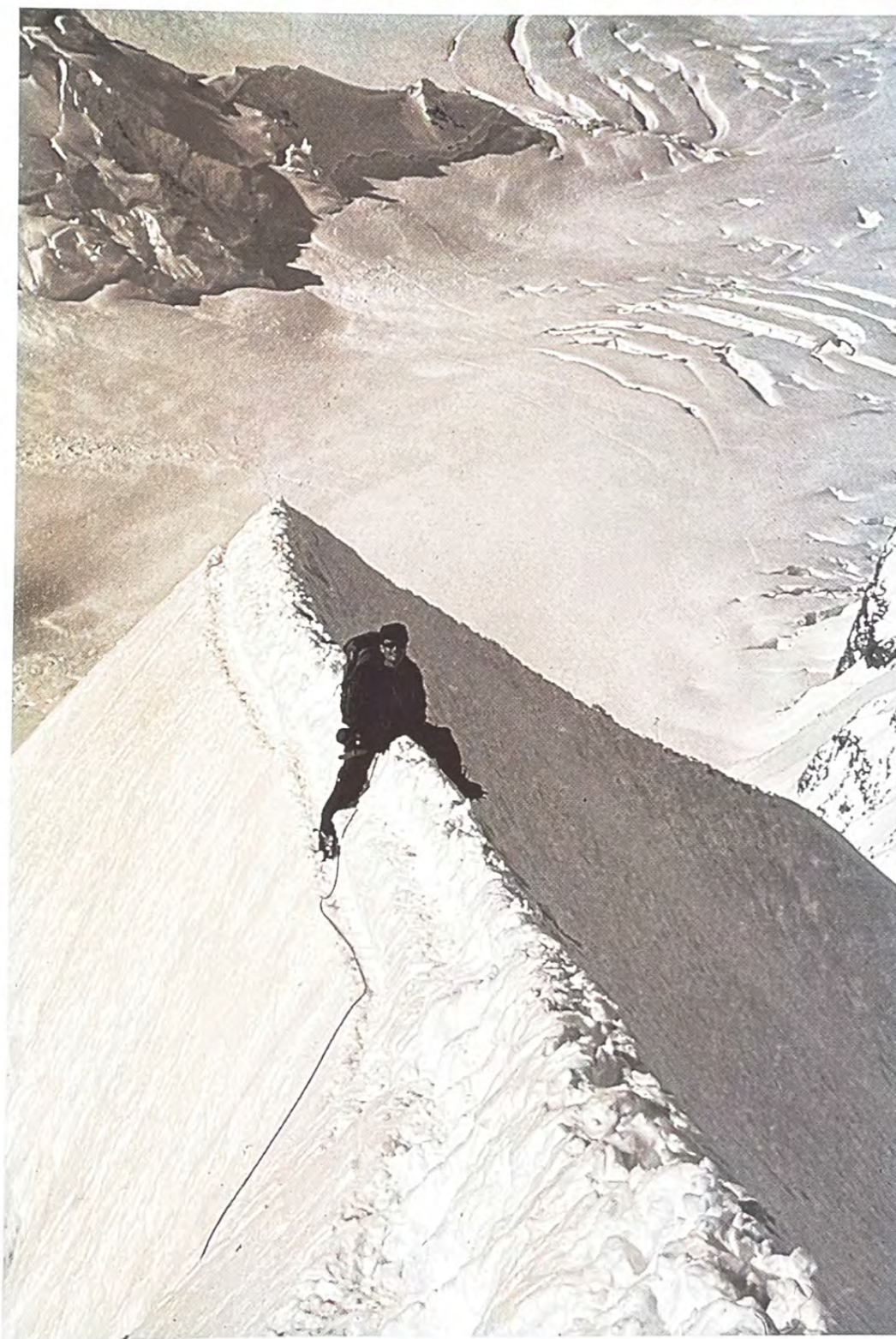


THE B.C. MOUNTAINEER



2000



The B.C. MOUNTAINEER
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Cover photos

- Front Cover: Mark Sanctuary on the East Ridge of Mt. Logan. Photo - J.-L. Bouchayer
 Inside Front Cover: John Clarke on the S. Ridge of Mt. Pitt with Mamquam Mtn. behind. Photo - S. Neufeld
 Inside Back Cover: Lindisfarne Mtn. from the Lindisfarne -Meditation Col. Photo - L. Baile
 Back Cover: At the top of the second pitch on the NE Ridge of Bugaboo Spire, with Snowpatch Spire behind. Photo - C. Wooldridge

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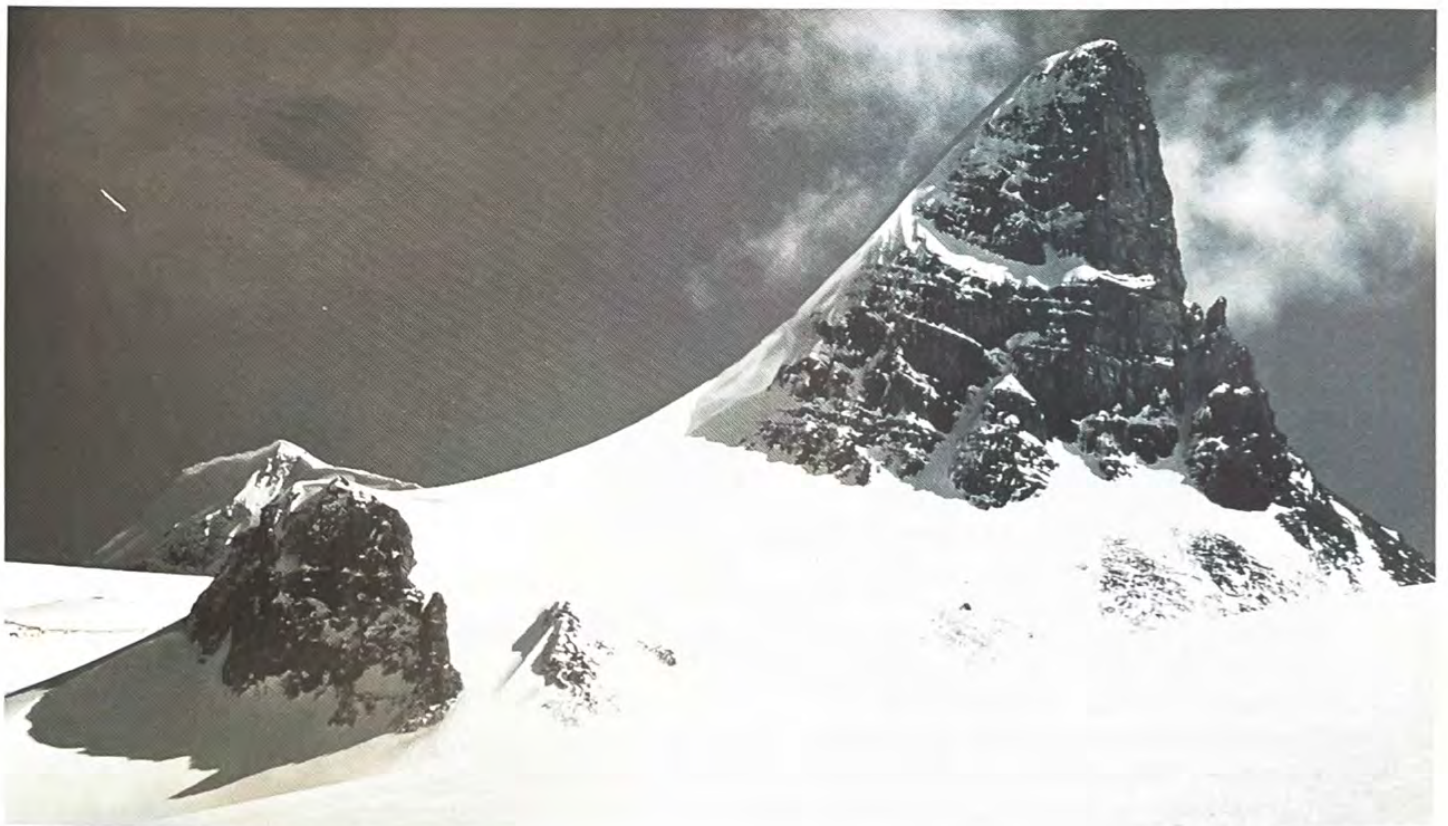
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St. Nicholas Pk. from near Bow Hut.

Photo - B. Wood.

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 Southwestern 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. In the 1990's, club members were 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. Today, club members are actively involved in attempts to protect some areas against the intrusion of motorized recreation, particularly snowmobiles. The club continues to play an active role in land use issues relevant to B.C. mountaineering.

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, 1999), the Falls River/Tchaikazan region (1986, 1998), Ape Lake area (1983), the Mount Waddington area (most recently in 1995 and 1997), and the Selkirk Mountains (most recently in 1999 and 2000). 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, Bridge Glacier, Fairy Meadows, Columbia Ice Fields, Stanley Smith-Lord Glacier area, Franklin Glacier, the Southern Chilcotin and the Homathko icefield. A popular Christmas ski 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



In the mountains, a club member prepares.

Photo - L. Baile.



To encounter this club member nearby.

Photo - P. Paré.

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.

In December and June the club publishes its 6 monthly trips program. Updates are given in club newsletters and on the club's website (www.bivouac.com/bcmc/).



A BCMC social event.

Photo - M. Kafer.

Social Events

Social gatherings are held in the fall, winter, and spring on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 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 Chair (604-268-9502) or by attending a club social event. Club social events and trips are open to non-members as well as members. The Membership Chair can also be contacted through the Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C. at 604-878-7007.

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



Club members enjoy wilderness skiing.

Photo P. Crean.



As well as the snow and winter temperatures. Photo - D. Scanlon.

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 non-vegetated areas to avoid damage to meadows, lake shores and stream banks.

MOUNTAINEERING

1. POETRY

Ridges

I have seen the ridges of plenty
where the immediate is notched and sculpted into
endless shapes
twisted in rock
cast in stone
where shades of grey and distant blue
in an endless tapestry
of planes dotted with snow and outcroppings

a passing backdrop to the rifts of sky
the dark waves of cloud and mist
that wage their battles against the sun's castings
heating the ground in a glow
in pockets
that can be felt all about
in the summer air
a short time
a time to be cherished
when one is left to wander the ridges
following those distant mathematical planes
to somewhere

Chris Ludwig

Ode to Slide Alder

Oh alder
whose pale thin bark doth resound in my heart
thine tangled branches of plenty
filleth my soul with terror

thine stalk which sprouts from the ground
doth cluster in richness
and thine roots unite in spiteful conquest

in snow
your body doth collapse and entangle
all others in thine space
and when the snow doth melt
thou springeth to life with haste

alder
that groweth overnight
thine dominion is absolute
you feareth neither axe
nor chainsaw

and when I am dead
I know
that you will be there instead

Chris Ludwig

Not Golden

The golden ears isn't so golden
as to have a luster
on a summer's day
when the hikers come
to stomp the snows into submission

the bowl on the north face
the ridge to its east
where urban warriors make their strides
with the help of flagging tape
and rock cairns

and they come young and old
to make their mark
to have a say
on the way things were built

on the summit
where pride and endurance
meet atmospheric tides

and eyes cast their light
upon all of creation

is it so lonely
these woods of ours
are our footsteps so timely
as to ring out through the forests?

it is a timely chatter
to impress upon ourselves
all that we know to be true
and all that we believe about ourselves

but none of the self assurances
will explain our emptiness
in the pursuit of what is golden
our journeys are not escapes

for the only things not temporary in this world
are our desires
and the golden ears

Chris Ludwig

Tent Poles

I've heard the hisses and dribbles
patting on my everywhere

and none so fine
the black anodized poles
taunting and flexing in the wind

the dark cage
that holds together my constitution
and the dribbles
and splatters
condensation
walking and walking
when I am neither there
weeping
for sentiments
of forever wonder

what hollows will hold up high
all the feelings
we could not contend
in a space
we call ours

Chris Ludwig

2. TRIPS OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY

Mount Blanc in a Day - The Hard Way

August, 1999

by Jeff Rabinovitch

The last few steps up Mt. Blanc were grueling but the top of the mountain was only a few metres away. I could see people standing up there! Finally. I crested the ridge but to my dismay saw that I was not on the summit. Ahead of me lay another long uphill slope to the top of yet another ridge. I sank to my knees and, gasping for breath, let my helmeted head drop to my chest. I needed more than the two breaths per step I was already taking. Behind me, Dan was lying on the snow, eyes closed. The last member of the rope team, James, was sitting patiently, waiting for us to recover.

It was daybreak on a beautiful but very cold August morning at almost 4800 m. The wind howled through my helmet and though the sun had already crested the North Ridge of the peak, it provided little warmth. As I sat there my mind struggled with the idea of getting up. I was cold and very tired, but determined. We had come a long way and a little shortness of breath was not going to stop me.

"Okay, let's keep going", James' voice rang out clear and strong. He had allowed us a minute break at most. With great effort we got to our feet and shuffled on - the end of our 21 hour non-stop ascent was almost over!

I admit that the idea had been mine from the outset - to climb Mt. Blanc, the highest mountain in central Europe, by foot from the valley, without any mechanical assistance - over 3,700m.

Most of the hundreds of climbers who ascend the mountain each day use one of three routes: the Gouter ridge, the three Mt. Blancs, or Les Grands Mulets. They approach via high altitude train or cable car, spend the night in a crowded dormitory and ascend the next day. None of these routes present any technical difficulty, except the altitude, and the routes are all crowded with groups of inept hikers being towed by steely eyed, cigarette sucking, faster-than-hell French guides. As well, the routes are simply long, boring snow slogs. I had come to Chamonix to climb, not to slog my way up mountains. There had to be a harder way!

In fact there are many. The problem is that those routes start in Italy, but because of the horrible fire of

December 1998 in the tunnel under Mt. Blanc, between Chamonix, France and Courmayeur, Italy, access to those routes was problematic. It was not until my fourth week in Chamonix that someone mentioned a possibility - an uncrowded route called the Aiguille de Bionnassay (4,000m), whose south ridge connects to Mt. Blanc via the Dôme de Gôuter.

And so, one sunny morning in the third week of August, we left our campsite in the valley and, as was our custom, stuck out our thumbs and waited for a ride to the trailhead. While three on a rope is manageable, three with three backpacks in a French subcompact is not, so Dan and I went first. James would follow and meet us at the train station in St. Gervais les Bains. Dan and I arrived, waited for half an hour then slowly realized that although we were at the St. Gervais train station, the train station was not actually in St. Gervais! Somewhat nervously Dan and I caught another ride to the actual town where we met a somewhat anxious James. He had discerned a train station symbol in the village on the topo and had headed there, but could not actually find it or us. So the St. Gervais train station was not in St. Gervais and the train station that was supposed to be in St. Gervais wasn't. Go figure. We laughed at our near miss and hid our fears about the inauspicious beginning. Moments later our luck returned when, just after we began hitchhiking up the small road towards the trailhead at Gruvaz a car stopped and we all managed to pile in the back seat. After a short ride up a road through lush alpine meadows we arrived at the beginning. We were at 1,100m - 3,700m to go.

At 11 am we set out on a long gravel road but quickly found a shortcut - a steep forested trail which we grunted up for the better part of an hour. At its end we found ripe berries and the original road which brought us minutes later to Les Chalets de Miage, a scattering of restaurants and chalets in a lush green glacial plane. Far in the distance lay the ridge leading up to the Aiguille de Bionnassay and below it the steep headwall to the Durier hut - our dinner stop. Mt. Blanc, a later objective, was not anywhere within viewing distance. Without a thought we turned our backs on the sweet smelling grasses and warm gentle breezes of the valley and began walking towards the rock and ice of the alpine world. We cast our eyes upward and followed the little trail as it wound along the glacier river, past waterfalls and then up the moraine to the new Glacier Plan hut, the stopping

point for the majority of hikers. We raced up the well trodden trail at a pace of 500 vertical metres per hour and arrived at the hut at 2 pm. Our pace was helped by our light loads (French expedition loads) of climbing harnesses, rope, crampons, ice axe, down and goretex jackets, bivvy sacs, hat, gloves, headlamps and lots of lunch and water. The tiny hut was embedded into the base of some cliffs at 2700m. There we stopped for instructions from the hutkeeper for the best route to the glacier far below us at the edge of the cliffs and for the route across it and up the steep slope to the Durier hut. Unlike B.C., where we have outdated, abbreviated guidebooks, France has not only well written, up-to-date, illustrated guidebooks, but guides at the bottom of routes! My theory of climbing is that climbing is climbing and beta is beta and the more often the twain shall meet the better. We waited the better part of an hour, resting while the hut keeper finished serving beer and Coca Cola to the thirsty hikers and then blessed us with directions and the company of a friendly local to show us the way to the glacier.

We scrambled along the base of the cliffs then leapt from the edge across the moat (the gap separating the snow from the cliff face) onto the glacier, roped up and quickly crossed the small glacier to the bottom of what turned out to be a steep pile of rotten, crumbly rock and gravel. The next two hours would prove to be difficult and tiring as we clawed and crawled our way up to the Durier hut, sliding back one step for every two forward. We took two hours to climb a measly 500m.

At 5:30 pm we reached the hut at 3,358m, perched on the rocky Col de Miage, at the foot of the South ridge of Bionnassay and plunk on the Italian-French border. In this cozy shack were arranged a dining table, kitchen, and 16 beds. The Japanese would be impressed. It was packed with mostly French climbers and a few guides. While James relaxed and ate his sandwiches outside in the cold wind, in the last bit of sunshine, Dan and I squeezed into a couple of spaces around the dining table and awaited dinner. Thank goodness we had made dinner reservations!

We ate, if not like kings, then like ravenous wolves. Down went bowl after bowl of soup, heaps of pasta in tomato sauce, sausage (when the refuge keeper told me when we arrived that sausage was on the menu, I must have made a face because he offered me lamb chops. Usually I am a strict chickitarian but

decided to upgrade for this special occasion), and cheese and fruit cocktail for dessert.

By 8 pm dinner was finished and I could barely move, but at 8:30 I had to go - up, to Aiguille de Bionnassay. Although the refuge keeper was convinced that we should wait until 3 or 4 am, in order to climb the harder 5th class section of rock to the summit in the light, this did not tie in with our plans: We would be walking down from Mt. Blanc as well and the lower portion of our downroute was heavily crevassed - it was important to be off those slopes as early as possible while the crevasse bridges were still strong. Our goal was to be on the summit of Mt. Blanc by 8 am. This meant a night climb of the south ridge of Bionnassay. We also looked forward to a 1-2 hour bivvy by the Dôme du Gôuter after the hard climbing was done and before the final slog up to Mt. Blanc.

We left the cabin and immediately began to climb up to the steep rocky ridge of Bionassay. As the sky on the horizon turned pink then dark blue, Dan kicked steps up the gentle snow slopes as James and I followed. As the last of the light left the twilight sky we turned on our headlamps, put on our crampons and crossed a steep icy snowslope to the base of the final rocky arête to the summit. We left our crampons on as James led the way up the rock, placing gear where needed. A couple of times we used stationary belays but mostly we climbed together, the rope and the darkness separating us.

On a few occasions as James or Dan cleared a difficult section ahead of me, the rope would slacken and I took a moment to look around. To my left and far below lay the entire Chamonix valley ablaze with a million lights. To our right lay Italy, bathed under the glow of a nearly full moon. We were literally on the edge of two countries! A couple of times I looked straight down either side, briefly, before turning away, happy that the night kept the massive exposure below well hidden, (about 500 m into Italy and almost 1,000 m on the French side). I was also beginning to suffer extreme fatigue and at times it was a struggle to keep my eyes open. The technical rocky section ended but, as I climbed up the final steep snowy steps to the 4,052m summit, I found myself struggling not only with fatigue but now with breathlessness too. I plodded up, stopping to rest every few metres, thinking that I would never get to Mt. Blanc at that pace. Finally we were on the knife edged summit - it was 1:30 am.

At the peak I regained some momentum and led the way along the famous descending traverse on the knife edge ridge to the col, one foot in front of the other, with the world falling steeply away for up to 1,000 m on either side - one way to Italy, the other to France.

By 3 am we had crossed the Bionnassay Col, climbed around the bump they call the Italian Piton (there is actually a large steel spike sticking up out of the rock there), and climbed up the ridge to the Aiguille de Gôuter and down slightly again to a bench at the base of the gentle summit of the Dôme du Gôuter.

We had achieved our primary goal, but now my body was begging for sleep. The wind had picked up and all I wanted was to put on my down jacket, climb into my bivvy sack and lie on the ground and sleep. We found some shelter from the wind behind a snow cirque and crawled into our bivvy bags for some rest. My pack provided only half a body's length of insulation from the snow so I did my best to curl up on it, but I could not find a comfortable position. To make matters worse, Dan and I were lying in a straight line - my head was resting on his feet. He was still wearing his big boots and whenever he moved, which was often, he would kick me in the head. Thank goodness I was still wearing my helmet or he would have knocked me out! On the other hand that may have helped - I couldn't fall asleep because I was so intensely cold and uncomfortable. Lucky James slept a full hour and a half!

At 4:30 am we were moving again. By now a fog (a lenticular cloud), had settled in and we moved across the gentle slopes of the Dôme du Gôuter in the white foggy darkness, leading in the general direction of Mt. Blanc, hoping to join up with the main route. We stared down at the snow looking for footprints to point us in the right direction but we were barely able to make out any. But soon we heard voices and within half an hour we were in the company of dozens of other climbing parties on the final 800 m slog.

I actually began to feel better and we moved at a reasonably fast pace, passing party after party on the boulevard like path. As the sun came over the horizon the clouds lifted and we could see a long line of climbers snaking up the narrow ridge single file over the last couple of hundred metres. But the summit kept pulling away just out of reach and so went my reserves-my pace was reduced to two breaths for

every step with lots of agonizing rests. But eventually we made it - Mt. Blanc, 4808 m. We were on the top of Europe.

It had taken 21 hours but was worth every moment. We spent a few minutes admiring the view and drinking some water as I warmed my frozen hands. An hour later we were down at 4300 m basking in the midmorning sun and eating lunch. After a brief rest it was time to head down. We raced down the Grands Mulets, crossed the heavily crevassed glacier without incident, crossed under the wall of seracs on the Plan Glacier quickly, and then hiked down the Pellerin trail to Chamonix. By 2 pm I was back in Chamonix, gulping down the thick valley air and eating ice cream. Our 27 hour, 3700 m epic day was over.

California Chaos

August 1999

by Brad Hansen and Karin Pocock

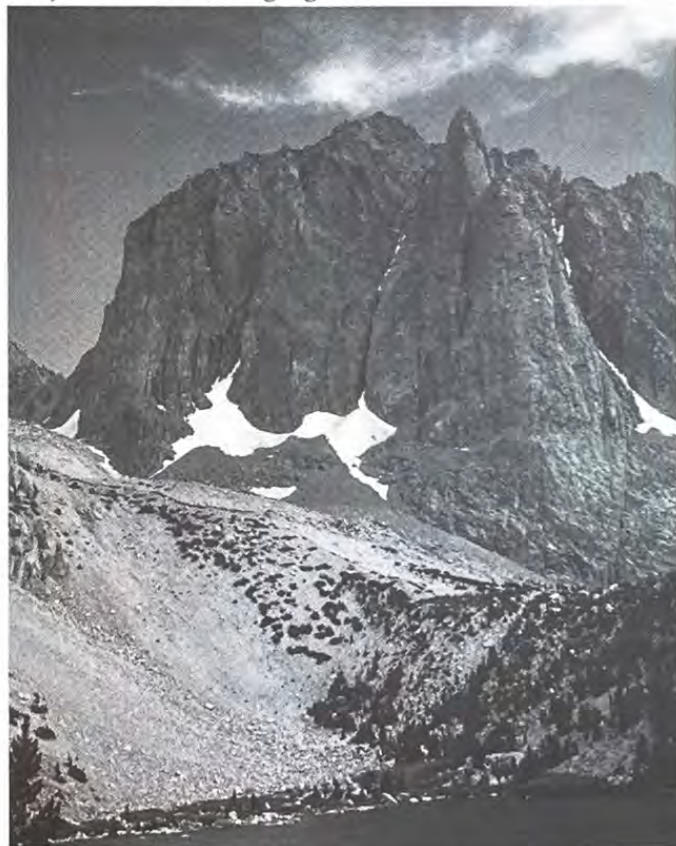
Blue - that was the colour sought, but black was all that was offered. Black, except for the yellow glint of the distant stars only this abundant at such altitudes: above the smog of a busy urban life. With a chilly shudder I pulled the tarp back in front of my face and closed my eyes once again, and placed my hands across her lower back. She was lying on top of my chest in hopes of conserving every last degree of warmth; sleep would be impossible - the frigid sub-zero temperatures would make sure of that!

We awoke late. It was likely around 7 am, about as late as is tolerable to a climber about to embark on a tough alpine climb. The hour was not early for the alpine - the sun illuminated the basin, the wind was audibly playful, and the temperature had risen enough to make the snowmelt creek running past our tent a constant backdrop to all other morning noises. By noon the creek would be swollen and roaring, fed by the snow patch we would soon be ascending. Though the morning air had warmed enough to swell the creek, Brad and I still found it intolerably frigid. Together we pattered about numbly, drinking coffee and for my part, wondering if I had elected to take enough clothing.

This was it - the Big One! It was going to be the longest and highest climb of our Californian vacation but apprehension existed as our three-person team had been reduced to two due to illness. Leaving our

sickly buddy at 2900 m base camp, we set a camp at the base just below a steep talus slope around 3200 m. The slope was too steep for its own good and shifting constantly. It had violently awakened us the previous night as sparks flew in the darkness and our world shook from the many giant boulders accelerating towards our tiny blue tent. Luckily none had ever reached our tent and thus, somewhat sleep deprived and shaken, but still quite intact, we looked towards our objective, Sun Ribbon Arête on Temple Crag, a 4000 m peak in The Palisades. Though moderate in technical grade and severity, being only a IV. 5.9, the route was still the 'Big One' for us. I was the 'veteran' climber with my single season of alpine climbing behind me and this was Brad's first season. He had already proven during the course of our three-week California trip that he was likely just as competent, if not more so, than me. This however, does not say much of our competence level. We were as ready as we were going to be for this route; it was time to give'er and see what happened.

Thousands of thoughts drifted through my head, subject matters changing faster than one could twitch;



Temple Crag.

Photo - B. Hansen.

life memories, past loves, childhood, family, everything-nothing, then the inevitable return to the current situation. *What could have been done differently?* We had been prepared for one night and had been reasonably comfortable, sleeping in a small notch between two gendarmes. *What could we do now?* - Nothing.

It was some time after midnight [and I hoped well past]. The uncomfortable nature of our perch 600 m up from the base of the mountain on a 1 x 1.2 m sloping ledge was compounded by an inverted sharp edge for a back rest. Slings were clipped to several poorly set cams giving us little more than mental comfort that they may hold us on the shelf, should we shuffle just centimetres from our spot. Thoughts would stray for a while but then always return to the same conclusion: don't move, conserve heat, ignore the pain-"*damm it's cold!*"

She stirred slightly and shifted an extra kg of weight on my right hip, driving a pointy rock a half millimetre farther into my lower back. Thoughts raced back to the conclusion-don't move.... Gritting my teeth I drew in a deep breath and reflected on the previous climbs of our vacation-a brief and pleasant distraction. She was in slightly worse shape, having been unable to feel her feet upon reaching the ledge: frostbite was a strong possibility, if not hypothermia and death itself.

Time was the enemy now. We were as cuddled and protected from the cold night air as our equipment would allow. It hit once again: the conclusion: push down and ignore the pain; the burning abdominal muscles from the never ending shivering, the agonizing kink in my neck from being bent over by the rock wall behind me, and the stabbing sharp rocks protruding through the coiled rope mat. *God I wanted to move, but don't: you'll lose heat and die-dummy!* The urge passed and thoughts drifted again to what had led us to this little ledge

As always we had burned too much time indulging in the calm of oatmeal and coffee and, when realising this, had frantically jolted into action. Brad, always keen for the first 15 minutes or so, scrambled up the unstable talus and reached the snow slope well ahead of me. The snow was really more like ice - to the degree of needing crampons, which unfortunately had been left at the Jeep in an effort to cut weight. Without hesitation he danced his way up the icy slope clearly in his element. I looked

up at the looming 100 metres of white before me and simply felt nauseous. Hmm, must have had too much coffee - coffee and exercise are not a good combo; my wimpy mind concluded as the cause to my gut wrenching feeling. Deep down I knew the cause of my fears; too strong was the memory of a three-man rope team fall on some steep ice a year previously and the ever-closing rock band and the gaping crevasse that almost ended my climbing career prematurely. As I stared up at the sparse, almost non-existent footholds Brad had chopped, I mused at how much I truly preferred rock over ice. "Oh how picky a climber I was!"

Brad, a good 15 cm taller than I with a subsequently longer stride and a mentality promoting fast (however unstable) movement, had cut as few steps as possible leaving me fighting through every move and chopping an entire second set of steps in between his. Cursing him and his ape-like limbs, I slowly sketched my way upwards.

By the time I reached the ledge, Brad had already enjoyed a delightfully long siesta along with a visit to a 'happy place' (which was no longer so happy). Frustrated at not being in front and fighting a fatigued feeling already, I grumbled my way over to the base of the first pitch and began racking gear. The opening lead was to be mine. If I did not lead this first pitch I would never get my head around the climb.

It was a gem of a pitch. A steep cracked corner, which I thoroughly enjoyed once I had freaked out and stitched up the first 6 m in my usual manner of hack-and-slash first lead jitters. Topping out on the pitch, I was now in the groove: the rock was great, the climbing airy, and the view phenomenal. I brought Brad up and smiled as he bitched with every move about the weight of the pack. This had become a favourite pastime of his during our season together. We changed over and he led the simulé of the next two pitches of third class choss. I followed warily at first (in BC 3rd and 4th class can mean anything up to unprotectable 5.8), but was eased by the discovery that in the Palisades 3rd class meant a fairly pleasant endeavour. We gained the ridge proper in a notch just past the first gendarme. Brad reclined in the notch tied to a flake I wouldn't have hung my gear rack off - a classic example of his version of a secure anchor compared to mine. I looked at him splayed and grinning away.

"Great belay spot, eh?" He said.

I winced. "We have to change this," I replied.

As he fiddled with a cam I got a look at the next pitch.

"Oh my gosh," I muttered, a face-climbing pitch with run-out marginal gear - ya, right up my alley!

"Why don't you take this pitch, you haven't had a technical lead yet?" I threw out at him with a smile. Brad looked at me and then at the climb, and then began to smirk (knowing how chicken-shit I was of face climbing).

"All right I'll lead it, but it gives me one in the bank," he said, still with a smirk on his face and then turned to grab the gear.

We were very familiar with each other's strengths and weaknesses and climbed efficiently together because of this. There was no purpose, on a route like this, in either of us thrashing a pitch which we knew the other person could sail. Relieved, I happily stole the comfortable, sunny belay and watched him go. He moved from a very bad horn to a series of shitty cams and then ran without gear for another 8 m. 'Yup, made the right call,' I would have

backed off that pitch without a doubt.

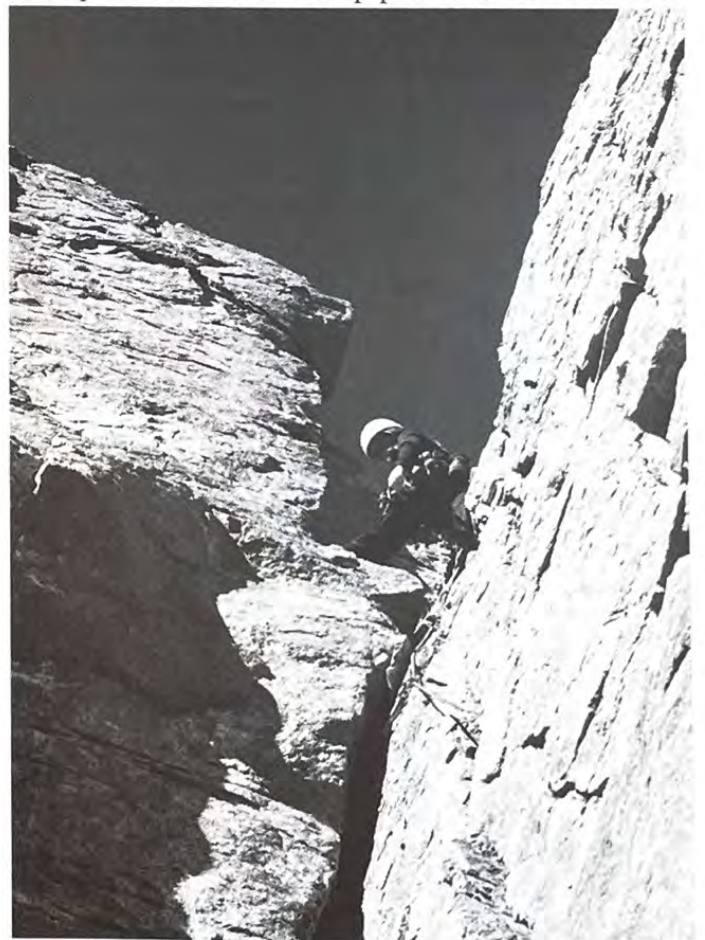
We swung leads comfortably for the next four or five pitches, each giving us a joyful adrenaline charge, but otherwise uneventful. We climbed those long, airy pitches in that zone which climbers seek - focused in an almost meditative communication with the rock. Our only disruption was the 18 kg of rope drag that inevitably occurred from the twisting and turning of the route along the arête; despite placement of a minimal amount of gear.

Late in the day we found ourselves in a large notch two short pitches past the 3rd gendarme where some past climber[s] had flattened out a bivouac site. We had lost much time finding our way up and around each gendarme, and were uncertain about remaining daylight and the best route to take from where we were - so we elected to spend the night there; assuming we would easily summit by noon the next day.

Dinner was sparse, a few Power bars and a fruit roll-up for dessert, but sleep proved to be even more



The approach to Temple Crag. Photo - B. Hansen



Karin on the first pitch.

Photo - B. Hansen.

sparse with constant interruptions from painful rocks, cramping muscles, or a chilled extremity that had become exposed to the wind or the other person shifting. Yet it had been expected that we would spend one night on the mountain but also that it would not be comfortable.

Morning was bone-chilling cold. The tarp we had used also had caused condensation to form and dampen our clothing; it felt like we were back in BC, not California.

We watched the morning sun slowly flowing along the ridge towards us, transfixed by the glow; each privately sharing some moment this being. The need to get moving weighed heavily on my mind, yet I could not even squirm from my blanket-wrapped fetal position until the sun's warm rays struck and brought me to life.

Gnawing on another Power bar, we stared up at the crux pitch. An overhanging off width which traversed into some thin, high angle face climbing. This pitch would play on both of our weaknesses, and in our mildly frozen state, for either there would be trouble. There was. For two solid hours Brad hacked and slashed his way up the pitch; leap-frogging cams and hanging on gear, two useful techniques I was delighted to see he'd picked up from me. As I grunted my way up on second, with our pig of a pack, I nonetheless marvelled at the head space it would have taken to blindly place a #1 Alien then move off it into hard face climbing with unknown placements. Reaching the ridge where he sat belaying left me thoroughly drained, the need for food, water, and sleep weighing heavily upon my mind. I grabbed the rack and took off. The next few pitches provided us with the most exposed climbing either of us had ever experienced. The arête narrowed to less than 60 cm in places and the drop on both sides went for at least 300 m into the tight gullies below. On top of this, there was no gear unless one wanted severe rope drag to the point of immobility. The belay would not have held body weight; the only way to be sure of arresting a fall would be to drop off the other side of the arête - if the rope didn't get sliced! However, gear that would not hold and cams that would have blown the ridge apart were inconsequential. We were trad climbers and trad climbers do not fall; or so the theory goes, so we had nothing to fear. And we merrily went on our way.

It must have been near 1 pm when it struck. Brad was following my lead into the notch past the fourth

gendarme when the little flecks of snow that had started lightly only minutes before, began to shower down upon us. We were practically touching the summit, maybe 60 vertical metres below and it was becoming bitterly cold for an August midday. We were in trouble and Brad wanted to run.

"We have to keep going - quickly," he said in a slightly panicky tone.

Big Pine, whose residents would be sweating it Karin placed a cam, joked at it's likelihood of popping if she fell, and then continued on her lead. It was during the next half-hour that I watched it roll in. We were climbing on the north east ridge of the mountain. From here I looked out east into the desert on the lee side of the California Sierra Nevada mountains, and some 2600 m below to the town of out at 30+ degree heat. On the ridge at 3800 m the temperature was dropping fast and despite having all the clothes on that we had worn during the previous night - fleece, long underwear, toque, and wind breaker - I still found myself doing half squats on the belay ledge to try and keep warm. Panning my vision from the climb and summit, across the skies above and to the desert out east, I watched as the blue skies turned light grey and then to an ominous charcoal.

Hearing her yell "secure," I took her off belay and leaned out on the anchor to stretch my neck beyond the edge of the arête for a northward look - other peaks visible earlier in the morning were now disappearing in a blanket of snow. Disturbed and filled with uncertainty, I peered down at the base of the mountain where a speck of blue caught my attention. It was funny to have such a feeling of helplessness, endangerment, and isolation, yet to be in view of our little tent at the same time; resting peacefully at the base some 600 m below. It was a powerful icon of safety, so close yet unreachable.

By the time I reached her station the first flakes of snow had appeared. Time was critical: making the right decision was even more so. Left into the gully; class 4, water-worn smooth, no pro, 90 m to the summit or continue the route; 3 pitches, 5.7 - both would still leave a class 3 descent from the top, or, hunker down in a small notch just large enough for two to huddle underneath the tarp. I argued to keep moving - 'go for the summit' - as the thought of sitting and doing nothing [freezing] did not sit well, but I bowed to Karin's greater experience, as she feared the rock would become dangerously slippery in only

minutes. We hauled out the tarp and rigged several cams to hold it from blowing away in the increasing wind, and amidst the now heavy snowfall, slid underneath and struggled to get some degree of comfort.

Minutes turned to hours, which turned into more. Snow became hail accompanied by lightning and thunder, cm piled up at better than 5 per hour, and then the tarp became crushed under the weight. The increasing load pulled it away from the rock walls allowing the frozen crystals to pour through the openings and pile up inside our tiny shelter. Added to our problems, the condensation of our breath on the inside of the tarp would slowly build up and either drip or rub off on our clothing. What we had expected [hoped] to be a short squall, quick to clear and give us back late afternoon sun, continued to pound us hour after hour. Our thoughts began to stray to the possibility that we may not get off the mountain alive!

At one point, Karin lifted her head, gazed into my eyes and whispered, "I may be young but it has been a good life." Then she lowered her head back down on my chest, shifted it back and forth a couple of times to push farther into my fleece--I gave us a 40% chance in my mind; only if the snow stopped soon! Uncertain of what to say, I replied with only a reassuring hug.

Another half hour passed before the sky brightened, illuminating our tarp and giving us cause to carefully peel it back and survey the conditions. The sky was slightly golden to the west and turning blue above. We stood up shivering, clothed in garbage bags and fleece, and stared out at our new winter wonderland. The rock, which had been warmed in the morning's sun, was now covered in a layer of thin ice and 20 cm of snow. Gore-Tex would have been ideal, but how much weight does one take? Two days of water, food, approach shoes, clothing, tarp, over-bag, space blankets, headlamps, rock shoes, and a rack and a half of gear - the pack was over 9 kg already, plus - it's California in August! Need Gore-Tex.? The wind whistled through the notch, and with the clearing skies the temperature was starting to plunge even further.

"We have to go down -- now!" I said and she replied with a nod, and slipped her way over to the first block from which we could rappel. I started breaking down our shelter, noting how difficult it

was with frozen fingers. Beginning to coil the icy rope, I discovered the camera; soaking wet with the film case cracked open. Cursing, I stuffed it into the backpack and continued packing.

We had only 20 metres of webbing; the first rap took four. And there were still 600 m to go on a single 60 metre rope. Few words were spoken as she dropped over the edge and went in search of the next possible station. I stood and waited; cold, slightly wet, hungry, but not scared -- it was like a dream setting; snow covered rocks, now blue sky, and a setting sun -- situational shock -- it wasn't supposed to be like this: we were going to spend another [possibly eternal] night on the mountain -- but where?

Rapping down to a sloping stance on the third rappel, Karin looked at me and said, "we've got to check this one out before you pull the rope - hand me a headlamp," and with a weak smile added a gentle, "please."

It was a number one Alien cam placed in a horizontal quartz crack, enough to make anyone shudder at the thought of rappelling from that alone. Clipping a sling to the cam and myself, I gave a little slack on the rappel rope, winked at her and then dropped off the ledge. It held.

After rappelling down, we had made it to our shitty little ledge when the argument started. I wanted to keep rappelling in the dark by headlamp, and she wanted to settle in and take shelter from the night.

"If we stay here I believe we'll get hypothermia and die, or at least lose fingers and toes," I said.

"I've done this type of thing before, if we keep rappelling we will die! Finding stations in the dark is nearly impossible." She voiced with ever increasing volume.

Staring at each other for a moment in silence, we tried to read each other's convictions. Each sensing that the other would not back down, we paused to pan our headlamp beams into the gully below. It was as though the mountain had a mind of it's own and was going to make ours up for us. In seconds, it sent a thick blanket of fog swirling up the gully, dropping visibility to only a few metres - and sending a resounding message of shelter.

The 1.2 by 1 metre sloping, snow-covered ledge upon which we stood would be our home for the night. Tied in to a multi-cam station, we fumbled drunkenly to unload the mounds of hardware each of us carried. We were worn by two days of exposure,

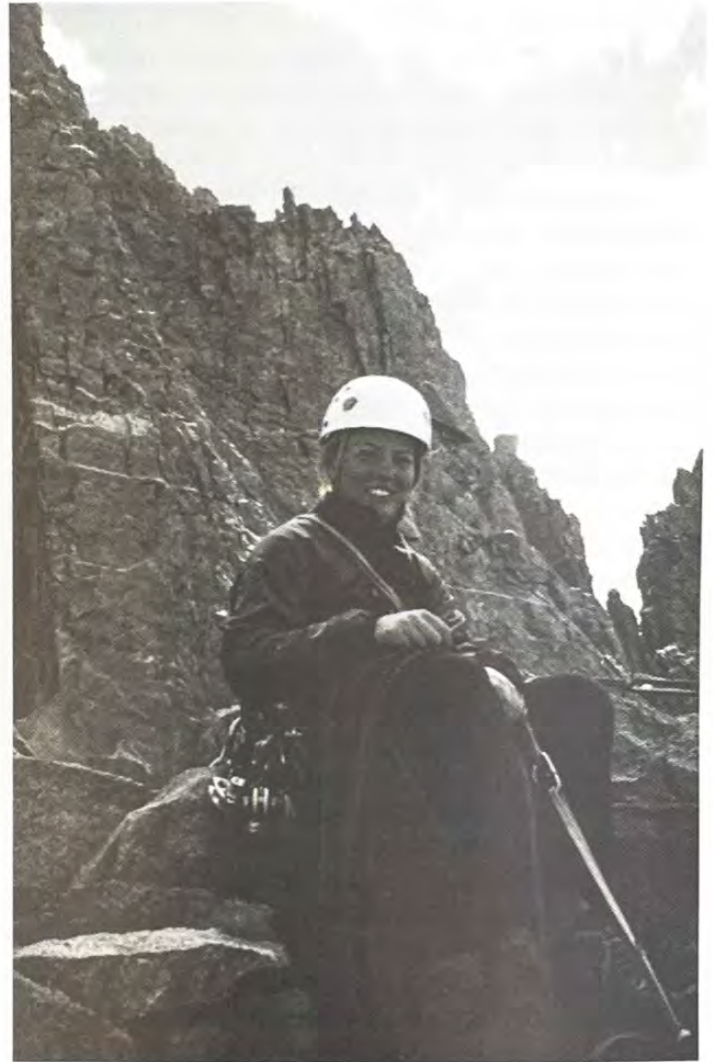


Brad on Temple Crag-sandbagged.

Photo - K. Powcock.

the latest with little food or water. As we tried to settle in and set up our space blankets on that icy little ledge, panic dared to take us over; it was simply too cold! All I could think of was my feet; how many hours had it been since they had circulation? I tried to warm them and lost all sense of the world around me for a time in the rhythmic motion of squeezing blood back into my feet.

scared me to see him hanging out in the cold clear air, I wondered if he was driven too mad by pain to realize he would freeze to death like that. I needed him to stay seated on the ledge for my own purposes as well. I could not produce enough heat for my own body, I needed that of another; Brad was my heater. We watched the storm in the distance that night, wondering if the wind would bring it back to the mountain we were trapped on, and finish us! It was a



Karin on Temple Crag.

Photo - B. Hansen.

long night. I do not think Brad slept - I was lucky, however, and faded in and out of consciousness.

Now sure that I was developing frostbite, I wiggled my toes to see if they had any feeling and to my surprise they did. A massive shiver struck and the abdominal muscles screamed in agony once again - "don't move, heat is all that matters," I yelled back inside my mind. I needed a distraction so I lifted two fingers and slid the tarp from my eyes to gain a view of the sky above. At that moment, high above, a meteor entered the earth's atmosphere and struck a glittering array of sparks across the sky. Mesmerised, I remained fixated on the night's stars for several minutes before lowering my gaze to the eastern horizon. Still stunned, it took a moment for me to realise the distant sky was no longer black but had turned into a deep blue. Karin stirred and I gave her a hug.

"Just a little bit longer--it's going to be a gorgeous day!" I whispered.

Her hand had been resting on my thigh and she gave it a strong squeeze which she held for near a minute. It was then that I knew we were going to make it off the mountain alive.

In a sleep ridden daze a dull but steady thudding sound kept droning in my head. I turned over but it wouldn't go away; in fact it seemed to get louder! In the distance I could hear Brad shouting but was unable to make out what he was saying. Thud, thud; moment by moment it got louder. Then my world began to shake and with a great mustering of will, I was able to open my eyes. Brad was shaking me violently, trying to wake me up from the deepest sleep I can ever recall.

"You've got to get up so they can see you're okay too!" Brad said as he pinched my shoulder.

Our worried friend, who had elected not to attempt the climb due to his cold and had stayed at the base camp, had somehow mustered incredible endurance, especially in his condition, and climbed up the descent route after the storm to see if we had made the summit. Being unable to find us he had then scrambled and ran from the peak at 3900 m down to the Ranger's station 11 km and 1700 m below to call for a helicopter. Only to have to finish the day by dragging his weary bones back up to our departure camp.

Standing beside Brad and still groggy with sleep, I watched as the helicopter slowly rose up the valley and circled to gain altitude. Seeing the SAR team flying above helped the reality of the situation sink in and gave me a feeling of pride that we had got ourselves down. The mountain had not made it easy to climb her, nor had she made it easy to escape unscathed, but together we had found a way.

Kilimanjaro - Pole, Pole Style

July, 2000

by Evelyn Feller

As I gazed out from the 4600 m Barafu camp at the jagged summit of Mawenzi, one of Kilimanjaro's three volcanoes, I was happily eating fresh mangos and papaya. I realised that we really didn't have any excuses for not successfully reaching the summit of Kilimanjaro. The acclimatisation regime set by Felix,

our guide, of slow pace, excellent food, and no heavy packs was definitely a successful approach to high altitude climbing.

The main adventure for climbing trips usually happens well before the trip starts. Ehleen and Erich Hinze and I were to have been joining a New Zealand group but just at the point of making the decision to go and committing ourselves with airline tickets, our leader was injured in a climbing accident. Ehleen made a flurry of e-mails to likely Tanzanian guiding services and we selected a company that was able to provide both climbing as well as safari services. The only real potential glitch that occurred was a moment of tension in Moshi when the company sub-contracted to do the climbing portion of our trip announced that the main company we were dealing with had not paid for past clients and that they were considering not allowing us to go with them. They seemed appeased when they learned that overseas travel agents were not involved with us and therefore they would be paid more promptly.

This very civilized expedition began four days prior to my ponderings at the Barafu camp at the Park headquarters at the Machame trail head near the town of Moshi in Tanzania. The huge bulk of Kilimanjaro and its volcanic neighbour, Mt. Meru, creates its own weather and the area is very agriculturally productive. The lower slopes of the mountain are covered in coffee, corn, sunflowers, bananas and vegetable farms, many of them part of cooperatives.

As our chief guide made his selection from a jostling crowd of potential porters, we gazed apprehensively at the teeming rain, not looking forward to a 2000 m climb through muddy jungle. Because of its attraction to tourists and mountain climbers, Kilimanjaro is a source of local employment and revenue. Park and camping fees are high, at least \$50 US per person per day. A guide is mandatory as is a porter to carry his gear. Six porters and two guides were deemed necessary for our small party of three! Salaries and tips for the crew add up, so the climb is not cheap. A price of \$700 US was considered middle of the road. With park fees and food consuming over half of that, the guides and porters were not making a killing. However, with the average Tanzanian GDP being \$180 US, it is clear why the porters and guides were keen to do this work. Felix generally climbed the mountain 15-20 times a year.



Erich and Ehleen at Machame Camp.
Photo - E. Feller.



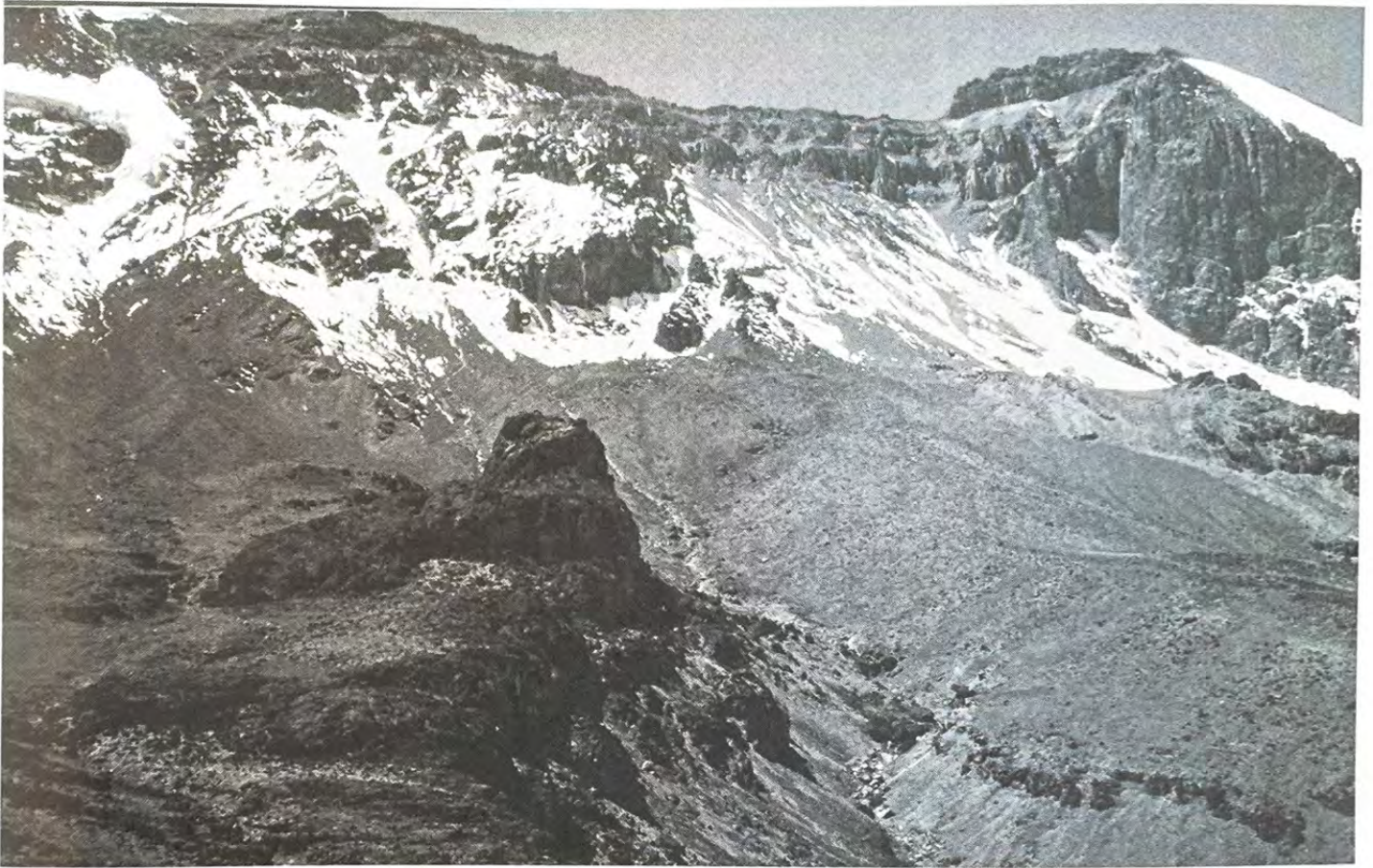
Shira Camp.
Photo - E. Hinze.



Shira Camp.
Photo - E. Hinze.



Kilimanjaro from Shira Camp.
Photo - E. Feller.



Kilimanjaro from the trail between Shira and Barranco camps.

