



The B.C. Mountaineer

2002





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Cover photos:

Front Cover: Sunrise on Mt. Baker during the 2001 BCMC summer mountaineering course.
 Photo - J. Brawn

Inside Front Cover: (clockwise from top left)

1. Bench below Ape Glacier. Photo - D. Hughes.
2. Kelly on the way to Mt. Baker. Photo - J. Brawn
3. Sunset on Matier Glacier during the 2001 BCMC summer mountaineering course.
 Photo - J. Brawn.

Inside Back Cover: (clockwise from top left)

1. Evening at high camp overlooking the Fyles Glacier, Ape Lake area. Photo - N. Eckert.
2. BCMC 2002 winter mountaineering course participants near the Vantage-Matier col with Joffre Pk. in the background. Photo - M. Feller.
3. On the Tahumming traverse looking SW towards Champion. Photo - B. Wood.

Back Cover: (clockwise from top left)

1. Mt. Barbour from the Mt. Ronayne trail. Photo - P. Kubik.
2. Andrea prussiking out of a crevasse during the 2001 BCMC summer mountaineering course.
 Photo - J. Brawn.
3. Sunset at camp on the Tahumming/Klite divide. Photo - B. Wood.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

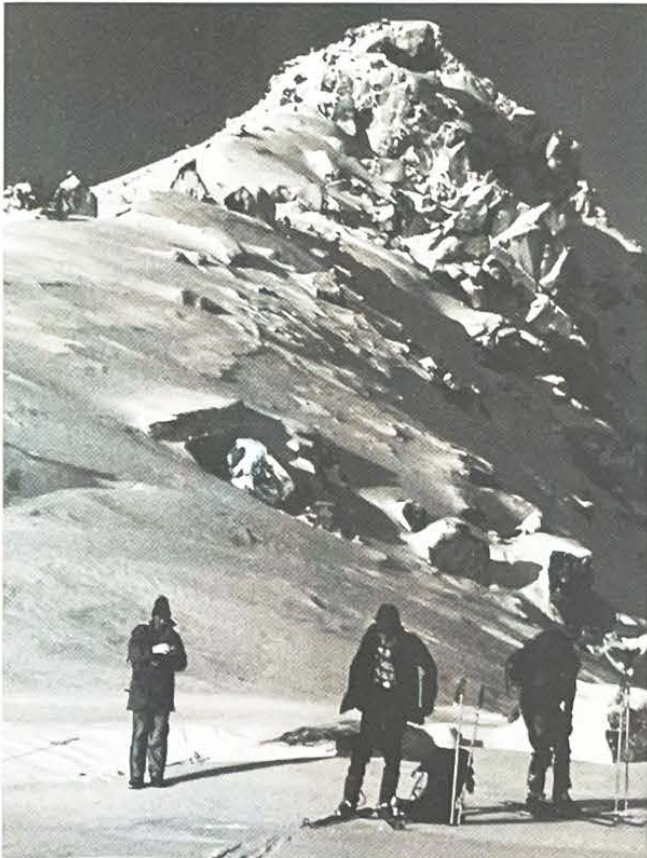
	Page
THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB	4
Mountaineering with the BCMC - by Jason Brawn	7
MOUNTAINEERING	
1. TRIPS OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY	
Mount Kilimanjaro - by Kirsten Hall	31
A British Columbian nomad in Bolivia climbing Huayna Potosi - by Mark Sanctuary	32
Cerra San Luis, Bolivia - by Jeff Rabinovitch	34
So you think you're ready for a Big Wall? - by Brad Hansen	36
Mount San Jacinto - by Pamela Jenkins	46
Shishapangma, Tibet - by Monika Bittel	47
Schreckhorn - by Mark Sanctuary	60
2. TRIPS IN AND AROUND B.C.	
Southern Coast Mountains/Cascades	
Pacific Crest Trail - Harts Pass to Rainy Pass - by Len Soet	63
Alternative methods - Crater Mountain - by Michelle Martineau	65
Uztlius Mountain, not a useless or ugly trip - by Karl Ricker and Nina Evans-Locke	65
Southeast Stein traverse - by Peter Pare	68
I wasn't at the church that Sunday - by J.P. Shason	72
Rock on/off - by Kevin Harper	73
Cold, confusion, and clouded judgement - the 1998 Garibaldi Névé traverse - by Steve Grant	76
Delayed deployment on Mt. "Alex Phillip" - by Karl Ricker	81
Winter ski camps with a portable cabin - by Michael Feller	84
BCMC Bendor Range summer camp, 2001 - by Dave Scanlon	87
Pioneer Mountain, Bendor Range, and a piece of BCMC history - Fred Perry - by Michael Feller	93
Bendor Range summer camp natural history notes - by Karl Ricker	94
Mt. Sloan, Southeast Buttress - by David Hughes	101
Central Coast Mountains	
The Tahumming traverse - by Jack Bryceland and Brian Wood	104
Ape Lake climbing camp, 2001 - by David Hughes	109
Columbia and Rocky Mountains	
Fraser headwaters traverse - by Betsy Waddington	114
A tale of two haggis, Trophy Mountains - by Jack Bryceland	117

3. POT POURRI

The antidote - by Anders Ourom 119
Grade IV, 5.9 - Now, what to take? - by Brad Hansen 124

MOUNTAIN SCIENCE

Glacier update - by Karl Ricker 127



Phelix Ck. area, December 1983.
Photo - M. Feller



Antimony Mtn. and its meadows.
Photo - P. Pare/L. Baile

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Club Philosophy

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club is a 95-year-old 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 BCMC 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 BCMC members.

Today, the BCMC 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 member 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 drew 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, Kawdacha, 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 (1999-2001), the Falls River/Tchaikazan region (1986, 1988), Ape Lake area (1983 and 2001), the Mount Waddington area (most recently in 1999 and 2000), 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 has also been organized in most recent years, utilizing a large club tent and wood-burning stove.

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

To help the beginner in developing his or her climbing skills, the Club organizes instruction courses and from time to time organizes training climbs. The purpose of these climbs is to allow people to gain experience on roped climbs. All trips run by the club have an organizer who should be contacted more than 2 days in advance of the trip departure. The organizer arranges carpools 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 programs. Updates are given in club newsletters and on the club's website (www.bcmc.ca).



Club members at a social event - the summit of Mt. Truax. Photo - D. Scanlon

Social Events

Social gathering 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. 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.



Romance blooms in the mountains.

Photo - D. Scanlon collection.

Membership

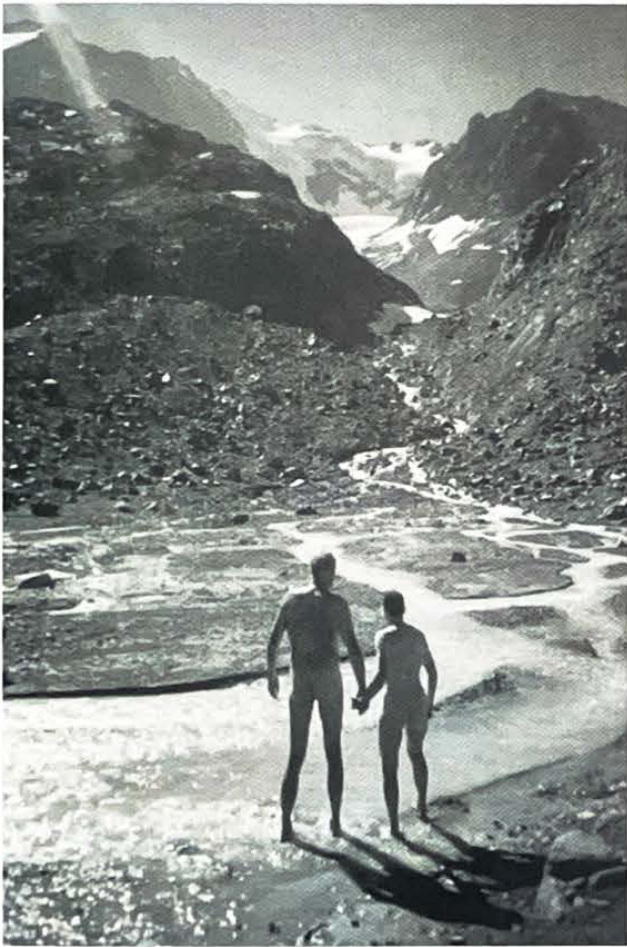
The BCMC has several categories of membership: active, associate, junior, life, senior, and honorary. Persons interested in joining the Club can obtain further information by phoning the Membership Chair (604-268-9502) or by attending a club social event. Club social events and trips are open to non-members as well as members. The Membership Chair can also be contacted by email: info@bcmc.ca.

Library and Publications

The Club maintains a library with an extensive collection of books, photographs, guidebooks, 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, expedition, photographs and other material. The Club solicits articles of interest written by members.



Club trips offer such opportunities.

Photo - G. Mumford

Huts and Shelters

There are five BCMC 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.

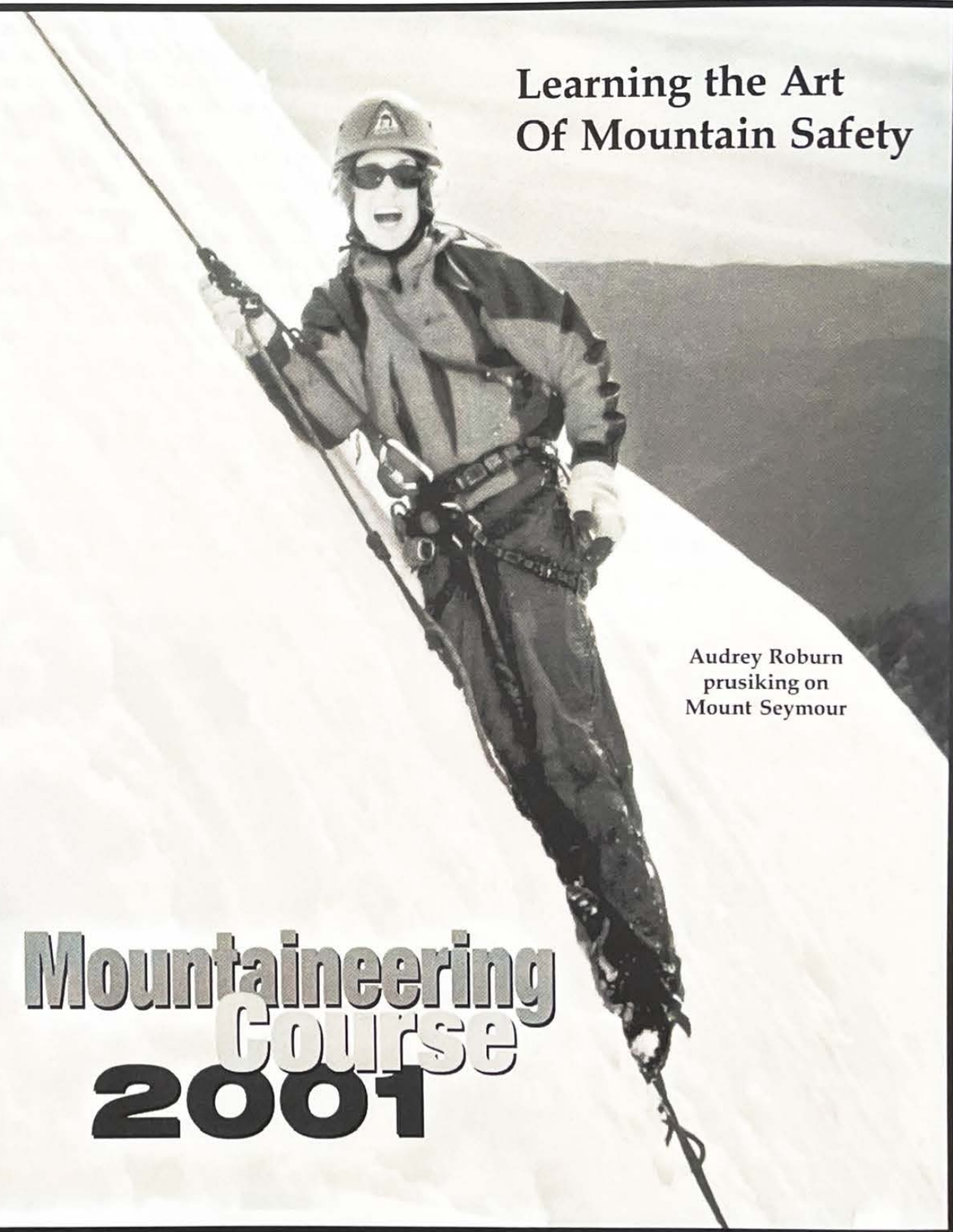


Club members know how to treat mountaineering clothes. Photo - B. Ellis

Conservation Guidelines

In order to conserve the alpine environment, Club trips try to adhere to the following guidelines:

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. Alpine life, whether flora or fauna, is fragile and not in abundance. Plants and animals are not killed unless required in an emergency.
4. Stay on trails and do not cut corners on trail switchbacks to avoid erosion.
5. 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.
6. Camp in forests or on non-vegetated areas to avoid damage to meadows, lakeshores and stream banks.



Learning the Art
Of Mountain Safety

Audrey Roburn
prusiking on
Mount Seymour

Mountaineering
Course
2001



Photo by Mel Bitner

Mountaineering Course Journal May & June 2001

By Jason Brawn

Thursday, May 17 - Classroom Session 1

This evening I met the folk who've signed on for the BCMC mountaineering course. Thirteen unique people, each with a shared passion for drinking deeply the elixir of adventure (though of Andrzej Jarzabek, there are rumours that elixirs more potent than the purely metaphorical tend to find their way into his pack). This is always an important moment, as first impressions are often accurate. So often in courses aimed at the "extreme" market, it seems that at least one or two arrogant narcissists will squirm out of their burrows for an appearance. Admittedly, it can be endless fun to eviscerate a social Neanderthal's character in print, but I'll wager it's best not to insult anyone proficient in wielding an ice axe.



So it is with a happy sigh of relief that I deem our baker's dozen to be "good eggs". As an added bonus, the instructors are just as outstanding. There are three of them, with a possible fourth who was unable to be with us tonight. The three of them are very different, but seem to make a great team.

Miles does much of the talking. He has a peaceful demeanor and a thoughtful way of speaking that suggests clear focus and utter competence. He is involved with North Shore Search and Rescue, and it shows. You just know he'll be the guy keeping us calm if three avalanches, two rabid grizzlies, and a tsunami all threaten simultaneously.

Nicole is still a bit of an enigma to me. While she spoke only occasionally, it was obvious that she knew what she was talking about. Sometimes her grasp of a concept or technique seemed perfectly clear, while the guys scratched their heads. I'm wondering if it's a case of being "book-smart" or if she really is as proficient as her knowledge suggests. Oh, and I love her eyebrows. It must be exhausting to be the group of muscles she calls

upon for their frequent gesticulations, but what a gift they are! Her face is marvelously expressive. I always have one eye on her when the guys are talking. I'll know they're filling our heads with rubbish when her eyebrows

start to quiver. One will finally shoot up, then the corner of her mouth twist as she decides whether she'll refute them openly, or pull us aside privately to save us from folly. Often she'll give in, and after clarifying a technique, the guys look thoughtful for a moment, then nod and

acquiesce. Great fun to watch.

Then there's Doug. At first I feared he was a bit brooding, but it soon became clear that he was simply tired, and in fact is among the funniest guys I've ever met. In times of desperation, it's either a Spock-like dearth of emotion or a good sense of humour that wins the day. Doug nicely balances the team of instructors with his mirth and experience.

So, in our quest for knowledge, we have three champions: one to deliver the knowledge clearly, one to know the knowledge thoroughly, and one that makes beer shoot out your nose. A better team



of instructors we could not hope for. Most importantly, my instinct tells me I can trust all three of them with my life. There isn't a sniff of incompetence among them.

Thursday, May 24 - Classroom Session 2

As with the first classroom session, tonight we worked on basic rope skills; prusiks, knots, and a myriad uses for each. We dug our compasses out, which immediately divided us into the gear-freak "*with magnetic declination adjustment*" lot, and the thrifty "*no magnetic declination adjustment*" folk. Those of us "*with*" nodded to each other in stern approval, like gritty bikers admiring each other's motorcycles,

"Nice compass" delivered gruffly with a nod, and the begrudgingly respectful reply,

"Yeah. Same to you. That puppy have an inclinometer?"

"Yeah," scratches beard and jerks chin toward the other, "yours?"

"Yup" mumbled with poorly concealed pride.

"Nice"

"Thanks" Cue dramatic music and fade to black...

Saturday, May 26

Field Weekend 1 - Mount Seymour

Alas, that we might have started the day at a more genteel hour, say 9am or so, in a quiet café with steaming Earl Grey in hand. There we might have chatted thoughtfully about the day's agenda, giving full consideration to all important "mountaineering issues", whatever those might be. Sadly, the hour was a far more practical 7am. There was some novelty in the waking hour though - I discovered that there is indeed sunlight at 5:30 in the morning, and further, that under some circumstances one's shadow can be seen to stretch *westward*. Given that I'm quite a night-owl, both of these facts were novel discoveries.

A tad late out the door, I could picture Doug's wagging finger and stern reminder that

the group would not wait for those who chose to be tardy. Pushing my little Subaru beyond its design limits, I did managed to arrive just in time, and at about half-past seven, 13 would-be, and 3 real mountaineers left for the slopes of Mount Seymour.

Any lingering fears I may have had about group dynamics were assuaged by the time we reached the training slopes. Now, the reality of any large group is that there will likely be a discrepancy in pace. A 155cm woman pumping up a mountain at 95% capacity (Mel, you *rock* darlin'!) will be outdistanced by a 185cm guy strolling up at a more moderate pace. It's just simple physics. Now, when the group stops to rest, those with a shorter stride might take another minute or two to catch up. In my humble opinion, the first identifier of poor group dynamics is when the 185cm guy takes off the second the 155cm hiker catches up. I love the fact that this never happened.

