we came upon the cabin, near which we had camped on the winter trip. Having heard stories of tame deer near the cabin I was not too surprised when we came upon one of the animals. But it was remarkable nonetheless to have the deer posing for a photo only 2 m away and showing very little fear.

After our cabin-deer encounter we found ourselves hiking into the subalpine zone on an ever steeper road which eventually went into a series of switchbacks. Lunch was had at the beginning of these switchbacks. Higher up, the views opened up with some intensely green very smooth meadows dotted with coniferous trees lower down. Eventually the switchbacks subsided. A short bit of track brought us to the first twin lake which still had a good deal of snow on it. A few hundred metres further we reached the Barclay Valley-Melvin Creek pass. From there one gains the first views of the Melvin Creek Valley.

The valley has quite an idyllic nature, mainly due to the fact that it is pristine and quite open and surrounded by some of the biggest very smooth



The Barclay valley. Photo - G. Stoltmann.

meadows that I have seen anywhere. We opted for a heather meadow area about a third of the way across the Upper Valley for our campsite.

Upon reaching the spot it seemed that all we wanted to do was to laze around for the first 45 minutes, basically being quite content to do absolutely nothing. In time the tents were set up and I suggested a hike up to the ridge top at the head of the valley. Just as I was about to leave the camp I heard Dave shouting excitedly from above. As I got closer I realized that he had found something on the ground and at that point he mentioned something about a bird's nest and the mother having just flown away. So I took a close look and was quite amazed to see a tiny bird's nest in the heather with three newly hatched chicks in it still entirely devoid of feathers. This was turning out to be quite a wildlife trip.

From here we continued to hike to the ridge crest to gain excellent views of the pristine Lost Valley to the north and of course Melvin Cr. Valley stretching east. At this point we noticed goat hair on the ground.



Melvin Ck. looking east. Photo - G. Stoltmann.



Melvin Ck. looking south south east. Photo - G. Stoltmann.

Sensing that there was time, we then decided to head for a 2500 m summit to the north which proved to be an easy walk up. Then it was back to camp for our individual dinners. That evening saw us enter our tents under clear skies.

Sunday morning broke clear and sunny again. By all appearances a perfect hiking day. We were moving by about 9:20 and decided to head for the immense smooth green meadow on the south side of the valley and then to angle up it in a north easterly direction. The going was smooth and straightforward but as we gained elevation I began to realize that this valley was truly a first class hiking destination. Views were opening up in ways that I had not anticipated and there was something extremely exciting about wandering up the immense tilted slope.

Some of the ski area plans were starting to look a little bizarre, particularly above Melvin Lake. And of course I couldn't help but notice the numerous avalanche paths. At the meadow's crest we decided to



Melvin Ck. looking south to Melvin Lake.  
Photo - G. Stoltmann.

take a new ridge system further north to another 2500 m bump. This gave me a chance to examine another of the proposed lift sites, which seemed to make very little sense, as the top would have been extremely steep. After a bite to eat and enjoying views and rest we headed back down off the peak and into the Melvin Creek valley, and by about 3 pm reached camp. We opted for a half hour rest and then broke camp to leave by 4 pm.

The hike out was pleasant, albeit a bit road weary on the mining track. But some of that weariness was alleviated when we met the president of the Cayoosh Recreation Club at the cabin. This fellow was a bit of a character, looking like the stereotype of a typical redneck hunter waving his cigar around in the air while he talked. But he was actually quite pleasant and informative. The Cayoosh Recreation Club mandate seemed a little unclear but they were definitely interested in keeping the Barclay Valley free from logging and overuse by hunters. They maintained the road for ATV use and had posted some signs along it pertaining to the natural features in the area. At any rate the fellow was nice enough to take our packs down the rest of the mining road in his ATV cart, saving us the long walk. All in all a very pleasant trip in a very pleasant area.

#### SALAL CREEK / ATHELNEY PASS TRAIL SURVEY ROUTE by Steve Grant

Salal Creek has seen few visitors because it has had a reputation for bad bush. The infrequent parties either travelled through the high country at right angles to the creek, or reluctantly used it as an entry or exit route.

On a spring 1996 ski trip to Bridge Peak via Salal Creek, we found the Salal Creek Valley to be unusually hospitable for ski travel below treeline because of kilometres of open, flat valley bottom. When we returned later in the summer, we were surprised to find the open areas were free of vegetation, which meant a moderately long hiking route could be created with a feasible amount of work. We also found an ancient cairn with part of an old boot in it, and an old campsite. We decided to clear a trail survey route to encourage more visits to the area.

At first, Jayne and I worked pretty much by ourselves. The encroaching logging shows were silent all summer while the Protected Area process continued. We flagged a rough route and began using loppers and a swede saw to allow passage through the

worst bits. On the October long weekend, Greg Stoltmann pitched in on a weekend that was shortened by a wet snowfall.

Late avalanche snow blocking the Lillooet mainline prevented a ski trip into the valley in the spring of 1997. Returning in June, we were happy to find our work had survived the winter, and we resumed lopping. A couple of short sections had to be realigned due to shifts in the creekbed. We expect this will continue to be needed every year.

In July, Jayne and I did a four-day trip into Athelney Pass. We did more clearing and carefully relocated parts of the flagged route in anticipation of other people helping. We found a disgusting little mining exploration camp, built and abandoned in October of 1996 beside a large balanced boulder. Also, we came across an old trail built through the rocky moraines where the valley bottom goes above treeline. This made a wonderful addition to our route. A pleasant scramble up Ochre Peak was rewarded with stunning views in all directions. The peak really does have ochre on it.

A scheduled club trip on the August long weekend attracted seven people. The first kilometre from the parking spot travelled through forest undisturbed except for logging flagging. We never even flagged a route through that section as we expected it would be destroyed. As usual, it was great fun trying to stay on the proper course to find the start of our route, and trying to find the end of the road on the way out. On the way in this time, everyone helped quickly clear a rough route across the substantial slide alder chute protecting the start of our cleared trail.

The party then pushed on about 3/4 of the way to Athelney Pass, and camped near the abandoned exploration camp. Unlike most valley bottom travel, the open Salal Creek offers sustained views of the surrounding mountains. We took advantage of the last hour of daylight and foraged pressure-treated 3m 4x4 posts to build a bridge across one of two small but awkward streams near the camp.

The group started the next day by building the second bridge, then split up. Monica Bittel, Yolanda DeViser, and Davie Pirrie headed for Athelney Pass, Robin Tivy visited the lake in the pass, and Jayne, Brian, and I returned down the trail to finish clearing a section. The party that went to the pass visited the old mining cabin, then climbed Ochre Peak. Robin found the cobalt colored, crescent shaped lake at the top of the pass has no outlet nor inlet, so the water was reasonably warm.

Meanwhile, the trail workers, powered on by Brian Wood's amazing zeal for clearing brush, finished a long difficult section, and had a scary encounter with some unseen large breathing THING in a slide alder patch.

Up very early on the last day, Brian rushed up the valley to visit the pass and rejoined us by 10. In the meantime we cleared rock debris from the old trail. On the way out we filled in the flagging in some sparse areas, and did as much lopping as time allowed. But still there were long uncut portions, and I was getting tired of still bushwhacking while imagining what it would be like with the route complete.

George Malburg joined me on Labour Day weekend and put in an enormous effort to make that dream a reality. We found the logging road had been extended 1km, almost exactly to where we had begun clearing the route. This reduced the distance to Athelney Pass to 15km. with 800m elevation gain. We cut until we ran out of daylight, and camped at the 4km point where the route first leaves the forest for the open gravel flats. Preparing supper was a bit of a nervous affair because of a black bear feeding on the far side of Salal Creek. I had forgotten the bear spray, and George was not entirely reassured by my claim that the bear would not want to get wet crossing the creek that late in the day. But a greater treat was in store for us. A pack of wolves started howling about 1km upstream, and continued into the night. In the morning, their tracks were on top of ours where we had gone to get water.

That day we did a lot of crashing around in the bushes to find the very best route, reflagged, lopped, sawed and cleared, trying hard to finish. But we just couldn't do it and returned, exhausted, to our camp for an uneventful second night and lots of speculation about whether we could finish the next day.

Finally, on the last day, George moved ahead to the end of the section we'd cleared on the way in, and we clipped towards each other. A golden spike ceremony marked the completion of 26 people-days of work. If you go there, I'll show you where it was. One of the greatest rewards of trail clearing is striding along the finished route, marvelling at how quickly you travel, and recalling what it was like before.

In the future, we plan to explore the possibilities of extending the route to the logging roads on the south side of Downton Reservoir and adding a fork up the north branch of Salal Creek. The old mining cabin could be refurbished to be part of route linking Pebble (Boulder) and North Creeks.

We returned for the Thanksgiving weekend, accompanied by Greg, Brian Thompson and his son John. There were water bars on the spur roads, so we hoped it was a sign the loggers had departed for the year without cutting the trees. Someone had cut a short trail joining the end of the logging road to the start of our route. So the secret was out. Increasing deep snow stopped us at the usual campsite, and we never made it to the pass. Determining if the old trail continues beyond the pass into MacParlon Creek would have to wait.

During this effort, we also maintained an up-to-date description of the route on the bivouac.com web site. In late 1997, we started hearing back from people who used the route because of that site. We also started contacting parties who might be interested in publicizing or protecting the route, and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee began mentioning it in their presentations. However, unless things change, logging will reach the heart of the valley within 5 years. This is highly regrettable given the importance of the valley as a refuge and travel route for animals, an historic human travel route, the poor quality of the timber, and the unique and world class scenery.

So now Salal Creek is opened up. Athelney Pass is a moderate weekend trip. Three days gives time to visit one of the peaks. There are things to do ranging from glacier travel to meadow wandering. 2700 m Mount Ethelweart rises above the pass and has seen only a few ascents. The time to visit the area is now, before it is spoiled by lots of other people, hunters, snowmobilers, heli-whatevers, and, of course, the loggers. In a way, it's a shame it couldn't have been left alone.

**SOUTH EDMOND GLACIER, B.C.M.C. SKI CAMP**  
**26 April - 9 May, 1997**  
by Pat Crean

Looking at the map covering the massive "Bridge-Lillooet" Icecap there were still a few interesting segments that had not received much attention from climbers and/or skiers. One area in particular was between the Stanley Smith and Edmond Glaciers, just west of Mount Fowler and south of the headwaters of Edmond Creek. This north-flowing icefield was not named, but could conceivably be known as South Edmond glacier or perhaps the Gray-Cooper glacier. (Ed's comment - this appears to have recently been named the Stahalam Glacier). There did not seem to be any recorded information about previous mountaineering activity; that in itself made it very

appealing. Thus, a ski camp was organised with part of the group staying one week and four people staying longer.

All the way from Cape Breton came Aaron Schneider, with Rhona Thornton and Richard Martell coming in from Waterloo, Ontario. From the Lower Mainland were Gerard Clement, Jack Bryceland, Marilyn Cram, Brian, Margaret and Erica Ellis, Peter Stange, Brian Vezina and myself.

Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> was a day of pouring rain, which definitely did not look good. However, Sunday cleared up considerably so we all mustered at Pemberton Helicopters with our mounds of equipment. Camp was established at about 1950 m where the two branches of the glacier meet and it turns to flow north-westerly down to Edmond Creek. This gave us good exposure to the early morning sun, a boon when your ski boots are frozen and need warming up. We also had good evening exposure (whenever the sun shone). We were out in the open, in the event that the wind blew, so we had to resort to building snow-walls around the tents. There was one big rock which some of us used for a cooking spot. There were no big snow banks or wind cirques in which to dig snow caves, so tents were the only way to go, but the location was safe and the views magnificent.

Mount Fowler was our "local" peak and about the only one with a name, so the first day most of the party took off up the gentle, south-east branch of the glacier to the col south of the peak and went to the summit from the south side, mostly a walk with ski poles on a barely covered talus slope. The col was the same one that Marilyn, Gerard and I had skied to in 1993 from a camp on Frank Smith Glacier. It had been a dismal, foggy day and we had scrunched in behind a rock wall to eat lunch. Marilyn had whimsically called it "Picnic Pass". Our second day, Tuesday, was fogged in and mostly taken up with building snow-walls and pattering around.

Like most of the club ski camps there was no rigid program of events; people just moved around finding out where others were going, then deciding where they wanted to go. Pretty casual but we always knew where everybody was and no problems occurred, fortunately. Most of the skiing was up the main glacier to the south. From a point opposite a big rock face to the east a route to the south-west led up under a well covered icefall with a steep pitch leading out into a large "cirque basin" with a ring of classic Coast Range ski peaks laid out before one's eyes in a great arc to the west. All of these peaks were skied on various days by members of



Looking south from camp. Photo - P. Crean.



Marilyn, Gerard, and Jack near the icefall east of camp. Photo - P. Crean.



Jack, Marilyn and Pat on Pk 2760 m with Mts. Gray and Cooper behind. Photo - G. Clement.



Marilyn skiing down the Stahalam Glacier, looking north. Photo - P. Crean.

the camp, the one exception being a beautiful 2890 m snow-dome way out to the west on its own, which would have taken a good long day.

The route to the south-east from the afore-mentioned location on the main glacier led over a wind-blown rocky pass then around a south-facing slope to a pair of scrambling peaks a little over 2700 m. From here there were great views across to Mts. Gray and Cooper and the Donar and Frank Smith Glaciers.

Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, the first group of eight flew out, leaving Jack, Marilyn, Gerard and myself. The next few days offered a mixed bag weatherwise, starting out with some stormy weather, snow and wind, but not too severe at any time. One day was bright sunshine but such a cold wind that we turned back from high up on the glacier and retreated to camp. The following day, Tuesday, after digging out from a night's snowfall, our foursome skied a 2760 m peak on the south-west side of the glacier. In contrast to the previous few cold days, Wednesday was sunny and hot enough that we had to wear face-masks to prevent getting burned to a crisp. We repeated our trip to the pair of peaks over towards Gray-Cooper, skiing back down the north-facing slope towards Mt. Fowler. A series of crevasses on our left pushed us up against the avalanche slope on our right. We picked our way through, one at a time, and down the moderate slope to camp.

Our last day of skiing was good weather but not quite so hot. Our objective was Mt. Saut, a 2800 m peak at the south end of the glacier, standing out on its own. It turned out that the peak immediately to the southwest was skied from our camp on Stanley Smith Glacier in 1984. We approached Saut from the east, curving round to the south-east side and to the summit from the south. A very worthwhile mountain to ski on our final day.

Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, was the day to leave our spectacular mountain wilderness. Clouds on the upper parts of the peaks burned off by mid-morning, heralding a perfect sunny, warm day. At 11 am our aircraft whirled in over the skyline and picked us up for the super-scenic flight back to the greens and browns of Pemberton Valley.

**THE SHULAPS IN WINTER**  
**27 December, 1996 - 3 January, 1997**  
by Steve Grant

After a terrorizing drive early on the 27<sup>th</sup> up the Fraser Valley and Canyon to Lytton, we took the Lillooet, Carpenter Lake, Marshall Lake, and Mud Lake roads. Each road in turn was more snowy and deserted.

It was afternoon before we started breaking trail up the steep Jim Creek road. The 50 cm deep snow was sugared out to the ground, and we had to follow old animal tracks to stay on top of some of it. My recollections from being there 19 years before (a VOC party including Robin Tivy) weren't sufficient to allow travel in the dark, so we didn't make it to the subalpine.

It had been quite cold while we climbed, but now the thermometer said -26° C. We had two stoves for three people, and neither of them would work. The stoves, I mean. So we had a campfire. Hours of fiddling with the stoves in the dark and cold gained nothing but frozen fingers, so we skipped supper. No sense wasting body energy digesting food. When we retreated to bed at 8 pm, the "mercury" retreated deep into the bulb of the -32° C thermometer.

In the morning, there were 5 cm frosticles inside the tent, and similar ones on the sleeping bag openings. Of course they would fall and melt on our faces without any provocation. Actually it was reassuring to note that our faces were warm enough to melt them. The stoves hadn't magically fixed themselves, which meant we had rock-hard super-cooled nanaimo bars for breakfast. It wasn't even that civilized. Still in our bags, we gnawed pieces off the frozen lump right out of it's bag.

We dried out the sleeping bags in the sun, and packed our crackling-cold nylon gear for a very late start. By keeping right at all the road forks, we soon reached the subalpine and began setting up camp. We rigged a tarp for wind and snow protection, and got wood for a fire. It was a spectacular site, and we would have taken pictures had we known we wouldn't see much more of it.

By cleaning the wick and jet, and lubricating and "spreading" the leather pump cup, I was able to get the Whisperlite working. There was also water in the gas bottle, but it was a harmless piece of ice rattling around in the bottom. I found that if you prick the jet with the stove off, it pushes the gunk down inside. The stove will relight, but the crap just gets jammed back up into the jet and it will go out. It's better to prick the jet with the stove running, so the stuff gets blown out, and relight and repeat until it's clear.

The rubber plunger in Greg's Coleman was frozen too hard to create pressure, and it started working again after things warmed up. Finally, one afternoon, it went from -25° C to -2° C in a couple of hours! We noticed we were doing little tasks without our mitts on.

After that, wind, clouds, snow and extreme avalanche conditions prevented any ambitious outings.

Just like the 1977 Shulaps jetstream trip. The New Year's Eve storm forced us to dismantle the shelter, and retreat to the tents for supper. We were getting warmer running around to stay out of the wildly swirling fire smoke than we were from the fire itself. Fortunately the tents were sheltered, but the storm erased all our carefully packed trails. Enough was enough. Time to leave, or so we thought.

The snow on the Jim Creek road was now deep glop - very tiring and strange stuff to ski in. The Mud Lake road was snowed in, but we had no problem driving to the Marshall Lake road, which normally is plowed. However, we were soon stopped by an avalanche blocking the road. Marshall Lake is cottage country, with a few permanent residents. Other cottagers were there for the holidays. From them, we found out about the historic snowstorms that had hit southwestern BC, and that the main roads were closed. However, no one had a phone to find out about the local roads.

Also unknown to us, we had become locally famous as the "Jim Creek folks". They had seen the truck and were wondering what sort of crazy people would go up there in winter, especially in these conditions. They were all anxious to hear our heavily embellished survival tales, so we had lots of invitations for places to stay. Many stories from BC's backcountry were traded as visitors came and went over the next two days. Besides not having phones, unfortunately they also did not have showers.

We spent the morning of Jan. 2 failing to fix someone's shorted-out radio phone. The danger of being caught between slides made us reject trying to get out via the unplowed Mud Creek and Tyaughton Lake roads to Gold Bridge. It wouldn't have helped anyway. In the afternoon, someone with a Bobcat cut a hole through the slide, so we packed up, said our goodbyes, and left. But there were lots more avalanches across the road. Some were drivable, and we shovelled through another, but eventually it looked questionable. Even someone with a snowmobile had turned around.

However, this sort of stuff is no problem for ski mountaineering equipment, so I packed some things and skied down to the Carpenter Lake road. The last 1/2 km of the Marshall Lake road was buried by numerous 3m deep, wet snow avalanches - which made our shovelling look pretty optimistic. The deserted Carpenter Lake road was cleared, and there were a few tire tracks. After a half hour of quiet walking along the road beside the silent frozen lake, I saw lights far down the lake. Eventually a pickup arrived. The driver had a radio, and called the road crews. Equipment was on the

way to clear the Marshall Lake road that night, the Carpenter Lake road was to open the next morning, and the Duffey Lake road had just opened. So I packed up our "HELP" sign, and went back up to where Jayne and Greg were waiting.

With information from the outside world as our gift for re-admission, we returned to the hospitality of our hosts, and celebrated with a grand feast and adventure tales long into the night. That's what people do when they don't have television. (Pity the folks in Boston Bar, who had to watch tv for six days.) Another day without a shower or clean clothes. Will this trip ever end? More important, does it qualify as an epic yet?

Jan. 3. Escape. Eyes wide as we bumped through narrow slots cut in the huge avalanches on a glorious sunny day. In Lillooet, the police approached us to find if someone called Stoltmann was with us - while Greg was inside phoning his very worried parents. The officer was disappointed he wouldn't get to go on a helicopter "joy ride" that afternoon to look for us up in the mountains. Then a stunningly scenic drive over the Duffey Lake road, the usual Whistler traffic, and finally, home at last!

If you go: Fairley's guide is still accurate, except for the addition of the Mud Creek road. The cottagers are very friendly and knowing your itinerary will save them some worries.

Party: Greg Stoltmann, Jayne Hardy, Steve Grant

#### DICKSON RANGE FAMILY TRIP

2-5 August, 1996

by Greg Bernard

It's strange how different memory and reality can sometimes be. My head told me that the road up Roxey Creek, while rather inconspicuous, was a fine route into the many splendours of the eastern Dickson Range. And it is...if you are walking. Unfortunately, if you are age 3, this isn't much of an option. And so there we were, chopping through large trees with ice axes, renovating paint jobs and antennas with small trees, and performing reconstructive surgery to the road itself with our bare hands, all in an effort to shorten the march into camp. Oddly, as I found myself navigating my truck up the overgrown path by radar alone, reality was exactly how I remembered it.

Being a parent and a mountaineer can be a somewhat contradictory experience. When at home, the mountains beckon; when in the mountains, thoughts often turn to home. This is tiring and counter-productive; not a good thing. The family trip to the

Dickson range was part of my search for a solution.

The premise is simple enough: entice enough people to go on a camp oriented trip (as opposed to an object oriented trip) to an area that is accessible and has a variety of options for day trips that satisfy a range of skill levels. That was the plan. No set itinerary; no set objectives; no experience required. Success for this kind of trip hinges on the number and type of people along for the ride. To be the only child in a group of hardcore climbers would be a bummer.