Photo - E. Hinze



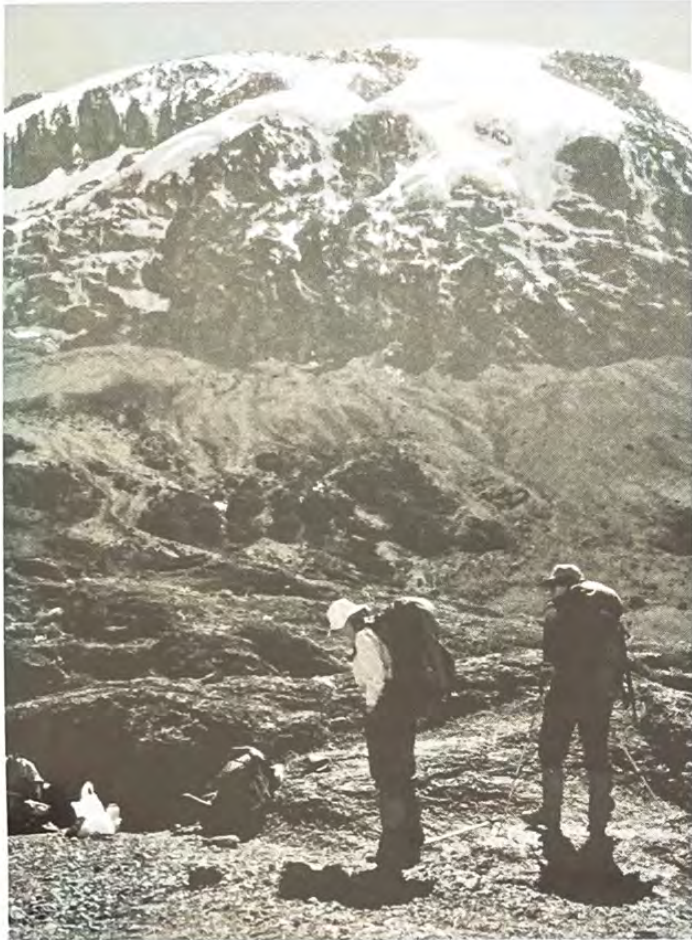
Barafu Camp.

Photo - E. Feller.



Mt. Mawenzi from Barafu Camp.

Photo - E. Feller.



Kilimanjoro from the trail between Shira and Barranco camps. Photo - E. Hinze.

We slogged our way up through the rainforest to the mist-shrouded Machame camp. There were cabins at the camp sites but these are generally for ranger use only. The area was moorland country with thick tussock grasses. The following day we climbed up rocky ridges through the remnant forest that had been destroyed by a large fire caused by a careless cigarette. The tattered and ghostly view was relieved by large clumps of pink, white and yellow everlasting daisies. The Shira camp was the most attractive one on the mountain. Poking above the clouds was Mt. Mera or the black mountain. This volcano has a spectacular breached caldera and climbers tend to see more wildlife here than on Kilimanjoro and so it is well recommended for a visit.

Kilimanjoro is actually a composite of three volcanoes, Shira, Mawenzi and Kibo, with large plateaus between the main summits. The remnants of



Barranco Camp.

Photo - E. Feller.

the Shira cone are now jagged ridges. The high vast Shira plateau is said to be visited by lions.

Camp life was very pleasant. We arrived to pitched tents, camp stools and free tea and popcorn. Suppers were very generous with tasty soups followed by beef or chicken, a tasty pepper sauce, delicious small fried potatoes and fresh vegetables. Fresh fruit followed for dessert. One porter, Samuel, was our designated waiter and took great pride in setting a table cloth with neatly arranged cutlery and serviettes. We felt we could perhaps justify a bit of luxury after many years of starvation rations served in the ubiquitous measuring cup. The campsite was clean and spacious and an enjoyable evening was spent watching the clouds clear from the dome of Kilimanjoro.

The third day involved an 18km hike from Shira camp to the Barranco Valley camp. Here we wandered up and down ridges and ravines with

some impressive views of the Arrow Glacier and volcanic cliffs and towers. The most intriguing aspect of the day was the giant vegetation, the lobelias and senecios, some easily 10 metres high with three or more crowns. Later we saw bee-catchers, beautiful iridescent green birds, eating insects in the lobelias. The Barranco camp was in a deep ravine gauged by a huge old landslide. Here camping space was more limited so we were closer to the other small parties, Australian, British, Spanish and French, who were on the same route. The next morning the 300m vertical route up the steep cliffs of the Barranco did not materialize into the grunt it appeared from the valley floor. After one descent into the Karanga Valley, an attractive valley littered by garbage, we worked our way over about 22km to the Barafu camp. While the camp was crowded, windy, and waterless, there were great views of Mawenzi and the Saddle plateau that many climbers on the standard Marangu route toil their way through.

Here climbers prepared for the arduous night ahead. Eleven p.m. came too soon and we struggled to drink tea and a snack and get into warm wind-proof gear. With head-lamps we stumbled up the loose rubble, occasionally stopping for water and food. Flash-lights from the other groups were visible. At one point Erich used his high school French to assist a French climber who needed some headache medication to deal with altitude problems. As Felix predicted, it became very cold before dawn and I was grateful for the down jacket I had rather skeptically packed. It was a relief to see the dawn and reach Stella point on the crater rim. This part of the crater is completely bare of snow, and glaciers just fringe the rim. The German climber, Hans Meyer, who made the first ascent of the mountain in 1887 was rebuffed by steep ice-cliffs on an initial attempt and saw much more extensive glaciation. He needed ice-axe and crampons and an expert Swiss guide. He was fascinated by the mountain and returned to study the glaciers. In 1899 he made the prediction that the mountain would be devoid of ice by 1930 because the glaciers had retreated so rapidly during the course of his visits.

Stella Point is about mid-way between Uhuru, the rocky summit, and Gilman's Point, a slightly lower point on the crater route at the top of the standard route. Gilman's is often the finish for many altitude-stressed climbers. After a brief rest for photos

and food we continued on past dazzling ice pinnacles to Uhuru or Freedom Peak. We were delighted with our success and that we were able to enjoy the experience rather than being debilitated from it. Thinking of freedom made me reflect on how fortunate we were to have the freedom, health and means to be climbing high mountains in exotic locations into our late forties and fifties. It also made one hope for freedom from poverty, disease and turmoil for the African people.

The descent down to Barafu through steep rubble was speedy. Surveying the rubble made one grateful that one ascended at night and did not get overcome with frustration. At Barafu there was a brief celebration with orange cordial, followed by rapid packing and then a descent to the Mkewa camp. Here the ridges had small rocky crags and the proteas and heath vegetation were an attractive environment.



The summit.

Photo - E. Feller collection.

The Mkewa route is one of the steepest on Kilimanjaro and with a slick clay surface it challenged our balancing abilities on the last day. Pouring rain and small creeks down the trail didn't help. A thump, a curse and a splash indicated failure. Felix continued down in a nonchalant fashion supported with an umbrella while the porters whipped by, loads on their heads, one porter playing a mouth organ.

At the ranger station we picked up official ascent certificates and local children earned pocket money rinsing our boots down.

While this is not an account of gripping technical challenges, the experience was a wonderful mountain adventure. I would strongly recommend the Machame or Shira routes over the standard, or Coca-Cola, Marangu route not only because of acclimatization

benefits but because of the opportunity to experience so many vistas of this huge mountain. While a guided and portered trip isn't our preferred way of being in the mountains, we were impressed by Felix's efficiency and the great food we had. Some individuals manage to race up high mountains in record time but Felix's 'Pole, pole' pace (meaning slowly, slowly in Swahili) got us to the summit.

Mt. Elbrus
August, 2000
by Kirsten Hall

Mt. Elbrus, for those of you who don't know, is the highest peak in Europe. It is located in the Caucasus mountain range, about 8 km from the Georgian border. I had been in Moscow for about 5 months and was going crazy for want of a mountain to climb. So, I spontaneously signed up for a trip with a company called Pilgrim Tours. They were great: very professional plus they use local resources to keep costs down and to make it a more Russian experience. I would highly recommend them to anyone who has any desire to climb Elbrus!

On Friday August 4, we flew south to a town called Mineralny Vodi (which means Mineral Water in English as it is the centre of an area with many mineral springs) with the 3 others in my group and a representative of Pilgrim Tours. The group was impressively international a French girl living in Dubai, a Kuwait guy living in Switzerland, a Mexican, and me, the Canadian living in Moscow! We had a 4 hour drive to the base of Mt. Elbrus. It was quite a flat drive for the first 3 hours but then the mountains started and my soul lightened! We spent the first 3 nights at a small mountain lodge just outside a little town called Terskol. The people were incredibly welcoming and hospitable to us, wanting to drink all sorts of alcoholic beverages with us including beer, cognac and vodka!

The first day was spent hiking on Mt. Cheget, a mountain that faces Mt. Elbrus. It was meant as an acclimatization hike and a chance to get some fantastic views of our ultimate objective. But hiking in the Caucasus is somewhat different than other places I have hiked. We took 2 chairlifts up to within about 500m of the top and then climbed the rest. It felt a bit like cheating, but since my legs had not climbed

anything more than the metro stairs for 5 months, it was probably the best way to ease into things. Later that afternoon, we cooled off under the mist of a waterfall near the lodge - gorgeous!

That night we were introduced to our two guides: Andrei and Valera. Andrei was the quintessential Russian mountain guide: shaggy black hair, a thick black beard, skin like leather from the sun, and a whole top row of gold teeth. He spoke decent enough English to get by, but it was definitely an asset to the group that I spoke some Russian. And it was excellent practice for my Russian! Valera was part Russian, Georgian and Armenian. He spoke virtually no English but had an amazing way of communicating just about anything with facial expressions or body language, including his amazingly quirky sense of Humour.

The next day we got our first taste of Elbrus. We took the two cable cars and chairlifts up to 3900m and hiked up to about 4200m.; This was my first experience of altitude and it didn't go well. I got a pretty bad headache which lasted for several hours, even after we had returned to the valley.

On Monday, we moved up to "the Barrels", a strange set of about 10 huts that really are made out of barrels. Each Barrel sleeps 5 people and has a little kitchen and eating area. After moving in, we did another hike and this time I felt a lot better.

Tuesday, we hiked up to Pastuchkov Rocks at 4800 m, which resulted once again in a pounding headache for me. My resolve to climb the peak was starting to wane at this point as the thought of hiking several hours with such a terrible headache was most unappealing.

Wednesday, Aug 9 was our day to summit. We were on our way by 4:20 am, much later than we should have started, it turns out.. We had planned to take a snow cat up to Pastuchkov Rocks and start hiking from there. This is the usual program since the hut at 4600 m burnt down last year and to summit from the Barrels makes for a really long day. But our snow cat driver decided not to show up ("only in Russia" Andrei kept saying to us appologetically) so this added about 3.5 hours to our trek.

Elbrus is not a technical climb but it certainly is a strenuous one.; It is constantly uphill and once the oxygen starts to thin around 4500 m, the energy decreases significantly too. Also, as Andrei explained to us, Elbrus is quite north of the equator and so the

air is less dense than near the equator. 4500 m on Elbrus is actually much more difficult than 4500 m on Everest, for example, as there is less oxygen in the air on Elbrus.

All the acclimatization hiking really helped me a lot, though. Only at about 5200 m, did I start to feel the headache come back but it wasn't as strong as it had been the days before. Worse, though, was the nausea which stayed with me until about 5300 m. At this point I was seriously reconsidering my goal. I decided that if I could get to the saddle (5416 m) that would be enough for me. The slog to the saddle was accomplished literally by motivating myself one step at a time.

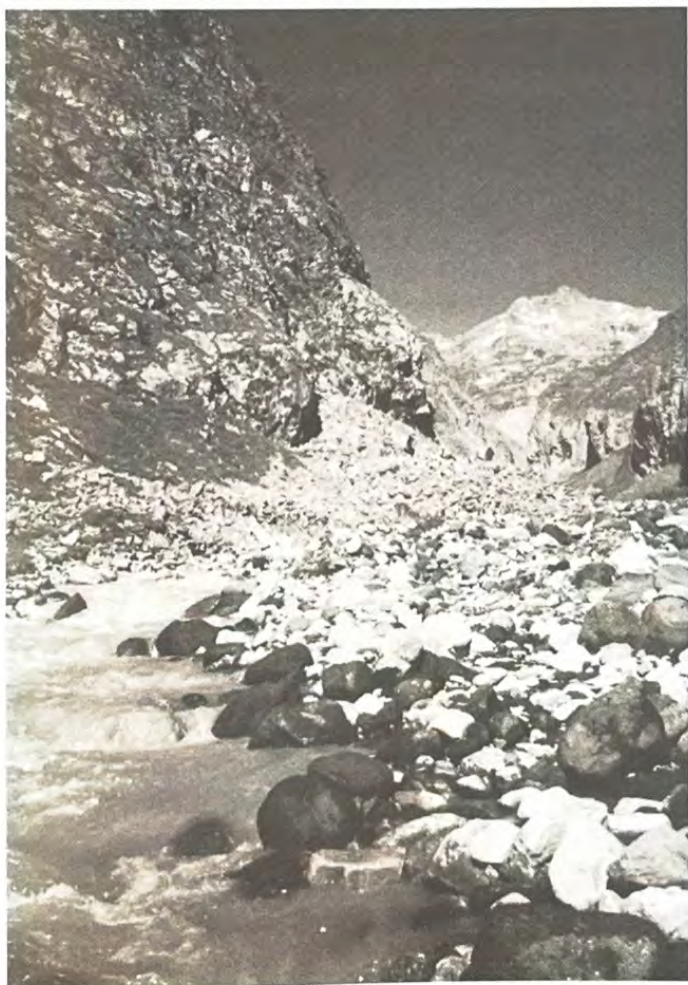
And once there I heard the magic words "30 minute break". face I literally passed out from exhaustion as we had been going for 10 hours by this point. My nap turned out to be the best thing I could

have done. I wouldn't say I woke up refreshed, but I had enough energy that I decided to push for the summit. It took all I had to keep putting one foot in front of the other for the last part, but at least by this point both headache and nausea were gone.; And so I made it! I have to confess that encouragement from Andrei helped a lot in that final stretch. But I did it.



The barrels at sunrise.

Photo - K. Hall.



In the Baxan valley at the base of Mt. Elbrus.

Photo - K. Hall.



Mt. Elbrus from Mt. Cheget, with Manuel and Kirsten in the foreground.

Photo - K. Hall

As we were approaching the summit, we had a rather surreal experience. Coming towards us was a small group descending from the summit, being led by a man in flowing black robes, a large silver cross and mountaineering boots. My initial reaction was that I was hallucinating but it turned out to be a mountaineering orthodox priest! He had lead a group up to the top of Elbrus in order to put a cross there - an 80kg cross! I had thought that I had it hard, but I was only carrying a light day pack! And as we were the first group up after them, we were the first to see the cross, which was beautiful.

After the photo session on the top of Europe, from which the views were incredible, we were faced with getting back to the Barrels. Getting up had taken everything we had, so it was a really 5 tough hours

down. All in all, the trip took 17 hours - a very long day! And we found out afterwards that it had involved an 1800 m gain in altitude and a walking distance of about 40km! It's a good thing they hadn't told us that before or it would have sounded absolutely impossible!

The next day I was convinced I wouldn't be able to walk. But all the previous day's hiking had helped to prime my legs so that I actually felt quite good. We packed up and headed down to the valley for our celebratory party during which many vodka toasts were made and we all enjoyed ourselves thoroughly! Our last day in the Caucasus was a recovery day: sleeping in, shashlik by the river, naps in the sunshine, watermelon and an early night. And Saturday was spent travelling back to Moscow where we were greeted with rain. I was seriously tempted to get back onto the plane and head back to the magical land of mountains!

If you want more information about Mt. Elbrus, there is an excellent website (www.elbrus.org) which is in English.

3. TRIPS IN AND AROUND B.C.

Southern Coast Mountains/Cascades

Mt. Baker, North Ridge

13-14 May, 2000

by Margaret Hanson

The week before May 13 saw Mt. Baker receive 20 cm of fresh snow and a return to winter snow conditions. The even heavier snowfall in the South



On the North Ridge below the ice pitch.

Photo - R. Whitworth.

Cascades and around Mt. Hood prompted the Washington avalanche forecasting service to issue a special bulletin rating the danger as considerable to high. Avalanche beacons were the order of the day.

Having a party consisting of 3 Canadians, a Scot, an Aussie and a German who was living in the States and working in Canada resulted in a minor delay at the border, but the explanations didn't take too long and we were hiking by 11 am. The road was blocked below the trailhead, adding 50 minutes to our trip up, but saving us money, as we didn't have to purchase trailhead passes for the vehicles. It was clear and sunny and the hike up went smoothly. Four and a half hours brought us to our campsite on the Coleman Glacier. The snow was reasonably firm, even on the glacier and the snowshoes we'd all brought stayed strapped onto our packs.



Franz leading the ice pitch.

Photo - R. Whitworth.

As we approached our camp site we met Vernon (BMC) and turned down from this trip due to lack of space) and Aaron. They had attempted the North Ridge that day, but had turned back half-way due to the soft snow conditions making progress very slow. Our thanks to them for breaking a trail. Dinner and bed were both early, although a few night owls were still up at 9. Robin suggested getting up at 2 am, but concerted whining got him to compromise on 2:30.

After a short night's doze, we left camp at 3:45, split into two rope teams of 3; Team Bollocks and Team Latrine. We're not sure where the names came from - maybe it's a reflection of what most climbers think about most of the time. The warm night, marginally below freezing, had done little to harden the snow and we were grateful to be walking in the footsteps of yesterday's party (even if they were a little far apart for the vertically challenged). As day broke near the base of the ridge, it was obvious that the sunshine had largely disappeared and there was the odd snow shower, although the sun did show itself enough to keep us inspired to continue.

A long slog up steepening snow slopes brought us to the base of the ice pitch at 9:30, shortly after another party of 3. There only seemed to be one easy way up, so we settled down to wait for them. It took over two hours and we had ample time to wish that we'd taken Robin's advice and got up a bit earlier. Nick and Franz whiled away the time by backtracking two rope lengths down the snow slope to retrieve a dropped mitten.

Once the way was clear, Franz led up the ice pitch, a stiff stretch of grade 3 ice. Not content with the level of difficulty, he increased it when one of his crampons came off part way up. He made a great recovery, putting in a screw and coolly replacing the crampon while the rest of us watched and wondered who'd get to go down and retrieve it if it went skidding off down the snow slope. Good lead Franz! Once he'd established a belay, Margaret & Nick followed up tied into the same rope and Robin led the pitch for the second rope team, using the previously placed ice screws. He arrived at the belay station muttering something about it being a sport climb. Most of us were equipped with one ice tool and one unwieldy walking axe, and we made up for the increased climbing difficulty with lots of bad language. A second easy ice pitch lay above and after that we followed the footsteps of the party in front of

us up a steep, narrowing snow ridge. The clouds blew in (mostly) and out (occasionally) affording us the odd glimpse of the awesome exposure below. The final difficulty came in the form of a nearly horizontal crevasse, where the shortest member of the party needed a boost to get up and over. It was later suggested that she should go back and do it again since she hadn't climbed it clean the first time. Maybe in a year or two...

We reached the top of a bump on the summit plateau in a white out and a howling wind. It wasn't the true summit, but as it was already 4:30 pm and we couldn't



Descending the Roman Wall.

Photo - R. Whitworth.

see anything anyway, we weren't too concerned. Between the time and the weather, no one wanted to linger and we were soon on the way down. The sun co-operated by coming out just as we were searching for the route down the Roman Wall. Three hours of post-holing in the soft afternoon snow brought us back to camp. After eating, rehydrating, and packing up, we started back for the cars at sunset - a beautiful sunset at that. More post-holing followed and all but the youngest and strongest broke down and donned snowshoes until we were well into the trees. After that it was the usual long, seemingly endless slog in the dark until we got back to the cars at 12:30 am. Long day notwithstanding, it was a great trip and highly recommended for all you snow and ice junkies (but get up at 2:00, not 2:30).

Participants: David Kyle, Margaret Hanson, Nick Hudson, Tim Lawrence, Franz Mueter, and Robin Whitworth (Organizer).

Mt. Hood, North Face Variation

1-3 July, 2000

by Colin Wooldridge

Dreamy Summer Days

Snow, hail, and rain was most people's forgettable Canada Day. But 8 of us left the politiking to others and trucked down south below the 49th to Mt. Hood, Oregon, to celebrate Canada's birthday under sunny skies and warm breezes!

The drive down to Oregon went well and dinner saw us relaxing in the charming old style town of Hood River at the Trillium Cafe - a fine joint with attitude and good food. After dinner the soft light of the early evening beckoned and we sauntered down to the Columbia River to let the wind stroke our hair and watch a kite boarder rip it up. We bailed on Jeff's desire to take in a Jazz show as I didn't quite trust the waitress' opinion that it was a mere half hour to Cloud Cap in her sporty car flying over the cross-ditches (a Porsche by any other name - since swapped for a BMW - makes me wonder why Canadian waitresses can't afford to drive Beemers?). Instead, we proceeded to lose each other (a recurring theme which intermittently interrupted our dreamy trip) on the drive up to Cloud Cap. Somehow though we always managed to regroup when the crunch was on and darkness enveloped us as we crashed at 1800 m in the Cloud Cap campground/parking lot.

More delays ensued in the morning as none of our alarms could wake us! Actually if truth be told, apparently Mirella and Cynthia arose at the appointed time - but didn't wake the rest of us! A fine morning was dawning as we distributed ice axes, pickets and sorted gear, leaving Kevin sleeping as he felt a cold coming on and didn't want to drain himself! He was saving himself for a bigger objective the next weekend: the NE Buttress of Slesse - which they didn't climb....

A pleasant hike up the moraine planted us on a glacier in a deceivably miniaturized world. The glacier seemed small and narrow and the summit didn't appear all that far away. The absolute openness of Hood's alpine created the illusions as the summit was over 1400 m above us and the moraine a good 25-30 m high. Deluxe cramponing up the glacier landed us square in the body recovery zone: the bottom of the North Face which collects bodies falling off the Cooper Spur.

Asteroids

Mountaineering is a dangerous pursuit at any time of the year on any route, particularly so on the Cooper Spur, the northeast rib of Mt. Hood. The Spur has earned the dubious honor of killing more climbers than any other moderately technical mountaineering route in the summit and slid down the North Face. Her spirit accompanied us as we found and retrieved her pack from the bottom of the Face (and later mailed it to her family). Perhaps she protected us from being killed by rockfall low on the Face - especially Kathy. I am glad you are still with us girl. A 30 kg rock missed her by a whisper. Rockfall is exciting stuff. It's like playing

Asteroids without the laser blaster. A quick retreat saw us beat a long snow route up between the North Face and Cooper Spur.



Cynthia and Mirella equipped for Mt. Hood.

Photo - J. Rabinovitch.

A man was moving up the Spur and as he came level with us I realized it was Kevin, our sick mate. He decided to get out for a walkabout, got higher and higher on the mountain and finally went for it solo! Good job fellow. It was a real pleasure climbing in the North America (so they say). We were going to climb the North Face Direct and descend the adjacent Cooper Spur at its most deadly: early afternoon. By this time the sun has warmed the Spur and the steep 50 degree upper snow slopes are primed to avalanche climbers down the North Face. Would we be next?

As we roped up in glorious sunshine under the aesthetic North Face, I was left feeling that the dead were watching from their rocky perches - their eternal home. They were lounging on the steep volcanic rocks that are seemingly held together with red, yellow and grey paste that is akin to pasta sauce. Toothpaste is



Mirella getting tired of playing asteroids..
Photo - J. Rabinovitch.

stronger. The dead truly own the north side of the mountain as the previous month had seen severe rockfall punish a party and a woman died as she fell off middle of the party, listening to people bicker and slowly watching the mountainscape evolve as we got higher and higher. Life became so simple: one foot one hand, one foot, a pure snow slope that went forever in both directions. Sweetness indeed.

The summit was spectacular. Stalagmite snow that constantly caught our ropes and made us stumble about drunkenly, sulfur to ease any nausea brought on by the altitude, and solitude at 3426 m with no-one but us and the ocean out west. We waved to the BCMCers summiting on Rainier and tipped our hats to Mt. St. Helens as we made our way down the Spur without incident.

Chinese

Darkness was near when we all finally got to the cars and sucked back some fine American amber nectar. We threw our packs in the cars, helped out a dude with a cracked battery and hustled into Hood River for eats. A little searching found us at a Chinese restaurant minutes before closing (10pm) and leaving a couple of hours later! Stuffed with egg rolls and rice. Now to find a place to crash....

We paid the 75 cent toll (no Canadian coins accepted read the sign - like we want them anyway!) and headed across the Columbia to set camp on the side of the road. Morning came fast with logging trucks barreling beside us throwing full engine brakes on, shattering the serenity of our roadside camp. We headed back to Washington and cruised the border, except for Russ, Donna and Kathy. Russ blew a tire near the border and hours later got the gang back in Vancouver.

Thanks to Kathy Banks, Mirella Lioce, Donna MacIntosh, Russ March, Cynthia Neale, Jeff Rabinovitch, and Kevin Wilder for a great trip and a dreamy day of American Climbing.

*To Diana Kornet, 29 of Portland,
whose spirit we carried up the North Face,
may you rest in peace.*

Mt. Hozomeen
6-8 August, 1999
by David Scanlon

The three of us left Strawberry Flats in Manning Park on Friday the 6th at 1:45 pm. At 7:30 pm we made camp on Hozomeen Ridge at 1770 m. The 16 km hike was great with the wildflowers all in bloom. The sunset was awesome.

We left camp at 7:30 am Saturday, arriving at the northeast buttress two hours later. The first pitch was about 5.1 or 5.2. This route is fairly straightforward to the summit. The next 3 climbing pitches had a 4 or 5 rating. This mountain had everything - snow, rock, scree, lots of exposure. We had great fun. Every so often we just stopped, turning around slowly to take in the view. On the last pitch, Brian and Debra took the chute. Dave took the very exposed, shorter ridge. Then we three walked onto the summit together. In a word (or three) - wow, awesome, spectacular - the airy, scary, south summit of Hozomeen! Ross Lake lay 2300 m below in the Skagit Valley, while the smaller lakes of Hozomeen and Ridley as well as Mt. Frosty and Castle Mtn. lay to the north east. A perfect day - high cloud and sun.

We left at 2:40 after 45 minutes and leaving our names on the register with the eight club members from the previous week.

We were 10 minutes down the descent when the mountain gods got angry - thunder, lightning, rain, wind, hail. The storm blindsided us from out of the west. We became disoriented twice on the way back to camp. We could not see for the storm. The thunder and lightning was even below us in the valley. Neither Debra nor Brian would carry my ice axe or crampons - something to do with electricity!

We found the ridge and trail, to reach camp at 7:30. Fog, rain, wind, etc. etc. The ground was white with hail. Dave's snow cave had collapsed so the three of us got into Brian's 2-man tent.

The rain quit during the night and we awoke to a dense, cold, damp fog. We were three drowned rats. We hiked out to the car arriving about 2 pm.

We give thanks to the mountains for letting us summit. Thanks to Brenda Hemsing and Ken Saunders for their input from the previous weekend. Ken for his cairns. Debra was on her first BCMC mountaineering trip. Great job Debra - 44 km later. It was also Brian's first BCMC trip. You guys picked a winner! Well done.

Participants: Debra Carleson, Brian Cashin, and David Scanlon (Organizer).

"M4": Maka-Murray Millennium
Ending Marathon
by Karl Ricker

Millennium madness or millennium-ending melancholy(?); perhaps a bit of both, the annual early October weekend trip to "Coldcoqu Country" was approaching. The phone was buzzing nightly at least two weeks before "that weekend". But mother nature had a different outlook on the spectacle. A late arriving summer had stalled the arrival of autumn. Coquihalla colours were still "on-green" and the late summer flowers had yet to wilt. An unexpected blanket of new snow in late September only hid the floral display from view! Its arrival only accelerated the phone queries. Some wanted to taste a "Coldcoqu" trip before the millennium tripped over, whereas others who were participants in years gone by, and hadn't done one recently, decided it was time to catch the aura once more, before disappearing once and for all into the electronic shackles of the next century. Imagine, exploring the "Coldcoqu" country on the Internet without having to come face to face with a misguided trip organizer! By Wednesday before the event, it felt like a century of phone calls had been received! The mind began to wander on how to place limitations on the trip. Signing trip waivers doesn't discourage anyone - especially when they know that this absent-minded organizer will either forget them, or lose them after they are signed!

Perhaps other tactics could be used to keep the head count to no more than one thousand: for example, eliminate vehicles with engine displacement over 2000 cc; scratch that, my three litre gas guzzler was needed. Or, stipulate that all vehicles must have tire pressures at exactly 100 kilopascals (a soft ride), or at 2000 kilopascals (a very hard ride). Another idea was to outlaw all applicants in excess of 2000 mm in height and 100 kilos in weight. No one of that stature even bothered to ask. Or, restrict participants to those who carry \$100 in cash, backed up with a credit card limit of \$2,000 (Canuck bucks) - - I failed on both counts, but at least the others could bail the organizer out of trouble! By Thursday there was a ray of hope; new applicants were counterbalanced by those canceling out. A flu bug was taking its toll. Steady

state had been reached, including those who were "undecided". Sev Heiberg phoned to say that he was "maybe", if he didn't work too hard on this Sigurd Trail Project on Friday! He overdid it. The contingent was hovering at 25 on Friday night, which provided a spate of relief - even a hundred strong turned out to be wild speculation.

So, what makes this trip to unheard-of destinations such a hot item? Perhaps heavy late September snowfall had a hand, and the hard core felt it was time for an easy slog? The main obstacles were the toll booth, 200 clicks away with a "2K" amount of now worthless pennies needed to pass back and forth through it. But that was to be remedied by three vehicles "in waiting" to pick up the hard-pressed at the frontier gate. In the end only one car was parked there and its occupants took up the offer of free transport to Murray Lake, roughly 20 k's to the north. The peaks, about 2000 metres high, are located 6 to 10 k's west-southwest of the lake, and, of course, are unnamed and not mentioned in any guidebook, but are shown on the map in the B.C. Mountaineer, 1998. Don't fret, the next "books" will be in CD-ROM format, amenable to instant update, and all parties will have their pocket-sized, solar-powered, micro computers, along with all the graphics, to guide them through any route, blow-by-blow through the crux moves if necessary! The single disc eliminates not only the 100 page short-form guides, but also the 2000 page Fred Becky specials as well. And for those who forgot, or brought the wrong disc, they can always e-mail the author on the spot asking for help!

The "frontier" gave us a quasi-final nose count: 18, with two arrivals expected on Sunday A.M. at the Murray Lake campsite. Vehicles from Logan Lake, Merritt, and Princeton as well as from the Greater Vancouver area were amassed, but the notable absence of the Maple Ridge and Chilliwack contingents generated an unexpected five absentees. The participant of significance was Rebagliati, not Ross, but Uncle Doug who left the BCMC 25 years ago to find his fortune at Vermillion Forks (aka Princeton), which was not gold. Dave Hughes was pushing hard to sign him up for a long overdue membership renewal in a special millennium offer, not yet available to any others on the potential re-tread cycle it should be noted. But sequestering famous names to encourage membership is today's avenue to growth.

The next task for this century-ending episode was to not lose any vehicles on our way to Murray Lake. Although located only one to two kilometres west of the highway, it occupies a deep sinuous valley drained by a very unusual Bottletop Creek. A cottage community along lakeshore leaves little room for a road, let alone a logging truck. So access to the lake from the "Coke" used to be the secondary 'turnpike' logging road that connects Maka Valley to Kingsvale, which was always the favoured approach from the north. That route, however, was blocked intentionally this year (1999), about 5 km north of Murray Lake, as a measure to discourage any primate woodland use in favour of nurturing the declining population of the grizzly bear. (A recent census indicates that there are only 30-35 grizzlies left in the Cascades north of the U.S. border.) Fortunately the blockade is down valley of the branch road system, labeled "Maka-Murray", needed to reach our destinations within the "No-Name" or "Anderson River" Ranges of the Cascades. A "rece" trip the weekend before had assured us that this branch road system was not yet de-activated beyond use. "De-activation" is another ploy to keep the recreational users out of "our" woods, and a "de-activist" is an activist, who protests these often ill-thought out MOF strategies.

Now back to Bottletop Creek and how to find it while heading north on the "Coke". At the Juliet interchange, head west (under the highway) and then to the stop sign. Don't go straight ahead from there (west) and onto the glacial-lake silt terraces of Juliet valley; instead, take a right turn and follow a paved road going north, running parallel to the west side of the "Coke". Nearing its end, turn left over a cattleguard intersection and onto a gravel road (sign-posted Murray Lake Road) which runs the course of the Bottletop Creek valley. This valley is of unusual interest, though not by its name which temptingly suggests a trail of beer bottle caps leading to a lake of "alternative" sporting uses. (There are several alternatives as we were soon to find out.) The road initially ascends the west side of the valley to avoid a privately-owned massive rock quarry; then it crosses an obviously undersized creek (relative to the size of the valley) and ascends the steep-sided east wall to catch the top of a spectacular gravel terrace at about 60 metres above the floor of the valley. This feature is a remnant of a once vast outwash plain that filled the entire valley while draining "Glacial Lake Maka",

backed up to the north of Murray Lake, about six Y2K years ago. Its outlet river swept over the plain and emptied into "Glacial Lake Juliet" at a giant delta now being quarried for gravel just south of the entrance to Bottletop Creek valley. Glacial Lake Juliet was dammed by a wasting ice sheet just to the north (near Larson Hill) and its surface extended south to Coquihalla Lakes. Its outlet spillway was controlled by stagnating ice at the lakes, and the discharge helped scour out the canyon to the south of the lakes along a brittle-fractured and easily erodible Coquihalla Fault Zone.

Proceeding northward along the east side of Bottletop Valley, the procession of vehicles gradually descended through a fading terrace and onto a more hummocky and "kettled" topography near the south end of Murray Lake. That is, the outlet of Glacial Lake Maka was also choked with stagnating ice buried by gravel. As the outlet "sill" melted out, the channel in Bottletop Valley was lowered with vigorous downcutting in concert with reducing lake levels in the Coldwater Valley (G.L. Juliet). Once the channel reached base level the consistently expanding (to the north) but ever-reducing levels of Glacial Lake Maka drained through an ice-choked lower Spius Valley to the north and thence into other lower elevated ice-dammed lakes occupying the Nicola Valley. So, in only a short time span the Murray Lake region experienced a quickly changing drainage reversal from south to north.

The road along Murray Lake is tight because it threads through cottage owner properties that are perched on steep slopes above and beside it. Campgrounds at both ends of the lake were uncharacteristically full; it was the opening weekend of hunting season. As far as we were concerned it was also open season on all ATV's which were buzzing around. This is the latest toy used by the rugged hunting fraternity - - - old Army surplus jeeps had far more class! North of all campgrounds, our local guides decided that an expansive cow pasture with plenty of wood for fires was to be the campsite. Norm, who had not been on a trip in recent years, unleashed his chainsaw and produced not only a cord of wood, but also camp stools for the fireside. Well, his racket cancelled out the ATV noise. A nose count, around the fire confirmed 18 participants and, with two more to show from the Merritt end, - a record turn-out for a "Coldcoqu" trip was emerging. It was

an easy night of relaxation and discussion beside the fire - an autumn trip as it should be.

On the following morning the procession of vehicles climbed out of the Murray Creek tributary of Maka Valley and on to the sign-posted "Maka-Murray" Branch of the forest road system. It climbs into a higher elevation unnamed valley running parallel to, and west of, the Murray-Bottletop system. This valley is crossed near Debbie Lake to enter a tributary cross valley coming in from the west. At this point drivers were not paying attention, and three vehicles, no less, wandered off-course on roads that lead to dead-ends in abandoned cutblocks. The main entourage, however, wound up on the escarpment overlooking the central branch of the headwaters of the Maka valley system. The road ("Bi-Millennium Drive") led us along its edge in a gradual ascent to the end in a satellite cirque (floor el. 1660m) lying northeast of a large gaping cirque. The whole massif is indented with cirques. Apparently they were developed by local glaciers prior to the onset of the overriding Cordilleran Ice Sheet. Sharp ridge crests which should rise above the floor of these basins had been beveled off. (This is in stark contrast to the terrain at the Coldwater-Coquihalla divide where cirques are marked by narrow ridges and were re-occupied by actively moving local ice after the Cordilleran Ice Sheet had disappeared.)

The road end seemed out of place, ending at virtual treeline, but for the recreation types it was the literal and proverbial (and geomorphic) "gift horse in the mouth". After the Ministry of Forests went to all the expense of building a road to this basin it seems that no one wanted its scruffy timber, indicating that recreation access would be the unwanted outcome of all this effort. It has so far eluded hunters and other potential nuisance users. Fire pits, gun shells and other weekender junk were conspicuously absent. While awaiting the arrival of all lost vehicles, a safe, easy route through the steep snow-covered headwall was debated. Obviously, the aid tool of the day was to be the ski pole. Had it been a dry day, a rock route direct to "Murray Peak", which lies at the east end of the basin, would have been a more sporting choice. The procession floundered over the snow-covered boulders at the base of the slope and then veered onto a steep scree slope in knee-deep snow. A long file of people slogged upward, resembling the line-up of Klondikers at Chilkoot Pass. Topping out, after 200

metres of elevation gain, the party was at 1900 metres elevation, on the edge of a rolling plateau. It reduces to a ridge around the large gaping cirque, but for the first summit of the day it was a quick and an open-gladed stroll eastward, which led to a granitic rock knob protruding through the scrub tree growth. Not a cairn or any other sign of human presence could be found. It was dubbed "Murray Peak", with a map - indicated spot elevation of 1983 metres. A modest bi-



The road end and Murray Pk., taken from Maka Mtn. Photo - C. MacMillan.



Hiking around a tarn on the ridge between Murray Pk. and Maka Mtn. Photo - C. MacMillan.



Hiking around another tarn on the ridge. Photo - C. MacMillan.

millennium cairn was built with record left within; photos were taken to commemorate the "event". The main objective of the day lay 3.2 km to the west, as the ravens fly, and it was going to require a much longer circuitous ramble to reach it - in fact right around the entire cirque basin! Departing "Murray", the pace picked up immediately at the sight of the magnitude of the task. On a summer day it would be a very pleasant alpine ramble, but for this day it was to be a relentless "mush".

Fortunately the snow was forgiving, and underneath its carpet-like cover were alpine flowers, still in bloom because of the slow arrival of summer. Many fresh moose and deer tracks were encountered in the trek around two small alpine lakes and in the descent to the low gap (el. 1849 m) on the southeast rim of the cirque, which marks the upper edge of sub-alpine timber. Along the edge of the rim, however, there was bushier krummholz to stymie easy passage, and it was to our advantage to stay in open areas about 100 metres away from the actual edge of the headwall. At a point marked el. 1966 on the TRIM map, old snow banks from the previous winter were disguised by the new cover; more ponds and then a ridge junction - west meeting north. There, Rabbit Rebagliati smelled the objective and bolted north onto the open ridge with several minor bumps, and past a cairn located a few metres below and about 50 metres south of the summit. It was without its own pile of rocks. Over the course of 40 minutes the balance of the party checked in. Meanwhile the riddle of a misplaced cairn was examined. A bronze survey plug ("Roy F") was found nearby, indicating that it was placed there for the military; obviously the survey was accomplished by using a helicopter, the station being set up for missile guidance missions we suspect. The next test was to look up the coordinates of the plug and see if its elevation was higher or lower than the posted elevation for the peak, 1989 m, shown on the TRIM map. Elevations on these maps are known to be at 3 metres variance with established survey points in the area. If the survey monument revealed a higher elevation (1995 m) there was a possibility of a summit at 2000 metres; hence "Bi-millennium Mountain" as a doubly significant name was a possible candidate. This did not appear to be likely, and construction of an 11 metre high cairn to make up the difference was not a job that could be done in an hour. So, we settled for a more

conservative half metre model, and scrawled "Maka Mtn." on the record left in a film canister. The air was brisk and clear; the views to the north-facing cirques of "Juliet Mtn." (see BCMC Newsletter, Vol. 75[1]) and Vicuña Pk. were the eye-catchers, but eyes strayed in all directions to take in the light reflected glare of the entire panorama.

Two pm was on us and part two of the marathon had to be completed before darkness. Two or three photo-snaps of the summit party concluded the festivity. The return went surprisingly quickly, using our continuous trail in the snow to advantage. In the interim, the track had also been used by deer (several), but not one was seen. All too rapidly the party strung-out but regrouped at four check points en route - the last being on the crest of the headwall that rises above the floor of the satellite cirque. For the descent, the procession on the steep snow covered slope again resembled the epic of Chilkoot Pass, all either lunging or skidding downslope in the rush to beat the darkness. Large greasy boulders to slither over at the base gave way to a short sprint through soggy subalpine forest, and then it was a final lurch through the small clearcut at road end. Camp was reached at dusk. The first to hurriedly depart was Rebagliati. He wanted to drive back to Princeton via the Voght-Kane Valley route, and left promptly to catch the last rays of daylight. For the rest of us, breaking camp was slowly savoured and the highway was reached by darkness, noting that some BCFS campsites along Murray Lake were still occupied. The hunters were there for a siege.

The trip, our 27th into the Coquihalla-Coldwater-Spius basins, was a success thanks to the weather, and to the aura of treading into the unknown. For some it may have been their final gasp in their centurio-millennio ending exploration of the "No Name Ranges" of the Cascades. We never did ascend a peak exactly 2000 m high, but were close to it on this effort and several others. For this trip, the data retrieved on the survey monument at "Maka Mtn." ("Roy F" - MCE 1970, Dept. National Defense) yielded the following: z = 1985.69 m (which is 10 m too low for our peak to be of 2k metres ht.), 634075.6E, 5515089.6N - established under contract by Underhill in 1980, using a helicopter for access. Thus the map spot height (1989 m) for the nearest high point to this mark on "Maka Mtn." appears to be "spot-on". Our closest encounter with an exact 2000der on a Coquihalla trip was the

1993 mission to "Mt. Carry". A survey plug on that summit yielded a 1999.1 metre height, on which a 90 cm high cairn was placed. The new TRIM map, however, assigns it an elevation of 2002 metres, which is an unwanted Olympic leap over our limit. For next year we could return to "Mt. Carry" and remove 2 metres from its summit, leaving no cairn; a Y2K microchip could be tucked into a crevice instead to record the unusual event. It should be cautioned,



Maka Mtn. to the right from the S side of the large cirque basin.
Photo - C. MacMillan.



Juliet Pk. (centre) and Vicuña Pk. (left of centre) from Maka Mtn.
Photo - C. MacMillan.



Descending the Murray Pk. headwall, Doug Rabagliati in the foreground. Photo - C. MacMillan.

however, that it will be bound to be bugged to read 1900! for those who bring their microcomputers to read the cairn records of the next generation!

By that time "Murray Peak" and "Maka Mtn." should be reached in 2000 and 3000 strides (Swedish length) respectively, from the ever-ascending progression of mountain logging roads in the Merritt Forest District. The hazard by that time may be bear traps, replacing those road de-activating "tank traps". Certainly both mountains are suitable candidates for the "103 hikes" series of publications, as it now stands, but by then - - possibly relegated to the "109 walk" series!

Were there prior visitors to either of the two peaks? Possibly Dr. C.E. Cairnes of the Geological Survey of Canada traversed over one or both summits in the 1920s or 1930s, but his map (GSC Map 737A, without report) does not indicate any symbols to show such. Other possibilities include prospectors and hunters, although the local foresters about Merritt are very dubious about the latter. Only one local resident has been known to visit the alpine tarns between the two peaks. Recent re-mapping by the Geological Survey of Canada has covered the area by helicopter, probably landing on "Maka Mtn.", in the manner established by the military surveyors in 1980. Fortuitously then, our trip may be the first "genuine" ascents, or at least can claim to have built the first summit cairns. The next visitors will likely arrive via skidoos, with 2000 cc motors to get them there; and using 100 litres of fuel in the process!

Participants: Bert Parke, Norm Hansen, Doug Rebagliati, John Sapac, Carol McMillan, Dave and Adrienne Hughes, Jenny Faulkner, Chris Lebsoe, Don Gray, Ed Zenger, Peter Talbot, Brett McConnachie, Paul Witte, Greg Stoltmann, Cynthia Neale, Nancy Henderson, and Karl Ricker (Organizer).

First Recorded Ascents:

"Murray Peak" el 1983 m 5514760N by 637370E (UTM)

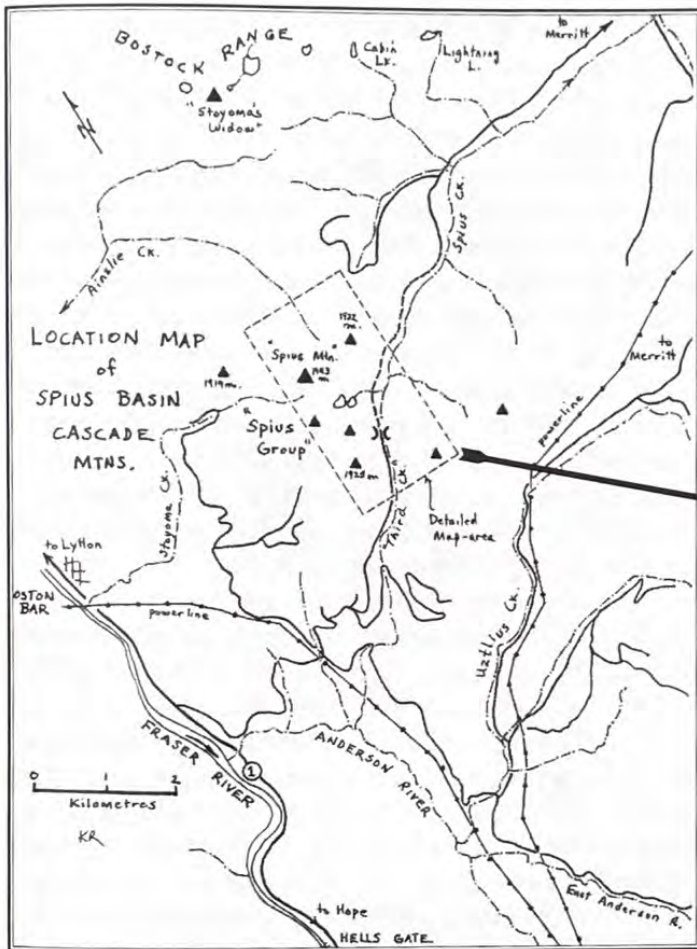
"Maka Mtn." el 1989 m 5515710N by 634085E (UTM)

**Spius Spy Saga - Loyal SS Mountain Brigade
Makes a Belated Discovery
30 September - 1 October, 2000
by Karl Ricker**

This is the millennium year of big or unusual events in the history of mankind, and certainly a trip to "Spius Mountain" (el. 1943 m) was not proposed to

be part of the extravaganza. The unforeseen, however, warped it that way. Today (Oct. 3) is the funeral for former prime minister, Honourable Pierre Elliot Trudeau. It is a day of nation-wide respect, remembrance and reflection, and not a day that one would normally write up a trip report - millennium year or not. But, ... his son Justin gave a sizzling eulogy which knocked the nation on its heels, and made every politician who attended the event, including Fidel Castro, take notice - Pierre was passing away and yet being re-incarnated on the spot! Justin's words brought inspiration, and seductively forced me back to work on a trip report. That's something no other politician has ever extracted out of my stubborn side.

The timing of Pierre's passage into the unknown was impeccable - a millennium year, when other great or stubborn people finally bite life's end after tenacious resilience and vision. It was also an incredible conflict with the classic trip to "No-Name Ranges" of the Cascades, which has been a 28-year dithering voyage of discovery, that will never be completed. Pierre passed away exactly two days before the scheduled start of the trip, leaving despair for some but a vision and a hope for others - and the funeral was two days after trip completion. The coincidence is remarkable on its own. The event would have an impact on the Spius trip, an understatement to say the least. Trudeau was an outdoorsman; he did a little mountain climbing, but water sports and alpine skiing were his fortés. He rode the planks for 75 consecutive years, finally cancelled out in his 80th year because of illness and grief over the loss of his youngest son in an avalanche. Pierre created several new mountain parklands for we mountaineers to enjoy, as part of Canada's National Park system, including Kluane; he and family have donated a new mountain hut to Kokanee Park, in memory of his son. Yes, there are those who fought against his principles and cheered when he finally resigned from office on a day of blizzards (fitting: "he snowed them"), but his son's eulogy cast the old grudges aside. The adversaries listened in deep respect. Justin used a happy tale about him and his father to ease the audience into listening to what he was about to relate. Our weekend trip bore a semblance to his story of secrecy and intelligentsia shenanigans on Canada's remote north coast. Another accidental coincidence, the SS Mountain Brigade also



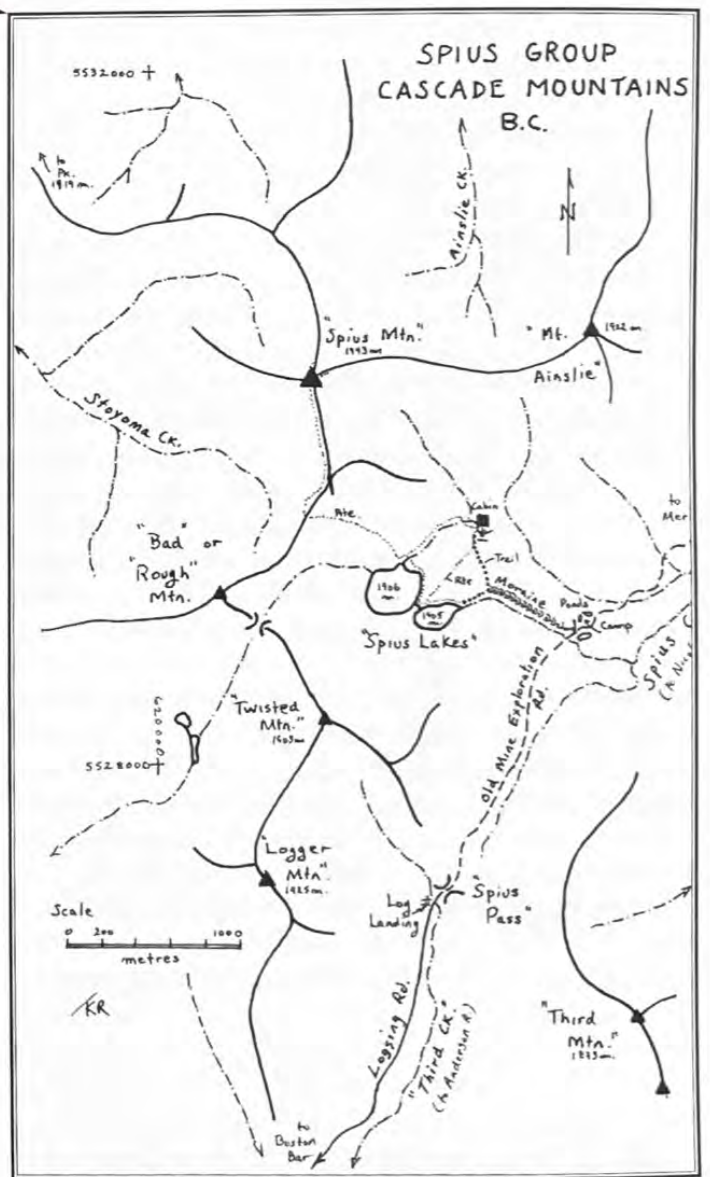
The Spius area.

Map by K. Ricker.

uncovered a fascinating revelation to spice up this report.

On the Thursday of Pierre's last stand the prospective trip participant list was hovering at about 20. With the word of a fallen leader and skies about to unload with heavy rain, the phone calls began to reverse the trend that evening. Understandably people not only wanted to remain dry for the weekend, but also needed time to reflect and pay homage - the thought of a dry climb had already disappeared in their minds, being absorbed with other more important matters. No hope and no vision, counter to what Pierre stood for; he would never consider himself as an obstacle to an outdoor venture. Seven potential carloads decreased to six and then five. Even the hard core were "bailing out". It could have been worse, but CBC kept the potential drop-outs glued to the TV screens, rather than their telephone, with an "instant" documentary, that

obviously had been crafted weeks in advance - the rumours of yet another millennial collapse of an eminent citizen were rampant. The built up emotions between Thursday and Saturday brought on an added toll. And, with rain 'cascading' out of the skies over those cleverly named mountains (Cascades), the trip roster continued to fall, destined to the oblivious cancellation slot, despite my pleas for vision - "the weatherman is offering us hope for the weekend, and the Cascades about Boston Bar to Lytton are more than just beyond Hope". The car loads were down to four; my oratory could not match Pierre's! By Saturday morning it had dropped to two full loads,



The Spius area.

Map by K. Ricker.

with two undecided fringe players leaving the inevitable answer: if we reach Boston Bar by 2 pm we are going - the usual indefinites who frustrate youthful or new leaders, but ignored in total by the older salts.