Miles, Doug and Nicole chose a spot they thought was suitably precipitous, and we got to work. I'm guessing they drew straws earlier, and it seems Nicole drew the short one. She trudged up a slope where we gathered to watch her hurl herself down

the snow forward, backward, head up and head down. She stopped each time with a practised ease that solidified my confidence in her. Soon after, we too were merrily sliding down the snowy slopes, sending fans of snow into the air as we used axes, feet and the occasional facial feature to arrest our falls. Good fun! Before her first slide, Audrey looked down the slope with a knitted brow, turned to me and mentioned a long-standing fear of snow and sliding out of control. A dubiously timed confession given our current situation, but like the arachnophobic who keeps a pet tarantula, she did an outstanding job of overcoming her fear.

Some had a hard time reverse-prostrating themselves in the "head down on back" position before body-luging down the slope. In this case, Nicole would hold their feet while they squirmed into place, and with a "Torpedoes away!" would release them to attack the slopes below. I looked over to where a group was repeatedly rag-dolling down a steep hill, and secretly hoped that I would not be abducted by aliens just then. I could imagine a crater sized glass bowl full of snow, sitting on a cosmic-sized coffee table, with me shivering inside. Every so often a big



Chris Peck digging out a tent platform on Mount Baker

green hand would dip in, scoop me up and fling me mercilessly into the snow. "Oh chill out Zorgag. They love this, we saw them doing it, honest!"

Later, we learned about snow anchors. After planting a snow picket, Miles tied himself in with a sling and casually asked if anyone had a cell phone. Someone nodded, which seemed to give him curious comfort. Pressing his lips together, he looked over his shoulder, back at us, then aggressively threw himself down the slope. The sling snapped taught, and with obvious fear for its welfare, the picket leapt from its placement and made an impressive effort to impale itself in Miles' sternum. Deftly eluding the attack, he then planted a longer picket, and inflicted another fall on himself, with predictably similar results. He then dug and placed a T-slot style of anchor. We all agreed that this looked infinitely more secure. Again, tying himself in with a short (and painfully static) length of sling, he mumbled something that sounded vaguely of rue, and leapt down the slope again. Avenging its earlier humiliation, the snow picket held its ground and inflicted a memorably cruel and unyielding blow to Miles' spleen. "That...hurt...a lot" was all he managed between clenched teeth. I was delighted! Here was someone cut from the same cloth as I; refusing to let good sense or personal safety stand in the way of an important lesson.

Later, when my team built a two point system, I put a short sling on it and jokingly asked Myles to give it a test for me. He looked pained for a moment, then actually started over to do just that. I guffawed, and told him I was only kidding; I'd do it myself. The moment that followed still causes my back to spasm. Everyone winced as I hit the end of my tether, gasped, and watched with bulging eyes as both liver and spleen shoot out my mouth and across the knoll.

We spent the next while practising boot/ice-axe belays, hip belays and standing prusik belays. All brilliantly engineered techniques, though the women in my group were not fond of the body belay. Oddly enough, an 89kg guy's weight applied in a cinching fashion about the waist of a 50kg woman, was judged to be especially uncomfortable. The boot-ice-axe belay was more popular.

We ended our time on the slopes by testing the

strength of a bollard which had been dug for us. Nicole squirmed over the welfare of her rope as ten of us tested the strength of the bollard with our body weight. I must confess, after such loading, I'd certainly not trust that rope with anything weightier than a Scottish terrier. Sorry Nicole.

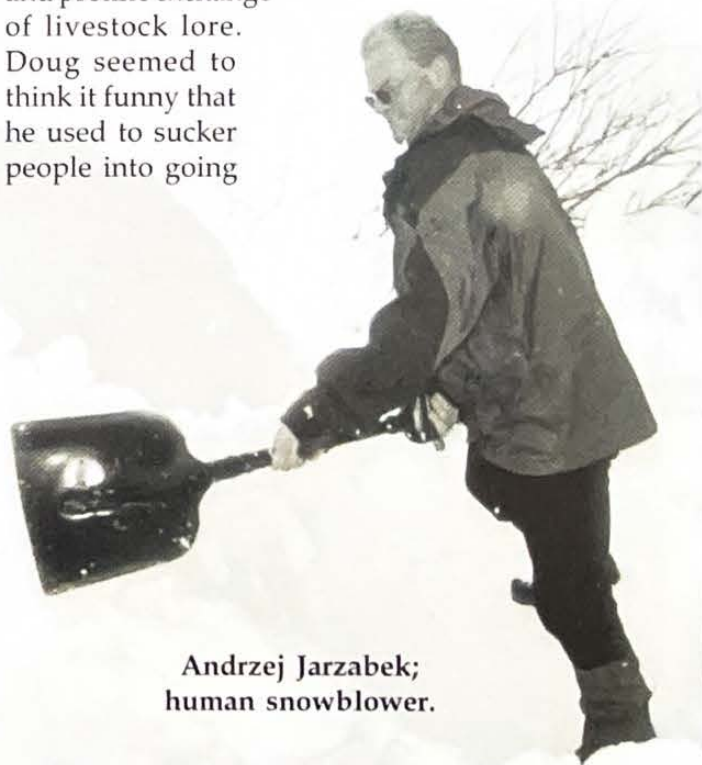
On the way back down, we collected into rope teams and practised team arrests. I had great fun being at the head of a team comprised of myself, Jeremy and Chris. Weaving in and out of the bush, I led us toward the steepest slopes I could find before merrily flinging myself off, "Falling!". Good men that they are, they always stopped me, a favour which I returned later when we switched places.

The day ended with many of us going for dinner at the local pub. What a spectacular day!

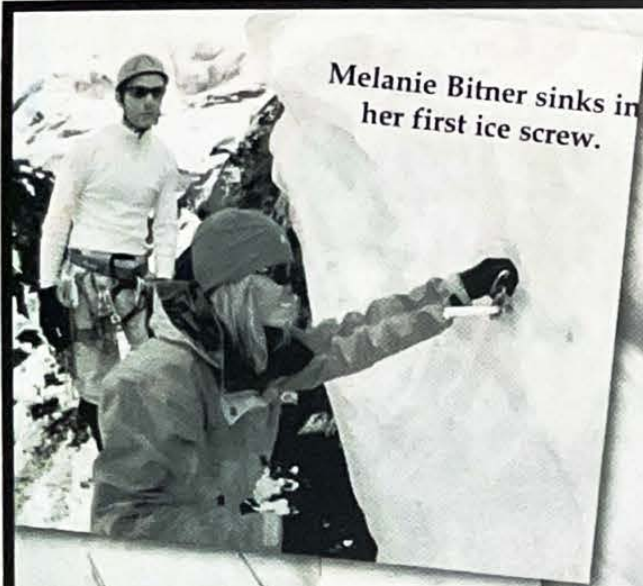
Sunday, May 27

Field Weekend - Mount Seymour

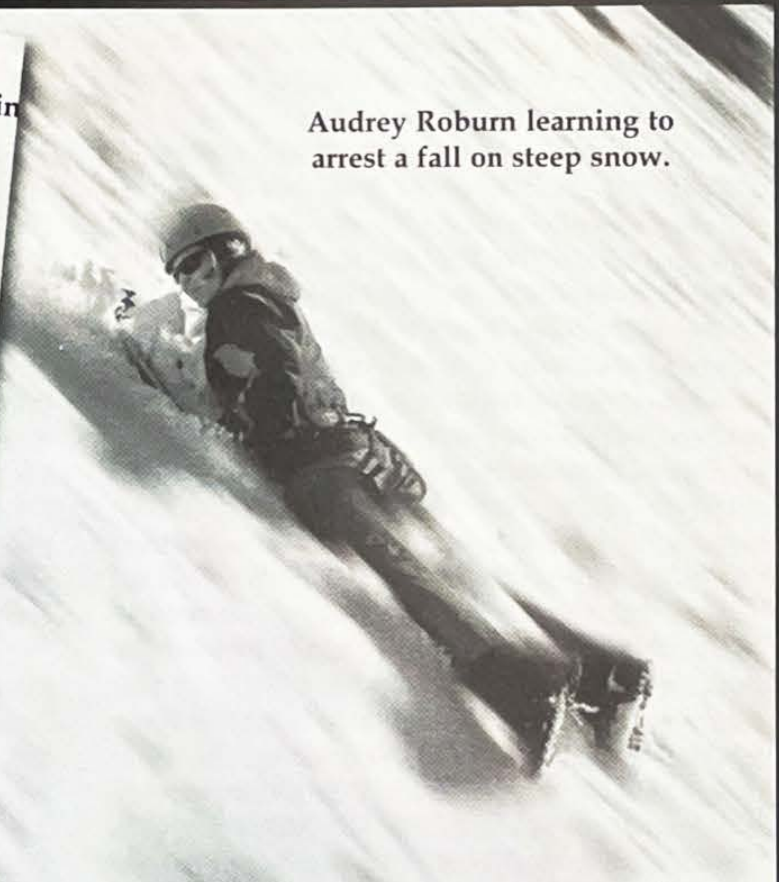
With thighs still smarting a tad from the previous day, we headed back up the slopes Sunday morning. At one rest stop, someone said something that caused a sudden and prolific exchange of livestock lore. Doug seemed to think it funny that he used to sucker people into going



**Andrzej Jarzabek;
human snowblower.**



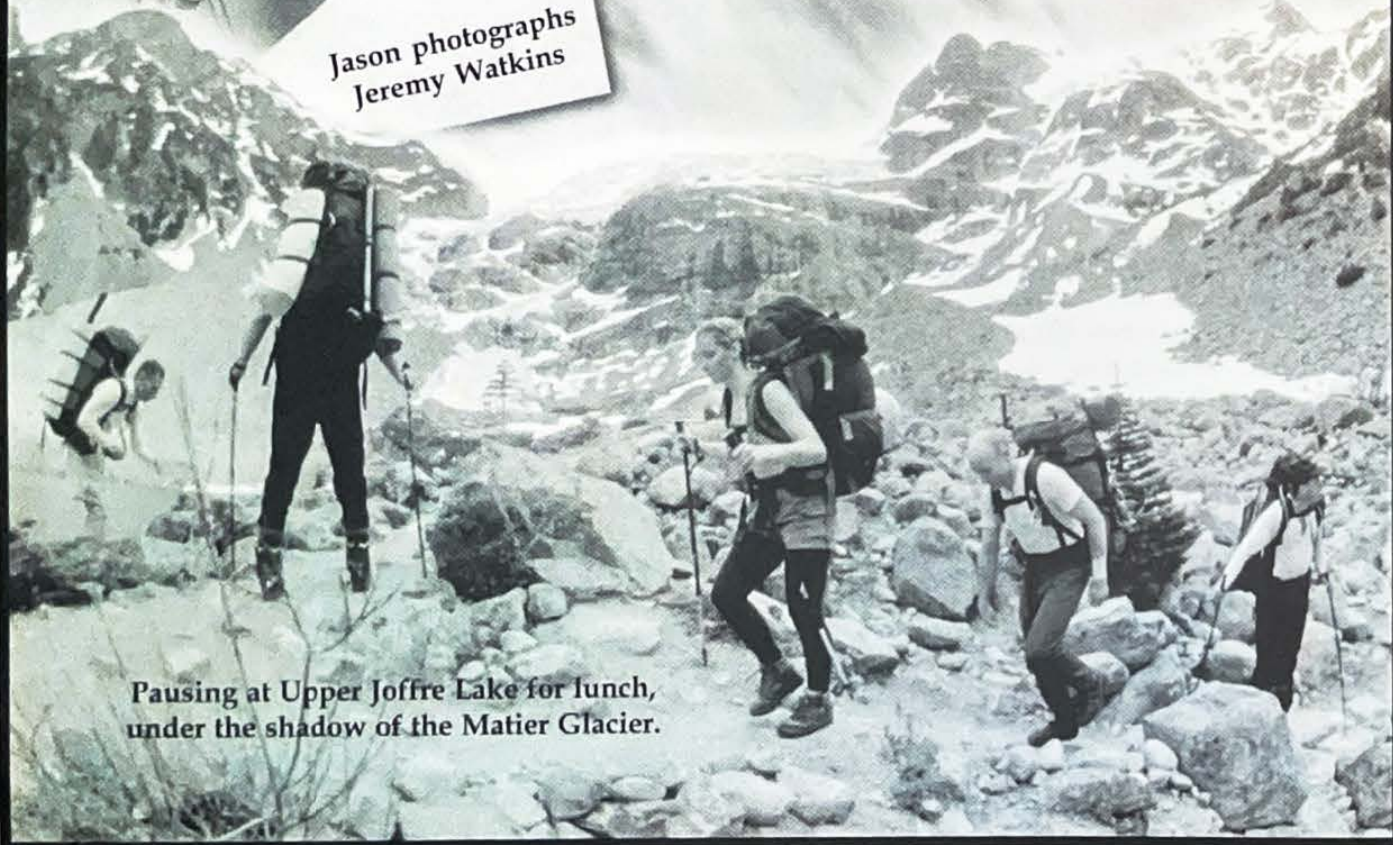
Melanie Bitner sinks in her first ice screw.



Audrey Roburn learning to arrest a fall on steep snow.



Jason photographs Jeremy Watkins



Pausing at Upper Joffre Lake for lunch, under the shadow of the Matier Glacier.

“cow-tipping” (the act of sneaking up on a standing, sleeping cow, and giving it a healthy shove). Though I’d never intentionally harm innocent cows, I’ve always found the idea of said cow’s eyes popping wide open just as her body passed the no-return angle of 45 degrees, excruciatingly funny. It turns out the joke was on me. You can’t actually tip a cow, which I must admit, is a bit dispiriting. Somehow I imagined one day I would go “tipping”, and have at least a kernel of insight into the sort of fellows who buy a six-pack of Lucky at 10:30 on a Wednesday night, polish off their suds while sitting in the middle of a farmer’s field, assuring each other that life don’t get none better, before stumbling off to tip defenseless cattle. I feel cheated. Doug related stories of having his head cow-licked, while Mel’s brother managed to elicit bovine ire so acute that he found himself bitten square on the ass. I’m a bit jealous. While I can only thank dumb luck for having arrived at 32 bereft of any notable scarring, I would certainly take the greatest advantage of bearing a posterior permanently marked by the wrath of a dairy cow. Sorry, I wandered off topic there.

So, today we learned about rope teams, how to travel in them, and how to do your best to drag



Nick Ranicar;
“Danger’s my middle name, baby”

them down a slope after you. I excelled at the latter. JP, Audrey and I roped up and headed out under the watchful eye of Miles. Every so often he would give me a subtle nod and I would throw myself into the arms of gravity, giving JP and Audrey a good workout. Then we switched leads, and JP led us up a long arête. Right away I had visions of an odd fantasy I’ve always held...

In this fantasy I’m climbing up a steep, narrow and snowy ridge, preferably with a dizzying drop on either side (today’s was barely 20m). One of the climbers falls. Now, the stories of climbing I’ve read teach that you will never stop them by just falling into “self arrest”. You’ll be plucked off so fast that you’ll have time only for arranging your hair neatly so you’ll look your best at the funeral. The fact is, you must leap off the opposite side. I admit I was prepared for the possibility, as Miles was hiking beside JP at the head of the line. Suddenly JP was shooting down the right slope. Audrey fell into self-arrest. Given the JP/Audrey weight differential, I figured she would be plucked off, so I literally went airborne (I’m smiling like an idiot at the memory right now) as I launched off the left side.

Dropping about four feet down the face, I pasted into the snow with my axe buried to the head, toes dug in, facing away from the arête. Then it hit. Audrey stopped some of his fall, but the angle was too steep and I was now able to stop them both. I was awfully pleased until Miles stalked over and gave me hell for “cheating”. I think he wanted to watch us rag-doll down the slope. Evil instructor.

As fun as that was, I hope I never have to do it in real life. It would be terrifying. Miles related a story about a five-woman team that was lost on Mount Rainier. The leader fell off the right of a steep ridge, so all four others leapt off the left side. The weight of the four pulled the leader back up the right slope and flipped her over to the left, where she joined her teammates for what must have been a horrifying fall to the bottom. That image still haunts me.

A brief exercise in running belays, led by Nicole, ended with a riotous team glissade back to our gear. Taking a brief rest, I sat and watched Nick training another group some distance away. Vicariously, I shared his boyish glee, as he would suddenly grab the rope and squirt down the slope time and again with three climbers in tow. I didn't get a chance to work with Nick at all, but as with the other instructors, he was obviously talented both with rope and people skills. I hope to climb with him in the future.

After that we headed over to a steep wall where everyone had a chance to practise prusiking. I rapped down a ways and took some pictures. It was a bit of a thrill to use new knowledge - I punched a little platform at chest level, buried my axe handle and clipped into the lanyard to anchor myself. It was rock solid. Hey, I'm learning!

On the way back down, we used a technique that was so fun it seemed like cheating. I came over a knoll that disappeared into the trees, but the people I had been following were nowhere to be seen. All that betrayed human presence was a trough in the snow, roughly the width of a climber's bottom, leading down the slope and through the trees. With a silly grin, I placed myself in the chute, and with only a bit of a scooch, was hurtling down the run with fantastic speed. You can't be serious! *This* is something real mountaineers indulge in? Brilliant! Suddenly a dark thought caught me, and I wondered if Mallory and Irvine had, in a moment of hypoxia induced poor judgment, chosen this for their method of descent off Everest. It would certainly explain a few things.



Mel Bitner breaking the sound barrier on Mount Seymour

Thursday, May 31 - Classroom Session 3

This evening we headed outside to learn about the techniques involved in crevasse rescue. Nicole was the victim, while Miles and Doug showed us the process of extraction. One can only guess what an onlooker would have thought about a group of people yanking a woman up a shallow slope with such a complicated array of equipment and fuss, but I'm sure it wouldn't have been charitable. Regardless, the whole process was very complex, as was evidenced by the occasional confusion of what went where. This is definitely a skill that would have to be practised on a regular basis.

Afterwards we went back inside to watch a video Miles had shot on a recent trip. This is where we would be heading in two weeks. He narrated the video as scenes of both beauty and intimidation filled the screen. One bit of footage showed what looked to be outrageously steep slopes, and we were informed that we would be climbing them. I looked back at Andrea and her eyes reflected my feelings. Yikes. Miles assured us we could do it, and I trusted him, so I was sure all would be good. Exposure is a funny thing. Put any of us on a 50 degree slope with a 10m run-out, and we

could do it all day...back and forth...back and forth, never falling. Now make it a 600m run-out, and orifices will pucker with the certainty that we are only seconds from plummeting down the slope "hands up" Club Med style. I know that slope might scare me stupid. I also know that overcoming those natural feelings (read fear and common sense) are part of the joy of climbing - on either snow or rock. I've shown myself in the past that I can learn to cope with exposure, so I hoped I wouldn't disappoint my teammates or myself.