I can say that, in spite of the access difficulties (and for some, because of the access difficulties), and the long drive, the trip was a success. The valley between Dickson and Penrose peaks is ideally suited to this type of trip. The walk from the end of the road in is minimal, the campsite is idyllic, the scenery is spectacular and very rugged, and most importantly, the rock is good. A trip of three days, however, is too short to make the drive (about 6 hrs.) worthwhile.

The Bernard and Dorotich clans left Vancouver at 5 pm on Friday afternoon, had supper in Whistler, and met Doug and company at the Hess campound in Pemberton. We continued over Railroad Pass and on past Gold Bridge to camp in the well fertilized clearing at the Slim Creek trailhead that same night. That left only the road up Roxey Creek to be negotiated. Future parties would be well advised to carry basic off-road gear such as a saw or axe, shovel, and towstraps. For those familiar with the class rating system used by the local off road guide, this road is a 4. (Yes, some of you may require a rope).

The twenty minute walk in took us about two hours as a talus field made some of the route quite challenging for small children. The beautiful heather meadows, meandering streams and odd snow patches made the effort worthwhile (2 hours of scrambling through a talus field with a 3 year old does require considerable effort for all involved). The atmosphere at the camp spot is quite wild despite its proximity to the vehicles, because the access is via an old mining road, not a logging road. We spent the remainder of Saturday soaking it all in.

Doug, Michael, and I awoke at 5 am on Sunday to attempt the North Ridge of Dickson. This was my second attempt on this route, the first try being repulsed by rain and snow at about 2400 m in August '92. This time we climbed to about 2700 m and the beginning of the second rock step before the wind and blowing snow forced us down. While we didn't climb on any of the rock on the route to this point, the steep step at our high point looked to be of high quality.

The blowing snow up high was rain in camp, 900 m lower, but the weather was so changeable that it was almost a non-issue. Everyone took the opportunity to relax and explore a little bit of the area around camp. At 6 pm that all changed when it started to rain for real.

It rained all night and there was some concern that the walk out would be most unpleasant. Fortunately, our fears weren't realized and the rain stopped just before we got up. The view as the clouds parted to reveal the dusting of snow on the granite cliffs above was overwhelming. After only three days here, home was the last thing on my mind, proof that the trip was a success.

Party: Christie Reid, Ehren Hess (age 14), Doug Hess, Michael Dorotich, Maureen Dorotich, Nastashia Dorotich (age 4), Cory Bernard (age 3), Lori Bernard, and Greg Bernard (organizer).

## Central Coast Mountains

### DIAS GLACIER SKI CAMP

27 April - 7 May, 1996

by Paul Kubik

It was several years ago when I was contacted by Max Lustenberger, our Swiss member, about running a joint Swiss Alpine Club - Rossberg Section - BC Mountaineering Club ski camp. Max had lived in Vancouver in the early seventies and along with another Swiss, Hans-Peter Munger, had climbed in south-western BC, even visiting the Mount Waddington area. Now Max's two sons were grown up and were to accompany him.

I thought it was a good plan and would give me an opportunity to ski with some Swiss, whom I read from Peter Gumplinger's accounts were formidable skiers in the alpine. The club executive gave its blessing and with that Max and I began the preparations. I mailed Max a copy of the recently revised ski touring guide to the South Coast ranges. He noted that extended traverses were becoming more popular than fixed base camps but in the end it was the latter which suited the Swiss better. I had to agree with him that for an international trip of this nature a base camp with air support made better sense than a lightweight, self-sufficient traverse. We settled on the Waddington area, in large part I guess because of its name and reputation. It might even be known internationally.

I chartered a plane from Wilderness Airlines to take the party from Vancouver International Airport to an air strip at Puntzi Mountain in the Chilcotin. From the

Puntzi air strip to the helicopter base at Bluff Lake was about an hour's drive. White Saddle Air Services was hired to do the flight in to base camp at 2100 m on the Franklin Glacier.

A week prior to departure the airline company became concerned over the amount of gear we were flying in. I was sure I had explained the situation to them before I booked the charter. I found out the chartered plane lacked the necessary capacity without adding an extra flight and unless I was willing to pay we would have to drive up with a large part of the gear. As anyone who has organized one of these camps knows, it's very difficult to ask for more money after the arrangements have been settled on and money paid up.

Gary Marcuse and I did the menu and shopping in a marathon Saturday afternoon a week prior to departure. The bill was over \$2000. Fortunately, my credit rating was good at the time and if the Swiss were no-shows I wouldn't have to do any shopping for backcountry trips for a while. In any event, it would leave the Swiss more time for shopping at Mountain Equipment Co-op when they arrived. They arrived on Thursday and after working late my German-speaking wife, Karin, and I went down to the Biltmore Hotel on Kingsway to meet them. I recommended the hotel because it was central to MEC and to my place. This is where they decided to stay for a couple of nights before departure. The denizens of the hotel pub made sleep difficult, carrying on into the wee hours. When the joint shut down at 2 am the pub crawlers went outside to barf onto the sidewalk and party on for a while longer. It was as good an introduction to Canadians as I could think of at the time.

On Friday night I loaded the food into the Subaru wagon and went back to the Biltmore to pick up the ski gear. With about 20 pairs on the rack it looked like I'd just emptied out a sporting goods store. Once out onto 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue a police cruiser passed by but I must have looked honest because they kept on going. I drove out to Jos' in Maple Ridge, transferred all the gear into his Toyota pickup and we drove all night up to Bluff Lake. Everyone else stayed in Vancouver for the luxury of another night's sleep and flew up to the airstrip in the morning. For Jos and I it was a memorable drive through the night, maintaining 90 km/hr all the way through the Cariboo and east towards Bella Coola with no traffic. West of Williams Lake we were stopped at a roadblock around 2 am looking for cattle-rustlers or game infractions, but not sporting goods. We were waved on through.

We arrived at Tatlayoko Lake before 7 am. The restaurant wasn't open and wouldn't be opening for a few more days so we drove up to the helicopter base. Jos and I didn't know the layout of the place and I'm afraid we woke up Mrs. Jen King. Her son Mike was the pilot and lived further up the valley. Mrs. King was kind enough to invite us in for coffee and toast and called her son by radio phone. While we waited for the charter flights to arrive from Vancouver we chatted with Mrs. King for a while and then wandered outside. It was late April and springtime in Vancouver but it felt like winter up there. There was no fresh greenery showing yet and still some frozen ground.

The weather was good for flying. Gary, Jos and I went in on the first trip. We'd already decided on the camp location where the Dais Glacier meets the Franklin Glacier. A small guided party was winding up a camp there and it enabled some cost reduction as we were able to eliminate some dead-heading. The weather up at the base camp was flawless and enabled the pilot to fly in the entire party - fourteen Swiss and eight Canadians.

*Diary of Jos: 27 April - After leaving the Lower Mainland at 9:15 pm we arrived at Bluff Lake at 6 am, driving straight through the night. Feeling tired was an understatement at that point. Nobody was up yet so we decided to get some sleep in the truck. But it wasn't long before Mrs. King invited us in for some toast and tea. At 7:30 am the first sling load was flown in. Three hours later Paul, Gary and Jos flew in on the second load. The weather was beautiful. When we reached the site of our camp it had already been occupied by the F.M.B.C. We decided with all the facilities in place to take it over from them. The first group started with setting up the communal tent. In the meantime 7 more flights brought in the rest of the group. Some tension arose when tent sites were believed to be switched between earlier and later arrivals. In the evening we watched as the clouds thickened from the west.*

We erected the fly of the club's large, new winter tent - about 7 m in diameter and 5 m high. This served as the focal point for the morning and evening meals. We didn't bring the inner tent or the wood stove as we did not want to fly in wood for fuel. In late April it was never so cold that we really needed it. We started work on a snow wall which ultimately rose about 2 m high and served to reduce the wind load on the fly by about 60 per cent. This wall took most of the second day. I doubt the visitors saw the need at the time but I knew the amount of work which had gone into the tent, and there was no way I was going to allow it to be destroyed in a wind storm.



Camp on the Dias Glacier with Cavalier (centre) and Jester (left) Mtns. behind. Photo - J. van der Burg.

Besides the big tent fly, everyone brought their own mountaineering tents for sleeping, some brand new from MEC. There was an existing path beaten down from the previous party and a few platforms. These were taken over by the advance party who were mostly Canadian. This was also where the big tent was erected. As the later groups arrived they tended to move higher up the hill, excavating platforms into the hill and building snow walls against the wind. These were mainly Swiss.

Once the weather improved later in the week the Swiss were up with dawn's light. The Canadians were more prone to sleep in. It seemed the Swiss skied with the Swiss and Canadians with Canadians although we were able to break when it suited our purpose. Whether by force of habit or because the ski peaks were not all that far away, the Swiss would return to camp around 2 pm. The Canadians, on returning later around 5 pm, would observe the camp from a long distance over the flat glacier. The camp, situated against a snowy backdrop of pure white with little black dots of Swiss standing in small groups amongst the snow walls, looked comically like a small penguin colony.

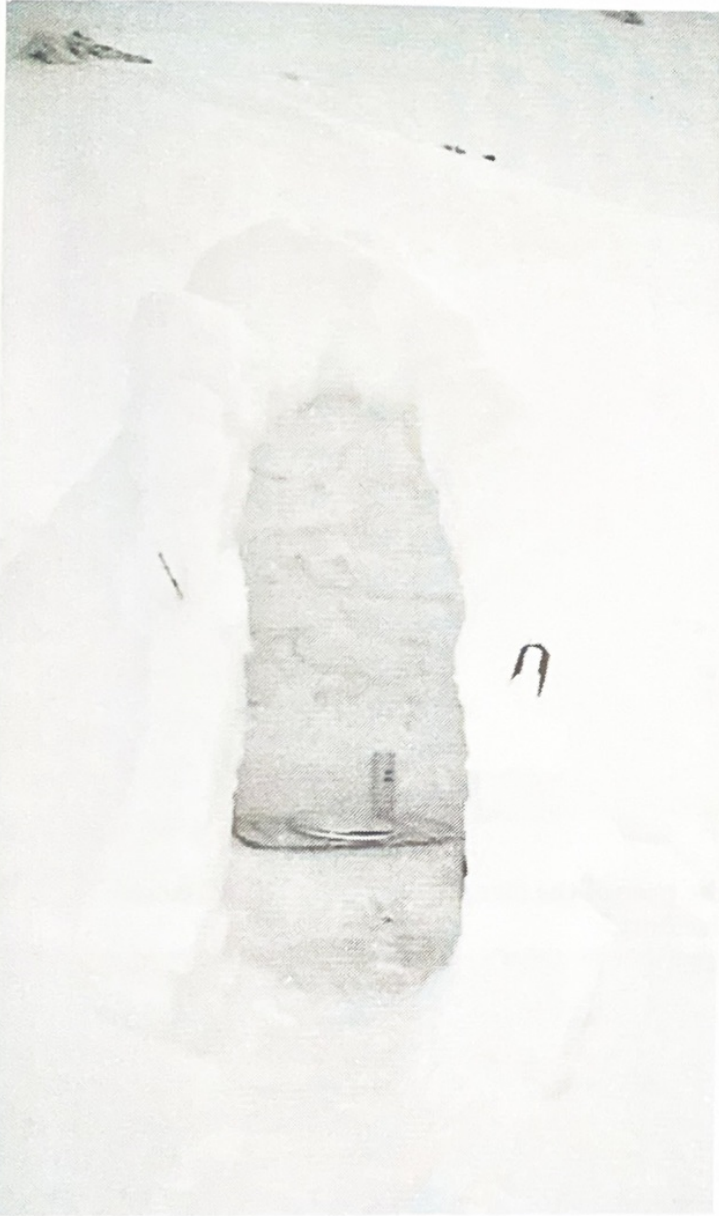
We had inherited the "toilet cavern" from the previous party. I made it serviceable for a day or two, or so I hoped, by carving a little platform for the club's toilet seat - the most widely requested item of camp equipment year after year. In reality it was towards the end of the week before the creative juices of the Swiss began flowing and a proper latrine was constructed in

a manner befitting its noble purpose. But in the meantime we had the cavern.

The ceiling was not high to begin with. One had to stoop to get in. Over the course of the week it was reduced to only squatting height by snow creep. The cavern was situated in an unfortunate spot, located in the lower part of the colony along the path used to get to the main tent. This led Vance to point out that *"The colony has a distinct class system. The choice upper slopes boast glacier vista lookout, domain of Danny Schnetzler and Hans-Peter Munger (Swiss), a small headed guardian statue at the estate of Rigo Amman, the Architect, and Herbert Hausler (also Swiss) and a Casino. The exclusivity of this neighborhood is evident from the statue head adorning this edifice, for it is an animal unknown to the Coast Mountains except on SAC lapel pins. The lower part of the colony, BCMC Lane, runs from the toilet cavern past the airfield to the kitchen. The rich ethnic mix of this area carries on a long standing BCMC tradition, with only two native-born Canadians. Alas, the penguins fail to realize that when the slope slides, it is the upper class who shall be buried first"*.

The second day was a white-out anyway so the only non-camp activity was some crevasse ice climbing by Vance, belayed by Norbert over at some big slots on the upper Franklin Glacier. There were a few short ski trips to the ridge behind camp.

The food was divvied up on the first night for the various food groups. I should have known from the outset, being married to a continental European, that large quantities of cheese and sausage were required. A few enormous rounds of Edam were cut into sections



The toilet cavern. Photo - J. van der Burg.

for the groups and I could see right away they were a little on the thin side for 10 days. Other things, such as mint chocolate, you couldn't give away. The Swiss, if I may generalize, as a nation show a marked aversion towards chocolate which is not Swiss.

If we lacked quantity with particular foods we hit it right with quality. It seems that some Landjaeger sausage had been slipped through customs from Switzerland. But this little delicacy is readily available in Vancouver and was on the menu.

Another hard sell was hot chocolate with marshmallows. We purchased three types of hot chocolate powder - with marshmallows, with milk powder and plain hot chocolate. The Swiss describe the

latter as "normal" with the implication the former are "abnormal". A Canadian, on the other hand, would normally prefer hot chocolate with marshmallows because we are a consumptive society and if one product has something the other doesn't we instinctively prefer the one with "more" in it, in this case, marshmallows, because more is better. We had all the elements necessary for the functioning of a small, mutually beneficial black market.

On one thing we all agreed, especially on the second day when private stashes of toilet paper had been used up, was the necessity of soft, white tissue. It was on the shopping list and Gary had reminded me of it but somehow it didn't translate into actually buying it and getting it to base camp. Sunday evening an SOS went out on the radio to White Saddle. I had some difficulty explaining my predicament because for some reason, this was the cause of amusement at the helicopter base. Audrey King on the radiophone at the other end had to call us back. It did seem, however, on sober reflection, we had a \$250 credit left with which a fixed wing air drop could be obtained using Mike King's brother, also a pilot. Twenty-five rolls were scrounged from the various residences of the King clan in the valley, no small sacrifice considering how far they had to go shopping, and placed on the Dais Glacier by air drop the next day. On recovering the booty the next morning (\$10 per roll) we found included fresh-baked bread from the kitchen of the elder Mrs. King.

With the toilet paper a semblance of normalcy returned to the camp much to the relief of the organizer who prior to this episode had enjoyed a position of respect, but was humbled, as it were, by the comic nature of the oversight, only to have his face saved by the timely occurrence of the air drop. The Swiss have written - "One can be certain that this "air-drop" will be recorded in the annals of the White Saddle Air Services".

Diary of Jos: 29 April - It was bright in the tents when we woke up. Sunny breaks drifted across the glacier as well as snowflurries. After operation "Airdrop Scotties Little Softies", the whole gang of Emperor Penguins were off to climb Mt. Cavalier, a 2646 m peak to the southwest of camp. The last little section to the summit was done on foot. A fixed line was set up because of some exposure, which was difficult to judge in white out conditions. An attempt was made on Mt. Jester, but after Vance took a screamer while being on belay, the attempt was called off. The ski down was in flat light, but otherwise great snow.

When they weren't skiing there was time for cards, whisky and liquors. Of course card playing requires a table and a table needs chairs. To sit for any length of



Skiing up to Fury Gap with camp the dark patch at the base of the steeply dropping Dias Glacier.  
Photo - J. van der Burg.



Skiing up Mt. Munday with Mt. Waddington, Combatant Mtn., Mt. Tiedemann, and  
Asperity Mtn. on the skyline from left to right. Photo - J. van der Burg.



On Finality Glacier, with Mt. Waddington in the distance. Photo - J. van der Burg.



On Pk. 2529 m SE of Bezel Pk. Photo - J. van der Burg.

time you need shelter from the elements. Some time by mid-week the Swiss had built a casino igloo with central carved snow table and seating for about eight. It wasn't until towards the end of the week that they put the same energy into creating the finest latrine with a view overlooking the upper Franklin Glacier. But such are the priorities of the tourists.

We didn't climb Mount Chris Spencer at 3000 m. I got a bit distracted as a rivet on my ski boot disintegrated and needed an emergency repair on the ridge. I guess the motivation wasn't that high due to the avalanche danger from the sun. As for Mt. Waddington, although we took hardware and Vance was keen for a crack at the NW peak itself, I never had that gut feeling I look for if I want to try something big. Although we had seven good ski touring days there was often afternoon cloud buildup and this was tempering my feelings. I was looking for a stable high but it didn't happen. A gully on the south side of the NW ridge leading to the Angel Glacier looked promising with a steep exit onto the ridge. We never got around to checking it out because most of us were new to the area and there was still a lot of skiable terrain.

Diary of Jos: 30 April - *Clear and cold this morning. Some high clouds to the west but it looked like the best day yet. Everybody wanted to get away as soon as possible to climb Mt. Chris Spencer, a 3009 m peak north of Fury gap. As we reached Fury Gap it had become clear that this was going to be a classic spring ski day. A clear, warm and windless day. The kind of day you dream about all winter long. Mt. Chris Spencer itself was not climbed. Some steep gullies in the full sun didn't seem safe to tackle this time of day. Besides, there were 2 peaks almost the same height with ski runs right from their summits. From the top we had excellent views in all directions. Definitely a place to linger. The ski down was great. Some went back the same way but others climbed a peak overlooking the Dais Glacier and camp. Also a good view was had of Mt. Munday to the south, a planned objective. An excellent ski back to camp found the rest lying in the sun and socializing.*

With everything in the area dwarfed by Waddington and base camp already at 2100 m elevation it was hard to feel you accomplished anything at the end of the day even if you went up a couple of 2600 m peaks. The high point for me was a couple of climbs of Mt. Munday. This was a return trip of 1800 m elevation gain and 30 km horizontal distance. Mt. Munday lay over a pass at the head of the Dais Glacier and up the Ice Valley Glacier. The first time we had no views so I went back for a second trip which made up for the first. I was able

to make out the Plummer Hut to the southeast and got a clear view of the south side of Mount Waddington. On the way back you can point your skis into the up track on the Ice Valley Glacier and schuss for several kilometers without turning much. You just swivel your head from side to side watching hanging glaciers whiz by you left and right.

Diary of Jos: 1 May - *Clear again and part of the group decided on Mt. Munday. A far away objective that required up to twelve hours after close calculations. Away by 6 am was a must. We headed up the Dais Glacier to the col with Jester and Waddington, dropped down onto the Corridor Glacier and up the Ice Valley Glacier. A long slog up to the Munday/Agur col. The weather had deteriorated in the meantime and it started to snow in the col. It was also cold and windy. Once we reached the final headwall, that leads onto the sprawling summit of Mt. Munday, it was a whiteout. We climbed a summit but we were not sure if it was the real one. The altimeter read 3350 m, close enough, and we called it a day. It was a long way back to camp. On the way back we realized we had not climbed the real summit. The ski down the Ice Valley was memorable. Just point the skis downhill and enjoy the view. Altogether the round trip took ten hours.*

2 May - *The good weather made a rest day out of the question. The Swiss headed off to the peaks northwest of camp, in the direction of Bezel Pk., a 2640 m peak. It was cool and windy on the way to the summit of the first peak. But on the peak itself it was sunny and warm as we reached the rest of the group. We stayed for a long time. The Swiss decided to head back to camp. But the rest decided to knock off one more unnamed peak and Bezel itself. A major 'schrund had to be crossed and there was some steep snow on this otherwise easy peak. The drawback with this peak bagging was that by the time we had to go back to camp it had whited out again, which ruined the skiing on the way back. The ski back across the glacier could have been a problem if it hadn't been for the ski tracks we were following. Suddenly, out of all this whiteness the penguin colony loomed and we knew we were home. At night a storm moved in and we had to dig out the communal tent at 2 am.*

3 May - *A rest day was called for after the last night. There was a high wind with snow and blowing snow. But by the evening it started to clear with some stunning light effects. You couldn't help but watch it for over an hour. The next day looked like a good one. A relief for the ones that were flying out. That night we had a full moon, so bright that Vance couldn't resist going for a midnight ski.*

The problem with air supported trips is the getting in and getting out when the weather's bad. Our weather started deteriorating towards the end of the camp,

eleven days in total. If I recall correctly, we were due to fly out on a Tuesday. To play it safe we should have bailed out on Saturday which was a good flying weather day. (Some did.) But the problem of the pre-arranged schedule with Wilderness Airlines charter complicated that option so we delayed departure. Sunday was bad and nothing moved except the camp bird which decided it had overstayed its welcome. Monday started out bad but improved later. We got the pilot's wife understandably upset because the Franklin and Dais Glaciers were clear but the critical Fury Gap was socked in. We estimated the cloud height at the gap and Mike King took a run at it but had to turn back. The weather for a switch was much worse on the leeward side of the range. Audrey was quite short on the radio that evening.