Boston Bar's bus stop café at the town's only hotel saw three vehicle show-ups - re-fitted into the two full loads, leaving Jenny's car in their spacious parking lot. The weather was sunny and not too cool as the procession chugged up the steep Anderson River road to the high voltage power lines that drape over the deep canyon. Autumn colours were fully developed to enhance the view and raise the expectations for what lay ahead. The main road was exited at the power line with an abrupt turn to the north, proceeding alongside it briefly to the first cross ditch! This road was heading to Stoyoma Creek basin, which as one would expect, was nowhere near Stoyoma Mountain (situated to the northeast in the lower Spius drainage basin at Prospect Creek). Luckily the second tank trap was avoided because our needed access road spurred off to the northeast, switch-backing its way uphill into the basin of locally named "Third Creek" (i.e. the third creek crossed by Anderson Main, if you stuck it out on that road beyond the power line). At the top of the switch-back a critical 3-way junction lacks signage to indicate the way, of course, and the most recent loggers' maps collected by Norm showed only a 2-way fork.

Obviously, or hopefully, it had to be the middle of the three, which put the cavalcade onto a rather lowly inclined road that ascended the desired "Third Creek" valley.

Massive granitic and gneissic cliffs with bands of rubble and forest quickly filled the scene; the pass (el. 1430 m) to the Spius was reached, and with it the last cutblock and log landing along the well-built road. Obviously the road was to be re-used in another cycle of cutting, representing vision for a change by the forest industry. The pass was very windy and any thought of camping to further test Bernoulli's Principle was not in the mind of this leader. "Ahead - unto the old mining road, to find some shelter" I ordered, amidst some mild protest. About two clicks farther along in Spius Valley, the vehicles forded the creek which drained the lakes in the elevated basin to the west of the road. A short spur road nearby did not lead to any suspected place to camp but hinted at a possible trail to the lakes; backing out, and moving

ahead to some small ponds, there was space to pull off the narrow road and find several places to improvise campsites (el. 1395 m). The Hughes' tent was erected on high ground whereas the other two tents opted for springy and flat, but damp, pond-side sites; the road, however, became the campfire and dining site. A chilly wind fanned large flames from the voluminous wood pulled out of the blueberry and azalea bush by the Merritt forestry contingent. It looked like a very promising day to come, if the wind would settle down; it didn't, trees roared throughout the night and the campfire was still aglow when breakfast began at 6:30 a.m. The skies were by now reddish-orange, with ominous clouds pushing in from the west. Expectations of a fine day of ridge rambling were dashed.

The suspected trail was found, marked by old blazes. It led to the crest of an ancient lateral moraine (Early Post-glacial, ca 11,000 - 13,000 years old) which paralleled the creek upward and steeply to the lake basin above. The trailhead, disguised by bushes at road level, reverted to a deep well-used groove on the moraine, and it provided good views to the pass, as well as obviated what would have been one hour of tough bushwhacking in sub-alpine, chest-high shrubs. The moraine peaked at 1530 metres, slightly above the lake and meadow-filled cirque basin beyond it. The short stroll through open woods and heather to the first lake (el. 1505 m) yielded a gasp from the hikers and a shriek from two bald eagles who disliked our intrusion. Norm, the forester, who knows every nook and cranny in the Merritt Forest District (30 years of leg work in it) was not only unaware of the trail but also of the beauty of the lakes before us. Swiftly moving clouds along the ridge tops consolidated the desire to find and climb the highest (1943 m) first, and then see if there was a chance of rambling comfortably to any other peaks (el. 1903, 1909, 1922 and 1925 m).

The party quickly moved to the inlet of the lower and outlet of the upper lakes, finding a log jam in the short connecting creek. Remnants of man-made rafts were found, ancient in appearance, but probably less than 40 years old. They had been used by fishermen on both lakes, with Norm speculating that the lakes were stocked illegally by carrying the fish up the trail in large square tin cans. How long ago? Along the shoreline of the upper lake curious linear canals sliced through the alpine meadows into the water. A creek

which flowed into the upper lake had the remnants of a beaver dam - hence the canals; and rare beaver-cut stumps were found along the shoreline. Obviously, the beaver were now gone but how did they arrive to begin with, and why were they so high (el. 1506 m)? The plan was to ascend the slopes directly from the shoreline to the broad south ridge of the prime objective, after bypassing its lower rock-buttressed base. Aiming for a steep avalanche slope to the west of it, the party huffed their way to the ridge, which connects the South Ridge to a peak lying to the southwest (el. 1909 m). John bumped into a herd of California bighorn sheep when he reached the crest. A sheep trail was followed northeastward to reach the start of the South Ridge, at 1800 m. Chilling swift breezes quickly generated a stop to put on clothing before rambling north on mixed gneissic rock and heather to a knobby summit, roughly 800 m away. Which knob was the highest? All were checked and almost all had a patch of Krummholz leaving no open space for a cairn. The victory cairn was purposely erected in an open rocky area located adjacent to the highest knob, which also was cairned for good measure. The summit was dubbed "Spius Mountain" (el. 1943 m), sitting on the crest of three-way divide of Ainslie Creek basin to the northeast, Stoyoma Creek (translation: "Bad" or "Rough") to the west, and Spius Creek (translation: "Twisted Creek") basin to the south and east.

The 1922 m high peak, lying 1100 m due east of "Spius Mountain" on a connecting high ridge, was to be the next stop on the traverse. Swirling clouds and wind, however, discouraged the initiative forward to what should be "Mt. Ainslie", rising up on the southeast corner of Ainslie Creek basin. Retracing our route and regaining sight of the picturesque lakes below, a cabin was sighted, situated about 500 m northeast of them. Binocs revealed that it was not an ancient trapper's cabin; it was an A-frame! The descent rate increased; reaching lake shore, all wanted to find the cabin. Following the inlet creek upstream, as it turned out, lead the party into an open wet meadow harbouring the cabin. Obviously it is in squatters status because no maps showed any legal lot boundaries around it. A log book could not be found inside which was relatively neat and orderly. The last party into it appears to have been a winter skidoo group, April/2000, but there were no records of ownership lying about.

Norm was stunned; he had no idea that such a cabin existed; yet judging by its overall appearance, it was likely built in the 1960s or early 1970s. Over the years of 2-3 metre snowpacks, the cabin has been warped and shifted on its spindly base and the outhouse had been flattened by the load. A large truck jack had been brought in (1999 or earlier) to attempt re-levelling and straightening, but the owners had not returned over the past few months to finish the job. It was well equipped with utensils, wood stove, tools, lights and heaters and with an upstairs loft for sleeping. Candidate for a ski touring trip? The final mystery is how the cabin has escaped notice by the authorities (who would surely torch it), and where is the trail that connects it to the main access trail used during our morning ascent to the lakes? Obviously, we were about to crack 30-40 years of secrecy despite the lack of reliable intelligentsia - Norm was aghast at the revelation.

We departed trying to find that trail. One trail "sketched out" before reaching the creek connecting the two lakes, but it was a possible candidate. Ascending the main trail back to the crest of the moraine, the sight of handiwork was uncovered. A bushy tree blocked the access to a direct cabin trail. Cabin users walked around the obstacle in a random pattern to disguise the exit onto a beaten route which soon developed once 15-20 metres from the obscured trail junction. The riddle was solved. The cabin is relatively unknown because the trail heads were hidden both there at the moraine crest, and at the short spur road in the valley below. Somebody's Utopia or "Paradise Lost" is now a "Paradise Found", not only for the surprising beauty of the basin, but also for the mountain ridge rambling opportunities that encircle it. We should come back and bag the other four or five summits, all of which are barely to modestly above 1900 m in height.

The passing away of Pierre Trudeau over this weekend has had two end effects. On the one hand it persuaded many aspirants to stay city-bound and pay homage; on the other, those who did come were bent on curiosity, seeking to find the secrets of this mysterious basin. Trudeau had cast his spell, whether willing to admit it or not. Normal intelligence gathering through logger scuttlebutt had failed on this one. This cluster of peaks, though hardly difficult to ascend, does have rock routes to be tested on the peaks marking the southwest rim of the basin,

making it a good late summer/early autumn spot in a virtual unknown area of the "No-Name Ranges" of the Cascade Mountains.

In the 1988 B.C. Mountaineer, it was suggested that the old-timers' name of Anderson or Anderson River Range be adopted for the lengthy stretch of mountains lying between Lytton and Hope. Trudeaumania can't interfere with names here, because Pierre likely never set foot in them. His mountaineering of note was in the Bugaboos in the late 1960s, climbing Bugaboo Spire with one or two of Gmoser's guides. An Alpine Club Membership was offered to him for his fine efforts, but astutely he turned it down, the element of subterfuge was too obvious. However, we would be remiss if we did not dedicate this trip (without political malice) to Pierre Elliot Trudeau - the coincidence and impact of his death is more than just obvious, it was a metaphysical exercise that the occasion demanded. You have our respect Pierre; Canada's mountains are part of your legacy, but don't let your followers set you up on an awkward pedestal - it would only conflict with your graciousness.

Participants: John Sapac, Drs. Gray and Norm Hughes, and Karl Ricker (Organizer)

First recorded Ascent "Spius Mountain" (el. 1943 m TRIM), likely ascended beforehand by hunters, fishermen or prospectors.

Coordinates (NAD, 1983); UTM, Zone 10

Spius Mountain

North = 5530200

East = 620900

Cabin North = 5529400

East = 621900

Z= 1520 m

Yak Pk. trail

by Peter Gumplinger

A hiking trail gives easy access to the alpine below the summits of Yak and Nak Peaks. The trail starts not far from the Zopkios Ridge rest area on the Coquihalla Highway. Taking the exit before the high point on the Coquihalla highway before the tollbooth, proceed through the underpass to the north side of the highway, then straight ahead into the upper lot where there are picnic tables. The trail can be found

by walking east up the ramp, counting lamp-posts as you continue beside a concrete divider. Near the fifth lamp-post a large stone cairn marks the beginning of the trail. At first, the trail leads down the embankment, crosses a creek, then enters the mature forest. The trail climbs through the trees to the tongue of a talus slope that drops from near the start of the popular 'Yak Crack' rock-climbing route. Cairns along the far (west) side of the scree slope mark the easiest ascent option. From the very top of the talus a short trail through heather gives access to the very base of the magnificent granite face.

When following the trench between the face and the slide alder, watch for climbers overhead who may accidentally dislodge small rocks. The trench holds a stream during run-off or after heavy rain. Short detours bypass the wettest and waterfall-type sections. Eventually the trail leads away from the wall, cuts up through some patches of alder, and arrives at the base of a separate small granite slab. This slab can be friction climbed directly when the rock is dry, or else a route exists through krummholz to the left of the slab. Above this section, the route follows an obvious draw until it emerges near the foot of a hanging basin. Several large cairns and many ribbons on nearby trees mark this spot. The route becomes less well defined from here on as the terrain is quite open. If you get off route on the way down around here, you can get into a dangerous situation. A few more ribbons lead up through the middle of the slope, touch a corner in the vegetation, then lead toward the broad ridge. From here, it is rambling along the ridge, over a hump, and on to the summit of Nak Peak. There is no trail but the few shrubs do not pose much of a problem. To gain the summit of the closer Yak Peak, one must be prepared to climb an intervening snowfield safely. It is only about 40m wide, but steep enough that a short slip can result in serious injury. Scrambling up steep rock on the south side sometimes avoids the snow. A short excursion leads left to the top of the false summit. This is a good place to get a feeling of what it is like to climb the face; just don't lean over the edge too far! For the true summit, return to the broad col and ascend near the edge of the trees.

Much of the trail is covered by snow well into the summer, making this a spectacular late summer and autumn hike. It is only about two to three hours up from the cars.

Bush-crazy up Eagle Creek (Mt. Grainger)

10-11 September, 1999

by Rich Pawlowicz

The fabled Chehalis region, the coastal mountaineer's version of the Bugaboos. Or so I hear. Way back in the spring I threw it into the schedule as a wish. Come September I was partially regretting it, and perhaps my indifference communicated itself to those phoning (or maybe it was the 20 other trips on the schedule that weekend). In the end two people stayed interested.

Guess it was on.

Long logging road access in Hermann's Toyota SUV. Apparently the road had washed out earlier this year. A call to Canfor suggested it was fixed, but the large CLOSED signs were still up (now enhanced by corrective graffiti) - Things somewhat more potholed than I recalled from last year, and then after 30 km the water bars began. MUCH bigger than last year. Finally a really huge one. After some hemming and hawing Hermann inches his nice shiny SUV down into it and..., gets stuck. Oh dear (and other, stronger, words). Long pause while some members of the party gather rocks, muttering "we are fornicated" (and other, stronger, words). Eventually we drive out of the hole but decide that this is far enough (on the way out we see three 4wds parked just before this dip,



Mt. Grainger from the road. Photo - R. Pawlowicz

obviously more intelligent than we were). An unexpected logging road hike, with the added bonus of meeting a guy on a motorbike, leather stetson, camo shirt, bow on his back, rifle across the bars, and a small child with an orange vest riding on his lap. He's hunting grouse, wanted to get away from the other hunters with his kid (but "doesn't mind people like us"). etc. to build up the middle, while others stand around.

At the purported start of the trail ("a partially-flagged route") we see nothing but green. Hmm. Well, enough of this shilly-shallying, I dive right in! Being the leader is fun. Thick, thick brush. It really is a vicious bushwhack, about three hours to go about 1.5 km. Many impolite expressions come to mind. The sections of old-growth are all right but in the sunny open areas the alders and thorn bushes are....dismaying. Amazing raspberries though, the largest I have ever seen. Still a little unripe.

Eventually we arrive at the basin SE of the peak. Lots of snow there! Set up camp and think about what to do tomorrow. It's now obvious that the guidebook photos show only the summit pyramid of Grainger, and nothing of the 900 m climb to get there from the basin, which is surrounded by cliffs. It appears there is an "obvious" bushy ramp to the N of us, and perhaps a rocky ramp to the W.

I go off to explore the rocky area. Start climbing a buttress, enjoyable rocky scrambling, not so enjoyable brushy scrambling. I keep going "just a little more" and finally find myself on the top of a huge rocky fin, surrounded by sheer cliffs on all sides except the one I climbed up. Nope, this will not be the route. We decide to try the bush. Just how bad could it be? (famous last words)

Up at 5 am the next day, to leave at 5:30. It's dark as we begin the bush route. Pulling oneself up small bluffs by grasping the thickset downsloping cedars quickly becomes tedious. I wish I had a lighter rope. On and on. This route is not recommended.

Eventually the slope eases. Now it's just scree; boulder hopping and snow walking up and up towards the ridge. The rock there is nice but it does drop away on either side. The psychological crux. A gendarme blocks the way. Adam discovers that if you drop down about 2 m on the left there is an easy but incredibly exposed ledge that bypasses the difficulty. He scampers ahead, crying "it's easy". The rest of us pull the rope out. What a ledge. 80 cm wide,



On the East Ridge of Mt. Grainger.

Photo - R. Pawlowicz collection.



The East Ridge of Mt. Grainger from the summit.
Photo - R. Pawlowicz.



Descent from Mt. Grainger.

Photo - R. Pawlowicz.

undercut, slightly downsloping, few handholds but good grippy rock, above....nothing. I'm calling it "Adam's Runway". Once past this, nothing but a steep dirt-filled exposed gully full of loose rock, nice scrambling into a moat and finally a steep snowfield (luckily the snow has softened so we can kick steps). The broad summit.

Decide that we really don't want to go back down the bush route. Instead we descend the snowfields towards the W end of the basin. Boot skiing for 600 m (yeha!) After a bit of searching and a short section of pleasant bush-rappelling (I'm serious), we walk onto a wide bench of glacially-smoothed rocks, washed over by water from two drop-dead gorgeous 100 m waterfalls (but wait - there's more! Did I mention the rainbows?). Onto the lower snow-slopes and back in camp at 1pm.

The hike out is faster; from above we had seen a slightly better line through the first part of the bush and once in we begin to pick up bits of decayed 20-year-old flagging tape and hints of a path. It only takes 1.5 hours to get to the logging road, with far less bush-warfare (although still more than "none"). This area is probably wrth a 3 day weekend to allow for exploration of other routes on Grainger and possibly a side trip to some of the intriguing pinnacles of Nursery Peak. The trail could do with a bit more traffic, too.



Through the cliff bands on Mt. Grainger.
Photo - R. Pawlowicz.

Grainger "Trail" and access:

The waterbars are pretty large (4wd only) in some places, with an especially deep one about 100 m before the outflow from Statlu Lake. If you get past this one you should be able to drive a few more km without problems; if not it's only about 1.5 hours hike

along the road. The route to Grainger is marked in places, not in others. It does not stay very close to the creek! Begin at the small landing at the logging road's first switchback below Nursery Pass (790 m). Go straight into the trees, passing a large fallen tree on the right. No trail here. After about 150 m (seems further) - into a dry bouldery creekbed, with a piece of flagging tape at 900 m. Enter the woods again there, or (easier) about 15 m uphill, and walk below a large shady cliff. At the first opportunity (about 30 m) turn left and head straight uphill in a steep, blow-down filled gully, continuing to its top. (The original trail may switchback up this slope on the N side of the gully). At this point trail remnants are visible going right and uphill through the old growth (occasional flags). It is important to gain elevation at this point to avoid the alder lower down. At about 900 m (a guess) the alder suddenly stops, and you can walk through low bushes to a scree slope. Climb higher, moving diagonally rightwards (one or two cairns) until you cross a stream at about 980 m. Now traverse the rest of the open area by keeping as much as possible to regions of open boulders (apparently unmarked). Although this requires some up and downhill movements you stay at about the 980 m level, occasionally going through patches of alder, but nothing like what you have to go through if you are lower down (trust me on this one). After crossing another stream you climb a soggy slope to a final rocky area with a couple of cairns leading into the remnants of a trail. Once into the old-growth the trail (flagged and visible) sidehills steadily upwards, entering treed meadows (snow patches for us) below a scree slope near 1070 m. follow the edge of the scree slope over a small ridge (bushy) and into the basin below Grainger. Fairly straightfoward to find on your return!

Participants: Hermann Sparn, Adam Rositch, and Rich Pawlowicz (Organizer)

Mt. Rexford by Jason Brawn

"Jay. Jay..."

"Mmmph?"

"Wake up Jay, the fire alarm is going off"

My subconscious desire for more sleep had incorporated the alarms into my dreams.

"Let's get out of here." Mirissa insisted.

I stumbled out of bed and stuck a thick piece of

tape over our apartment's mind-piercing fire-whistle. Who the hell came up with this thing? Why not a robotic arm that reaches out from a discrete panel at the end of my bed, rubs my feet and gently informs me "Excuse me Mr. Brawn, but a shaggy hooligan has activated your fire alarm. It would be prudent to exit the building when your foot-rub is complete." At the very least, fire alarms should have a snooze button. I digress.

We marched outside, eyeing with disgust the pulled fire-alarm mounted to the wall 1.5 cm inside our security gate. Brilliant. A baby Tyrannosaurus Rex would have arms long enough to reach in and give it a yank. Anyway, after the firemen left, we trudged back inside and decided it was too late to go back to bed. Now, here is karma playing it's first card of the day. We had planned on rising at 6 am, so if Rex hadn't pulled the little red handle, we would have been out of the house forty-five minutes later, would never have run into Brett and the rest of the BCMC, and would have had a very different weekend. Specifically, one that did not include summiting Mount Rexford.

I think it was just before 7 am when the next day's lunch (a lovely multi-grain bagel with thick slices of well-aged cheese) watched Mirissa and I carry our stuff out to the elevator. Of course, it made no effort to catch my attention, to save me from what turned out to be a very hungry Sunday.

Not being an early riser (unlike Alfred, who took obvious glee in rousing everyone with his clapping on Sunday morning), I found the cool morning a novelty. I drew a deep breath; I was looking forward to a long, challenging hike up Mt. Rexford.

My guidebook noted "some protection advisable, including runners", which sounded simple enough. Rexford was described quite clearly as "class four", and given that I've rock-climbed for quite a few years, anything below class five would just have to be pretty straight forward, surely. It should be noted here, that I had never paid that much attention to Freedom of the Hills' definition of class four. I just read it now, and I see why Alice has "All Fear" written on her helmet.

Karma played another card when it ensured I couldn't find the logging road that I was looking for. I had read the map wrongly, and assumed by the little dotted approach line that we were to come at Rexford from the east. We enlisted the help of everyone we could find while trying to find that road.

Three red-neck campers of dubious parentage

(including the requisite member with one eye that looks at you, while the other stares sightlessly to your left) informed us that they reckoned we was purdy close, we just had to drive us a ways that-a-way, y'all got yurselves a map? Lem'me see it. Well, sheeit, I ain't sure where we are, but Henry over there, big guy, can't miss'im, he 'bin here 'afor an he kin tell ya'll where ta go.

We couldn't find Big Henry, so we drove on to the Youth Corrections Centre. Having always trusted the government to be in possession of useless information, I was sure someone here would be able to help me. Sure enough, Sergeant Ed compared my map to the one above his desk. He shook his head gravely, casting a suspicious eye at my mapbook, cuz you know these here boys made this for me and I'll assure you my map's right and yours ain't.

I can't be sure, but I think it's possible ol' Ed fathered the fellow with the wandering eye.

So, Sergeant Ed is the one who pointed us in the right direction (to the wrong road) and that's where we found the gate that he figured he remembered being there. The logging road on the east side had been recently gated off, preventing us from driving merrily in the wrong direction. After being stopped by the gate, we analyzed the map further, compared it to the sketch of the mountain, and realized it was the West side we wanted. The logging-road on that side was open. Thanks karma!

After a fun fifteen minute cruise up a fairly well-maintained logging road, I was beginning to wonder if we were on the wrong road. Later, Mirissa insisted that she knew we were on the right track.

It became clear that we might be on track when a group of vehicles appeared around the bend. As we pulled up, Mirissa pointed out all the climbing and mountaineering gear. I asked the group if we were close to Mount Rexford, and was that perhaps the mountain they were climbing? Yes on both counts. They turned out to be a BCMC group. Both Mirissa and I had the feeling we were unwelcome though, a feeling that was wiped clean away by the end of the weekend. We parked near the others, and began to get our stuff together.

Mirissa and I were both feeling a little sheepish, as here was a group of experienced mountaineers, while we were looking at our first class four climb. I hid my 9 mm rope when I saw the 10.5 mm being loaded into one guy's pack. Oh, God, if they see my 9

mm, they'll know I'm a newbie, I only brought it because my pack was already so heavy. Here, see, I have a shiny red Petzel helmet, just like yours! They also had ice-axes and heaven knows what other secret stuff mountaineers carry. One thing eluded me though. Both Mirissa and I had these huge packs, while many of them had only mildly full day packs. More secret mountaineering stuff, I gathered.

The BCMC group finished gearing up before we did, and headed up the road toward the trail. I felt a little panicky because I figured they knew where they were going, and we obviously didn't. One fellow in their group came over to us and chatted before following his team. He introduced himself as Brett, and his presence that weekend was the next gift of good karma. Many BCMC members gave of themselves on our trip, lending everything from an encouraging word, to gear, belays, inspiration, knowledge or just good company. Brett, however, always went a step further to ensure that all members of the group, especially the ones with less experience, were taken care of.

After we chatted for a few minutes, it was clear that Brett wanted to put some altitude behind him, and catch up with the group. He asked if we had a trail description, and we said we did. He pointed up the road and said it was pretty well marked, bid us a cheery "See you up there!", and started up the mountain. We were still about ten minutes from leaving, and by the time we started walking he was out of sight.

Up the spur-line we went, both mumbling curses at the weight of our packs. The road came to a switchback, and we continued up it. The occasional boot-print was welcome evidence of our being on the right track. Soon, the trail was more grass and gravel, and prints were no longer visible. About twenty-five minutes later we stopped. Neither of us had seen a boot print or any flattened vegetation. The trail was now badly overgrown, and the foliage was both very wet and apparently undisturbed. We both agreed that the group could not have come this way. We turned around, thoroughly soaked, and lumbered back down the trail looking for a marker. It was a little disheartening to be lost so early, but we were still sure we'd find the trailhead. Sure enough, almost back at the switchback, we found it.

A short, steep slope led us into a maze of slash. The area had been clearcut many years previously, but a vague trail wound it's way through the tangle of

dead, grey timber. The reality of trail marking is that much of it is done with brightly coloured tape. This is unfortunate in a clear-cut, because loggers use the same stuff to mark their don't-wipe-out-all-the-trees-past-this-point line, and their survey lines. This makes for a lot of tape. Sound like I'm trying to justify how we got lost? Maybe. We followed a gaily coloured line of bright yellow tape up the slope until there was clearly no trail. Mirissa and I split up to hunt for it, but met with no success. We looked at the map and tried to figure out if we needed to cross the gorge we were beside. Mirissa made the call that we should, and soon after we found a very clear and easy to follow trail. Ah, progress!

The trail entered the woods, and other than being relentlessly steep, it was quite beautiful. It was my favourite kind of trail, in that it hid the view from you for a few minutes of climbing, then gave a peek of a new and beautiful vista through the trees, before plunging you back into the forest again while you worked toward the next amazing visual feast.

About an hour later, we came to a creek. Having emptied out our spare water bottles to lighten our packs, I was glad to find a source of running water. We filtered enough so that we had two litres each, then moved on after a quick snack. The trail eventually spat us out at the foot of a towering face of rock. The rock face paralleled the trail, as it continued off to the right. The trail started out quite nicely - steep but manageable. Behind us sat Mount Slesse and it's flanking peaks, but where the forest conspired to hide the view from us earlier, now clouds were doing the same. Only if we spun around very quickly could we catch the clouds off guard, and see glimpses of Slesse's glaciers and mammoth talus fans, before the white curtain hurried in to shield our view.

The further we went the steeper the trail became, and it also lost it's firm nature and became much more slippery. Sand and dirt made for very poor footing in some rather precarious spots. Our heavy packs made balance difficult, and the steep terrain was home to many carnivorous boulders. Falling could have led to a painful stop.

Yes, I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit, there were spots on this section of trail where I was a little gripped. This section would only be referred to as class two, but I could feel the fingers of anxiety flexing their claws. As always, Mirissa's encouragement got me through the tough spots.

I can't remember for sure, but I believe this section took nearly two hours. Eventually, the trail spilled onto the shoulder of a large field of massive boulders and blocks. The field spread up ahead to the foot of the North Nesakwatch Spire, behind and right into the gully below us, and up and to the right toward the high camp that was our day's destination. From stones the size of toasters to blocks the size of mini-vans, evidence of the tumultuous forces that shaped our world was strewn all about us. Deep green clusters of hearty alpine trees huddled among the rocks, like squatters in a hostile environment, determined to eke out a meagre existence. In small pockets of earth among the boulders tiny gardens of delicate alpine flowers lent a bright-purple brush to the stark landscape. Closer to the foot of Nesakwatch Spire, a blanket of snow covered much of the slope, the blinding whiteness reaching up and past a col above and to our right, and wrapping over the small knoll to the right of the col. Boulders and blocks of all sizes dotted the snow, miniature moats surrounding each of them. The peak above drifted in and out of sight as the clouds continued to play on the air currents. Taking it all in, I felt small, humble and glad of the chance to feel that way.

Mirissa and I moved ahead into the boulders. Occasionally a wisp of cloud would slide between us like a ghost, tendrils reaching out and brushing our faces with cool, moist fingers. We looked up at each other the first time and grinned like fools, not speaking, but both in awe of one more simple, yet priceless moment in the day.

We first heard, then saw two climbers coming down from the col, their ice axes crunching snow and ringing against rock, giving them an air of security that I was a little jealous of. We chatted with them briefly, and they confirmed our suspicions that the col ahead was high camp, and our goal. Mirissa and I watched them bound down the blocks with little thirty litre packs. MEC must sell magic mountaineering packs, ones with eighty litres of volume inside, but the weight and size of a little day pack. I really must get myself one.

I had only my walking staff to arrest a fall, so I decided it would be best not to spend too much time on the snow. Mirissa's boots were new and stiff, allowing her to kick secure steps. My boots were pointing me to the relative security of a band of rocks above the snow, so I picked my way across and into

the blocks above. Mirissa continued up to the steeper rise into the col, while I made my way above her on the left. As we neared the top, I called down to her to stop, and took her picture. I'm looking at it now, as I write this. She looks so tiny against all the raw and massive beauty around her. We should all have a picture of ourselves like that, just to remind us that we are but a small part of the whole.

We arrived at the high camp at about 5:45 pm. A remarkable rock sat at the top of the col, upon which sat or stood the ten BCMC members. Like a massive table-top, its nearly flat top was about 6 x 15 m, roughly rectangular, with a stone ramp leading up to one corner. Three of the BCMC party had their bivy-bags laid out on the stone, while the other tents were huddled around the skirt of the big table-top.

Dropping our heavy packs onto the snow, we felt gleefully weightless as we wandered behind the knoll to gather water. There, the snowpack melted into a little sloping glade; a scene of such pastoral perfection, that one was tempted to seek out the gardener. Here again, little purple flowers dotted the thick green carpet of moss and grass. I sat near the edge of a perfect little basin, marvelling at the scenery, and filtered our water for the next day. Humming birds buzzed by, and the occasional butterfly bounced by crazily on little puffs of wind. Again, I'm looking at the picture now, and anyone would swear that the shot was faked.

Soon after, Mirissa and I had our bellies full of hot food, the tent was set up, the food hung off a boulder, and we were watching the sun's last rays give way to darkness. The next morning would be summit day. We had seen the route from camp. The clouds parted long enough for Brett to point out the line up a long blocky ridge, over a grassy saddle, up a steep rise to another wide, easy ridge, and then up to the summit.

"Don't worry Jay, it's easy. You'll find it." assured Brett.

I was feeling so good right there, that I thought I just might.

At 5 am our alarms went off. Given that we were in bed before 10 pm, it wasn't so bad. Other than having to fill my ears with toilet paper to block out Peter's snoring (that man is an avalanche hazard!), I slept very well. I snoozed for another few minutes, then got my gear on. Stepping out of the tent, I was greeted by a perfect morning.

Dawn's first light was well on its way to chasing away the gloom, and there was neither cloud, nor a breath of wind. The air was crisp and cool, and the brightest of the stars was still winking down through the brightening sky. Distant mountains were partially obscured by the pre-dawn veil of fog, and there to the left was Mount Baker. I watched for a few minutes, as the glaciers on its eastern flank grew brighter with the coming of dawn. A deep cobalt blue silhouette framed the mountain, crowned by long brush-strokes of pastel magenta, which stretched across the western horizon. Thin white clouds drew a single endless ribbon from left to right, just above the mountain. A few minutes later the first rays of dawn lit up the peak. As the sun rose, it was like thick, white cream was being poured down Baker's slopes. Shadows formed and deepened as the flat light of pre-dawn gave way to the contrast of daylight, and the topography of the slopes became more obvious. It was a symphony for the senses. I looked back over my shoulder at the morning's objective. It was a perfect summit day.

I walked over to the stony table-top where my stove was set up. Alfred was just working his way down to stir the group from their slumber. It was 5:30, but his clapping and good-natured urging got the group moving about half an hour earlier than they planned. Stoves were fired up, and the group came to life. Theo had a surprisingly simple breakfast compared to his dinner on Saturday night. The man had his whole pantry stuffed in his pack.

I had discovered the previous afternoon that most of the team brought 9 mm rope, so much to my relief, I didn't have to hide my rope any longer. Mirissa was struggling with a bit of a bug, and was fighting nausea. She hadn't slept well that night, and it seemed her climb might be in jeopardy. Forever the trooper, she shook it off soon enough, and was herself in no time.

Having not brought a day-pack, I strapped on my fanny pack, filled it with water, a rack of nuts, some slings, and two Cliff bars. There should have been a bagel sandwich in there too, but.... My harness and slings I clipped to the pack, and my 55m 9mm rope was slung off my back in a butterfly coil. I was ready to go climb a mountain, or so I thought.

I remember, some years back, chatting with a climbing friend about mountaineering. He told me that fourth class climbs motivate more terror in

climbers than fifth. I didn't understand how that could be. Very soon I would.

The first section was a pretty basic scramble up a loose slope onto a blocky ridge. I was pretty excited to be with this group, and Mirissa and I kept saying how amazed we were to be climbing our first mountain. Everyone around us moved with confidence, and it was contagious. Now and then I would look over the edge, and realize that there was a sheer drop of hundreds of metres. A few of the early moves had me a little spooked, but the hand-holds were all solid and plentiful, and foot placements were excellent, even with hiking boots on.

As we worked our way higher up the ridge, scrambling over and around huge blocks of stone, the escalating scale of exposure was starting to affect me. I tried to stay focused though, and continued to move with relative confidence.

We came to a section that the rest of the group had moved through quickly enough, but which even gave Mirissa pause to consider. A thin ledge with sketchy hand holds led out to the right on the face of a massive block. The exposure was dizzying. Mirissa worked her way up it, but I couldn't do it. With a rope, or even a piece of dental floss tied into my harness I could have sprinted up the block, but the morning's sustained exposure and lack of protection was adding up for me. There was another route to the left, with no better holds, and no less fall-you-die factor, but it just seemed more my flavour. Brett was just above me, watching. Half my courage came from sure feeling that if I slipped, he would somehow snatch me back from certain doom. Reaching far to the left, I took a grip on a chunk of rock, then slid my weight around a rocky bulge. I could find no footholds, and nothing secure for my other hand, but if I could just shift my weight around a little more, I could drop onto the ledge beside Mirissa. Then I felt two things in quick succession. First I felt the rock that I was holding start to slip, then I felt more gripped than I have in quite a while.

The rock that was bearing all my weight was about to join me in six or seven seconds of freefall to the snowy slopes below. I stuck my other hand into a flaring horizontal crack, even just for some friction, and quickly slid myself over to the left, dropping in a most undignified fashion onto the tiny sloping platform.

At this point I figured that I could go only a little further, until another section like that one would put

an end to my day. Belaying me through all the tough spots would have taken too much time, and I didn't want Mirissa to lose the group while she was busy belaying her big, brave boyfriend. So, it was decided then. Well, I thought, a little dejected, let's see if I can get a bit further before I have to turn back.

I continued after Mirissa and Brett, who were just ahead. Alice was working herself up just behind me, carting a very heavy looking pack. She moved in a determined fashion. That's the best way I can describe it. Come to think of it, everyone in the group moved in a different way.

Peter and Theo had an air of indifference to their movements, as if the climbing and exposure was neither thrilling, nor challenging.

Alfred. Thinking about him makes me chuckle. Barrel chested Alfred standing on the little crag between the false and true summits, fists-on-hips, green hard-hat slightly askew on his head. Alfred moved as if he were strolling in his own backyard, the mountain below him his faithful black lab hoping for a scratch behind the ears. I liked Alfred immediately. Hans was always thoughtful looking, and sure-footed. Brett carried a peaceful air about him and his movements. I drew much confidence from that. Mike and Jake had similar ways of moving on the rock, both with enviable confidence. For some reason, they both had that quality, that if you were in trouble somewhere, you would be happy to see their face in the rescue party. They should both be fire fighters. Werner exuded that typical European climber confidence, like he was born with an alpenstock in hand, and a coil of hemp rope over his shoulder. I didn't get a chance to see Tanya climb, but I did hear her once, and had to smile. Sometimes when I'm gripped I can get a little grumpy. She snapped at the person she was descending with, then apologised a half second later, explaining that she was just a little spooked by her predicament. I could identify. Given that she did the whole climb with quite a heavy looking pack on, (she even took her bear-spray to the summit), she must have been a strong climber indeed. Then there was Mirissa. She and I had done very little climbing in the previous months, and hadn't done any long hikes in ages, but she moved with a confidence and daring that left me in awe.

Now that it's written, it's interesting to ponder the different styles of each climber. I think some mountaineers learn to climb, and others are true

climbers. Both types share a love and need for the hills, but there is a subtle difference. Many in our group that day were true climbers, and Mirissa, I'm proud to say, was among them.

At one point, Alice got stuck and could not move through a difficult section with her big pack. Mirissa took our rope, lowered one end down to Alice, and pulled her pack up. Without the weight of her pack, Alice was past the crux in a flash. The bit of teamwork made me feel as if we had contributed something to the group effort.

Meanwhile, I was finding my way around that section by traversing through, then under some bushes. A few more easy moves on the rock placed us in a little grassy niche between the blocky ridge, and the steep shoulder of the next ridge above and to our right. Mirissa was already bounding up the steep trail behind Brett, so I tried to avoid looking into the chasm on either side, and followed.

Once over the shoulder, we were greeted by a long flat ridge crest. Far ahead, I could see the other climbers nearing the base of the false summit pyramid. The true summit was hidden from view until later. We all enjoyed the faster pace, and moved quickly over the massive blocks of the ridge. The view was spectacular, as the sky was a deep, rich blue, and only a few wispy clouds hung above us. It was still early, before 8 am, and the temperature was perfect. I had a long drink of water, took a moment to enjoy the scenery, then moved on.

Alice, Mirissa and I were alone now, the rest of the group out of sight above us (behind the left side of the triangular false summit).

The trail became steep again, but was easy enough to find. We moved around the face, each choosing our own path through the maze of piled boulders. We had left the sun behind, and now moved into the cool, flat light of the peak's west face. The sounds of voices and ringing metal were close, and I could hear Mirissa above me chatting to someone above. Pulling up some steep but easy moves, we all collected in what looked like a balcony seat in an old theatre.

There was some commotion going on around a corner to the left. I peeked up, and saw that Peter was setting up a rope to protect us through some very exposed moves. Why they thought this needed a rope, while earlier moves of equal difficulty and dire risk were climbed unprotected, I'll never know. That

said, I was sure happy to wrap a prusik around that rope. I slid around the corner and up a series of steep corner moves, pushing my prusik above me, until I came to a little ledge. I resisted the urge to hug Peter, and instead just thanked him for the belay. "Off rope", I said with a sigh, preferring to stay on belay until I was back in my truck.

I stepped carefully up some loose gravel to a slightly more secure stance near the rock face on my right. This section had me a little gripped, as it was steep, loose, and seriously into the realm of fall-you-die. Mirissa was above me, as usual, climbing to the left of a large overhanging block. The little crack system she was working through looked solid, but she warned me that the top moves would be a bit tough for me. Mike told me to go right around the block, but Mirissa's route looked so much nicer. I made my decision, and was very soon regretting it. I had a good stance, but could get no higher. The thought of down climbing and going to the right had me gripped. The thought of moving up this very sketchy section to safety had me gripped. Come to think of it, I was majorly gripped. Couldn't go up or down. Now, for the record, if there had been no alternative I would have gone up and been fine, but I knew there were ropes and such right above me, so I held my ground. Mirissa was busy above me, organizing the rescue of her big, brave boyfriend. Soon enough, the clouds parted, angels sang, and a rope came slithering down to me. Thanks Mirissa and Mike. I clipped the figure-8 into my harness, then scooted up the last moves. Easy. Why the hell is that? I could have climbed that move a hundred times, but I couldn't do it without a rope. For some people, courage comes in a bottle. I guess mine comes from Mammot.

I stayed on belay, and continued up the face, climbing through some nearly vertical, but very easy moves. Again, I resisted the urge to hug my belayer, and instead just thanked Werner for his efforts.

"Off belay!"

I stood, and once my eyes recovered from the shock of bright sunlight, I was hit by the realization of what was spread before me. I stood on the end of a narrow ridge crest, which sloped about fifteen degrees and butted into a small, 6 m crag about 25 m away. That crag must be the summit, I thought. Mirissa was there to greet me, having just ascended another route unroped. On an unfamiliar route. If anyone could have known how little climbing

experience she has, they would have been as incredulous as I, but none could have been as proud. I was breathless with awe, as the three hundred and sixty degree panorama unfolded around me. Mount Baker, Mount Slesse and all it's brothers, mountains and more mountains, marching into the distance. I felt a mix of fear and euphoria. The gentle slope of the narrow platform had my gut screaming "Sit down you idiot! Get down on all fours! Grab something!", but I overcame the fear enough to wander around a little. The ridge had a pinch in the middle, a narrow gap that could be stepped over. Peter sat there setting up a second belay. I moved past him into the shade of the crag.

The true summit, I was soon informed, was still out of sight, behind the little crag. It took a while to get everyone to the top. I sat with Hans and talked about climbing. He said he was staying there, that he wasn't going to the true summit.

"What's another ten metres?" he shrugged. "I just want to sit here, and enjoy my lunch and the view." I was shocked. To come so close, and not to finish? I was scared, but I knew I had to go on, until my courage gave out, or I would feel I had let myself down. He seemed totally at ease with his decision, but Tanya urged him to continue. I was uncertain, at first, if I supported the peer-pressure. Push him, and perhaps he'll falter and hurt himself, or others. But at the same time, aren't we all pushing and encouraging each other? Isn't that part of the group dynamic? Even if it isn't spoken, the person ahead of you who smoothly moves past a difficult section can give you the motivation to do it yourself. It's a passive method of pressure, but there is no question, it helped me to the top. I agreed with Tanya, and told him he just had to go. He relented.

Once the whole group was upon the false summit, we pressed on to the true summit. The brave ones, including Mirissa, took the challenging route over the crag. I chose the easy route around it, and joined the rest at the base of the true summit. It was about 10 m of blocky moves, with two options for a finish. Mirissa was already half way up, without a rope, grinning like a kid. She was stopped by the difficult finishing moves. She could have done them, but chose to wait for a rope. That's why I'm proud of her, and not angry when she does something in climbing that I can't. She knows her limits, and will only press them so far. A wise woman.

A rope was thrown down to her by the small party already on the summit. Alfred called down, his German accent so fitting in this setting, that he had a good stance and was ready. A good stance? I could see he only had a hip belay set up. I informed Mirissa of her dubious belay, but she figured the weight differential made it ok.

The rest of us waited for Jake to come and lead the way. In hushed tones, we all agreed that we wanted a modern belay, from someone with a harness. Go for it Jake, you'll do fine.

And he did. In no time he was on top, and I tied in half way along the rope and seconded him. It was fairly easy, with solid holds everywhere. I cleaned his gear as I went, moved right around a big block and into a delightfully exposed wide crack (I say delightfully exposed, because I was on rope), then a final move onto the summit.

"Off rope!" I called over my shoulder.

I found Mirissa sitting up on the highest part of the summit. We bonded, then I asked her to slide over so I could sit there. I wanted my butt on the highest square cm of the mountain. And so it was done. Mirissa and I, and every member of the group stood on the true summit of Mount Rexford. I had climbed, or rather hiked, long and demanding trails before, but here was an entirely new experience. Why was I here? Why were any of us? I would think on that.

Brett was going through a small sheaf of papers. I saw a little pvc pipe with a cap near his knee. I realized these must be the summit records. He actually found the first summit record. There, written in pencil on a piece of paper from a small note pad, were the names of two men. Herman Genschorek and Walt Sparling. Dated July, 1951. I held this piece of paper in my hand with reverence. Shouldn't this be behind glass somewhere, away from dirty hands, rain and the wind's sneaky grasp? But, no, I realized, this is one of the many privileges of doing what it takes to get here. We could touch history. Another privilege was for Mirissa and I to sign our names in the BCMC booklet. All our names are in that book, as a testament to our willingness to challenge ourselves.

As the last of the group were coming up, the first (and strongest climbers) were downclimbing and going back to the false summit. Those of us without the requisite bravado waited patiently to set up a rappel.

Three rappel slings were already in place over a medium sized boulder, but only one was of any use.

The other two looked as if chewed by small sharp teeth. We slung one more just to be sure, then rappelled back down.

So much of my fear seemed to abate after the summit. There were still many unknowns, like how the heck I was getting down, but I was now on familiar ground. I hiked back to the false summit, having a much easier time of moving through one exposed section near the crag. I could now stand with relative ease on the false summit. Something was changing inside me. Brett was looking for a place to set up a rappel. He decided on a flat, round stone near the edge of the middle of the ridge, beside the narrow gap. Once he was done, it somehow fell on my shoulders to be the first one down. I figured the station was pretty safe, and I could hardly argue that someone else should test it.



Rapelling off the false summit of Mt. Rexford. Paul Binkert belaying.

Photo - M. Feller

"This won't kill me, will it Brett?" I asked, knowing that a confident answer would make me feel much better.

"Ummmm, nope, I don't think so. But maybe I'll just sit on it here to be sure."

Oh well, I guess that'll do. I clipped in and went over the edge. There was a ledge just below the top, so I stopped there, took some good holds and weighted the rope.

"It's moving!" someone called. Brett had a cautious eye aimed at the station, but he felt as I did. The rock might settle, but it couldn't come sailing over the edge, could it? I let go of my hand holds and started rappelling. My mind was kept busy clearing the rope and responding to guidance from above. I came to Mirissa, who had started downclimbing but stopped because she was uncertain about the next move.

"I'm tired, Jay. Cold too. I just want to get off this mountain."

"I know, me too. You rap after I'm off."

"Ok"

I continued rappelling until it became clear that I wouldn't quite make it back to the balcony seats. One rope was shorter than the other, and the short one wouldn't make it. I called up to Brett to take in rope on the long side, and give it to me on the short. There was some discussion, then it was decided that I had to make myself safe for them to do that. I was pretty secure where I was, so I told them to go for it.

"Belay off" they called down. Calm, remain calm. Unless I have a sudden series of leg spasms, I'll be just fine. They adjusted the rope, and I pulled down some extra on the short side. I looked down and decided that I could now make it to the balcony.

"Ok, that's good!" I called up, wanting to be back on belay. A minute passed. "Am I back on belay?"

"Yes!"

Good. I pulled the ropes even, then continued my rappel. Sure enough, there was just enough rope to get me to safety.

"Off belay!" I called up from the balcony, then sat back to enjoy the view. Mirissa followed soon after, then quickly disappeared around the corner to get back in the sun and warm up. There was some confusion as to what would happen to the last person down. It would be Brett, as he was the most experienced climber still up here with us. Some of the others had gone down earlier. I got Jake to call up to him that he should just rappel. It was my gear up there, and I

didn't care if we left it. I waited for a while, then moved down into the sun too. Eventually, people started to pass by. I waited for the others to rappel so that I could carry my rope. I missed the action, but apparently my rope got stuck on the way down, and someone had to climb up and retrieve it. I'm not sure if it was Jake or Brett, but whoever it was, thanks!

Hans came by and sat with me.

"Did you like it?" he asked, knowing that this was my first class four peak.

I thought about his question, about the fear that had been, and still was running through my veins, about my terror back on the lower blocky ridge, about the uncertain descent. I weighed those factors against the incredible joy of being there, the beauty around me, of sharing the experience with my partner and all the generous and knowledgeable members of the BCMC group. I thought of the fears I had overcome, or was at least trying to cope with, and the feeling of growth that gave me. I thought of all these things and more, but could only reply, "Ask me when we're back in camp."

"I don't" he said, levelling a serious look on me.

I was sure I hadn't heard him right. "You don't?"

He put a flat hand out sideways, like a dam, 30 cm in front of his chest. "Fear is here. I do this once and a while to keep it there. If I don't," he said, a warning tone in his voice, "then it is here." He moved the hand closer to his chest. "And then the next thing I am afraid to do," he moved the hand even closer to his chest, "it will be here, and so on."

His analogy was crystal clear. It was perhaps much of the same reason I was here. I was much braver seven or eight years ago. It makes me sad even to write that, but it is true. Still, like Hans, I am capable of holding the fear at bay, even pushing it back, so that I can enjoy all the adventures life has to offer. There is great comfort in knowing that others share your human frailties. Thanks Hans.

Hans moved on down the mountain.

Jake and Brett came around the corner. The fact that my slings were hanging on Brett's shoulder was a clear indication that he had downclimbed and saved my gear. Thanks Brett. I got my rope back from Jake, and slung it on my back.

I was sure that some of the parts that gripped me on the way up would terrify me on the way down. Down is always harder than up. As it turned out, I was feeling a new confidence on the rock. The fear

was still there, but I could work with it. We sailed down the upper ridge to its steep shoulder. Brett suggested that I could set up a rappel if it would make me feel safer. I considered it, but figured I'd be ok.

On the descent I was remembering having seen a rap anchor near the grassy niche between the two ridge lines. I kept thinking how nice it would be to avoid all the uncertainty of the lower ridge. It turned out that the rap was no good, the snow conditions where it went to were not good for the equipment we had, so we had to downclimb.

Brett, Mirissa, Alice and myself were moving as a team down the lower ridge. I felt solid, and surprisingly confident. We came to the same part that scared me on the way up, and it looked no friendlier on the way down. I'd love to say we all downclimbed it no problem, but we rapped, with Brett cleaning the station and downclimbing. Thanks again Brett.

The rest was just a simple walk back to the camp. I took a route through the boulder field, just because I love hopping around bus sized boulders. We all met back at camp and started packing. Some of the group members were already heading back down.

Having not had much to eat that day, I dived into my spare freeze-dried dinner, then proceeded to melt snow for water on our descent. Mysteriously, the little creek near the snowpack had dried up. Given the heat of the day, we couldn't figure that one out.

Brett accepted our invitation to dinner, so the three of us went down together. Just over half way down, we stopped at the creek which intersects the trail and filled up our water bottles. We were also pretty overheated. We all soaked a towel or spare shirt and wiped ourselves down. I went the extra step and stuck my head under the waterfall (bracing!).

Ten minutes later, we were back on the trail, refreshed and eager to get home. Forest gave way to the dead, grey slash, and the trail seemed much easier to follow down that it did up. The spongy ground felt good on the knees, and being close to the truck gave us a burst of energy. That burst of energy seemed to die, for both Mirissa and I, the second our boots were back on the logging spur. Brett pointed out that we could see the true summit from the road. We tilted our heads up and stared in wonder. Just a few hours ago, we had stood there. Looking at them from the road, the false summit, crag, and true summit all glowing with the soft pink of last light, they seemed unreachable. But we all proved that weekend that

they are reachable, and I know that very soon I will be back there, hopefully to learn something new about myself and the people around me.

So why did we go there? Climbing authors, climbers, and non-climbers have all struggled with the question of why we do it. Why do we put so much at risk for such intangible rewards. I can only guess, as I'm just beginning to understand some of my own reasons. Perhaps being in the presence of such overwhelming might lets us see ourselves more clearly.

I can imagine the volcanic forces tossing molten rock into the air, pushing great slabs of the earth's crust skyward, the whole world groaning and screaming as it is shaped by the fires below. Is it not easy to see the peak of a mountain as the focal point of all that energy? Everything was pushed in that direction, toward a singular point, all the earth's endless power heaving itself skyward. In the end, there is a single piece of stone that sits atop a steaming, cooling tower of rock. To sit upon that stone, to close our eyes and feel the might of a whole mountain beneath you. Must that not give one cause to reflect? When I look at Mount Rexford, or Slesse, or any of those very primal looking mountains, I think of the simplicity of their nature, and the clarity of thought they encourage.

We always picture the wise old Guru sitting atop a mountain, awaiting those who are willing to make the climb, so that he can share his wisdom. Why does the Guru not live in a sod hut somewhere in Saskatchewan? Because there is no challenge in reaching him. Wisdom is earned, not found or given. Perhaps mountaineers are each seeking their own inner Guru. Do we push, suffer, and risk our lives simply to reach the top of a chunk of stone or ice? Just for a great view? That doesn't make sense to me. I believe it's what waits on that stone and ice, that's what calls to us. When we put our hand on the summit, we touch the focal point of great energy. Whether you believe that energy is inside you, comes from God, or radiates from the mountain itself, there is undeniable power to be felt. For me, the power of the summit comes from inside me. To touch that stone, I had to overcome fears that are rooted in the core of my being. I had to endure the physical effort of getting there, and I had to employ, and trust my knowledge of climbing. Touching that rock is like being five years old, and having your dad put his big hand on your head, give your hair a scrub and say,

"You learned something today, didn't you son? Well, you done good."

I think of a concept that I've read of a few times in climbing literature; that the mountains tolerate our presence, but never accept or welcome it (Alfred excluded, of course). If they wish, the mountains could cast us into the scree without feeling or regret. Then again, perhaps, if the mood struck them and we were open to it, their presence could teach us something about ourselves, about our place in this world, what we're capable of. I know I learned about parts of myself on that mountain that would have remained forever hidden.

To all the members of the BCMC group, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for an incredible adventure.