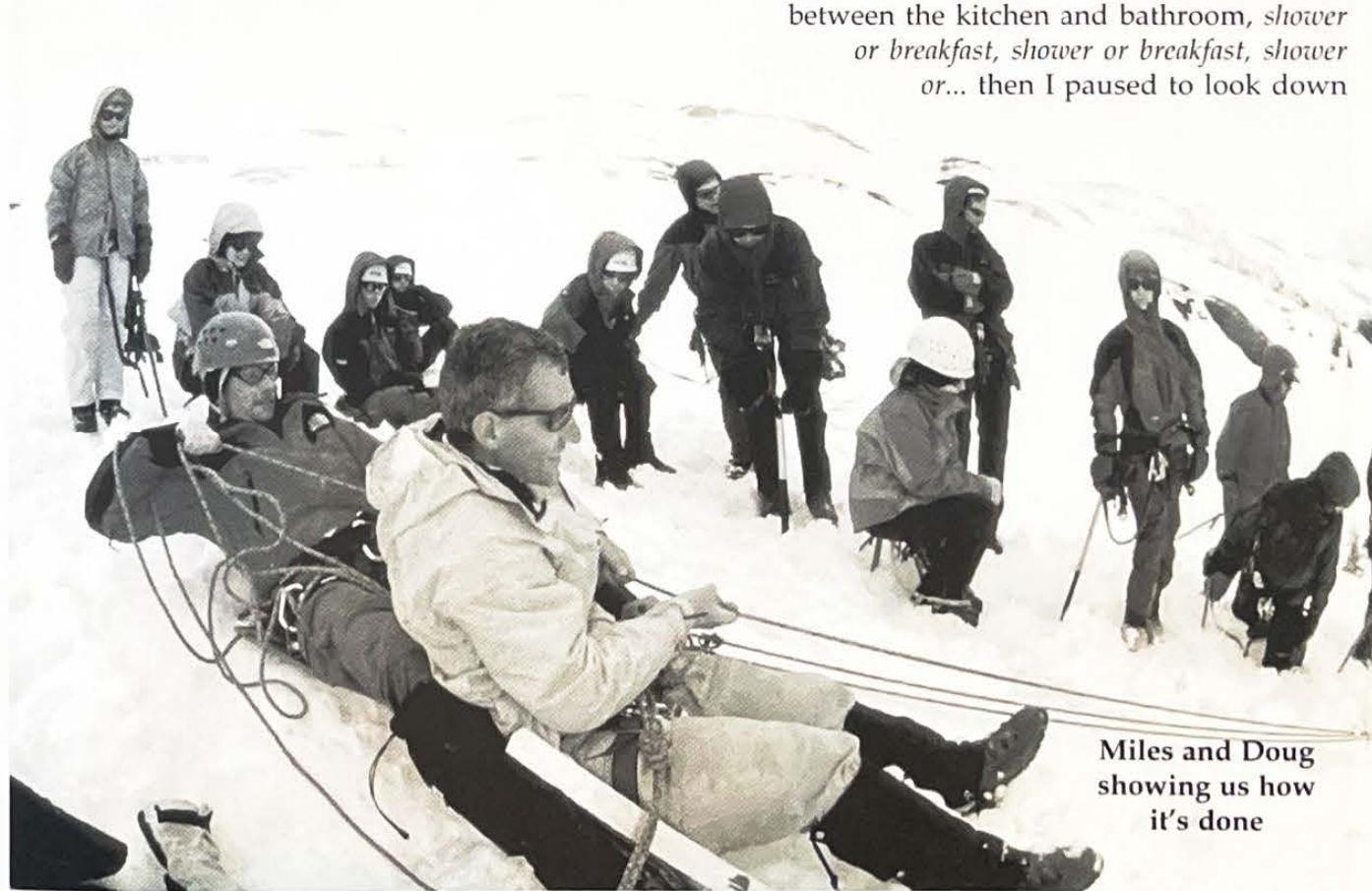
Saturday, June 2 - Field Weekend - Mount Baker

The week preceding this trip was like Christmas Eve; every night it was hard to sleep for all the excitement dancing through my veins. Nearly every day's errands included some element of trip preparation, making even the most mundane trip to Safeway a frolic though the isles in search of kibbles for the trail.

I was packing until about 1am on Saturday morning. I had promised myself a 10pm bedtime,

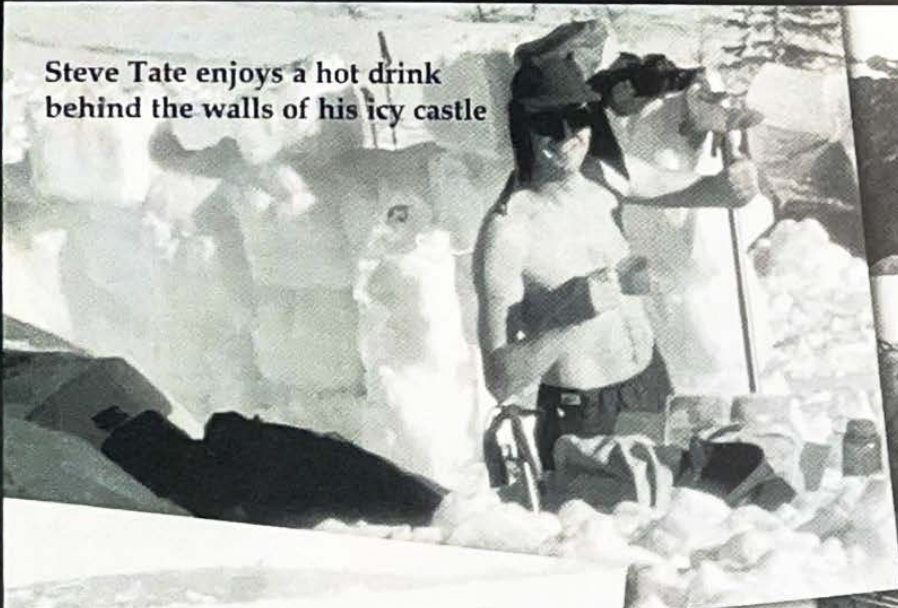
but decided it was best to pack such that I needed only stumble from my bed, through the shower, past my bags (which had been tethered to my right leg since Wednesday to avert their being forgotten) and down the stairs to my car. In retrospect, a fortuitous plot. Being a tad drowsy while setting my alarm, I stared bleary eyed at the large red numbers and did the mental math, *now, let's see here...I need to be there at 6am, I want 45 minutes to drive there and 45 minutes to get ready....that's....an hour and a half *yawn* so I need to get up at...** rubs eyes ** ummm...5:30. I fell asleep almost immediately. Thanks to the friendly folk at Panasonic, my alarm did indeed beep urgently at its assigned hour, which somehow freed a single neuron from its cell in the dungeons of my brain, "YOU IDIOT! 4:30! NOT 5:30! (Neuron glances at clock) OH CRAP IT'S TOO LATE! GO MAN! GO! GO! GO!"*

My ultimate nightmare was happening- I had slept in. I leapt from my bed and spun my head back to look at the time-5:32am. Oh God. I sprinted to the hall and stepped on something that produced sharp "pop". My head metronomed between the kitchen and bathroom, *shower or breakfast, shower or breakfast, shower or... then I paused to look down*

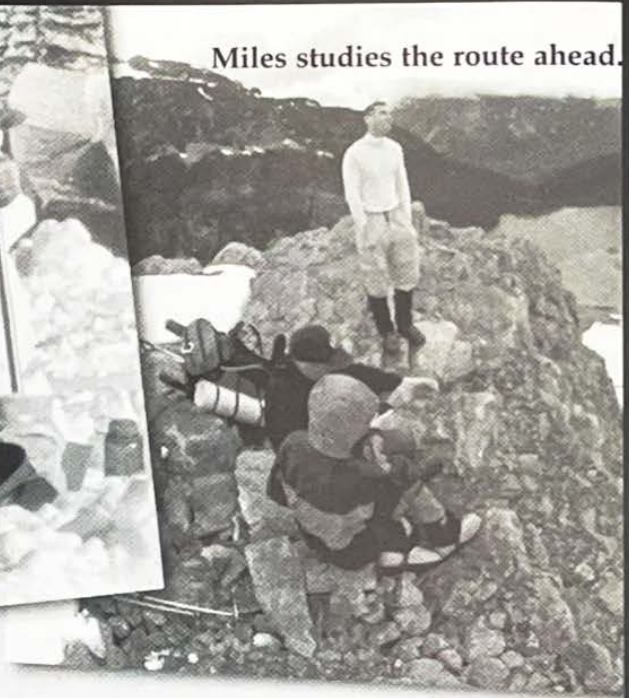


Miles and Doug showing us how it's done

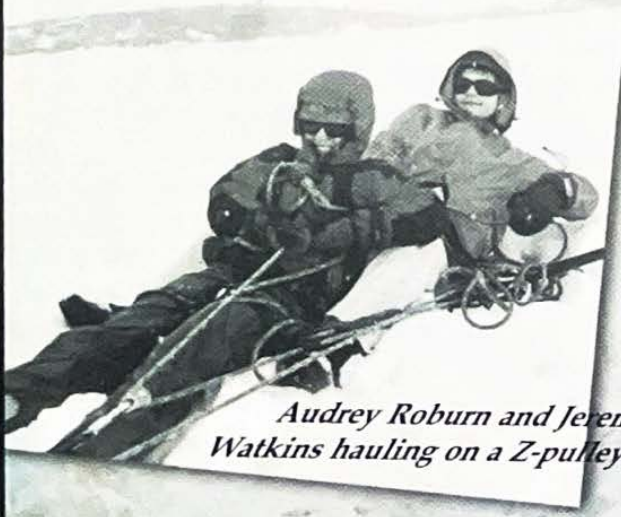
Steve Tate enjoys a hot drink behind the walls of his icy castle



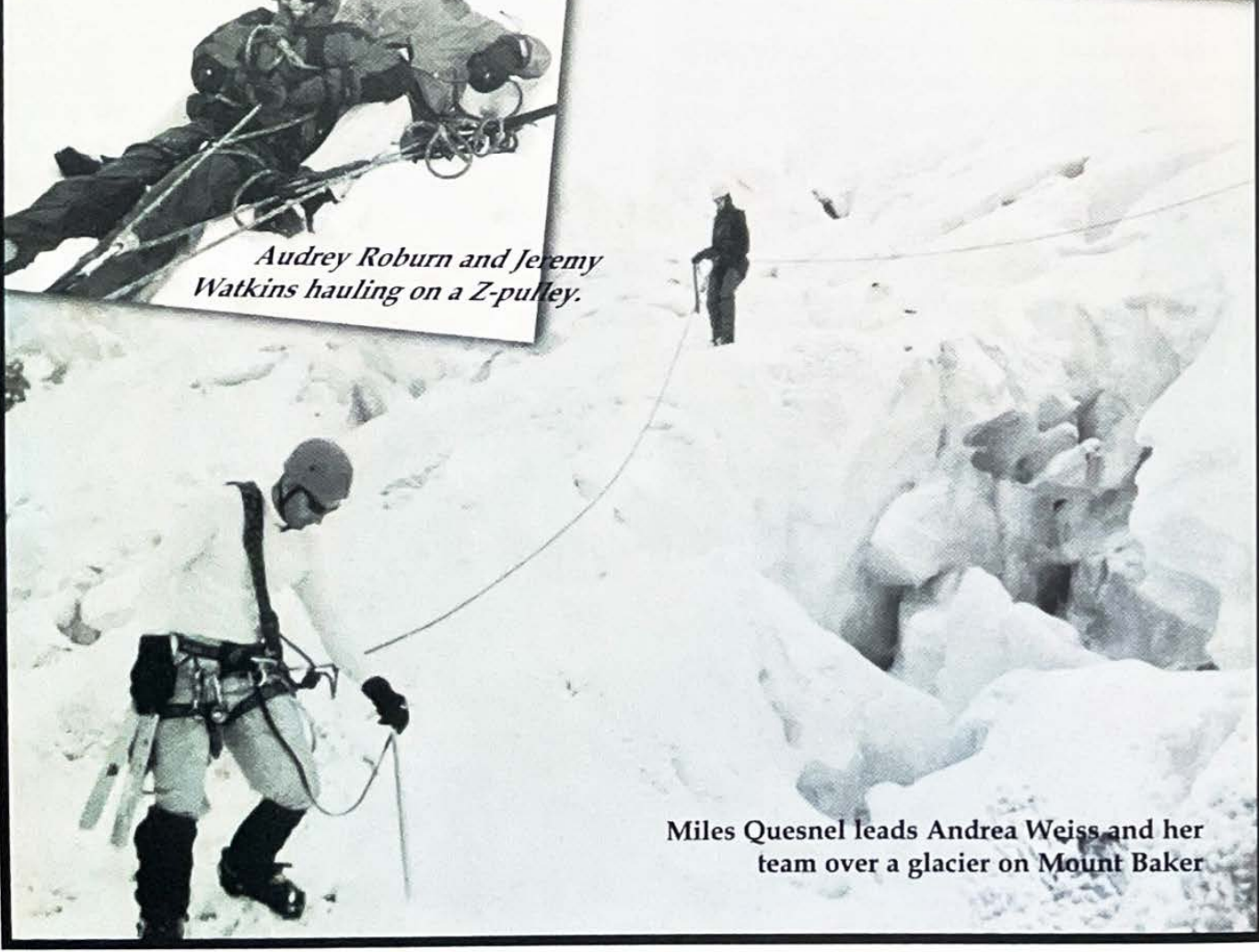
Miles studies the route ahead.



Audrey Roburn and Jeremy Watkins hauling on a Z-pulley.



Miles Quesnel leads Andrea Weiss and her team over a glacier on Mount Baker



at the source of the “pop”. I had stepped on a Clif Bar- like a cute little camper, his stubby chocolate-fudge head poked sleepily from his tiny metallic sleeping bag. I dare say, I hope never to wake up the way Clif did- being rudely jerked from my warm cocoon and eagerly consumed.

After pelting myself with a 12 second shower, I dressed and sprinted down the stairs with 36 kg of gear thumping behind on its tether. Time- 5:38am. I made the last turn onto the freeway up on two wheels and engaged the warp engines (kudos to the folks at Subaru, I have yet to break your car). Much to my surprise, I arrived at Toys R Us five minutes early, in time to eat a nutritious [sic] breakfast at McDonald’s. After playing musical 4x4s to arrange seating, we were off.

I was in JP’s back seat while Jeremy rode shotgun (no respect for his elders). Now, I’ll state here for the record, without even a kernel of irony, that JP is truly one of the most affable men I have ever known, and I could never write an unflattering word about a gentleman who just begs to be hugged he’s so warm-hearted and lovable. So how about a little limerick instead...

**To Baker we drove with JP
Break the speed limit? “Heavens, not ME!”
With the group out of sight
We were lost, what a fright!
“It’s not a race”, he told Jer-e-me.**

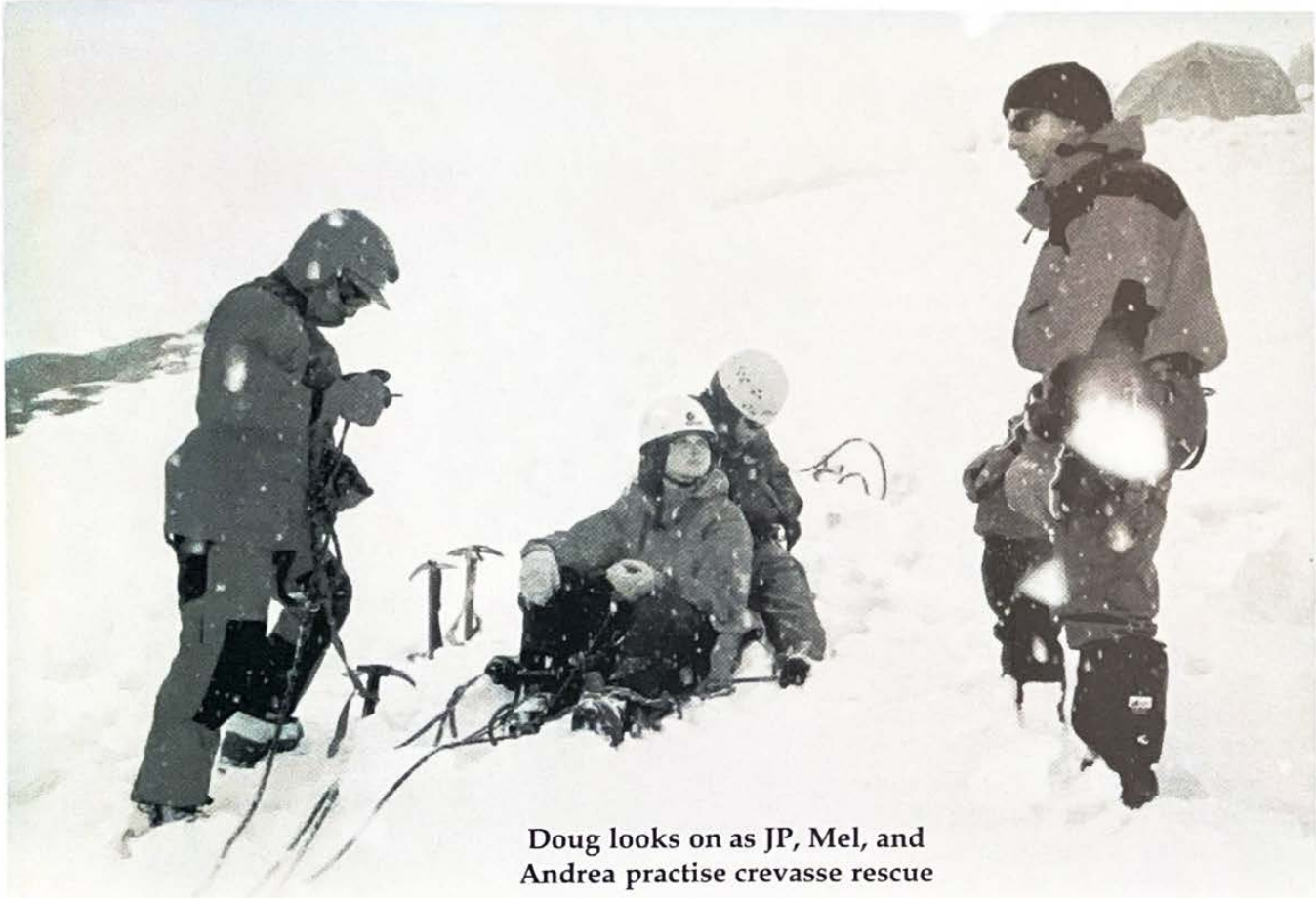
Between Jeremy and JP, they got us back on course and fate slid us neatly behind Mark’s truck at the border crossing. A few twists and turns later we collected at the Mount Baker ranger station. Therein was an engaging little store full of maps and books. Sitting beside a paper-mâché model of Baker was a curious display: a little row of boxes into which one was encouraged to thrust a hand and guess at what was encountered. Now, as memorable as it was to discover I’d inadvertently fondled the flayed skull of some unfortunate woodland critter, how much more fun this would be with some covert modifications; I made a mental



Steve Tate extracting himself from a crevasse on Mount Baker

note to bring something cheap and outrageously naughty (not you Doug) on my next Baker trip.