Diary of Jos: 4 May - *After saying good-bye to Albert, Ehleen and Erich, part of the group was off to climb Mt. Finality (2833 m). It was a beautiful warm, sunny day as we reached the summit at 1 pm. This time we didn't wait until the clouds rolled in and we had a sloppy run down the south facing slopes back to camp. A 3 pm return called for some serious relaxation in the sun.*

5 May - *Mt. Munday revisited. We had to get that outstanding view we had heard about. Away by seven this time. It was clear again, but cold. The route was familiar this time. As we reached the real summit (3367 m) the views were outstanding of Mt. Waddington, Tiedemann, Austerity, Serras 1 to 5, and Claw Peak, where the Plummer hut could be seen. But it looked like our luck was leaving us again and within a short time it was whited out again. On the way down the headwall, Paul showed us a fast way down (backwards on skis over an eight foot rock band) but nobody felt like following his example. We stuck to front pointing. The ski down was the worst of the whole week. Not even the Swiss were able to ski this crud gracefully, which made us feel a whole lot better. It got better lower down. Back at camp by 6 pm. We were ready to go home. A lot of ground had been covered and not a lot left to do.*

6 May - *It was cloudy and a light snow was falling. It looked doubtful if we could start flying out today. Mike decided to give it a try. But after taking out two flights he had to turn back on the third. It had become too dangerous. The pressure dropped all day and spirits were starting to sag. People were ready to get out. But the weather dictates if that is going to happen or not. With only one place to fly through, we were trapped in a way. That evening it was surprisingly quiet - the calm before the storm as it turned out.*

A cold arctic front moved over the region on Monday evening. The gale picked up strength all

evening. BCMC Lane was a bit of a wind, tunnel so I spent a good part of the evening inside listening to the tent fly crack in the wind, and outside anchoring it down. Around midnight Jos came by to say the big tent was flapping loose in the gale. I had taken it down earlier in anticipation of flying out Monday and then put it back up for supper when I knew we would not be going out that day. The pegs were well anchored when I took it down but I wasn't able to get much purchase when I put it back up, as the snow had melted and rotted around the periphery. What was happening now was the main center pole was still standing anchored by guy lines and the tent was flapping around inside the snow walls. It took about an hour to get the whole thing down and stashed away for the night. By this time it was nearly 2 am and I had to be on the radio at 5:30 to the pilot with a weather report

After a few hours of sleep I got up. BCMC Lane was clear of snow around the tents but there was no sign of any tents in the exclusive Swiss suburb. These were completely buried under snow drifts to the level of the tops of the snow walls. I hurried around to see if everyone was okay, fearing suffocation, but most had slept quietly through the storm. Fortunately we were able to get the chopper in early and start flying out people. This left Gary and I alone on the glacier with about two sling loads of packs and gear where there should have been just one. When the chopper came in for the load it couldn't lift off. We threw off some big Swiss bags but this wasn't enough so we tossed off even more. The big chopper got the load up off the snow a metre or so and started sliding off down the Dais Glacier with the sling barely clearing the snow. I thought the pilot was going to have to drop the load, but after a long time he started to get some speed and altitude. He made a huge arc around the glacier before he was ready to cross Fury Gap.

This was the eleventh day out and some of us weren't smelling very pretty. I had no change of clothes. I slept in my skiing clothes. This has the advantage of keeping the pack small and light for the chopper. However, the size of some of those big hockey bags lying in the snow was about 1.5 times the size of my pack. I just knew that in there were a few changes of clothing and more than a few empty glass bottles of schnapps.

When I heard that chopper coming back for its last load of passengers I let out a whoop because the last thing I wanted to do right then was to spend another night in this abandoned penguin colony.

Diary of Jos: 7 May – *Last night the winds picked up to a gale-force storm. Nobody got much sleep. The noise inside the tent was ear shattering. The thought of what would happen if the tent tore apart didn't help either. In the middle of the night we had to collapse the big tent before the wind would tear it apart. In the morning the wind had subsided somewhat. The rescue effort could begin. Several tents were completely buried and had to be dug out. Some were not in very good shape after that ordeal. To our surprise the wind died down during the morning and it cleared. The glacier was a changed place. The snow had been wind-swept and looked very different from what we were used to. It became clear that we had outflow winds that night from the Interior through Fury Gap. It had lived up to it's name. A call was made to Mike. He had a hard time believing us as it was cloudy and snowing at the hangar. But we convinced him that it was not desperate to get out. He started flying at about noon and by late afternoon Paul and Gary were the last ones to fly out. Thanks to the hospitality of the King Family we were able to take a shower and they also cooked an excellent meal. Great for the long drive back home through the night.*

Party: BCMC: Vance Culbert, Norbert Grillmair, Ehleen Hinze, Erich Hinze, Gary Marcuse, Albert Souza, Jos van der Burg and Paul Kubik (organizer)

SAC: Vroni Merz, Rigo Ammann, Herbert Hausler, Rene Iten, Hanspeter Kempf, Sepp Krell, Marc Lustenberger, Martin Lustenberger, Max Lustenberger (organizer), Hans-Peter Munger, Daniel Schnetzler, Werner Schmid, Werni Schumpf and Ernst Studer.

## MOUNT TIEDEMANN VIA NORTH RIDGE AND DAMOCLES PEAK

25-30 July, 1997

by David Hughes

Ever since our successful 1977 BCMC Mt. Waddington trip, I have wanted to climb Mt. Tiedemann. Ten years passed before I had the opportunity to climb again in this section of the Waddington Range. In July of 1987 I organized another BCMC trip to Combatant and Tiedemann. Our plan was to climb Combatant's two peaks (3756 m) from the north and then drop down to the Combatant-Tiedemann Col to climb Tiedemann from the west. Unfortunately a week of bad weather prevented us from attempting Mt. Tiedemann, allowing us to only climb Combatant in a snowstorm. Several parties were back to climb Mount Tiedemann in the 80's with a more recent ascent of Tiedemann being completed in 1990 on the northeast face via the badly crevassed

Radiant Glacier. Despite its status as the second highest peak in the Coast Range south of the St. Elias area, Tiedemann receives very little climbing activity.

After seeing the elegant north ridge of Tiedemann from both Mt. Hickson to the northwest and from the junction of the Scimitar and Chaos Glaciers, Erich Hinze and I thought this original ascent route was worth trying. The real question, however, was how to get to the ridge. The original 1939 ascent attained the ridge from high up on the Chaos Glacier. This glacier is appropriately named, as the Chaos is a horrific mess of crevasses and icefalls. The Chaos Glacier might be navigable in the dead of winter and if this is the case, this would be the easiest route barring avalanche danger.

The other north routes involve an approach from the Radiant Glacier. The Radiant is comprised of three sections-- a lower badly broken ice fall section rising above the Scimitar, a 3 - 4 km relatively flat midsection, and an upper ice fall section that culminates in the Tellot-Serra-Asperity-Tiedemann-Damocles cirque. It was our hope to retrace the 1990 route up the upper Radiant to the Tiedemann-Damocles col.

After assembling a relatively experienced group of mountaineers and two new members - my son, Eric, and his friend Chris - we headed off to the Chilcotin. On Friday, July 25, 1997, we left Bluff Lake with Mike King and Whitesaddle Air for the mid-section of the Radiant Glacier. Our first trip established our base camp at about 2160 m next to a water hole in the middle of the glacier. We also decided to set up a food drop on the Tellot so that if time and weather permitted, we could spend our last 2 or 3 days rock climbing on the upper Tellot. With Mike King's help we explored a route up the one glacier band that dropped from the Tellot to the Radiant from the Argiewicz-Termination col. The rest of the east side of the Radiant cirque is next-to-vertical walls that block any route to the Tellot. The only other way up to the Tellot is to climb up to Unicorn-Termination Peaks Col then proceed along the Cataract Glacier to the steep McCormick-Shand Col. After dropping a food cache near this latter col, Mike returned us to our base camp then returned to Bluff Lake for two more loads of climbers.

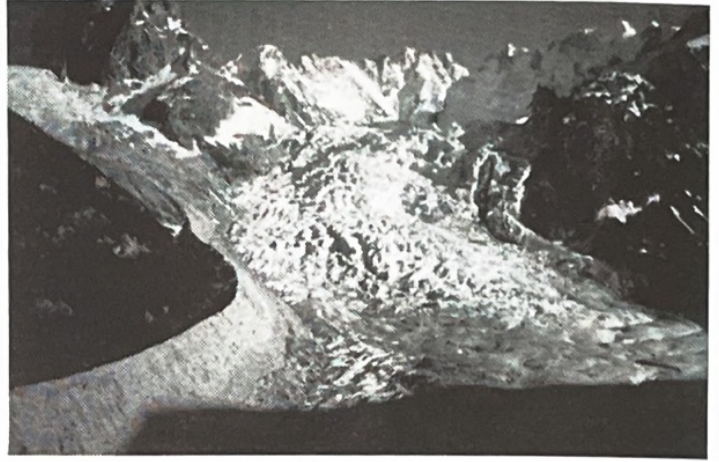
After setting up camp, Erich Hinze, Jeff Rabinovitch and I climbed to the south (lower) Chaos Peak to get a view of the north ridge of Damocles. On arriving at the Chaos Col it was apparent that there was no easy way on to the north ridge of Damocles. The north ridge from Tiedemann to Chaos Peak is relatively complex in

that it is made up of a number of different sections. From north to south and bottom to top the sections are:

- a broad col that starts at the subsidiary south Chaos Peak
- two rock towers rising steeply from Chaos Col
- a snow col directly west of our camp at 2880 m.
- a steep rock face that breaks the continuity of the north ridge of Damocles
- a snow ridge of varying width from the top of the rock face to Damocles Peak
- a combination rock and snow ridge to Tiedemann-Damocles Col
- a rock col of several class 3 to 4 leads
- a classic snow ridge to the summit of Tiedemann that includes two aretes.

**Day 2 - Route Found** - Day 2 was set aside to be a route exploration day. Given the difficulty of getting on to the north ridge of either Tiedemann or Damocles, we divided into two groups. The first group, which included Jack, Jos, Theo, Jeff and Norbert, headed up the Radiant Glacier on the obvious ramp on the right side. After initially making good progress, they soon found themselves in a labyrinth of crevasses. As the temperature rose, the snow became soft and crevasse bridges became unsafe. From here they could also see several more major crevasse/serac obstacles before reaching a less steep section below the northeast face of Tiedemann.

The other group, comprised of David, Erich, Eric and Chris, worked their way up the glacier immediately west of camp to a col at 2880 m. After some difficulties finding routes through the crevasses and a 6 m climb out of the bergshrund, a soft slushy steep snow slope lead to the col by about 1 pm. Our original plan was then to traverse left (east) around the rock and snow face that blocked the route to Damocles' north ridge. But the view from the col was very different than from base camp. The slope traversing to the east was steeper than we anticipated and it was comprised of a small amount of snow on ice and rock. A second possibility - straight up - also proved to be much steeper than we anticipated with equally poor conditions. The third and final alternative was to proceed up for one lead then diagonally up to the right (west). This route on snow and ice after four leads led to a route around the corner. On the other side was a short two pitches down then a lead up a short ice gully to a steep snow slope of about 200 m. which led to the north ridge of Damocles. With a route now found, we quickly headed back to



The Radiant Glacier. Photo - D. Hughes.



Looking up Mt. Tiedemann and the Radiant Glacier from base camp. Photo - D. Hughes.



Damocles to left and Combatant to right from Chaos Pk. Photo - D. Hughes.



Mt. Tiedemann (right) and Combatant Mtn. (left) from near Rainy Knob. Photo - D. Hughes.

base camp - hoping that the other team members' Radiant route would be easier.

Back at camp, it became clear that the Radiant route to the Tiedemann-Damocles col - the technically easier and more direct one - was not passable this year because of ice fall problems.

Day 3 - The group was not ready for a move to high camp so we headed up to the main peak of Chaos Peak (2720 m). From here, good views of the Scimitar and Chaos glaciers were obtained as well as of the bench northeast of the lower Radiant Glacier where the filming of the new Disney movie "*Kundun*" started a couple of days later. This site was also used for mountain shots in the movie "*Seven Years in Tibet*".



Climbing up to Damocles Pk. Photo - D. Hughes.



On the ridge up to Damocles. Photo - J. Rabinovitch.



Climbing up Tiedemann above the Tiedemann-Damocles Col. Photo - J. Rabinovitch.

**Day 4 - Climb to high camp** - On reviewing the objective dangers of the terrain and the proposed route, three climbers decided to forego a chance at Tiedemann. Jack, Theo and Norbert chose to concentrate on several peaks over at the Unicorn-Termination Col on the east side of the mid-Radiant Glacier, which

they climbed on the next two days. The other six - David, Erich, Eric, Chris, Jos, and Jeff - started the slog back up to the col north of Damocles. Another two days had increased the crevasse difficulty, and we did not arrive at the col to set up camp until mid-afternoon.

**Day 5 - The Peak** - The first party left camp at 5.30 am the next morning. Our traverse crossing took over two hours. From here we made good time pushing up to the ridge and along it to Damocles neighbor, Mt. Waddington. The Hollywood movie K2 used the summit of Tiedemann for their summit shots.

**Day 5 - The accident** - By 3 pm we headed down knowing that time was running short. Progress was relatively straightforward back to the short ice gully one lead from the traverse back to our high camp. It was now close to 7:30 pm. We decided to rappel down the 60 - 70 degrees ice gully. Jeff and Jos set up a rappel, while I belayed the other three climbers down to the top of the gully. Jos being one of the most experienced climbers was asked to go first to start the rappel. To our horror we heard a scream as Jeff, Eric, and Chris watched Jos fall backwards and slide down the gully. Jos fell and slid down 90 m on to the connecting snow face, bounced off a rock band and landed on a steep snow face. From a rock point near our rappel station we could see Jos sitting on the snow just a little above a lower gully that would have taken him more than 400 m to the Chaos Glacier below.

After formulating our rescue plan we sent the two younger climbers down the gully to set up ropes to connect us to the traverse. I then rappelled two full rope lengths down to Jos. To our astonishment, Jos had not received any major injuries although he was in severe shock. His fall and slide had been arrested by a patch of soft snow that had been warmed by the late setting sun. Jos was confused as to why the accident had happened - the entire rope was with him and it was securely connected to his stitchplate belay device. What happened? The climbing rope, which had been doubled, had not been properly placed through the sling at the rappel station. The rope had been placed through a twist in the sling. After he took several steps the rope snapped out of the coil in the sling and Jos was sent reeling down the gully. After bandaging Jos's nasty gashes and getting him changed into dry clothes



Resting on the Damocles ridge. Photo - J. van der Burg.



Mt. Tiedemann from Damocles. Photo - D. Hughes.



Combatant Mtn. (left) and Mt. Tiedemann (centre) from near Spearman Pk.  
Photo - D. Hughes.



Mt. Tiedemann (left), Asperity Mtn. (centre), and the Serra Pks. (right) from near Bravo Pk.  
Photo - D. Hughes.

we were able to slowly belay him back up to the traverse.

Now came the difficult task of aiding Jos across the traverse as we were about to be overcome by darkness. Erich led the route out with Chris, setting up the four stations. Eric led a second rope with Jeff and Jos a metre or so apart in the middle and myself on the top end. Carefully directing Jos step by step, we worked our way across the traverse. The majority of the route was undertaken on a clear, still, but moonless night. For a short period however, a thick fog rolled in creating the illusion that the traverse was flat. Being last I could see Jeff and Eric's headlamps in the fog. I got the eerie feeling that one could walk out on a misty cloud-shrouded floor to Jeff and Jos. All sense of the vertical and our place in time and space had momentarily disappeared. After a long and tedious down-climb we got everyone back to our high camp at 3:30 am.

Although Jos did not have any serious injuries he did have a badly gashed knee and was in no condition to tackle the difficult descent to base camp. Given this situation we radioed Mike King to see if he could land at the high camp. As is always the case in an emergency, he was quick to help. Within the half hour (about the straight flying time) he was setting down between our tents with the tails of his skids hanging over the edge. Within minutes Jos was off to Bluff lake, then to Tatla Lake and Williams Lake for medical treatment.

**Day 6 - Return to base** - We returned to base camp to bring our three other companions and our new visitors, Mike Down and party, up to date. The following day three fellows flew out with Mike King to help Jos return to Vancouver. The weather was then deteriorating, hindering the other party's attempt on the left side of the upper Radiant Glacier en route to try a new route on Serra 5. The conditions did prove to be too marginal and Mike's party was not able to climb Serra 5.

The following day, Eric, Jeff, and I took 14 hours to reach our cache on the Tellot Glacier via the Shand-McCormick col. The col provided 3 to 4 leads of ice climbing - so much for an easy walk to the Tellot! We were lucky to get our gear that day because the following day brought rain and a Tellot stop would not have been possible for the helicopter. The Radiant, however, can be reached by Mike on marginal days and by mid morning we were back to Bluff Lake.

Tiedemann and the Radiant cirque have not been well visited by the club. The area deserves our attention. Climbs in the area can vary, with terrain and

route finding often as challenging as the technical aspects. My thanks to a great team who pulled together tremendously - Jack Bryceland, Norbert Eckert, Erich Hinze, David and Eric Hughes, Theo Mosterman, Jeff Rabinovitch, Chris Randolph, and Jos van der Burg.

## ACCIDENT ON MT. TIEDEMANN

25-30 July, 1997

by Jos van der Burg

**Snap...** Oh my God. It's happening to me. My worst fears are coming true. I try to hang on for dear life. But the ice provides no handholds. My lifeline has given way and I am picking up momentum. Images start flashing through my mind. Images of my wife Jo-ann and her worried look when I left. After losing two of our animals in short order she believed that there would be a third fatality. Images of Bob and Jenny, Randy, John and Janet, Brian and Tom. I am going to be the next victim. I am starting to tumble. The rocks are getting closer. I don't feel the impact. My mind is in survival mode. I must stop somehow. Over the rocks I go. I land on the next snowfield. The snow is deep, soft and wet from the daytime heat. Suddenly I stop after falling 90 m. After the last tumble I landed with my feet in the soft snow and sink to my thigh. I come to a dead stop. I am alive.

"I am organizing a trip to climb Mt. Tiedemann", Dave asked, "are you interested?" Without much thought I said yes. I had been on several trips with Dave before and felt very comfortable climbing with him. As the time came closer I developed a nagging feeling. A feeling that something was not going to be right. But I ignored it. Summertime is a busy time and I had a lot on my plate. I needed to get out and get my mind clear of daily problems.

On the 24th of July we left my place to drive to Bluff Lake and Whitesaddle Helicopters. There we met the rest of the group. We had a good strong group and spirits were high. We organized our gear and planned for a base and a high camp. Basecamp was going to be on the Radiant Glacier and high camp on the Tellot Glacier.

The next morning dawned beautiful. Maybe we were finally getting the summer we had been waiting for. Dave, Theo and Eric went in on the first flight and set up basecamp and left a stash at high camp. Two hours later we were flown in to basecamp. Surrounded by steep high mountains, tumbling icefalls, and crevassed glaciers, this was not the place for the inexperienced.

But it was a beautiful spot. In the middle of the



Erich and Dave negotiating a crevasse.  
Photo - E. Hughes.

Radiant Glacier we were camped beside 2 beautiful deep blue lakes for water. Mt. Tiedemann loomed above - big and intimidating. There were no obvious easy routes. Two options were decided upon - up the massive, badly broken up icefall of the Radiant above us, or climbing up a steep couloir that meets up with the north ridge of Damocles Peak and climb rock or snow up to it's summit. Then drop down the other side and climb the final slopes up to Mt. Tiedemann.

The next day Theo, Jack, Jeff, Norbert and I went to find the route up the Radiant, and Erich, Dave, Eric and Chris to find the route up the north ridge of Damocles Peak. The weather was beautiful as we went our separate way the next morning. At first the going was easy. Hard snow was good for cramponing. But soon we reached the icefall. A maze of crevasses started to appear. It wasn't long before we were searching our way through a labyrinth of crevasses. The heat started to soften the snow. Bridges across the crevasses started to give away. In places we sunk into the snow above our knees. It became too dangerous. We had to turn back. At basecamp we watched the progress of the

others. It was very slow and they reached a saddle around 3100 m at well after noon. Norbert, Jeff and I decided to go up to Mt. Unicorn for the afternoon to have a good look at the route up through the icefall. We reached 2950 m on Mt. Unicorn when we were stopped by class 5 rock for which we didn't bring any gear. It was about 4 pm when we stopped to assess the situation. With the binoculars we searched for a way through the icefall, but it looked even worse from up here. It seemed impossible to find a way through it. In the meantime we watched the other group climb out of the saddle onto a steep, exposed snow and ice slope to look around the corner of the north ridge. At about 6 pm they too decided to turn around.

Back at camp the mood was down. There seemed to be no easy solution to climbing this mountain. The two choices remained the same but the only way was to move a camp to be within striking distance. Basecamp was too far away.

The next day motivation was low. We got up late. It was another beautiful day. Nobody was keen to do anything. But a short trip was in order. We decided to do Chaos Peak and left at 11 am. After a short class 3/4 section we reached the top. From it we had a good look at the north ridge on Damocles Peak. It still looked intimidating but once past the difficult section above the saddle, it looked easier. After spending a while on the summit we had a relaxing stroll back to camp which we reached at 4 pm. The mood was more upbeat. A decision was made to move camp up to the saddle at 3100 m and strike out the next day. Jack, Theo and Norbert decided that the potential dangers were too great to endanger their lives and decided to stay at basecamp and do some easier peaks around camp.