Slesse Mountain, NE Buttress
5-6 September, 1998
by Colin Wooldridge

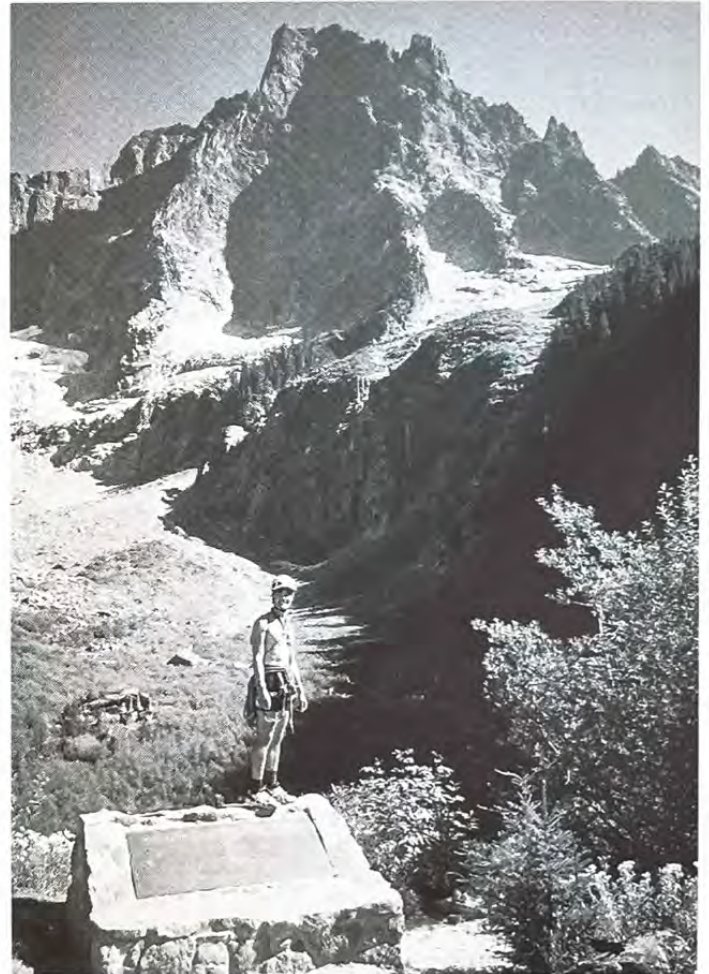
Partnering - I'm one of those people who don't really plan things. I like to hop on spot and just go for it. Of course this approach causes problems - like finding partners at the last minute. And so with the Labour Day long weekend coming up and the East Ridge of Temple in the Rockies in my sights, I needed a partner. Rob was committed to Albreda, Mark and Bruno were going to Slesse and I was going nowhere....

One last phone call to Mark. Bruno had bailed! (Seems his wife Lori had rattled the chains invoking quality time with the family - thanks Lori!) With my partner secured, our objective was still up in the air. Mark wasn't too sure about romping in the Rockies with loose piles of junk and a long drive. I really couldn't fathom Mark's reluctance to get high in Alberta, but the short drive convinced me to give in to coastal urges and the firm rock of Slesse.

Cruisin' - Anticipating crowds on Slesse over the long weekend, we figured a 2 day shot at the flying buttress was our best bet. So with a late start we cruised Highway 1 into Chilliwack listening to dance tunes under sunny skies. Betsy, my white VW Fox, continued rocking up the Nesakwatch Main until the DJ dropped the needle and the Nesakwatch unceremoniously ripped her muffler off. Deja vu flooded over me: three years earlier Betsy had

suffered the same indignation as she ground out on adjacent Centre Creek....

Slightly shaken I tossed the muffler into the bush and we drove off (no longer cruising) to the sound of the new music: barking our way up the road, like a mutt on a chain. The car parked, Mark then broke his own chain: a lucky neckcharm. I wasn't too keen on the sequence of events thus far, but he fixed the lucky charm and I didn't think much more of it.



Mt. Slesse rising over crash debris and memorial. NE Buttress is to the right. Photo - C. Wooldridge.

Approaching - We sorted the rack, consolidated 7 litres of water, slung some food together and evaluated our respective bivi gear. The rule was you could bring either a small sleeping bag or warm clothes. I opted for the latter while Mark took the former and we stuffed everything into one 60 litre pack.

The 4 hour approach was a mix of plodding along an old logging road, going through talus strewn with airplane crash debris, lunging up a gulch,

marching on glacially polished granite slabs alongside detrital avalanche snow in a looming cirque, angling up a ramp cutting the headwall (the bypass variation) and struggling through shrubby, resilient conifers.

Climbing - There is no definitive roping up point. Instead we scrambled past a roped party in our running shoes, fourth classing it. The rope came out when I felt gravity's pull on the pack equal the friction of my runners. Eventually we pulled our rock shoes on and simu-climbed past another party up to the start of the 5.10 fingers pitch. Mark's lead. A steepening series of stacked granite pillars led through overhanging metamorphic jugs. He cruised it, savoring the juggy and featured climbing. Downright incredible moves at 5.9/10a. Climbing with the pack on was a nuisance so I off-loaded it on Mark and finally got to romp, free from its burden. A neat 5.9 lieback led by Mark found us at the bivi ledge some 2 hours after having started climbing.



Mark snaking up granite corners with overhanging metamorphics above. Photo - C. Wooldridge.

Slumbering - The ledge saw 6 of us hunker down for the night with 6 more people scattered above us on various bivi platforms. 2 people around the corner from us had the misfortune of excavating their bivi platform on the previous toilet site! When Mark pulled his -20 °C sleeping bag out, raised eyebrows and wanting looks crossed the faces of most of our bivi mates. As the evening set in, it became grossly apparent that two boys from Oregon were in a state of desperation: they were huddling chin to chin under a flimsy tarp, and yet they had sacrificed the weight of down for the luxury of hot soup supplied by a stove and fuel...go figure.

As the evening wore on, six headlamps sporadically loitered into the looming cirque below and camped at the foot of the buttress. The next assault wave was readying. An American and I traded climbing stories under a full moon in an attempt to delay the ensuing misery of a cold night. Mark and the others were long passed out by the time I curled fetal and shivering on a rope, gazing out at the white of the moon as it lit Mt. Rexford across the valley and swung behind Slesse. The stillness of the night was broken only by the snoring of the American's (much warmer) brother.

Summitting - The morning had most of us lying in wait for the sun to arrive. And when those first golden rays warmed our faces, it was as if a starter's pistol had been fired: people scurried around racking up, stuffing breakfast down, pulling ropes, and organizing packs all in an attempt to get ahead of the 10 other climbers.

The American brothers sat in marked contrast to all this, slowly chewing their breakfast and basking in our spectacular situation. Their game plan was to hang out and bring up the rear. They were fast climbers and I appreciated their sacrifice - but waiting for six hours behind slower climbers didn't really appeal to me. That said, it looked as if Mark and I were going to join the line just ahead of the Americans, second last!

Mark scampered off as I was still pulling my shoes on and some quick simu-climbing on 4th and low 5th rock got us past two parties and onto open rock. Six pitches of varied and occasionally exposed climbing took our feet over scrambly mid-5th rock, and let our fingers lock and pull on exquisite 5.8/9 roofs and flakes. A sharp-edged, stiff final crack led us directly to the summit ridge. The lack of head



Mark high on Slesse's NE Buttress.

Photo - C. Wooldridge.



Pulling in a rappel rope in the land of giant gendarmes on the W side of Slesse, looking W to the border peaks.

Photo - C. Wooldridge.

spinning exposure on the buttress was disappointing, but the solid, entertaining rock yielded two of the most fantastic pitches I have ever climbed in the mountains. In retrospect I wished we had climbed the lower six pitches of the buttress that the bypass variation avoids. The amount of traffic on the route has certainly cleaned up those pitches and would make for a fuller climb. Justification to go back!

Descending (aka Lucking Out) - The sparkling view of Mt. Baker from the summit made us forget the previous 4 hours of climbing in the cool shade. The weather had been perfect for our ascent, which was lucky for Mark as the only clothes he had were the shorts and long sleeve shirt he was wearing (remember our rule: clothes or sleeping bag - it was strictly enforced!). The summit panorama was all too quickly replaced by ropes being thrown from rap stations as we hustled down the backside of Slesse. The gendarmes and loose rock of the west face stood in stark contrast to the smooth, compact, huge north walls we had just ascended.

Descending the west side of Slesse completes a traverse of the peak (a bonus). However, it left us some 30 km from our car back on the north side. Now, you'll notice that I didn't mention dropping off mountain bikes, rollerblades, or a rubber dingy in Slesse Creek before we started up. It would seem that we had run into a bit of a problem! However, if you look back at the opening line of this essay, you'll notice that I don't plan things, so problems are de rigueur. The original "plan" (really just a "thought") was to traverse north from the summit along a ridge system and then descend through a talus basin back to the Nesakwatch. Our disfavor with this option grew the higher we got on Slesse: the ridge looked time consuming and the exit through a cliff band had to be bang-on to avoid cliffs and horrendous bush.

Mark's jerryrigged neckcharm brought us luck high on the upper buttress as he recognized one of the boys climbing ahead of us: Kurt, a guy he met climbing on Lotus Flower Tower the previous summer. Kurt and his partner were from Oregon! They were the ones eyeing Mark's sleeping bag at our bivvi platform, but Mark and Kurt hadn't recognized each other because Kurt was all bundled up (from Mark's perspective), and Kurt's wanting distorted his vision (I'm guessing). Anyhow, they had a truck parked at Slesse Creek and...cold beers! Problems?! What problems?

Cruising back up the Nesakwatch with the sweet taste of the amber nectar lingering in our mouths, Kurt's entourage were kind of surprised when I jumped out of the truck and walked out of the bush with Betsy's muffler in-hand. With the muffler wired back on and unending thanks offered to Kurt and Co. we swung into McDonald's to plot up our topo of this great classic.

Participants: Mark Sanctuary and Colin Wooldridge.

Accomplices: Bruno and Lori Bagneres, Oregon Kurt and his entourage.

Baby Munday Peak
11-12 September, 1999
by David Scanlon

We met at Tim Horton's in Sardis. After our coffees and goodies we divided our gear and ourselves into the 4 x 4's. The last 4 km to the trailhead was 4-wheel drive only. We met the 14th person of our group there.

Two km along an overgrown logging road and it was time to drop down and cross Airplane Creek. This part was a bit brushy but the rest of the trail was in good shape, although continuously steep. We made camp at 1950 m on snow by a small, still frozen lake. Camp was in a bowl facing west, surrounded by Baby Munday Pk, Stewart Pk. And The Still.

Soon part of our group was on its way - some to climb Stewart Pk. (an easy class 2 with fantastic views 2000 m down Jones Lake) - others to Baby Munday Pk.

Baby Munday Pk. is a marvelous climb - class 3 with an airy class 4 area just before the summit. There is a lot of exposure on this climb on both sides. The summit itself is quite airy. Surprisingly, most of the rock is solid.

Back at camp after supper a breeze started up. It continued to build until some tents were almost flat. We had little sleep that night, having to constantly get up and out to tie down our tents. One tent had broken poles from the wind. Strangely enough the wind was gone by morning.

The next morning, Sunday, we awoke to another clear day and could see five mountain goats on The Still. The Still has 3-4 ways to its summit, all having much loose rock, so care is necessary not to knock any on people below. The Still is basically class 2 with a

section or two bordering on class 3. The summit is fairly narrow. The Still is right next to Welch and Foley Peaks, giving us unparalleled views of them.

Most of us were on The Still on Sunday, with three going to Stewart Pk. On our descent, 3 of our group went over to Stewart Pk. Also, we had almost everyone on three peaks, with John Sapac going to Knight Pk as well, bringing our group total to 4 peaks. Back at camp and packing up to leave, we were missing someone. It was the same person who lost the trail on the way up yesterday, and who also went up The Still by himself not telling anyone. We could only hope he had gone on ahead and wasn't lost.

Our group was the last to leave camp. Shortly after leaving, about one km along, we saw others ahead of us, but they were coming towards us! Soon we saw they didn't have their packs on. Wondering what was up we continued. Now we could see someone being carried. It was Jane, and she had hurt her ankle.

Ian and Gary had already left to get help. Others helped carry Jane down to a flat area; it being the only place on the trail for a helicopter to land.

We were then all together, resting, chatting, mulling about. We wondered where our missing hiker was. As I organized the trip, I decided to stay with Jane, arranged rides for everyone and got

everyone on their way. It was then about 2 pm.

I got snow to put on Jane's ankle, and made her as comfortable as possible. We talked and talked. I cleared some rocks away for the helicopter to land, then got us some water. We talked some more, then I got out a crossword puzzle I had in my pack. Jane was reasonably comfortable where we were and we were both thankful the flies weren't too bad.

Four and a half hours later the helicopter came over the ridge, seeing us right away. He did a 360° turn then landed right in front of me, putting the nose of his machine right at my hand. Then a surprise for Jane - she knew one of the Search and Rescue guys - Theo Mosterman.

Because there were five people and three packs, I and one S.A.R. guy stayed behind. (Too much of a load for 1 trip). We talked while waiting. These S.A.R. guys, including pilots, are very underrated. They give their time so very unselfishly to help others. They leave their wife and kids whenever called, day and night, to help.

Jane's rescue was very straightforward. The directions given were exact, so no time was wasted in finding us.

Arriving at Chilliwack airport, Theo gave me a ride to the hospital to see Jane.



Baby Munday Pk. from the trail.

Photo - D. Scanlon.



Knight Pk. above camp on the snow at lower left.

Photo - D. Scanlon.

I called home and explained why I'd be late. Then my car finally came. While Jane and I were waiting on the mountain I found out that the rest of our group safely made it out. They all went to the pub and they did find our "missing" hiker.

They also found three yokels looking for help. These three were looking for the Lucky Four mine and had literally trashed and thrashed their 4-wheel drive up the trail, finally dropping one wheel over the edge of a big washout. They were given a ride to a phone. I wouldn't want to be the B.C.A.A. towtruck driver answering that call!

Ian then arrived to take Jane to V.G.H. She had a successful operation the next day and has recovered very well.

To conclude: if you decide to hike by yourself, tell someone where you are going.

The directions given to the Search and Rescue people were exact so no time was wasted in trying to find us.

Our Search and Rescue people are very good at what they do. They are also very selfless in giving up much time in training and rescues. They don't get near enough recognition. Thanks guys!

Participants: Adrian Powell, Carol MacMillan, Mark Burgoyne, John Sapac, Gary Russell, Peter Woodsworth, Mike McGuiness, Tanya Zulkoskey, Jane Weller, Ian McGillivary, John Gudaitis, Brett McConochie, Marilyn Cram, and David Scanlon (Organizer).

Mt. Pitt, South Ridge **September 1999** by John Clarke

Mt. Pitt has always had a bit of a mystique about it among local climbers. Despite its proximity to Vancouver it is seldom climbed because of long approaches. The first ascent in 1938 by the Jenkins brothers was a groundbreaking trip as it involved a high elevation traverse from Garibaldi Lake. This trip was way ahead of its time and still amazes me when I think about it. Subsequent climbs have mostly been done by flying into Snowcap Lake, but BC Parks doesn't allow this anymore due to the danger that it could wind up like Spruce Lake with many flights in and out every day.

I had always been fascinated by the long (8 km)

SSW ridge of Mt. Pitt and it was just another one of those trips that I'd looked at on the map many times and thought - "I've got to do that!" Well, in September, 1999, I phoned Shel Neufeld, a BCMC member who does conservation work with me. I asked him what he was doing. He said, "I'm working". "That's very sad" I said, because I'm going to Mount Pitt. It's got this 8 km long south ridge that desperately needs to be climbed. It's big. It's long. It's like someone took a giant hairdryer to the hummingbird ridge on Logan and then covered it with vegetation and goats. Why don't you talk to your boss and get back to me, but make it really soon because the weather is perfect. Shel replied, "I can go, I can go, I'll talk to my boss tomorrow!" I was mightily impressed and thought that Shel had excellent potential in the Coast Range.

Dan Gerak and his wife, Lee, operate Upper Pitt River Lodge beyond the head of the lake and it's a good idea to hire them for boat and truck transport for any climbing trips in the upper Pitt Valley. Dan dropped us off at the end of the logging roads just past Shale Creek on the east side of the Upper Pitt River in perfect mid-September weather. This trip was to be a huge adventure for me as I had been curious for years, not just about the long ridge on Mt. Pitt, but also the prospect of bushwhacking up a pristine valley at only 200 m above sea level. I remember Randy Stoltmann being very interested in what kind of old growth lay inside the park. Well, we were finally going to find out. The walking essentially starts at Shale Creek and it took us from noon of the



John Clarke crossing Iceworm Ck.

Photo - S. Neufeld.

first day until dusk on the second day to put a camp in the woods at the base of our ridge beyond Iceworm Creek. We had been worried about creek crossings but we were very lucky to find logs across the big creek coming from Nimbus Glacier and even Iceworm Creek itself. Without the extremely lucky, slender, knotty cedar log that spawned Iceworm Creek the trip would have ended right there.

The 12 km walk to Iceworm was mostly on sandbars and because sockeye were spawning in the side channels there were signs of bears everywhere. The giant fir-cedar we'd hoped to see didn't materialize. The big flats south of Nimbus had some decent spruce, but good big fir-cedar was nowhere to

be seen all the way to Iceworm Creek. It was still a marvel to see a major valley without even a hint of flagging tape, let alone a trail! The ridge above was wonderful and we felt we had the whole world spread at our feet since the entire Pitt Valley was filled with fog.

The farther along the ridge we got, the more nervous we were about any change in the weather as this would be a very serious place to be caught in a long September storm. We climbed all the bumpets along the way and marveled at the views into the Misty Icefields to the southeast. The eastern aspect of Mount Mamquam looked as wild and remote as anything you'd see beyond the inlets farther north.



On the long climb up to Snowcap Pk. from the head of Iceworm Ck. The glacier behind enters Snowcap Lake.

Photo - J. Clarke.



View SE towards the Misty Icefields from the S Ridge of Mt. Pitt. Caligo Pks. are on left, Misty Pk. is the sharp rock peaklet in centre, and Katzie and Nimbus Pks. are on the right. Photo - J. Clarke.

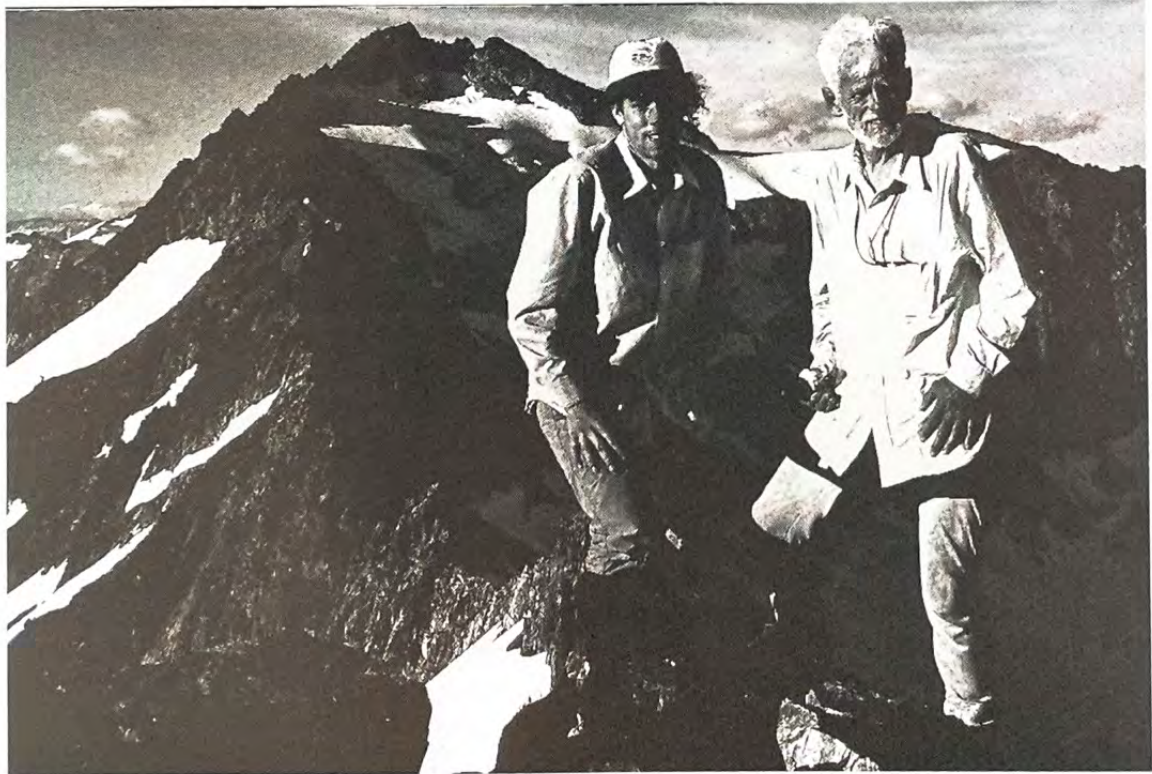


John on a peak on the ridge, looking towards Pitt Mtn.

Photo - S. Neufeld.



Heading up the previously unclimbed peak on the ridge before Mt. Pitt. Photo - S. Neufeld.



Shel and John on the summit of the previously unclimbed peak with Mt. Pitt behind.
Photo - S. Neufeld.



On Mt. Pitt. The horn behind is on the S ridge of Pitt.

Photo - J. Clarke.



Caligo Pks. above Shel.

Photo - J. Clarke.



Looking SSE from the Caligo Pks. Misty Pk is the horn on the left, Katzie is the prominent peak in the centre, and Nimbus Pk. is the horn on the right. Photo - J. Clarke.



Looking SE towards the Misty Icefields.

Photo - S. Neufeld.



Shel on the Misty Icefields with Misty above and to right.

Photo - J. Clarke.

After climbing to the top of Mount Pitt we dropped southeast and camped at 1300 m in the open gravelly meadows in the headwaters of Iceworm Creek. The next day, still in miraculous weather, we climbed up 1100 m and visited the 2400 m Snowcap Peak, the highest point in the sprawling collection of icefields and summits SSW of Snowcap Lake. We couldn't have been happier with the way things were turning out.

On the way south we visited the humble little Caligo Peaks along the snowy ridge just southwest of Snowcap Peak. We climbed these in alpenglow and felt like we were walking around in a dream. Next day we marched south on the white treadmill to the col between Stave and Misty Peaks and from our lunch spot there we surveyed the grand snowy scene of the whole Stave Glacier névé and its enclosing peaks. Later, on top of Katzie Peak, although we couldn't find my old cairn from '71, we did find a piece of yellow cedar with 4 sets of initials on it. A little bit of mystery - we wondered whose they were. Next

day, on top of Nimbus Peak, we found my old 1971 cairn undisturbed with no names added to the register. I had fond memories of the '71 trip as it had been the culmination of many failed attempts to reach the Mistys in the 60's.

Our route home took us into the high glacial valley just west of the peak of Katzie, then southwest and south to our final camp at the little cluster of lakes just south of the park boundary. From here it was an easy hike southwest down through gentle alpine forest to the complex of roads that snake their way up the slopes north of lower Shale Creek. We were dumbfounded when the first logger we ran into in the Pitt Valley said, "hey, you guys didn't happen to see a chunk of wood up there with some initials carved on it, did you?" after a soak in the hot springs at the edge of the Pitt River we chugged down the lake with Dan and Lee to the dock at Grant Narrows.

Dan and Lee Gerak can be reached at 1-800-665-6206, ph/ (604) 520-1796 fax, [www:go-fish-bc.com](http://www.go-fish-bc.com)



Crevasse patterns near the top of Snowcap Pk. Caligo Pks. are behind.

Photo - J. Clarke.

A Short Trek to Vancouver by Don McPherson

Bill, Lisa and I bump into the dock of the Wigwam Inn at 4:30 pm, Oct. 1. The day is flawless with an excellent long range forecast. Smoke is curling serenely from the chimney of the picturesque lodge and not a soul is to be seen. Stepping onto the pier, I hoist my pack and walk briskly toward the front door, then veer sharply around the corner, and head for the bush at the rear of the building. A sigh of tension is released as I walk into the trees and shrubs with no one from the Inn within sight. Turning, I wait in the quiet stillness until Bill and Lisa Ng slowly idle past me. Silently, I wave goodbye, then he opens the throttle and I turn to face the wild jungle of the thick forest edging into the well-maintained backyard of the Yacht Club. A dim awareness of isolation and loneliness sweeps through me, then vanishes as a sense of adventure floods in.

I lower my eyes and discover my boots on a green carpeted path leading gently upward. This first class trail threads its way to 225 m where there is a wooden seat built for viewing the exquisite spray of Pearl's Falls. Old orange tape leads through two steep, narrow clefts, then stops at 340 m. After several attempts to traverse south I finally find a way through the puzzle at about 330 m. Weaving among cliffs above and below, I come to one of three silver gullies seen during the boatripe an hour earlier. These ravines cut deeply into the emerald forest pelt and appeared nearly vertical in places. The first one is easy as a jumble of windfalls and stone has jammed between the walls, making a natural bridge. Crossing, I continue traversing slightly downward, until I am seemingly stopped by a slick looking 80° gorge. A second look reveals a possible way into the wide gully beneath an overhang about 30 m below. Down I go and carefully plot my path into the watery gray channel. Feeling the exposure, I begin crossing

with utmost care on mossy but solid granite. Once in the big ditch, a 10 m slab with adequate friction and occasional knobs leads to 4 m of easy (5.0) downclimbing on good grips. I carefully walk down a slick looking flatish section and start a tough traverse to the south side, then spot another possibility. Reversing my moves back into the watercourse, I downclimb to discover a precipitous animal trail.

Ten minutes later I come to a flat on the uphill side of a knoll (250 m). Evidently, I had passed over the top of the third gully, as I never encountered it. On this bench is a welcome old logging road. An excellent campsite with a rivulet of water is passed, as I want to get as far as possible before dark. Down, down I diagonal as darkness approaches. No place can be found to pitch my tent as the light dims to encroaching blackness and I bivouac in a somewhat horizontal trench behind a large boulder, eating etc. by flashlight.

Oct. 2. Continuing down, the alder-treed road eventually becomes totally throttled with salmonberries above my head. I abandon the road and diagonal up until I hit a streambed and soon spot a huge expanse of gravel to my left, where I find a 50 m wide treeless, bushless, roadless swath with a wood-steel pier below. At 80 m I cut onto the south bank, crash through heavy bush and again come upon a brushed but passable logging road going my way. The lower I go the better the travel, until I come to a broad stream delta with a faint animal trail leading to the beach at the mouth of a small stream. I can choose to go up the creek to find an easier way around the cliff on the south side of the brook, or I can tackle the headwall head on, which looks like it just might let me up (a mistake). Some near-vertical brush yarding and scary windfalls eventually get me to the apparent top (50 m), where more fallen trees and bush have me grumbling until I get to 240 m. Here there is a saddle where an ancient logging road and animal trail lead down to 20 m where crossing Bishop Creek is easy. On the south side of the creek is a good logging road-trail, which is followed down to a waterfront view. Here I briefly watch a father and son in a boat. A smile erupts on my face as I observe the father's pleasure observing his young son fish. Up the trail I trod to 350 m where I reminisce of a past trip I had with a friend in '91. We climbed Bishop, Elsay and Seymour in 1 day via this route in mid-spring.

The logging road crosses over a pass and continues down the other side, eventually ending. A brushless animal trail continues down to a clean, wide granite creekbed at 120 m. From here I see an abandoned black PVC pipe snaking downhill until it is out of sight. Though it is only 4:30 in the afternoon, I decide to camp. Sleep comes easier in my tent than out of it, so after half an hour of looking for a flat spot, I cut down a 20 cm alder, dig out ferns, and pitch my tent. In the morning a feeling of slight dizziness causes concern as ear infections have kept me in bed for several days in the past. Once I am packed and walking downstream for 5 minutes, the sense of slight nausea and balance problems disappears and doesn't return.

At 110 m I cross to the south side of the creek beneath some brush-free large trees. The line of forest appears to diagonal south east into the water below. Traversing up and SW is dense brush with a number of windfalls thrown in. I am concerned that following the fir and cedar down to the salt water will mean even worse going to Elsay Creek. For 45 minutes I battle diagonally up south by southwest, heading through thick bush, then traverse down when I think enough height is gained to descend to a point above Silver Falls. Arriving at Elsay Creek I am rewarded with big trees, few windfalls and no brush. A short way upstream a route off the near vertical bank is revealed to the water and boulder below. Steep dirt descends to a perfect crossing where four or five large boulders stick up to 30 cm out of the turbulent, churning water. I am lucky, crossing at 120 m onto an inviting-looking 30-40° slope on the south side.

All goes well until 170 m, where the lovely head high small trees beneath larger ones begin turning into a dense gauntlet 3-4 m high. I can barely force my way through, sometimes needing to axe a tree or two to force my way uphill. This hellish mat continues up to 280 m. I abandon blazing and flagging somewhere with the mess. Weaving my way around deadfalls and dense patches of bush, I top out on a mound and look down into an inviting valley (300 m) sloping gently down to the north. I head south and within moments walk into a more than welcome well-marked trail at 11 am. I give a prayer of thanks and am in my car on the Seymour hwy. (Baden Powell parking lot) by 4 pm. Safety is never far away, but the feeling of adventure is considerable.

**Mt. Alex Philip - Mt. LePage:
The Real Estate Flip Trick Trip**

by Karl Ricker

"Mt. Alex Philip" is an unofficial name for a lofty spire located on the lengthy NW ridge of Tremor Mtn. in the Spearhead Range of Garibaldi Park. It lies roughly halfway towards "Mt. Charlie Chandler" (see B.C. Mountaineer, 1998). Rising majestically above the snout of Tremor Glacier it is conspicuous to all who descend the Trorey Glacier corridor enroute to Wedge Pass, and it is easily seen by those who skirt the south end of Mt. Pattison on the Spearhead Traverse. The steep lower avalanche prone slopes of Mt. Alex Philip can be approached by either route - preferably on skis. Ed Zenger had cast a fond eye on a route to its summit when he slid by in 1997, and because Alex Philip and Charlie Chandler were exchanging real estate in the World War I era it seemed to be only fitting that the two mountains side by side should receive names commemorating these two pioneers. The real estate game began here; Charlie owned the land at the northwest end of Alta Lake but decided that the life of a trapper/hunting guide was better than pulling stumps to make a farm. He sold the entire "section" to Alex when he and wife arrived (1912) at Alta Lake to begin construction of their resort complex just ahead of the completion of the PGE railway.

As it turns out, construction of more cabins and facilities continued for years as the railway kept bringing in more and more satisfied customers. However, increasing age and their never stop lifestyle took its toll and the Philips sold out after World War II (1948), going into retirement at Alta Lake. They saw the painful birth of Whistler before passing away, with Myrtle Philip seeing her name attached to its new elementary school. Charlie disappeared sooner, but built his own little empire at Wedge Pass with connecting trail well before 1927.

Naïvely, we thought "Mt. Alex Philip" would be an ideal May weekend ski trip with a potentially sporting rock climb of one or two rope lengths to top it off. The Intrawest empire had in the meantime bought out Whistler Mtn. and had their own ideas on where the public should have lift access to Garibaldi Park in the months of May and June. To reduce overhead in a low season of visitors, they decided to keep only one of the two mountains open. They caught us off guard and closed Blackcomb at the end

of April, leaving our May '99 scheduled trip with either a long hike from the valley floor, a cancellation, or another objective - the latter being the case, hoping also that lift re-opening would provide a second chance with the trip in early summer to the original destination. It didn't work out.

For the year 2000 we decided to cover our bets, and scheduled "Alex Philip" for the second weekend of May, and again for the second weekend of June when Blackcomb lifts are supposed to re-open for the summer ski and snowboard camp cycle. As the winter wore on it became apparent that May closure of Blackcomb lifts was in the cards, despite the massive re-construction schedule for Whistler. A trip to Diamond Head as a substitute yielded heavy deep wet snow as an unrewarding alternative. No sweat, the June weekend should make "AP" a go; but in May the Intrawest gang decided that Whistler would remain open on the second weekend of June, because the ski camps were scheduled to open on the following Monday. No such thing as prep work for ski camps apparently, but gritting our teeth it was decided to run the trip on the third weekend, because the snow cover was there. Murphy's law wouldn't cooperate; the weather threw the worst during the third week, including heavy snowfall, which brought out the avalanche warnings, and the decision to let prudence prevail. As it turned out, the weekend weather wasn't that good anyhow, and so a tentative fourth weekend possibility was discussed. The key participant, Ed Zenger, said that weekend was already committed to family matters and so his project was put on the shelf in favour of investigation of the unnamed peak which rises out of Deeks Lake. Peak 1640 m, as so noted in the guidebook, is the obvious target ascent when hiking into Deeks Lake. It rises off the shoreline on its east side as a steep 450-500 m high rock face, slashed on its north end by a narrow mail-slot type of gully which daylight on its sky-line ridge about 250 m north of the mountain's north summit. If the mountain had a "real" name that face would have been laced with many routes by now, and certainly the gully would attract the Welsh climbers, if no-one else. Peak 1640 is not often ascended by any route, as shown by the lack of welcoming cairns on its summits. The North Shore Hikers, however, do put it on their schedule, and so we decided to find out why. Like other peaks along the Howe Sound corridor, this trip provided the early

season cardio-vascular challenge - start near sea level and top out between 1600 and 1700 m, or roughly two Grouse Grinds. The first grind checks in at Deeks Lake; we chose the direct trail along upper Deeks Creek, despite the warning signs - the handlines set on the vertical gravel washouts through the trail were secure, but Ken MacKenzie said he was going to test the by-pass trail on the way down regardless.

At Deeks Lake the Mt. Windsor trail was found at its north end and it was surprisingly free of snow until the 1400 m level was reached, which is within ear-shot of the Windsor - Deeks Peak saddle. Fortunately the snow pack immediately thickened to provide an easy promenade under the west face of Mt. Windsor, yielding fast access to the Windsor-Pk 1640 col. A small snowed-in tarn with a blue moat lay near the col. Steepish snow slopes rising above it were ascended to reach the north end of the ridge of the objective, and fortuitously it happened to be where the letter-slot gully daylighted on the ridge. It provided a tremendous peep sight view of the lake below, and the gully with a bit of cleaning would certainly make an exciting route to bag this peak. Talk about an overdue project. More steep snow traversing on the east side of the ridge crest quickly put us on the north summit of the 500 m long crest. One could almost spit into Deeks Lake from there. It didn't appear to be the high point and the cairn on it was only a token few rocks. Traversing due south on the crest put us on the south summit of the ridge, and looking back to the north it appeared that the south summit might actually be lower. More imposing, however, was the view southward over a 150-200 m drop to a col and a more ragged peak which is about 1 km NW of Mt. Hanover. Adorned with a tiny 5400' contour on the topo it could also be as high as what we were standing on.

Neither the federal topo map nor the metric Lions Bay Search and Rescue map was going to solve the riddle of the highest peak lying between Mts. Windsor and Hanover. But we had a bubble level in the packs. Setting it on a firm base and lining it up to "awesome" peak to the south it showed a 3 to 4 metre difference; we were higher! Whew, we didn't really want to descend to that col and claw our way through rugged rock and vertical bush to its summit. The level was reversed to make sure. But which end on the ridge rising above Deeks Lake was higher? The north summit from where we had come, or our present

position? The level said we were 1-2 metres higher; that is, the south summit, but we had to traverse back over the north anyhow and pick up our steep trail of tracks to the Windsor col, which ended any anxiety of slipping out into oblivion, or into a tree downslope. The trail below was found to be decidedly harder to stay on in the descent to the lake, where again the west face of Peak 1640 showed its class. As announced, Ken took the bypass route on the trail below the lake to reach the access road. It was definitely a slower proposition.

So the day saw a successful flip of the trip to "Peak 1640". What kind of name should it receive? The notes left by the late Dr. Neal Carter (BCMC Member: 1919-1928) provide a good clue. Deeks Lake was dammed to its present day level in the World War I era, in order to supply a secure source of late summer water for the purposes of washing gravel extracted near tidewater. A trail or road from the operation was constructed, terminating near the creek at 600-700 m elevation. A trail to the lake had been pushed up from there. Early day hikers and climbers probably took advantage of this exceptional access, which include some enterprising people. Not the least was Al LePage, who may have been one of the young BCMC pioneer members at that time. Al apparently visited the Upper Deeks basin frequently but we are not sure if his access route was always by way of the creek trail or whether he also used the trails in the Capilano valley on the east. Over a period of time he constructed a topographic map of the basin, which according to Dr. Carter's notes, also showed an active glacier on the north slopes of Mt. Brunswick. That was the closest-known glacier to Vancouver until it disappeared altogether in the hot summers of the early 1930s.

How Al LePage became a real estate tycoon (if Dr. Carter's notes are correct) from a lifestyle of a curious mountain-man is unknown to Dr. Carter, because Neal was transferred to Prince Rupert after finishing his doctoral sabbatical in Germany in 1930. Ken wryly stated that the real estate mapping in the Britannia Range did not look so good in those times despite the possible incentives at tidewater. However, was Al ever a BCMC member, and if so, when did he give up on the club in those years of establishing his empire? Well, the story is complicated. According to the Royal LePage real estate firm, Al LePage founded the empire in Toronto in 1913. If we have the right

man, he was in the Deeks Lake basin before the war, which does not jibe with Dr. Carter's notes. So perhaps there is another Al LePage, known as "Alex" to Dr. Carter, who also dabbled in the local real estate scene. So far, neither the archives at Vancouver nor other historians have found any clues to solve this mystery. [Ed's comment - An E. LePage is noted as a member of the BCMC during 1911 and 1912. Perhaps he is Neal Carter's "LePage".]

"Mt. Al LePage" nonetheless is the obvious name for "Peak 1640". Currently the North Shore Hikers are building a spur off the Mt. Windsor trail through the dense sub-alpine shrubbery to the "LePage"-Windsor col to make the trip enjoyable for everyone. For the very overdue face climbers it will serve as a handy escape route.

So there we have it; two entrepreneurs named Alex and Al, who were both in the real estate game in one way or another and who had a love for our local mountains. Their vision deserves a significant momento of recognition in our mountain heritage. Year 2000 is the time to initiate it.

Coordinates† on the "Mt. LePage" Summits

	North Ridge Summits		South Summit
	North End	South End	
N	5484500 ± 50 m.	5484150 ± 50 m.	5483850 ± 20 m.
E	485700 ± 20 m.	485680 ± 20 m.	485800 ± 20 m.
Z (m)	1 to 2 m. lower	1655 m. *	3 to 4 m lower

* Highest map contour (1640 m) is interpolated to read a 1655 m summit elev. (30 m spacing)

† UTM Zone 10, 1927 North American Datum (coordinates will shift on 1983 Datum)

Lake Lovely Water Summer Camp '99 by Peter Woodsworth

The majority of the participants, 18 all told, were relative newcomers to mountaineering, so the first few days, as planned, were spent on the basics and bagging the easier local peaks - Iota, Pelops, and

Niobe, all under the leadership of Tami Knight, our guide extraordinaire. After this, various teams successfully assaulted Omega from a variety of directions, several reached Alpha from the Southwest Ridge and one team from the Northeast Ridge. Lydia was mounted from the Southeast, Thyestes from the Northwest, and an attempt was made on the Northeast Ridge of Niobe.

The snow pack was excellent with the occasional wet sloughs on the steeper, warmer faces. It actually extended to the door of the cabin! The lake was frozen with just enough open water for some casual swimming. The weather was generally clear with one day of occasional light showers.

One participant cut her face badly and had to be choppered out, to reappear the next day, stitches and all, to complete the camp! Now that's ovaries and a great mountaineering-cum-dueling scar! This injury was preceded by two minor ones to other participants which prompted the suggestions that no one should leave the cabin and that people should rope up to use the privy.

A very successful co-adventure with the A.C.C.; good people, good routes, good weather, good thrills - who could ask for anything more?



Mt. Iona (left and Serratus Mtn (right) from the east.
Photo - P. Woodsworth.



Lydia Mtn. (left), The Red Tush, Mt. Pandareus, Ionia Mtn. and Serratus Mtn. (right).

Photo - P. Woodsworth.



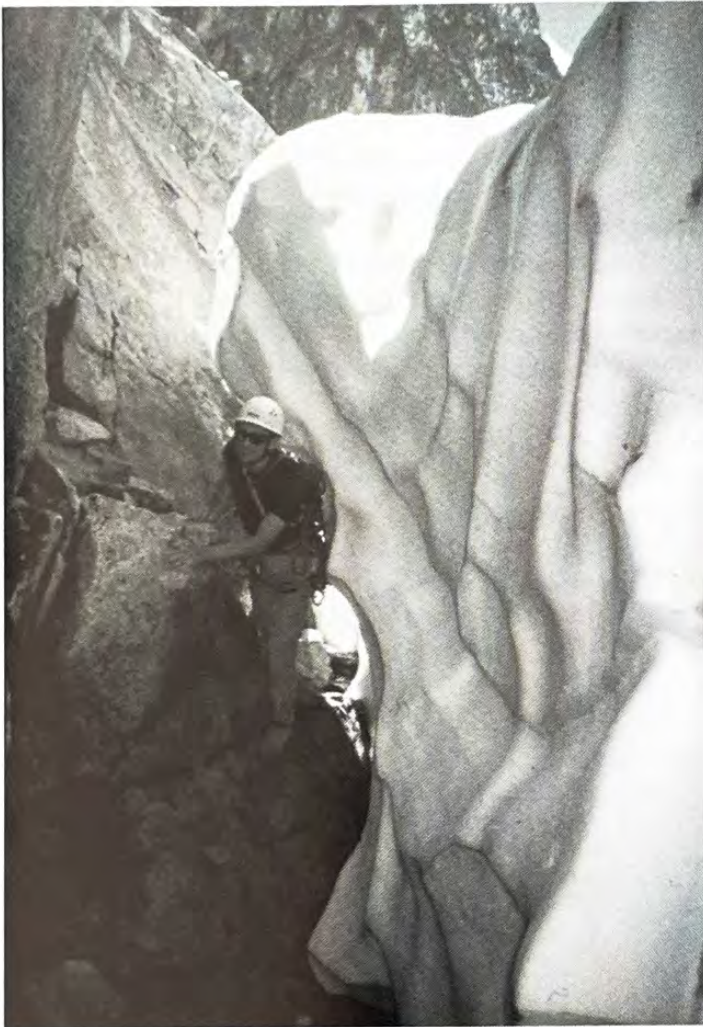
Lake Lovelywater ship of fools with Alpha Mtn. behind.

Photo - P. Woodsworth.



Red Tit hut and Ionia.

Photo - P. Woodsworth.



Traversing inside a moat on Alpha Mtn.
Photo - P. Woodsworth.



On Alpha Mtn.
Photo - P. Woodsworth.



Iota Mtn (left), Mt. Pelops, and Mt. Niobe (right) from Omega.
Photo - P. Woodsworth.

"Letter home" - What Really Happens on a Mountaineering Course

by Michelle Martineau

Dear Parents,

I took a mountaineering course last week. The group consisted of seven guys (three 17-yr-olds, two post-grads and two older married types, Russian and Chinese), two male instructors.... et moi. Monday and Tuesday were spent up at Squamish, a big knob of granite just north of here, rock-climbing, going over different belay techniques, anchors for climbing and rescuing, and then ascending techniques and rappelling. Weather was great and it was fun, although climbing in rock-shoes and climbing in big, stiff mountain boots are two quite different stories!

Then we were up at 0*420 (* stands for Oh-my-gawd-have I even been to bed yet?) on Wednesday morning to drive up to Pemberton, which I thought would take three hours, but somehow I got there in two. We met at the Pony Express for breakfast, a briefing on the approach route, met our second instructor and then drove off in convoy to Cerise Creek, just past Joffre Lakes.

Upon leaving civilization, we added ice axes, climbing hardware, helmets, crampons and 50 m climbing ropes to our already bulging backpacks (including five days of food etc.) and set off up to Anniversary Glacier. I also took my ski poles as walking stabilizers, kind of like those nontogenarians we used to see hobbling around the neighborhood. Going up I must admit they were kind of useful, but coming down they definitely saved my knees and should be considered standard kit for future long hikes (descents). My heels were freshly covered with duct tape every morning to prevent more horrible blisters from my new 2.3 kg mountaineering boots. We reached a nice col at 2000 m and set up Base Camp Excellent, enjoying a gourmet pasta meal before hoisting the Maple Leaf on a ski pole (it was Canada Day). But every time we were going to sing, our trusty companion Makalu (90% red wolf, 10% dog) started to howl so loudly that we all dissolved in fits of laughter and gave up.

Next morning was spent practising falling down the white stuff and self-arresting, forwards, backwards, left, right, headfirst on back and front. Then all the same positions with an ice-axe and in between, of course, re-running up the slope until

we were totally nackeded. In the afternoon we descended to a more precipitous area and learned how to build all sorts of different ice anchors in order to rescue people from crevasses, then took it in turns to "fall into a crevasse". More gourmet pasta, weather deteriorated, evening lecture on glaciers and time planning.

Friday morning dawned with the sound of rain on tents, but we dutifully ate our porridge, got our packs together and set out to conquer Mount Hartzell, 2590 m. Roped up and took it in turns to kick steps all the way up to the top of the glacier, where we had lunch and singing with Makalu, before continuing across the snowfield, making our way around the most amazing crevasses (could put freight trains in there) to the base of Hartzell at 2400 m. Pre-arranged our teams in the pissistent precipitation and started our assault on the steep bit. Unfortunately, by this time the sleet was coming horizontally and some feebler members of the group were in danger of becoming hypothermic, plus we reached our turn-around time, so called off the mission 30 m from the summit... Everyone was fairly wet on the descent,



Checking equipment near camp.

Photo - D. Kreuger.



Anniversary Glacier from camp.

Photo - M. Martineau



Practising on the Matier Glacier.

Photo - M. Martineau.

which due to some unforeseen circumstances took longer than intended. After searching out some water stops, we were late back to camp, had some gourmet pasta just for a change (with spam), a lecture on avalanches and hit the sack.

Due to crap weather at Camp (previously) Excellent, we de-camped on Saturday and descended to Glacier View Drive further down the valley, stopping half-way for a lesson on snow bollards as alternative (and leave-behindable) anchors for belaying/rescuing etc. Très interessant! The afternoon was spent doing map and compass work, practising crevasse rescue in teams between the trees, drying out gear and eating. We had a pretty good evening of story-telling and general hilarity in a mountaineering cabin, where the young and feeble slept, while us stoics found a lovely camp spot in a mosquito infested swamp nearby.

Sunday we rose at 0*500 (* stands for oh thank god, we're still alive and it's the last day!) put on our full packs (which should have been much lighter due to dearth of edibles, but all wet gear, especially ropes, were saturated and therefore weighed twice as much,

so off we struggled, this time across the lateral moraine to the base of the glacier. Two people were pooped and took an early start down the mountain, and the rest of us put our skills to the test in rescuing each other from pretend crevasses. Then we hiked about 300 m up the glacier to test out our crampons (walk with your legs apart at all times!) So it was time to descend, but instead of taking the trail we came up on, we hiked out over the terminal moraine, across various frigid waterways, bushwhacking our way



Camp Excellent.

Photo - M. Martineau

down the "winter ski-out", marching non-stop down to the parking lot. (sigh). Three hour drive back to Vancouver with two snoring bodies in my car. One hour soak in the tub. Big smelly mess to clear up and terrible dehydration headaches so could not sleep, but what an experience!

Lizzie Lake Ski Camp
26 December, 1998 - 2 January, 1999
by Alice Obermajer

Dec 26th snowing, -2°C
(I think we brought too much food)

A subhuman, subalpine start at 2 am to pick up Richard and meet at the Pemberton Esso at 6 am. The Lillooet Lake road was ploughed and we even made it some distance up the logging road. We started skiing at 8 am and tried out our new sled rigging. It worked pretty well, but after crossing Lizzie Lake, we had to stash our steeds. After a crusty slog through steep forest, we were stopped (*All Fear*) by an avalanche slope - loaded with windslab and a classic terrain trap below. There was no way around so we made camp on the ridge, knowing the cabin was just on the other side. Dinner Menu: freeze dried crap.

Dec 27th still snowing, -5°C

Woke up to more snow. Jeff and Brian put in tracks along the avalanche slope. With monster packs the rest of us went across one by one. Why did the chicken cross the avalanche slope? We made it alive and found the cabin. Everyone looked for 'the best' spot to put up their week long abodes. Jake and I thought we had the perfect one, a little cave sheltered under some large trees. A lesson was learned that big snow laden trees tend to release bombs at 3 am or so. Despite the nightly bombings, we did not move our tent. Richard dug himself a waterfront-view snowcave. Jeff had found the stream and our water hole was cut and steps engineered. The cabin was cleaned and holes plugged with caulking. The cabin was made livable, a cozy fire was lit, and we piled in to dry out our stuff and make dinner. Menu : BBQ turtle beans with Bavarian smokies.

Dec 28th still snowing, -2°C

Spent some time digging out our tents. Then off to play in the white stuff. Wary of avalanche danger,

we did some tree skiing. A group of five broke trail up one ridge and the other group went up another ridge. The snow was deep and heavy and it was amazing how steep a slope you could ski without killing yourself. Some were happy just to keep the ski tips up and avoid trees by faceplant technique. Others were taking advantage of the steep and deep by jumping off things. By 4 pm we were jelly-legged and hungry. Menu: perogies with sour cream and onions.



Skiing up the logging road to Lizzie Lake.

Photo - A. Obermajer.

Dec 29th, still snowing, -1°C

Went for a tour along ridges to Long Lake hoping that it would clear up. Sucker holes kept us out all morning. But we gave up trying to get anywhere with such poor visibility and skied back through ultra heavy deep snow, down the gnarly steep slope to the cabin. Jeff took time to do some photography and got everyone coming down the gnarly slope. At camp we dealt with the multitudinous snow by examining it. A snow pit revealed three large consolidated layers and one ice layer. A shovel shear test showed a break in the new snowpack - kind of what we expected. We then honed our avalanche transceiver finding skills. Yurgen and Jake shoveled the snow off the roof - all 60 tonnes of it! Dinner menu: Spaghetti.

Dec 30th, sunny!, -7°C

Wow, we were excited at getting in some views, so headed up along Intern ridge to Long Pk. The snow had dried out a bit and we were able to get in some good turns. Long Pk. was cold and windy and as soon as we got down the clouds rolled in, so we

retreated back to the cabin. We went for a few more runs on the slopes near camp. Some more chores were done - Jeff and Brian cut wood, Yurgen and Jake shoveled more snow off the roof. An American guy named James skied in to the cabin and joined us for dinner. Menu: Chinese mushrooms with beef, snow peas, and rice.

Dec 31st, grauple snow, -5°C

Jake, Richard, Yurgen, James, and I headed up towards Arrowhead Pk., found an awesome bowl, and dug a Rutschblock. Richard loaded it and it took a jump close to the edge to cause a break. Lots of snow and it was surprisingly uniform and stable. James showed us a trick - pour coloured juice on top of a snow column - it shows all the layers and densities. The bowl was "proven" safe to ski. Back at the cabin the friendly Whisky Jacks enjoyed a New Year's treat of gorp. Dinner menu: Tortillas.

Midnight was a long way away, and gin rummy was a popular pastime. Started counting down for New Year's Eve at 7:30 pm for Newfoundland. Yurgen's surprise - hot Saki. Then moving westward with the provinces, a celebration every half hour. Next was my wine, then smoked salmon from Shawn. To honour Quebec, Jesse had a "special" surprise. We went outside in the clear night, under a full moon, stood around the triangle, and with Yurgen (FGL) leading the way, we sang the Lumberjack song:

I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK, I sleep all night and I work all day, I cut down trees I skip and jump I like to press wildflowers, I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK, I sleep all night and I work all day

We had lots of sparklers to play with courtesy of Jeff D. When those all went out, we spotted a huge tree bomb and played the game of who could set it off. It was one solid tree and solid Jeff D. finally took the sledgehammer to it and got buried by a tonne of snow as we cheered him on. We were getting super hungry, ate all of Jake's chocolate, and went inside where Jeff R. made lots of popcorn and made us sing the Hanukah song.

*Heenay matou ooma nayeem.
Shevet acheem gum yachad*

Richard warmed us up with cognac and feeling pretty lightheaded we made up a New Year's Eve Christmas Camp song:



"Are we lost?"

Photo - A. Obermajer.

- On the first day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, a sledgehammer in a tree.*
- On the second day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 2 lanterns glowing.....*
- On the third day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 3 stoves a burning, 2 lanterns glowing, and a sledgehammer in a tree.*
- On the fourth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 4 piles of rat crap....*
- On the fifth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 5 feet of powder.....*
- On the sixth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 60 tonnes of snow on the roof.....*
- On the seventh day of BCMC camp, my club gave*

to me, 7 nights of sleeping.....

On the eighth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 8 days of skiing.....

On the ninth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 9 sparklers sparkling

On the tenth day of BCMC camp, my club gave to me, 10 smelly skiers.....

Time for some rum from Brenda and hedgehog chocolates from Brian. We're getting close. Cecil the bushy tailed wood rat finally made an appearance. James showed us a card trick. Yurgen toasted chestnuts on the stove and finally 1999 in British Columbia arrived --Yeh !!!!! Passed out immediately in the tent, exhausted by the midnight frenzy.

Jan 1, sunny, -10°C

1999 brought a beautiful day. Jeff D., Jake, and I practised our powder skiing techniques on some awesome super long glade runs and bowls from 2000 m. The others bagged as many peaks as they could - Arrowhead, Table, Anemone. We had incredible views of Cloudraker. Menu: Norwegian Curried Pork.

Jake, Richard and I were a food group and I have described our sumptuous courses. It seems that we were eating better here than at home!! Other food groups managed even more elaborate cuisines, complete with appetizers and deserts!!

Jan 2, sunny, -15°C

(I don't think we brought enough food)

Another beautiful day, but time to ski out. Scooted across the avalanche slope (didn't seem so scary anymore). Then down through the steep trees. Unfortunately, a hard crust layer had formed, making the descent treacherous. My skins would not stick and Jake and I ended up postholing down. We finally made it and were cheered on by our party as we crossed Lizzie Lake. The logging road had turned into a sheet of ice. With warmer temperatures and duct tape I skinned down the road. Some others took the kamikaze approach and took off at warp speeds. At the trucks before dark, and back to civilization we went; stopping off for one last BCMC camp dinner.