A half-hour later we were off-loading gear at the trailhead. A shocking number of groups were also getting ready to leave. I hoped this wasn’t going to turn into a mule-train of climbers all shuffling up the same route. I shouldered my pack, which weighed a considerable amount, and cast a jealous eye toward the packs of some of the others. Then a thought hit me – my spare size 13 hiking socks were probably no smaller than Mel’s sleeping bag. The body-weight to pack-weight



Doug looks on as JP, Mel, and Andrea practise crevasse rescue

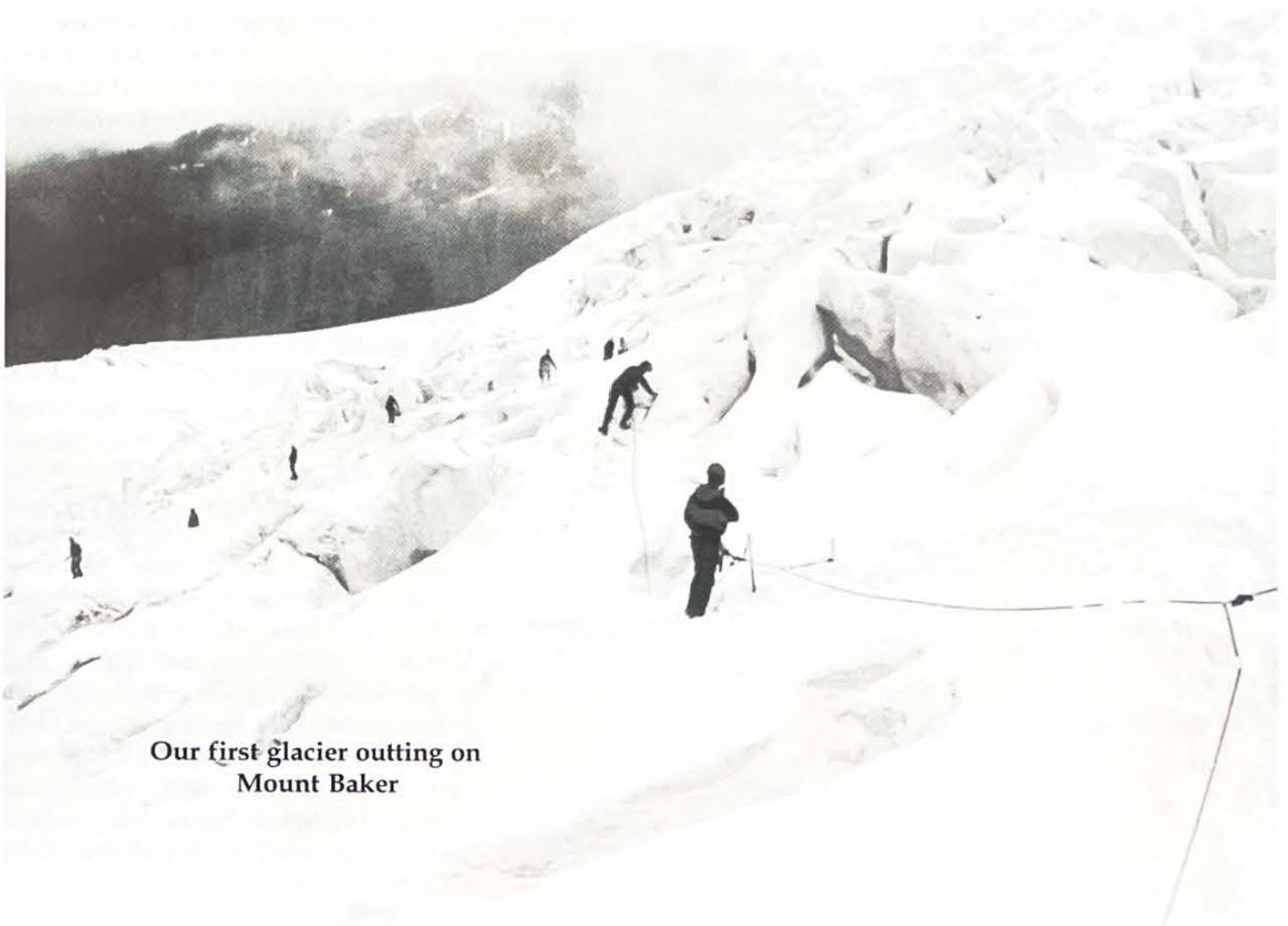
ratio was roughly the same for all of us (except the instructors, who each carried packs roughly thrice their own body weight.)

Seizing my poles, I began lurching down the path with my burden, quickdraw in hand, ready to secure myself to the first person who seemed unlikely to notice. We had been warned to expect roughly four hours of slogging, with about 1200m of altitude gain. I mentally prepared myself to be claimed by the reaper, and tried to remain presentable for my would-be pallbearers.

As it turned out, we arrived at camp in just over two hours. Tricky instructors! The spot was exceedingly spectacular. A massive field of seracs spread before us, with a maze of yawning crevasses below to our left. Sharp breaths of awe were drawn from many a climber. I stood open-mouthed for a minute before noticing someone claiming ground for his tent. Spying a narrow strip

of snow leading up a ridge overlooking the glacier, Andrea and I headed up to claim some prime real estate. Over my shoulder, I heard our instructors designating a large pit near a particular tree as the "potty" area. This turned out to be a bit of a fiasco - some stood in the pit and peed out, while others stood on the rim and peed in (though, not to my knowledge simultaneously). As an added bonus, a rocky knoll (one which I noticed was frequently trodden) neighbored the pit and afforded an excellent view of anyone's posterior who happened to be seeking relief at the time.

Back on the ridge, Andrea and I unloaded our packs and attacked the slope with our shovel. Below us, more than a dozen architects began erecting pits and walls in which to ensconce their tents. Steve and Chris went so far as to garrison themselves behind a twin set of icy battlements. Very cool!



**Our first glacier outing on
Mount Baker**

While the weather brooded indecisively, we finished our camps and geared up. On a long, shallow slope, Miles and Doug set up a z-pulley as they had done at the school the previous Thursday. Things were going much more smoothly this time. I thoroughly respect how seriously our instructors take the job of teaching these skills to us. I watched other instructors on the mountain this weekend, and often there was an affected air of self-importance which was in stark contrast to the professionalism of our mentors. We were most fortunate, indeed.

After a few hours of digging t-slots and hauling team mates, we warmed up with a rousing snowball fight. Above us, the weather brooded darkly. Rather than go for the intended glacier walk, we retreated to our camps for hot meals, then curled up in the warm, welcome arms of downshrouded slumber.

Sunday morning dawned with unique beauty. The air was crisp and the sky clear, while only a few morning clouds huddled far below us at the base of the mountain. A brilliant sliver of gold crested the mountains across the valley, setting alight the tips of countless seracs teetering upon the glacier. It was a truly amazing scene. I hoped the weather would hold, but the meteorological pessimist with whom I tented was dead certain the day would deteriorate horribly. She was largely accurate.

An hour later, with warmly distended stomachs, we all waddled together to gear up and head out over the stiff morning snow. Finally, our destination was the glacier! I was fit to burst from eagerness, and ran down the slope to catch a shot of everyone descending to the glacier. Another group was already set up and working the crevasses, so we strapped on our crampons and

**Marilyn Krickhan in
her element**



followed Doug and Miles up and onto the glacier for a tour of its beauty and dangers. I couldn't believe I was actually digging my front-points into a glacier. I French-stepped up a short wall as Audrey prusiked me in. What a view! A remarkable maze of blue ice and sugary snow spread before us, and through it wove our group. Exhilaration coursed through me. How many people would ever be lucky enough to experience what we did then? It was a deceptively hostile environment, with gaping crevasses waiting with patient hunger on every side.

I passed Miles showing Jeremy how to place an ice-screw. The youngest in our group at 19, Jeremy's cherubic smile and quiet enthusiasm were ever-present. Whatever his peers were doing that weekend, I can't imagine they were having more fun.

Eventually we all wound our way back to the crevasses, now abandoned by the other group. After setting up anchors, we started putting our knowledge to use. I secured a line parallel to three others, and lowered myself repeatedly into two crevasses to shoot group members practising prusiking (just try saying that three times fast... practising prusiking, practiking...dang). What a surreal and magnificent environment. At the bottom of the crevasses, ancient blue ice as hard as stone defied my crampons. Not surprisingly, clawing up and over the edge of a real crevasse was far more challenging than in practice. I couldn't imagine how tough it would be with a huge pack! Soon, early afternoon came; we cleaned out all our anchors, had a quick lesson in placing ice screws, and headed back up to camp.

Once packed, we had a last look at the glacier and headed out. I considered wrapping my pack in my groundsheet, climbing aboard and seeing if fortune would bring me careening into the parking lot, but thought better of it. I did, however, pull out my mini-tarp when we came to the head of a long steep slope. Dropping my butt onto the little square of blue plastic, I enjoyed a shameless bit of tomfoolery as I hooted my way down the slope. Damn good fun.

An independent observer would have thought we were being chased down the mountain. The whole line of us stormed down the trail at a nearly frantic pace; in what felt like mere minutes we burst into the parking lot. I was standing near Marilyn when someone asked her "Aren't you glad that's over?". Barely breathing hard, she just shrugged, saying, "It was ok", and I had the distinct feeling she had the energy to head right back up and summit. For my part, I was awfully happy to get that pack off.

Nature was calling rather loudly. The trailhead offered a splendid little log enclosure for just such times. When my turn came, I entered the little chamber of relief only to be assaulted by a fetor of profound intensity. With breath held and eyes watering I made my stay as brief as possible and escaped just as the last of my sinus membrane burst into flame. Opening the door, I met Andrea as she scurried past me with obvious urgency burning in her eyes. Fewer than 10 seconds after the door clicked shut, she burst out looking pale and a little horrified, "Couldn't ...stand...it..." she managed between pursed lips and gasps of clean air. Somehow that was quite funny at the time.

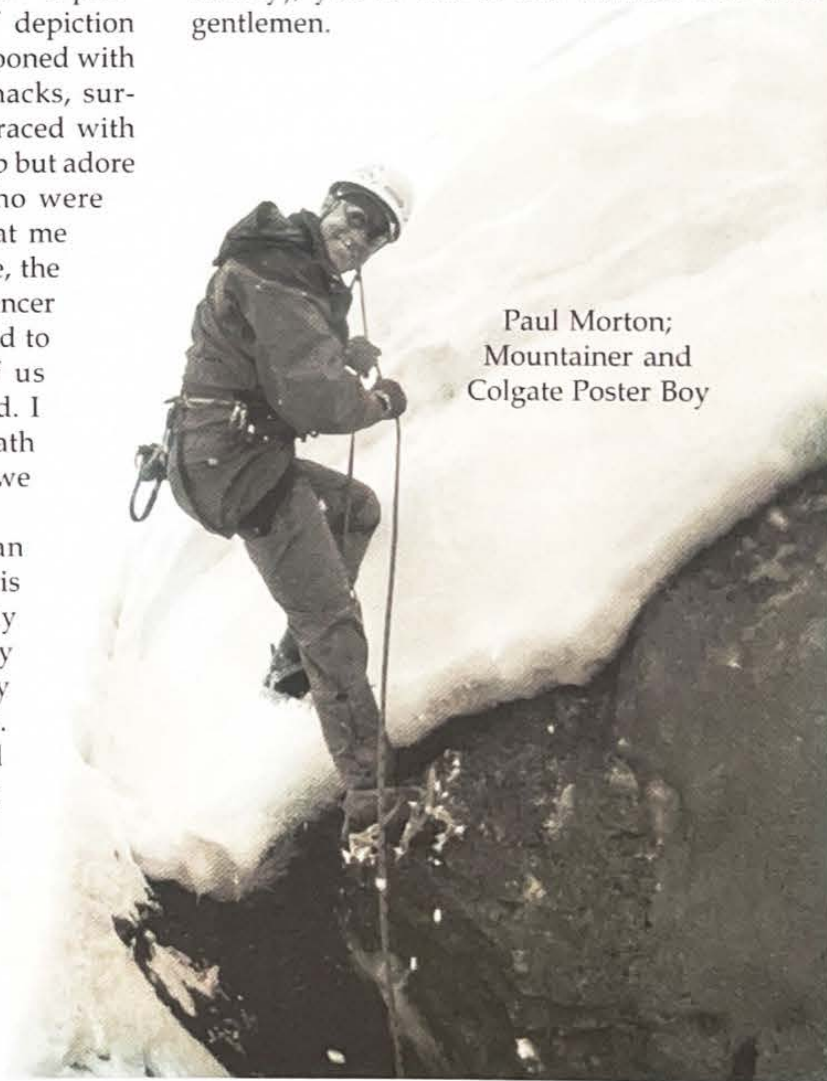
With dry clothing donned and gear stashed in the trucks, we headed off for food. The "Frosty Inn" was our destination. It was charming in the way only remote American bars can be - a peeling exterior featuring a local "artist's" depiction of a friendly Sasquatch, an interior festooned with generations of contemptible knick-knacks, surprisingly good food and a waitress graced with such an earnest smile that you can't help but adore her. Aside from the two smokers who were sucking on their death while staring at me with a curious unblinking malevolence, the place was just perfect. I brought the Cancer Couple to Paul's attention, so he started to "cough" dramatically, and some of us followed suit, but they were unmoved. I suggested we all feign a dramatic death by choking, but they expired before we could try our plan.

Andrea and I shared a vegetarian pizza. Despite the fact that "Frosty's" is incalculably distant both geographically and culturally from anything remotely Italian, I was pleasantly surprised by what a tasty meal was laid before us. While some were scratching chins and trying to choose between such tempting offerings as the "Swankie Frankie" and the "Paul Bunyan", others were more interested in a cold malt beverage. The waitress looked at Nick for a long moment, then asked him for his ID. With his trademark boyish charm he produced his driver's license while

the rest of us "thirty-somethings" dug out ID with serious faces. The waitress, in her good heartedness, patiently squinted at each license "just to be sure".

While all the ordering and feasting was going on, Doug began issuing forth an unending stream of hilarity. My God that man is funny. Everyone was doubled over with tears in their eyes as he sat there impishly grinning, barely letting us catch our breath before firing off another shot of levity. Thanks to Doug, most of us left the bar that night with stinging nostrils, as his merriment was cause for our beverages to be shot forth with irrepressible gusto.

A quick group photo with the Happy Sasquatch, and we were back on the road for home. Thank you so much for driving JP (and refusing gas money), you're one of the world's last true gentlemen.



Paul Morton;
Mountainer and
Colgate Poster Boy

Saturday, June 23

Field Weekend - Mount Matier

I'm finally a mountaineer - I can now get up at 5am, manage to feed, bathe, ready myself, and arrive at the appointed meeting spot, all without any panic or assistance whatsoever; a fact of which I'm now quite proud.

Upon joining the others at our morning rendezvous, I discovered a sad fact - only seven of us collected in the cool morning air. Scheduling conflicts had kept many away.

Splitting into two cars, we headed north on the 99. Nicole and I ended up in the back seat of Mel's pathfinder. The seats were comfy enough, but by feigning critical nausea, we soon found ourselves occupying the much more comfortable front seats. I'll give credit where it's due - great plan Nicole!

We stopped for breakfast at "The Pony" in Pemberton, a modest middle-of-nowhere greasy spoon that just happened to churn out the most delectable breakfast I've had in some time. A word of warning however: don't waste the cook's time with your picky palate - I made the mistake of inquiring about the spiciness of the salsa.

"Ya, it's pretty spicy, you'll like it" said the cook, absently.

"Actually," I replied, making every effort to be polite, "I'm a bit of a culinary milquetoast, maybe you could just put a wee bit on mine?" Unblinking, she stared at me for a moment, as if to decide between knocking me senseless, or covertly blowing her nose in my breakfast wrap,

"Do you want salsa or not?" she demanded. I stood open mouthed for a moment, "Uhhh, no?" I replied carefully. She smiled curtly and took my money. Too tired and hungry to loudly proclaim her dubious parentage, I chose instead to quietly curse her to a painful demise at the foaming beak of a rabid whisky jack.

A short while later we rolled into the parking area. Nicole was not faring well. What I had thought was a clever way for us to stake out the front seats actually turned out to be genuine sickness. She disappeared from the parking area for a while, I can only imagine to colourfully share her breakfast with the landscape. She had the unhappy burden of knowing that if she didn't go,

none of us could. In the end, despite a flu bug, which instilled nausea reminiscent of Andrea's Mount Baker Outhouse Fiasco, she was unselfish enough to forge ahead anyway. Thanks Nicole, with all possible sincerity I deem thee a good and unselfish soul.

I followed Nicole along the trail. Within a few minutes we broke out into an open section of trail nestled beside a cold, emerald lake. The backdrop for this scene was quite remarkable- a massive hanging glacier nestled between two great mountains. I gibbered senselessly while trying to take it in. It seemed so distant, so untouchable, and yet Nicole assured me that we would in fact be on that glacier later in the day.