The next day we left basecamp at 6:30 am to climb up to the saddle. With the heat of the last couple of days, the previous winter snows were disappearing fast. Crevasses that were closed two days ago had become gaping holes. One had to be crossed by crawling on our bellies over a weak snowbridge which had been crossed 2 days earlier on foot safely. In the couloir the snow had become slush in the daytime heat and the person in the lead was setting off avalanches to the people below. But we reached the saddle safely by 2:30 pm. A beautiful spot it was. Striking views we had of the Coast Range. In the distance, to the northwest, we could see Mt. Monarch. Closer to us we could see Mt. Bell and Mt. Geddes, and the Pantheon Range. We looked down onto the Scimitar and the Radiant Glaciers and our base camp. To the southeast we could see the Niut Ranges. And above us we had Damocles

Peak with its hanging glaciers which gave us spectacular avalanches. It was a spot we had to enjoy for the rest of the afternoon and evening. After relaxing in the sun, having light conversation and a spicy meal from Jeff, we headed for bed.



**High camp on the Damocles ridge.**  
Photo - D. Hughes.

We were up at 4:30 am and away by 6:30 am. The weather was beautiful once again. The climb out of the saddle was slow. It was steep, exposed, and icy in places. Belays had to be set up which took a long time. Once we reached the corner we had to go up an icy gully with steep snow above, which would bring us up to easy snow to the top of Damocles Peak. With our ice tools we made it up the ice gully without a problem. The snow was excellent for cramponing and we reached the easy slopes at 9:30 am - 3 hours to climb 300 m. We hoped to be on the summit by 2 pm.

On the summit of Damocles Peak we had a good look at the rest of the route. It didn't look easy. We had to traverse a narrow rock ridge, go up steep, icy snow onto easier snow which led up to a narrow steep snow ridge to the summit. We carried on. Nerves were getting frayed. It was continual hard work. But we made it through the difficult sections and reached the summit at 2 - 2:30 pm. Close to target. It was cold and windy on the summit at 3848 m and 10-20 minutes was all we could take. The view was outstanding. Waddington loomed to the southwest. Camps could be seen on the Bravo Glacier and tracks going up to the

summit. The Tiedemann Glacier stretched out below us. An impressive sight. Glaciers feeding into it from Mt. Munday were spectacular. All around were peaks and glaciers except to the east where we looked out onto the Cariboo plateau. But alas it was too cold to enjoy for long. We also had to get back if we wanted to make it back before dark.

The return started well. One belay was set up on an icy section, with running belays on the narrow rock ridge. Over the summit of Damocles Peak. Down the easy slopes onto the steep, now slushy, snow leading up to the ice gully. Above the gully we decided to set up a rappel. It was about 7:30 pm and spirits were good. Most of us were tired but still clear of mind. Slings were put around a big rock. One rope half was thrown down first, the second a few minutes later. It was decided that I would go first. I fed both halves through my stitchplate and got into position. I did not double check the rappel station to make sure that everything was correct. Complacency sets in after many years without incident. I put my faith in my partners. Then I put my weight on the rope, took several steps and suddenly...



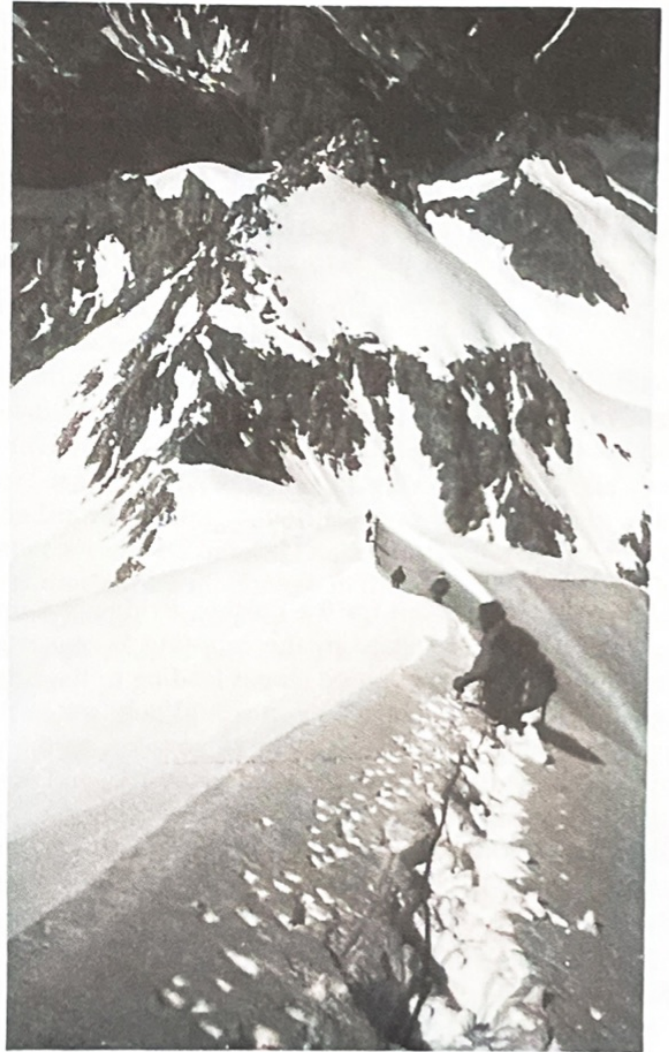
**Jos on the summit of Mt. Tiedemann.**  
Photo - D. Hughes.



Looking to the Serras from the summit of Mt. Tiedemann. Photo - D. Hughes.

Shock, disbelief, numbness. My mind was blank and racing at the same time. What had just happened? I felt remarkably at peace. I seemed ready to accept my faith. But here I was, alive. I started to assess my situation. I felt no pain but there was blood on the snow. I had cuts and scrapes on my hands. Also I had a deep puncture wound on my right arm, most likely from my iceaxes which had come loose from my pack. My legs were stuck in the snow and tangled in rope. Jeff was trying to keep me from going into shock by talking to me. I was starting to get cold and wanted to get comfortable. I also didn't want to slide further down the slope. I carefully loosened my legs. In the meantime the others were trying to get down to me. I started to get dizzy but managed to shake it off. I continued to get more comfortable. I then noticed a deep gash on my right kneecap.

Dave was first to reach me. He took my vital signs and got me more comfortable. Jeff reached me next. We untangled the rope and got my pack off. All my warm clothes were put on. I was shaking all over. But the main thing was that I was mobile. Even though my knee was badly cut I was able to walk. It was decided to lead me back to camp. I was put on belay by Eric while Jeff and Dave kicked steps for me up the slope I had come down. Eric and Chris went ahead and set up belays along the steep, icy traverse above camp. It had become dark and we were working with headlamps. It was a slow process in the cold damp darkness. Eric and Dave belayed me from the protection points while Jeff was 2 m ahead of me pointing out where I had to put my feet. By 3:30 am we reached camp. Eric and Chris had melted snow and made tea and soup. I crawled into my sleeping bag and fell into a deep sleep for 4 hours.



Descending Tiedemann. Photo - D. Hughes.

It was 8 am when I woke up. I was extremely grateful for all the effort everyone took to get me back to camp safely in the dark, although I didn't tell them so. It was excellent teamwork. Some were starting to feel blame. Mistakes were made - no doubt about that. First we had to figure out what had gone wrong. We concluded that the rope was not fed through the sling after all but got hung up on a rock. When I put my weight on it, it popped loose from the rock, hence the snapping sound. Had I double checked the rappel station I would have most likely spotted it. But I did not. A mistake that almost cost me my life. But the decision of what to do next was clear right away. I could not down climb to base camp in this condition. My health was more important to me and I was not going to worry about a few hundred dollars. Mike had to come in and lift me off the saddle if possible.

Within half an hour Mike reached camp and did a daring and frightening rescue right above our tents. We flew back to his base from where I was given a ride to the Tatla Lake medical station. There I received first aid treatment. But they felt the stitching had to be done in Williams Lake. I was transported by ambulance to the hospital there where I received first rate medical treatment. Thanks to the help and concern from all, it looks like I will have no lasting effects from this incident except for being a whole lot wiser.

## Columbia and Rocky Mountains

### NE RIDGE OF GIMLI PEAK, VALHALLAS

August, 1996

by Julian Lash

Jeff and I started out for the northeast ridge of Gimli Peak (2760 m) fairly late in the morning because the steep and somewhat exposed slopes leading to the ridge were snow covered. Daytime sun would help soften the snow and make the crossing to the ridge safer. As things turned out, starting late may not have been a good idea, but at the time this seemed reasonable. From camp we hiked up to the meadows to the bottom of the very aesthetic south ridge (5.10) which Howard Zwecker and Dave Way had climbed a few days earlier. From there we followed the trail around to the col between Gimli and Nisleheim, then went across the snow covered lower north slopes above Mulvey Lake until we reached the northeast ridge.

We climbed a couple of pitches unroped. It was that easy at the beginning. We then roped up and climbed a couple more easy pitches. Finally we put on our rock shoes when the climbing began to get steeper. This is not a frequently climbed ridge and so there were few clues to the correct route. At one point we decided to go left where a gully split the ridge. Unfortunately the rock on this side was rotten. This point marked our first near disaster.

I was belaying Jeff from a big ledge. He climbed easily above me to another ledge. In the process of finding a route up past that ledge he removed some pro (because of anticipated rope drag problems). Then a rock underfoot came loose and he slid down a steep slope, stopping just before a small drop. He cut his hands a bit but chose to continue up. A pitch or two later we got back on the correct route and the difficulty decreased.

All this time the sun did not come out and we were both cold. Although the clouds were heavy and, in the

distance, black, we climbed on. We had some great views of the Devils Range to the north - you can see why it was named that way - the peaks were very sharp and pointy like pitch forks. We also saw Christian Rucker and Howard Zwecker descending along the ridge from Gladshiem Peak on the north side of Mulvey Basin. In the meantime the weather alternately improved and deteriorated. We were optimistic that it would hold out so, rather than downclimbing, we pressed on. Unfortunately we were rather slow, especially at the start, and when we were only half way up the rain began. For a time that was okay because the difficulty of the climb decreased. Jeff pretty well ran up some of the class 3-4 pitches. Eventually the rock became too slippery and the temperature began to drop to the point where it was safer and warmer to climb in hiking boots. This worked until the difficulty went up again and then our climbing slowed considerably. Much protection was needed!

At about 6 pm the rain stopped. We were treated to a most beautiful sunset - the most beautiful I have ever seen - but I was wondering if I was ever going to see very many more at this point because I was freezing - the wind had picked up. Finally we stopped, albeit briefly, for food. It had been about 9 hours since we had last eaten. Although the wind was cold it had a benefit - the wind had dried the rock. This was lucky because the very last move on the last pitch is probably the crux. Jeff used some very large pieces of pro for that one and climbed through it to the summit, by headlamp. I was amazed when I came to it. Jeff had to heave on the rope to get me past it.

At 9 pm we found ourselves standing in the pitch dark on the broad flat summit. The wind was howling and there were snow flurries. Jeff signaled to the others in camp, some 600 m below, to relieve some of their anxiety about our whereabouts. Unbeknownst to us at the time, they had sent out a search party to the bottom of our ridge at 6 pm but the shape of the ridge prevented a sightline and the wind overcame any sounds of shouts or whistles.

Jeff and I had a choice - bivy on the summit or try to descend the class 4 descent route. We found a good rappel anchor and with the idea of keeping ourselves moving and maybe warm, or just getting out of the wind, we tied our two ropes together and began our descent into darkness - in the right direction we hoped. We had both been on this easy route a couple of days earlier and in the daytime there is nothing to it. Well of course everything that could go wrong did - the ropes jammed and I had to climb back up to free them, then

we ended up in this ever-steepening gully with a nose-um bottom. After fiddling for a route down the descent route face for three or four hours we finally found a tiny cave in which to escape the wind. We got out my emergency space blanket and sat/lay down to await the 4 or 5 hours to dawn. At least it wasn't snowing or raining.

I had some pants but they were not really warm. Jeff had some long pants, and we both had fairly good top clothing, but you could always do with a bit more. And then this darn space blanket. It kept ripping and it wasn't big enough for two, but it closed off the entrance of this cave. We had to do something to keep warm so we ate and sang songs. It was generally speaking a most uncomfortable night, but it was never really desperate.

At last we noticed the light of the stars fading and the sky lightening up considerably. We got up and started moving and, lo and behold, we were only a metre or so off route. Within 30 minutes we were at the base of the mountain. (Yahoo). Just there we met 8-9 of our party who had come up from camp on a rescue mission. Not knowing our condition or what clothing we had, they wisely carried my thermos full of tea and lots of warm clothes. An hour later we were in camp. How wonderful it was to get back, to get some warmth and sleep.

Amazingly, the weather that day was beautiful. The rain the previous day (the only rain in days) caused us much delay. Was it worth it? I don't know. I had wanted to climb that ridge for two or three years. I had no idea it was going to be so difficult. Of course it was slow and I think - hindsight being 20/20 - one should probably start earlier and carry more clothes. One of the difficulties of that climb was that there were no nice clean long descent rappels. As Jeff told me, we could have done that but we would have had to have left an awful lot of gear to do it and you don't like leaving masses of gear because you never know whether you're going to need it in the next rap.

Jeff's comments: Lots happened on that climb. I chose it because I wanted to climb an extended 5<sup>th</sup> class route and this was the only class 5 route in the area that I felt capable of leading - indeed I found few overly challenging moves on the whole climb (my fall notwithstanding). Julian and I had started out to climb it the previous day but turned around because of poor weather prospects. I believed that the day we climbed it to be the last day for a try because people at the camp were getting ready to leave. In short, I got a bit of

summit fever. I ignored the weather and should not have.

Another factor that influenced our slow progress and our resulting overnight on the mountain was my decision to climb in shorter sections when the rain and wind picked up. Shortening up the pitches made it easier to hear one another since we were having lots of difficulty hearing over the wind. Verbal communication, even at half rope length pitches, was impossible. That lack of communication in these harrowing conditions left me feeling uncomfortable. Being relatively close also enabled us to provide each other with much needed beta and support. In addition, because a fall was much more likely in the wet conditions I thought that being within 25 m of each other would be helpful. As well, short pitches meant less time sitting motionless in the cold, biting wind. The downside of shortening up the pitches was more time delay of course, but I still feel that it was the correct decision.

The best part of the climb (aside from actually summiting) was when I saw all those people coming up to meet us. Although, as it turns out, we did not need the help, the feeling that there was a hardy and capable crew who were prepared to help at the earliest possibility makes me glad to be a member of the BCMC. Thank you Dave (Hughes), Theo (Mosterman), Erich (Hinze), Dennis (Sims), Paul (Ng) and Howard (Zwecker). Oh and by way, the truth is that you valley huggers missed a great norse-god party on the summit of Gimli. So there.

Party: Julian Lash and Jeff Rabinovitch

## COLUMBIA ICE FIELDS IN SPRING 1996 and 1998 by Dave Scanlon

1996:

Friday, 26 April - Fly to Calgary.

Saturday - Scott and Dave drive to the Hilda Creek hostel to meet Tim and Louise.

Sunday - Up at 5. Eat then drive the few minutes to Sunwapta Pass. After packing and stowing all the toys in our 30 kg packs we walked to the foot of the Athabasca Glacier. (Road still blocked off.) 8 am and we're off. Tourist season starts early as we pass 2 bulldozers clearing the road for the snowcoaches on the glacier. Lunch at 12 on top of the headwall. Stop at 5 about 3 km from the trench to make camp. We call our camp "Fortress Columbia".

Monday - Up at 6. Visibility zero - very windy and snowing. We dig out camp and eat. Dig out camp then lunch, eat, play cards, eat, talk, dinner, dig out camp. We could see some of the bottom of Mt. Columbia (highest mountain in Alberta) at times. A few times at that. Bed.

Tuesday - Up at 5. Snowing, windy, visibility zero. Dig - eat - play cards - talk - teatime. 11:30 - weather clears somewhat. Tim and I decide to lay a trail of wands to the trench in case tomorrow is clear. Good to be doing something. We can see higher now on Mt. Columbia. Dinner now done - clearing. Hooray!

Wednesday - Up at 5. Cold. -20° in tent. Wind chill is ? Leave camp at 8. Distances are very deceiving. At the base at 1:30 - 5:30 at the summit, after a lot of kick stepping and finally putting on our crampons. Snow and ice to 45°. Windy and cold on top. But clear. Mt. Bryce! Mt. Alberta! Bush River Valley - North Twin - South Twin - Mt. Stutfield - Mt. Kitchener - Snow Dome - Mt. Castleguard - Andromeda - Mt. Athabasca. What a view. We cannot see camp. We can see the ski plane landing twice with tourists though. He messed up our tracks too. Anyway, what a view. 325 square km of ice. Huge - huge faces. Mt. Bryce's North Face. Over 2000 m. Leave summit at 6 pm. Back at camp at 10 pm. We unpack, eat, then get to sleep around midnight.

Thursday - Awake at 7. Back to sleep until 8:30. Look outside. It's not as cold, but the wind and snow are back. Can't see anything. Dig out tent. Eat, play cards, dig out tent, etc. etc. etc.

Friday - Visibility is better than Thursday, but not much. We are planning to leave on Saturday, but no, we're out of here today. Break camp and leave at 9 am. At car at 1:30.

We put in wands about every rope length. They were a terrific aid. We had a safe trip and achieved our main objective - the highest summit in Alberta - Mt. Columbia 3,747 m. Due to bad weather we didn't move camp as planned and attempt other ice field summits. (Next time.) Most excitement - 3 of us on alpine touring gear, 1 on tele gear, skiing roped up. "You zigged when you should have zagged" was heard a couple of times.

Most interesting job was Tim's. Last person on the rope on the way out, skiing, picking up our wands on the run. Good job Tim.

We all got to wave back at the tourists on the lower glacier as the bulldozers were gone, and the snow coaches were now running.

Hardest part of the trip was the walk, (carrying our

skis) from the glacier to our cars. What a trudge. Scariest view was to see about 100 m of our incoming trail under a serac icefall. Those wands were gone.

And next time?

1998:

8 people called, 6 cancelled, leaving Karin, Ken and myself. Left Karin's (Richmond) 6 am, arriving at the icefield center 6 pm. We call home then drive 10 minutes to the Hilda Creek Hostel.

Up Sunday at 5. We manage to go around the gate on the snow coach road, saving 2½ km and 200 m in elevation. Dave drives Ken's truck back to the parking lot after dumping the gear. Then walks-jogs back to the gear. We three look around - and - no rope. Bad! Dave goes back down the road to the hostel, searches frantically and finds our rope. Back to the parking lot then up the road a third time. 7½ km later and I've still not gone anywhere. We're finally roping up when the first bus of tourists arrive. We all have our pictures taken. Ken is really chatting it up with all the young ladies and having a good time. We drag him away.

Later, the consensus is to go up the icefall center, rather than the right side nearer the cliffs. 10 minutes later a large mass of ice falls. 15 minutes later an even larger mass comes down and we're very glad we weren't participants.

We have lunch at the bottom of the "ramp" leading from the Athabasca Glacier up on to the icefield plateau. Dave's not feeling well - short of breath and coughing a lot. Up on the plateau after a short time Ken and Karin go ahead and make camp. Dave arrives later. This cough is brutal.

Monday - Slightly overcast. To Castleguard Mt. 3080 m. The summit is clouded in so we go on to a ridge for lunch. The summit clears so we go back. Dave and Ken are turned back about 40 m from the summit by steep slopes. A 14 km day.

Tuesday - Clear. Dave wakes up Ken and Karin. Ken peeks out and says, "I can't see a thing." He is looking at a snow wall about 2 m away thinking we were socked in. We head down into and then out of the trench. Towards Mt. Columbia. Dave and Karin to about 3350 m. Karin has a pounding headache. Dave is still sick and coughing, coughing, coughing. Ken goes on until about 3540 m before calling it a day. Dave looks down and sees one of the rivets on his boot has broken, puts some duct tape over it hoping it won't come out, then nurses it back to camp. A 16 km day. Karin's headache is better, but she has some major blisters. Dave rigs up a temporary pin to hold his boot together.



Camp with Mt. Columbia behind. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Camp with Mt. Bryce in right background. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Skiing towards Mt. Columbia. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Skiing towards Mt. Columbia. Photo - K. Powcock.



**On the summit of Mt. Columbia with Mt. Alberta to the left of Tim. Photo - D. Scanlon.**



**On the summit of Mt. Columbia. Photo - D. Scanlon.**



Castleguard Mtn. Photo - K. Powcock.



Mt. Athabasca. Photo - K. Powcock.



Mt. Columbia. Photo - K. Powcock.



**Mt. Bryce. Photo - D. Scanlon.**



**Andromeda. Photo - K. Powcock.**



**Summit of Snow Dome. Photo - D. Scanlon.**

Wednesday – Slow start, up to the summit of Snow Dome, 3460 m. Very windy, eat lunch behind a snow wall we build. Views are great. We have a very swift invigorating ski down to camp.

Thursday – We pack and ski down. Then a very pricy snack at the icefield center. We stop at Golden. Then on Friday home.

Home! Doctor suspects pneumonia. After x-rays and exam, doctor determines Dave has a viral infection aggravated by the dry air and exertion, when the treatment is moist warm air.

My apologies to Karin Pocock and Ken Saunders. If I'd been well we could perhaps have accomplished more.

We're planning a return next year.

## SIX DAYS IN THE ROCKIES

18-24 August, 1995

by Dave Scanlon

Our objective was the Kain Face route on Mt. Robson. The reality was up to a metre of fresh snow on the mountain. So, Kevin and I drove to the Icefield tent campground on the Icefields Parkway in Jasper National Park, and a meeting with Scott and Graham from Calgary. Plan B was to hike near here on a day to day "where to next" basis.

Next morning, Saturday, we decided to do the walk up Mt. Athabasca, 3490 m, one of the most popular and accessible of the local mountains. Up the Snocoach Road to the first pullout. Up and over scree for a short distance, rope up, don crampons, then up the normal route to the summit, with the last 150 - 250 m blowing snow and windy. Visibility is on and off with a nice knife-edged snow summit, some exposure, and some views through the clouds of the parkway.