Participants: Jeff Driedger, Jake Filusz, Shawn Galvin, Brenda Lomax, Brian Lomax, Yurgen Meninga, Alice Obermajer, Richard Pavlovitch, Jesse Puddicombe, and Jeff Rabinovitch (Organizer)

North Stein Traverse

14 August - 3 September, 1999

by Peter Paré

"Is this Blowdown Pass?" asked the helicopter pilot alternately consulting his 1/250,000 map and the view through the Plexiglas, as we circled in swirling cloud above the reddish-yellow rocky crest which separates the Blowdown and Cottonwood drainages. We had taken the bus from Vancouver to Pemberton that morning and were trying to put down 2 one-week food caches for our planned three-week traverse of the North Stein Divide from Cloudraker Mountain to Lytton, but it appeared we were already lost! I pointed out the road across the pass and we scooted through just below the cloud cover, but we were then faced with a solid wall of cloud and couldn't go forward to our intended drop site at the head of Texas Creek. The pilot put down in the meadows beyond the pass to consult the map and then we had to go back to the Duffey Lake corridor to try to find our way to the drop site. Eventually we could only put down at a 2400 m col on the divide above one of the branches of Gott Creek. After Lisa and I hurriedly stashed the plastic bucket and built a hasty cairn we tried to imprint the topography of the unfamiliar col on our mind and asked the pilot for accurate map coordinates. The second food drop was just as unsatisfactory. It was intended to be at a pass at the very headwaters of a branch of Van Horlick Creek, but once again the site was shrouded in cloud and we had to put the bucket down in the middle of a snow and boulder field below the col. We then had to return to the Duffey Lake corridor to get back to the Lillooet valley and up Lizzie Creek. We wanted to be dropped at Shields Lake slightly northeast of Cloudraker, but once again cloud blocked our way and the pilot finally dropped us on a misty ridge and said that according to the GPS we were only a km from where we wanted to be.....only trouble was we couldn't see anything. Looking at our watches we found that the flight had taken 1.8 hours instead of the 1 hour we had planned (and budgeted) for! After surveying our situation I got out the topo to see if we could identify exactly where we had left the 'Texas Ck' drop and found to our distress that the map coordinates the pilot had given us put the drop on the top of a peak, not a pass! There were passes on either side of the peak but we weren't sure which was the

drop site. Needless to say the thought that we might not be able to find our second food drop became a topic of conversation for the next two weeks.

We tottered down the ridge with our heavy packs and soon found the ice and snow covered Shields Lake as well as a flat heathered tent site on a rocky promontory above the lake. We set up camp in the swirling mist and it proceeded to rain for the next two days. The alarming thing was that I finished one of the three books I had for the traverse, and we hadn't even started. The two day delay meant that we decided to abandon the planned ascent of Cloudraker and so when the rain stopped at 1 pm on the third day we headed east past Sapphire Lake toward Long Lake. There was an amazing amount of snow, Long Lake was still mainly ice covered, all a result of the record winter snow pack of 1999. We camped above Long Lake on the way to Moraine Pass and the weather continued to improve.

Day 4 dawned clear and we got our first view back to Cloudraker and forward to the peaks around Tundra Lake. Through Moraine Pass and past Iceberg Lake, mainly on snow, brought us to the ridge above Cherry Pip pass for lunch and our first views of the unknown territory ahead. The divide north of Tundra Peak includes Aurora Pk, Lindisfarne, Meditation and Phacelia. To the west of the Divide is the lovely Bellavista Ridge. We tried to cut the corner rather than descending into the trees below Cherry Pip Pass and this resulted in the most scary climbing of the whole traverse down a slippery creek bed. As we climbed again up the southern flanks of Lindisfarne Mtn. we came upon a tarn just above tree line and quickly stripped, bathed, and pitched the tent. The weather looked settled and we hoped it was the "Big High" that had so far not materialized that summer.

Next morning was clear again and we set off before breakfast to climb to 2100 m on the west flank of Lindisfarne where we set up the tent on a flat patch of heather with a 360 degree panorama. We had a leisurely breakfast before setting off at 11 am to climb Lindisfarne (2530 m). Lunch on the peak at 1:30 pm with our first views into the Stein drainage, a branch of the North Stein river which drains the small glaciers on the north east slopes of Lindisfarne, and Meditation. We descended onto the glacier and circled back to the col between Lindisfarne and Meditation from where we climbed Meditation Mtn.

(2560 m). We reached the peak at 5:30 and had excellent views of the way ahead. Back to the tent by 7:30 for a quick dip and a sunset dinner.

The morning of day 6 was misty but the cloud slowly lifted, as did our spirits. We climbed back to the Lindisfarne-Meditation col and after crossing the glacier northeast of Meditation we gained the Divide and had a pleasant 6 hr hike with pristine and preserved branches of the North Stein on our right and the upper reaches of the heavily logged Twin Two creek on our left. Below us was a partially frozen lake; the open water was a deep turquoise and the snow covered parts were almost crimson with concentrated red algae. We stopped at 4:30 by a small and reasonably warm tarn where we washed ourselves and our clothes.

On day 7 the sun hit the tent at 7:30 am and we had a hearty breakfast of couscous left over from dinner before setting out along the long ridge which ends in Brimstone Mtn. The descent from Brimstone was a bit unnerving but we were at the next pass for an idyllic lunch by a stream by 1 pm and then climbed steep scree to reach the long terraced East Ridge of Storm Peak which we had climbed on a previous trip with Klaus Haring in 1996. We climbed the ridge to the base of the summit pyramid before descending to the glacier on its north side and gaining the long roller coaster ridge which we knew would take us to a picturesque pass between the headwaters of Van Horlick Creek and the North Stein. We reached this pass at 6:45 pm and despite the increasing wind and an invasion of lenticular clouds we had a dip in a partially snow covered tarn and watched the sun descend behind Snowspider, Joffre and Matier Peaks. There were copious signs of mountain goat but we never did see one in the flesh.

There were some showers during the night but in the AM it was only partially cloudy with a cool wind blowing from the southwest. We now left the divide to the west and headed north toward the pass where the first food drop was to have been. A few hours brought us over the pass to the steep boulder strewn slope where we had left the food, but with snow melt the terrain looked unfamiliar and we couldn't find the food for over an hour! It was a relief to realize that we wouldn't have to suffer the embarrassment of a forced retreat down the Van Horlick Creek road!

We set up camp on a bump just above the lovely lake which forms the origin of a branch of Van

Horlick Creek. It cleared completely but was chilly (4 degrees at supper time) and we took a stunning walk around the lake in the evening light.

The next day was a rest day designed to eat food and lighten the packs and it was a lovely day with no wind. We climbed the rust colored mountain (2350 m) immediately north of the lake where we could see south east to Kwoiek Peak, Tiara Tower, Mehatl Peak, Mt Klackarpun and Mt. Skook Jim which define the south divide of the Stein, a traverse which we had done two years previously. By the time we returned to the lake it was hot and Lisa devised a "luge run" down the snow covered slopes directly into the lake! I went first on my thermarest and survived but Lisa was dissatisfied with my slow speed of descent and chose instead a plastic bag as her "luge" which resulted in a much faster descent and screams of delight??, agony??

The next day we shouldered our now heavy packs, plus the empty bucket and descended to touch briefly on a logging road before ascending to Van Horlick Pass. This was our warmest and buggiest day. We stopped briefly for lunch at the pass but the bugs were so bad we waded through hectares of alpine flowers to reach a more exposed camping spot with a breeze to keep them away. After lying down in a tarn with only our heads exposed to the mozzies and black flies, we set up the tent, without the fly as a refuge and enjoyed the wonderful views down the North Stein. That night we slept without the fly and the almost full moon and starry sky were visible through the mesh of the tent.

On day 11 we awoke to a red sky to the east and the sound of baby marmots mewing for breakfast? There were big black clouds to the southwest but we left the tent where it was and did a day hike south along the eastern rim of the North Stein to a 2350 m peak which gave good views of a series of lakes in the Scudamore Creek drainage. As the clouds built and distant rain moved toward us from the southwest, we hurried back to camp, arriving just as the wind and rain started at 2 pm. It blew and rained for the next 18 hours; our exposed site, perfect for blowing away mozzies, was exactly the wrong place to be in the storm. We could hear gusts of wind gathering force in the valley below and we waited helplessly as their momentum built before lashing our little tent with their full fury. It was a restless night as the gusts would periodically flatten the tent.

The next morning was grey and blowing but no rain, so we set off along the divide and the easy ridges above Scudamore Creek. As we crossed a meadow Lisa pointed out a large grizzly on the other side of the bowl feeding on the lush helebore. It didn't see or smell us so we gingerly went on our way. Up and down we went between branches of Scudamore and Van Horlick and eventually we climbed 400 m to the west side of the ring of peaks which surrounds Cirque Lake at the easternmost extension of Scudamore. We had trouble finding a safe descent route in the gathering darkness but by 7:30 pm we had reached a small tarn in the meadows beside the lake.

It remained cool and blustery the next day. As we ascended the marshy flower strewn slopes toward the headwaters of Blowdown Creek we came upon 5 deer, 4 magnificent bucks and a young one; they watched our progress with aloof interest before speeding off.

On the east side of the divide we eventually reached Blowdown Pass and after following the road for a few km we ascended 100 m to the long east ridge that leads down from Gott Peak. Now came decision time. We had a good view of the ridges that make up the divide around the branches of Cottonwood Creek and it looked a long way and required a steep descent into the next valley. Lisa suggested an alternative route. The ridge we were on extended above timberline for 5-6 km to the east, separating major branches of Cottonwood Ck. By going along the ridge and then descending to 1500 m in Cottonwood Creek we could regain the north divide and save at least a day's travel, (that is, if we were right in our guess as to which pass the food was

in. If we were wrong it would mean at least a day's walk back along the north divide!!) The decision made, we plopped the tent down right on the rim of the ridge with great views of the preserved upper reaches of the many branches of Cottonwood Ck. It was wonderful to realize that for almost the entire 3 week traverse we could look into one of many preserved wooded valleys and as we looked across the whole Stein Drainage it was fantastic that, as far as the eye could see to the south Stein divide, was park

Day 14 dawned clear and fresh and we worked our way along the ridge and at 3:30 pm found a lovely little stream, tarn, and meadow to camp in at the end of the ridge. We got an early start next day which we later named the day of reprises! A 200 m climb to regain the ridge was followed by a 700 m descent



Camp above Long Lake.

Photo - L. Baile/P. Paré.



View towards Van Horlick Pass, from the peak N of the lake.

Photo - L. Baile/P. Paré.



Peter on an evening stroll.

Photo - L. Baile.



Peter straddles the N Stein-Twin Two divide.

Photo - L. Baile.



Hiking beside a creek descending to the W Branch of Van Horlick Ck.

Photo - P. Paré.

through the forest to Cottonwood Ck. The descent was surprisingly pleasant - rather open forest interspersed with patches of flowers; the only bush was blueberry, no slide alder or devil's club! Reprise number one was the finding that Cottonwood Creek

was easily fordable. I waded across and clambered out onto a big log and Lisa followed closely behind. As she swung her leg over the log it locked at a ninety degree angle. It was painful, she couldn't straighten it and she couldn't even get off the log. Unspoken images of what we would have to do if it didn't straighten out went through our minds. We had an emergency locator but, of all the places on the whole traverse, this was the one spot that would be most difficult for a helicopter to find us, let alone effect a rescue; we were in thick bush at the bottom of the valley. It would take me two days to hike out to Duffey Lake road leaving Lisa alone and immobile. I filled Lisa full of pain killers and she carefully tried to extend the leg. After about 20 minutes of effort the spasm seemed to abate and she was able to stretch it out and take a few careful steps. Another 20 minutes and she was ready to try ascending.....it appeared to work - reprise number 2.

The ascent was even easier going than the descent because we were on the dry south facing slopes of the valley and the trees were even more open. After 600 m of steep elevation gain we topped out into a little hanging valley which was a veritable Shangri-la; a meandering stream in a lupine studded meadow. Now if only we could find the food. It was another 200 m elevation gain and 2 km to the pass and as we followed the stream we became more and more convinced that this was the misty pass that we had briefly visited two weeks earlier, and we were right.....reprise number 3! The walk back to the tent with full packs was a joyful happening and we rewarded ourselves with a swim, snooze and an extra large dinner.

Day 16 we woke to pinkish cloud above the Stein. We closed our eyes for a few minutes more sleep and when next we looked, it had changed to dark clouds - it was going to rain. We decided to move as far as we could before it started and that involved cutting across a steep nose between two branches of Cottonwood Ck. We ascended a steep flower strewn creek bed - it was a horticultural wonderland containing a profusion of every possible alpine flower. As we crossed the nose and passed two bleak looking snow-covered lakes, it started to shower and when we finally crossed the 2200 m pass into the next valley it started to rain seriously.

We descended as fast as we could over the slick scree and found a relatively sheltered heather-

covered hollow among the trees. Now really wet and chilled, we set up the tent and crawled into the bags for a 2 hour snooze. It cleared enough for us to have our couscous dinner outside and we opened the third of the 3 maps which covered the traverse to examine the route ahead.

It rained during the night and was misty with showers and snow flurries (!) in the morning. A sucker hole at 11 am convinced us to venture forth and we crossed a lovely, but wet, meadow and went over another pass to reach Brimful Lake. By this time it was snowing fairly briskly but we decided we needed to push on until at least we reached Cattle Valley and so we climbed into the cloud above the lake and actually ascended the 2400 m peak east of the lake so that we could descend its relatively easy east ridge into Cattle Valley. As we came out of the cloud we could hear the bellowing of unhappy sounding cattle from below. According to Lisa, who was raised on a dairy farm, they were saying, "Hey, its not supposed to snow in August, aye!" We were surprised that there were still cattle in the valley since it is part of the Stein drainage and should now be park. Perhaps they have been allowed to stay due to a grandfather clause? It was 3°C when we camped and as the clouds lifted, snow covered peaks were observed.

Day 18, August 31, was -1°C, low cloud and some sucker holes in the morning. We crossed Cattle valley and found the trail that leads up to its east rim and down Sihwe Creek, the trail up which the cattle are brought in the spring. As we climbed to the valley rim it started to snow heavily and the possibility of heading out early down the trail was raised. The dialogue went something like this: Peter: "We could just stay on this trail and be out in about 4-5 hours." Lisa: "We haven't given the route a fair chance; there are still 4 days till we have to be out. Besides I am not psychologically prepared to re-enter civilization" Peter: "It's blowing a blizzard. It wouldn't exactly be an ignominious retreat, there could be 60 cm of snow on the ground by tomorrow!" We had reached the rim and it was time for a decision, onward or down. Lisa: "How about flipping a coin? Or going on until that little lake in the west branch of Ponderosa Ck?" The decision point passed and we were walking up the ridge toward Earlobe Lake and Siwhe Mountain! Moments later we turned around to see a broad band of blue sky moving in. As the cloud blew off the nearby peaks we were in a winter wonderland - fresh



The lovely lake.

Photo - L. Baile/P. Paré.



Cirque Lake.

Photo - L. Baile.



On the snowed-up ridge above Devil's Lake.

Photo - P. Paré.

snow carpeted the meadows and appeared to etch the dark rock of the surrounding peaks. Stunningly beautiful. We did camp that night by the little pond at the head of the west branch of Ponderosa Ck. and most of the snow melted.

September 1st was clear but cold, -8°C , when we woke with a thin layer of ice on the pond. We crossed the ridge to the next branch of Ponderosa Ck. and strolled down the lovely valley toward the north side of Sihwe Mountain, and then around its west side to reach a little tarn and meadow at the headwaters of the branch of Ponderosa that runs east toward Stein Mountain. We saw flowering *Potentilla* and rabbits in the valley. That evening we had a spectacular display of alpen glow on the surrounding, now snow-covered, peaks and watched a marten doing a fantastic dance on the nearby scree. We hoped for good weather the next day which would see our highest section of the whole traverse; we planned to ascend the divide between Sihwe Mountain and Stein Mountain and climb Stein from its south west col.

During the night there was the ominous sound of precipitation on the tent and it wasn't the rain type of precipitation! It was clear in the morning but -5°C with 12 cm of fresh snow on the ground. The climb to the divide at 2500 m was tiresome because the talus was partially covered in fresh snow which was more like 25 cm deep at this elevation and blown into drifts in spots. There was a gorgeous view from the top back toward Sihwe and forward toward Stein, but we were somewhat alarmed to see a number of small crevassed glaciers which weren't indicated on the map and which we had to traverse to reach Stein Mountain; we hadn't brought crampons. The 25 cm of fresh melting snow on the firm snow of the glaciers made for interesting travel, but we were able to skirt the obvious crevasses. We had lunch by a turquoise blue lake at 2300 m in the rocky and desolate headwaters of the south branch of Sihwe Creek. As we ate, Lisa pointed out a large pile of bear scat and as we speculated what would bring a bear to such an unfriendly place she noted the desiccated hind legs of a goat. It could have been caught in an avalanche and the aroma of its remains must have attracted the bear, who feasted and left a little offering to the gods.

By 3 pm we were at the base of the steep crevassed glacier that leads to the Southwest Ridge of Stein but luckily we were able to climb a snow covered moraine to the west of the ice and reached the col at 2600 m by 4:10 pm. Dropping packs, we raced up to the 2800 m summit of Stein Mountain and were rewarded with spectacular views, northwest to Sihwe Mountain, southwest to the main Stein Valley and a plateau studded with small lakes in the

foreground 600 m below us and southeast along the 11 km ridge we would descend on the morrow which would take us to the mouth of the Stein. Beyond the ridge we could see the Fraser River and the town of Lytton, our first indication of civilization (except for logging and mining roads, trails and cattle!)

A 500 m descent, mainly on scree, brought us at 6:30 pm to a tiny stream and flat meadow to the east of the plateau of lakes and poised to regain the ridge for the final descent the next day. It cooled rapidly to -2°C when the sun set and we were in the bags by 8:30.

The next morning, day 21, Lisa's socks which had been left outside were frozen and could stand by themselves. It was a beautiful day for our 2000 m descent down the ridge. We first climbed a hundred metres or so to gain the ridge and then went directly along its crest; easily angled for the first 6-7 km and then descending steeply through mainly open forest. At lunch we confirmed by direct observation that the Lytton ferry was back in operation and we could see tiny cars wending their way along the Lytton-Lillooet highway below us. There were wonderful patches of



Lisa looking towards Siwhe Mtn.

Photo - P. Paré.

old growth Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine with a grassy understory along the ridge. It is a very dry ridge and would be hard to ascend without a lot of extra water. The final 600 m were through steep forest, and then we were walking in the setting sun along the open ponderosa pine on the north of the Stein. We dropped to the river's edge just 2 km upstream of the bridge and after a celebratory swim in the Stein and an offering of thanks to the spirits of the River, we made our last camp. The next morning we walked to the ferry across the Fraser, got a lift into Lytton and caught the bus back to Vancouver.

Party: Lisa Baile, Peter Paré.



Near the col on the SW Ridge of Stein Mtn.

Photo - L. Baile.

Joffre Pk
12-13 June, 1999
by Rich Pawlowicz

"Thank goodness the weather didn't improve"
- JvdB, Joffre '99.

Far above the Duffey Lake Road lies the brooding presence of mighty Mt. Joffre. The massive buttresses and stepped ridges of this dramatic peak have dominated my thoughts ever since an abortive expedition in 1997, during which we climbed to 2500 m on the North Ridge. The summit was in sight but the snow conditions were bad and, exhausted, we retreated with heavy hearts, descending to spiritual depths of self-loathing and despair. In the following year I feebly penetrated within a few km of this mountain (drove by on the Duffey Lake Road), taking only a few photos with which to torture my anguished imagination. Even in the crystalline blue summer sky the East Face exuded a dark malevolent menace (it was the shady side), like a huge mound of rock-coloured stale jello cubes speckled with chunks of marshmallow. More than ever, I felt drawn to it, deadly dreams filled with darkened images of its desperate cornices and drab, snow-plastered rock.

In the early months of 1999, I began the planning for an expedition to climb this cream-covered pimple on the acned Coast Range landscape. The subtle dance of recruiting climbers, contacts, networks, and discreet invitations began (i.e. I put it on the schedule). My life began to be dominated by all of the equipment and logistical planning required for such an endeavor (who brings a rope, how many cars, and why can't people speak more clearly when leaving their name on the answering machine?). In the evenings I pored over previous expedition accounts, trying to make sense of what they had done (reread Fairley a couple of times).

Finally, the expedition got underway. Members traveled by different means to our rendezvous on the slopes of the exotic North Shore mountains (the church lot) from which a motley caravan of vehicles gaily adorned with native iconography (graffiti scribbled in the dust) wended their way through the lush green lowland valley penetrating far into the interior and the true beginning of the expedition (the Joffre Lakes Parking lot). After that point, we were cut off from civilization and its mundane cares. Ahead gleamed the Matier icefall, surrounded by snowy

peaks. My soul leaped forward, glad to be free of the preparatory paperwork and all its worries (getting people to sign the waivers).

The first day was spent hauling loads. Some expedition members scouted ahead for the best route ("see any orange markers?") while behind the rest toiled with their massive packs. Soon we were at the upper lake, still frozen and surrounded by the snows of winter. A temporary base camp (lunch spot) was set up at 1600 m while we discussed the icefall. Traversing the Matier Icefall is always a dangerous part of north side ascents. We were the first expedition this year and no fixed lines had yet been set up. The usual right side route was blocked by crevasses and overhanging seracs. We decided to use the left side route, threading the fine line between the icefall on the right and numerous avalanche fans (wet snow sloughs) on the left.

Roped up, we ascended to Advanced Base Camp (2300 m), at the foot of the N ridges' NW Buttress. Above us the skies darkened as high clouds began scudding across the once-blue expanse.

Once at ABC the party split up. The expedition was already taking its toll in injury (my knee hurt), but since I knew that it was important to maintain momentum, a scouting party was sent off up the WNW Gully (i.e. they left me) to explore the lower reaches of the N Ridge. Both the N Ridge and SW Gully were listed on our climbing permit but we had learned during transit (ran into people at the Pemberton Petrocan) that other parties were also

aiming for the SW Gully via a SE side approach.

The scouting party reached a high point at 2550 m, but found that the climbing was harder than expected and that fixed ropes would probably be required at 3 locations. The evening was spent discussing options, detailing loads and the climbing sequence.

The next morning - disaster! Overnight rain had fallen, and the snow, instead of firming up into solid cramponing, had remained deep and slushy. The SW Gully was definitely out of the question. Would the N Ridge go? We snoozed in our tents until the rain stopped, taking occasional glimpses at the stormy sky. Joffre was hidden far above in thick cloud.

Finally climbing parties set off. Following the steps left the previous evening, we quickly reached the ridge. In the distance more dark gray clouds scudded ominously nearer. Had we stayed too late to avoid the summer monsoon? The first fixed line was set up, but time was racing by on the narrow ridge. In the wind communication was difficult. The careful plan crafted at Base Camp was proving unworkable. The fatigue of climbing at altitude and minor injuries (my knee hurt some more) were taking their toll on our group. After some shouted discussions at 2600 m a small summit party (3 people at the front) was sent on ahead. We gave them what gear we had and watched them disappear into the rolling mists. The rest of us retreated to Camp II at the top of the first fixed line and waited to see if the weather would improve. However, it began to rain again, and eventually we retreated back to Base Camp.



Joffre (right of centre) with its N Ridge on the right skyline.

Photo - R. Pawlowicz.

Back at Camp we chatted nervously. What drama was occurring far up in the gloom? Conversations would trail off, mid-sentence, as eyes looked up towards the notch at the base of the clouds. Then - a figure! And another! Finally all three were descending the snow slopes above the camp.

Climbing fast and light, the summit party had raced ahead, alpine style, in a continuous push to the summit. Tricky 3rd and 4th class rock and snow was traversed unroped, and soon they stepped onto a peak unmarked by human presence, with visibility of only a few metres. Then began the descent rappels, and tragedy struck, like the bite of a pit viper in the cupboard under the kitchen sink when you are reaching for an old plastic bag.

Downclimbing a rocky buttress, one climber slipped. A dangerous fall was averted, but not injury (he cut his finger). The flow of blood was staunches by emergency first aid (Band-Aid applied), and the descent carefully resumed.

At Base Camp we welcomed the descending team. The expedition was a success! Our joy was mixed with grief over our injured companion. As the weather was not improving and the end of the season approached (work on Monday) we quickly dismantled the camp and began the return. The endless approach now sped by in reverse as a continuous blur, marked only by the dramatic sight and sound of the icfall shedding tons of debris in a furious explosion. Another day of rain had made the snow a little more treacherous and we all broke through the surface crusts at one point or another (aargh). Behind us the lower snow slopes gleamed in occasional patches of sun but the peaks remained wreathed in gray, like the upper story of a burning beach cabana surrounded by white hotel towels, confirming the wisdom of our choices.

As we sat afterwards and reminisced in a squalid Brackendale bazaar teahouse (the Shady Tree pub), we pondered over the meaning of it all. The senseless tragedy, the waste of fine blood, all for an absurdity. Why do we climb? The savage arena of the mountains has little pity for our puny lives and dreams, and yet an unspoken bond exists. We are like little poppy seeds glued to an immense rocky bagel covered in white cream cheese - without the bagel, we would be no more than black specks of dirt. For us the mountains had been a natural field of activity where, playing on the frontiers of life and death, we had found the freedom for which we were blindly

groping and which was as necessary to us as ice cream with bits of chocolate. I have not named the summit team because, in a sense, we all summited, although only three of us actually trod the snowy tip (i.e. I'm jealous it wasn't me). Joffre, to which we had gone empty-handed, was a treasure on which we should live the rest of our days. With this realization we flip the channel: a new life begins.

There are other Joffres in the lives of men.

* * *

Expedition members:

Climbers: Jos van der Burg, Frank Chanroux, Mark Fisher, Marco Iucolino, Tim Lawrence, David Pougatch, Gilles Vandenbeuck, Robin Wentworth, Jeremy Williams

Organizer and Expedition Historian:

Rich Pawlowicz (who has possibly read too many mountaineering books)

North Ck.

1-9 May, 1999

by Paul Kubik

May 1-2: BCFS just unlocked the Lillooet FSR gate in time for our trip. We drove to 600 m el. on North Creek Main, then skied. In contrast to last year, when Karin and I were short of food, this year there was an abundance. We dragged a sled full of food in. A brutal sledding experience through the approximately three kilometers of steep forest but clear sailing once on the avalanche run outs. Now to some serious eating.

La Nina year. Mucho snow. Three meters on the ground at the cabin. We dug out the wood cavern under the porch and the rear window. Jos located the outhouse and liberated it from winter's grasp. The porch railing had gone, the cap on the stove pipe was crushed and the heat shield was bent, but otherwise the cabin looked intact.

Only two entries in the log book since our entry last Easter. One fly-in, fly-out foursome in February and four snowmobilers in April. The following day's goal was to sled and ski to Pebble Creek cabin and return to North Creek at the end of nine days. But the weather like last year was not cooperating.

Interesting phenomenon observed on the way in: Tree limbs snapped off 10 to 12 m above the snow level on an avalanche track. Jos thought it was the outcome of a powder snow avalanche earlier in the

year. Karin thought that it was the power of the Goddess, the dogs thought it was Dog.

May 3: Hemonius in the bag! Crappy weather in the morning forestalled our Pebble departure. A giant sucker hole enticed Paul, Jos and the dogs to peak-bag and ski in the afternoon. On the descent down from the summit to the skis, 100 m below, the visibility worsened and a loud sucking sound was heard. The ski down was flawed only by the flat light, otherwise light powder on a hard base. Conditions could be described as "late winter" rather than early May. When replenishing the wood supply, we found damage to the cabin. The beam supporting the floor joists on the west side was warped and cracked - about 5 cm of deflection.

May 4: Arrived at Pebble Creek cabin - a slum compared to North Creek. Went up the "Gun Barrel Glacier" to Pebble Glacier and then to the lake at 1550 m el. in Pebble-MacParlon pass.

May 5: Deteriorating weather. Skied "Secret Gully" behind the cabin on "Secret Ridge" four times.

May 6: A total wipeout - a warm front arrived overnight and then a cold front in the evening. Only one run in Secret Gully was made.

May 7: Improving weather. Skied Peak 2580 m overlooking the glacier running north to Mount Ethelweard. Briefly got a glimpse of Ethelweard. Lots of wind slab from the storm. Packed up and headed out to North Creek over Pebble Glacier - now in a whiteout. Descended the shooting gallery around the Gun Barrel Glacier in flat light. Lots of recent avalanches from the storm. Very cold. Arrived back in North Creek intact.

May 8: Karin skied as far as the 1900 m col below Blockhead. Deteriorating visibility prompted her to ski down to the cabin and get some turns in. Good snow. After accompanying her down, I went back up and found Jos descending the ridge of Sugus. Went up Sugus, then Jos and I skied down into the valley north of Hemonius. Flat light - tricky. Completed the circuit back to the cabin.

May 9: Departure to civilization. The ski down from the cabin to the last section of forest before the logging road was fast - one hour from the cabin. Trudging back through the forest it was easier to walk. A lot of snow had melted off the road in the nine days we were away. It finally felt like spring.

Participants: Jos Van der Burg, Karin Rolfes-Kubik, and Paul Kubik, Ogy, Muffy.

Shulaps Range

30 August - 1 September, 1998

by Greg Stoltmann

Having done an excellent hike in the Southern Chilcotin Mountains exactly two months earlier, Nancy Henderson and I decided to try another extended hike into an area I was quite curious about, namely the Shulaps Range which lies north of the eastern third of Carpenter Lake. Carpenter Lake is the largest reservoir of BC Hydro's first major power project outside the Lower Mainland which resulted in the construction of two dams on the upper Bridge River.

We decided to drive into the area on the Saturday night and camp at one of the low lying BCFS campsites. We got to bed at around midnight in the Liza Creek campsite on the Marshall Lake Road. This wasn't much of a campsite at all and if the Forest Service expects to charge for this one they had better do some upgrading on it.

The next morning saw us up at 6:20 and moving by 6:45 toward the bottom of the Jim Creek mine road about midway along the Shulaps Range on its southwest side. At this point I noted the loss of my toque which had mysteriously disappeared. This was quite amazing since it was the third one of this type that I had lost. Oh well, on up the road since there was nothing I could do about it. The Jim Creek road is a steep 4x4 road which splits about three quarters of the way up. For our purposes the left fork was the better but we tried the right one first, wound up spinning and had to back down to the fork. Eventually we wound up parking in the alpine at about 2100 m, the time being 7:50. We then had a quick breakfast and were moving by around 8:30.

The first part of our upward hike saw us moving up the remainder of the mining road towards a ridge with some mild class two scrambling. From here we hiked up a big SW facing talus-scrree slope to reach the crest of the range by around 12:30. Of note was the presence of a shiny green type of rock that often formed in slab-type formations. I later found out that this was serpentine and that there is much of it in evidence in the Shulaps Range.

At this point we ditched the heavy packs and opted for a makeshift minimal load setup. Both Shulaps Mountain and Big Dog Mountain, the two highest peaks in the Shulaps Range were visible from this point and we decided that due to our position



Nancy on Shulaps ridge crest.

Photo - G. Stoltmann.



Looking SE towards Shulaps Mtn.

Photo - G. Stoltmann.



Looking SE from Shulaps Mtn.

Photo - G. Stoltmann.



Looking NW from Shulaps Mtn.

Photo - G. Stoltmann.

relative to them that Shulaps would be climbed first. With our light loads we moved easily in a southeast direction along the spine of the range, with Carpenter Lake and the Bendor Range on our right and the Yalakom River Valley and Camelsfoot Range on our left. Also on our left was the largest alpine basin in the range forming the headwaters of Peridotite Creek with a lake at the bottom of it and Shulaps on its upper south side.

The summit of Shulaps was reached by 2:30 with some scrambling near the top. From the 2870 m peak we were able to look both northwest and southeast along a very clearly defined range. By 4:40 we were back at the packs after a four hour round trip.

We then moved northwest along the range hoping to reach a small lake two valleys south of Big Dog Mountain by nightfall. When we reached the head of this valley our progress was stopped by a glacier for which we should have had crampons. Without the crampons we were forced to abandon going around the southeast side of the glacier and had to consider other options. Nancy struck northwest up a talus ridge which then joined to another ridge down which she walked. I, on the other hand, decided to jump a crevasse at the midpoint of the top of the glacier and then proceeded to walk down the remainder of the glacier which was quite smooth and crevasse-free. Ultimately we both arrived at the lake at around 8 pm in near darkness.

Quickly we threw the pyramid shelter up and got the dinner on while marveling at the unusually barren red rock look of the valley. We buried the food in some rocks and then went to bed at 11:10.

The next morning we were up at 6 am after Nancy reported seeing a bear up the valley. This, fortunately, turned out only to be a rock. By 8 am we were moving for Big Dog Mountain, an 18 km round trip from camp. After hiking along the lake heading northeast we had to lose about 150 m of elevation and then regain 300 m on the valley's northwest slope. About three quarters of the way up the slope we happened upon a trail which went down into the Blue Creek valley immediately south of Big Dog Mountain. After crossing Blue Creek we left the trail and began hiking up Big Dog's south slope. The mountain is not entirely straightforward and we had to pass a 2600 m false summit with an alpine lake just to the north and then another false summit before the main summit could be seen. The whole mountain is a

giant reddish rubble heap which is either scrambling or walking, and the 2850 m summit was reached at 1 pm. We spent a good hour on top and had lunch. The location of Big Dog is at a transition in landscapes with gentle interior plateau country to the north and east and the main Southern Chilcotin mountains to the west. Also visible was the top of the Blue Creek Mine road to the southeast which actually make it possible to do Big Dog in a weekend from Vancouver! On the return trip down Big Dog we opted for some good "screeing" slopes to add speed and fun to the descent.

From Blue Creek we retraced our route back to camp for a 6:30 pm arrival. Incidentally, the weather had been entirely sunny up to this point. Dinner and the usual camp routines led us to bed by 10 pm, but Nancy was unable to relax owing to a case of "bearania" brought on by rock rustling sounds from up valley. I went out and checked on the food and it was okay, and determined that the wind was sending rockfall sounds down the valley to our camp, rather than it being a bear ripping apart our food cache. After this we were finally able to relax.

On the last day of our hike we were up at 8 to another mainly clear day with some light cloud. After the usual breakfast routine we headed up the moraine ridge that Nancy had initially descended to get to camp. Upon reaching the crest of the range we decided to hike back to the truck via a different route which eliminated the tedious crossing of a large talus slope.

Heading in a southwesterly direction we found some excellent "screeing" slopes to lose a large amount of elevation on this route. Below this we hiked down into a meadowed bowl with a waterfall and ascended up a gully on its southwest side to the top of the mining track. Losing patience with some of the mining track I opted to cut some of the upper switchbacks by walking down some of the steep grassy slopes backwards so as to take stress off my legs. Soon we were on gentler ground where the walking was more casual and within 20 minutes the truck was reached at about 2 pm.

I kept my eyes open for my toque on the Jim Creek and Marshall Lake roads but no luck. Dinner was at the Sante Fe Station in Pemberton, thus concluding a most excellent hike.

Bridge Glacier Ski Camp
2-9 May, 1998
by Pat Crean

We were five in number, which was very uneconomical for helicopter use, but ideal for the five passenger ski plane based at Squamish. It was Saturday, warm and sunny and we lazed around until 11 am while the pilot ferried another group up into the hills. At 11:30 we were loaded and taking off northwards. About 35 minutes later in the beefed-up turbo-charged Pilatus Porter we were at the main Bridge Glacier. Right out in the middle of the huge flat expanse of ice and snow, camp was at 2200 m. Clear and sunny, barometer reading 794 m.b., temperature +10°C. By mid-afternoon tents were up, toilets dug and lunch eaten. Time for our first ski, up a 2420 m peak to the south of camp.

Sunday 3rd - up the glacier and approached the west side of Bridge Pk. We reached the 2850 m outrider just west of the main summit and were confronted by a deep notch plus steep bare rock to the peak. We were not equipped for this and decided to try from another side.

Monday 4th - North and north-west from camp up the glacier, past a large wind-cirque and some impressive rock walls up a 2800 m peak, skiable all the way. This peak is about 2 km north of Stanley Pk. with a view all the way up the Stanley Smith Glacier

to the west. Since it did not have name, we christened it Frank Smith Pk. in honour of Stan's brother. Good ski off the peak.

Tuesday 5th - Northwest then westerly, close to some towering rock walls on the right and through a notch at the west end of the ridge, we traversed west to Stanley Pk., skiable to the peak. Weather clear, hot and 360 degree view. Skiing to die for. We left at 8:30 and were back by 2:30 pm.

Wednesday 6th - South from camp, then turned west through crevasses and up a steep east slope to approach Bridge Pk. from the south. Got to 2600 m. The weather was warm and sultry. It was already mid-afternoon and the snow was softening and the avalanche hazard increasing. With the steep snow slope to ski down we decided to get down and past the deep slots before the mountain started to slide.

Thursday, 7th - Once more we were skiing to the northwest of camp to an unnamed 2900 m peak less than 1 km southwest of Stanley Pk. This was gained by going between the two peaks and climbing on skis to the summit from the east side. As we huddled behind some rocks eating lunch, Brian produced a bright green apple, solemnly sliced it and gave a piece to each of us. We all agreed that the mountain should be call "Granny Smith", because indeed the apple was a granny smith variety, and also to honour Stan and Frank's venerable grandma. A good ski down in soft corn snow, but it turned cloudy in the evening.



Bridge Glacier camp.

Photo - P. Crean.



Heading towards Stanley Pk. Photo - P. Crean.



View to Bridge Pk. from the south. Photo - P. Crean.



Skiing down the Bridge Glacier. Photo - P. Crean.

Friday 8th - High stratus cloud and sultry. Three separate peaks form the "Stanley Ridge" running due east and west, Stanley being the most westerly. That day we went for the middle one, at 2800 m.

Saturday 9th - The weather looked decidedly uncertain, so we radioed out for pick-up at 2 pm to avoid getting stuck. At Squamish it was sunny and hot, tee shirt and shorts weather. Well, we lost one day but we won a great week of skiing. Participants: Marilyn Cram, Brian Wood, Mike Peel, Peter Stange, and Pat Crean (Organizer).

Bridge Glacier East Ski Camp 1-9 May, 1999 by Pat Crean

This camp was located to explore the area which drains down to the start of the Bridge River. Access was by helicopter from Pemberton. The grid ref of camp was 593357.

Saturday 1st - In by mid-afternoon with weather improving, sunny with broken clouds. It snowed lightly during the night.

Sunday 2nd - We had 5 cm of fresh snow and low thick cloud with the sun trying to break through. We headed up the glacier to the southwest of camp then turned north up a 2500 m knoll on the main ridge southwest of camp. A cold westerly wind precluded any lingering and drove us back to camp at 2:30 pm. It snowed again overnight.

Monday 3rd - Cloudy with sunny breaks, so we headed north from camp then west and south in a wide arc and finally settled on a 2400 m bump on the ridge.

Tuesday 4th - We skied south from camp on the left side of the slope, southwest by exposed rocks and up a steep slope to a col at 2100 m. We went up Pk. 2370 m on the way back and down to the snout of the glacier east of camp. An impressive icefall and cave at the bottom was easily reached on skis and was at about 1460 m.

Wednesday 5th - It was fogged in all day, sultry and almost raining in the evening. Fortunately it turned to snow later. Camp day. It snowed all night but was warm.

Thursday 6th - We had 20-25 cm of fresh heavy snow in the morning but it was almost raining. Totally fogged in again. We dug out and built snow walls.



Snout of the Bridge Glacier in 1999.

Photo - P. Crean.



Resting.

Photo - P. Crean.



On the summit of Pk. 2740 m.

Photo - P. Crean.



Approaching Pk. 2740 m south of Mt. Tait.

Photo - P. Crean.

Friday 7th - We awoke buried under 45 cm of heavy snow. After a big digout, the weather was a bit better - cloudy with sunny breaks. We skied south up a peak just to the east of Pk. 2370 m down to the nose of the glacier again then had the uphill pull back to the tents.

Saturday 8th - At last a sunny day, so we decided to go for a good long plod northwest towards Mt. Tait, but going up the steep slope to the col south of Pk. 2713 m and swinging south along the ridge to the 2740 m summit. The wind was bitterly cold, but the day was mostly clear with stupendous views of Lord, Frank Smith and Stanley Smith glaciers and km beyond.

Sunday 9th - The last day, as usual, is always sunny. The first group flew out at 11 am. A couple of hours later, more or less, we were basking in the warm sun at Pemberton airport.

Participants: Aaron Schneider, Peter Stange, Marilyn Cram, Gerard Clement, Julian Lash, Mike Peel and Pat Crean (Organiser).

Hiking the Nootka Island Trail

7-12 August, 1999

by Peter Gumplinger

A bit of history

Nootka Island, just north of Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island's west coast, abounds with the earliest history of British Columbia. The ancient Nuu-Chah-Nulth* village of Yuquot, at the southwestern tip of the island, has been continuously settled for over 4,300 years. It is the only place in Pacific Canada where native whaling originated and developed. One of the most significant archaeological finds associated with this heritage is known as the 'Whalers Shrine'. Originally located at one of the lakes adjacent to Yuquot (Friendly Cove), it is now in the New York Museum of Anthropology. By the late 18th century, when their ranking leader, Chief Maquinna, greeted the first white men on Vancouver Island, the site at Friendly Cove had become the capital summer village of the Mowachaht* people, housing around 1,500 natives in about 20 wooden long-houses. (*Nuu-Chah-Nulth is the name of all peoples indigenous to the West Coast of Vancouver Island, while Mowachaht refers specifically to those who lived at Yuquot.)

At that time, Spain claimed possession of the West Coast of North America by virtue of the papal Decree of Tordesillas (1492). In 1774, amid rumours of Russian fur traders on this coast, Juan Josef Perez Hernandez, in the "Santiago", arrived near Estevan Point, south of Yuquot, but apparently did not come ashore. Again in 1775, a Spanish expedition under Bruno de Hezeta, with the "Santiago" and the "Sonora", under Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, merely cruised the coast. First to land in the 1700's were Captain James Cook and his men, including George Vancouver, midshipman on the H.M.S. Discovery, and William Bligh, master on the H.M.S. Resolution, who entered Nootka Sound on March 31, 1778. Anchored at Resolution Cove on

Bligh Island, across from Friendly Cove harbour, the natives called out to Cook's ship: "itchme nutka, itchme nutka", meaning "go around", but Cook thought they were telling him that Nootka was the name of the area.

Captain Cook spent most of April, 1778, refitting his ships and exploring the area. His trading for excellent sea otter skins and publication of his journals in 1784 sparked the fur trade. The powerful Chief Maquinna became one of the major traders and liaisons among the early explorers and other native groups. Vessels from the East India Company were the first of the fur trading fleet to visit Yuquot. By 1788, John Meares, a retired lieutenant of the Royal Navy, brought European and Chinese workmen. They erected a dwelling and a shipyard where the first European vessel on the Northwest coast, the schooner "Northwest America", was built and launched. Due to the lucrative fur trade, Yuquot was the key port north of Mexico for hundreds of cargo ships for several years.

Word of this fur trade soon reached the Spaniards at San Blas, Mexico. The Viceroy decided to assert Spain's sovereignty in the region by establishing a fortification at San Rafael Island adjacent to Friendly Cove, where the Nootka Light Station now stands. In 1789, Spaniards under Esteban Jose Martinez built Fort San Miguel, Spain's northernmost garrison in the Pacific and the only one established in Canada. Spain seized a number of ships, including those of Captain John Meares. This controversy brought Britain and Spain to the brink of war before Spain backed down via the Nootka Convention in 1790. In 1792, Captain George Vancouver went to Fort San Miguel to meet Captain Juan Francisco de la Quadra and put the Nootka Convention into effect. The captains did not settle, however, and the flag of Spain flew on the West Coast of Canada until 1795 when others finally signed the treaty.

In 1803, after a period of escalating tensions, Chief Maquinna, the son of the Maquinna who greeted Captain Cook, decided to attack the trading vessel "Boston". Twenty-five of her 27 crew members were massacred. The two survivors, a blacksmith and a sail maker, were kept as Maquinna's slaves for over two years, facing death daily. The account of their sufferings was published in 1815 (Jewitt).

In 1889, Father Brabant built the original Roman Catholic Church in Yuquot, and in 1911, the Nootka

Light Station was constructed to guide ships to and from Nootka Sound, by then a busy mining district. Logging began in 1914, but it was not until 1938 that the first sawmill was built in the area and a gold rush started in Zeballos. A pulp mill was built at the mouth of Gold River in 1967, and the federal government cut off funding for Yuquot. By the '70s, all but one native family left their ancient village; most moved to Gold River.

Since then, Parks Canada has officially commemorated Yuquot as a National Historic Site. To celebrate the bicentennial of the historic meeting between Captains Vancouver and Quadra and as a gift to the Mowachahts, Spain donated an exquisite stain glass window for their new church, which was built after the original burned down sometime in the 1960's. The tribal council has built several rustic cabins for tourists arriving with the MV Uchuck III, a passenger boat sailing regularly from Gold River to various logging camps and native communities up the coast. More and more ocean kayakers now make Friendly Cove their destination, as do hikers wishing to experience the Mowachaht's traditional trail to their historical fishing camp at Bajo Point.

The party

I met Rayne about 25 kilometres into 1999's "Great Walk", a dour 63.5 km pledge walk on gravel logging roads from near Gold River to the coastal community of Tahsis. Rayne is a Tahsis local and a veteran of this self-punishing event. Later that day, I met her husband, Manfred, and their friend Sheri. When talk turned to hiking the Nootka Trail, I was more than glad to accept an invitation to join them. Joe is from Naniamo and was our designated leader. He had already hiked all, or portions of, the trail four or five times. He agreed to meet me at Departure Bay ferry terminal. When we arrived in Tahsis, Manfred and Rayne's residence was already bristling with activity and anticipation. Sheri was there with her husband, Dan, reworking their packs. Final arrangements were made with Heike to meet us in the morning and with a Tahsis local to take some of us out to Louie Bay. The rest would fit on a relative's sport-fishing boat.

The trip

Tahsis was teaming with mostly American fishing boats eager to catch the prized spring and

coho salmon. These boats are getting more abundant with every passing year, and with each year the good fishing is pushed further and further out into the open waters off Vancouver Island's West Coast. The mouth of Esperanza Inlet, Ferrer Point and the Nuchatlitz are now among the favourite and still productive sport fishing grounds. We crossed Tahsis Narrows and Hecate Channel through a convoy of boats, racing out for their daily catch. We also passed numerous commercial fish farms along the way. Low grey clouds obscured the hillside as we headed up Esperanza Inlet. The driving wind was cold when suddenly an armada of boats came into view, bobbing up and down in the swell between the Nuchatlitz group of islands. They were slowly trolling their bait. There must have been a hundred boats pursuing the ever more elusive silvery fish. Our boatsmen sped passed this frenzy and turned into Nuchatlitz Inlet in a wide circle, slowing down, fearful of the outer reef. The shoals here are visible only between ocean swells as narrow lines of foam. Beyond these outer islets reside successfully re-introduced colonies of shy sea otters. Once prized by European traders for their luxurious pelts, they were hunted nearly to extinction.

The ocean was calmer when we finally approached the mouth of Louie Bay, a sheltered bay at the north end of Nootka Island. Its northern shore is littered with big chunks of rusted metal from an aborted salvage operation of a cargo ship that ran aground near Ferrer Point. The wreck was pulled into the inlet and cut into pieces before the operation halted. The sheltered lagoon just to the southeast of here cannot be entered by motor boat without great risk. However, its interior is accessible by floatplane and it is the usual starting point for journeys along the Nootka Trail. A flagged path leads across a narrow neck of land from the tip of the lagoon to an expansive sandy beach. My companions called this beach for some reason 'Third Beach'.

We disembarked into shallow water because the tide was going out and waded the last few meters to shore. Our access costs were a whole lot cheaper than had we hired a floatplane, but we were now stuck near the entrance of Louie Bay with only thickets of salal between us and Third Beach. We made the wise decision to leave our sandals on and continue wading to the narrow isthmus at the head of the bay. Joe had been this way before. He told us of people who ended up being swallowed by mud holes 'somewhere

around here! I have a lot of respect for such tales and gladly left leading the way to my companions. Joe was first to get stuck just as we entered the narrowest part of the isthmus. He managed to free himself, while the rest of us panicked. Trying to gain firmer and higher ground, Manfred thought to use the direct approach. He got stuck next. Amid this confusion, I carefully retraced my steps some distance before climbing out of the water. Meanwhile, Manfred was hopelessly stuck and sinking deeper with every attempt to free himself. For some reason, none of us thought the situation was life threatening, and fortunately it wasn't, so we all had a good laugh before helping Manfred get out of the quagmire.

With the canyon walls narrowing as we headed south, the decision was made to don bushwhacking gear and brave the undergrowth. We feared that if we continued through the isthmus, we'd be facing the open ocean with no way to climb the left wall. In hindsight, we believe that this may well have been a better approach. Instead, we headed straight for the worst bush imaginable. The sky was overcast and not much help for orientation. I used the bush to guide me along the way of least resistance, but I soon found myself separated from the others, overlooking a narrow bay that I couldn't identify on the map. Hearing my partners thrashing about in the underbrush, I hollered until Joe came to my rescue. He informed me that what I was seeing, was the same isthmus we had just left. Had I gone in a half circle? Confused and humbled by the experience, I returned with Joe into 'bush-hell', obeying his orders, which kept us on a tight compass bearing regardless of the terrain. Dan marched through this bush like a black bear, waiting for us at intervals, smoking yet another of his few remaining cigarettes. The going got even tougher when we came across a rivulet in the forest. We couldn't avoid getting forced into the valley bottom. When things got really bad, we started to make out sky behind the trees. There were maybe a hundred meters between us and the coast, but only a detour got us there eventually. We saw a pink flagging tape just inside the forest, but nothing else.

It was time for a break. Dan and I scouted the shoreline by climbing onto a barren headland. There was no way we would be able to follow the surf-battered coastline. We guessed where Third Beach was likely to be, but seeing how poor our progress had been so far, the prospect of having to bushwhack

all the way made us despair. A lone ribbon close to the water's edge was spotted. I didn't give it much significance after the experience with the other tape. Dan went to check it out. He returned with the ecstatic news that he had found a trail. I reasoned that if there was a trail, it should continue along the coast and not just end at this random cove. So I set out to search for the trail in the opposite direction. Once found, I could follow it relatively easily, although I needed to get back to my group. The trail probably follows the coastline all the way to Ferrer Point, or to where a skid road leads to abandoned barracks on the outside of Louie Bay. We were all relieved to have found a trail, and we didn't mind that it was rather marginal. I happily adorned the route with more flagging tape. Right away, there was a long section where we had to crawl on all fours under a roof of logs. This introduction turned out to be the toughest day of our five-day trek over roughly 35 km.

Another group of hikers emerged from the lagoon access trail just as we arrived at Third Beach. The encounter was not unexpected since we had earlier seen a plane flying low over the treetops. With every year, the Nootka Island Trail is becoming more popular. Nootka Island's pristine wilderness coast of immense white sand beaches and vast old growth forests of red cedar, Sitka spruce and hemlock has so far remained unlogged, despite having no formal protected area status. We can only hope that its increasing popularity will help spare it from the chainsaw.

We camped on a grassy terrace behind the sand. The plan was to get up early, when the tide was still low, and gain the base of a cliff at the far end of the beach. We were behind schedule, however, and just managed to reach it by dashing forward between surges like sandpipers. This was Joe's route although a high-tide alternate route also exists. It branches off the access trail a few meters inside the forest and climbs the embankment with the help of a long rope. We quickly climbed above the crashing surf directly below us. In minutes we were back under a canopy of salal. Our trail veered right and down and we soon emerged at the top of another bluff. We were obviously expected to descend further, so we scrambled over wet rock as it began to drizzle. The tide was coming in, and in the nick of time, we jumped off the last slabs on to a small beach.

The hiking was slow across irregular tidal

sandstone shelves. In time, a deep and wide surge channel, which extended far into the hinterland, forced us to detour inland. Fishing floats, hanging half-hidden in a tree, mark the exact spot where one needs to dodge into the forest. They are always present at such crucial locations, everywhere along the trail, but don't bother to look for them until progress seems really impossible immediately ahead. As we walked through open forest, Dan announced that it felt like hiking in Stanley Park after the previous day.

From where this trail rejoins the coast it is easy beach walking all the way to Calvin Falls. We passed the remains of a container that somehow got loose and recently washed ashore. Its valuable cargo of quality lumber scattered all over the beach. By the time I reached the far side of Skuna Bay, the sun had burned off the fog and it was time for a swim. Joe disagreed and wanted me to press on with the promise of better body surfing around the corner at Calvin Falls. I prevailed at the sight of calm, shallow, and relatively warm looking water, though nobody wanted to join me. So I had a private skinny dip and felt refreshed walking the last kilometres alone around and under a picturesque escarpment.