Magic. It truly is a part of mountaineering. I hope nobody ever becomes desensitized to that fact. Magic holds that million-ton glacier in place, allowing for a scene both tangible and impossible. It ensures that when we work extra hard to enjoy the view of a crisp mountain lake, the water will embrace a depth of emerald that defies explanation- just for our mortal benefit. Magic ensures that even through the most foliage, stone, tree, crevasse, gully or glacier choked path between where you are and where you want to be, there is invariably a path to be found; and how many times have I lost my balance a tad, teetered in an alarming direction and there was a nice, flat little stone just waiting to graciously bear my weight? *Magic* I say.

I wish that Magic went so far as to minimize the effect of a 27kg pack on one's endurance and general well being. As I write this tale on the day following our journey, my legs recoil from the idea of bearing an ounce more than my body weight. I have devised complicated contraptions of wire, wood and rubber bands for employment in the retrieval of anything below knee level, as, for at least the next week, squatting will be a one-way journey.

Somewhere along this section of trail, my radio crackled to life, "Jason, this is Miles."

"Jason here, go ahead"

"Did you guys see that bear?" said in as serious a tone as he could muster. Not knowing if I should take him seriously, I carefully replied,

"Are you serious?", which must have delighted him.

"No" he said, laughing.

"I thought you might be serious, as I'd heard a sound earlier, and had a kind of sixth-sense thing going that it was a bear!", I replied, relieved. Now we switch scenes to Paul and Audrey, who are alone on another section of trail, as they monitor our transmissions on a radio cleverly modified to only relay panic inducing information. This is about what they heard:

"Jas***, this is ****les.....**son here, ** ahead....***** guys see ***** bear?...***** serious....***** heard a sound earlier, ***** it was a bear!". Wide-eyed, Audrey and Paul waited for the others to catch up with a change of underwear. Miles had great fun later while relating that story. Evil instructor.

After about two hours or so of meandering through mixed and rising terrain, we arrived at Middle Joffre Lake. The sun lit the toe of the glacier above, and the lake spreading out before us proudly reflected the phenomenal bowl of mountains in which we stood. Here we had a much closer view of the climb ahead. Nicole pointed out the route to us and after a brief snack we moved on. I was getting excited. While it must have seemed obvious to most, I just then grasped that we were actually going to be on that glacier soon.

Another hour of relentless vertical brought us to the remarkable Upper Joffre Lake. As beautiful as the sight was, more pleasure was gleaned from stepping into open, windy terrain; I had lost at least half a litre of blood to the buzzing little villains who inhabited the more sheltered sections of trail. While they bounced out of control in the wind, I joined the group for lunch.

Sucking happily on the bright, juicy flesh of a kiwifruit (It's second only to mango in nutritional density, and you can eat the skin!), I spied some tents pitched on the shore of the lake. A couple of the residents peered curiously over at me. I tried to affect the casual-cool air one would expect from a competent mountaineer, but spoiled my efforts while suddenly, and quite nosily, hacking up a baby carrot which I had tried to ingest through my trachia.

Shouldering our packs, we continued on our journey. At about 60m up the very steep slope, I took a brief look over my shoulder and was

arrested by the sight; the whole upper lake was visible, and even in the dreary light of an impending storm, it shone brilliantly with an intensely deep emerald. What a breath-taking moment.

Moments. Often I think they're why we push so hard for mountainous adventures. I can't imagine anyone really enjoyed the slog upwards that day, but all the incredible Moments between stretches of exertion - well, it's why I do this climbing thing.

The weight of my pack was starting to catch up with me, but having just watched Mark run up



Mark Binstead hanging out on Mount Baker

like he was on an escalator, I took a deep breath and forged on. Mel, Nicole and I had chosen a similar route up the slope and were soon encouraging each other upwards. It was at this point that the sky finally made good on its threats, as it opened up and pelted us with coarse snow. Given that we were already overheating, we chose

to leave the Gore-Tex in our packs. Following a last strip of rubble into the snowline, we crossed to the rest of the group. It was time to rope up.

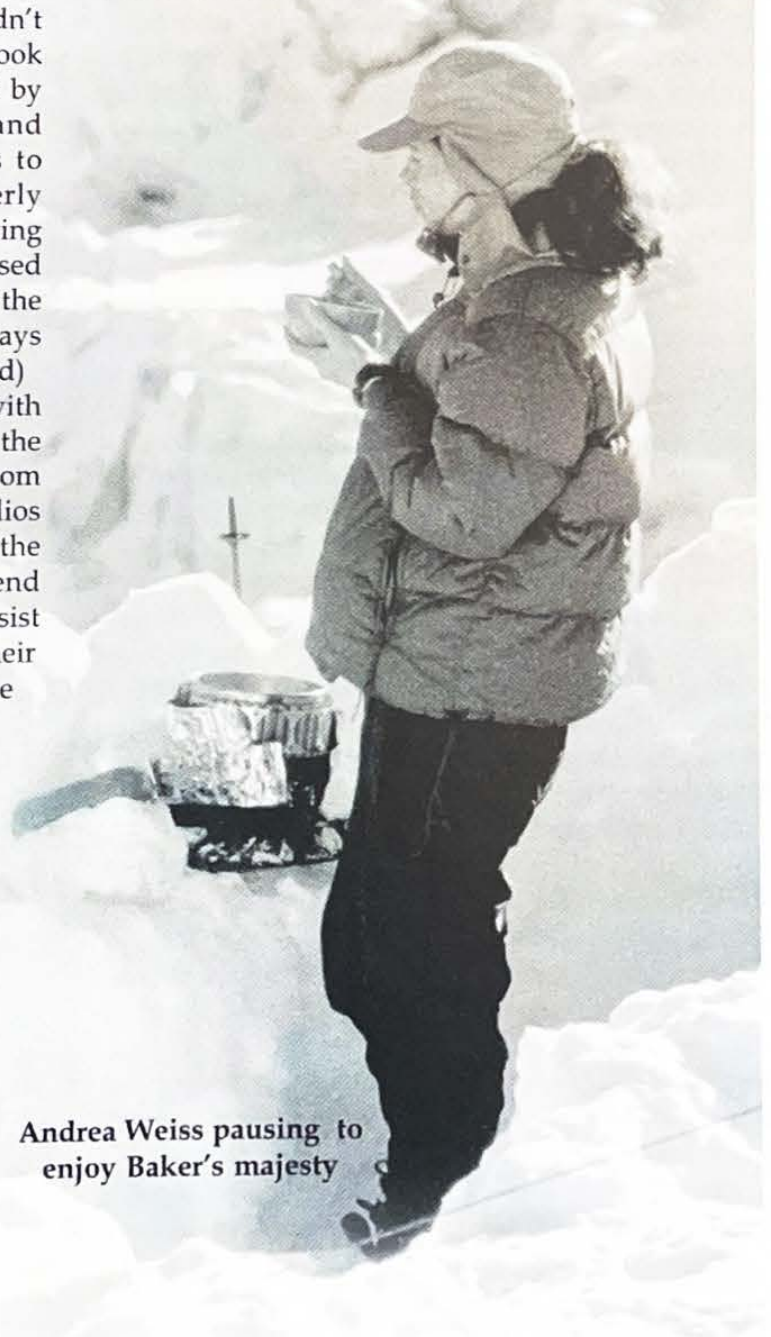
The glacier, which had seemed so far away, was now only a couple of hundred metres away. Distance had made it look quite overwhelming, but up close it seemed almost inviting. Almost. Buckling on our crampons and organizing ourselves into rope teams we started up the slope. A cluster of onlookers watched with obvious interest as we shuffled upwards. They pointed, mumbled amongst themselves, and took photos. I think Mark and I both felt a bit bad that we couldn't do something more impressive for them. It took some time to get to the base of the climb, and by then our audience had grown impatient and descended. Perhaps we could learn tricks to entertain onlookers at such times; a properly choreographed *Cirque du BCMC* show might bring our little club a measure of fame, if not increased membership. I'll leave that seed of thought for the executive committee's consideration (I'm always happy to perform a mildly thrilling head-stand)

Paul, who consistently impressed all of us with his tenacious endurance and enthusiasm, lead the way over the glacier's toe with some guidance from Miles via radio. As a side note, we all used radios on this trip. They were constantly in use in the roped areas, and I would strongly recommend them to any party of climbers. Some might insist they're gimmicky, but they were well worth their weight. Anyway, lets get back to Paul before we lose sight of him. Ah, yes, there he is at the top of the technical section. Great work Paul!

We all followed his path through the snow and ice, terrain very similar to what we encountered on our glacial excursion on Baker. Towering seracs of ice jostled each other in slow motion to our left. The terrain was too easy to be very intimidating, but it was serious enough that we did have to pay attention and utilize some of the skills we had been taught in order to ascend safely.

Cresting the face, I watched Miles place a wand, as his team moved on across the glacier's snowy crust. Upon a radioed "Wand!" from Mark at the tail of our

team, Miles would place another wand. In this fashion we pushed our bodies higher up the mountain. I think at this point that everyone, at least on our rope team, was starting to reach their limit. The weather had been turning worse by the minute, and I knew my reserves were dwindling. I was staring at the tracks in front of me, watching the consistency of the snow change as we ascended, watching the rope in front of me slither mindlessly across the surface, hissing softly as it hunted for the summit, noticed with curiosity as the broken crust would reveal snow beneath



Andrea Weiss pausing to enjoy Baker's majesty



*We who wandered this land knew this was no "New World". The term was merely a conceit in the minds of those who had not known of it before...
-Louis L'Amour*



Andrzej Jarzabek, Chris Peck and Kerry Brundige (top) follow Jeremy Watkins and JP Shason in plunging down to the glacier.

strangely stained red, and turned my head whenever the wind would pick up and drive the abrasive snow into my cheek. Visibility was dropping. Nicole's cough was coming with greater frequency, and her stride was starting to look forced, just as mine was. I wasn't climbing so much as shuffling forward.

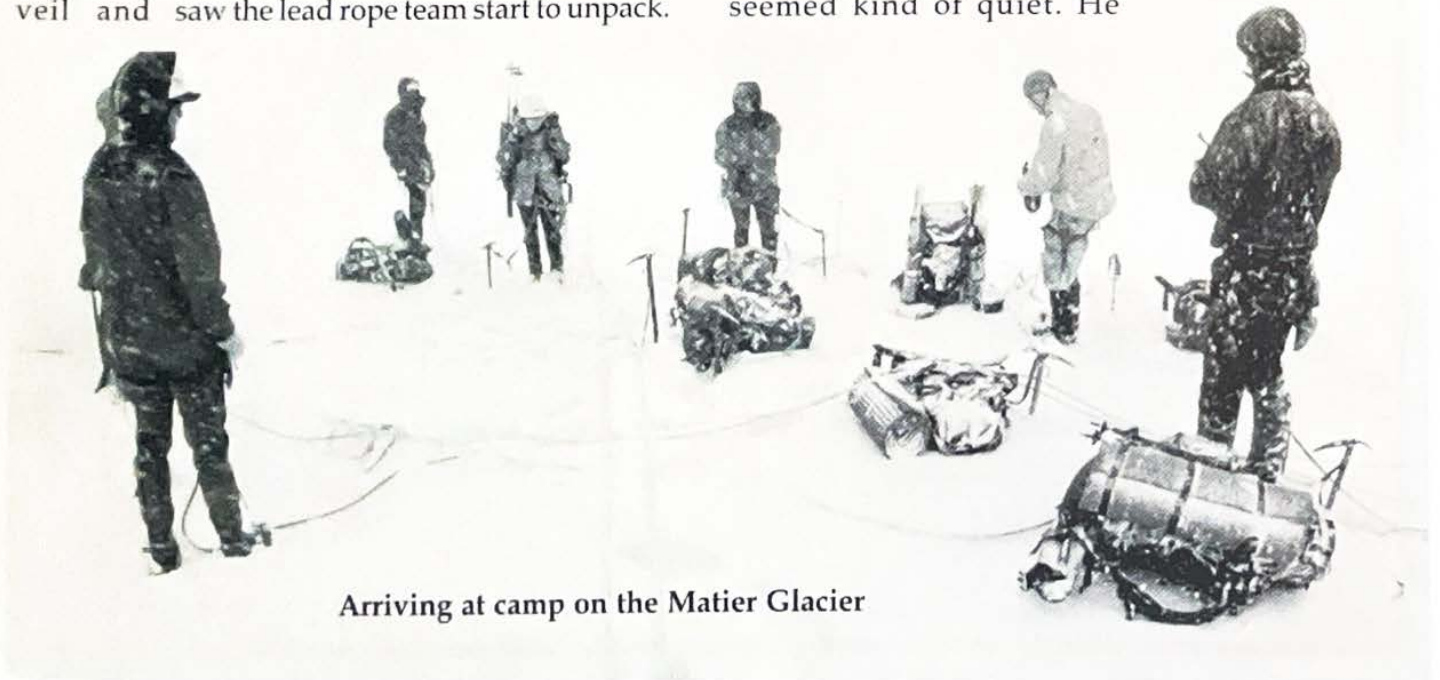
Suddenly I was aware of a sizzling sound. I looked over my right shoulder at the three-foot snow picket clasped to the side of my pack. If my hearing was correct, the picket was making the sound. I tried to imagine what caused the buzzing. Perhaps as the snowflakes hit the metal they somehow melted so quickly that they sizzled, or perhaps the sound was snow congealing as ice on the picket? My fading lucidity failed to deduce the answer. I plodded on with the mysterious whisper in my ear. I soon learned the truth of the sizzle's meaning.

The radios were crackling intermittently, but my batteries were suffering from the cold, and I could barely make out what was being said (note to self - use lithium batteries next time). Nicole shouted back to us that we were going over a last rise then into a depression where we would stop. The rise turned out to be further than I had hoped. Mel finally had to stop and eat something. Mark, who had been sprinting up the mountain at a pace nothing short of superhuman, was finally looking ready to stop. I looked ahead through the white veil and saw the lead rope team start to unpack.

We took a collective deep breath and trudged up to join them. This was it. Base camp.

Miles was probing the snow, so I broke out my probe and helped. Slipping the pole-sections together, I locked them in place and began systematically impaling the glacier's snowy crust. It felt deep and solid. Suddenly a little zap tingled my fingers. Hmm, perhaps I had a sliver or something in my glove. I probed again. *Zap!* "Hey!" I exclaimed, leaving the probe free-standing in the snow. I don't think anyone really believed that my probe was shocking me. In a moment of calm wind, I could hear it buzzing softly as it dared me to take it in hand again. So that's why my snow picket had been buzzing earlier - God's finger was hovering over the "smite with lightning" button. I steeled myself and tried once more, with some success, but after a minute or so I was hit again, and with increased intensity. I actually saw the arc flash between my probe and my hand, and involuntarily flung the probe away from myself. I had the distinct feeling that I was seconds from being lit up like a Christmas tree, and hurriedly collapsed the pole.

Soon enough Miles had wanded off the camp and Andrzej tromped off to dig our latrine. Thanks Andrej! Everyone started digging platforms for their tents. As always, each had his or her own ideas on Arctic Architecture. Once Mark and I had our platform dug, we set up the tent. Mark seemed kind of quiet. He



Arriving at camp on the Matier Glacier

crawled into the tent and warmed up in his sleeping bag. I don't have enough experience to know what was wrong, but guessed that he had just pushed too hard. I remembered a similar experience after pushing too hard on Windy Joe in Manning Park - I was a basket case of nausea, and had to recover as my partner set up camp. I figured Mark knew his body and how to take care of it, so I just got to work.

Armed with my shovel and that juvenile facet of my personality that has always loved to build stuff, I started to dig. The camp was full of huffing and puffing as we all built snow walls of varying height and stoutness. After I slid the last block in place, I got the stove going for dinner. Now the truth is, freeze-dried meals at sea-level qualify as little more than gastrointestinal defilement, but at 2300m my Zucchini Lasagna was succulent beyond words, and was eagerly shoveled into my fleshy furnace.

As the evening wore on, the sky started to clear. All our hearts were full with hope for the morning.

As the sun was drawn into the mountains across the valley, it peeked from behind a band of cloud and flooded our glacier with a brilliant golden light. I scurried for my camera, hearts were lifted, and everyone marveled at the sudden beauty of our brilliant new panorama. Clouds played along Matier's breast, and Miles pointed out the route. I asked if he was kidding. He looked at me, and raised an eyebrow that said he didn't kid about route selection. The face he pointed out looked truly vertical. I know this is just illusion, but it was an alarming sight. Once I caught my breath I started thinking about it - we could do that. We have the skills, if not the experience. I was getting excited.

Once the sun was lost in the far mountains, everyone vanished into their tents, and I headed for the loo. It was after 10pm, but there was still enough light to navigate without headlamp. I wish I had taken my camera with me for that particular moment. Cloud as obscure as suggestion hugged the glacier, but the faint horizon was still able to



bear its gift; a brooding and impenetrable layer of cloud blending smoothly into a wide smudge of whisper-faint orange, which reclined lazily upon the mountains to the west. I stood on the snow and stared for a long moment, caught between the chill of the evening and the simple yet captivatingly sparse palette before me. What mastery of expression to be able to say so much with so little. I felt utterly privileged to be the sole witness.

Regretfully casting my eyes back to the path, I shuffled down to the pit and found that with my limited palette of saffron, I was ill-equipped to match nature's artistic genius.

When I turned to walk back up to the tents, the thickening soup in which we were camped had consumed the smudge of light, and I was now immersed in near darkness. Squinting into the fog, I moved carefully back up to my tent. Crawling in beside Mark, he appeared dead to the world. Good, I thought; rest up partner, and lets tackle that beast in the morning.

As much as I needed to have slept well, my slumber was marred by the sure feeling that the

alarm was about to go off, and I didn't want to miss it. When I finally did doze off it was only a heartbeat later when Paul was up and about, waking the camp. Paul, you are hardcore, and I'm in complete awe of your limitless energy, but if you wake me at 3:57 again, when we were specifically given the opportunity to rest until 4, I'll...I'll...well whatever I do it would seriously alarm young kittens and houseplants. You've been warned.