Sunday. Woolley Peak was next. 10 km north of the Athabasca Glacier we park, hike over the flats to the Sunwapta River. Off with the footwear and wade over. Up to the knees at the deepest spot and cold. We then follow Woolley Creek to the large flat grassy area about 2320 m by the Creek. We're surrounded by Mushroom, Diadem, Woolley, and Cromwell Peaks. Beautiful area.

The glacier between Woolley and Diadem is steep and badly broken up. We can see the results of many past snows and icefalls. The whole summit of Diadem seems to be one huge cornice. The largest we've ever seen. Very intimidating.

Up at 4 am in the dark. We eat and go. We're aiming for what the book says is the normal route. (Will someone please explain normal to me some day?) Up the snow and ice chute with rock on the right, the

glacier and seracs on the left. Really close on the left. The closer we get, the dicier the route looks. No hesitation. Snow and ice up to 55° - 60° in places. Twenty minutes go by and we hear a loud crack, then a crash as tonnes of ice fall behind us. Just behind us. Five minutes sooner and we would have been toast. We think that we will not come down this route. We continue. Faster now. Later, another crack, crash, and more ice falls behind us. We watch below us in awe as this second serac runs down the chute below us. We arrive at the Woolley-Diadem col. We collect our thoughts, eat, and enjoy the view. We carry on now to the summit of Woolley, past one very hairy notch.

We all agree that no picture of Mt. Alberta equals seeing it in person on a clear day. What a magnificent mountain. Such views of Mt. Alberta and Rockies we've never seen. The Columbia Icefields to the South. The most sinister faces in The Rockies are here. We burn up film. Camp is another world away far below. Mt. Woolley 3400 m, down 200 m to the col, then up to Mt. Diadem 3320 m.

We have our objective for today, then lunch. Now down. How? The day is passing. We follow the summit ridge to its end. A short drop leads around a corner out of sight to we know not what. We go.

We slowly and carefully descend. Until we arrive at a drop off. We can't see the bottom. We can't go west - a rock ridge. East goes over a snow ridge, out of sight to we know not what. We go.

Graham is now leading. We're very exposed. Can't go up or down. Up and over and around ridge after ridge. Most of the time we can only see one other person on the rope as the others are out of sight. Time passes. The sky is darkening. Ahead looms a rock wall. We have now two choices. Retreat or descend. We choose down. We have a narrow couloir to go down. As narrow as our shoulders and it's steep. It bends and it twists. I'm continually looking down to Kevin between my feet, when I can see him. Time crawls. All we hear are our few words "Go - Stop - Slow". I look down again, Kevin is standing beside Graham on the glacier. We are down. Scott is last. He says he doesn't like to be last, as he doesn't have any protection. I mention that it wouldn't be any fun having him fall and come at me feet first with all those pointy metal crampon spikes either. Just about dark. For some it was just another day. For us, with our experience, we've just encountered the most severe 600 m of continuous objective hazard and exposure ever. We stayed calm, we talked, we made all the right moves as safely as we could. We did it as a team.



Camp with Mushroom Pk. behind. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Diadem Pk. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Heading up Diadem Pk. from the Diadem-Woolley col. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Descending from the summit of Mt. Woolley. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Ascending Diadem Pk. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Kevin Graham and Dave with Mt. Alberta behind.  
Photo - D. Scanlon collection.



The summit of Mt. Woolley. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Ascending Nigel Pk. Photo - D. Scanlon.



Nigel Pk. Photo - D. Scanlon.

We arrive in camp at 11 pm. Scott and Graham with one last chore. To reset their tent, which the wind partly blew down. A nineteen-hour day.

Day 4. Sleep-in, eat, and break camp. All done very slowly. Down the trail. Across the Sunwapta River again, then back to the Icefields campground. We eat, rest, eat, rest.

Nigel Peak at 3210 m turns out to be a great little hike. Day 5 takes us up behind the Wilcox campground, up a trail, cross-country past dozens of beds of mountain goats, up the edge of a small icefield to its summit. The parkway, Snocoach Road, the whole North East side of The Columbia Icefields is before us. As Kevin wasn't feeling well, only I, Scott and Graham are here. We spend what seems like hours here. As all things end, we return to camp. Kevin feels better.

Day 6 takes us away to Yoho National Park, and rain. That evening after dinner, we go to Field for a brew. We talk and have another brew, and another. We call home. Forecast is for rain.

Up in the rain in day seven. Break camp. Graham and Scott are off to Calgary. Kevin and myself to B.C.

Great teamwork – great friends.

Party: Graham Simpson, Kevin Irvine, Scott McDonald and Dave Scanlon.

## THE OLD FOGY'S FOOT FOLLY

by Brian Wood

In October, 1997, I was in Edmonton visiting my son, Michael, who is serving in the Canadian Infantry. He and his army buddy, Steve, were planning their last climb before the ski season and the following weekend would probably be their last chance. I was invited along and assured that I would not be at the sharp end of the rope. In fact they would put me in the middle, a nice safe place even on a traverse.

Michael had not been climbing extensively due to overseas tours with the UN and NATO, but Steve is an experienced climber and an army Mountain Operations Instructor. This meant he had been responsible for setting up rock anchors for rappels and fixed ropes, and many other gadgets to ensure that an infantry unit of non-mountaineers could traverse mountainous terrain safely, including following multiple pitch rappels, day or night. If he could handle a group of average incompetent infantry types, then surely he could get me, who should still have some residual skills, up a low class climb in one piece. Right?

Steve decided that the Grillmair Chimney on Yamnuska (Mt. John Laurie) would be a good 'wind-

down' of the season for him, but I don't think he realized how much of a 'wind-up' it would be for me. Perhaps this easy (for some) day trip could be turned into an epic so that these youngsters would have something to remember. One of the necessary ingredients of an epic was present – me. Would fate provide the missing pieces?

There was no need to warn them of my obvious advanced age and inevitable lack of fitness following a month's car touring in the US. Those were givens. My next excuse was that I had not done any sustained steep, multiple pitch roped climbing for many (12-15) years. The only time I use ropes now is on glaciers and for negotiating short bluffs that are encountered in normal class 4 mountaineering situations.

My initial excuses were disregarded and they assured me that I could probably be hauled up like a sack of potatoes if need be! After all, these guys did lots of weight training, something I had never even thought of at their age.

My next excuse was lack of proper equipment. I had no personal climbing gear and all I had for footwear were sandals and light nylon/leather trail boots with very bendy soles. This excuse was soon squashed because Steve's father had run a climbing school and there was enough gear in Steve's basement to equip an expedition. I was soon fitted out with a modern climbing harness (if I had my circa 1975 Whillans sit harness with me, it would not have been allowed on the climb anyway.) This new harness even came with a chalk bag which was my first exposure to this modern ritual. The modern helmet made my early model, a Joe Brown heavy duty fiberglass 'special' from the 1970's, seem like a WW2 Army helmet.

Steve had so much equipment that he could probably fill MEC's back orders at a moment's notice, but, as with MEC, my size 12 feet were a problem. However, that excuse disappeared because I managed to rent some '5.10 Stealth' climbing shoes which fitted my feet like a tight glove. From my recollection of previous pure rock climbing trips (not many - and a long time ago, I remind you again) my boot soles always had cleats, but the soles of these climbing shoes were as smooth as a baby's bottom. Luckily, this was Alberta where it rarely rains, and so visions of sliding off green greasy rocks were put to rest, and I was assured by their enthusiasm that these shoes would stick on anything. Also I had always worn at least two pairs of good thick socks (plus orthotics) in my old climbing boots, but now my feet could barely fit into these fancy climbing shoes with just one thin pair of

socks, and these were the largest shoes available. I was told some people didn't wear any socks at all, and that skin to leather/rubber contact was essential to ensure 'meaningful communication with the rock'. That sounded a mite too kinky to me so I opted for the one thin pair of socks. I thought those light climbing shoes would seem more at home on a ballet floor than on a rock face, which might explain why the climbing magazines show modern climbers decked out in those fancy stretchy tights. Even so, I could not envisage these shoes initiating my metamorphosis into Barishnikov, so I stuck with my usual baggy pants, hastily repaired with duct tape.

The next step was sorting out the climbing hardware. I could see this could be a problem because of the sheer size of Steve's collection. Steve's climbing hardware collection was impressive - with a wide range of 'pro' ('chocks' to old fogeys) in many sizes and colours. In my day, for a rock route, I would take my total collection of equipment - a few slings, karabiners and some new fangled Chouinard Hexcentrics (the original symmetrical model, now a collector's item). If no one was looking, I might slip in a piton hammer and a few rusty old pitons because I still didn't quite trust this 'clean climbing fad.' My fairly small collection did not require sorting or much effort to carry. On the other hand, if we took all Steve's collection, it would be too heavy to carry on the approach, never mind on the climb.

Sorting climbing gear has been likened to foreplay, (by those of the Freudian school) and when I noticed my hands were getting sweaty and my breathing rate was increasing, I felt there might be some truth in that parallel.

The gear sort-out in Steve's basement continued for a long time and I felt quite apprehensive by the time it was finished. If this climb was such an easy climb, why were we taking so much gear? My fears were quickly discounted by Steve's assurance that this was only the primary sort-out. The final sort-out was to occur at the campsite near the actual climb.

I was amazed at the variety of the gadgets, their bright colours and intricate mechanisms. I was glad I would not be setting some of this pro because I would need a library of instruction manuals to set them correctly. Life is certainly more complicated (and costly) than it used to be - and presumably it's safer if you know what you're doing. The old adage that the modern mountaineer carries his courage in his back pack might be true, but he has to have the experience and judgment to use it properly - not to mention the strength to carry it all.

We arrived at the campsite at night and so we could not see the route. After a fitful sleep, and the final gear-sort out between hasty mouthfuls of the Army's favourite breakfast (maple-flavored instant oatmeal - very patriotic and supportive of Quebec culture) we set off along a gravel road and a trail to the base of a large talus slope where we got good views of Yamnuska's east face, lit orange by the early morning sun. It was an impressive steep wide face with deep chimneys and a few short overhanging roofs, separated by clean walls with a few grooves and trees for variety. There was not a cloud in sight so this was going to be a very long dry hot day with little chance of rain, and therefore my very last possible excuse of lousy weather was not going to materialize. We were committed to the climb, or perhaps I should have been 'committed' for being talked into this venture in my dubious condition. The one thought that spurred me on was that I would never be more than 30 m from help at either end of the rope at any time.

At the top of the talus slope, Michael and I changed into our rock shoes and packed our hiking boots into two day packs. The leader would be able to climb without a pack which is useful in view of the chimneys. Steve used his mountaineering boots because he had done the climb before in rock shoes and now wanted to experience the route in more sporting, old-fashioned gear. Very appropriate for the occasion. Michael and Steve were to take turns leading, and I was to clean the route of the pro. (We expected about 5-6 full pitches, some of which would be about 5.5.)

The start was gentle enough, and we were soon progressing reasonably smoothly up the face. It was nice to have complete faith in Steve's abilities - particularly his rock anchors. He told me he would set a minimum of two, sometimes three, and these would take some time to set up. Some of my old British climbing friends used to mock the Army for its old gear and somewhat ponderous approach, but it was very comforting to arrive at the top of a pitch and marvel at the technological miracle tying Steve or Michael to the rock. My recollections of early British climbing experiences were usually a series of heart-felt thanks we never had to actually test some of the very dubious "psychological belays" set up with minimal gear after what seemed a very long, unprotected run-out. Perhaps my memory could not be relied upon for these technical details, but these modern belays were a big improvement and I am sure we could have hung a loaded army truck off some of Steve's belay anchors. Being surrounded by such competence, I would have to

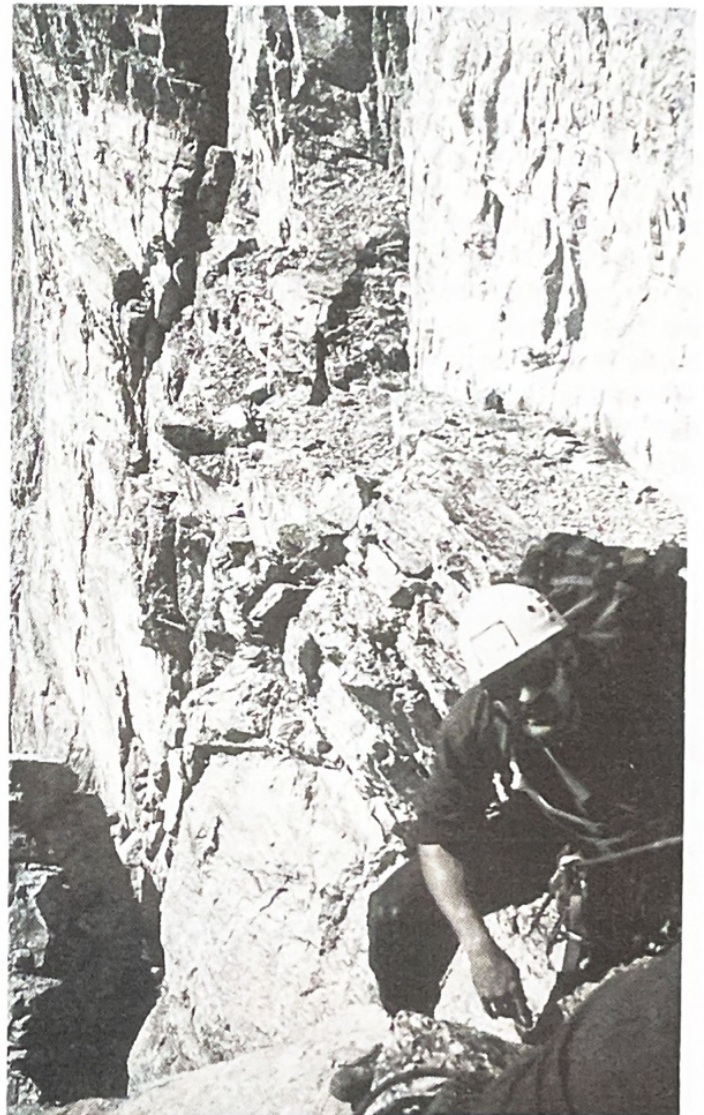
be very imaginative to have even a slight chance of an epic.

As the climb progressed, I marveled at how forgiving the new climbing shoes were. In contrast to my normal climbing boots I could place these climbing shoes quite carelessly on some small holes, and the wonderful friction grip would hold. The snag with this approach is that the lazy and/or incompetent can get up routes they should not, replacing poor technique with superior technology. Once again, technology has effectively diminished the hard earned skills of the artisan, and buffoons are now let loose on sacred ground! However, as I soon discovered, buffoons must be especially careful with these new shoes when using one particular type of hold - the foot jam.

From my previous experience, in my conventional stiff-soled mountaineering boots, of course, I remembered foot jams felt quite secure because I felt my foot would not slip inadvertently from the crack into which it was jammed, and yet the foot was comfortable and usually it was not too difficult to extract the boots when moving on. On the other hand (or more correctly, on the other foot) with these modern soft climbing shoes, there is minimal stiffness in the sole which therefore cannot protect the sides of the foot from becoming crushed. So as I transferred my weight onto my jammed right foot, it slid deeper into the shallow vee crack and became compressed at the sides and quite painful. I was looking forward to moving onto a more comfortable hold but when I tried to extract my jammed foot it would not budge.

By now I was fully stretched out above my jammed foot and Michael, who was belaying me at the time, had taken in the slack, preferring to give the 'old man' little room to fall. I was now hanging off two hand holds and pushing off the wall with my left foot while wriggling and twisting my right leg, but all to no avail. A few minutes of this feverish activity began to exhaust me, and Steve, about 10 m below me, could not understand my contortions until my cursing became loud enough for him to hear.

If only to rest my rapidly tiring arms and to try a different approach I tried to take some lower hand holds, but Michael, feeling increased tension on the rope, took in more rope. Obviously the old man needed some help to move upward! I had an instantaneous vision of my waist being drawn upwards by an over enthusiastic belayer, while my right foot remained anchored. This could resemble being stretched alive on the 'rack' of Medieval England (and I always thought that 'rack' in climbing meant a 'rack of pro') I shouted



On the Grillmair Chimney, no place for an old fogey.  
Photo - B. Wood.

to Michael for more slack but he could not hear me. Steve, ever vigilant of the old man's plight, relayed my instructions and I was suddenly lowered to a horizontal position roughly level with my jammed foot, hanging by the harness. Rotating my right leg through 90 degrees about the jammed foot transferred the pain to my ankle, which was luckily quite flexible after a lifetime of repeated sprains. I tried pushing off the rock with my free foot, but that did not help so I grabbed my jammed foot with both hands and heaved and twisted it, using my free foot and support from the rope to steady my swinging.

Steve started to climb up towards me to help, and I had a vision of his strong hands mangling my foot as he yanked it out. Michael lowered me a bit more so the

jammed foot was now slightly above my head. Then, as he lowered me still further until I felt I was actually hanging from the rock by my jammed foot, I thought that perhaps a real true epic was being generated. What a way to spend the night! I have heard of a hanging bivouac but this is not what I thought it meant. Steve was now moving ominously closer to help wrestle that foot out of the crack. I muttered that I would take my foot out of my boot first (hopefully without dropping the boot), when all of a sudden, like a cork from a bottle of champagne, my foot popped out of the crack.

I was so preoccupied regaining that lovely secure feeling of four point contact with the rock, I didn't even stop to wonder why my foot had been so suddenly released. It was only afterwards as I sat at the belay with Michael and watched Steve flow gracefully up the

next pitch that I realized my right foot felt quite comfortable, not because of numbness from possible nerve damage, but because it was not so swollen. I then realized that hanging horizontally or slightly lower than the jammed foot allowed the blood in my foot to drain back through my varicose veins, so my foot shrank slightly in the crack and thus, was able to pop out. So hanging from my jammed foot was doing the right thing for the wrong reason. How impressed my vascular specialist doctor would have been if he had known I was taking time to do my leg raising exercises even half-way up a 300 m cliff.

However, I resolved in future I would be careful not to put my foot in any downwardly converging crack. I hoped I could keep that resolution more successfully than a previous, foot-related resolution, which was not to put my foot in my mouth! Some of my friends realize how unsuccessful I have been in keeping that resolution. Perhaps foot-related resolutions are particularly difficult to keep for large-footed people with large mouths.

The final pitch looked impressively steep from the last stance, and there was little choice of route - straight up the crack into an overhanging cave. I watched Michael tackle the bridging which was fairly continuous with only a few resting spots. There was a trail of old pitons in place, and so protection was convenient and not exhausting to set like some of the pro in previous pitches. I noticed it was getting colder and we had been out of the sun for some time. Heck, it would be getting dark in the next hour or so and perhaps we could schedule an epic after all.

Michael disappeared into the cave where his echoes become fainter until we heard, "On belay." The final pitch was exhilarating for me and definitely airy. The last moves were through a small hole in the roof of the cave (impossible with a pack on) and suddenly I could stick my head through a hole on a narrow ridge quite close to the summit. I pulled myself through and gasped. There, spread out before my feet was a whole gorgeous panorama of peaks, bathed in a reddish glow of the setting sun. A magnificent finish, worth every bit of struggle. I take my hat off to Hans Gmoser, Grillmair and party who did the first ascent in 1952 without our sophisticated gear and protection, and of course, without the knowledge that the route would go.

Michael and I changed gratefully into our wonderfully roomy hiking boots and limped down the easy trail off the peak, following Steve who took off like a mountain goat. We scooted down the talus and arrived back at camp in the failing light.



Even less of a place for an old fogey.  
Photo - B. Wood.

Once again, an epic was avoided, but I know I don't need an epic to remember this spectacular route thanks to the determination of my two young, very able companions who had more faith in the old fogey than the old fogey himself

## The North

### OVERLAND TO THE SOUTH NAHANNI - A CANOEING EXPEDITION

30 June - 9 July, 1997

by Peter Gumplinger and Jan Soukup

#### Prelude

"Names such as Deadmen Valley, Headless Valley, Funeral Range, and Broken Skull River ignite our imagination of turn-of-the-century mishaps and murder," wrote Kathleen and Michael Pitt (1991). Marie Bremner (1993) "carried mental pictures of the thundering Virginia Falls, of tiny canoes dwarfed by the towering pinnacle at the Gate, and of ghosts of headless prospectors at the mouths of chattering streams." My partner, and driving force behind this adventure, Jan Soukup, had "cravings to get a taste of the wilderness adventures of the great early Canadian explorers, like Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson." I was simply flattered by my friend's announcement that I should be his partner of choice.

Jan's dream of canoeing the South Nahanni started long ago when, as a young student in Prague, he saw a documentary film about Albert Failie, Nahanni River's devoted old prospector. According to Jan, the Nahanni should be 'deserved' and not 'humiliated' by the spoils of modern technology, meaning floatplane access. He was adamant that he would only consider for the approach an overland route, which combined downriver travel with upstream lining and dragging, plus multiple portages; muscling everything over the Continental Divide, for a total of roughly 50 km.

The South Nahanni River, located in the extreme south-west corner of the Northwest Territories, holds a world-wide reputation as a grand canoeing adventure, but as an avid whitewater kayaker, I had reserved this river for something to do in veteran years. That is, until I read the following, intriguing, and much quoted passage from Ken Madsen (1996). (It also surfaced, very recently, as a German translation in the Austrian Alpine Club yearbook (Albert 1998)).

"Enough canoeists have survived and enjoyed the Nahanni to dispel the legends, but those of stout heart and limb needn't despair. There is still a route that will re-create the adventure and hardship. Particularly the hardship."