Hidden behind a row of trees, the falls didn't come into view until I was almost there. When I finally saw them, I also discovered a nudist colony. The falls are a highlight of the trip and we were disappointed since we had hoped to have them to ourselves. These people shared our sentiment and gave us a rude welcome. They told us over the course of the afternoon, in various polite and not so polite ways, that we must camp out of their sight. We were enlightened that in a wilderness setting such as this, it was a simple courtesy expected from us, to camp far away from those who got there first. Never mind that they had arrived at this uniquely beautiful place with two powerboats now anchored where the falls plunge into a tidal pool, and already had had the place to themselves for several days. We learnt of their disposition because I had used their rope without asking first. It hung down the middle of the chute and I made use of it to haul myself up the splashing cataract.

Rayne, Manfred and I slept in the next morning. There was no need to get up early since our agreed destination for the day was only 7 km of easy walking away. When the three of us at last emerged from our



Campsite at Calvin Falls.

Photo - P. Gumplinger.



Peter and giant Sitka spruce trees behind Bajo Point.

Photo - P. Gumplinger collection.



Beano Beach with its forest backdrop.

Photo - P. Gumplinger.

tent, the tide was rushing into the mouth of Calvin Creek, making it impassable for the moment. It was the perfect morning for a lavish breakfast. The menu called for hot chocolate and pancakes sprinkled with dehydrated banana slices. When it was feasible to cross, our neighbours' mother came over to apologise for her offspring. Her gesture helped and we felt a whole lot better about the incident when we finally departed. I remembered that a geologist friend had told me about 30 million year old fossil leaves visible on the slabs south of the falls, so I returned quickly to photograph them.

I wanted to camp at Bajo Point, hoping to see my first sea otter in the wild among the vast kelp beds there. We brought extra water containers to fill at Bajo Creek because there is no potable water at the point. It was fun leaping in the sun across an expanse of perfectly round and smooth rocks all the way to the point. When we rounded the corner, we saw our hiking companions in various stages of killing time. Some were simply lying in the sun out of the breeze; others were beachcombing for shells or a rare Japanese glass float. Joe came up with something very interesting. He found what seemed to be a section of a whale's giant vertebrae. Moreover, it seemed to have been tampered with by indigenous people. The piece of bone had one perfectly round hole drilled into its side. We thought it might have been an anchor for the people who once fished here every summer. Bajo Point is the site of an old native village. We went exploring and found that now only a fern covered mound remains where a longhouse once stood among giant spruce trees. Middens dot a forest floor still conspicuously devoid of underbrush.

Only some of us were smart enough to pitch a tent among the tall grass behind the big logs high above the tide. Those not so observant had to stay up until after midnight, holding one end of their tent up, while the ocean lapped at their ankles. What a different scene in the morning! The sea had completely retreated far beyond the prominent rock sculpture, which so uniquely marks this cape. Everyone was up early exploring a myriad of beautiful tide pools. Searching in vain for the sight of a cute sea otter, I ventured out further than anybody else did. At the outer edge of dry land, I spotted several re-occurring spouts in the distance of what, I am sure, were Humpback whales. I even thought I saw one launch itself halfway out of the water.

Oblivious to the tide, I only slowly made my way back when I spotted a false killer whale swim nearby. By the time I was convinced that I wouldn't be seeing a sea otter that day, I found myself on the wrong side of a quickly deepening water channel. Not wasting any more time, and not having brought sandals, I simply crossed it up to my waist with my hiking boots on. Wet boots was not a big dilemma. It was still early and the sun was already burning down on us.

The walking was easy at first, so long as the tide was still reasonably low and we could walk on the flat shelf. However, soon this became no longer an option and we were into serious "pea gravel". This stuff robs all energy from your stride, and as hard as we experimented, no fancy technique of walking helped. All we could do was plod along patiently. The reward was Beano Beach, the most gorgeous beach anywhere, especially on a sunny day. An unsullied green carpet of forested hillside formed a most soothing backdrop. Small breakers curled up onto the gravel beach at regular intervals. It was a lovely sight to behold, when suddenly somebody yelled "Whale"! As if this place wasn't paradise already, there it was, a small grey whale in the shallow waters only twenty meters away from shore. We were in heaven, running up and down the beach, alongside the feeding whale. A ridge of sand blocked the estuary of Beano Creek from the open ocean. What a perfect place to swim and attend to some body cleansing. A well-kept cabin was just tucked behind a row of trees overlooking the scene. It came complete with bunk beds, a stove, utensils and an outhouse. We hung around for almost all of the afternoon, waiting for low tide. The idea was to push on to Callicum Creek before sunset. This would make the next day heading to Friendly Cove shorter.

At low tide one could pass in front of an impressive cliff and get to a second, more secluded beach, where a long rope conveniently hung from a tree to help the wary hiker up a slippery slope of rock and soil. The trail continued in the forest within sight of the attractive meadows that cover the top of the cliffs. Callicum Creek is named after Maquinna's subordinate chief, who was shot by a Spaniard under Martinez in 1789. It trickles into the ocean at an isolated beach. At last we camped safely out of high tide's reach, and most of us retired early. I stayed up a little while longer to tend the fire and watch for shooting stars.



Approaching the cliffs just south of Beano Beach.
Photo - P. Gumplinger.



Rounding the first cliff south of Beano Beach at low tide.

Photo - P. Gumplinger.



Lunch break NW of Maquinna Point.
Photo - P. Gumplinger.

I was rudely awakened by a great deal of commotion in my tent. I was told there were wolves just outside our tent. Everybody was getting up. Yes, there was a wolf. He looked unsure of himself while he paced up and down the beach, eyeing us as we were eyeing him. He then climbed a big tree stump and commenced howling bitterly. His mate had gone on and now he was separated from her by our presence. We soon noticed that pebbles very near our tent were wet. Rayne said that she smelled urine earlier. Had they actually marked our tent while we were sleeping? Eventually, he disappeared into the woods. We heard him whimper as he walked around us, following his mate who never answered. He was a small wolf with big paws. After so much excitement nobody wanted to go back to bed.

The weather was overcast. It was time to go down the home stretch to Friendly Cove and rendezvous with our boat ride tomorrow morning. A splendid old growth forest immediately engulfed us. There were huge cedar trees everywhere and every one of them was culturally modified in a tradition where natives pried large blanks of cedar from live trees over the centuries. The ancient trail was well worn, but many fallen trees criss-crossed over it at short intervals. Travelling this portion of the trail took more time than one might think, judging by the distance. Lunch was a breathtaking viewpoint northwest of Maquinna Point. All day we followed numerous detours into coves and around rugged headlands until the church at Yuquot finally came into view. After more of the same, we made it to the wide tidal river that isolates Maquinna Point from Friendly Cove. The tide was still not out enough to help with the crossing. After we thrashed through a particularly bad section of jumbled forest further inland, we decided to cross just when it began to rain in earnest. The current was much slower here, but the water was deeper, up to the crotch for most people. Joe made the mistake of wading barefoot. It turned out that the channel bottom was covered with mussels.

We camped just outside the Yuquot Indian Reserve. Dan and Sheri put up their new tarp and everyone huddled under it. It was still dripping in the morning. Armed with sightseeing tips (I was the only one of my party who had never been to Friendly Cove before), I set out to explore this historic place. I toured the old church. It has colourful totem poles framing

the entrance inside. I was careful not to wake the natives who had sought refuge from the rain and slept inside the church. Only a little boy got up and asked me a few questions about my pack, which I had left outside. I didn't have time to go over to the manned lighthouse. Our ride had arrived at the dock and my friends were waiting.

A speedy ride down Kendrick and Tahsis Inlet brought us back to Tahsis where all of us decided to walk the short distance up to the Ruhl residence. Manfred revelled in the thought of seeing the long faces of his co-workers at the sawmill tomorrow morning. They had predicted that he'd never make it with his 60+ years. Instead, he made it look like a 'cake-walk'!

Participants: Peter Gumplinger, Heike Jordhan, Dan and Sheri Macleod, Joe Moric, Manfred and Rayne Ruhl.

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Central Coast Mountains

Tchaikazan Summer Camp 2-16 August, 1998 by David Hughes

The Tchaikazan area provides a wonderful variety of class 2 - 5 mountaineering and is one of the most grand valley hikes in the Coast Range. It is located on the eastern side of the Coast in the

southern Chilcotin, southwest of the Taseko Lakes. I climbed in the area with the 1975 BCMC Camp and wanted to return this time with my son and wife and 21 other members, all newcomers to the Tchaikazan. Our camp was split into two one week groups. The first week, August 1 - 8, had 18 participants. Six of us stayed for the second week and were joined by another six. Both groups flew in from Fishem Lake landing strip near the entrance to the Tchaikazan Valley, and walked out.

The summer of 1998 brought different conditions in the Tchaikazan valley and in the mountains. The winter of 1997/98 produced a relatively low snowfall in this part of the Coast. The locals at Fishem Lake near the entrance to the Tchaikazan reported it was the lowest snowpack on the mountains they had ever seen. The warm summer and late date of our camp meant that many of the snow routes to the climbs at the head of the Tchaikazan were not easily passable and the two spectacular snow routes on the north face of Fluted Mountain that were put up by Brian Gavin & Mark Force and Paul Kubik & Gary Marcuse at the 1986 BCMC Camp had largely disappeared.

The warming trends have also resulted in significant glacier melting. The snout of the Tchaikazan Glacier had not retreated that much from



Snout of the Tchaikazan Glacier in 1986.

Photo - P. Kubik.



Snout of the Tchaikazan Glacier in 1988.

Photo - D. Hughes.

1975, but a comparison of 1986 and 1998 pictures revealed the glacier may have lost close to 100 metres in depth over the first couple of kilometres snowpack on the mountains they had ever seen. The warm summer and late date of our camp meant that many of the snow routes to the climbs at the head of the Tchaikazan were not easily passable and the two spectacular snow routes on the north face of Fluted Mountain that were put up by Brian Gavin & Mark Force and Paul Kubik & Gary Marcuse at the 1986 BCMC Camp had largely disappeared.

The warming trends have also resulted in significant glacier melting. The snout of the Tchaikazan Glacier had not retreated that much from 1975, but a comparison of 1986 and 1998 pictures revealed the glacier may have lost close to 100 metres in depth over the first couple of kilometres.

The Trip to Fishem Lake

The trip to Fishem Lake via Williams Lake and across the southern Chilcotin Plateau is a long day's journey. Our trip had more than the usual vehicle stories as five different cars had disabling mechanical trouble or flat tires. Although the road in was not unusually rough, it was a long way on gravel and dirt roads and good clearance and tires should be the order of the day.

The first sign of our problems occurred at Lee's Corner on Hwy. 20 west of Williams Lake and our first meeting point. Juri had the assignment to pick up helicopter fuel here for Mike King's helicopter. Eventually it was determined that Juri's car had broken down near Hope and he and John Halliday had to return to Langley to retrieve John's vehicle. From Lee's Corner, we headed southwest to the Nemaia Valley. After crossing the Davidson Bridge over the Taseko River, we traveled west about half the distance to Konni Lake in the Nemaia Valley. From here, we turned down the Elkins Road (Lord River Mining Co.) which travels about 42 km to Fishem Lake dirt airstrip. The 1986 Camp used the same approach but the 1975 Camp had to fly from the northeast end of Taseko Lake as there was no passable westside road at that time.

Along the way, we lost two more cars - one to mechanical problems and another to leaking transmission fluid after grounding out on a rock. After loading up three extra persons in our remaining cars, the main part of the convoy arrived at Fishem

Lake just after 8 pm. A second trip was required to retrieve Eric and Tim back at the entrance of Elkins Road with the second excursion arriving back after midnight. The last stragglers arrived very early the next morning and, yes, Juri and John did arrive with our helicopter fuel.

Flight In

We were up early the next morning (Sunday, Aug. 2) to arrange a shuttling of cars to the trailhead 8 km up the valley for our walkout. This last 8 km really requires 4 x 4 as the going gets rough near the end.

Our first flight with Mike King of White Saddle Air from Bluff Lake started at 5:30 a.m. The flight in was spectacular as the helicopter slowly worked its way up the valley on its 20 minute trip. After six trips, 17 people for the first week camp had arrived at our base camp on the terminal moraine about 1 km from the snout of the Tchaikazan Glacier. (Only Lewis was missing as he chose to walk in with a daypack. He arrived in the early evening.) Our camp spot, like the 1986 Camp, offered spectacular views, pleasant breezes and practically no bugs. The 1975 Camp placed its base camp in the meadows closer to Friendly Peak and had lots of mosquitoes.

Camp Summary - Week One

August 2 - Friendly Peak via South Ridge - Most people were content to set up camp, lie around in the sun and recover from the longer-than-expected drive. David H, Nancy, Tim, Juri, John S and Jenny were keen to go and so off they went to climb Friendly Peak from a less frequent route, traversing from the south end of the summit ridge to the north end. After a good outing and class 2 and 3 scramble, David and Nancy ended up on the peak looking down on base camp.

August 3 - With good weather, the majority of the group decided to go to a high camp in the Tchaikazan Glacier. The first group of David and Eric H, Tim and Erich led the way to find a suitable camp. They got onto the glacier near a beautiful small lake little more than 2 km from the camp. The trip up the Tchaikazan was a lovely walk with only minor crevasse problems. The dry conditions resulted in the glacier being snow-free to 2400 m.

After searching for an appropriate site, camp was placed on snow debris from the past winter's



Tchaikazan Glacier and Mt. Monmouth.

Photo - D. Hughes.



John and Jenny at camp with Mt. Monmouth behind.

Photo - D. Hughes.

avalanches at about 2400 m, a little below the 1986 high camp spot. As the day progressed, Norbert, Nancy, John H and Juri arrived, to be followed by Monica, Mike, Peter and Brenda late in the day.

Friendly Peak via East Face - Back at base camp, Jeff and Kevin chose to try a face route on Friendly Peak going directly up from camp. After a somewhat complex route on rock with some class 5 climbing, they reached the top.

August 4 - Monmouth - WNW Ridge - With good weather, David H, Erich, Eric, Tim left before 5 am and headed down the Tchaikazan to the junction of the Monmouth. After dropping through the huge depression, we worked our way up the Monmouth Glacier to the col and the base of the WNW Ridge. From here it was good scrambling up to the ridge proper, arriving there a little after 9 am. The ridge then narrowed and the true climbing began. Working along the ridge with four or five leads and short patches of scrambling, they arrived at the notch to which the 1986 BCMC party had rappelled. A lack of snow had put the party several hours behind schedule. From the notch, a traverse and the steepest section of ridge lead to the West Peak of Monmouth. The final section had taken the previous party about 5 hours with snow on sections of the ridge. This year's dry conditions had left steep downward sloping slabs with lots of loose scree on the steep section of the ridge. Given the unfavourable-looking conditions, the late hour and the inexperience of the team, they decided not to rappel and turned and retraced their steps arriving back at high camp at 9:15 p.m.

Monmouth - 1st SE Route - Norbert, Nancy, John H. and Juri set off to try the standard Southeast Ridge route. Again dry conditions played havoc with a route that normally takes one-half day from high camp. The group spent hours finding a way up through the middle of the icefall that heads up to the col between Fluted's long West Ridge and Monmouth's SE Ridge. Nearly all the difficulties were between 2400 - 2600 m, the lower section of the glacier between the two mountains. The SE Ridge itself was a scramble as long as one stays on route. The party successfully reached the top, 3200 m and the highest point of the area, near 6 pm. The group returned to high camp about 10:15 pm.

August 5 - Corner Peak and other subsidiary peaks along the ridge to Rock Island - A pleasant day was experienced by most of the high camp groups up

to the ridge between Corner and Rock Island Peaks, with several proceeding to Corner Peak proper. All were back early in the afternoon.

Monmouth 2nd SE Ridge - Jeff and Kevin had arrived up the Tchaikazan the day before and had set up a separate high camp near the base of the icefall on the spur of the glacier heading up to Monmouth. Given the difficulty Norbert's group had had, they tried and found a route up the icefall on the extreme left which made for easy going up to the SE Ridge.

Monmouth, NE Ridge - Undaunted by not getting up the WNW Ridge, David H, Eric, Erich and



Looking back to the WNW to Mt. Monmouth.

Photo - D. Hughes.



High Camp.

Photo - D. Hughes.



Fluted (left) and Monmouth (centre) from Mt. Winstone.

Photo - D. Hughes.



Rifferswil Glacier on Mt. Monmouth.

Photo - D. Hughes.

Tim started off to climb the Rifferswil Glacier and Monmouth's Northeast Ridge. Again the drier conditions led to significant icefall problems with a route being found on the left side. A short pitch of vertical ice had to be climbed to get to the upper plateau of the glacier. Once on the ridge, gendarmes were more difficult to get around than on the original first ascent which David and Rene Bucher of Switzerland climbed in 1975. A threatening thunderstorm forced them off the ridge and a fast retreat to high camp. They arrived to find everyone else safe in their tents and just in time to retrieve Eric's tent which was in danger of being flattened from the gale blowing up the glacier. To this point the winds had continually blown down the Tchaikazan, but this short squall roared up the glacier for about an hour.

August 6 - Car troubles now came back to haunt many in the group. Tim and Mike particularly needed to get out to cars which necessitated them leaving earlier than planned. Tim and Eric left early and

proceeded to go all the way out to Fishem Lake in 1 ½ days. Norbert and Monica's groups also decided to leave for base camp.

Mount Winstone - David H, Lewis, Margaret, John S, and Jenny left for the head of the Tchaikazan to climb Mount Winstone by its Southwest Ridge. The climb went relatively easily except for a rotten gully of two leads near the bottom.

August 7 - Monmouth - 3rd SE Ridge - David H and Erich became the third party to ascend the standard route. Utilizing Jeff's route they were on top by 10:30 a.m. They returned to close down high camp and return to base camp to rejoin Lewis, Margaret, John S and Jenny and the other participants staying for a second week. The other 10 climbers had now left for the outfitters' cabin, the half-way point on the way down the valley.



Eric Hughes on the WNW Ridge of Mt. Monmouth.

Photo - D. Hughes.

Trip Out

On Saturday, Norbert, Nancy, John H and Juri took the recommended side trip up the Spectrum Valley to Spectrum Peak. The wonderful hike through picturesque meadows was a well-deserved diversion. They, in turn, met the other six at the trailhead in the early evening as they walked the rest of the way out on the same day.

The trip out in a good year is a wonderful hike--even though it is about 25 km to the trailhead. Crossing Friendly Creek is usually difficult near the beginning of the trip. As in past years, a log across the creek in the narrowest section a short distance up from the Friendly - Tchaikazan junction was the safest and easiest place. This crossing was followed by an hour or so of ugly bushwacking in the Miserable Forest. After escaping to the river flats at the Miserable Creek, a knee to thigh-high crossing of this creek and a lesser crossing at the Oreamnos Creek provides excitement. From there the route was magnificent as you walk through 5 or 6 km of open grassy meadows next to the river.



Mt. Monmouth with the NE Ridge on left and W Pk on right. Photo - D. Hughes.



Fluted Mtn. Photo - D. Hughes.

A convenient close to half-way point (if cars are at the end of the 8 km road from Fishem Lake) is an old outfitters' cabin just after wading Spectrum Creek. The approximate utm coordinates are -- north 5664300 and east 443200 (zone 10 and North American Datum 1927). A crude horse trail can generally be followed from the cabin to the trailhead. This year exceptionally high water forced everyone off the trail into the forest on a number of occasions. The end of the trail was dry, however, and an enjoyable walk through pleasant interior forest.

Camp Summary - Week Two

August 9 - Sunday brought the arrival of the second six participants to join the remaining six. The second week, unfortunately, had more unsettled weather and most of the climbing was on easier peaks around the Friendly Glacier.

Grizzly bear sightings, however, were the highlight at this middle period of the camp. On a trip up the Friendly Glacier two mother grizzlies and four cubs were spotted near the lower end of the glacier. This was followed a day or so later by a mother and two cubs walking by the base camp to forage on berries next to camp.

August 10 - Drizzle reduced the outings to a walk over to the beginning of the Miserable Glacier and selecting a route out to the Friendly Creek crossing for the trip out.

August 11 - The weather cleared sufficiently to allow all 12 participants to go up to the head of the Friendly Glacier. From here most climbed to the summit of Moose Mountain, a picturesque monolith that dominates the landscape view when walking up the Tchaikazan Valley. Unfortunately the west side of Moose is considerably rotten and our route up the Southwest Ridge and down to the col separating Moose from the front part of the mountain, often called Carefree Mtn., was more ugly scree than rock climbing. A more interesting route might be from the Miserable Glacier side to this col.

The Balance of the Week - The second week also saw Rim Mountain being climbed by Lewis and Margaret and another peak on the Marmot Towers side of the valley by Adam and Steve, two junior climbers. Yes, another week was required to explore climbing in the Oreamnos, Miserable and Hourglass glacier valleys which received practically no attention at this camp.



Mt. Monmouth with the SE Ridge to left.
Photo - B. Hemsing.



Meadows before Spectrum Ck. on walk out, with Moose, Carefree, and Friendly. Photo - D. Hughes.

A second repeat of the Spectrum Peak was also completed on the walk out by David H, Adrienne, Erich, John S, Jenny and David P.

The Tchaikazan 98 Camp saw a good cross-section of the Club with four young climbers through to Jim Craig, one of the Club's Honorary Members



In the Tchaikazan valley. Photo - B. Hemsing.



Looking back to the Tchaikazan valley from the cars.
Photo - D. Hughes.

who is now "70 something". He was on the first ascent of Monmouth back in 1951. Jim teased us every morning with the aroma of bacon and eggs which drifted down from his tent as he cooked his gourmet breakfasts.

Participants:

Two Weeks: Erich Hinze, David Hughes (organizer), Margaret Hanson, Lewis Kaiserseder, Jenny Faulkner, and John Sapac

First Week: Eric Hughes, Tim LeCouteur, Norbert Eckert, John Halliday, Nancy Henderson, Juri Borsky, Monica Bittel, Brenda Hemsing, Peter Knaven, Mike Peel, Jeff Rabinovitch, and Kevin Carriere

Second Week: Jim Craig, Blake Drummond, Adrienne Hughes, David Pirrie, Steve Canning, and Adam Rositch

**BCMC Exploratory Camp - Nude Creek,
Niut Range
27 July to 8 August, 1980
by Esther & Martin Kafer**

Introductory Note: For some unknown reason no report was ever published on this camp, where a total of 37 club members made seven or so first ascents and a number of difficult new routes in an (at that time) unexplored area of the B.C. Coast Range. During a recent trip to Switzerland to clear up the estate of my father we found an interesting report on the camp (written in German by Esther for her mother and my parents), which we think is worth translating to share with you and to bring alive the story of a venture we and many others remember well.

"This year the club decided to have a camp in the Niut Range. Martin and I had climbed there twice before but camped in different valleys. I was on the camp committee and from studying the available maps and air photos we became convinced that the Nude Creek valley was not suitable for easy hiking. Consequently, the camp chairman, an older man, said he would not come to the camp. Therefore I took on the work. The camp was planned for a maximum of 38 climbers and two cooks. A friend from Whistler helped me find the cooks, two charming girls, Bernadette and Debbie, of whom only one had any experience in cooking for a group. Yet during the interview I was favourably impressed and together they cooked really well. Both were also very nice young people; they sat with us at the evening campfire sing-song and even joined in some smaller climbing trips.

One of our climbing friends, Gary, helped me to prepare the menu plan. We worked on it two evenings until midnight and then I typed the lists and brought them to the respective stores. The club has a big cooking tent, two large dining tents, large pots, and cookers which are kept in a storage locker. This meant that I had to organize to have all of it, together with the club climbing ropes and radio, delivered to our garage. I wrote and photocopied a letter of last instructions and a map for all the camp participants and arranged that everybody had a ride to the staging area. It was important to leave room in the bigger cars for the community gear and food.

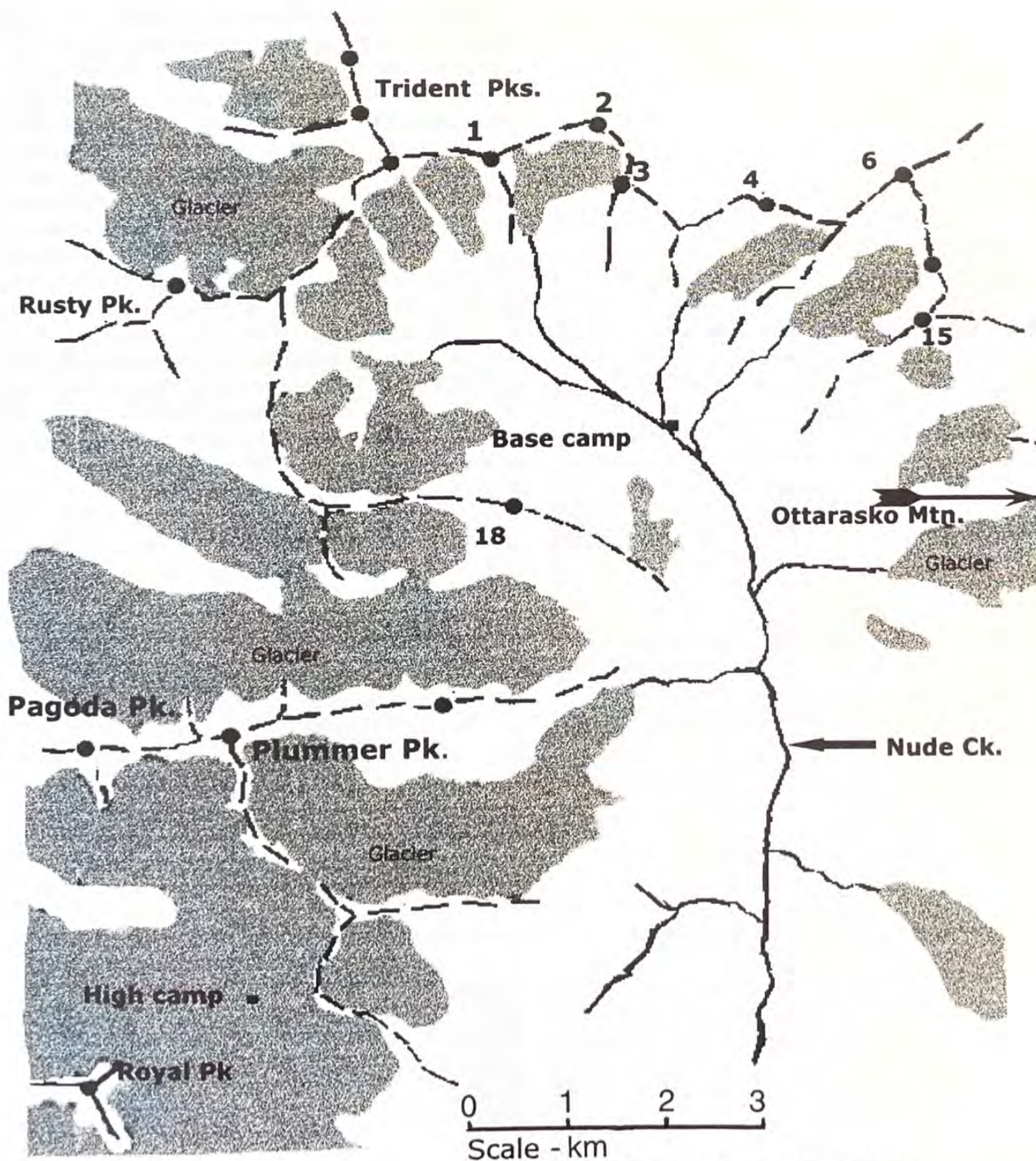
On Thursday before the camp, all the people with suitable cars came to our house to load the food

boxes and camp equipment. We both took Friday off work, which was just as well, since the store had forgotten to deliver about 15 or so boxes. Fortunately, I had left two larger vehicles in reserve and they were able to pick up the left-over boxes right away. On Friday afternoon, July 25, we started up the Fraser Valley, met Joyce Davies and Manfred Putz in Hope, and convoyed along the canyon. Joyce had picked up all the bread which I had ordered at a good bakery in North Van. That same night we all stayed at the Lac La Hache campsite, where quite a few BCMC'ers had already set up their tents.

On Saturday morning we stopped briefly in Williams Lake to load up all the fresh meat for the camp, which I had pre-ordered from a butcher to avoid an extra day of transporting it in the heat of the car. Everything was solidly frozen and we packed it in Styrofoam boxes to keep it that way. We thoroughly enjoyed the drive through the Chilcotin as always, reaching the south end of Tatlayoko Lake by evening. The last few kilometres of the logging road were quite difficult and we had a few anxious moments until all the cars were safely parked at an open area near the lakeshore where we camped for the night.

Sunday morning sharp at 8 am the helicopter buzzed into the marked landing spot (Martin had made the flying arrangements) and Martin and two others took the first flight to scout out the campsite; to our knowledge there had never been a climbing party in Nude Creek valley and we had taken quite a risk in planning to put a large camp in there just from looking at maps and air photos.

I remained at the staging area to supervise the loading arrangements: for each flight the chopper could take three climbers with their own packs and a few food boxes. We still had to have five flights just for camp gear, the larger pieces in a net hanging down from the machine. In addition, we had to fly in about 20 long pieces of alder branches or trunks, which were needed as supports for the three large tents. The return flight took about half an hour and it was after six in the afternoon before I arrived at the camp. The three big tents were already finished and Martin had also put up our own tent. The camp was beautifully sited in the highest meadow in the valley, knee high flowers interspersed with boulders, through which the campers had already established connecting walkways, including one to the near-by



Sketch map of NUDE CREEK area

from map 1: 50'000, Mt. Queen Bess (92N/10), traced and computer enhanced by: M.Kafer Oct. 14 / 2000

forest where we dug two latrines. A small side creek for drinking water gurgled through the meadow. Most important, the main creek was covered by a large snow avalanche remnant, which served as a refrigerator. We buried the greens in there, such as salad, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots and so on and also the meat, which was still quite frozen and remained very fresh for the whole twelve days. The avalanche snow also made a very handy bridge for the climbs on the other side of the valley.

So there we were happily installed, two cooks and thirty-seven climbers. Martin and I stayed in camp on Monday since we were somewhat tired and there was quite a bit more work to make the neighbourhood more livable, after all we had to accommodate over twenty tents in a limited space. Many of the other climbers went off on various climbs.

Two very prominent peaks closed off the upper end of the Nude Creek valley, Mts. Rusty and Trident. (Martin and I had participated in the first ascents during a private expedition in Five Finger Creek valley in 1967). Some of the climbers in camp made new routes on those two peaks, but we did not join them since we preferred to attempt the unclimbed summits - the lure of the unknown won out. There were five unclimbed mountains between 2700 and 3000 m high on the north side and a few smaller ones in between, whereas the south side had just one mountain of about 2700 m.

We also had flown in some food for a high camp near Mt. Royal, which John Clarke, Martin and I had climbed for the first time in 1970. Two groups of four climbers used the high camp and reached Royal Pk. on two new routes. They made an ascent of Pagoda Pk. and also climbed Plummer Pk. (named after the late Paul Plummer, who had been a BCMC member and very ardent mountaineer).

On Tuesday we finally managed to get on a trip with a party of about ten people. We climbed the highest of the unnamed peaks, #5 (we had marked all the unclimbed summits with numbers on the map, all of the numbered peaks, # 1 to 6, 15, and 18 were climbed at least once during the camp), at first following a distinct animal trail which had been discovered on the previous day. The animal trail led through the precipitous mountain forest in about an hour to breathtaking expanses of wildflower meadows. I have never seen such a profusion of flowers, it was a unique and dazzling display.

From the edge of those meadows we had a direct view down to our camp. The meadows gave access to a number of high side valleys, where we found mainly heather and smaller flowers, then boulder fields and finally snow and glaciers. In one of the hanging side valleys we even found a small lake. Most of the climbs on this side could be reached using the animal trail which probably had been made by deer and mountain goats. On this first peak we followed the South Ridge on easy rock interrupted by the odd snow patch; I am not going to describe every climb we did; they were quite similar in difficulty, except the ascent of Mt. Ottarasko.

Mt. Ottarasko is the highest mountain in the area, ca. 3060 m. We had seen it often from our previous expeditions to the Waddington and Niut areas. It was climbed by three different groups on different days, always a very long trip, taking nearly twelve hours. We hiked up through the familiar forest, then east along the flower meadows to a large gravel filled glacier basin with a lake and then over steep snow and ice to the rocky summit pyramid - not very good rock, unfortunately. This mountain had only been climbed once before on a different route from another valley.

Later on Thursday during the return from Ottarasko the weather deteriorated. It got very cloudy and rained off and on for two days. I stayed in the tent reading part of the time. We also played Scrabble and had sing-songs around the camp fire. Whenever the rain let up, some of us would make short hikes up or down the main valley.

We were happy to see the sun reappear on Sunday, so we set off to explore the easy peak on the south side. There we enjoyed a fantastic view of the precipitous North Face of Plummer, where we had done that hairy traverse over the peak thirteen years earlier. We also had a bird's eye view, assisted by a pair of binoculars, of a grizzly bear bounding down the glacier south of us. He was running at a fast clip jumping across the smaller crevasses. As he came to a steeper snow section he merrily bum-schussed for quite a distance. Near the bottom of the glacier he reached a much larger slot and we all wondered what he would do. He looked and he hesitated and, like any sensible mountaineer, he turned aside and found a way around! We also saw some mountain goats and marmots.

It rained again for part of the next three days, and

some of the campers passed the time by building a sauna out of plastic tarps. We heated some creek boulders in the camp fire, hauled them into the plastic tent, poured water over them and - voilà! - lots of wonderful steam. Somebody also dammed up the creek to create a pool for cooling off.

Everybody was in good spirits despite the dreary weather. The rain occasionally eased enough to allow some outside activities for an hour or two. The cooks installed one of the Coleman stoves on the serving table so that all who wished could brew up tea or coffee to their heart's content. There was a lot of singing, one guitar and two mouth-organs assisting. We even had an impromptu dance on the grass near the camp fire. Various card and board games were also popular. Martin was crowned Scrabble champion at the end of the camp!



Gary, John Gray, Susan, and Frank in camp.
Photo - M. Kafer.



Pk. No. 6 and No. 15 from Nude Ck.
Photo - M. Kafer.



Plummer (left) and Pagoda (right) peaks.
Photo - M. Kafer.



Nude Ck. below camp, with Rusty (left) and Trident Pks. (right).
Photo - M. Kafer.



Camp.
Photo - M. Kafer



On the W Ridge of Ottarasko Mtn. Photo - M. Kafer.



Bad weather day at camp.

Photo - M. Kafer.

The weather cleared a bit on Wednesday afternoon and we managed to climb a smaller peak. On the last climbing day everybody was away early to take advantage of the brilliant weather to get in one final glorious long or hard ascent - a fitting end to an excellent camp.

All the various age groups from twenty to sixty years got along well, the food was well cooked and ample, and the mountaineering potential sufficiently challenging or easy to suit all tastes. What Martin and I found most satisfying were the splendid views from some of the summits - we sighted old friends like Waddington, Mt. Monarch, Queen Bess and Monmouth which we had been fortunate enough to climb in past summers.

Friday morning arrived and, starting at 8 am again, the helicopter flew the whole kit and kaboodle back to the parking area on the east shore of Tatlayoko Lake. Since we had eaten the mountain of food, the flights could accommodate four passengers and by one in afternoon we were all safely back at the cars.

We washed in the lake, but the water was too cold to swim in for more than about a minute, then spent the night at a nice quiet campsite on the Chilcotin River. Next day we drove home, using gravel roads as much as possible, via the Gang Ranch, Pavillion Mountain, Lillooet, Duffey Lake and Pemberton, back to Vancouver.



Royal Pk.

photo - M. Kafer.

Participants: Marsha Ablowitz, Norm Abrahams, Frank Baumann, Nadine Baumann, Lee Bruch, Jim Craig, Joyce Davies, Randy Enomoto, Sherre Friberg, John Gray, Werner Himmelsbach, Patricia Hobley, Mike Holt, Esther Kafer, Martin Kafer, Rosanne Konrad, Paul Kubik, Susan Leslie, Gary Marcuse, Alfred Menninga, Martin Moseley, Bren Moss, Geoff Mumford, Paula Pick, Manfred Putz, Howie Rode, Wayne Saunders, Jan St. Amand, Howard Scotney, Luciano Semproni, Jennifer Smith, Chris Spencer, René Torn, Art Van Lane, Ginny Weisse, Brian Wood, and Roy Yates.

Further information on peaks named above

- Mt. Ottarasko - Canadian Alpine Journal (CAJ) 1963
Pagoda Pk. - CAJ 1948
Mts. Rusty and Trident (a.k.a. as "The Triplets"), Plummer Pk. CAJ 1968
Royal Pk. CAJ 1971

A brief note on the geology of the area, as recorded by Frank Baumann in the camp sign-out journal: Rocks on this peak (#2) show a similar pattern to that of all the others in the upper Nude Creek basin - mainly intrusive below about the 1500 m contour and mainly low grade metamorphic rocks above. Intrusives are mainly phaneritic and porphyric quartz diorites although more acidic (up to granite) float was seen. Aplitic dikes, most common in the intrusive-metamorphic transition zone, are found even in the highest exposures (e.g. Trident) of metamorphic rock. Metamorphic rock is mainly a silicified phyllite although an obvious thick band of stretched pebble conglomerate is found at about 2800 m on all the peaks. A finely laminated limestone sequence was noted at about 2900 m on peak #6.

The theme song of the camp was sung to the melody of " Glory, Glory ,Hallelujah" (more or less) but the words as rhymed below (author unknown):

1. There was a brave rock climber, or may be
just a fool
He went to climb a fearsome pitch, he broke
the climbers rule
He tried to use a worn out rope, he should
have stayed in school.
Well he ain't going to climb no more!

(chorus)
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die
(3times)
Well he ain't going to climb no more!

2. His hold pulled out, his chock popped free
because of rotten rock,
his partner on the belay below received an
awful shock,
To see him flying through the air, his helmet
came unstuck
Well he ain't going to climb no more!
(chorus)

3. He felt the wind, he felt the cold, he felt the
sudden drop
He tried to grab a handhold but he just was
out of luck
The old rope snapped, the rock rushed up,
there was a sudden stop
Well he ain't going to climb no more!
(chorus)

4. There was blood upon the harness, there was
brains upon the rocks
Intestines were hanging out, blood filled up
his socks, They scraped him off, they scooped
him up and filled three cooking pots
Well he ain't going to climb no more!
(chorus)

5. The end of this grisly tale: now listen well,
you BC Mountaineers,
He'd gone out the night before, got tanked on
too many beers,
When he tried to do that foolish pitch his
head was far from clear
THAT'S WHY he ain't going to climb no
more!
(chorus)

Columbia and Rocky Mountains

Bugaboo Spire, NE Ridge

1 - 3 August, 1998

by Colin Wooldridge

I'd been browsing the bible of 50 classics and with sunny skies and the BC Day long weekend at hand, a road trip to the East Ridge of Temple in the Rockies beckoned. A few quick phone calls enlisted Marcus and Rob. A couple of lengthy calls with Marcus saw the choss of the Black Towers get junked in favor of the solid granite of the Bugaboos. I'd bought the guide book for the Bugs 5 years ago and finally the time had come to climb an enticing spire: the classic NE Ridge of Bugaboo Spire.

Saturday, August 1 saw the three of us sitting in the OK Corral Restaurant in Revelstoke (a personal favorite) chewing the fat after spending the night crashed in a clearcut outside of the Stoke. The long drive resumed into the sun with more swagger about musical taste and jargon. Opposing attitudes, opinions, and commentary halted briefly as we tried to get a look at Mt. Sir Donald in Roger's Pass. Sunny skies kept us relaxed and optimistic as we picked up groceries in Golden and headed down the Columbia Trench.

We bumped past sunlit Bugaboo Falls and caught our first glimpses of the majestic Hound's Tooth thrust through Bugaboo Glacier. Five minutes later our views of the Tooth disappeared into a swirl of storm clouds and mega-rain. The sudden change in weather left us confused: were we witnessing a typical afternoon thunderstorm that tends to plague the area, or had a front moved in? Our watches told us that it was too early in the day for a thunderstorm, meaning that a front had moved in, killing any chances of climbing. None of us could believe it...16 hours of driving for nothing!!! I was choked. And so we sat in the parking lot humming and hawing between ourselves and rushing up to anyone in the lot to solicit their opinion. An hour later saw us bumping back down the road headed to the chossy Rockies after all.

Still shaking my head in frustration, we saw CMH's Bugaboo Lodge down the road from the parking lot. It was time for some local beta. We ran from the truck into the pounding rain and accosted a

red-coated guide. He was telling us his story when puzzled looks crossed our faces - something wasn't adding up. His time frame of events was out of sync with ours. "Hold on Billy!" I thought to myself. A smirk of stupidity crossed my face as I shot Marcus a glance and the dawn of realization hit us.

We had been so engaged in telling it like it was that we hadn't set our watches ahead an hour coming over Roger's Pass. Meaning that the storm was indeed a mere afternoon squall! Dumb, just plain dumb. Smiles were coming back to my lips, especially since the guide's forecast meant that we were going climbing in the spires! We thanked the dude and I walked away impressed again by the outward helpfulness of CMH staff.

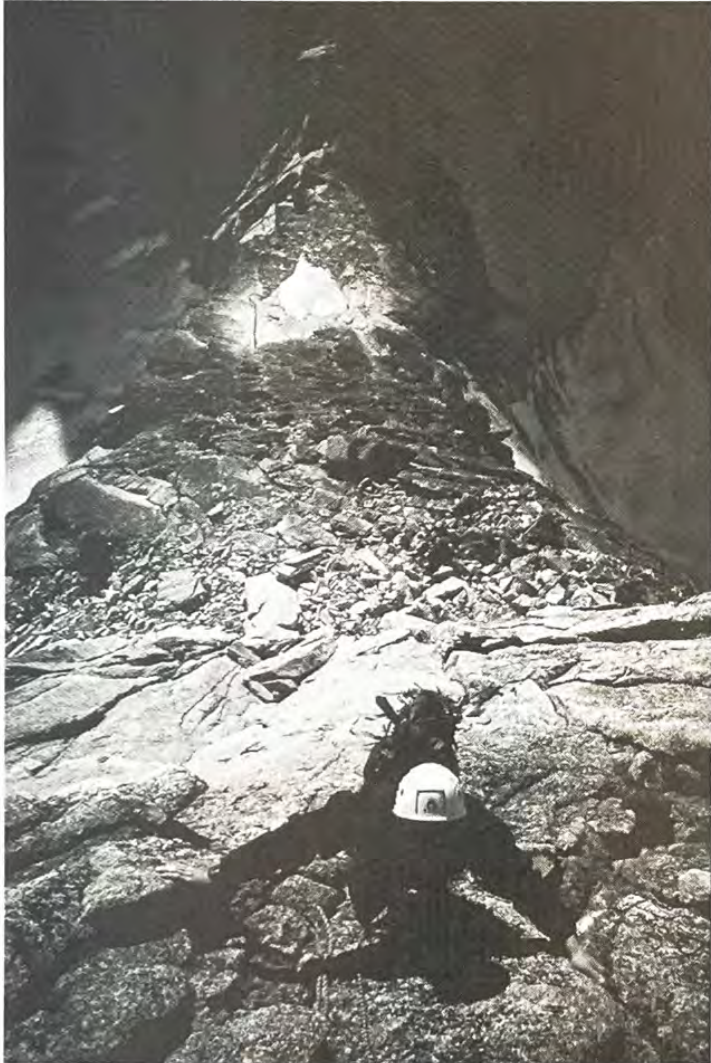
Once again we pulled into the almost full parking lot and arranged pieces of chicken wire around the lower half of the truck propped up by sticks and stones. Bizarre, you bet! 35 cars surrounded by chicken wire with people scrounging around for sticks, stones, and wire to protect their vehicles from the appetite of nocturnal porcupines. It seems rubber and the sweet taste of brake fluid are among their favorite dietary supplements. Crucial gear decisions made (i.e. one deck of cards or two?), we headed up the trail in a light rain.

Less than 2 hours later the rain continued as we set foot into the Conrad Kain Hut to cook dinner. As I perused the black and white photos on the walls, I wondered if we would ever get out of the hut and climb one of these stupendous spires. My sentiment lingered from our clambering up aluminum ladders on the trail: "What craziness thrives here? Hiking up in the rain thinking that we are going to climb tomorrow". Especially considering that no-one in the hut had climbed in 2 days. Rained out.

Glum faces met mine and surprise filled their voices when I told them that we had come to climb for only one day. Most were here for a week and to them our venture fringed on the insane. Perhaps, but the word 'bugaboo' is a mining term describing a dead-end mineral lead and I felt our gamble followed closely in that tradition of boom or bust. Dinner finished, beta collected, we headed out the door to dry skies! I was stunned. It seemed as if our gamble was playing out more like the quick and dirty than the bankrupt.

The tent was unfurled on Applebee Flats, an hour's hike above the Kain Hut, and gear sorted for

the next day. Walking over to the outhouse yielded a tiny stone structure built flat against the cliff with its stonework framing Snowpatch and Bugaboo Spires in dramatic fashion.



Marcus climbing granitic flakes on pitch 1 above the Bugaboo-Crescent Col. Photo - C. Wooldridge.

Sunday, August 2 had Marcus yelling and waving fanatically at some invisible rodent - at 2 in the morning - which served to confirm clear, starry skies overhead! An hour later the three of us extricated ourselves from each other and the narrow confines of the tent. The stove fired hot drinks into our gullets and we were off headlamping through valleys of moraine and ponded meltwater.

The dark shadows of loose blocks were quickly replaced by the luminescent glow of bare glacial ice spread in front of us. As we cramponed up the low

angled Crescent Glacier I marveled at the density of granite spires surrounding us: outstanding rock with routes wherever you looked. I had heard a lot of storied talk about the Bugs, and now that I was here, I too was impressed.

I took the ropes while Rob and Marcus shouldered packs adorned with crampons and ice axes as we 4th classed it up a series of ramps leading to the Crescent-Bugaboo Col. The sun was rising as fast as we were gaining altitude, and the rock was dry. Amazing. Truly amazing. Bootlegging it over massive blocks toward the start of the NE Ridge I goofed and uncoiled the ropes a pitch below the rope-up ledge. This created a dangerous situation as I pulled the snaking ropes through loose blocks with both Rob and Marcus below me. So in an effort to appease my partners, I offered the first lead to them - both declined.

The first pitch is a huge detached flake - my favorite kind of climbing - and so I laybacked the great flake and nirvana was close at hand. As soon as I left the ground, two Americans showed up and started up a variation that split from us at the top of pitch 1. Marcus' pack had two ice axes protruding above his head which made him look like an antelope, but did not confer its grace. Instead, as Marcus headed up, he promptly got tangled in the Americans' rope causing him to lose his cool and start swearing! Nirvana couldn't have been farther from the young lad. With the ropes sorted out, Rob joined our belay and Marcus booted up the next pitch.

Rob led up an exposed and poorly protected white dyke which made for brilliant face climbing in the mountains. The kind of climbing you dream about for a long time after the stone has left your fingertips. Seven more pitches of easy 5.7 corners, boulder-choked chimneys, and slabs led to the North Summit and the start of the traverse between the South and North Summits. But how? To traverse the true summit blocks required exposed, unprotected moves that looked pretty time consuming - was that really the way? I noticed two pitons at my feet that formed a rap station ending on a ledge which bypassed the summit blocks. I was torn. The true traverse looked spectacular: knife-edge exposure looking straight down 800 m to glaciers sprawling on both sides of the spire. But time was getting on and there were 3 of us, so we rapped off the pins much to Marcus' sensibilities, which was apparent from his



Approaching the N summit, looking N to Brenta Spire (left) and Cobalt Lake. Photo - C. Wooldridge.

commentary as I descended: "the pitons are flexing and one is bent!" But we made it...

I was eager to lose the ropes and start making time on the 4th class bypass of the summit traverse. However, I was brought up short by both Rob and Marcus who wanted to keep roped up. This was Rob's first taste of true mountaineering and the immense exposure had set his mind racing with fear and uncertainty.

The breathtaking scenery and sunny weather had kept me in nirvana, until I looked behind us and saw some very black clouds approaching. I guessed the thunderstorm would hit us in about half an hour on the exposed summit ridge, making us prime lightning rods! Time to move. In an effort to escape quickly and avoid the South Summit, we outsmarted ourselves and ended up taking a very time consuming variation. By this time the storm threat appeared to have bypassed us and so Marcus and I backtracked up to the top of the South Summit. We were rewarded

with fabulous views of Pigeon Spire and Howser Towers along with repeated lightning strikes to the east of us.

We descended the normal route up Bugaboo Spire, the largely 4th class South Ridge/Kain Route. The upper part of the route had some exceptional exposure and equally exceptional rancid rap anchors (which reinforced the saying: 'no-one can have a peaceful life who thinks too much about lengthening it'). In contrast, the lower two-thirds of the Ridge was a tiresome, never-ending descent over loose blocks ending at the Snowpatch-Bugaboo Col.

We entered the col and sat for an hour waiting for the group ahead of us to rap. Normally a snowfield sits below the col which people downclimb, but the hot summer and a low snow year the previous winter had left bare ice below the col forcing most to rap. Two raps off single bolt stations saw us across the bergschrund and marching toward camp 16 hours after starting out.

Monday, August 3 dawned sunny and we ate breakfast looking out at our skyline traverse of Bugaboo. As soon as our tent came down another tent went up in its place. Quite the international crowd with Brits beside us, Americans across the way and South Americans replacing us. I felt like part of a community. But with our gamble won, it was time to head out - some content, some with demons still to wrestle.

Participants: Marcus Dell (the dealer), Rob Orłowski (the player), and Colin Wooldridge (the gambler).

Columbia Ice Fields Skiing
1-9 May, 1999
 by David Scanlon

May 1- A 12 hour drive to hostel.

May 2 - Up at 5 am. Four wheeled past sno coach gate ferrying people and gear, saving 3 ½ km and 200 m elevation. Roped up at 8 am. In the icefall Jason broke a ski. Ken and Ian escorted him back to the sno coach area - he was off home. The rest of us carried on as far as we could into the maelstrom and camp. -12° and windy. Ken and Ian arrive.

May 3 - Breaking camp, we were away at 10 in unchanged weather. Less than 50 m out Ian fell about 10 m into a crevasse. Karin did a great job in anchoring him - he was okay. We pulled him out. Ian - "What a rush!" Using G.P.S. and compass we camp where we originally planned.



North (left) and South (right) Twin from the Icefield.
 Photo - I. Hopper.



The igloo cave built by Ian and Chris, supervised by Brian.
 Photo - I. Hopper.



Camp below Mt. Columbia.
 Photo - I. Hopper.



Skiing down off the top of the headwall, and it clears.

Photo - D. Scanlon.

May 4 - 12°C, windy, and snowing. We rose - ate - read - did puzzles - built walls. About 11 Ian saw and caught a small bird. Brian held it while Ian broke ice off of its feet. Ian put the bird in his pocket for 10 minutes. He peeked in, to find the bird revived, so the bird flew away on a hopefully happy trip. Brian later instructed Chris and Ian in the art of building an igloo. They did an admirable job. Hart slept in canoe that night. The weather cleared up a bit, so we were hopeful.

May 5 - Up at 6, but the weather teased us. We still couldn't get away though, so we built bigger walls, dug out a bigger kitchen, and better latrine, and played a card game in our igloo. Gordon skied out a rope length and back with a self belay set up. "Boring!" The evening weather was the best yet - still windy and snowing.

May 6 - Master Sergeant Ken Saunders got us all up at 5 am so we could be away at 7 - to Mt. Columbia in clear, cold, windy weather. Down, into, and out of, the trench to the base of the mountain 6 km away. Away we went. It got windier. We lunched with ski's off at about 3350 m. It was very windy. The wind actually broke off pieces on snow which hit us. We started kicking steps up, then put crampons on. It was hard going with chunks of snow hitting us very hard, very very poor visibility, and cold. We got onto all fours - slow going. A crevasse! - breaking off the

whole north east side of the summit area. It wasn't there 2 years ago. It was then 3 pm, past our turnaround time. We succumbed and retreated. Gordon had a crampon come apart. He fell and self arrested but not before pulling down Chris as well - no injuries. We were back at camp about 7:45.

May 7 - Snow and wind all night and day. Huge snow drifts. Tent bound. We needed compass and G.P.S. to find the latrine. With G.P.S. and compass we figured out the direction out. I left the tent twice all day - only when the pull of the latrine became greater than the suction of the sleeping bag.

May 8 - Up at 6 am to find huge snow drifts. Away at 9:30 in nil visibility! Dave couldn't see past his ski tips. All belts and prusiks were snugged up extra tight as he lead and if there was a hole - he would be in it. Brian lead - small break in weather. We head out. Dave misread the route. I looked for a shortcut, broke through a crevasse to my waist, skis and all. It was dark at the bottom. Jordan did excellent work on our Rope team all week - between the old farts Brian and myself. That day he kept me from going all the way in. We skied down then under the seracs. Skiing the 4 km down the Athabasca Glacier we stopped to take a picture of the tourists taking a picture of us.