I opened the tent flaps to a most disappointing sight - 20m of visibility. Slipping on my camp booties (which, by the way, are positively orgasmic when compared to tromping about in icy boots first thing in the morning) I emerged from my warm cocoon into the morning's chill. A gentle wind stirred the air, but nothing could be seen beyond the boundary of our camp. Well, surely it would lift soon, I thought, then lit our stove and boiled water for breakfast. Everyone was shuffling about, eating and gearing up for the climb. I kept squinting into the morning, looking for some improvement. There was none. We all had harnesses on, were well-fed and nearly good to



The group learns about running belays

go. I won't speak for anyone else, as I'm not sure who felt what, but I at least had some reservations about heading into a whiteout. I felt comfortable crossing the glacier to the headwall, but not comfortable ascending in that weather. Miles explained our options, and as a group we decided to wait an hour and see what happened. The conditions were worsening. That same abrasive snow which had been falling on Saturday drove us into our shelters. About an hour and a half later Miles made the call – we were going down.

Camp was torn down and our packs readied. We roped up and headed back down the mountain. One notable moment came while we descended back down the nose of the glacier. Audrey slipped on a section of ice and just before completing her self-arrest, was stopped by Andrzej. Hey, we really did learn something! Kudos to Audrey and Andrzej for keeping clear heads. Upon removing crampons, we had a quick bite to eat, then Paul showed his usual bravado and was the first of many lemmings to launch himself down a frightfully steep chute. Sadly I missed the show, but was told that he did a bit of a rag-doll near the bottom. Paul, I salute you!

The rest of the ride down was just an exercise in pain tolerance and good conversation. Some of those in plastic boots were suffering a tad. I haven't tried them yet, but after years of mashing my feet into tiny rock shoes, I'm thinking I've traumatized my size 13s enough, thank you very much. At one point Mel turned to me and asked for a tissue. Blood was gushing from her nose. Immediately Nicole, Mel and I were fantasizing about smearing the blood all over her face and calling Miles (using feigned intermittent radio calls) to hurry back and rescue her. We opted to let him off the hook, and instead made some effort to staunch the bleeding. Mel delicately dabbed at her nose with some tissue. I suggested that she might wish to simply jam some up her nose. This was met with a dubious glare, but in no time I had her back on her way looking for all the world like a battle-wounded pachyderm; one brilliant white tusk jutting from her bloody right nostril. *Good heavens*, did I just dream up a metaphor that made some reference to Mel embodying anything even *remotely* elephant-like? A pox upon me! Forgive me Mel! You're the picture

of Mountain Cuteness! The pinnacle of Glacial Adorability! Let me try that part again...

I suggested that she might wish to jam some up her nose. This was met with a dubious glare, but in no time I had her back on her way, a delicate sprig of tissue barely discernable in her flawless right nostril. (**sheepish smile*...forgive me?*). In what felt like just moments later, we were all back at the cars, boots gingerly slipped from tender feet, gear loaded, and on our way back to Squamish for dinner and good conversation.



Kerry Brundige masters the
Texas Prusik

And so it ends, or if you'll indulge a bit of whimsy, so it begins. Yes, it would have been nice to end this tale with the bagging of a class four summit. What a brilliant reward that would have been for such an exceptional group of people! The truth is though, a substantial percentage of alpine sojourns end with the summit untouched- that is a reality of mountaineering. Still, as Miles pointed out, we can still glean much valuable "beta" for future attempts. Also, knowing the guarantee of success every time you shouldered a pack, would that not somehow dilute the elation experienced when you did summit? How much more satisfying to plant your axe on a mountain, knowing that in addition to the standard kit of equipment and skill, you were able to claim tenacity as a factor in summiting! I will acknowledge now that this pearl of wisdom may be a bitter pill to swallow if my next Matier summit bid is foiled...

I recently mentioned to one of the team that it has been a long time since I've met so many good souls in so short a time. There wasn't one person we had to "endure" in the whole course (with the possible exception of myself, but lacking objectivity, I'll choose to assume that all of you loved me like a favourite brother).

Some final, yet important thoughts now. This course was run by four people whose utterly unselfish gift of their time is a debt not repayable. Miles, Nicole, Doug, and Nick, I know I speak for all of us when I say how much we all appreciate your time, and the knowledge you have passed on to us. I hope that by seeing each of us success-

fully use the knowledge you have shared, you will somehow be repaid in a small way for your efforts.

I hope this tale brings back some good memories to all the participants, and also encourages participation in BCMC courses. I can assure anyone considering them that the quality of knowledge, equipment, trip locations, instructors and participants far exceeded my expectations.

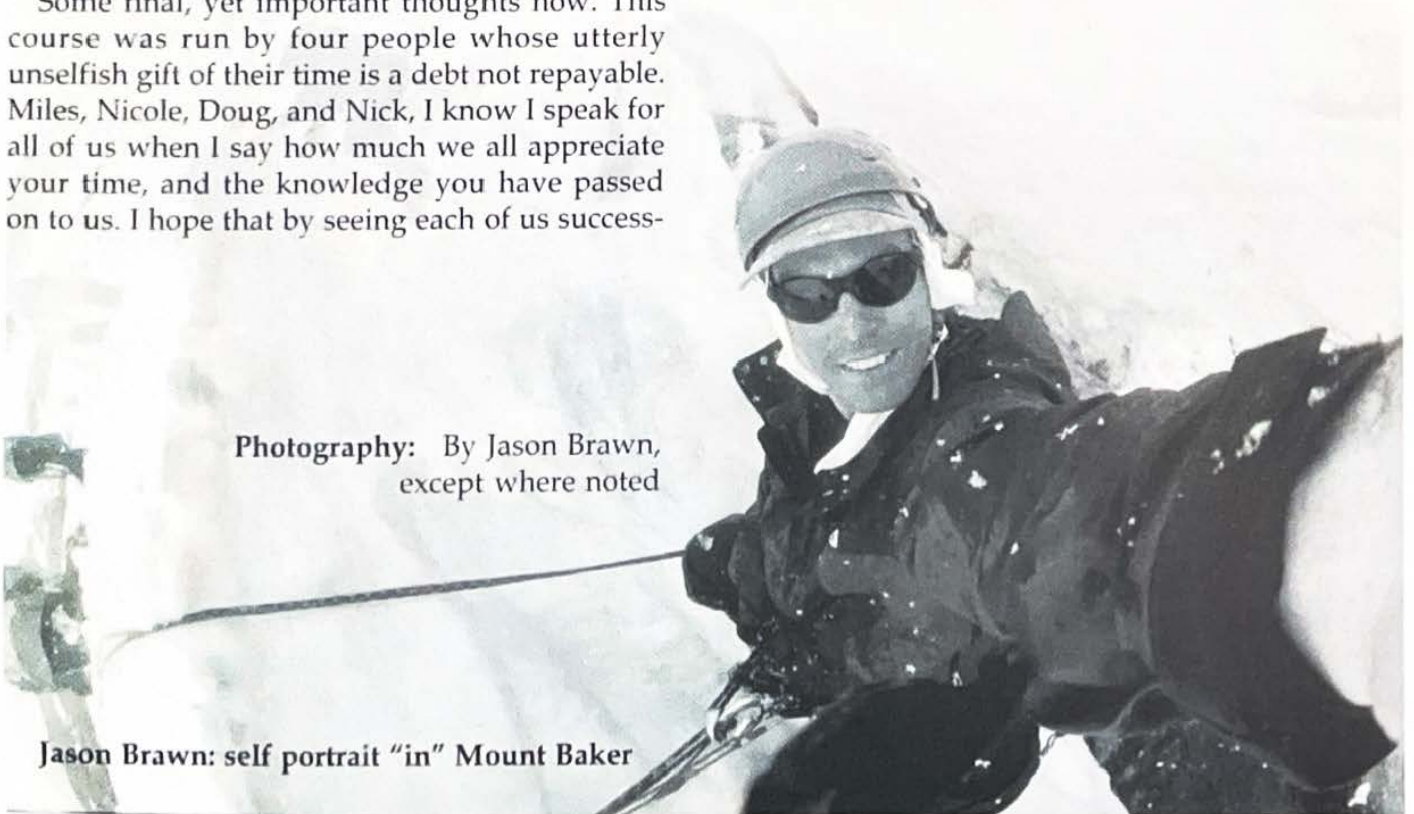
In closing, I will humbly suggest that we need to remember this: only by soaking up all the knowledge and skill available, and sharing it with the same unselfishness and enthusiasm that was shown by Miles, Nicole, Doug and Nick, will the BCMC continue to grow. Again, I tip my hat to the four of you, and to the participants in the course; it was honestly a privilege to have met each of you.

Course Participants: Kerry Brundige, Mark Binstead, Marilyn Krickhan, Melanie Bitner, Jeremy Watkins, Andrzej Jarzabek, Steve Tate, Jan-Paul (JP) Shason, Andrea Weiss, Chris Peck, Paul Morton, Audrey Roburn, Jason Brawn.

Course Instructors: Miles Quesnel, Doug Hulme, Nicole Hoskin, Nick Ranicar.

Photography: By Jason Brawn,
except where noted

Jason Brawn: self portrait "in" Mount Baker



MOUNTAINEERING

1. TRIPS OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY

Mount Kilimanjaro

by Kirsten Hall

An interesting and amazing adventure - interesting because of the group I was responsible for, amazing because of everything else! It was the annual Downside Up Mt. Kilimanjaro Climb for Charity and since I was working for them, I had the opportunity to go as the trip leader.

Unfortunately, the majority of the people I was traveling with turned out to be the sort that I never would have chosen to go with, had I had any say in the matter. The group consisted of 3 "New Russians", a breed of very rich, extremely selfish, obnoxiously rude people; one incredibly incompetent and condescending 53 year old American doctor who was going through a midlife crises (having to prove his youthfulness by constantly smoking and bragging about the amount of beer he could chug); his 24 year old girlfriend (also Russian, and a bit of a spoiled princess who did her nails every night); 2 very Russian men who were nice but were incessantly trying to force me to drink gin, vodka, whiskey, whatever, with them; 2 lovely Swedes, and a spunky girl from Kazakstahn who kept me from strangling some of the others on a daily basis.

So with this unlikely gang of travelers, we arrived in Tanzania on October 9 with blue skies, warm sun and friendly smiles from everyone. Our first 6 days were spent on safari, which turned out to be much more exciting than I had ever imagined. We went to three national parks - Lake Manyara, the Serengetti, and Ngorongoro Crater - seeing an abundance of wildlife - lions, cheetahs, elephants, hippopotami, giraffes, zebras, hyenas, antelope, crocodiles, rhinoceri, flamingos, gnus (or wildebeests) and one leopard. In each of the parks we stayed in really nice hotels and were very well fed! I guess the plan was to get us well rested and fattened up before the real purpose of our trip - the Mt. Kili climb!

The climb was, overall, a great success. Eight out of the 10 who attempted it made it to Uhuru

Peak (5895m), one to Gillman's Point (5685m) and one to Kibo hut (4700m). Other than the last day, it was a very easy walk starting in the warm, humid rainforest, progressing through different vegetation layers (heather and then alpine desert) to reach the wintry conditions of Kibo Hut. We did the slow (or poley-poley in Swahili) version of the Marangu trail: 5 days up, 1.5 days down. This meant that we had an extra day at 3700m to help with acclimatization and thereby increase the success rate.



Horombo huts on Kilimanjaro. Photo - K. Hall

The last day, on the other hand, was really hard. We were woken up at 11 pm (not that anyone was really sleeping at 4700m anyway) and were on our way by 12. I don't remember very much about this time as I really went into automatic pilot, putting one foot in front of the other and looking only at the person's feet in front of me. About an hour into this climb, though, we had a spectacular moonrise which I will always remember. It was exactly a half moon and it came through the clouds starting as a blood red colour, changing quickly to orange and then fading to a creamy white. After this point, we no longer needed our headlamps as the moonlight was bright enough.

After about 4 hours, we were all really feeling the altitude, having to take frequent short rests. Our head guide, Kamili, seemed to sense that our energy was starting to fade. He turned away from the mountain, opened his arms to the sky, and began to sing. It was in Swahili but we knew it was an incredibly spiritual song, sung from his



Saddle on the trail to Kilimanjaro.

Photo - K. Hall

soul to help us. I could almost feel the energy flowing from his voice into my muscles, which then had the strength to take me the rest of the way to Gillman's Point.

Many people only make it as far as Gillman's and I totally understand why. By this point, you are spent. You've just climbed the steepest part, the air is really starting to get thin and the thought of 2 more hours of walking only seems masochistic. But Kamili was very smart. We got there when it was still dark. We were told we could sit there and watch the sunrise or keep moving and try for the peak. There was unanimous agreement (the one and only time on the trip that that happened!) to push on simply because it was too cold to sit and wait for the sunrise!

The last part was the hardest for me. When it was dark, you couldn't see how slow you were really going but with the sun coming up I was well aware of the lack of progress being made towards our destination! Many people have asked me which was harder of the two high altitude peaks I have now done: Kili or Mt. Elbrus (5642m). Kili was only made easier because we took a wonder-drug called Diamox, that decreased the symptoms of altitude (headaches and nausea). I had a better idea of what to expect at altitude, and I never doubted on Kili that I could make it. But I

can honestly say that physically, I was just as drained at the top on both mountains. When I finally saw Uhuru peak, I burst into tears of joy and relief that the end was in sight.

Back in Moscow, the grey, rainy weather, the black and grey winter clothing, and the grumpy expressions on everyone's faces seemed even more accentuated compared with the blue skies, colourful sarongs and friendly smiles of the people of Tanzania. But, we raised about \$25,000 from the event which went towards the costs of running our center for children with Down's Syndrome. So, all in all, it was a successful and fantastic adventure for a wonderful cause!

A British Columbian Nomad in Bolivia climbing Huayna Potosi,

6-8 August, 2000

by Mark Sanctuary

Aaah the life of an aimless rootless wanderer, free from cares and responsibility...

I had been traveling solo around Latin America for several months and in Cusco, Peru, I hooked up with two absolutely priceless Germans; Christian and Torsten, and a beautiful headstrong Austrian from Vienna, Sarah, on whom I still have a crush. Together we traveled across the altiplano, along the shores of Lago Titicaca (3800m), through rugged pueblitos populated by leather skinned Andeans, and across the border into Bolivia, to arrive in Alto La Paz at 4000m above sea level. We balked at the intense poverty and filth of this capital city which, to the sensitive eyes of a gringo, looked like a scene from some post apocalyptic B-movie - the twisted maze of streets, the unfinished buildings, the starving dogs, the piles of rotting garbage in the streets, the traffic, and so on.

Two impressive mountains tower above downtown La Paz, Illimani at 6462m, and Huayna Potosi at 6088m, shining above the chaotic city like guardian angels, praise the great lord! There was something about Huayna Potosi that screamed "climb me". Maybe it was the fact that it is logistically and technically easier to climb than Illimani, or maybe it was the aesthetic shape of the summit... Regardless, on the 5th of August 2000, as the four of us sat around the dinner table eating

our calditos, I suggested my bold plan "Hey, let's climb Huayna Potosi tomorrow???" None of them had ever really done any climbing to speak of and were – understandably – a little uneasy about running up a 6000m peak with some aimless rootless un-cultured bohemian from the west coast of Canada. But I managed to convince them that I was a hard man, and that I climbed 6000m peaks on a routine basis, and that I could guide them up and down again without so much as a second thought. Mind you, I was a little concerned about teaming up with a group of soft euros who are more accustomed to cruising cobblestone streets and sipping espressos in chic cafes than climbing up a 6000m peak. But those fears aside, we all got along really well. Unfortunately Torsten's caldito had more than just chicken and potatoes in it because his gastro-intestinal plumbing seemed to have developed a mind of its own, as he put it so well... "shit happens in life". Our expedition would sorely miss his wit.

The next morning, Christian, Sarah and I left poor Torsten on the toilet – where he had spent most of the night – and gathered some route information from one of the several climbing agencies in La Paz. The tourist route is a straightforward snow walk with a short class III ridge section for the last 50 vertical metres or so. We had no climbing hardware with us. Our gear was limited to hiking and walking clothes and jackets, but we found all the gear we needed that morning at one of the many guiding outfits in La Paz. We rented decent plastic boots, ice axes, a rope, a tent, etc. We figured that the trip would require 2 days and 2 nights

Our climb started at the Zongo Valley pass, at 4700m and about 30 km outside the city, easily reached by two-wheel drive. Unfortunately, there is no regular bus service, but we managed to engage a taxi to take the three of us for \$35US. We arrived at the pass late in the afternoon on the 6th of August, and pitched our tent a kilometer or so from the road. Most parties climb the standard route of Potosi in 2 days and one night. However, as officer in charge, I decided that we should spend an extra night by the road in order to help us acclimatize. We had only barely adjusted to living at 4000m, and I was concerned about pushing up to 6000m in two short days. We sat in the middle

of the Cordillera Real, watching the stars come out as evening turned to night. To the east, thunderheads rose up over the Amazon jungle several kilometers below us, and silent bolts of lightning illuminated the glaciated peaks that surrounded us.

The weather was absolutely fantastic with crystal clear visibility and intense blue skies and it was under these conditions that we made our way up a lateral moraine to the toe of the glacier. We walked steadily through the thinning air, making our way slowly to high camp at 5500m. The thin air took its toll; Sarah and I could hardly think that afternoon, and it was all we could do to lie motionless on our foam pads and watch the sun set over the yellow altiplano. Christian, on the other hand, was fine until we left at 3:30 am the next morning to start the climb; he was pretty slow for the first hour out of camp but was fine after that.

We plodded towards the summit under a moonless sky packed with an unbelievable array of stars. The familiar constellations of the northern hemisphere were hidden below the horizon. Instead I found myself tracing the shapes of the Southern Cross and Scorpio. I was constantly distracted by shooting stars, which time and time again, streaked across the sky. We were so cold. As we moved higher and as time ticked by, a dull, steel grey light began to grow to the east, and though this feeble light did nothing to warm us, it did allow us to see more of our surroundings.