Here is what I wrote in letters to friends after the fact:

"...The mosquitoes had their worst cycle in great many years. The day we arrived at the start of the trek was the day I began living behind my bug-shirt. I didn't come out from under it for two weeks, aside from fingering a spoon into my mouth in short and daring manoeuvres. It was hard to imagine that anyone would submit to such punishment voluntarily, not to mention the harshness of the trek itself, the weight of the loads to be carried, and the density of the willow bush and arctic spruce forests. The rapids had to be lined upstream, sometimes up to the neck in frothing cold water, always in fear of being dislodged from the ground momentarily. There was no room for injury, but virtually every step carried the possibility of getting hurt, spraining an ankle, bruising a shin, or cutting a hand. Sometimes there was not enough water to float the boats, so as we slogged through the muck, it sucked at our feet with every step, and more than once we slipped up to our knees in bog."

"I carried the kayak overland above my head, upside down, with the help of a wooden crate clamped to the cockpit. The bars which rested on my shoulder were cushioned with foam rubber. Yet, I could only carry the contraption for about ten minutes before I'd throw it off my shoulders into the willows and collapse behind it, oblivious to the thousands of mosquitoes. The nuisances would immediately descend upon every square-inch of me, trying to find unprotected skin, or a piece of clothing not woven dense enough for them to pierce through. Due to the way the contraption was constructed, I could not see straight down to where I was stepping. This caused me enormous grief when I needed to balance the weight above my head from one slimy boulder to the next, or from one muskeg billow to its neighbour. It was also impossible, unaided, for me to lift the assembly over my head after each break, and so the three of us had to stay together and rest in unison, whenever the first of us tired."

"We laboured detached from the time of day, often to exhaustion, until the body finally refused to obey the mind. The portage was every bit as strenuous as I heard it was going to be. It was the toughest thing I have ever done, and it helped that I was mentally prepared for it."

The German/Austrian climbers, with summits like Patagonia's Fitz Roy to their credit, concur in their article with these remarks about the portage (literally translated):

"This rarely chosen approach has a reputation among the Canadian bush-experts as a serious and cruel self-punishment... The mosquitoes make relaxation impossible and become an unbearable plague. Our romantic Canadian campfire ambience is gravely dimmed... Time has lost its meaning to us. We have our own rhythm now which dictates

*the necessary rest... We shove, paddle, and burden every day to exhaustion. We move forward in a trance. Our perception becomes increasingly narrow. We barely register the vacant scenery. All difficulties are surmounted with apathy. Food has only an existential meaning. We utterly yield to our fate and live only in the 'Here and Now'."*

### **Background**

After several permutations of people scheduled to join us at the Moose Ponds, headwaters of the Nahanni, everything fell through. Only the portage party of three remained: Jan, his fiancée, Milena Rigan, and I. This left me preparing for the unthinkable - dragging a 22kg, plastic-moulded, Prijon T-Canyon kayak across the mountains, with the intention of using it to transport all my gear, and my share of the food for 18 days, down some 250 km of wilderness river. Jan's Quicksilver Rocky Mountain Cruiser fibreglass canoe could not be relied upon to take some of my load. It's a sleek voyager and non-freighter in comparison with the canoes that are usually used for this kind of trip. It became obvious that an extra dry-bag had to be cinched to the kayak's deck.

For its first 60 km, the river gushes through the notorious, Class II-III+, Rock Gardens. I was not worried, given that I would have a most suitable craft, however marginally buoyant, if I managed to store everything, and haul the beast to the river. What helped our endeavour somewhat was a planned rendezvous with three BCMC members, who would be flying into Rabbit Kettle Lake, so we expected to be resupplied with food provisions about halfway through our journey.

The internet lines between Edmonton and Vancouver sizzled with our exchange of e-mail, as I implored Jan, who does engineering design work, to come up with a viable scheme for portaging a kayak through thickets. I was doubtful of his suggestion that I should be able to carry the kayak, singly, in canoe-style. Impossible, was my answer. Finally, thanks to some wood planks, nails, screws, wing nuts, a hammer and a cordless drill, which Jan brought from Edmonton, a carrying frame emerged on a dirt lot in Fort Nelson.

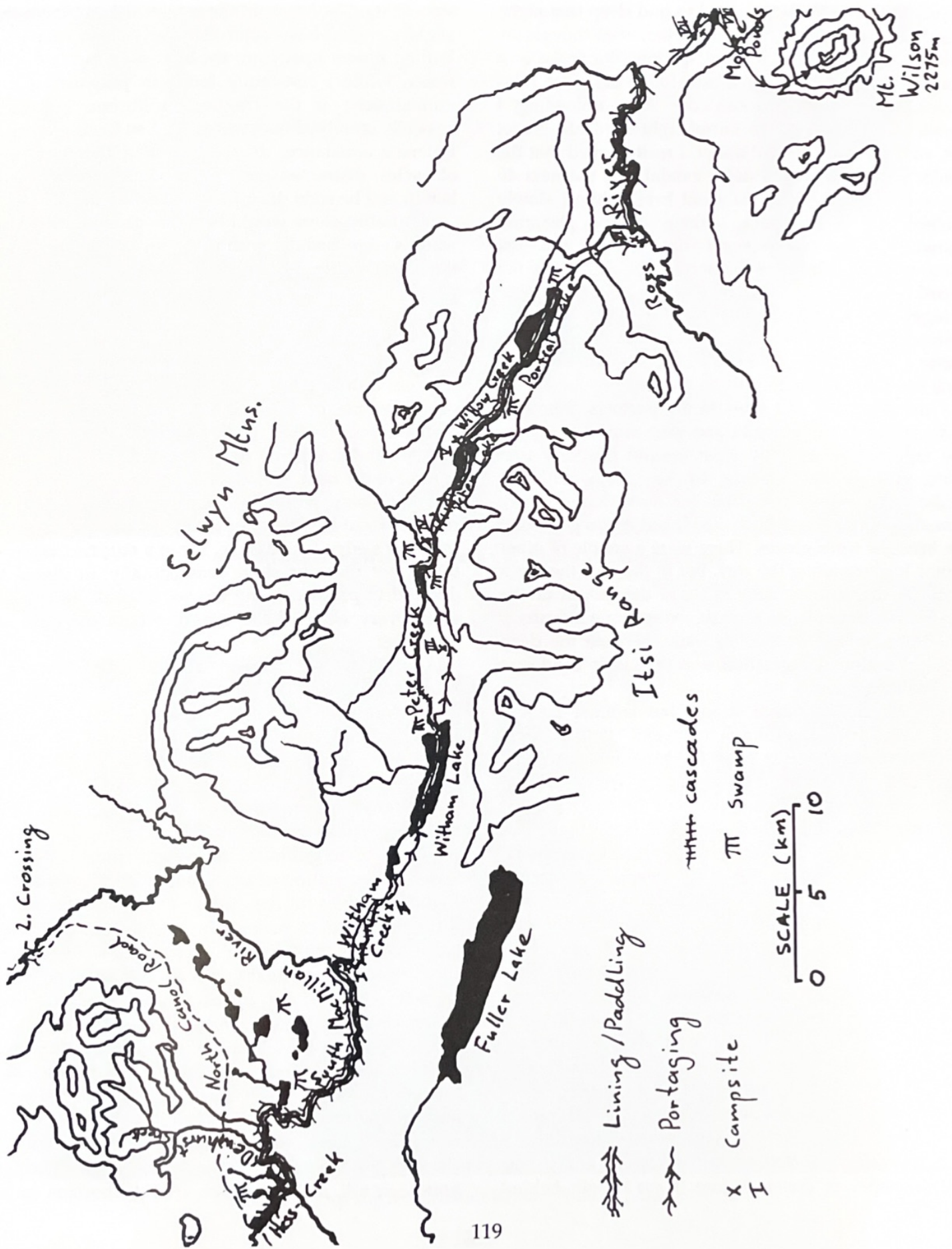
### **Chronology of Events**

June 30 - Web reports of closures on the North Canol Road and scare-mongering by our friends about the predicted unusual high snowmelt runoff, made it seem like a miracle when I drove my faithful Subaru onto the Pelly River barge. We had come in my station wagon, without a glitch, all the way from Fort Nelson, transporting all gear, including the boats. We were now leaving the community of Ross River, Yukon. This was

the last outpost of civilisation for us. As we continued, we soon noticed some very recent repair work of water damage, but otherwise, the North Canol Road was in good shape. The bridges even sported signs with the names of the creeks. We passed an old graveyard of army trucks from WW2 along the way, and at last, after some 170km, we approached the first bridge across the South Macmillan River. The Itsi Mountains, to the east, looked wildly more beautiful than I had imagined. These were not mountains I had ever heard of before, and yet their peaks, snowfields, and glaciers formed an impressive backdrop to the spindly northern spruce forest in the valley. We proceeded on to the second South Macmillan crossing, but only to take a look at the boulder-strewn river.

Our route was decided much earlier in the comfort of our living rooms, as a result of researching the available reports and maps. To our knowledge, all previous parties put in at the second river crossing, then navigated very treacherous rapids until they reached the mouth of Witham Creek, which flows out of the portage valley from the south-east. All accounts we had read talked of near disasters striking early in this stretch of whitewater. Hence, we opted for a conservative approach, substituting muscle and sweat of hard work for the bravado. We were looking for a tributary creek to provide an access corridor to the main river from the road, although all possible choices flow into the South Macmillan below the Witham Creek confluence.

The original portage party (Roder, 1977) was supported by helicopter to do their scouting. Their report mentions Hess Creek meandering relatively slowly from the road to the river. They talk of a calm section of the Macmillan River immediately downstream of the Witham Creek confluence. However, they also point out serious difficulties that lie in the tracking upstream of the first 4km of riffles and rapids, with overhanging trees from the banks, and the water too deep for wading. They concluded that this alternative required more time (they estimated three days to reach Witham Creek), and they did not recommend it. In light of our own experience now, we are doubtful that they actually tried this route other than from the air. We were thus persuaded to try the even smaller Dewhurst Creek in the hope of avoiding the riffle section. Jan donned his sparkling clean everything, jumped into the creek, and disappeared behind the first bend. Soon he returned with the verdict - unusable - and so our only option emerged by elimination. It was Hess Creek, or bust!



The overland route. Map by P. Gumpfinger.

July 1 – I somehow managed to find sleep that night, beside the road at the 200 km marker, even though my mind was churning with anticipation. We woke to a gorgeous day. As we drove back to the bridge at Hess Creek, we startled a moose cow. After unloading, I drove away again to an out-of-sight roadside gravel pit, with a parked RCMP trailer. I really hoped that the trailer's insignia would deter vandals for the next 40 days. It suddenly felt lonely out here, while I slowly walked the 3 km back, gazing at the gleaming snowfields and summits of the Selwyn and Itsi Mountains, which frame the portage valley beyond the broad Macmillan River basin. As I walked down to the bridge, I could see that only a short distance downstream, jumbled sweepers blocked the glittering water surface across its entire width. This did not bode well for our undertaking.

I conveyed the bad news to my partners, who had changed into their wetsuits, and were almost ready for the launch. So, we only went around the very first bend, and we were already working away with my folding saw. The spruce this far north has scrawny branches of incredibly hard wood, and it was good that we brought work gloves. There were a couple of other minor logjams along the way, but in the end, the creek made it surprisingly easy to reach the mouth of the Macmillan. It was a gentle float, except for a few sharp meanders, where we had to wade, because the deep channel undercut vegetation, and the inside bend was too shallow.

The Macmillan has a strong, but laminar current here. We tried paddling upstream, though only managed to ferry across to the left bank, which seemed marginally more promising for tracking the boats from shore. It was mostly grass, but had a vertical embankment of undercut soil, about a meter high. This made it difficult to land, let alone line a kayak, especially one with the lip of its cockpit dangerously close to the water. There was a constant risk that with one wrong jerk on the stern line, the boat would broach and flip, leaving me on the high bank, unable to hold it against the current. If I jumped into the water, I'd be swimming. The situation was even more precarious, since I had strapped two olive jars on either side of a dry-bag to the afterdeck. The jars helped stabilize the kayak, but only to a point. After that, they provided an extra handle for the current to exert its torque. To do away with the stern line all together was not an option either, because with the bowline alone, the kayak's nose was simply forced against the shore, and it was only a matter of meters before it got caught behind

something. I had to hold the reins just so that the boat slightly angled for a controlled ferry away from shore. Pulling it now upstream, the boat rode high out of the water, while I constantly faced it, prepared to react immediately, if the fragile equilibrium changed. I basically stumbled backwards, and so I was grateful for Milena's assistance, as she watched the boat, while obstacles distracted me. Jan's canoe tracked much better, and he soon disappeared from sight.

Invariably, there would be a tree growing at the very water's edge, usually with no room to squeeze by it on the water's side. In this case, the reins could still be passed from one hand to the other around the tree, but sometimes, the trunk would grow horizontally out of the bank before bending skyward. Worse yet, the tree would be leaning over the river completely, or be a sweeper. I didn't dare allow the boat a long leash, and so every one of these impediments required major manoeuvres. At other times, a willow would be enough to snare and tangle my ropes hopelessly. I'd lose direct control of the boat, which would then consistently steer under the same willow's lower branches. It was a relief that we were not the only creatures which had chosen the river's edge for passage. What a surprise, when we found out that our shore was actually an island. We decided to proceed along the south bank, and crossed at the very head of the island, where the river was shallower.

At midday, we reached a spot with many large, round boulders on the river's left. Here, the river forms a fast chute along the opposite side, below a cut-bank. It was a special place and the boulders in mid-river provided relief from the insects. After lunch, the character of the river changed markedly. We were facing continuous rapids now. With the faster flow, the river was shallower and more rocks began to show, requiring us to guide the boats with short lines to the bows, while wading in knee-deep water. Inevitably, we found ourselves on the outside bend with the ensuing difficulties of even faster flow, and deeper channels. It was necessary to periodically jump into the water up to the chest, and push boat and body against a very strong current. At one point, in the middle of a particularly sharp bend, it became impossible to make progress alone. Up to my neck in water, the kayak pulling at my outstretched hand, I lost my footing. Although I quickly caught a branch, I was suspended in a raging current, with no option but to wait for help. Fortunately, Jan was close behind, and with combined strength we succeeded. Several more similar incidents took their toll, and I began to scan the horizon for any



A gentle float down from Hess Ck. Photo - P. Gumplinger.



Peter lining up the MacMillan River. Photo - J. Soukop.

indication that we had made progress. The conclusion I reached was daunting. Moreover, the river made a particularly big meander in the wrong direction. I decided it was bad for my psyche to even bother looking around, and so I kept to the task.

I was falling behind again, when I looked up and saw to my astonishment that Jan and Milena were preparing to board their canoe. I hadn't bothered to read the available information as carefully as Jan had done, so I knew nothing about a quiet stretch below the Witham Creek confluence. We paddled silently, sceptical of our good fortune. The sun was now low on the horizon, and the Itsi Mountains reflected off a river that had become an elongated lake. We flushed a family of Canada geese, creating a drama by separating a gosling from its parents. As the river turned east, the current picked up again, but just as the current became really strong, we found a deep, quiet side channel. Soon we noticed to our surprise that the water was taking on a different colour, and we quickly deduced that we must have reached the confluence. It seemed unreal, but there it was, an attractive lagoon inviting us to camp, at the very junction with Witham Creek. We had covered in a single day what we had estimated to take three. Our optimism gained a hefty boost, since we had now arrived in territory that others, before us, had already conquered. Milena prepared the first of many excellent meals from her diligently sorted packages. It was devoured instantly, and we turned into our tents. I had just zipped up my sleeping bag when I heard something splash mightily in extreme close proximity. Thinking Jan had gone for a swim (which wasn't unlike him), I hollered, but when I peered out, I saw that I had alerted a huge bull moose.

July 2 - Milena had assumed her favourite position, crouching around the fire, rustling with zip-lock food bags, and clanking with pots. A thin ribbon of bluish smoke started rising straight up among the morning shadows, when suddenly the alder foliage behind her rustled, and turning around, she almost fell into the fire. The gorgeous bull moose had returned. His rack was still covered with velvet, but already it was of a size that I had never seen, even in glossy calendars. Puffs of steam emitting from his massive nostrils, he looked at us with dignity, before he splashed away with a powerful gait.

We started out tracking the boats up a more quiet bottom stretch of the creek. It did not take long until we reached the cascades. They are marked on the map with slash marks, rendering the stream as if it was 4 km of railroad track. A long faded piece of flagging tape

adorned a large tree on the right terrace, exactly where one would be tempted to start an overland portage. At this location, the terrace runs up against an ancient lateral moraine, which banks the river in its course, creating the cataract ahead. Various accounts have described lining up this section as an epic undertaking, and we were in no mood to relive their experience. Having lined relentlessly the previous day, we were anxious to find out what portaging was like, and whether we could shuttle everything in two trips. The loads we strapped to the frame-packs were enormous. Jan assembled the heaviest load for himself, leaving only the canoe for the second trip. Milena's burden was just as impressive, considering that she still experienced pains from a serious neck injury she had suffered in a car accident. I left a dry-bag with all my clothing behind, but still, I had to squat before my monstrous pack, then crouch forward bringing the load over my hips, get on my knees, and then use the paddle to steady myself in the struggle to get up. So heavy was the load that there was no other way for me to shoulder it unassisted. This technique eventually also gained popularity with my partners.

We immediately found a game trail heading for higher ground. The reward for sloggng up the hillside was a sparsely treed plateau, with many moss-covered breaks in the willow growth, and scarred only by a few shallow crosswise ditches. The plateau was also criss-crossed with moose trails. We rested upon reaching it, taking in one of the more spectacular and exhilarating views along the portage. Behind and below us lay the Macmillan basin and the land along the Canol Road from where we had come two days earlier. We quickly reached the point where the plateau blends into the shoulder of the mountain, marked by a water-filled depression. Approaching the hillside, it was important to gain just enough elevation to enter a game trail, which was ideally designed for our purpose. The trail crossed several small boggy ravines and then contoured until it petered out in a rocky marsh near the creek. Scouting revealed that it was preferable to cross the creek here, and we decided to return for the boats.

As we assembled the carrying frame for the kayak, dark clouds, which had formed during the hot afternoon, began to discharge their contents. In a matter of minutes, the vegetation all around us was wet, and so were we. Fortunately, the rain stopped as suddenly as it began, and with the returning sun, we embarked on our second forward trip. Milena was now carrying an even heavier load than on the initial leg, and I would basically race to cover as much distance as

possible, in time until the pressure on my shoulders became unbearable. With the carrying contraption nicely framing my face, and with the kayak well balanced upside down above my head, I could lift and drop the bow with my forehead, using the boat to plow through the willows. The branches couldn't hit me and I was pretty reckless. Jan had the front of the canoe tilted down, for the same reason, and so the yoke sat firmly against his neck and shoulders. The drawback was that he could not see very far ahead as he followed Milena within sight of her gaiters, occasionally bumping into her. Due to the abundance of trails on the plateau, we ended up travelling a different route each time. We only found our reliable game trail again because of the boggy ravine, which provided us with a bearing. We were travelling the whole time out of sight of the creek.

I first attempted to cross the creek with my heavy backpack, and without using the buoyancy of the kayak as a stabilizer. I soon realized, however, that I was asking for trouble, and so we decided to barge the encumbrance with the canoe during several ferries. Thoroughly bushed, we established camp on the opposite shelf. The second day on the portage slipped way into the third when we finally crawled into our tents. The ground cover all around was a deep layer of cream coloured lichen. Sleeping on this springy carpet was like sleeping in feathers.

July 3 - We savoured the beautiful morning in the white blossoms of Labrador Tea bushes, the yellow tents contrasting with glaciated peaks and the deep blue sky. Eventually, we packed our gear and hitched ourselves back into the role of beasts of burden. Another strong game trail led us to a bay of the creek, where we found traces of an old human camp, in the form of a few blackened rocks arranged in a circle. We found the ground near the bay, and next to the creek, distinctively boggy, and so we aimed in the direction of an indistinct esker. We gained it for the price of precarious walking over a field of teetering boulders. In due course, we scrambled up onto a last promontory, which provided us with our first panorama of beautiful Witham Lake, embraced by the towering Itsi Mountains. We had ventured some distance from the creek in our attempt to avoid muddy sections. Although this added to the portage distance, we stuck with our decision for the remaining trips.

We couldn't wait to launch our boats, and let the cool crystal waters shoulder all the weight. My wooden contraption, still assembled, added a crown to the hill of gear piled into the centre of the canoe. I had

strapped the Billy bag to the rear deck, and was now praising the comfort of having a backrest, even if the stern of my kayak rode deep in the water. We took it easy crossing the calm lake, enjoying the chance to rest our weary bones. At last, we entered a creek inlet, disguised as many little bays in the marshes of its beaver kingdom. Gradually, the ponds took more of a creek shape and we started to detect current. While I powered against this current, I failed to look to see if the others were following me and, at one point, where a beaver dam obstructed further progress, I realized I was alone. I whistled but received no answer. I returned to the open lake, all the while wondering which channel the canoe must have taken in this labyrinth. Climbing to shore, I saw and heard no one. It was as if my partners had been scooped out of existence. After what felt like a long time, I was happy to see Jan wandering around in the reeds, searching in vain for a reasonable passage further up the tributary.

By the time we unloaded the boats, the sky in the west changed dramatically. We could see a wall of rain obscuring the valley entrance and moving up fast. The chilly rain struck just as we had managed to stash everything under the overturned canoe. Chilled from the previous exploration through the beaver-works, coupled with sudden wind, we waited for a brief lull in the precipitation to change from our wetsuits into rain gear. The rain passed over as fast as it arrived, and now veiled the more elevated valley ahead with a translucent curtain. The broad, fairly level ridge, which parallels the course of the creek at this location, seemed to be a natural portage corridor, although it required a thrash through dense willow to reach its crest. We knew from the map that our ridge and the stream eventually converge near the point where the creek emerges from a swamp, some 4 km upstream. The moose-highway-department, with the apparent intention to connect feeding grounds with fast pathways, had built a large trail, equally suited for our purpose. Tired from another long day, we spied a level campsite in a deep lichen caribou pasture, holding a waterhole, about half the distance along the passageway. Even more fatigued upon my second arrival at camp, I was dragging the Tupperware-kayak with no strength left to hoist it back onto my shoulders, after I had made an unscheduled stop behind my partners. We had a hasty supper and collapsed to a sound sleep.