It was almost with a sense of urgency that we packed the cars to leave.

p.s. May 9 - About noon between Kamloops and Merrit nature gave us one last shot. A snowstorm for about 50 km - 60 km with 5 cm of snow.

Participants: Hart Kemp, Karin Pocock, Jordon Peters, Chris Trautman, Jason Komaromi, Brian Wood, Gordon Bolt (Seattle), Ian Hopper (co-organizer), Ken Saunders (thanks Ken), and Dave Scanlon (co-organizer).

**The Wapta on skis - a Classic
Rocky Mountain Traverse
11-16 May, 1999
by Brian Wood**

I could feel the heat of the hot tub penetrating into my stiff and cold limbs, but I knew this was only a brief respite from the snow and wind. Ah well, better make the most of it because we start another trip the day after tomorrow. There is obvious efficiency in arranging two consecutive trips in basically the same area, because traveling time for those who go on both trips is minimized, but I was beginning to wonder if the original enthusiasm would last. Perhaps it was not a good idea to separate the two trips by luxurious living in a motel.

Our next trip was to be the second week of two separate one-week ski trips in the Rockies. The first trip was organised by David Scanlon, and was one week of skiing from a base camp on the Columbia Icefield. (see previous article). Some of the participants of the first trip had agreed to come on the second trip, which was the "classic" ski traverse of the Wapta Icefield, and was organised by Ken Saunders. The two trips were separated by two nights of luxury in the Saskatchewan Crossing Motel which was in sharp contrast to the near-winter conditions experienced on the Columbia Icefield. Human nature being what it is, after two nights of soft beds and dips in the hot tub, most of the prospective participants of the second trip decided to return to Vancouver rather than face more snow and ice on the Wapta Icefield. We tried to tempt them with the prospect of the ACC huts instead of tents, with lighter packs too, but after the good-byes, we were finally left with three participants - Gordon Bolt from Seattle, our intrepid organiser Ken, and me.

We spent a surprising amount of time washing clothes and sorting gear, and then selecting food

which had been stored at the motel for the second trip. These domestic chores were occasionally mixed with lessons for me, like learning to play the game of pool in the local bar, as Ken was determined that I should make up for the obvious deficiencies in my social development. One evening we received a phone call from one of the participants of the first trip who was driving back to Vancouver and had noticed that some of their food for the second trip, which had also been stored at the motel with our food, seemed to be smelling of gas. To be on the safe side we checked some of our stored food but could not smell gas and so we assumed that their gas contaminated food was nothing to do with us. After an evening carousing in the pub, we went to bed blissfully unaware of the imminent food shortage.

Because this trip was to be mostly traversing gently sloping glaciers, we thought we could try sledding our packs on "Krazy Karpets", the well known roll-up plastic sheet children's sleds. Unfortunately Gordon did not have a "Krazy Karpets" and we could not find one in Banff on our way to drop off Ken's car at Wapta Lake for the car shuttle, so he made one from a length of vinyl carpet runner bought in Banff. While in Banff, we also bought some climbing skin glue and solvent and stripped the old glue from Gordon's climbing skins and re-glued them to avoid problems he had with them on the Columbia Icefield. After leaving Ken's truck at Wapta Lake, we drove back to the Saskatchewan Crossing Motel in Gordon's truck. We tried speeding up drying the skin glue by blasting the skins with hot air from the windshield de-misters, but the smell was quite strong so we opened the truck's windows to minimize possible brain damage. (Editor is dying to make a comment here). But it was quite cold with the windows open, and we reasoned that hypothermia was a more immediate threat than brain damage, so we closed the window and tolerated the pungent smell. We assumed that any brain damage from the solvent fumes would probably be no worse than the brain damage which is noticeable occasionally with some members of the club, presumably resulting from a mis-spent youth, or too many camp meals cooked in aluminum pots. We spent the evening doing the final sort out, and one last dip in the hot tub.

The next day, after one last luxurious breakfast at the motel, we drove north over Bow Pass, past the

Peyto Lake viewpoint, and parked Gordon's truck at an insignificant parking lot near an equally insignificant trailhead under a gloomy sky. After desperate attempts at skiing the narrow and icy trail with our heavy packs, we gave up and walked down the trail to Peyto Lake. With great relief we tied our packs to our sleds, hooked up the tow lines to our harnesses, then Ken and Gordon were introduced to the delights of sledding. We made good time skiing across the light dusting of snow on the hard ice of the lake and soon reached the broad delta at the south end of the lake. I felt the trip had started at last, but suddenly Gordon announced that he did not feel he could complete the trip with us. We could not dissuade him, and so after lunch we took some of his gear and food and he set off by himself back to his truck and drove home to Seattle. The weather was improving to a high overcast as Ken and I made good progress carrying our packs up the initially shallow drainage which slowly steepened and narrowed



Ken ascending from Peyto Lake to Peyto Glacier.
Photo - B. Wood.

towards a fairly spectacular top end. We were surprised to find meteorological instruments set on some rocky outcrops near where we finally gained the lower portion of the Peyto Glacier in bright late afternoon sunshine. We again set up the sleds and made good time in nice conditions and at about 6 pm we reached the Peyto Hut, which was in a magnificent setting with spectacular views all round.

The hut was empty and so we could spread out in the well - appointed kitchen and cook our food using the hut's twin burner Coleman stoves. We soon had a supper prepared, but shortly after eating it, Ken gave a loud belch, which is not unusual on these trips, except that his belch tasted of gas. With an expertise that really impressed me, he regurgitated the soup back into his bowl. I tried this feat as well, but I could not imitate him, probably due to a childhood fear of wasting food that I had picked up in Britain when food was rationed during and after the war. (Please do not ask which war). Anyway, I could not taste gas in my belches and did not wish to waste the food. We then started smelling various packets of our food to check for gas smells. Ken thought that there was a surprising amount of contaminated food but I was not so sure, but I am not known for a strong sense of smell or taste. We debated hypothetical risks of food poisoning and/or solvent initiated brain damage versus mild starvation and the moral dilemma of wasting food, especially if the food was in fact safe. Luckily we had some extra food because Gordon had canceled and so we should not be too short. Our next dilemma was what to do with the contaminated food. We felt we should not bury the food near the hut because of the likelihood of attracting animals. Also, there was not sufficient gas in the food to help the food to burn, and we felt we did not have enough spare gas to help it burn, and there was no natural fuel around the hut to make a fire. Needless to say we did not relish carrying the food out with us because we had enough stuff to carry, such as the three person tent, which was brought for emergency use only. From the log book it seemed that relatively few people used the hut and so we reasoned that it was probably all right to put the contaminated food in the biffy, as the volume of food was relatively small. The only heat in the hut came from us and cooking, so things cooled off fairly quickly after we had dealt with the food. So, after one last look at the view we were into our sleeping bags shortly before dark .



Ken on the Peyto Glacier.

Photo - B. Wood.



Ken on the Wapta Icefield near Peyto Hut.

Photo - B. Wood.



Wapta Icefield near Peyto Hut.

Photo - B. Wood.



Looking SE from Mt. Thompson. Photo - B. Wood.

The next day dawned magnificently clear and we set off sledding across the Wapta Icefield, eventually stopping for a snack near the base of Mount Thompson while we contemplated a neat side trip up this peak which had a shallow face on our side. The setting was certainly inspiring, and for the short side trip we could leave our gear on the glacier, and perhaps enjoy a few turns on the return. It was then that I noticed that my trail mix tasted of gasoline, i.e. autogas not white gas, and so I scattered it on the glacier thinking that we were now well away from the hut. With any luck the gasoline might evaporate in the heat of the day to decontaminate the nuts and raisins, and then I might be able to eat them. The climb to the summit on the long ridge was easy and well worth it, and we had some magnificent views of the Icefield Highway while overlooking Bow Lake. We traversed along the ridge leading off the summit of Mount Thompson, giving wide berth to the impressive cornices which occasionally settled with a disconcerting "whump", although we thought we were well clear of the danger zone. The snow was softening in the afternoon sun so we enjoyed the ski run back down to our gear on the glacier. We noticed that the scattered trail mix left near our packs had disappeared, and that ravens were circling over our packs like vultures awaiting more goodies. We had not seen any ravens on the glacier before we left our packs, but we should not have been surprised by the



Looking N from Mt. Thompson towards Mt. Jimmy Simpson.

Photo - B. Wood.

appearance of these cunning scavengers. It then occurred to me that letting the ravens eat the gasoline-contaminated trail mix was not a particularly nice thing to do, especially by a member of the Conservation Committee. I suddenly felt guilty as I might be responsible for exposing ravens to possible brain damage, but I was soon able to rationalize that any gasoline contamination in my trailmix was probably negligible compared with the garbage-contaminated food eaten by National Park ravens.

We continued south, skirting the Bow Glacier, and soon saw the spectacular St. Nicholas Peak which overlooks the Bow Hut. The descent to the Bow Hut would have been fun except the sleds insisted on swinging down the fall line and threatened to pull us off our feet. Much to our horror we discovered that there were visitors at the Bow Hut who might have watched our antics jousting with the sleds. We suspected that they probably could not see our sleds and so could not understand why we were having so much difficulty in skiing the relatively easy slope to the hut. The visitors were a Japanese couple and a Canadian mountain guide who would have been too polite to say anything if they had watched us. We had a pleasant evening comparing notes, and we learnt that they were not going to visit any other huts on the

traverse. The Bow Hut is the most visited and largest hut on the Wapta Traverse because it is the most easily accessible from the road, and after supper we rattled around its impressive number of empty rooms. This was the only time we saw anybody else on the traverse, so it is nice to know that one can still escape the crowds, even on a popular trip like this one.

The next day was overcast, and heavy clouds obscured St. Nicholas Peak and the ridge leading along our intended route. We made our way back up our "jousting slope", traversed past St. Nicholas peak, and ascended shallow slopes toward the Vulture Col in cold winds and poor light. After a short stop at the ridge we felt our way down the Vulture Glacier in poor light. For the ski down we carried our packs and entertained each other by tripping over our rope. Who ever said we go backcountry skiing for the joys of skiing! We were glad that we had decided to rope up as there was an icefall and large crevasses on our right hand side which were visible as an eerie blue in the otherwise grey background. While these were obvious and easy to avoid even in the poor light, we did not know what the crevasses were like in the rest of the terrain because a lot of the time we could not see very much. By crossing over a relatively easy ridge just before the Vulture Col we felt we had



Brian near the Bow Glacier above Bow Hut.

Photo - K. Saunders.



Ken near Mt. Balfour.

Photo - B. Wood.

avoided the obvious problems with the crevassed area, but as usual it is the stuff one cannot see that is more scary. We finally spotted the Balfour Hut in the poor light and were very thankful that we had found it as the weather was deteriorating and we did not relish camping. I could see that we were beginning to get used to the relative luxury of huts, and it does not take long to eliminate camping as an option, especially if the weather turns a little "dismal", to quote a strong supporter of huts!

The morning of the next day was worse than the previous day and we had no choice but to ascend the icefall of the Balfour Glacier. We carried our packs slowly up the crevassed benches of the icefall, and felt threatened by imminent collapse of huge seracs which we could see occasionally as clouds shifted in and out. We alternated leads, and at one point when I was at the sharp end of the rope, Ken shouted to me to hurry up, which surprised me as he is usually a perfect gentleman and very considerate and respectful of feeble elders. I assumed he was complaining about my slow pace, but he later explained that he noticed daylight under one of my skis while I was crossing a snow bridge which was covered with soft snow. In the circumstances, my ignorance of the weak bridge was probably a good



Mt. Daley near Scott Duncan Hut. Photo - B. Wood.

thing because if he had told me I was standing on a weak bridge I would have probably jumped and caused the bridge to collapse. Ken had organised a good crevasse rescue the previous week when a member of the party fell into a crevasse on the Columbia Icefield, but we had lots of helpers then, and there were only two of us on this trip.

It seemed a long slog up the ice fall to the high point, but we eventually made it and even enjoyed a bit of sunshine and clear sky, before we were again swallowed into cloud where visibility was barely a few meters. We felt our way down the glacier by throwing snow balls in front of us to show which way the snow was inclined. Amazingly, the clouds suddenly lifted and we had magnificent views of the mountains to the south. We scanned them anxiously to try to locate the Scott Duncan Hut before we lost visibility again. Ken 's sharp eyes eventually spotted the hut which seemed to be perched precariously on a narrow rock shelf below Mount Daly. It was a magnificent setting for a mountain hut and very fitting for the end of this traverse. The weather continued to improve as we approached the hut, which had a snow drift blocking the door so we had to dig our way in. After supper we had an almost clear evening, and as it was our last night we went for a late evening ski exploring the local ridges and enjoying the rich colors of the setting sun on the neighboring peaks. We understand that this hut is the least visited hut on the traverse, which seems a shame as the hut is so well situated.

On the last day we made a gentle traverse in high overcast, and as we passed Mount Niles the weather deteriorated and we started a steeper descent. Shortly after taking off the rope the light became really bad again, and Ken, who was in front, suddenly disappeared with a brief yelp. I was amazed because we were sure we were off the glacier, and I had visions of trying some desperate rescue techniques to extricate him from a crevasse. Luckily he had only dropped off a steep wind cirque, but it was deep and he had quite a shock. After that scare we skied very cautiously, until we entered the trees which gave us our reference, after which progress improved, at least for Ken who had better control than me. We eventually followed Sherbrooke Creek to Sherbrooke Lake, where we had a snack and contemplated the bad weather we were leaving behind (which always makes one feel good). The trail from the lake quickly



Brian near Scott Duncan Hut with Mt. Niles to right.

Photo - K. Saunders.

became marginal skiing for me, and I finished up walking the last kilometer or so, but I kept on seeing Ken's ski tracks between the patches of dirt as he valiantly (or recklessly?) skied all the way down through the trees to the West Louise Lodge. When I arrived he was on the phone still retrieving his voicemail messages. Wow! Back to so-called civilisation with a bump!

It was a good trip, and we finished it off with another night at the Saskatchewan Crossing Motel, complete with the hot tub. Who said that backcountry skiers were too cheap to appreciate "la Dolce Vita"! By the way, the source of gas contamination was eventually tracked down to my spare can of fuel for my motorbike. The can had been stored with the food while we were on the Columbia Icefield trip, and that would explain the taste and smell of auto gas, as opposed to white gas. It seems that our idea of combining two trips back -to- back nearly came to grief because of my cheap spare fuel can - which I never even needed. If the story of this trip appears to be obsessed with the risks posed by chemicals, rather than natural mountain hazards, it is because the technical difficulty of the traverse was fairly low and we felt we had to introduce other risks to try to hold the reader's interest.

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Adamant Range Climbing Camp

7-15 August, 1999

by Anders Ourom

The climbing camp was a moderate success, with decent but not great weather. A few triflers were put off when told that we would be hiking into the area. We rendezvoused at the Husky in Golden on Saturday morning, but disorganization led to us not starting to hike until early afternoon. In the end, eleven started up the Swan Creek trail. The trail has been much improved. However, about an hour up the trail Dave and Arnie had to retreat when Dave's leg was gashed by an errant pack. We were unstably perched on a slope by the creek at the time. Dave ended up with several stitches. The rest plodded on, under large packs. It was buggy and hot. Eventually four camped by the moraine about 20 minutes below Fairy Meadows hut, three at the hut, and two about 2 hours below. We regrouped on Sunday morning, and continued to a tarn midway between the Friendship Col and Granite Glacier, about 300 m above the hut. This site was chosen because it eliminated an hour or more of ascent/descent each day.

Sunday afternoon: Set up camp. Two prospected the route to Friendship Col.

Monday: All six camped at Troll Tarn, went up to Pioneer Pass, climbed Sentinel and Damon or Pytheas, then descended by Friendship Col. The three at the hut tried Austerity.

Tuesday: Four tried Quadrant in unsettled weather, without success. Later there was brilliant sun. Two of the hut folk went home, and the third joined us at the tarn.

Wednesday: A lovely day. Everyone went to Austerity. Four climbed the northwest face, a good ice climb. About six 50 meter pitches of 45-50 degree ice, with a final gully escape pitch up to 70 degrees. The other three climbed Ironman, finding it much more of a challenge than advertised in the guide. There were adventures with ropes and rappels for all on the descent, but everyone was back to camp by 7 pm.

Thursday: Showered and rained most of the day.

Friday: Everyone went up to Friendship Col. Three climbed Pioneer Peak, the other four Mt. Thor.

Saturday: Hiked out, in decent weather.

Rendezvoused in Golden for a clean up and dinner, then some went to the Mad Trapper.

Participants: Dave Way, Arnie Wilson, Zoran Vasic, Margaret Hanson, Jos van der Burg, Simon Coates, Roxanne Coates, Brian Kuchinka, Brenda Lomax, Nana Zolbrod, and Anders Ourom (Organizer).

**Mt. Revelstoke National Park,
25-28 July, 1998**

by Michael Feller

Having driven past/through Mt. Revelstoke national park on countless occasions, not having heard of anyone who had climbed there, having heard of its spectacular alpine meadow flowers (though not being attracted by its lurid tacky signs on the highway), and seeking a relatively short trip to a new area, the park seemed a logical destination.



Upper Jade Lake with Mt. Coursier (left) and the Inverness Pks. (right) behind.

Photo - M. Feller.

The new Climber's Guide to the Columbia Mountains is singularly inaccurate with respect to this area. The guide states that a trail is maintained up Clachnacudainn Ck., while it isn't. It also states that no overnight camping is allowed in the park, while campsites exist at Eva and Upper Jade Lakes, and camping is permitted anywhere more than 5 km from a road, i.e. anywhere within the heart of the park. Route descriptions are often sketchy and the claim that Clachnacudainn West is frequently ascended was not borne out by any visible evidence of such ascents. While hundreds of hikers use the trail to Eva Lake, we were not aware of any other climbers present while we were there.

After paying our car and camping fees, amounting to \$9 per person per day, we drove up to the crowded road-end car park at around 1800 m in the subalpine. In sweltering heat we hiked up the gravel and asphalt trails around Mt. Revelstoke then on to the Eva Lake trail. This trail was graveled and nicely ditched through many of the meadows it traversed. The flowers were at their peak but the meadows were not as luxuriant or as bright as some we had seen a day earlier on a climb in the Monashees above Sicamous. There the Indian Paintbrushes had been a deeper, more vivid red, the lupines a deeper blue, and the flowers generally more profuse, than those in the park. The park meadows, however, were



Traversing in meadows above Clachnacudainn valley, with Clachnacudainn West behind. Photo - M. Feller.

still extremely beautiful and undoubtedly appreciated by the crowds of people, many German, traversing the trail in both directions.

At the Jade Lake trail junction we headed east up over a 2200 m pass before dropping down to upper Jade Lake, our campsite for the trip. The heat and our heavy packs had us stopping frequently, drinking as much water as we felt safe doing. Unfortunately the park attracts an inordinate number of dog owners, whose unleashed pets seemed to do their best to foul every creek (One study showed over 90% of dogs tested in Colorado carried Giardia. No one knows the number for B.C.).

The Jade Lake campsite sported a fouling-dog owning party of yahoos whom, after they left the next day, we found to be cutting living trees for firewood to unsuccessfully burn some food they didn't want to pack out. We dumped their leftovers, mainly bread, down the toilet. Given the numbers of people around, bears were unlikely to be in the vicinity, however. After the yahoos left, a German couple dropped in one afternoon but otherwise we had the campsite to ourselves, apart from the marmots, pikas, and countless bugs.

Our first day there, again in sweltering heat, we climbed Clachnacudainn West by the ridge leading south then west from the high point of the Jade Lakes trail. One buttress on the ridge had a nice ramp bypass and a gendarme on the final ridge to the summit had some scree and easy ledges as a bypass. From the first buttress until the summit cairn there was no sign of people. Descent was from the low point in the ridge west of the summit down snow and scree directly to Upper Jade Lake. Views were superb but the heat got to us - every stream, tarn, or snowpatch resulted in a drinking stop, but the lack of shade left its mark.

Next day, it was off on a high traverse on the west side of the upper Clachnacudainn valley, to attempt Mt. Coursier - the dominant peak at the head of the valley. The traverse took us through small rocky ridges, a refreshing small lake, much talus, steep herbaceous slopes, and myriads of flowers. However, a drinking and cooling stop at every stream was mandatory in the shadeless 30°+ heat. A steep climb through lush herbaceous vegetation (using clumps of grass or flowers as handholds!) lead us to a moraine basin at the head of the valley at the base of Mt. Coursier. A large boulder with a shaded north

side and a rapidly melting snow patch provided a welcome respite from the heat.

While having lunch in this shady oasis, a quick calculation indicated that if we continued up Mt. Coursier we would not get back to camp until after 11 pm. This and the heat caused us to change our destination to a rocky bump (Pk. 2393 m) on the ridge leading west from Mt. Coursier. A short and pleasant class 2-3 scramble had us soon on top guzzling water and photographing the superb scenery.

We then retraced our steps back to camp, taking a lower route at one point to avoid a steep herbaceous vegetation traverse. This lower route took us through extensive shrubfields (rhododendron and black huckleberry) on talus - a dubiously preferable route, but an interesting vegetation complex - one I had never seen before. A swim in a small lake and a long pause in a miniature canyon, waiting for the sun to drop well below the ridge to the west, delayed our arrival in camp.

The heat having got the better of us, the next day we packed up and slowly hiked up the trail to the pass, then down and out to the carpark. The number of people we encountered increased exponentially as we approached the car. A short but satisfying trip, despite the heat and bugs.

Party: Evelyn and Michael Feller

Mount Revelstoke National Park Summer Camp 30 July - 5 August, 2000 by Michael Feller

Two years later, Mount Revelstoke National Park saw us back, on the club's first summer climbing camp of the new millenium. In the intervening period I had browsed maps and discussed access with park wardens and the B.C. Ministry of Forests. A recce 6 weeks before the trip had provided helpful access information. Fifteen+ participants made a viable party and even heavy rain two days before the trip did not dampen enthusiasm.

The group met, on schedule, in Revelstoke, but numbering 14, as one person had dropped out at the last minute. The highlight of the breakfast meeting was Mark's discovery that a restaurant could serve up minute pieces of dehydrated bacon in place of the real thing! After some shuffling of vehicle loads and obtaining our wilderness pass, we drove in convoy to

near the end of our logging/communications tower access road. There we were greeted by sun and swarms of bugs which were to accompany us for the rest of the trip. We followed a partly snowed-up trail through subalpine vegetation until near a private cabin just outside the park boundary. We had lunch near the boundary in a breezy spot where the bugs weren't as ferocious.



Hiking in to camp in the upper St. Cyr Ck. valley, with Mt. Coursier the snow peak on far left.

Photo - M. Feller.

After lunch we hiked through forest and meadows, dropping into the St. Cyr Ck. valley. A bank of cliffs presented a problem until the breach was located. We continued down then up to our proposed campsite - a delightful place set in heather, grass, and boulders behind an old moraine wall, complete with running water, refrigeration (in the form of lingering snow), and air-conditioning (down-valley breezes) to minimize bug problems. People spread out, finding a diversity of camping, cooking, and socializing sites. A toilet was constructed by

Mark (who got points for his first one but not his second, which involved a class 5 perch in boulders). That first evening a small group of 9 goats checked us out from the cliffs of Pk. 2578 m directly above our camp. We were constantly running into these gotas, or their tracks, in subsequent days. They, marmots, and pikas provided animal companionship during our stay. One day Mark saw a wolf carry off a dead marmot and, on our trek out, Lesli almost encountered a bear. A dipper bobbed around near camp, a humming bird buzzed our party near the summit of the highest Inverness Pk. and an occasional raven floated by. Other people, however, were conspicuously absent, except for a couple of helicopters, one of which appeared to be making an illegal landing until our party was sighted, causing an abrupt departure.

Despite being chased down to camp by thunderstorms on most days, the weather generally cooperated in a big way, helping to make the camp a great success and causing the party to climb all accessible peaks in 5 days. Sunshine ruled and rain was restricted to one night and some showers from the edges of thunderstorms. These storms miraculously tracked all around us, never hitting us directly, although Peter experienced a humming ice axe on one summit.

There appeared to be more snow than usual, certainly much more than 2 years previously, and we were able to climb high on snow towards most of the peaks. This, together with the lack of ice, facilitated access to the peaks, also helping to make the camp a great success.

The rock on the ridges of the peaks offered any degree of technical difficulty one desired, although we generally restricted ourselves to class 3 and 4 routes. Particularly nice rock was encountered on the highest Inverness Pk. while particularly loose rock was encountered on Mt. St. Cyr.

The American Alpine Club guidebook to the area is very vague, which is probably the way it should be if we wish to preserve wilderness. It is certainly not this writer's intention to destroy that wilderness by providing much geographic detail. The vague guidebook is reinforced by inaccurate maps, the most inaccurate of which is a new 1:50,000 of the park published by a private company. This map shows lakes where none exist and has incorrect peak elevations and contours which don't always match reality.



Nearing the summit of Mt. Coursier.

Photo - M. Feller.



Camp below Mt. Dickey (right).

Photo - M. Feller.



Inverness Pks and Clachnacudainn Icefield from Mt. St. Cyr.

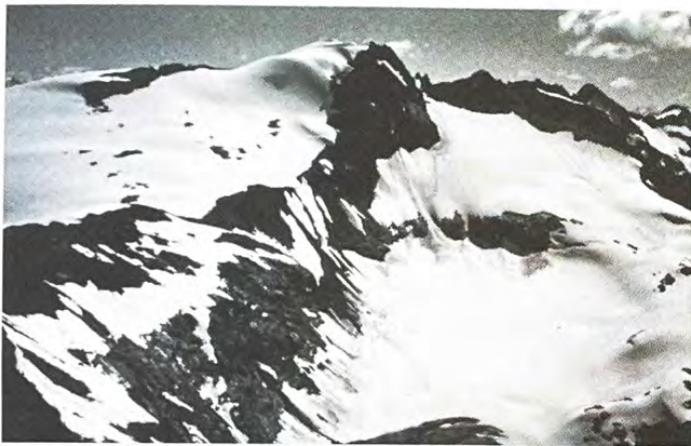
Photo - M. Feller.

Perhaps due to the vagueness of the guidebook, or due to perceived access problems, or due to its proximity to much higher profile climbing areas, such as those of Roger's Pass, or the Adamants, Sir Sandford, or Moloch groups, the mountains of the Clachnacudainn Range of Mount Revelstoke National Park have been only infrequently visited. The summit register on Mount Coursier, the highest (or second highest - depending on which map one believes) and most dominant peak in the range, contained entries for only 4 parties including the first ascent party of 1957. The party prior to ours signed in 10 years previously - in 1990. The Mt. St. Cyr summit register recorded only 2 previous parties. The guidebook, published in 1992, had no information about ascents of Dickey. Undoubtedly other parties have summited these peaks, particularly if the clean (and recently reroofed) glaciology research hut above Margaret Lake has been used as a base, but the numbers are still likely to be low. It is possible, therefore, that some of



On the upper Woolsey Glacier with Mt. Klotz to left.

Photo - M. Feller.



Mt. Coursier from Mt. Dickey. Photo - M. Feller.



Mt. Dickey with the E. Ridge on left and N-NW Ridge on right. Photo - M. Feller.



Inverness Pks. from Mt. Coursier. Photo - M. Feller.



On a shoulder on the N-NW Ridge of Mt. Dickey. Photo - M. Feller.



Inverness Pks. from the highest Inverness Pk. Photo - M. Feller.



On the summit of Mt. Dickey. Photo - M. Feller.



Mt. St. Cyr (right) from Mt. Dickey.

Photo - M. Feller.



Lower on the SW Ridge of Mt. St. Cyr.

Photo - M. Feller.

our ascents were new routes, particularly on Dickey or on the highest Inverness Peak.

The day after arrival, in unsettled weather, the party headed up towards what would be called "Ambivalent Pass" at the head of the Woolsey Glacier. Several climbing options were available from the pass and not everyone knew for which peak they were headed prior to arriving at the pass. Hence its name. Mark, Randy, and John H. decided to climb Mt. Dickey that day while the rest of the group headed up Mt. Coursier. Ellen christened the former group the 'Dickey boys'. Two days later, the Dickey boys pioneered the route (for this group) up Mt. St. Cyr. A day later one of the boys opted for a rest day, allowing Ellen to join the remaining two, becoming a self-confessed 'Dickey bird' - on the highest Inverness Pk.



On the SW Ridge of Mt. St. Cyr. Photo - M. Feller.

Two days after the Dickey boys knocked off Dickey, the remainder of the group (the mob) also climbed Dickey via the obvious route directly from camp. This ascent, via Dickey's north to northwest ridge was one of the camp's highlights as more time was spent resting than actually climbing. Delightful meadows on a shoulder on this broad ridge offered



On the summit of Mt. St. Cyr with Inverness Pks. behind.

Photo - M. Feller.

superb, sunny, bug-free vistas. Here the mob lingered on both the ascent and descent. The summit provided a 2 hour lunch stop and stunning vistas from the Bugaboos through the Roger's Pass peaks almost to the Adamants. All peaks climbed offered superb vistas. The only marring of the scenery was a new logging road and recent logging in La Forme Ck., visible from the summit of Mt. St. Cyr, as well as older logging in the adjacent Monashees on the west side of Lake Revelstoke. Heliski junk littered the northern boundary of the park from near Mt. St. Cyr westward. Due to the lack of rest days, the group climbed most peaks earlier than expected, so we departed a day or two earlier than planned.

Participants: Marsha Ablowitz, Monica Bittel, Lesli Cowan, Marilyn Cram, Peter de Visser, Randy Enomoto, Evelyn Feller, Michael Feller, Mark Force, John Halliday, Carol MacMillan, Lorain Ogle, John Sapac, and Ellen Woodd.

Peaks/routes climbed -

Mt. Dickey (2525 m) - **E. Ridge** (class 4) - M. Force, R. Enomoto, J. Halliday (31 July)

- **N - NW Ridge** (class 3) - M. Ablowitz, M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, P. De Visser, E. Feller, M. Feller, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle, J. Sapac, E. Woodd (2 August)

Mt. St. Cyr (2627 m) - **SW Ridge** (class 4) -

1. R. Enomoto, M. Force, J. Halliday (2 August)
2. M. Bittel, M. Cram, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle (3 August)
3. P. de Visser, E. Feller, M. Feller, J. Sapac, E. Woodd (4 August)

Pk. 2578 m (1 km SW of Mt. St. Cyr) - **SSW Ridge** (NTD) - M. Ablowitz, M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, P. de Visser, E. Feller, M. Feller, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle, J. Sapac, E. Woodd (1 August)

Pk. 2389 m (1 km E of Mt. Dickey) - **E. Ridge, descent via N. Ridge** (NTD),

1. P. de Visser, E. Feller, J. Sapac (31 July).
2. R. Enomoto, M. Force, J. Halliday (1 August)
3. M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle (4 August)

Mt. Coursier (2646 m) - **NW Face** (NTD)

1. M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, P. de Visser, E. Feller, M. Feller, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle, J. Sapac, E. Woodd (31 July)
2. R. Enomoto, M. Force, J. Halliday (1 August)

Inverness Pk (highest) (2651 m) - **S Ridge, descent via N Ridge** (class 4) - R. Enomoto, M. Force, M. Feller, E. Woodd (3 August).

- **N Ridge** (class 4) - M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, J. Halliday, P. de Visser, E. Feller (3 August) C. MacMillan, L. Ogle (4 August).

Inverness Pk. (300 m S of highest pk.) - **N. Face** (NTD) - 1. J. Sapac (3 August)

2. M. Bittel, L. Cowan, M. Cram, J. Halliday, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle (4 August).

Inverness Pk. (600 m SE of highest pk.) - **NW Ridge** (class 3) - M. Bittel, M. Cram, J. Halliday, C. MacMillan, L. Ogle (4 August)

The North

Mount Logan, East Ridge

7 May - 3 June 1999

by Mark Sanctuary

Prologue

The mysterious St. Elias Mountains of Kluane National Park in the Yukon Territory are often hidden from view under storms sweeping in from the Gulf of Alaska less than 60 km away. Here among some of the most impressive and intimidating scenery I have ever seen is Canada's highest peak - Mount Logan.

Jean Luc and I have been ski comrades since the winter of 1995, and as 1999 dawned, we shook hands, sealing our commitment to climb Mount Logan's East Ridge. The organization of logistics, gear and food was relatively straightforward, due to the fact that we were only two and that we had ventured into the backcountry together on several occasions before. We decided to drive to Kluane Lake on the edge of Kluane Park where we would meet Andy Williams who would fly us to the base of the East Ridge from the Silver City Airstrip. Upon arriving at the base of Logan, our plan would be two-fold:

- An ascent of the East Ridge which involves close to 4000 vertical metres of moderate to technical climbing to the summit at 5959 metres elevation.

- A 130 km ski traverse from the base of the East Ridge, down the Hubbard and Kaskawulsh Glaciers to the Slims Valley and finally to the Alaska Highway. We prepared ourselves for a 5-week trip of which 3 weeks would be spent climbing and descending the

ridge; and 2 weeks would be spent ski traversing to the Alaska Highway.

We arrived at the airstrip on May 3rd and to our dismay learned that there were no less than 21 people waiting to be flown in to the base of the mountain. Most of the climbers were heading to the King Trench, on the far side (west side) of the mountain. One group had been waiting for 18 days when we arrived. The weather that spring had been dismal and the opportunities to fly people to Logan had been limited. Andy Williams has a little Heliotrope Courier, which can accommodate two climbers and gear at best, and given his recent fly-in rate, we resigned ourselves to a long wait. However, we were lucky (and not for the last time thankfully) - on our fourth day of waiting, the visibility was poor on the west side of the mountain, but clear to the East Ridge, consequently we managed to skip ahead of everyone.

The Climb

Thus, on May 7th, Jean-Luc and I stood 6 km from the base of the East Ridge and stared in awe at the sheer walls of rock, ice and snow that surrounded and dwarfed us. The serac towers and crevasses were taller, and wider and more incredible than any I had ever seen. The sheer quantity of ice and snow was almost incomprehensible. After the drab brown and gray of Kluane Lake, the perfect white snow and turquoise ice of Mount Logan were brilliant. Huge avalanches cascaded regularly down to the glacier on which we stood, overpowering the silence with a titanic roar. I know, a little melodrama there, but the scenery was amazing and for the 20 days we spent on the mountain my amazement never ceased.

That afternoon we each hauled our 55 kg of gear 6-km to base camp, including approximately 27 kg of food and fuel and 27 kg of gear. Twenty seven kg of food and fuel would see one of us for 22 days of good eating. We organized ourselves to allow two carries between each camp; a food/fuel carry that decreased each day, thank the sweet Lord, and a gear carry.

The winter in Kluane that year had been relatively dry, with less than half the average annual snow accumulation. There was more ice on the route than we had expected. In the interest of cutting weight, Jean Luc and I had agreed to take a much lighter rack - three ice screws and two snow stakes between the two of us. As a result, most of the climbing went unprotected. We also limited ourselves

to one classic ice axe each, which made us feel a little less than secure on the steeper ice sections.

Nonetheless, on May 8th the climb of the East Ridge began in fantastic weather. Standing on the glacier at the base of Mount Logan I looked up the East Ridge and tried to come to terms with the size of the mountain. I tried to imagine reaching the top and it seemed like a fantasy. I mean really, the summit! It was so far away, and there was so much to climb, so many camps to set, so many crevasses and ridges to navigate and overcome. The possibility of reaching the summit seemed slight. Trying to take the whole climb in all at once set my heart pounding. I guess I would call it fear. Fear of failure, of dying, of a two-week storm, of frostbite, of an avalanche. For me, the start of any climb is always a challenge in itself. And the challenge for me is to find my groove, my climbing groove. Once I'm in my climbing groove things start to fall into place; I concentrate on the tasks at hand, I focus my energy, things just flow.

So I avoided thinking of the 4000 vertical metres we would have to scale, and the summit, and getting back down and skiing out. I got myself under control and Jean Luc and I started to climb.

From our basecamp, we climbed a steepish south facing snow slope (approximately 40°) to gain the base of the ridge itself. Once on the ridge we moved quickly along a section of class 4 rock to establish Camp 1. The climbing was fun with some good exposure here and there. The sunny skies and spectacular views made for a comfortable and entertaining climb. It felt a lot like a spring day on Seventh Heaven. We set camp 1 on a large flat snow mushroom perched precariously on the ridge. From there we had a great view of the route along a snaking arête of snow and ice. The climbing between camp 1 and camp 2 was definitely one of the most technically challenging sections of the ridge for us. The highlight was a super thin ridge traverse on rotten "void rich" ice and depth hoar, made all the more exciting by our lack of climbing protection.

We made our way across the delicate ridge traverse, totally focused on carefully placing our cramponed feet and ice axe in the rotten ice. We were perched on the edge, and the only sounds to be heard were our movements, our breathing and the wind. As if it was an effort to surprise us, a helicopter rose up out of the valley and flew by, sending turbulent snow and ice into our faces. The pilot spotted us and came



Mark low on the ridge with camp 1 below on the ridge.

Photo - J.-L. Bouchayer.

in closer for a look. He flew a full 360 degrees around us and then just as quickly as he appeared, dove back down into the valley, leaving us once again feeling totally alone and isolated. It was even hard to believe that it even happened. We stood looking at each other, blinking.

Camp 2 was again a small platform perched on the edge of infinity. The summit of Mount MacArthur reared above us, and the sheer rock and ice walls of the Logan massif let loose their avalanches. We saw a party of two approaching the base of the East Ridge, two dots moving slowly across the vastness. It turned out that we were to meet these two fellows and become friends. As they approached, a larger than average avalanche crashed down the Hubsew ridge directly towards them. We watched as the cloud of snow and ice quickly covered the kilometer of glacier between the base of the ridge and our friends. A few weeks later as we sat in our tent talking about the scene, they commented (paraphrased) "we saw the cloud approaching us and there was nothing we could do, it was huge, we just pulled on our hoods and zipped up and waited. As the cloud engulfed us, the day turned instantly from clear and cloudless to white-out blizzard."

The climb to camp 3 was another technically challenging section involving some steeper blue ice and another knife-edge ridge. Front pointing up the steep ice with a single classic axe and a full load of gear was exhausting work for the calf muscles. On the rappel back to camp 2, our luck saved me from a serious accident. I managed to rappel off the end of the rope, luckily I was holding onto the rope as the end of the rope slid through my karabiner, saving me from a 1500 m tumble to the glacier below. The weather had started to deteriorate as we moved our second load to camp 3. The wind picked up and the visibility dropped. For a while we had a view of the Gulf of Alaska to the south. The blue ocean in the distance reminded us of a life where the days and nights are warm and green things grow. Deteriorating weather has a way of increasing the urgency of a climb.

The weather at camp 3 continued to deteriorate. We woke up the next morning to heavy winds, blowing snow and poor visibility. We decided to spend the day, our eighth day of the climb, resting in the tent. It was a nice break to lie warm and cozy in our down cocoons, read our paperbacks, chat about

life and the climb. The weather did not improve for the next 7 days, though we didn't let that stop us from climbing up to camp 4. We moved through the storm, slowly planting wands every 100 m or so and recording a compass backbearing. Though we moved slowly through the blowing snow, we managed to move to 5000 m by our 10th day on the mountain.

Life at camp 4 was not easy. I came to the conclusion that humans don't belong in this environment. Every night the mercury on our little thermometers dropped well below the -30°C mark. Cooking and melting water during the day was an adventure in itself. I would take my big gloves off to handle the little fiddly metal pieces on our stoves and I would watch as the tips of my fingers turned white, at which point I would shove my hands back in my gloves and wait for them to come back to life. Every night we had to wake up several times to dig out the tent or risk being buried alive. We woke up one night and found that only the top few cm of our tent protruded from the snow. We were resolved to stick out the storm and wait at our camp for a break in the weather that would allow us to make it to the summit. We had 7 days of food when we arrived at Camp 4, and we watched each day as our cache grew smaller and smaller.

On the third day of the storm, the clouds parted and the wind dropped in the late afternoon. We looked towards the summit and saw it waiting for us. We got ourselves ready for an early morning start for the summit, but woke to find the storm raging again. We settled back down in our sleeping bags and waited. Again, that afternoon the weather cleared and again the next morning the storm was raging.

On the fourth day of the storm, Jean Luc and I decided that we would leave the camp at 1 pm and make our way to the summit. If the weather had not started to clear by 3 pm, we would turn back to camp. We started out from camp in a raging blizzard, visibility was less than 25 m, and a loud voice in my head told me to stay at the camp. The thermometer read sub -30°C and there was a strong wind to add to the chill. I could feel my core body temperature drop every time I stopped to rest, and I could feel the heat being sucked out through the soles of my boots. Even when I moved, taking three breaths to every step, breaking trail through the deep new storm snow, I never broke a sweat. I wore all the clothes I had with me. I thought I would have my down parka as a



Mt. Augusta through clouds from Camp 3.

Photo - M. Sanctuary.



Camp 4 during a break in the storm.

Photo - M. Sanctuary.

backup for when I rested, but I wore it for the whole day.

At 3 pm the weather started to clear, and by 6 pm we were under clear blue sky and high above the clouds. I stood on the east summit with Jean Luc and looked around at the mountains spread below us. We were there for only five minutes before we had to retreat because of the bitter cold and harsh wind, but it was enough time for the moment to sink in. It was beautiful there, not just because of what we saw, but also because we knew that this was the summit, the top. This was the ideal we had held in our minds since we hatched our plan to climb Canada's highest peak. And here we were - we had made it. I would describe the feeling as one of guarded celebration and relief. I say guarded because we still had to get down the mountain.

It took us 9 hours to reach the summit from Camp 4, which put us on the summit at 10 pm. Our tracks to the summit had filled and crusted over. It took us 5 hours of exhaustive trail breaking to get back to Camp 4. It was surreal slogging back to camp at 3 am under the dull red glow of the sun to the north, the stars, the pink and silver snow and ice. I'll never forget that.

We took two half-days and one full-day to down-climb the ridge, and we had one day pinned by a storm at Camp 1. At Camp 1 we met Jer McIvor and Dan Maclean, the two we had seen engulfed by the avalanche on the glacier. We hit it off throwing quotes at each other from bad movies "Welcome to my evil underground lair..." Outside the storm raged and our tents threatened to disintegrate. But we woke up the next morning and there was a break in the storm. So through poor visibility and light snow, the four of us descended the last section of the ridge and crossed the glacier to our food cache. We were famished. We spent a whole day lying around eating. We turned the stoves on at 9 am, and the feast did not stop until 9 pm.

The Ski Out to the Alaska Highway

Armed with our 1:250 000 scale map complete with 100 m contour intervals, we set out from our basecamp and said good-bye to Jer and Dan and two European climbers we had met there. We slimmed our packs down and dropped as much gear and food as we could. The balance of our gear we gave to Jer

and Dan to fly out for us. We took ten days of food and fuel for our ski traverse to civilization.

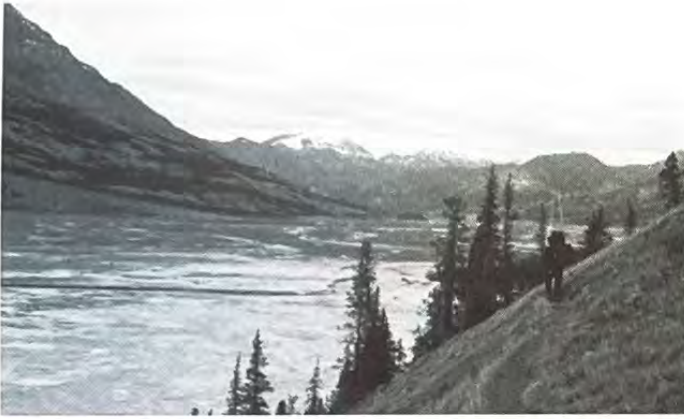
The ski out gave me a glimpse of what it means to be a nomad. Moving across the vast expanse of snow and ice, setting camps wherever and whenever, carrying all we needed on our backs. Such a simple existence; wake up in the morning, pack up the camp and move. We covered roughly 20 km a day, hauling between 20 and 30 kg of gear. We left the base of the East Ridge and skied due west along the Hubbard Glacier between Mount King George and Mount Vancouver under fantastic blue sky. We turned north around King George and headed through some unnamed mountains and glaciers to the head of the Kaskawulsh Glacier where we spent a day in the tent, battered by another storm. We skied quickly down the Kaskawulsh covering 20 km in less than 2 hours but then slowed as the angle eased and the crevasses started to open up. By the end of the day, however, we had covered 40 km and had made it to the end of the Kaskawulsh. It was quite an experience to see and smell running water and plants again. When I look back on it now, the end of the glacier was a desolate place, but after a month of nothing but snow and ice, the little brown shrubs and dead grass seemed like the Garden of Eden.

After six days of traveling across a frozen sea, we stepped off ice for the first time in 26 days. It was a relief to untie the rope, which had faithfully tied Jean Luc and I together. We saddled our packs and made our way over the moraine and into some four hours of horrendous bushwhacking before we found the Slims River Trail. Two relevant observations Jean Luc and I made while hiking out on the trail:

- "I can fit my size 11 plastic mountaineering boot in this bear print" and;
- "You can see where the claws dig into the mud, way out here past the end of his toes".



Camp at top of the Kaskawulsh Glacier with Mt. King George behind. Photo - M. Sanctuary.



Hiking above the Sims River. Photo - M. Sanctuary.



Jean-Luc and Mark off snow and ice.

Photo - M. Sanctuary collection.

We didn't bump into any grizzly bears, but they were there and they knew we were there. Luckily they avoided us.

Epilogue

In a semi trance, we walked onto the Alaska Highway, our backs and hips raw from our heavy packs. We slapped each other's backs and congratulated ourselves. We tried to comprehend everything that had happened to us over the last 35 days. People ask me "how was your trip?" and I never know what to say. How do you explain an experience like this as you pass a friend on the street? It's my hope that this incomplete narrative helps answer some of your questions, and also provides you with at least an understanding of what happened and how I felt during our adventure to Kluane.

Statistics

Elevation of camps:

Basecamp - 2200 m, Camp 1 - 3200 m, Camp 2 - 3800 m, Camp 3 - 4500 m, Camp 4 - 5000 m

Body Weight April 28th = 84 kg, Body Weight June 2nd = 77 kg.

Average Fuel Consumption = 225 ml per person per day of white gas

Standard Pack Weight, gear only = 18-30 kg.

Longest Day = 14 hours (summit day)

Most elevation climbed in a day = 1000 vertical metres (summit day)

Longest stretch spent confined in the tent = 4 days at camp 4

Most distance in one day = 40 km

Total Vertical Climbed = 7000 m

Largest meal consumed in one sitting = 500 ml of soup + 1.75 liters of spaghetti + assorted chocolates and bon bons + sip of single malt scotch

Lowest Temperature -40°C

Lotus Flower Tower

16 August - 1 September, 1997

by Mark Sanctuary and Grant Else

The Plan:

We left Vancouver with a loose plan to climb the Lotus Flower Tower, a granite wall rising 700 vertical metres above an alpine meadow. The climb is rated at 5.9 A1, or 5.10c. This is an alpine/backcountry rating, quite different from your typical urban crag ratings, as we discovered... eventually. The plan was to drive up to Watson Lake, catch a bush plane into Glacier Lake, hike from the lake to the base camp in the cirque with all our gear, and climb the wall over two days. The actual climb involves 20 pitches of moderate to difficult climbing, pitch ratings vary from 5.7 to 5.10c. There is a bivy ledge 10 pitches above ground. The first day would be spent getting to the bivy ledge, we would have a haul bag with our extra food and water and sleeping bags. The second day, we would leave all the extra gear on the ledge, and climb the remaining pitches to the top. To descend, we would rappel the route. The first three pitches are notoriously wet and slimy and we planned to aid them. The rest of the climb we would do our best to free climb.

We gave ourselves 10 days in the cirque; two

days to get to base camp, two days to get out, 2 days to climb, and a 4 day contingency for bad weather. At the end of our ten days, the float plane would return to pick us up. And then we would have three or so days to make it back to Vancouver, in time hopefully to resume our normal lives as engineers.

And so it began.

August 16 - We drove. No kidding, we drove for 12 hours straight from Vancouver to Hudson Hope. We slept at one of those once-free campgrounds maintained by the Ministry of Forests.

August 17 - We drove. My butt was getting sore, the AM radio stations were few and far between, my jokes and Grant's jokes were turning stale, and were more often than not, repeats. But we drove from Hudson Hope to Finlayson Lake. Finlayson is 250 km or so north of Watson Lake via single track dirt road. We arrived at the lake late that day, and camped by the road.

August 18 - There we were at the lake, and it was a big lake. The only vague instructions that we had from the pilot were "meet our float plane at Finlayson Lake". Well we didn't see any evidence of a float plane, but there was a decrepit dock with a washing machine on it, so we hedged our bets and waited there. About an hour and a half later, a plane landed on the lake, and made its way towards us. The plane was a vintage Beaver from the 1960's, powered with a single piston engine that churned out a whopping 450 hp or so. We loaded our gear, and took off for a 15 minute flight to a hunting/fishing lodge. To our surprise, it was quite a posh affair with a real rustic atmosphere, stuffed heads of game hanging on every wall, a pool table, a Jacuzzi, and a four star chef who cooked us a fabulous lunch. What a deal! And it was all included in our plane ticket.

We spent about three hours at the lodge playing pool, reading, and relaxing before the pilot loaded us on the beaver again. We took off on a 45 minute flight towards Glacier Lake in the North West Territories. The weather wasn't great for the flight - the clouds were quite low. The clouds were in fact lower than the tops of most of the mountains in the area. The pilot flew us through winding valleys, over barren tundra and sparse forest. There were caribou trails everywhere, though we didn't see any actual caribou. Our flight path took us over a large sprawling ice field and glacier, and down towards Glacier Lake. Al, our pilot, did us a huge favor and flew us into the

cirque so we could catch a glimpse of the Lotus Flower Tower. The cirque was a tight fit for the plane to fly in, and the towering granite cliffs threatened to tear the wings off our little plane, but through some fancy flying at low speeds, we managed to get our first real view of our climbing route. The first thing that came to my mind as I gazed at the wall; "that is big and steep and scary looking - whose idea was this?".

We landed at Glacier Lake, unloaded the gear, and told Al to pick us up on the 28th of August unless he heard otherwise from a climbing party that was to be picked up on the 21st.

There were in fact three other groups in the cirque - a group of four Americans flying out on the 21st, another group of Americans flying out on the 28th (with us), and a group of Germans??? We weren't sure if these Germans actually existed. We never had an actual sighting, but apparently they were in the area, So Al and his beloved Beaver took off into the overcast sky, and I said good-bye to the last chance I had to back out of this fiasco.

We loaded our 39 kg packs onto our backs, and headed down the trail towards the talus slope that we would have to climb to get up to the Cirque. The trail winds along the valley floor through forest and marshes for about 3 km before turning north, heading up the valley side through a terribly unstable talus slope below the 1200 vertical metres face of Mount Harrison Smith. About a week before we arrived there was a nicely marked and well traveled trail up through the talus. But that was a whole week before we arrived... apparently a block of granite the size of a small battleship peeled away from the face of Mount Harrison Smith and creamed the trail, and most of the talus slope, not to mention a good number of trees along the valley floor. The dust didn't settle for a day. We picked our way through the unstable rock of the talus slope and it began to rain, and the bugs got worse, and we were both super exhausted, and the top of the talus just didn't seem to be getting any closer, and I was wondering again what the HELL we were doing there. Hauling gear to a base camp is one of those necessary evils I guess, and I am too proud (and poor) to let a helicopter do the work for me, so I kept my mouth shut. Another factor is Grant and I had decided that throughout our trip, we would be forbidden to "blubb". That is we weren't aloud to complain about things over which we had no control,

such as "I'm tired" or "My pack is too heavy", etc.. Of course we still reserved the right to raise the alarm if things were going badly, for example "the bear is eating my leg off and it hurts - get him off me", there is a fine line between blubbing and expressing genuine concern.

After five hours with monstrous loads on our backs, we made it to Fairy Meadows. These are lush green alpine meadows surrounded by towering sheer gray walls. Large and small blocks of granite pepper the meadows, and bubbling streams fill the air with a constant "gurgle" and from high up (from the top of the Tower for example), the streams look much like the capillaries of a maple leaf, gathering the water from the oh so frequent rain storms that sweep through the area.

Of course I didn't notice any of this as we first arrived. The only thing on my mind was set up the tent, eat and sleep. Luckily, the group of four Americans were leaving early, and so we were able to grab their camp, mercifully tucked away from the rain beneath an overhanging rock/boulder roof, forming a sort of "cave".

August 19 - We spent the next 30 hours sleeping/eating/sleeping/resting. We got to know the second group of Americans camped in another "cave" a couple of hundred metres away. There were three guys, all college students about my age, or slightly older, and we got along really well with them. They had climbed the Lotus Tower a week or two before and they had lots of good advice and stories, which we were very eager to hear. Throughout the day we were in the clouds, and the rain poured steadily from the sky, which was fine with us because we were too tired to do much else besides sit around. The other group of Americans had also made an attempt at the tower a week before. However they were unsuccessful, due to a series of mishaps. Two of the four did manage to spend a night on the bivy ledge, and climbed two pitches above the ledge on the second day before bailing off.