I will never ever forget this dawn. How could I forget something so surreal and magnificent? The colour of the eastern glow changed from steel grey to pale yellow, and then to orange and then to red. We crested the airy knifelike ridge 50m below the summit and marveled at the snow around us that had taken on a red hue under the dawn sky. We stopped to rest and waited for the sun to come over the horizon. To the east, over five vertical kilometers below us, and partially hidden under a thin layer of cloud lay the Bolivian Amazon, stretching off to infinity. To the west lay the arid yellow of the altiplano and the perfect blue of lago Titicaca. To the north stretched the rugged snow capped peaks of the Cordillera Real dividing the steamy jungle from the flat expanse of the yellow and violet altiplano. To the south lay the city of La Paz and the triple peaks of Illimani. All this was

bathed in the changing light of dawn.

We arrived on the summit at just past 8am after climbing the short class III ridge, and were back at our high camp by 10:30 am, exhausted with mild headaches and empty stomachs, but nonetheless exhilarated and ready for more adventure in South America.

Cerro San Luis, Bolivia

May 2002

by Jeff Rabinovitch

I started mountaineering as a way to challenge myself, and to find wilderness and the spirit of nature. In the last few years I've come to regard mountains also as a way to enjoy the company of people and share laughter with good friends. This trip however was different.

THE PEOPLE - I met fellow climbers, Mark and Jill from Seattle, online and met them briefly in Montreal before we each embarked on our trips to South America. We would catch up later in La Paz. We met in their hotel on May 1 and it did not take me long to realize that the trip we were about to go on was theirs. Although I am an experienced climber they seemed to be making all the decisions. A day later we were joined by a newbie 'climber' named Josh whom they had met online. I felt like I was crowding them so I backed off and let them make all the decisions. So much for teamwork.

With the help of a mountain-tourguide-agency-owner, whom Mark met last time he was in La Paz, we got kerosene for our stoves, good topo maps and directions to the bus we would be taking. Over dinner the night before we left they decided which gear we would take and what time we would leave. They were to pick me up at my hotel at 6 am so we could get to the bus stop well in time for the 7 am bus. Believe it or not, in these matters I am prompt. I spent the evening packing and sorting food and then after 3 hours sleep began my wait for them to arrive.

GETTING TO OUR BASE CAMP - at 6:30am Mark came in the first taxi (we needed 2 for the 4 of us and our gear) and got to the upper edge of La Paz (el Alto) just in time where we waited for the bus, which, in typical fashion, arrived at 7:30. We helped load and strap our gear (as well as lots

of other people's stuff) to the roof of the bus, and took our seats for the 5 hour bus ride to Rodeo. After a beautiful crossing on the altiplano the bus left the paved road and started down the wide smooth gravel road to Caxata, a small Aymaran town where we stopped for almuerzos - the fixed plate lunch with hidden meat soup and surprise meat, rice and potatoes. We were all stuffed as we clambered on board the bus for the final hour to Rodeo, a supposedly abandoned mining town where a couple of families apparently still lived and where we hoped to find a muleteer to help ferry our loads to base camp at 4700 m.

Unbeknownst to us the road to Rodeo was, shall we say, scary. It is not heavily traveled, although there is one bus per day and various other trucks loaded with people and goods. They say that no bus has ever gone off the road but I was sure we would be the first. Our top-heavy bus leaned and lurched along the winding road, with a rock wall on one side and a cliff on the other. Now you know that I climb rock, ice and mountains, drive like a maniac, jaywalk and eat street food. But let me tell you, I was terrified. Some people on the bus, who use the bus frequently and who knew what to expect, were crying silently. The driver of course was smiling like a madman.

Finally, with many sighs of relief, we got to Rodeo (4300m) and the bus continued on to Viloco in northern Quimsa Cruz on the really bad part of the road, for another 3 hours! All of us elected to walk back to Caxata. We would not get back on that bus!

In Rodeo we found a small town with about 35 adobe houses, many abandoned houses from the old mine, and one small store owned by a woman with a spike for a front tooth and a chicken that camped on her shoulder, and Rramillo who owned 3 burros. Suddenly we were surrounded by lots of cute and somewhat shy Aymaran kids, all with sun burnt cheeks. While we played with the kids, Rramillo strapped our loads onto the burros and soon we were off for our hike up the valley.

I think it was when we passed the first big lake after the old mine site at about 4700 m that the lack of sleep, the bus ride and the elevation caught up to me and I began to drag my ass. I had no headache but I felt lethargic, experienced

some loss of balance and had a hard time keeping my eyes open. These were typical early Mountain Sickness symptoms. I was eager for food, liquid and sleep. Finally we got to our camp beside some more abandoned roofless stone buildings, about an hour from the glacier, above a small lake. Llama poo and signs of old mining activity were all around us, so we filtered, boiled, and chlorinated everything we drank, although this will not remove heavy metals, but Rramillo eased our fears by explaining that no refining took place there. It made sense but when I'm 120 and get cancer, we'll know he was mistaken.

In camp I quickly erected my bivvy, got my stove going and felt suddenly better. Josh, however, who cruised up the hill, was a disaster. He crawled into his tent and could not move, so we fed him lots of hot tea. He pushed back the nausea and did his best to sleep. Jill was fine as was Mark. However, this was short lived.

The next day was our rest day, but at noon they again decided to go for a hike to scout the approaches to the first two mountains we were going to climb. The steep scree slope to mtn. no. 2 was almost too much for me, again. Somehow I got to the pass where I recovered. Lower down we made our way to the glacier for the next morning's approach to Cerro San Luis - our first climb. This time I fell short and had a lie down among the rocks. I was now clearly the weakest, as Josh had recovered already.

That night in camp I ate and drank as much as I could in anticipation of our climb to 5640m. Again decisions were made without consulting me regarding time of departure (4:30 am) and rope team arrangements. I was in the middle. Mark would lead and Josh, at the other end, could swap leads by reversing the rope. This was frustrating because I had been on more glaciers than the other 3 combined and could work my way through a crevasse field well. I could also set a good pace from the front. Well, that was how it would be.

ATTEMPT NUMERO UNO - I was ready at 4:35 am but had to wait until 5:15 for the others. We got about 100m past camp when it was obvious that Mark was seriously ill and could not continue. I felt pretty good, but Jill and Josh would not go on without him. Back to camp where Mark ingested steroids and Diamox and used my

asthma inhaler to try and cure his lung infections himself.

FOR REAL NOW - Finally 2 days later (!) Mark was ready. They already cancelled the 3rd mountain, so this would be our first of two. The evening before we climbed I casually asked Mark if he would be making all the decisions on the climb. He seemed surprised. I was even more surprised when he offered me the lead on the rope the next morning. I took it. I was feeling perfect. This was race day!

While I was first to the glacier, Mark dragged his ass up, but we all made the approach in good time. We roped up and made our way up the glacier. From my studies of the glacier through binoculars the previous day, I found few problems so it was an easy slog on soft ankle deep snow up the 20° grade. I gave Mark the lead for the next steep bit, but then when Josh declined the lead, I took over for the now collapsing Mark. I set a pace all could follow and in no time we were up the final 45° section and were on the rock ridge.

We were in for a surprise. We thought the rock ridge rose gently to the final snow ridge to the summit. But our view from camp to the final snow ridge had been blocked by a mountain in front of San Luis. The rock ridge ran for a little way but ended at what seemed at first to be a steep, chossy wall. Mark, Jill, and I walked along the ridge to the rock wall, and although it did seem to be a mess of broken rock, it was not too steep or very long.

Upon our return to the glacier top to reassess our options, we found Josh crying. This young and braggy climber had recently experienced his first accident (his girlfriend ended up in hospital for a couple of days after a bad fall when they were climbing together) and could not go on. Mark and Jill elected to stay with him. Cotopaxi slipped out of my fingers and I was not going to be let down on this beauty of a mountain.

Now, mountaineering is not about taking risks; it is about managing risks. The risks of course are falling on rock, being hit by falling rock, elevation and its physical effects on our minds and bodies and weather. I felt stronger than ever, the weather was picture perfect, (although afternoon storms were likely) and the rock wall looked to be easily manageable without a rope. I promised the

4 in attempts to gather the vitally important 'unwritten' beta but with little success. The 14km hike around the east side of the dome, over the north shoulder and then back down the talus to the northwest face seemed to be quite the deterrent for the Yosemite climber who is used to a ten minute approach. Or perhaps it was the **death** slab approach, as it was nicknamed, straight up from Curry village where the fixed lines were said to be 'nearly' worn through. Either way we could only get snippets of beta, which were little more than quotes from guide books. Taking the positive from this, we determined there couldn't possibly be any crowds on the route.

The weather, always a concern but even more so on this isolated climb, seemed to be holding with extended forecasts from the Rangers calling for clear, warm skies. The moon was also looking to cooperate as it was rapidly waxing and showering the valley with a gray light a couple of hours after sunset. We studied the sun and moon's play on the wall. Until 3 p.m. we'd be climbing in the shade then within minutes the entire face lit up brilliantly with afternoon rays as the sun worked its way west across the sky. Then by 5:30 pm. the face took on an increasingly orange glow until around 6:30 when, in just minutes, the entire face fell into shade leaving mere minutes of workable light before nightfall. Darkness would then take hold until the moon could work it's way around the dome in a similar path as the sun, giving with it limited rays for those who may be in need. I joked with Karin that she - **the Dome** - had a rather ironic alarm clock. When the sunlight strikes your back you had better be making plans for sleep.

Three ropes, a full aid-rack, sleeping bags, food, stove, clothes, portable ledge, cameras, and of course the crap tube (white with black end caps and yellow webbing we aptly named it the **stinky caterpillar**). Thirty kg packed (and strapped) into each horribly uncomfortable haul bag, we hoisted them onto our backs and headed up the trail. There were two possible approaches; a 14km hike up the backside, around the north shoulder and then dropping to the base, or the death slab approach from the front, the latter having an old fraying fixed line that has to be juggled. We chose to live and do the hike.

Often our climbs have involved long approaches with heavy weight during the past summer alpine season. Pingora, for instance, was a 16 km approach, but this was a first - humping a loaded haul bag (or pig as they've been nicknamed) which literally is as uncomfortable as packing a pig. Exhaustion, hunger, and thirst weighed heavy during the plodding of the last km but finally the trail topped out at the northern shoulder of the Dome. Through the trees the sun could be seen setting behind the top of El Captain. After a power bar, splash of our precious water reserves and a five minute rest, I volunteered to descend the climber's trail down to the face of the wall in search of the promised water springs, said to emerge on either side of the start for the NE Face route. On my way down a British duo passed me in a hurry to set up camp at the base of the climb so they could make final preparations for a single day ascent.

The descent was a heck of a lot longer than I expected. Anxiety welled up and fear began to grow as I kept dropping past one false arete after another. My mind twisted with the thought; 'we're camping on the shoulder, maybe a third of the height of the wall yet I've been hiking down for almost half an hour - how big is this thing?' This question rattled around my skull several times when the answer was suddenly revealed upon rounding another corner - gargantuan! My mouth dropped as I stared at the wall starting with the base of the route some 30m below. Then, craning my neck backwards and looking up towards the orange glow of the sunset lit Visor on the summit, (a protrusion of rock sticking out about 6m from the lip of the cliff at the summit), it seemed like the end of the universe.

Several moments passed in digesting it's enormity, then I vowed not to look again lest I lose my nerve. Heading down I scoured the base for water and quickly concluded I would have had a better chance of finding a cactus to squeeze than flowing water. Two other climbers relaxing on a their portable ledge a hundred metres or so up on another route were coaching John (one of the Brit's), who was now some 120m below and still descending the slab approach trail. They had found a trickle of water only days before and were now hopelessly trying to shout directions to the fretting Brit. Considering the failing light, I abandoned my search

others that I would carefully assess the snow ridge before ascending it to the summit, racked my ice tool, a water bottle and crampons on my harness, pocketed a Snickers bar and was off.

The rock wall was only class 3 with a one very short class 4 section which, with rests to regain my breath, I easily climbed. The rock was surprisingly good. I found only a few loose holds which were easily avoided. Within an hour I was at the bottom of the snow ridge. From a distance it looked steep, but foreshortening is the curse of all climbers. It was exposed, but not more than 35°. I donned crampons and confidently worked my way up, taking frequent rests.

Ten minutes later I topped out on the ridge, stepped across to gentle slopes and within moments I was on the summit. My first 5000m peak! Clouds were starting to roll in and already obscured some distant views. I snapped a quick self-portrait with my camera, ran down the snow ridge, and worked my way down the rock wall. It now all felt so easy. At this point Mark and Jill decided to head up. Bad timing and bad technique. They elected to pitch out the whole wall and the easy class 2 ridge to the snow. By the time I returned to the top of the glacier, clouds covered the entire mountain and it began to snow. Soon Mark and Jill were enveloped in fog, but continued on, very slowly. I could not understand. They were walking into a storm and the rock scramble down would now be a slippery mess.

Josh and I waited in the storm. Three hours later Mark and Jill were back, having turned around only minutes from the summit, mainly because Mark could not walk 10 steps without collapsing. We gathered our gear and roped for the glacier descent in the snowstorm. Half an hour later we were off the mountain and walking back down the boulder gully, across fields and along the old mining road into camp.

It was obvious that this trip was over. Mark was sick and Josh was an emotional mess. Jill was just deadweight. Even though she was physically the strongest, she could not lead anything and would not go without Mark.

The next day, Rramillo, out muleteer (or is that burr-o-teer?) and camp guard, came the next morning to ferry our gear out.

So you think you're ready for a Big Wall?

by Brad Hansen

We did it – completing set goals that we had to make before saying we were ready. Me picking off a long 5.10c on-sight sport route in Owens River Gorge and Karin bagging a red point on an 11.b, bolstering our confidence. That, along with completing the classic 5.9 grade 4 on Pingora peak in Wyoming in smooth style, led us to believe we were up for the challenge of a Yosemite **Big Wall**. For months the idea of a multi-day mixed free and aid climb had been bantered around, and the chosen target was Half Dome's Regular Northwest route. Looking at the topo map of the climb, it was anything but regular – aid pitches, traverses, run-out face climbing, unprotectable chimney slots, and numerous pendulums, not to mention the 1550 vertical metres. Still, it was said to be a **good** starter wall.

Across Nevada we drove, planning and preparing; packing the new haul bags (we each had a 60 litre bag), drinking 2 litre bottles of pop and duct taping the bottles for water, unfolding and refolding our new double portable ledge. All this done according to John Long's "How to Climb Big Walls" book.

Nerves were running high when we drove into the valley once again – 'The Valley,' as it was called by the climbing community, just by sheer reputation if you said 'The Valley' all climbers knew you were talking of Yosemite! It was late September and late in the day as we turned the corner towards Curry Village when we were suddenly awe struck by a view of Half Dome's vertical wall, gently bathed in orange light of the fading day. Pulling the truck over on the side of the road we got out and stood side by side, silent as it loomed over us. Some time passed as we gawked at its towering, taunting, and intimidating cliff of the North West face, before Karin turned to me and was just barely able to croak "huh-huh, big". I had seen it many times before but this time it was daunting, this time we were going to climb it – or at least try!

Over the next couple of days we practised aid climbing and hauling of a light bag at some of the local crags, and we started to build confidence as things went well. In the evenings we cruised camp

4 in attempts to gather the vitally important 'unwritten' beta but with little success. The 14km hike around the east side of the dome, over the north shoulder and then back down the talus to the northwest face seemed to be quite the deterrent for the Yosemite climber who is used to a ten minute approach. Or perhaps it was the **death** slab approach, as it was nicknamed, straight up from Curry village where the fixed lines were said to be 'nearly' worn through. Either way we could only get snippets of beta, which were little more than quotes from guide books. Taking the positive from this, we determined there couldn't possibly be any crowds on the route.

The weather, always a concern but even more so on this isolated climb, seemed to be holding with extended forecasts from the Rangers calling for clear, warm skies. The moon was also looking to cooperate as it was rapidly waxing and showering the valley with a gray light a couple of hours after sunset. We studied the sun and moon's play on the wall. Until 3 p.m. we'd be climbing in the shade then within minutes the entire face lit up brilliantly with afternoon rays as the sun worked its way west across the sky. Then by 5:30 pm. the face took on an increasingly orange glow until around 6:30 when, in just minutes, the entire face fell into shade leaving mere minutes of workable light before nightfall. Darkness would then take hold until the moon could work it's way around the dome in a similar path as the sun, giving with it limited rays for those who may be in need. I joked with Karin that she - **the Dome** - had a rather ironic alarm clock. When the sunlight strikes your back you had better be making plans for sleep.

Three ropes, a full aid-rack, sleeping bags, food, stove, clothes, portable ledge, cameras, and of course the crap tube (white with black end caps and yellow webbing we aptly named it the **stinky caterpillar**). Thirty kg packed (and strapped) into each horribly uncomfortable haul bag, we hoisted them onto our backs and headed up the trail. There were two possible approaches; a 14km hike up the backside, around the north shoulder and then dropping to the base, or the death slab approach from the front, the latter having an old fraying fixed line that has to be jugged. We chose to live and do the hike.

Often our climbs have involved long approaches with heavy weight during the past summer alpine season. Pingora, for instance, was a 16 km approach, but this was a first - humping a loaded haul bag (or pig as they've been nicknamed) which literally is as uncomfortable as packing a pig. Exhaustion, hunger, and thirst weighed heavy during the plodding of the last km but finally the trail topped out at the northern shoulder of the Dome. Through the trees the sun could be seen setting behind the top of El Captain. After a power bar, splash of our precious water reserves and a five minute rest, I volunteered to descend the climber's trail down to the face of the wall in search of the promised water springs, said to emerge on either side of the start for the NE Face route. On my way down a British duo passed me in a hurry to set up camp at the base of the climb so they could make final preparations for a single day ascent.

The descent was a heck of a lot longer than I expected. Anxiety welled up and fear began to grow as I kept dropping past one false arete after another. My mind twisted with the thought; 'we're camping on the shoulder, maybe a third of the height of the wall yet I've been hiking down for almost half an hour - how big is this thing?' This question rattled around my skull several times when the answer was suddenly revealed upon rounding another corner - gargantuan! My mouth dropped as I stared at the wall starting with the base of the route some 30m below. Then, craning my neck backwards and looking up towards the orange glow of the sunset lit Visor on the summit, (a protrusion of rock sticking out about 6m from the lip of the cliff at the summit), it seemed like the end of the universe.