July 4 - We woke to a steady drumbeat of rain. When it finally stopped, the lichen ground squished with water like a sponge under our feet. The wetness was

rising in wisps of fog all around. There was something absurd in the scene of our high alpine camp, resembling that of mountain climbers, but draped with canoe, kayak, paddles and lifejackets. By mid-afternoon, after the sun had burned off all the moisture, we left our alpine meadow, and then followed a most scenic trail with beautiful vistas in all directions. Especially the wall of peaks, alongside us, drew our constant gaze. We suddenly heard a thundering noise. Frantically eyeing the ramparts for danger, we just saw the explosion of snow and dirt as the avalanche hit, streaking the slopes below a chute with debris.

The put-in at the outlet of the swamp was very unappealing, and particularly mosquito infested. The rocks above water were covered with a thin layer of mossy sod, while those below water were covered with slippery slime. We rushed to change into our wetsuits, loaded the boats, and pushed off. The kayak's shallow draft and my surface scraping paddle strokes allowed me to glide over numerous shoals. Jan was not so lucky. He was constantly out of his canoe as we penetrated the dark and gloomy looking swamp. Clouds had rolled in again, and just as we started feeling really weary, we saw a perfect little gravel bar, at the base of where the creek steepened to a staircase. There was just enough room for two tents. Soon, the smell of chickpea à la Milena with dried onions, garlic, bacon bits, and jerky filled the air. Once the cooking was safely under way, Milena silently retired into the tent apparently so exhausted that she didn't have the strength to wait and eat. Jan and I, on the other hand, devoured the meal impatiently, while the beans were still a little crunchy. We did not need the lullaby of the cascading waters to fall into an instant sleep of total oblivion.

July 5 - Jan got up first and scouted the dense spruce forest ahead for game trails. We later saw him waving at us from a clearing above the creek's right escarpment. He appeared pleased with his findings. By the time we followed his trail to the clearing, a brief shower rolled over us, and then the trail simply ended a short distance past the spot where Jan had turned around on his advance exploration. We scouted back and forth, to no avail. There was no trail to be found anywhere and the worst bushwhack of the whole portage commenced. In the process of bulldozing prickly spruce branches out of the way, we got thoroughly wet from the water deposited on the foliage. Eventually we reached the second lake, whose surface reflected what seemed to be an ethereal apparition, the symmetric pyramid of Mt. Wilson (2276

m), totally isolated and bathed in a golden aura of sunrays. We knew that this mountain loomed directly above the Moose Ponds, our portage destination.

We were unable to find a better route on the way back for the boats. Tired from bushwhacking even without loads, we decided to take a breather upon reaching the viewpoint. I was the first to look down to our campsite. What I saw seemed utterly surreal. There was a person on the tiny gravel bar. In time, the figure huddled over our old fire, and rekindled it. We felt cheated. Was there no place left anywhere, without running into somebody? He had even caught up to us, which I thought impossible. Honestly feeling a bit hostile, we were thinking on our way down what to say to the stranger. Instead we all laughed, when he told us that he had no clue of a party ahead of him, and seeing our boats beached on the gravel bar was a similarly mysterious encounter. John's shock of short-cropped blond hair and bug-bitten face was barely sticking out from under the hood of his Gore-Tex jacket. He had so far muscled up all waterways, and never portaged his solo Mad River Guide canoe. Starting at the second bridge across the Macmillan River, he had had several near disaster swimming accidents. In these he lost his mosquito repellent, mosquito head net, and he also inadvertently triggered his bear spray, which somehow found its way into his eyes. After this short parley, we went about our chores as if nobody else was around. We thought that John must have relished being solitary, but on the next day, we joined forces for the remainder of the portage. Jan admired John for his courage, and I relished the opportunity to exchange white water tales, because John, it turned out, was first and foremost a kayaker.

Finally, after straining ourselves with the boats overhead through bush so thick that a rabbit would have difficulty squeezing through, we were waterborne again, aiming for the opposite end of the lake. The map showed that the creek, which provides the link to the final lake, does not enter this lake at the farthest reach. A cosy gravel bar, right inside the mouth, tempted us, and we called it an early day. Another drizzle, which by now had passed on, left a double rainbow as a fitting frame for the solitary peak of Mt. Wilson. Nestled in a flood plain, our campsite had gorgeous views in all directions. The mood over the peaceful lake was dazzling, as we watched John's canoe emerge into view. His silhouette, kneeling low in the middle of the boat, contrasted against the light of the oblique sun. He slowly pushed his wake across the mirror surface with every measured stroke of his paddle. We chatted for a



Overlooking the MacMillan valley from a high terrace above Witham Ck. Photo - P. Gumplinger.



Lining near tree line, just below Portrait Lake. Photo - P. Gumplinger.

while when he passed our tents. Given his rate of travel, we expected him to continue much further, and so we regretted that we had not asked him to stay with us, when we later saw his campfire smoke only 300m away. Around supptime, I made an unsuccessful attempt at fishing.

July 6 - We woke up early to sunny weather. Only a short distance away, we could make out various pieces of John's clothing draped over bushes to dry, but by the time we got moving, John was already gone. As we strolled, with the boats on a leash, along a creek bed of many meanders, we passed several tiny waterfalls, in the form of spillways across beaver dams, and noticed that the water table behind was considerably higher than our creek. It was thus only a matter of time before we encountered the first of several massive beaver dams. The kayak, with its round bottom and keel, could be pushed across the relatively gentle inclines of spill-water soaked grass. The canoe, on the other hand, had to be substantially unloaded at least once. This terrain was a lot of fun and very inspiring to us, so we didn't mind the toil. We climbed in this way substantially, nearing tree line, until we reached a short channel with a boisterous current. Strangely, this section presented us with no real impediment either and, rounding a big beaver lodge, we paddled into Portrait Lake. The shore had a nice inviting pebble beach. Just as we reached the beach, a wind squall came up the open valley, churning whitecaps on the lake. After killing some of the windy time with a lunch break, we launched into the waves, pretty well sailing with the wind.

The far shore had a wave undercut bank with a tiny dirt beach for landing. The height of land, at 1250 m, was a soggy meadow beyond Portrait Lake. A rusted old shovel lay in the deep wet grass, where we reassembled our packs. John had been lingering around, apparently waiting for us. Together we proceeded to slosh through the water, agitating thick clouds of tiny male mosquitoes. Pretty soon we found a muddy, yet well-defined, moose trail in the right direction. In the belief that future parties would much appreciate it, we festooned its crucial beginning with a long piece of flagging tape. The trail was deeply forged into the spruce forest down to boulders, with only a handful of logs across it. Conveniently, none were too bulky for my folding saw. The trail, dropping ever more steeply into the valley of the Ross River, was quite reliable. Lower down we noticed that the trail was marked with old axe trail blazes and the occasional bit of faded flagging tape. Upon reaching the valley

floor, and quite unexpectedly, after so many signs of people, the trail completely disappeared into a stinking swamp of calf deep water. An oval hill across the expanse of swamp land provided the only possibility for a camp. We had lost several hundreds of meters in elevation and were now faced with retracing our steps back to the boats. After a short discussion, we opted for getting it over with.

It seemed like a long time before we arrived back at Portrait Lake. We were now faced with the longest portage, aptly named the "Portage from Hell" in a previous account (Bremner 1993). A reddish sheen of the very late northern sun reflected off Mt. Wilson. The mountain was an incredibly dominating feature from this vantage, but the boulder-strewn section of the trail was particularly tedious for me, and I could hardly rejoice in the vista. After a slow weary haul, interrupted by many rest stops in increasingly shorter intervals, we made it down and across the swamp to our hill. We felt content that, with good luck, we should be able to cross the Continental Divide, and reach the Moose Ponds the next day.

July 7 - The clear sky of the previous night had persisted into the morning. Between sips of coffee and bites of breakfast, we gradually packed and carried the already sealed bags down a short distance to a landing spot, where the beaver canal system towards the Ross River started. In due course we paddled into the dark quiet water of the beaver channel. The channel curved between luscious green banks of willows and swamp grass, dotted with dead and bleached trees, killed by the increased water table. We had to duck a few snags fallen in or across it, and very soon we arrived at a transfer connection to the shore of the Ross River, a mere 30 m away. The clean gravel and easy tracking on the Ross River were a pleasure in the hot sun. Forging the river at intervals, we arrived at a warm, pebbly island with big driftwood to sit on, and a deep back-eddy nearby, which looked like a good fishing hole. After this leisurely siesta, we muscled against an increasingly strong and turbulent current. When the situation became distinctly difficult, we knew that we had reached the area from where we should start the final portage towards the Moose Ponds. Encountering unpleasant swamps on the river's left, I scouted upstream, past rapids, to where a grove of trees indicated where we could travel. We summoned the resolve to muscle the boats up the rapids to this spot, although we now think that there must have been a better way to start the final overland trek.

After a brief rest, we were on our way. First we stumbled through wet ground and water holes among tall spruce trees, before we climbed steeply up an esker on a faint trail. Along the top of it ran a much more well defined moose trail persuading me, in the role of the navigator, that it would lead where I was going. With Mt. Wilson as a navigational beacon behind, instead of beside us, it became evident that we were wandering aimlessly with our loads from one clearing in the willow bush to the next. It was frustrating. I couldn't find a moose trail, which headed steadily in an easterly direction through the gentle, expansive pass. Rather exhausted I paused with Milena, letting Jan and John do the scouting. The revving motors of a floatplane, taking off nearby, confirmed the direction of the ponds, and jolted me back into a sensation of unwelcome civilisation. I felt awkward, sitting somewhere in the willows, so close to the finish, and yet so unsure of how to get there, while these pilots flew overhead. The two scouts had found a better trail, adorned with ribbons, and led us to a small pond. There, to my utter surprise, Jan decided to camp. I protested, but he and John mollified my concerns, arguing that we could probably float from this puddle into the real Moose Pond.

We still had to go back for the second carry, and this being very late by now, we rushed back at a trot, only this time along a trail, which followed the edge of a ravine through the lowest elevation dip in the Divide. Near the Ross River, the trail, although well flagged at times, became rather erratic, to the point that, in the rush, we got separated into two groups. Staggering along the path, totally drained of energy, we silently counted on carrying the boats this one last time. The skies had become overcast without us taking notice until we arrived back at the selected campsite. We did not feel like celebrating, given the gloomy welcome in the Northwest Territories. I also felt we had stopped short. I had never seen Jan, my idol in terms of perseverance, so tired.

July 8 - In the morning Jan swam the length of our puddle to discover that its connection to the main pond was by a small steep creek, incised into a grassy hillside. It was definitely not a navigable canal. After breakfast John joined him east along the trail of the previous night. I was back in my tent when they returned and announced that they had found a paradise campsite. They were so enthusiastic, that they managed to convince Milena and me to pack up and move to the new spot immediately. This was supposed to be our day of rest. After maybe half a kilometre, we

reached a grassy area, recessed slightly into the edge of the north bank, protected behind by arctic birch bush, and with a magnificent view down to the Moose Ponds, some 25m below. The place was truly magic. The clearing was exposed to the south and seemed to enjoy a microclimate of more southerly places. Beautiful meadow flowers and even a grove of poplars were present. Everything was very delicate and luscious, and totally undisturbed. No human had set foot on this garden yet this year. To top the paradise qualities, a crystal clear spring of icy water welled up just below the top of the escarpment.

To prove the fitting name for the ponds, moose were constantly seen munching on the water plants, along the far side of the lake. John and I went fishing with our boats. We were catching nice size arctic grayling with almost every cast. As we drifted downwind across the body of water, two canoes appeared with paddlers in bright white Tilley hats. They were obviously more interested in exercising their paddles than fishing, which we could not understand, given the bounty and ease with which we scooped up fish. They were also frightfully clean and perfectly dressed. The women even wore makeup. A queer conversation ensued when we tried to explain to them that we had not flown into this neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Milena was making fried twelve-grain bannock from a prepared mix to go with our catch. The delicate white meat of the trout-like fish was a forgotten luxury. We each had a gulp of the last rum, brought along especially for this occasion, to toast our successful arrival at the Nahanni. Our idyllic evening was abruptly interrupted by a sudden thunderstorm. We quickly retired into our shelters while John, who did not have a tent, braved the rain at the fire. Then, he too, crawled into his bivy-bag under the overturned canoe.

July 9 - It had stopped raining only half an hour before we emerged from our tents. Everything was wet, and we rushed to make a quick breakfast before our climb of Mt. Wilson. Milena had decided to pass at the invitation, and instead, she would recuperate some more, wash her hair, and organise the gear for the canoe journey. John, still trying to keep warm in his bivouac, declined as well. We donned our bushwhack-nylon hiking boots, gaiters, and gloves. First we crossed the pond by canoe, and then we were faced with the main challenge of our climb. The approach turned out to be an arduous struggle of epic proportions, up the bushy slope at the foot of the mountain. Moose didn't seem to travel much in this direction, and Caribou were found higher up. We grovelled up and up, getting



The beautiful camp near the Moose Ponds. Photo - P. Gumplinger.

totally soaked from the wet bush, rain, and our sweat. Finally, the trees were getting lower, thinner, and sparser. We followed a creek-eroded gully along its edge, until we reached a boulder field above the trees. While we rested there, having a snack, we noticed that the day was getting lighter and warmer. There was still a lot of moisture everywhere, but our chances of reaching the summit had decidedly improved.

As we rounded the lower north ridge, we made out two young caribou in their camouflage pelt, eyeing us.

The animals seemed more curious than afraid. Rather than running away, they walked straight toward us before casually disappearing over the ridge. We picked our route, via as many rock-free patches of scruffy grass as we could find in the vicinity of the broad ridge. When even these little floral ambassadors petered out, we were into serious scrambling. The steep convex slope consisted of big blocks of granite piled up helter-skelter on top of each other, and pretty well all of them were loose and teetered under our weight. It was the



Lining an easy section of the Ross River, enjoying a rare reprieve from the bugs. Photo - M. Rigan.



Finally on the Nahanni, drifting past Mt. Wilson. Photo - J. Soukup.

biggest pile of rubble I have ever laid my hands on. Eventually we passed the inflexion point on the curve of the ridge, and it narrowed. We skirted the prominent triangular snow slope along the easy ridge crest, and before long we could see the summit cairn still enshrouded in thin patchy clouds, driven by a cooling moist wind.

Miraculously, within minutes of our arrival at the summit, the warm sun pierced through the haze and, as if touched by a magic wand, the clouds started to dissipate. The landscape surrounding us looked very green. Forever repeating valleys and mountain ridges extended to the distant horizon in all directions. We could see much of our portage route as on a palm of our hand. To the north, Mt. Christie, the only other mountain with a name in this neck of the woods, presided over the true source of the Nahanni. A tiny line of shimmering water meandered down to touch the Moose Ponds and continued curving and twisting south past our peak, increasing very little in size. I strained my eyes, using the binoculars, to look south-east towards the dreaded Rock Garden.

We had been on the summit for more than an hour, when we saw two tiny canoes floating on the main pond. One looked distinctly like John's green solo canoe. They met for a while at a clump of reeds, chatting undoubtedly, but then, instead of lingering around the lake fishing, John followed the emerald streamer into the river. It was a sorry realisation to us that he was leaving. Picking our way even more carefully down the treacherous block slope, and retracing much of our route from the ridge back to the trees, we found a game trail, which descended an indistinct ridge, east of where we had ascended. Jan was trotting along in a hurried pace, but we had to leave this path and thrash back to where we had stashed the canoe. Milena gave us a joyful welcome, relieved that she would not be left alone to tackle the next 550km of wild river back to civilisation.

#### Epilogue:

Twenty-two eventful days on the Nahanni itself were yet to come (see next article), and already we thought that, like Ken Madsen and his party before us, we would be "looking back on the past days as the highlight of our Nahanni adventure."

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#### NAHANNI MAYHEM!

10-31 July, 1997

by Evelyn Feller

I was becoming increasingly more apprehensive as I started the process of loading the canoe. It was difficult to communicate my thoughts over the roar of Virginia Falls. The falls were hidden behind a wall of spray and were running chocolate grey, not their usual white. There were no wide sunny beaches on which to comfortably load and get ready to take a well planned route through the Fourth Canyon.

'Paddling rivers in flood is dumb,' I kept saying to myself. For three days we had waited it out at Virginia Falls. When we had landed it involved stretching up to a jetty at shoulder height. Now, three days later, we had stepped straight into the boat. We had watched large trees float down the swollen river toward the falls. The much anticipated hike up Sunblood Mountain was done in driving rain in hypothermia-inducing conditions.

I was about to try to convince the others to wait it out another day when I noticed a commercial canoeing group starting to lash canoes together in pairs. The obvious increase in stability became very appealing and we rapidly found small logs with which we could secure the canoes together. Unfortunately, because of the potential of crushing Jan's fibreglass canoe, we decided not to include the third canoe. We would act as the rescue craft should he capsize.

My memories of the trip through the Fourth and Painted Canyon recede into a fast blur of grey water and the yellow-red walls of the canyons. Every now and then there would be a rogue wave bouncing off the canyon walls but our craft was amazingly stable. I was surprised how I could still turn the rather large craft with an easy J stroke, and after the first few tense moments, actually enjoyed the trip. At one point Jan was caught and spun around in a large eddy and struggled to maintain his balance. However, he and

Milena had done an excellent job in getting through some rough water very similar to some of the bigger rapids on the Thompson. It was not a trivial section of water. On my return I read an article of a near fatal capsizing in the Canyon.

We camped in a much appreciated sunny evening at Clearwater Creek, grateful for the opportunity to dry gear out. There was much evidence of the results of the deluge. Our campsite had been completely flooded out and there was considerable debris trapped 1 m high in the bushes. We wondered what had happened to the parties which had left the previous day; Kent and Eric, the Americans we had camped with, the Colonel and the Canadian Army group and an uncohesive Kiwi party.

The next challenge was the notorious Figure 8 rapid. Milena and Jan elected to land on the right side to scout it. We pulled onto a gravel island to assess the problems ahead. The whirl-pool of this rapid was one of the largest and ugliest I have seen. There was no way we wanted to be on the left even in our canoe catamaran, otherwise we would have been doing an under-water analysis of the bed material of the Nahanni!

To Peter's commands we paddled furiously. Unfortunately, we all stopped to get our bearings at a strategic moment and the whole craft was spun around. The slight confrontation with the edge of the whirl-pool was enough to keep us paddling furiously. The rest of the rapid was uneventful and Jan scooted along the cliffy right bank.

The next four days were sheer Nahanni magic. We drifted in bright sunshine through the towering limestone cliffs of the Third, Second and First Canyons. There were leisurely sunny lunch stops with the whole party sprawled over the gravel bars, sometimes watching the acrobatics of the arctic terns and once being the object of a curious bear that plunged into the river to check out the strange shapes on the gravel. He quickly realised his mistake!

There was occasional white-water excitement with rapids like Georges Riffle that has capsized some eminent Nahanni paddlers - but we remained upright. The sight of a large canoe being tossed in large wave trains is always spectacular!

There were wonderful hikes into Dry and Prairie Canyons, involving intricate creek crossings and the obligatory hike to overlook Pulpit Rock and the huge cut-off meander of the Nahanni. This experience of the Nahanni in excellent weather without being driven by

gold fever into allegedly dangerous and unknown terrain was in sharp contrast to the experiences of early travellers last century. They left the country with names like Deadman Range, Headless Valley and the Funeral Range. Some evidence of the flooding was quite intriguing. Balls of mud and small pebbles littered Prairie Creek and were probably the precursors of conglomerate rock. It was geology in action!

At Lafferty's Creek we again met Kent and Eric and the remnants of the Kiwi party. There we were regaled with the events of the big flood and how the various parties fared. The experiences sounded like an epic of huge proportions where survival was really a matter of good luck rather than good management. The Army group and the Americans found that camp sites were non-existent on the raging river. No sooner was camp established, then the site would be inundated from flooding side creeks. The Army allegedly spent the night tied to trees with their paddles in their hands and Kent and Eric flopped down exhausted, still clad in paddling gear, under some trees on a high bank after paddling nearly all night.

The Kiwi party decided to paddle all night and had many adventures including negotiating the figure 8 rapid in the middle of the night and large pressure waves at Pulpit Rock. There they witnessed a rafting group capsize and the Army party rapidly attempting to acquire some advanced paddling procedures. The experience was far too intense for most of the Kiwi's and they headed for Blackstone Landing as quickly as they could paddle, for the return trip to Edmonton and the safety of New Zealand.

The next morning was spent exploring Lafferty's Canyon - a wonderful place that involved swimming to get through narrow sections and clambering up small cliffy sections. The cooling in the canyon was relieved by the waters of Kraus' hot springs down river. The springs had been cleaned and rejuvenated by the flood. Here we found our Kiwi acquaintances lying blissfully in the springs with large slices of bread they had made, covered with raspberry jam. Their planned departure time, and ours, from the springs was extended by a few hours.

The last day from the park boundary was probably the hardest. We paddled the 80 km through grey silty water that increasingly seemed to have the consistency of molasses. There were no really good sources of cool, clean drinking water and the humid air was draining. I was impressed by the facilities at Blackstone Landing, particularly the spacious visitor cooking shelters that



Camp upstream from Pulpit Rock. Photo - E. Feller.

were protected from the voracious bugs by mesh netting. The interpretation centres there and in Fort Simpson were excellent with welcoming and helpful staff and good video collections about the natural and human history of the park.