The Germans... well we weren't really sure what happened to them? Everything we knew about them was hearsay because neither Grant nor myself actually met them. Apparently there was a party of two Germans in the area who planned to climb the Lotus Tower. They were seen camping halfway up the valley, in the middle of the dangerous talus slope! They were told that the cirque was still an hour or two

climb from where they had stopped. They responded with "they liked it there". Ya right! They also had a portable bivy ledge, and they weigh a ton! they were told that there is a spectacular bivy ledge half way up the wall, but they maintained that the bivy ledge was more comfortable. Ya right! We also saw gear along the trail, stashed in the trees, a rope here, a rack there... slowly (I have a small and slow brain) a picture of their situation formed in my mind. And this picture was confirmed later by an American who spoke with them. They admitted that they were unprepared, and they hadn't realized the area was so remote. So they flew home early, having never even set foot in the cirque.

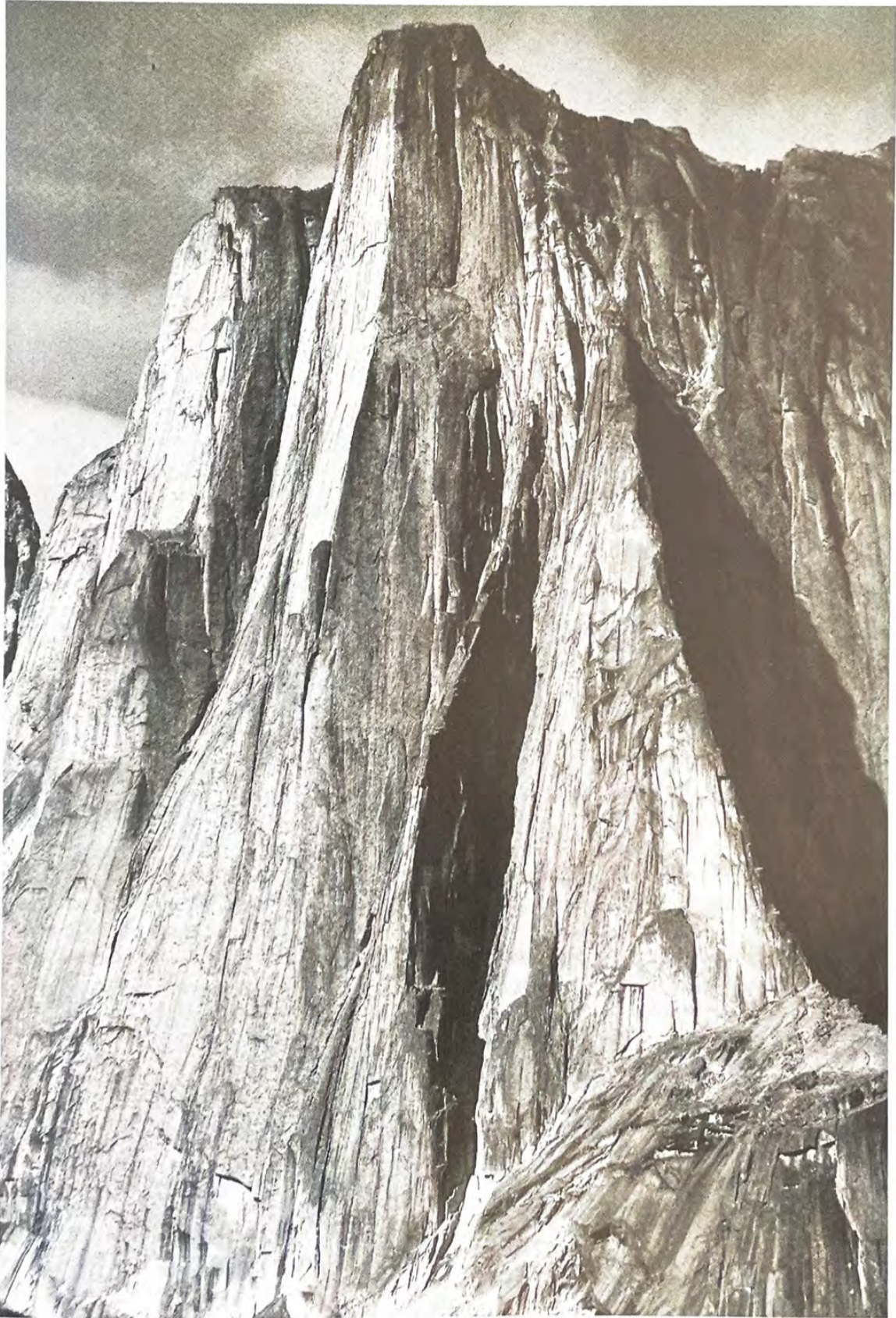
Towards the end of the day the weather did lighten up somewhat, and Grant and I decided to make our way over to the base of the Lotus route. We brought our climbing gear with us; lead rack and 'draws, personal gear and three ropes. We made our way up the cirque, about a one hour hike across scree, moraine and glacier to the start of the climb. Along the way, I banged my knee quite badly, OW! The first three pitches are described in the guide as "awkward 5.9". We found the start of the climb. I craned my neck rolling my eyes higher and higher to take in the line of the route. I felt very small, very unprepared, and full of doubt at my climbing ability. All we could really see were the first three pitches, the route followed a slight but consistent overhang, and because of the rain, was terribly wet and slimy. Thankfully, Grant is more level headed and experienced, and he set about organizing the gear, and analyzing the route. I was inspired by his collected example, and so closed my gaping gob, steadied my trembling knees, and cried "Mon Dieux! what have we done."

Back at the tent that night, I dreamed of climbing.

August 20 - We woke early, and saw the weather was clear and bright, with hardly a cloud in the sky. "Looks like the day to do it". We rushed over to the base and were ready to start climbing by around 9 am. After a "hard man" photo of me decked out in all our high tech climbing gear I began to lead the first pitch.

Pitch #1, #2 and #3:

I realized very quickly that I was carrying a lot of gear, and that it was VERY heavy. All told, I was trying to lead this pitch with about 14 to 16 kg hanging on me. I got about 20 m off the ground, got



The Lotus Flower Tower.

Photo - M. Sanctuary.



Solid rock and chicken heads on the upper half of the wall. Photo - G. Else.

off route, and took a 6 m whipper as I tried to downclimb back to the route, pulling Grant way off the ground. Calmly Grant said "got you" as he was wrenched off his feet. He's so cool. I was shaken. It wasn't a terribly difficult climb, but I was not being cool. I was intimidated, excited, tense. I was feeling our isolation, and the magnitude of our climb, and all these things together compromised my climbing. I told Grant to lower me, and I suggested that he should lead the first pitch, since it would be a couple of minutes until I recollected my frayed sense of confidence. I mean it is 5.9! and I was freaking! how the hell could I expect to make it up 20 something pitches.

Our plan was to aid climb the first three pitches since they are typically wet. But Grant led the first pitch free, and then lead the second and third pitch on aid. It took us a painful wet 4 hours to get through

those first three pitches. I jugged up behind Grant, and Grant hauled our gear.

Pitch #4, #5, #6 and #7:

Above the first three pitches the climbing eased off a lot. The next four pitches are rated at 5.7, and despite a bit of a slow start for me on pitch #4, Grant



Mark in Fairy Meadows.

Photo - G. Else.



A rain and snow squall approaching.

Photo - M. Sanctuary.



Looking down from high on the wall. The haul bag is on the ledge where the night was spent.

Photo - M. Sanctuary.

and I lead confidently and comfortably. The rock was relatively solid, and it felt great to have my hands on it. The protection was really good, and the sun was shining. And already, at pitch #4 the views and the exposure were breathtaking. We made good time, going at about 1 pitch an hour - slow but we were hauling a bag through a chimney and it was God awful hauling.

Pitch #8:

I lead over an easy section of grassy ledges up to a corner below the bivy ledge. When I realized that I was just below the ledge, I was SO happy! strength anew flooded into my arms, and I led the layback 5.9 with about as much style and grace as a hippo ballet dancer, but considering how tired I was, I felt like a hero as I pulled myself over the last move, and up onto this ritzy bivy ledge that could easily sleep maybe 6 people in a pinch.

The bivy ledge:

There we were, completely exhausted, sore, hands raw and bleeding, toes aching, but nonetheless absolutely totally exhilarated. The views from the ledge were spectacular, and as we ate our high fat, high energy lightweight and tasteless food (actually Grant had a big can of Puritan Beef Stew, hardly lightweight but it definitely looked tasteless), we took in the scenery, the stars, the sheer cliffs, the valley floor now 350 m below us, the streams shining silver in the moonlight. They say a night on the ledge is a spiritual experience, and I totally agree. Above our heads, the second half of the climb stretched over us, so steep and sheer, it looked like it might fall on us. But we would deal with that part of the wall tomorrow, all we wanted to do now was stare around in wonder, eat, drink, and sleep.

August 21 - Morning came so quickly, and as I prepared myself for our second day on the wall, I felt sore, tired and stiff, but the excitement and anticipation of the climbing that lay ahead numbed these feelings.

Pitch #9:

Another layback corner rated at 5.9+. Unfortunately the crack had not dried out completely so it wasn't a terribly pleasant lead, and I resorted to French aid on a number of occasions. But I was rewarded at the top of the pitch with a perfect little

belay stance. It was a little ledge, with an earthen seat, and a pair of bolts conveniently placed for maximum ergonomic efficiency.

This was the last such ledge on the wall. Above us, the route took us up a sheer wall, punctuated by two overhangs. I appreciated this belay a lot because after this comfy belay we would have nothing but uncomfy hanging sling belays. I sat on the belay seat and looked behind me, I got my first taste of incredible exposure. Behind my seat, the wall dropped directly to the cirque floor, over 350 m below me. It was an incredible and wild sensation, and as the sun shone and the wind blew through my helmet, it felt so good to be alive and climbing, and OK - I was also feeling a little tense.

Pitch #10:

Grant lead the first pitch on the sheer wall. He lead cautiously and carefully, placing lots of protection in the finger sized crack that split the face. A close look at the face revealed some startling features. The face was for the most part, smooth, solid granite, split by cracks varying in width from finger size to fist size - perfect for placing protection. The granite face was not featureless and smooth; it was sprinkled with feldspar crystals, some of which stuck out like a small thumb, and even better are the zeolites. They looked a lot like chicken heads, or doorknobs. Some of them were even good enough to sling as protection. It was really "weird and wild schtuff!" Great climbing. I recall that one of the chicken heads had depressions for each finger and your thumb. "Someone is playing a joke on us man!!! look at this!"

And so Grant lead this pitch, and made it to the belay station. But not before he took a little fall. The rating was given at 5.9, but as I climbed up after Grant, I kept thinking to myself, "MAN this isn't 5.9!" but in hindsight Grant and I both agree that fatigue, exposure, and isolation can make a huge psychological difference to the rating. But regardless, it still felt a lot harder than a 5.9.

Pitch #11 and #12:

We continued up the chicken headed, cracked granite wall. The climbing continued to be exhilarating and fun. Our bivy ledge had shrunk and was now just a small brown square, our white haul bag not much more than a dot. The exposure was

wild (I keep using that word). It is hard to describe the feeling of looking between your feet, and seeing the ground spread out 450 m below you. Terms like "wild" and "bladder draining" still come up way short.

Pitch #13 - Overhang Number One:

I had to lead pitch #13. Oh man! Not that I'm superstitious...

During the whole trip I wore a good luck charm my brother had given to me some years back. He bought it for me in New Zealand - a simple but eye catching shape, distinctly Maori/Polynesian. I looked up at the overhang, sweeping over my head like a frozen wave of rock, and I looked below me, the ground a dizzying 550 m or so below. I could do little else but clutch my good luck charm and utter a few words to steel my nerve. I found myself thinking about God, not the Christian God or Krishna, or Ishtar, or Thor, or Aphrodite. I thought about an omnipotent entity, impossible to define or comprehend, and I thought about how this God must have much better things to do than listen to the poor pathetic prayers that kept finding themselves rolling off the tip of my tongue.

It was a great pitch, I led through the overhang using some kind of layback stem move, and of course some French aid (vive la France). As I stemmed/laybacked my way up, one of my footholds popped off, sending me soaring through the air for a short bit before the rope caught me, and as I hung there breathing quickly, heart pounding, I realized that I was okay, and it was good. But it was a great section regardless of the fall. I reached high over my head and groped around for a hold, and as I found a hold, and as I realized that it was a good hold, a fabulous hold, and that I was going to make it, that incredible feeling of power and pride welled up from deep inside and I pulled myself over, and up onto the easier face of rock above. It was great to yell "secure!" to Grant below.

Pitch #14 - Overhang Number Two:

This is the hard one, it is the crux of the climb, rated at 5.10c if you free it of course. As Grant and I looked up at this small but formidable pitch, we quickly decided that we would NOT free climb it, but that Grant would aid this pitch. We just didn't have the strength. We were just totally exhausted, nor did

we care to free climb it. So Grant aided the pitch, and I jugged up past him.

Throughout the day the weather had been steadily deteriorating. We could see heavy dark clouds swirling around the mountain peaks around us. Dark streaks across the sky, the tell tale signs of rain, were too close for comfort. The sun had disappeared behind the gray clouds overhead... but there was nothing to be done about it. We knew that this was our only chance to make the summit, and we knew that we were so close, the rain had remained at bay so far, and the rock was still dry and solid.

Pitch #15:

This was a very long pitch, and it was my turn to lead. I looked up from the sling belay. The next station was visible, but it was so far away, and so high. It seemed unreachable, and the wall looked steeper than ever, the holds smaller than ever, and I felt so tired, so thirsty, so hungry and all the gear I was carrying felt like a tonne. I looked at my tortured, raw hands. I looked down towards the ground and the drop made my knees tremble.

But this was the best pitch I lead throughout the entire climb. The line took me straight up two cracks, parallel to each other and about 1 m apart, perfect for fist jamming, finger jamming and foot jamming. Spread about were pink feldspar thumbs and the black chicken heads. The pitch was rated at 5.9, and it was simply a lot of fun for the first half anyway...

About 20 metres below the belay station (wow, it's actually getting closer!) I felt something cold brush my cheek. I looked around, forcing my focus away from the rock. Flakes of snow were falling around me, light flurries. "OH FUCK!" The last thing I needed was snow when every bit of friction was critical towards staying on the rock. I looked left over my shoulder and saw a big wall of black clouds and swirling snow moving towards me, "I think I might die..." and I felt sure that I would never make it to the belay, and that I was about to end up setting a gear belay and hanging. But the belay looked so close, so I went for it. I climbed, and placed pro. I was a machine going for broke, and as I touched the ratty, faded slings at the belay, and as I secured myself, I was enveloped in a cloud of swirling blowing snow.

There I was, high above the ground, huddled shivering against the cold rock as snow swirled around me. It was snowing so hard that I couldn't see

the bivy ledge at all. Despite the weather and the cold, I felt totally and utterly fantastic. The pitch I had just lead was the last hard pitch of the climb.

Pitch #16 and #17:

Grant jugged up to my belay stance through the snow. As he secured himself to the anchor, the snow stopped, and the sky opened up, bathing us in a cold light that did little to warm me. We quickly transferred the lead gear to Grant and he took off up pitch #16. The rock was thankfully dry, but the wind was still blowing, and I told Grant "hey, I'm cold, and if you take long on this pitch I'm going to be hypothermic", and then I added "that wasn't a blubb, it was a statement of fact". There isn't really a hard line separating blubbery and genuine concern. At the time I thought that my statement was a justified and rational concern. In hindsight, maybe there was a smidge of blubbery...

Grant disappeared over a bulge, and a few minutes later I jugged up to his belay stance, it would have been easier to climb, but I was too cold to think about putting my sore hands on the cold rock.

I led the last pitch, a comfortable, unexposed, though somewhat slimy, 5.7. At the top of the pitch, I secured myself at the last belay of the climb, and Grant climbed up to meet me. We were both exhausted, totally pumped, wired, ecstatic etc. It was a tremendous feeling, and a fantastic accomplishment. We ate a few mouthfuls of food, drank the last of our water, snapped a couple of photos, and then prepared ourselves for the long arduous task of rappelling the route.

The Descent:

I hate rappelling, and though I was so happy to have reached the top, I couldn't feel the total sense of accomplishment because I knew that we still had to rappel. I really hate rappelling; it is far more dangerous in my opinion than climbing. For instance while you climb, you are always tied into the rope and there is for the most part more protection placed in the rock, and your hands and feet grip the rock. Rappelling puts you at the mercy of a single anchor, and your gear that connects you to that anchor; there is the possibility of going off the end of the rope; it is possible to miss the next rap anchor; you are constantly tying in, and tying out of the rope, increasing the chance of a mistake, rapping a big

route is done after a long hard day; you are tired, and it is easy to make mistakes, and daylight is typically failing (as was our case); the dynamic rope feels like a long rubber band and you bounce around in a most unnerving manner; there is always the chance that as you pull your rope through the anchor above you, that it will get caught in a crack, forcing you to abandon it. And as they say, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

I hate rappelling.

The first two raps went well. The third rap... well we ran into a little trouble. We had tied a knot at the end of each of the ropes, to help prevent us from going off the end. As Grant rappelled down the rope, on a down bounce the knot got wedged into a crack, and on the up bounce, the knot lodged itself... arg! Grant was almost stuck midway down the rappel. It took us an hour to fiddle around in the failing light and steady sleet with our third rope, before the knot was free. We had to be so careful that we didn't get ourselves into any bad situations. "If I untie here, and I'm clipped here, and the rope here meets the next anchor, can I get the rope back, and will Mark be able to reach me?..." Well we just had to make sure that we knew exactly what we were doing. There was no room for error. Obviously all I heard from Grant 50 m below me was a long string of the profane...

We finished 7 raps down to the ledge. By the time we reached the ledge, it was just about pitch black; we were wet and cold. We decided to spend another night on the ledge. We huddled in our sleeping bags under Grant's tarp, eating leftover food, sipping carefully at the last of our water, listening to the rain. It rained on and off throughout the night, and when it stopped raining, we would peek out from under the tarp and look around at the view. The moon was visible occasionally, and besides gusts of wind, everything was dead quiet and still.

August 22 - The next morning we awoke to the gray sky, stretched our broken exhausted bodies, and prepared for the final set of raps. We decided to launch the haul bag off the ledge. It was quite the sight. We just pushed it over the edge of our ledge and watched it bounce twice before it disappeared. A couple of seconds went by, and then we heard the bag hit the ground. The sound echoed against the walls surrounding us. I hoped that my sleeping bag was okay, and that the haul bag had in fact hit the ground. It would be awful to have to climb up three pitches to

retrieve our bag.

We ran into another problem. On the third rap below the ledge we pulled our rap rope through the anchor and it got caught on a flake above us... about 15 m above us. "Do you want to climb up to get it?" "No do you?" "No". So we cut it, and used our third rope for the remaining raps.

The Ground:

I didn't feel that I had finished the climb until my feet actually touched the ground. After 50 hours on the wall, my feet returned to the earth. It was a relief to know that the climb was over, that there would be no more rapping, and that we had accomplished what we had set out to do. The solid, beautiful, safe, flat ground! It never felt so good.

We stumbled back towards our camp. At the first opportunity, we filled our water bottles with clear, cool, clean water that ran directly off the glacier. We drank and drank to our heart's content and water never tasted so good. Further down the trail, a stream ran over a sandy bed, the banks green with tufts of grass - it just begged to be swum in. I stripped and... well it was a bit too cold to swim in, but I did take a quick dip and it felt good.

We arrived at our camp, and the first thing on our minds was FOOD! We ate and it was good, and we spoke to the groundhog, and we told him of our adventures and it was good. And the mountain marmot listened to our story, and it was good. And the mosquitoes and mice and goats and caribou and fish, they all listened to our story as it unfurled from our lips. The whole experience was too incredible for words. It seemed that we had accomplished something of biblical proportions, and it was good. Religion had been on my mind because during our drive up to the Yukon, there were long stretches where the only radio stations that we could find were hard right Christian.

We actually didn't talk to the animals. We were too busy eating. Including the weight I lost due to dehydration, I was probably at least 5 kg lighter. Well whatever it was, my ribs were mighty visible.

We spent the rest of the day relaxing.

August 23 - It was an ugly day. Grant and I decided to head back down to Glacier Lake. We had left some extra food down there and Grant wanted to pick up his tripod. We decided that we wouldn't be doing any more climbing in the cirque, so we could

ferry all the climbing gear (ropes, harnesses, rack, etc.) down on this trip. That would lighten our final load considerably. The hike was uncomfortable. My knee began to bother me again, and I was still tired from the climb. Grant and I had decided that since we had completed the climb, we had earned the right to blubb as much as we liked. I seized the opportunity. Down at the lake, we met the three climbers from the US. They were waiting for the plane. They were completely out of food, and they had been at the lake for over 24 hours. Needless to say, they were feeling a little hungry and bored. They were really nice guys, and we sat with them on the beach for a good 2 hours. We shared our extra food with them, and they brewed some coffee for us. We also exchanged stories about the Tower climb. It was so much fun to sit there and share stories. We threw Grant's disc (frisbee) around a bit and I got nailed in the head. We told them to pass the message on to the pilot that we were to be picked up on the 26th after lunch.

It took us three hours to hike back up to our camp that afternoon.

August 24 to 27 - The 24th and 25th were spent exploring other areas of the cirque, hiking up mountains, photographing the sights, reading, eating, sleeping and recovering. We met another group of American climbers; they ended up finishing the climb in one day - on the 25th I think. It was a long day for them, 21 hours from bottom to top and down again. They were a strong team. They too felt that the climb had pushed their limits. I filled my spare time reading a Tom Robbins Book, "Skinny legs and all" - good book.

Early on the 26th, Grant and I packed up our camp and headed back down the valley towards Glacier Lake. We arrived at the lake at noon and found to our surprise, four beers waiting for us in the shack, courtesy of the pilot. We expected the plane to arrive mid-afternoon.

The sun set at about 9:30 pm that night and still no plane. We unpacked our sleeping bags and our stove and our food, and had dinner. We were wondering what had happened to our plane? I slept a full 13 hours that night. At 11 am on the 27th, I got out of my sleeping bag, and began building a dam to divert the river that flowed outside the shack we had slept in. It was so quiet, and so boring. There was a fishing rod in the shack and that entertained me until I lost the lure.

But the plane did come that day. At 2 pm, about 24 hours late - we heard the buzz of the beaver's engine. They couldn't pick us up the previous day because they had had engine trouble. We loaded onto the plane. Our pilot this time was Warren. He is one of the joint owners of the hunting lodge we stopped at on the way in to Glacier Lake. He had a friend with him called Sam. We took off, the ground dropped away, and we had a new perspective of the area that had been our universe over the last week. We flew out over glaciers, taking a bit of a detour because Warren was giving his pal a tour of the area. I think Warren was a bit of a showoff - he did some pretty hair raising moves with his plane. We swooped over heather-clad hills, and through steep valleys, and we flew by a caribou standing on the top of a hill. It had a huge rack of antlers on its head. There were a couple of times that my stomach felt like it had moved up to my mouth.

Warren took us to Inconnu Lodge. We spend the rest of the day there, and a good portion of the next day. It got a bit boring, but we weren't going to complain. We ate excellent food, played pool, read some +books, sat in the hot tub, took long showers, and generally lived it up a little.

August 28 to Sept. 1 - We were dropped off at Finlayson lake at about 3 pm. We loaded our gear into the car, and noticed that we had a flat tire! But that was OK because we had a spare - one of those little shit tires that are hardly good enough for paved roads, let alone 250 km of dirt highway. Well, it was another epic driving back to Watson Lake, but we made it.

We took our time going back to Vancouver. We actually took a bit of a detour, and drove through Jasper and Lake Louise. We even did another climb at Castle Junction. It was a 10 pitch affair, but nowhere nearly as intense as the Lotus Flower Tower. We arrived back in Vancouver on the 1st of September.

Afterword:

So there you have it, my little adventure in the wild Canadian north. I had a great time and I will carry its memory with me for the rest of my days. I have to thank Grant for organizing the trip, he looked after most of the logistics, and it was his idea in the first place. He is a great climbing partner too, and has a good sense of humour, thank God.

Nothing I have ever done stirs my soul like a

wilderness adventure. I love these experiences, and I hope that I will continue to explore throughout my life. Climbing, skiing, hiking - I love these activities because they take you to wild places and they give you a freedom to explore, free from crowded roads and airports, engines and gas stations. When I explore wild areas, I am forced to rely on myself, I am forced to deal with situations and problems with the limited resources that I have with me and I push myself to my physical and mental limits. I love these challenges.

This trip to the North West Territories pushed my limits. It was a challenging adventure that tested my backcountry and climbing skills. It required as much strength as I have, it required all of my endurance; it took every ounce of my mental focus and concentration, but I got back what I put in.

MOUNTAIN SCIENCE

El Niño - La Niña and Other Cycles: What Are the Effects on Our Glaciers? by Karl Ricker

Introduction - El Niños, what are they?

El Niño is a Spanish term which was used to describe an oceanic condition that brought unwanted climatic and biological changes in the eastern tropical Pacific. By 1983 the term was commonplace because in that year it was an unusually strong event, sending a mass of warm water northward to the Gulf of Alaska, that saw tropical fish and sea turtles swimming along our coastline. When the ocean surface is warm, our winters are also warm because air masses swooping in off the Pacific have not been sufficiently cooled. This was very obvious during the El Niño of 1997-1998. The sea-atmosphere interaction on climatic trends has been suspected for decades; in fact the locals of Peru and Ecuador have witnessed El Niños for generations, but the mechanism of coupling the sea surface to climatic forces has only been recognized since World War II. Other than some oceanographic "dabbling" with the strong El Niño of 1956/57 (see Table 1), it was not until the climax event of 1983 that the cause and effects became fully understood.

El Niños are the result of fickle motions of the equatorial trade winds. Normally the winds flow

from east to west, from high to low atmospheric pressure zones. The winds move warm surface waters across the Pacific in roughly the same direction, thereby creating the necessity of replacing the surface water "lost" off the South American coast with upwelled cooler "bottom" water, as well as the nutrients in the ooze of the sea depths that are sucked up along with it. Some of the bottom water is shunted northward along the coast of North America, complementing locally upwelled bottom water. During La Niñas the upwelling is especially vigorous and the sea surface is noticeably colder than usual. With a change to on-shore winds (southwesters), the cooled and moistened air masses release a bonanza of snow on our mountains. During El Niños, however, equatorial trade winds reverse direction and flow from west to east, "piling up" warm water that is pushed across the Pacific to the coastline of South America. Hence, there is no upwelling of cold nutrient-rich bottom water; in its place the continental margin experiences "down-welling" of warm surface water brought across the Pacific from west to east, which in turn slowly migrates into the North Pacific and brings along with it a host of biological warm water species. Hence, the expression "Holy Mackerel" is à propos. This fish species arrives in gigantic schools, snapping up young local species, including disappearing salmon, as their prey.

In the El Niño scenario, the atmospheric pressure gradient is reversed - the "High" is to the west, generating a conflagration of Indonesian forest fires, and the "Low" is in the east, bringing torrential rainfall to northern South America. Humid air masses are warmed by the sea surface, then release their load of precipitation. If the elevation is not excessively high (below 2000 metres), the skies unload more rainfall than snow at our latitude. Above this elevation, however, the snow pack may become unusually deep, and at higher than normal densities. With La Niñas the highs are along the coastline of the Americas and the winters can be drier and colder than normal as winds flow offshore to the low pressure centres in the equatorial Western Pacific.

Air pressure differences between the east and west Pacific are an easy and convenient measure of the intensity of an El Niño or La Niña. Climatologists use a mathematical transformation of the difference in air pressure between Darwin, Australia and Papeete, Tahiti as a means to graph this ever-

changing regime, as shown on Figure 1. This air pressure index is known as the Southern Oscillation Index (S.O.I.), which has gained world-wide oceanographic/climatologic significance. If the index is strongly negative, there is a significant El Niño; conversely a strong positive value, over a period of time, signals a La Niña event. Another measure of the S.O.I. is sea surface temperature, which before the advent of satellites could only be measured at a low number of fixed manned stations located away from coastal influences. For B.C. a few outer coast lighthouses provided such data, beginning in 1934.

It was not until the 1990's that glaciologists began to compare the mass balance of glaciers with the El Niño-La Niña oceanic/atmospheric couplet. The studies were slow to be initiated because the El Niño-La Niña cycle is not the only one that causes climatic variations. For decades the sun spot cycle was the favourite target for comparison, and thus the relatively recent discovery of the El Niño cycle is only now being digested by the glaciological community. A complicating factor in such an analysis is the time lag in the response of a glacier to a shift in precipitation trends, whatever the cause. After a year of high snow pack, for example, the time lag for small glaciers to respond to the surplus, as shown by an advance at its terminus, is at least six years. The glacier usually extends with some overall thickening. Accordingly, larger and lengthier glaciers require a longer lag time to respond to the supply of excess snow pack. So, for the warmest and best recognized El Niño on record (1983), the long-term climatic response to the event would scarcely be noticed at any glacier until the 1990s.

The sign of response (positive/negative) is not easy to predict for either the El Niño or La Niña event. If the glacier is high enough and located on the windward (maritime) side of a mountain range, it may have received abnormal snowfall (e.g. the 1983 event), thereby lengthening several years later (i.e. in the 1990s). Conversely, a La Niña may spawn retreat, because snow may have been "sifted out" on the maritime side, from less often produced storm clouds, leaving little to fall on the leeward of a mountain range. That is, the winter may have been cold but there was little precipitation, and less so if it was blitzed with dry polar outflow winds that are forced out through coastal mountains. That is, the air pressure gradient is higher inland over the continent.

For the coldest local coastal winter on record (1949/1950), this was often the case, especially around Kitimat and Prince Rupert.

The record of El Niño and other climate cycles

How often do El Niños occur and what has been the historical record of their presence and strength? The research of Ware (1995) and Hsieh et al. (1995) on weather records (especially winds or wind stress / sea level air pressure change, air temperature) and oceanic sea surface temperatures (mainly at key lighthouse stations) has determined the historic occurrences of ENSO events (El Niños and/or La Niñas), as shown on Table 1. Their determinations extend back to only the turn of the century on this matter, because of data limitations on the oceanography; reliable weather records only began to be collected in the 1850s for a few select locales along the Pacific Coast (trustworthy thermometers date back to the 1820s). Analysis of the data shows not only the El Niño (ENSO) cycle, but also several others: namely the quasi-biennial oscillation (2.7 - 3.2 years), bidecadal oscillation (22 - 24 years), and the very-low frequency (VLF) oscillation (52-73 years). The El Niño cycle re-occurs every 5.2 - 6.2 years (mean), but the extreme periodic variation is 4.2 - 6.7 years. When two or more of these cycles peak in the same year(s) climate extremes are produced.

Curiously, the 150-year air temperature record, when "smoothed", shows 13 changes in marine climate off the B.C. coast: 7 periods of warmth (averaging 11.4 years each in duration); and 6 cool periods (averaging 10.8 years each). The longest warm period (1923-1947) also featured strong winter winds, as is the case with the present trend beginning in 1978, and ending in 1998 (?), and as was the situation with the shortest warm spell (11 years) for 1957 to 1967. Whereas, cool periods of 1907-1922, 1948-1956 and 1968-1977 featured weak winter winds, notwithstanding the irregular short outbursts of polar outflow events. The period of 1898-1906 saw a mixed cycle of some warmth and average winds. (Before 1898 the data on winds are not sufficient to make any comparisons) These long-term fluctuations are the result of the bidecadal and very low frequency oscillations. Temperature maxima occurred in the years of 1914, 1939, 1964 and 1989, which coincide with the bidecadal oscillation (the next one appears in 2014 A.D.), while the reinforcing very low frequency

oscillation peaked in 1939 and 1989. El Niño and La Niña events add only minor "spikes" to the above-noted longer stage cycles, which have mysterious origins. The windiest winters, by the way, were in 1940, 1941, 1958 and 1983; all are El Niño years falling into the above-noted bidecadal warm periods (Table 1).

The cause of the bidecadal cycle has often been attributed to the forementioned 22-year sunspot cycle (solar flares), but it does not fit the changes witnessed in the Gulf of Alaska, which is the source of the weather system that effects our coastline. Another suggestion has been a better fit of the bidecadal oscillation to the 18.6 year tidal node (lunar cycle) which is especially strong in the Gulf of Alaska. It generates cyclic oceanic current strength which in turn produces greater or less mixing of the water mass. However, in southern latitudes this cycle should attenuate, which has not been the case. Rather, research is now focussing on a 20-year cycle in the instability of North Pacific westerly winds, and their relationship in turn to sub-tropical air mass circulation - all of which is related to a "pool" of warm water appearing at mid-oceanic latitudes (origin?). So, not only is the jury still deliberating on that possibility, but also we are grasping at yet more enigmatic straws as to why there is a VLF oscillation. Mysteriously, it seems to be about 75 years' duration off southern California, but it lasts only 50 or so years along the B.C.-Alaska coast. One set of researchers say the VLF is a spin-off from a low frequency oceanic cycle in the North Atlantic which has profound global climate influence; others lay the cause to unexplained variations in solar energy output. Not yet resolved for an accepted explanation are longer-time scales in climate variation (centuries and millennial) which produce the onset and disappearance of glaciations.

Local glacier fluctuations and relationship to climate cycles

General Comment

As far as recent glacier fluctuations are concerned, what are the climatic cycles controlling their general state? Certainly with those we monitor locally, the variable re-positioning of their snouts **might** suggest a quasi-biennial oscillation. These oscillations, however, are not from positive to negative, but more often are the change of degree of variation in the amount of loss from one 2-3 year cycle to the next.

El Niños			La Niñas	Comments
Strong	Moderate	Weak1		
1899/1900	-	-	-	Vigorous downwelling; windy winter
-	1902/1903	-	-	Windy winter; no Aleutian Low in 1903
-	-	-	1904	
-	1905	-	-	Vigorous downwelling; windy winter
-	-	-	1908-1910	1909 is coldest year of the century
1911/1912	-	-	-	Vigorous downwelling, Mt. Katmai eruption
-	(?)1914/1915*	-	-	Vigorous downwelling (1914), no Aleutian Low (1915); bidecadal warm peak (1914)
-	-	-	1916/1917	1917 a notorious cold year
1918/1919	-	-	-	Vigorous downwelling
-	-	-	1924	Widespread minor glacier advances (1920s)
1925/1926*	-	-	-	Vigorous downwelling; no Aleutian Low; windy; record frost-free days at Victoria
-	-	-	1928	End of wide-spread glacier advances
-	1930/1931(?)	-	-	No Aleutian Low (1930); windy; d/w (1931)
-	-	1933	-	Upwelling; downwelling in 1934 (not ENSO)
-	-	-	1938	
-	1939	-	-	Windy winter; bidecadal warm peak; VLF oscillation peak
1942*	1940*	1941*	-	Windy winters, downwelling, triplet events
-	-	1944	-	
-	-	-	1949/1950	Coldest winter of century
-	-	1951/1952	-	Upwelling
-	1953	-	-	Downwelling
-	-	-	1954-1956	Near record snow pack (1956)
1957/1958*	1959	-	-	1959 El Niño reached southern California
				vigorous downwelling; windy; warm air mass
1963*	-	-	1963/1964	Disagreement on 1963 ENSO; bidecadal warm peak (1964)
-	1965/1966	-	-	No Aleutian Low (1966); windy winter
-	-	1969/1970	1970/1971	Glacier re-advances noted : world-wide, local
1972/1973	-	-	-	no Aleutian Low (1973); heavy coastal mountain snow pack (1972)
-	-	-	1974/1976	Strong Aleutian Low (1977); heavy mountain snow pack (1974); strong downwelling (1978)
-	-	-	-	Mt. St. Helen eruption (1980); 1981 v. warm (no ENSO)
1982/1983*	-	-	1983/1984	Very windy winter; vigorous downwelling; very significant event.
-	1986*/1987(?)	-	1988/1989	Disagreement on 1986 ENSO; bidecadal and VLF warm peak; windy winters, downwelling
1990-1992	-	-	-	Mt. Pinatubo eruptions (1991/1992)
-	1994-1995	-	1996	
1997-1998*	-	-	1999/2000	Very windy, record coastal mtn. snowpack (1999)

1) Weak El Niños seldom reach mid latitudes, only those detected along BC coast are indicated

* warmest ENSOs on record, but not necessarily the strongest in terms of sustained duration.

Wedgemount Glacier, for example, shows several years of big losses as opposed to those of minor losses, although the data shown for this glacier (Ricker and Tupper 1996) are hardly convincing. Data short-comings in the years without any surveys are shown by an averaged amount between the years of observation, thereby hiding this cycle from view.

The overall melt-down of Wedgemount, during this century, shows a crude bidecadal swing, but it is out of phase with the timing of warm-cool periods noted above. The oscillation on this glacier begins roughly 5-16 years later than those dates. This is not to be unexpected, because of the travel time that the snow pack goes through from its accumulation phase in the upper reaches of the glacier to its disappearance at the glacier snout, as melting ice. For Overlord Glacier, this lag appears to about 5-8 years, although the glacier appears to have bucked the warm spell of



Overlord Glacier snout from main baseline cairn on 11 September, 1000. Photo - K. Ricker.

1957-1967 by continuing with an advance that began around 1951. Thus, its growth may actually reflect a VLF cycle, beginning roughly eight years after its 1939 peak, but concluding "on time" in 1989. However, the graph of loss and gains for Overlord, (see Ricker and Tupper, 1996) clearly shows the effects of the 1923-1947 bidecadal warm cycle; significant retreat (100's of metres) of its glacier snout took place during this time. This retreat interval on Wedgemount Glacier was carried on for another 15-30 years. Possibly the thermal influence of the lake which fronted (and undermined?) its snout has prolonged the cycle. Retreat was finally brought under control when the bathymetry of the basin "shoaled-out" at its east end, leaving no substantial underlying water mass to cause structural instability in the overlying glacier.

ENSO Events - Local Record

How do El Niños and La Niñas affect our glaciers? Theoretically the impact of either event can be direct and swift because: **(1)** the Aleutian "Low" (pressure centre) is intensified during an El Niño winter, leading to coastal **downwelling** of warm water that originated in the tropics, although this was the case not in all such events (e.g. 1903, 1915, 1930, 1966, and 1973); and **(2)** there are no marked wind changes in summer during El Niños, and hence the winter variation should not be "wiped out" by a modifying summer manifestation of the same cycle. Summers along our coast are generally characterized by coastal **upwelling** of colder "bottom" water (hence, there is so much coastal fog). The dates of El Niños and La Niñas (ENSO's) over the past century are shown in Table 1. Ware (1995) cautions, however, that while ENSO events take place every 4-7 years, only the stronger (i.e. high temp.) ones reach the B.C. coast at a frequency of one per 4.3-6.7 years. [Weak events rarely reach our coast, although those indicated on the table were detected in the analysis of lighthouse sea surface temperature records.] Not all years of warm temperatures, however, are significant ENSO events. Roughly 70% are, but the warm years of 1934, 1963, 1981 and 1986 were not the result of El Niños according to Ware (1995). There is some controversy on these; Hsieh et al. (1995), list 1986/87 as a moderate El Niño event, while the Canadian Institute of Climate Studies (1999) includes 1963 as an El Niño event year. The latter also state that 1981 was **not** a

warm year. Thus, there are some minor differences among the experts on what constitute ENSO events, as shown on Table 1. Notwithstanding, there is a further caution: only 42% of the strong and 25% of the moderate ENSO events produced significant warm sea water anomalies off our B.C. coast. Those reaching us were the events of 1900, 1906, 1912, 1914, 1919, 1926, 1940-41, 1953, 1958, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1991-1995 and 1997-98 (Hsieh et al, 1995 and Canadian Institute of Climate Studies, 1999).

ENSO Events - Impacts on Local Glaciers

Types of Impacts

From the above scramble of on and off El Niños, and counter-partnering La Niñas, what can we expect with our glaciers, and which of the two in the couplet is winning the battle of reduction versus glacier growth?

An El Niño will have two impacts on glaciers: (1) the immediate response, and (2) the delayed reaction that is associated with the time lag required for "headwater firn" (accumulation zone) to reach the glacier snout. The character of the impact rests on whether the glacier is of sufficient altitude to receive the excess winter moisture **as snow**, or it is too low and the excessive moisture is dominated **by rainfall**. Assuming the former, because an El Niño has yet to short-change us of winter snow for skiing at Whistler [although it has on the North Shore mountains, e.g. 1926, 1957, 1963 and 1940-1942], the short-term impact might be reduced snow pack to protect the lower elevated glacier snouts from perhaps excessive summer melt. That is, the snout of the glacier lies below a threshold elevation (1800 metres) and there is less snow cover on this zone to melt over the summer, allowing for extraordinary melt on underlying ice. The longer term impact could be either reduced or greater supply of firn to the snout several years later, depending upon the elevation of the accumulation zone. Therefore, the overall impact may be either reduction of the glacier in length and volume, or steady state - little change.

For La Niñas, the 1998/99 year generated excessive snow pack, which on the lower elevated North Shore mountains did not totally disappear until the early autumn of 1999. Moreover, some ski runs on Whistler and Mt. Washington (Vancouver Island) already had old snow cover of 1998/1999 as a base for the new snow of late autumn storms of 1999.

Thus, not only would La Niña add a supply of snow to the snout of the glaciers over the long term (i.e. excessive accumulation zone "left-overs"), but it should also protect the snout from excessive summer melt in the short term. Hence, the immediate response in a La Niña year should be glacier snout advance, because solar radiation cannot melt the underlying ice until summer has virtually concluded. What could upset these prognoses: (1) unusually hot and prolonged summers, (2) the leeward effect which produces only scant snowfall in either types of ENSO event, and (3) other atmospheric disruptions such as a volcanic eruption (e.g. Mt. Pinatubo in 1991/92 - see Table 1).

Impacts on Wedgemount and Overlord Glaciers

Looking at Wedgemount and Overlord Glaciers, the graph of glacier retreat for the period of 1895 (\pm) to 1995 (Ricker and Tupper 1996) shows year by year resolution, beginning in 1973 for the former; not until 1989 is there such for the latter. Although this adds to the difficulty of recognizing ENSO impacts, some of these events have a duration of 3 years (Table 1) and thus can still be recognized in the erratic timing of observations on the positions of glacier snouts. For Wedgemount, the El Niños of 1969/70 and 72/73 appear as a pronounced spike of immediate glacier retreat (direct impact) as does another spike of retreat for the 1976/77 event. But in the case of the climax El Niño of the century (1983) the glacier tongue provided a stand still (!), while the event of 1987 shows only minor retreat, typical of the years before it. The series of El Niños from 1990-1995 are shown by consistent but modest retreat. Ironically, the spike of greater retreat (1989) is supposedly a La Niña year, which apparently did **not** translate to providing protective snow cover. For the balance of this decade. Figure 1 shows that the La Niña of 1996 was reflected by reduced retreat, and for the 1999 event - even less retreat; whereas the El Niño of 1997/98 created sizeable retreats, although nowhere near the record losses of 30 m+/year recorded for 1947-51 or 1969-1973. These fluctuations appear to be the immediate response to ENSO events.

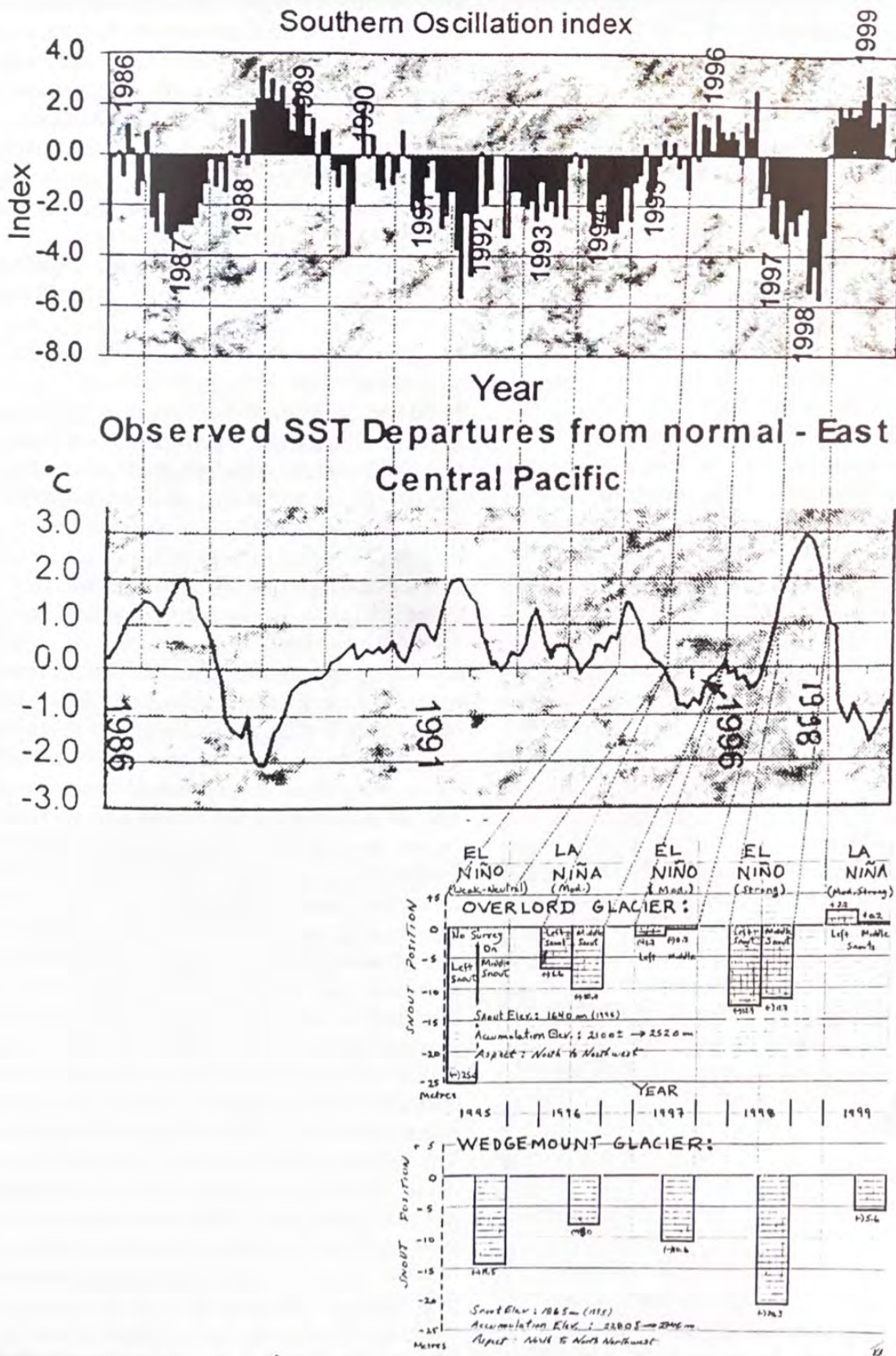


Figure 1. Comparison of S.O.I. to Sea Surface Temperature and snout changes of Wedgemount and Overlord Glaciers, Garibaldi Park.

Notes:

1. S.O.I. and SST Diagrams from Can. Inst. Climate Studies, Seasonal Climate Bull. Dec., 1999 (Vol. 4, No. 4)
2. 1995 and 1996 retreat distances for Overlord and Wedgemount Glaciers, respectively, are corrected values.

What has been the delayed response, due to time lag, roughly eight years later? For Wedgemount Glacier, our records show a minor advance in 1980. Possibly, the La Niñas of 1973 to 1975 generated this minor perturbation. For the 1983 El Niño, which had an immediate impact of no retreat, possibly the minor retreat shown in 1988 is the long-term impact. The long term impacts are obviously not so clear.

Turning to Overlord Glacier, its overall advance between 1951-1986 (Ricker and Tupper 1996) does not have a year-by-year data breakdown to comment on the short-term variations within this 25-year push. The 1986-88 retreat could be a manifestation of the 1986/87 El Niño, a direct impact, whereas the 1989 advance is a product of the 1988/89 La Niña, another possible direct impact. The 1991/92 and 1994/95 years of retreat are also likely to be El Niño related (see Figure 1). The minor advance of 1993, however, is not synchronous with a recognized La Niña; the sea surface temperature is slightly below normal for that period, and the S.O.I. is without a negative anomaly (Figure 1). Did the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991/1992 generate a slight atmospheric change to produce the cooling (Table 1)? Looking at the last half of the decade, the histogram and graphs (Figure 1) show a mixed response. The La Niña of 1996 failed to provide sufficient snow cover to protect the glacier snout from excessive melt whereas it did so in 1999 (in contrast to Wedgemount). The El Niños in the last half of the decade brought increasingly negative retreat, though not as great as of those in the first part of the same decade (see graph in Ricker and Tupper 1996).

Impacts on Other Local Glaciers (Sentinel, Place, Helm)

How are other local glaciers faring with the impacts of ENSO events? Only a few are monitored (Place, Sentinel and Helm Glaciers) on an attempted yearly basis by the Federal Government (Natl. Hydrology Research Institute, Environment Canada),

and their methodology is far more exacting. However, Federal Government budget cutbacks over the decade have frustrated employees in charge of the program, who in turn have resigned to find work elsewhere. Results for the 1990 - 1995 period have yet to surface in print, and thus the comparison of ENSO's to the net snow water equivalent balance, cannot be yet ascertained. Their program which began in 1965 shows the following:

- Sentinel Glacier with **positive** net balances (1966, 1968-1969, 1971-1976, 1978, 1980-1984 and 1987-1988);
- Place Glacier with **positive** net balances (1966, 1974, 1976);
- Helm Glacier: observations began during the 1975/76 glacier year, after the conclusion of the IHD; positive net balance in 1976 only, and strong negative balances in 1977, 1979, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1990.

Comparison of these data, and the following notes, to Table 1 does not show any clear cut picture on the impacts of ENSO events.

The El Niños of 1966 and 1976 produced positive net balances on both Sentinel and Place, while the La Niña of 1974 also yielded significant **positive** values on both. And in other years with no ENSO events, there were mixed net balance results. For Helm Glacier the 1976 year ended on a **positive** note as well. In the case of Place Glacier, which has an elevated accumulation zone (2500 m), its leeward aspect on the Coast Mountains is depriving it of a healthy winter snow pack regardless of the type of ENSO event. It had abnormally high **negative** balances in 1970, 1979 and 1985, and probably had a few more again in the late 1990s. Sentinel Glacier (on the windward or maritime aspect) is a different story; exceptionally positive net balances were recorded for 1974, 1976 and 1983 (El Niño climax year) while modestly high negative balances occurred in 1970, 1977 and 1979. Yet, despite the 17 years of **positive** net balances (in 24 years) Sentinel Glacier has been shrinking! This anomaly has been discussed and investigated, ad nauseum, and is too complicated to elaborate upon further, except to state there are some methodological problems, and the elevation of its accumulation zone is all too close to the critical threshold of 2000 metres. Nearby Helm Glacier, of equivalent aspect and elevation, shows a volume shrinkage in its yearly

negative balances which have continued, unchecked, from 1977 to 1990 regardless of any type of ENSO event. In fact its biggest year loss (2.3 metres water equivalent) was in the non-event year of 1979. It's safe to assume that Helm Glacier is on its way out.

Overall general trends - prognosis

In the overall picture, as of recently, El Niños appear to be winning the war on the state of negative imbalance of our glaciers regardless of the net balance results discussed above. La Niñas have not been strong or long enough to reverse the overall trend of glacier wastage, adding only miniscule lengths of one to two metres at Overlord Glacier, as opposed to tens of metres of retreat induced by El Niños and other factors. The picture is doubly complicated in that some El Niños add to a positive balance on the glacier's overall regimen. For 1999 the halt in retreat on Overlord Glacier was not unexpected; trails to Singing Pass were snow-covered for the first two months of the summer, and surprisingly there was old ice cover on Russett Lake at the time of our survey in early September. Strangely, a higher and better solar shielded Wedgemount Lake and Glacier should have yielded a similar picture, but this lake lost much of its ice cover in late July and the trail to the lake was nearly free of snow by late spring. Examination of the accumulation zone beneath the north face of Wedgemount in mid-September revealed an upper glacier surface that had lost its protective snow cover, and the old firnline between **old** snow (previous years) and exposed glacier ice was located near the base of the upper ice fall (el. 2375-2450 m) as opposed to the **new** firnline on Overlord, located within the lower ice fall (el 2000-2050 m). Apparently Wedgemount basin was either in a leeward position during the winter storm cycle of 1998-1999, or the density of the snowpack was much lower (and drier) yielding much less water equivalent as it settled in spring season. Possibly there was more solar radiation at Wedgemount over the course of the summer, but this is hardly the reason why the glacier should have continued to retreat, given that it has a much longer period of shade cover over the duration of the hottest time of the day.

I conclude that the long-term outlook for Wedgemount is not at all encouraging, until there is a bidecadal shift to a cooler climate regime, which Ware (1995) states should be at any time now. However, he



Wedgemount Lake and Glacier, August, 1971.

Photo - M. Feller.



Wedgemount Lake and Glacier, July, 1980.

Photo - M. Feller.



Wedgemount Lake and Glacier, 19 September, 1999.

Photo - K. Ricker.

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