The trip had been a logistical challenge to organize; linking up with Peter's overland portage and then changing craft from a kayak to canoes. However, the services and help of Wolverine Air staff and canoe rental from Nahanni River Adventures made everything go very smoothly. We were also most impressed with the Nahanni Park staff, especially with

Christian, the ranger at Rabbit Kettle, whose hike to the tufa mounds was a gem in natural history education.

Our trip had only scraped the surface of the adventures that the Nahanni offers and the Nahanni demands a return visit.

Party: Marilyn Cram, Evelyn Feller, Carol MacMillan, Peter Gumplinger, Jan Soukup and Milena Rigan.



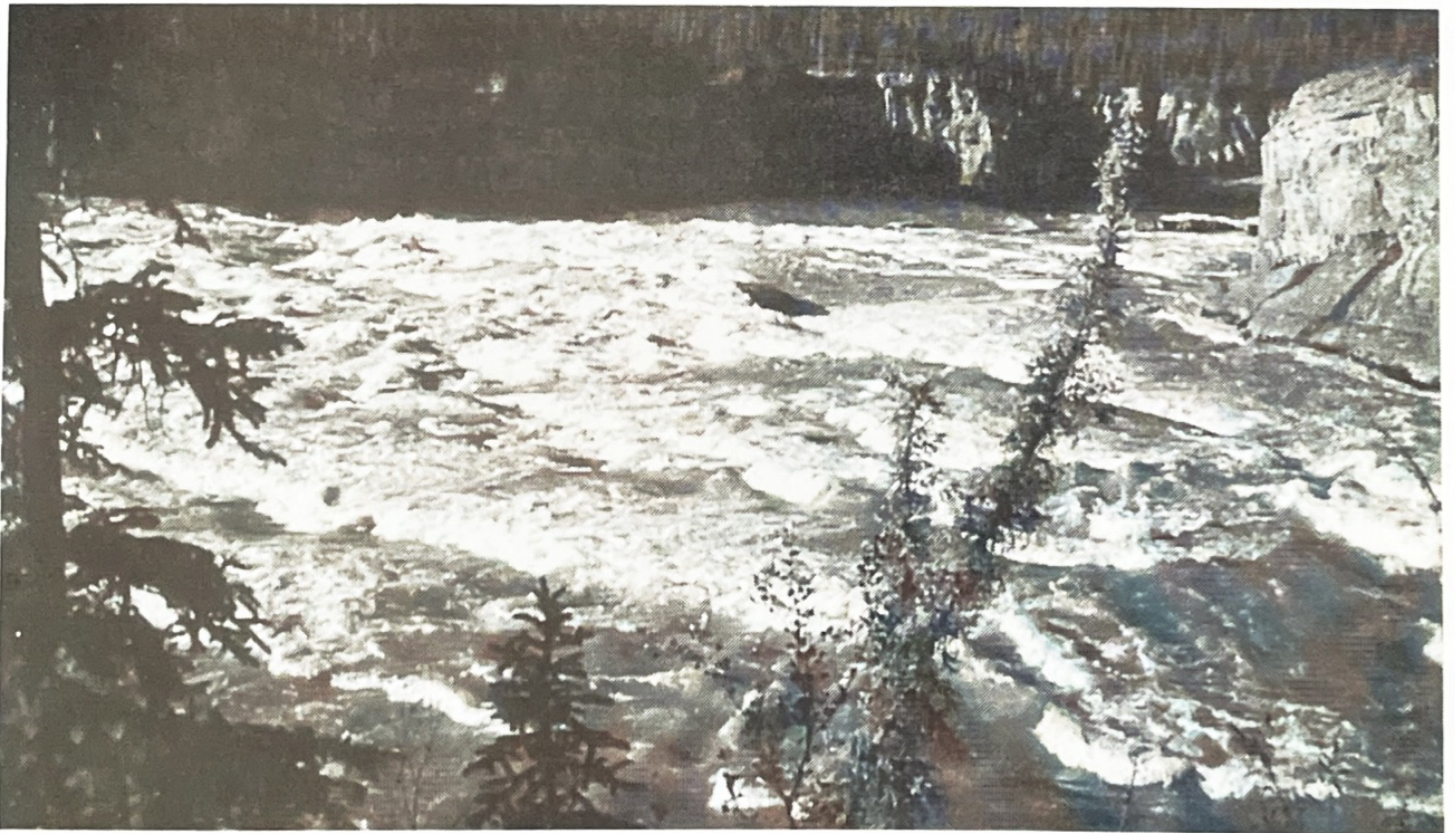
In the first canyon. Photo - E. Feller.



In the third canyon. Photo - E. Feller.



Final campsite at the park boundary. Photo - E. Feller.



The Sluice Box rapid above Virginia Falls. Photo - E. Feller.

## MOUNTAIN SCIENCE

### GLACIER MONITOR '98

by Ed Zenger, Karl Ricker and Max Gotz  
(AWARE, Whistler)

Our two glaciers, Overlord and Wedgemount in Garibaldi Park, were measured again over the last two years at the end of the meltseason in September/early October. Both unfortunately are continuing their retreat as shown by the following:

Glacier & Snout	1996	1997
Overlord Glacier - south snout*		
- south lobe (left side)	(-) 6.6 m	(-) 1.7 m
- north lobe (right side)	(-) 10.0 m	(-) 0.3 m
Wedgemount Glacier - main snout	(-) 7.8 m	(-) 6.7 m

\*The north snout position has not yet been reported because to date it has always been upslope of the bilobed south snout. However, if the present recession rate of the latter continues the converse relationship will occur.

The 1996 results for both glaciers are as expected because the prolonged El Niño of 1990-1995 had dragged on to a warm summer for 1996. For 1997, however, the spring snowpack was heavy and was being accumulative (at alpine levels) into the first two weeks of July. The meltseason, thereafter, sputtered to an end by the third weekend of September. Hence the Overlord Glacier performed as expected with negligible overall retreat for '96-'97, and to snout positions of only 3 to 4 metres behind their winter position (glaciers advance during the winter period). The winter moraines, by the way, provided attractive dust baths for the goats, being freshly trampled with their recent visits by apparent significant numbers in early September.

Unfortunately the 1997 visit for Wedgemount had to await the October long weekend. This was a desperation trek in knee to thigh deep snow, once above treeline, and snowshoes had to be used in the trek around the lake to reach the glacier snout. Measurements were confirmed to a tape and compass survey from the one and only visible witness cairn located about 90 metres away near lake shore. Fresh snow and decidedly cloudy white skies negated any possibility of deploying our stereo photo grammetric survey methodology, and so there are no data to

measure the relative volumetric changes of the glacier surface. (Over our 25 years of surveys this is the fourth time that weather has been uncooperative for field photos.) In view of these conditions, we had expected only negligible retreat of the glacier, and a result comparable to the previous year was therefore a surprise.

### IMPACTS OF RECREATIONISTS ON VEGETATION (DON'T TREAD ON THE FLOWERS)

by Michael Feller

We have all probably trodden on or camped on flowers. Whenever we venture off trails and camp in the wilderness we impact flowers. Not only flowers, but mosses, lichens, grasses, shrubs - in fact all plants - feel our impacts. Have you thought about these impacts? Many people have not only thought about them; they have also studied them in an attempt to acquire knowledge which can be used to minimize these impacts. A recent study (Yorks *et al.* 1997) found no less than 400 published studies on trampling impacts on vegetation. What follows is a brief review of these studies, mostly from the U.S., to help you understand how your recreational activities are impacting vegetation, and how you can minimize your impacts.

People, of course, are responsible for a wide variety of impacts in natural areas. These impacts depend upon people's behaviour and characteristics, number of people, weather, soil conditions, type of plants present, and the physiological state of the plants. Numerous guidelines (e.g. Cole, 1989) have been developed to minimize all these impacts.

#### 1. Factors influencing trampling damage to vegetation

**People's behaviour and characteristics** - Heavy people cause greater impacts on vegetation than light people (Cole, 1995b) and people wearing boots cause greater initial impacts than people wearing runners (Cole, 1995b). Lug-soled boots also tend to displace more soil than do runners, although boots with different soles displace similar amounts of soil (Kuss 1983). Thus, going on a diet and wearing runners will lessen your impacts.

Impacts tend to be greater when going downhill, than when walking uphill or on level ground (Weaver and Dale, 1978). Thus, one should be most cautious about impacting vegetation when descending.

**Number of people** - The more people trampling an area, the greater will be the damage, but this damage

increases at a decreasing rate as the number of people increases (e.g. Cole 1985, Cole and Trull, 1992). The relationship between numbers of people and vegetation impacts should not be confused with the issue of party size, as ecological impacts are not consistently related to party size. If 50 people are allowed into an area per day, the impacts of these people on vegetation may differ little between 2 parties of 25 and 10 parties of 5. It is the total number - 50 - which is important. Indeed, the ecological impacts of large parties are often less than the impacts of the same number of people from a larger number of smaller parties. Thus, one campfire for a party of 20 requires less firewood than 5 campfires for 5 parties of 4 people (e.g. Stanley *et al.* 1979). In Banff park, grizzlies appear to be more heavily disturbed by small numbers of people moving through their territory throughout the day, than by larger numbers moving through during a short time period.

Party size restrictions are justified more on social grounds than on ecological ones.

**Weather** - Weather has two main influences on people's impacts on vegetation. Firstly, wet weather will produce wet soils which are more susceptible to compaction and erosion as a result of trampling (e.g. Yorks *et al.* 1997). Secondly, abnormally dry warm weather may stress plants, making them more likely to succumb to a trampling-caused injury.

**Soil conditions** - Some soils are more easily damaged than others. Damaged soils stress plants, making them more susceptible to being killed by people and retarding their rates of recovery from injuries. There are 3 main types of damage inflicted by people on soils - compaction, reduction in fertility, and erosion. These interact as compaction decreases soil fertility and increases the likelihood of soil erosion. The soil that is eroded is usually the topsoil which is the most fertile for plant growth.

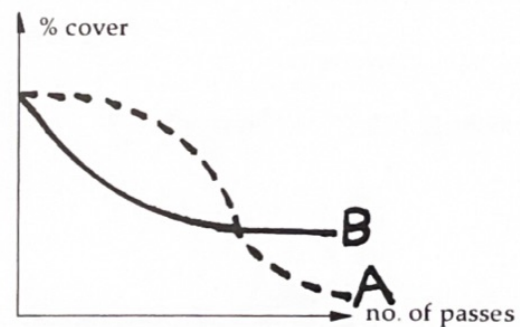
The soils most susceptible to damage from people walking on them are those which are fine textured (containing much clay), have a high organic matter content, (dark brown-black in colour) have a high moisture content, have low fertility, are shallow, and/or are on steep slopes (Cole 1987, Kuss 1986, Kuss *et al.* 1986, Yorks *et al.* 1997). Soils which are least susceptible to damage from people walking on them have medium textures (good mixtures of sand and clay), have moderate organic matter content, have moderate fertility, are deep, and/or are on flat ground.

Soils, of course may exhibit properties implying opposing susceptibilities to damage. Thus, a heavy clay

soil can occur on flat ground or a shallow soil can have moderate organic matter content. Such soils will be highly susceptible to one type of damage but resistant to another. The heavy clay soil on flat ground, for example, will be highly susceptible to compaction but will not be susceptible to erosion.

**Plant characteristics** - When considering the impacts of people on plants, three plant characteristics can be considered. These are resistance (how rapidly ground coverage by a plant is reduced by trampling), resilience (how quickly plants recover after their ground coverage is reduced), and tolerance (how much trampling plants can tolerate and still have a particular ground coverage, such as 75% of their original cover, after a certain period of time). It may appear that resistance and tolerance are similar, but they can be quite different.

Thus, in the figure, species A is more tolerant of trampling than species B but species B is more resistant to trampling than species A. Most workers have just considered resilience and either resistance or tolerance.



Cole and Trull (1992) considered that resistance is determined primarily by the stature (short vs. tall), arrangement, and toughness/flexibility of aerial parts. Thus, resistant plants are usually "short, large size (too large to be stepped on), have tufted or bunched growth, stems that are woody or wiry and flexible, and leaves that are tough and/or growing in basal rosettes". The resistance of a plant will be increased by growing close to taller, more resistant plants or on a substrate that cushions the impact of trampling. Resistant vegetation types tend to be dominated by either tall, tough, woody shrubs, such as *Pachistima myrsinites*, or grass-like plants that grow in bunches or as a turf (e.g. *Carex nigricans*). Low woody species with brittle stems, such as the heathers *Phyllodoce empetrifomis* and *Cassiope mertensiana*, resist low, but not high, levels of trampling. Sensitive vegetation types tend to be dominated by broad-leaved herbs with erect stems, such as *Valeriana sitchensis*.

Resilience is determined by the location and toughness of the growing points and by the growth rate of regenerating tissues. Thus, resilient plants are those that have growing points "at or below the ground surface that are tough enough to survive trampling, or are hidden or cushioned from trampling impact. Resilient vegetation types tend to be dominated by fast-growing broad-leaved herbs (e.g. *Valeriana sitchensis* or by tufted or turf-producing grass-like species (e.g. *Carex nigricans*)"

Tolerance is related to plant type, with shrubs being less tolerant than grass-like or herb species, and to the location of the growing points, with plants having growing points above the ground surface being less tolerant than those having growing points at or below the ground surface.

Cole (1993) has summarized many results as follows: "...the durability of a vegetation type can be predicted quite accurately by examining characteristics of the dominant ground cover species. If these species are woody or have aboveground perennating buds [growing points], they will probably have low tolerance for trampling. If they are tufted or matted graminoids [grass-like plants], they will probably have high resistance and enough resilience to be very tolerant of trampling. If they are erect forbs [broad-leaved herbs], they will probably have little resistance to trampling. However, they are likely to have high resilience and, therefore, relatively high tolerance. Types that are dominated by low-growing forbs or by erect graminoids have an intermediate response between that of low-growing graminoids and that of erect forbs." In other words, the most durable vegetation types are usually dominated by graminoids. Shrubby types may be resistant to damage but, once damaged, they are slow to recover. Broad-leaved herbaceous types are easily damaged but tend to recover rapidly.

Cole considered that these findings would apply throughout the U.S. Hence, they are also likely to apply in Canada. Studies in Mt. Revelstoke national park in B.C. are consistent with Cole's results in that the *Valeriana sitchensis* community there was least resistant but most resilient to trampling, the most fragile communities (considering both resistance and resilience) were *Vaccinium membranaceum* and *Cassiope mertensiana*, while the least fragile community, with high resistance and resilience, was *Carex nigricans* (Campbell and Scotter 1975, Landals and Scotter 1974).

Although a certain vegetation type can be assigned a certain durability, it should be noted that different species within one vegetation type can have greatly different durabilities. Thus, Cole and Trull (1992) distinguished four groups of species in Washington's North Cascades. These groups were -

1. **Species that are both resistant and tolerant** (low growing plants with either a tufted growth form or leaves in basal whorls flat against the ground).  
e.g. *Antennaria lanata* (woolly pussytoes)  
*Carex nigricans* (black alpine sedge)  
*Carex spectabilis* (showy sedge)  
*Hieracium gracile* (slender hawkweed)  
*Juncus drummondii* (Drummond's rush)  
*Leptarrhena pyrolifolia* (leatherleaf saxifrage)  
*Luzula hitchcockii* (smooth woodrush)  
*Veronica cusickii* (Cusick's speedwell)  
*Viola orbiculata* (round-leaved violet)  
Mosses
2. **Species that are resistant but intolerant** (woody shrubs)  
e.g. *Pachistima myrsinites* (falsebox)  
*Phyllodoce empetrififormis* (pink mountain-heather)  
*Vaccinium* spp. (huckleberry/blueberry)
3. **Species that are nonresistant but tolerant** (broad-leaved herbs with upright stems)  
e.g. *Arnica mollis* (hair arnica)  
*Equisetum palustre* (marsh horsetail)  
*Heracleum lanatum* (cow-parsnip)  
*Lupinus arcticus* (arctic lupin)  
*Mitella breweri* (Brewer's mitrewort)  
*Saxifraga odontoloma* (stream saxifrage)  
*Senecio triangularis* (arrow-leaved groundsel)  
*Thalictrum occidentale* (western meadowrue)  
*Valeriana sitchensis* (sitka valerian)  
*Veratrum viride* (Indian hellebore)
4. **Species that are nonresistant and intolerant** (tree seedlings and broad-leaved herbs)  
e.g. *Abies lasiocarpa* (subalpine fir) seedlings  
*Caltha leptosepala* (alpine white marsh-marigold)  
*Gentiana calycosa* (mountain bog gentian)  
*Osmorhiza purpurea* (purple sweet-cicely)  
*Parnassia fimbriata* (fringed grass-of-Parnassus)  
*Pedicularis bracteosa* (bracted lousewort)  
*Viola glabella* (yellow wood violet)

It should be noted from these lists that one violet, *Viola orbiculata*, is considered resistant and tolerant while another, *Viola glabella*, is considered nonresistant and intolerant. Similarly, broad-leaved herbs occur in categories 1, 3, and 4. To complicate matters further, several broad-leaved herbs had different responses to trampling depending on the plant community in which they were growing. Thus, *Aster alpigenus* (alpine aster), *Erigeron peregrinus* (subalpine daisy), and *Potentilla flabellifolia* (fan-leaved cinquefoil) were all sensitive to trampling in the generally sensitive *Valeriana* community. However, they were all resistant to trampling in the more resistant *Phyllococe* and *Carex* communities. Resistant plants can protect less resistant plants from trampling, to some extent.

Another complication is that plant species growing in pure stands have been reported to be more sensitive to trampling than when growing in mixtures with other species (e.g. Kuss and Graefe 1985). Furthermore, plants growing in early successional communities (those developing soon after some disturbance such as fire or a landslide) may be more sensitive to trampling damage than those growing in late successional communities (e.g. Kuss & Graefe 1985).

**Elevation** - You may think that plant communities above the treeline are more fragile and less resilient (due to a shorter growing season) than plant communities at lower elevation. Well, studies of plant communities at different elevations (e.g. Cole 1985, 1993, Cole and Trull 1992) have only concluded that the response of vegetation to trampling is generally unrelated to elevation. Thus, in the Washington Cascades, the most resistant plant communities were ones at both the highest (*Carex*) and lowest (*Pachistima*) elevations. Similarly, the least resilient plant community (*Pachistima*) was at the lowest elevation, while the higher elevation communities *Phyllococe* and *Valeriana* varied greatly in their resilience (low to high, respectively).

Plants in alpine areas must tolerate harsh conditions, including strong winds and blowing snow and ice. Thus, much of their mass is below the ground surface. What is aboveground is generally tough and close to the ground surface. These characteristics also confer resistance to trampling to a plant.

In a study of plant communities in 4 widely scattered U.S. states, Cole (1993) found that plant communities in subalpine regions exhibited the widest variation in response to trampling. These regions contained the most tolerant, the 3 least tolerant, and some intermediate tolerance, plant communities, of those he

studied.

## 2. Guidelines to minimize trampling damage to vegetation

Many guidelines have been proposed by different people aimed at minimizing human impacts on natural environments. The following guidelines deal specifically with trampling impacts on vegetation.

1. Avoid trampling vegetation, particularly the most sensitive tree seedlings and broad-leaved herbs.
2. Learn to recognize which plant species and communities are sensitive to trampling and which ones are not. In general, graminoids are the most resistant and resilient group, while climbers and cactoids are the least resistant and resilient. Herbaceous broader-leaved forbs are likely to suffer most immediate losses while shrubs and trees have the longest - lasting decreases in diversity following trampling (Yorks *et al.* 1997).
3. Minimize disturbance of natural features (Avoid unearthing rocks, picking flowers, and cutting or uprooting trees and other plant life. Gather edible berries gently.)
4. Stay on trails when they are present (Avoid making your own, cutting corners, etc.).
5. Take trailside breaks on durable sites (Avoid resting in sensitive plant communities.)
6. Small parties should spread out when walking off trail, if possible, although terrain and vegetation may dictate otherwise (this minimizes damage to each individual plant). However, large parties should stay close together, with people walking in single file, even, as the greatest plant damage occurs within the first few passes (Yorks *et al.* 1997).
7. Choose an off-trail route that crosses durable surfaces (When walking off-trail, utilize as much as possible surfaces that will not be disturbed by trampling, such as snow, rock, or nonvegetated ground beneath dense forest. If these are not available, walk through resistant plant communities, such as grassy areas.)
8. Cautiously ascend or descend steep slopes (Minimize soil erosion and plant destruction and stress by treading as lightly as possible.)
9. In popular locations, select a well-impacted campsite.
10. In remote locations, select a previously unused campsite (Avoid lightly impacted ones unless there is a need to develop a concentrated campsite in a remote location.)

11. Camp on a durable site (camp on snow, sand, or bare forest floor beneath dense forest, rather than on lush meadows or streambanks. Camp on grassy or dry sedge plant communities in alpine/subalpine areas, rather than on herb, heather, or shrubby communities.
12. Wear runners hiking, if your ankles are strong, and wear runners or soft-soled shoes around camp.
13. On established campsites, confine tents and activities to already impacted areas.
14. On previously unused campsites, disperse tents and activities if the site or vegetation is durable (e.g. bare forest floor or grass) or if few parties (less than one per 5 years) are likely to visit it. Otherwise, confine tents and activities to a few areas.
15. Build fires on mineral soil where vegetation will not be damaged. Use existing fire-rings or fire scars where possible in well-impacted campsites. Do not use these in places without well impacted campsites.

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A grassy campsite in the arctic tundra where vegetation impacts are relatively low. Photo - M. Feller



Camp on a sandy-gravelly bench where impacts on vegetation are minimal. Photo - M. Feller.

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A herbaceous alpine meadow where camping/trampling impacts would be high. Photo - M. Feller.