Several moments passed in digesting it's enormity, then I vowed not to look again lest I lose my nerve. Heading down I scoured the base for water and quickly concluded I would have had a better chance of finding a cactus to squeeze then flowing water. Two other climbers relaxing on a their portable ledge a hundred metres or so up on another route were coaching John (one of the Brit's), who was now some 120m below and still descending the slab approach trail. They had found a trickle of water only days before and were now hopelessly trying to shout directions to the fretting Brit. Considering the failing light, I abandoned my search

and headed up the long haul back to the shoulder; waterless and more thirsty, tired, and hungry then ever...John was still thrashing the bushes above the slab in near darkness without a headlamp or water.

Struggling into camp, I was delighted to find Karin had the portaledge set up, hanging from an old tree trunk and supper ready for a strike of a match. During dinner John appeared seemingly suffering from dehydration and begged us for information on how to find the water spring some 4km back down the trail. Plus, he was surprised to hear that all water must be treated for bacteria, which was common in the Sierras. After careful consideration we spared him what we could of our iodine tablets, enough for a meager four liters. I glanced at my watch, 9:36 pm, "poor sap", I said, "doesn't have a chance of making it back before midnight".

Morning brought the problem of water and the conclusion we would lose a day getting our gear and load of water down to the base of the route. Paper, scissors, rock sent me down to the base with gear and Karin back the other way to get water. As I neared to the base, I was astounded to see the British team still working on the first pitch nearly 2 hours after sunlight. I marveled at their confidence; starting late on a grade VI climb that neither had done before during the short days of late September - and they still thought they could finish in one day! Karin joined me and together we concluded there was no hurry, we had food, water, and our respective Tolkien books and took the rest of the day off.

Wary of rock and gear fall from the Brits, we chose to hang our ledge under an overhang for protection and crawled in shortly after nightfall for much-needed ZZZ's. No sooner had dreamy land begun to overtake me (Karin was long gone) when my sensitive hearing picked up a faint scratching noise. Sitting up and listening intensely there was no mistaking the sound of scratching on the haul bags. Quickly I clambered out of the ledge, slid on my shoes, and grabbed a headlamp. Trying to be quiet I stumbled in the dark and managed to bend over and pick up a couple of nice rocks on my way to a stealthy attack. 'Damned rodents aren't going to get our food like in the Tetons', I mumbled to myself.

The bags had been placed on a shelf about 6m up the start of the climb behind a corner some 9m south of our ledge. Around the corner I came and hit the switch on the light. Hearing a loud snort, I realized trouble as I watched a burly little black bear pull his head out from inside one of the haul bags. We stared at each other for a split second, less than 3m apart before he turned and began to run while I began to yell and released a barrage of one-pounders. Sparks streaked from the shots that hit the ground, but a couple of hollow thuds let me know that not all were in vain - then I ran out of ammo.

The bear had just reached some bushes and suddenly felt more secure with me only 6m behind. He stopped, turned with newfound courage, and charged. Caught off guard I paused for a split second and then spun to run. The little bugger snorted loudly behind me and I heard his feet scrapping at the rocks as he picked up speed. In three steps two things happened; first, I stumbled and put my hands on the ground to regain balance, second, I got mad! Many times I have had encounters with black bears but none had ever made me run or even scared, and as far as bears went this one was puny. Dragging my hand it quickly came across a beauty of a rock, like that of a baseball, and with a quick clench, I was re-armed and back on my feet. I caulked my arm and spun to face my pursuer. Head to head we squared off.

It was little fuzzy wuzzies turn to be confused and he stopped with a snort as my light shone directly into his eyes. Hesitation was his downfall, and with my arm already in motion I let my cannonball fly. But his hesitation was slight and by the time the rock had reached him he had already turned around and begun to flee to the bushes. The rock landed with a *crunch* on other rocks and spurred him on a little faster. A second later I was panning the light back and forth but there was nothing to find but brush. Relaxing, I checked the downed haul bag and discovered some power bars had been pilfered and there was a large hole in the underside of the lid. Dismayed, I studied the wall and noted Yosemite black bears could climb rock too, at least to a 5.6 level. For the next half hour I wrestled the bags higher and into 5.8 terrain. Satisfied I headed back to bed and

found Karin snoring happily, unaware of the evening's events.

The alarm went off, 5:15 am, but no one heard it and neither of us stirred until it was daylight, a late start and a potential disaster. Another loss to the clock was assessing the damage from Mr. Fuzzy Wuzzy. The lid to the haul bag was torn but nothing a wad of duct tape couldn't fix. Losing a power bar each we moaned. I could handle the resulting lean day ahead but the loss of the last pop-tart was almost too much – agony – a dagger twisting in one's spin.

Putting on our happy faces we turned a smile and got on with it. Karin lead the first pitch, smooth, she hit the anchors secured and got ready to haul our bags. I helped, a lot, until our 'train' was beyond my reach and she was on her own. It abruptly stopped.

"Oh my god," she yelled, "is it stuck?"

"Nope," I yelled back, "it just left my reach." During my entire jug up the rope I thought Mr. Fuzzy was up there with her at the anchor; judging by all the grunts and groans.

Momentary terror struck on my lead, as I screwed up the sequence, and had to take on a fixed nut. It shifted and nearly popped out, which would have sent me 6m past the belay. With a quick few moves I had a cam in and then sailed the rest of the pitch. Turning up on an easy left slanting ledge towards the anchors I was horrified to find that the haul line would have to be pulled over a sharp edge at a bad angle. Unable to find a way to gain a better angle I gave in to the saviour of the wall climber and man in general – duct tape. Ensuring a smooth edge over the lip I yelled down, "ready to haul," and upon reply began to heave. It hurt! I looked down to Yosemite village, 'bastards were having mocha's and cappuccino's for their mid morning break', I thought, and heaved.

The tension was rising as Karin reached the belay, as both of us felt the pressure: We had to get to the top of pitch six, or retreat and spend the next month agonizing over defeat, we started late and hauling was horribly slow. Yelling at each other wouldn't help; screaming at the rock only created an echo, which returned as mocking laughter. It was crunch time till the end of the day. Focusing on our individual tasks, groaning

through each haul of the bags and solemn re-racking of the gear, we only spoke the necessary. And tried desperately to stay out of each other's way – any irritant could set off an emotional landslide.

Completing the haul I once again slumped in my harness and welcomed the relaxing rest of belaying Karin's lead. Pitch 3 had begun and I guessed 1 pm. In a half slumber I played out the rope some 8m when there was a clunk from a shifting rock, a 'yelp', from above, and then a series of whimpers. She yelled down that a huge rock was loose and she had nearly pulled it down on my head. Then she groaned that she did not know which way to go. The strain was beginning to cause cracks in our emotional armour. I thought carefully, opened my mouth to speak but then changed my mind. We each have our demons and they thrive on a big wall but neither can help slay the others. I kept silent and shifted my belay underneath a slight overhang. It was uncomfortable but something I was going to get used to.

It seemed a small turning point for all went smoothly and I was at her belay and getting ready for pitch 4. A thin layer of merriment had managed to coat the tension. 'Perhaps, allowed to grow, we may actually start to have fun', I thought.

Pitch four started with a bolt ladder to gain a crack created by a huge flake. 'Not too hard,' I thought, and started aiding up. Because of the switch to free climbing after the bolt ladder, I was doing the ladder in my rock shoes. Biting my lip I held back the 'ow's' as my toes got scrunched against the wall with every step into the entrées. At bolt number two I wanted to stop and put on my other shoes but then a realization struck: we were in sunlight and my mental alarm clock started ringing, reminding me that our assessment in the parking lot was that the sun's rays meant a waning day. I pressed on – there was a tear in the thin layer of merriment.

Switching to free climbing, I made a quick and scary move to gain the crack and headed up 5.9 territory, or at least so it said in the topo map of the climb. Soon the vertical crack changed from sharp edged positive jams to a rounded, sloping, off-width, and flaring flake. Sweat exploded from my brow as I tenuously balanced on a crappy hand and foot jam. Fumbling desperately, I reached for

a cam, jammed it in the crack and then held on. 'To hell with style, only the clock matters,' I mumbled while pulling up on it. Next, I had to mantle a steep ramp, committing to the moves before I could tell what holds will be revealed. I studied, whimpered, and then moved up. Crap - only a thin finger jam, feet smeared against the wall below the shelf - crux move, 'roll onto the shelf fool.' I went to move but was held back. Screaming I yelled for more rope, thinking Karin had me too tight on the belay.

"You've got slack," she yelled back leaving an unsaid question hanging in the air - what's the problem? My fingertips burned. I looked down between my legs, one entrée was dangling freely, with the other caught on my last cam. I kicked vainly, no use!

There is a moment in climbing beyond all others, heightening one's senses to ridiculous levels and plugging you with adrenaline beyond any other circumstance normally encountered - to know absolutely that you are going to fall! The day already past was shorter than that moment. Staring at my fingers I watched in horror as my strength ebbed and they began to unfold. With a high pitched squeak I yelled, "falling," and then closed my eyes when my fingers popped.

In a microsecond it was over and I was left dangling from a rope some 6m below where I had been. I hung for a moment to recompose, 'there is no quitting, and I'll still have to make that move,' I thought to myself. Pulling up on the rope I had Karin take me tight on my last piece of gear and then took another moment for mental prep. Sucking in air I made sure the entrées were out of the way and then moved up.

Getting a little farther I went into the crux roll and was suddenly stopped. A more difficult position, I couldn't hold and squeaked once again that I was falling, and then pitched off the edge. Whimpering and feeling beat up, I tried to figure what had gone wrong when Karin yelled up, "you have to tell me when you're climbing, I still had you on take." Hanging by the rope I banged my head on the wall once again, a stupid mistake at a bad time. Sniffing, I clambered my way past my nemesis, whilst letting Karin know that I was now climbing, and continued sobbing and grunting my way to the belay.

The sun beat on us as Karin got ready to go, but it was not welcome. Even in those few moments the hue had changed to an orange glow echoing its inevitable setting. We spoke little, just a few jokes about the idiocy of my falls, but nothing of the approaching hour. Then she was off for pitch five.

I remember little of her climb. Only getting the flashlight out of the haul bag and changing the batteries (dead from the night of water searching), while feeding the rope. I wanted to get both lights but did not know where Karin's was. Ready, twitching, I waited for the 'secure' signal.

By the time I reached her belay it was over. Night had come down on us like a cruel wraith and blinded us to our surroundings. There was only a faint western glow of the retreating sun and a smattering of starlight: the moon, half-full, would not come around Half Dome's shoulder for another 2 hours. Doubt and despair raced through our veins as I secured. We were on the fence; one side meant failure and retreat, the other to push on into the unknown but certainty of hardships. The next few moments are private and can only be imagined by adventurers caught on the edge and having to make a hard decision...we rallied our strengths and I headed upward in search of a suitable bivi site.

It was odd, climbing by headlamp, as the world was focused only on the immediate. There was no exposure, no cliff, and no plunge apparent. Lack of daylight certainly hindered finding the holds but at the same time it lent itself to the liquidity of movement. It was just as well that the pitch was lead in the dark as the 5.7 section, which was over 30m long, only had five pieces of gear, not all of which were bombers.

We were given a break with the top of the pitch being a decent bivi site. I set an anchor and began the haul.

The gear was in chaos, the ropes were a tangled mess and it was getting late but the ledge was up and our bellies were full. Unwinding with re-counts of the day's events we watched the moon come out from behind the wall. It was bedtime, leaving one last task - the delicate climb into the ledge. Almost instantly sleep washed in like a wave, barely giving me time to set the alarm - 5:30 am; on, two more buttons and I flicked back to the

current time - 12:10 am - a fact I would conceal for 2 days.

As soon as I set the watch in a side pouch it began ringing. Cursing, I pressed on the light to see what had gone wrong. It read 5:31 am. Nothing was wrong but the 5 hours and 20 minutes we had for sleeping were now history. I whimpered.

Karin purred in restful sleep and I would have joined her had not my bowels groaned and sent a cramp through the depths of my body. 'No choice now,' I thought and gingerly worked my way out of the ledge. A double paper bag system, toilet paper and the stinky caterpillar in hand, I headed for the potty end of the rocky ledge to.... Task complete, it was bombs away into the tube, a task to be repeated many times.

Although dark when I first got up, the sky was now beginning to turn blue. We were late again but on top of pitch 6 - we did not surrender! It seemed to take forever to get the bags packed, ropes flaked, and gear racked, but alas I was off. Up a wide ramp of easy terrain to a fixed pin. Looking up I saw old webbing around a tree so I continued further along the ramp. While climbing this section, I heard voices other than Karin's and at the base of what looked a difficult crack, I halted. To my amazement another climber was already at the fixed pin. Sluggish with astonishment, I placed a cam in the crack and waited only seconds for him to reach my spot. A Spanish team on a speed ascent - simile climbing the route. In broken English he asked to pass and if I could, pull up his rope to relieve his rope drag. Welcoming the rest at any rate, I waved him on. While resting and watching, he eloquently jammed up the crack placing no pro (he tried to place a cam but it was the wrong size; mumbling he said he only gave one try, then he moved on instead of grabbing a larger size) and disappeared over the top.

Then I started up. Two ropes dragging (the lead line and the haul line) and a double rack of gear to boot, I clambered up 2m and then started to go dizzy from the strain. Desperate, I slammed in a cam and clenched the karabiner. The rest was a difficult struggle and I was happy to rest on a shelf while the second of the Spanish duo passed.

The demon was awake and it set to flight, circling my conscious thought. "You're pathetic"

it said, "weak, slow; you're in over your head, you should be hiking."

"Damn him," I said aloud and turned back to the remaining crack with new found vigor.

The demon tried to attack once again as a second Spanish team passed my belay while I was hauling. But my guard was up to his tactic and I smote him: I did not care!

Karin had felt the wind from the same demon and we spoke briefly of him. Condemning speed ascensionists who have done the route several times and are well beyond the level of a beginner's big wall, we gained a slight charge. This was our wall, meant for the novice to gain experience. 'Does the master fly fisherman cast his line into the fishing pond on Old Macdonald's farm? Who has the greater right to be there, him or the kids? Lighthearted, Karin leapt off for pitch 8.

A stroke of luck, I had gone off route and gained an extra 9m and that, combined with a brilliant line of climbing, allowed Karin to link pitches 8 and 9 together as one pitch. Suddenly, and for the first time, we were on schedule. Also during this pitch a loud but laughable pair climbed past us with 'dreams' of being speed ascensionists. Together at side by side belays, we laughed and joked, and everyone knowing full well that they were to spend a cold night on 'Big Sandy' ledges atop pitch 17.

As the mood lightened it became apparent the fun was to begin. Pitch 10, the Robbins Traverse; climb a bolt ladder, lower out 12m from three old manky pins at the top, and then run back and forth across the wall until a shelf off to the right can be reached. Heart pounding, I ran across the wall, twice, and then struck the ledge with an outstretched right hand. The strain nearly popped a vein, as gravity on the rope wanted to pull me back off the ledge. Grunting, I pulled myself in and got a toe on the ledge - safe!

The next pitch was frightening. Starting, with no fall protection available, a section of 5.9 traverse and then further up a large block, which flexed from the strain of a cam. I looked down and noted we were directly above the start of the route. 'Death block waiting to happen,' I thought, fearfully. I struggled to remove the cam. Grimacing, I now had to pull another 5.9 move

with the last piece well below and off to one side. It's not like pulling a 5.9 move at the crags where you might have a few draws hanging from your harness; this was Yosemite and you always took a minimum of a double rack of 14kg plus. Many minutes later, after studying the holds and formulating a sequence, I started out on a delicate ballet across the rock.

We were now on the ledge at 11, our - **needed to make it** - bivi site just as the sun burned hot on my shoulders. Maybe 3:30 pm; I yelled out a victory howl of 'secure'. It had been a traversing pitch so Karin would have to lower out the haul bags so that they wouldn't swing wildly across the face of the wall when released from her station. A pain in the ass but necessary as many a haul bag has been ripped open after swinging wildly across the face of a cliff, spilling its contents and the fate of the climb on scree far below. The mountain seemed to come alive to our presence - perhaps it had been busy making other climbers miserable, in any case it reserved some wrath for us. We were ignorant to lowering out procedures and it cost us.

A single non-locking karabiner had been attached to the top of the bags. This placement allowed the bags to roll across the cliff face causing the lower out rope to wrap around them. A bad situation then had to get a little worse. Not only did we now have several coils of rope wrapped around the bags; the damn things had the audacity to self-clip themselves into the non-locking biner we had used. We were screwed. The bags were now 15m below me and 25m out to Karin's right. Try as she might there was no way that she could pull the heavy bags back to her station. There they hung on the sheer vertical wall, hopelessly snarled.

Tension rising like a steam over a hot tub on a cold winter's night, we fought to keep control as we yelled possible solutions back and forth. In the end there was only one. I was going to have to untie from the lead line and jumar down the haul line in order to untangle the mess.

Over an hour past and the sun no longer burned hot but had fallen into the warm glow of early evening. I, however, was still hot, mostly sweat from fear, but on my way back up the haul line, a far safer process than jumaring down. Reaching the belay I took a moment to breathe before re-starting the haul. When Karin reached



The Robbins Traverse. From here one has to pendulum 14 m to the right.

Photo - K. Pocock

the belay we half cried, half laughed at what had happened but we had to press on. To be sure we'd reach 17 the next day before nightfall, we needed to fix the next pitch and hopefully two. Karin headed off, up a wide 5.6 chimney, across a shelf and then a thin 5.11c (aid for our level) crack. The top finished with a pendulum to another chimney and a 6m traverse to the belay; I heard her hum and haw for a long time and then the call - "down climbing". She returned with dire news. It was

impossible to fix the next pitch, as juggling the line would cause it to fray against a sharp edge below the anchor. There was more than an hour's light left but it was not enough to reach any other ledge as the next three pitches were a series of chimneys.

We sat on the shelf at pitch 11 pondering. It was a bunch of rocks stuffed behind a huge flake arranged in some resemblance of flat. Our feet dangled over the edge. The topo said 'narrow bivi for two,' "pity the poor bastards who end up sleeping on this without a portable ledge," I quipped

It was a rare moment for big wall climbers or climbers on any long climb. The sun was still in the sky but we could not move upwards. Once this realization struck, we took full advantage. In a fashion to be proud of we began a seven-course meal; dried fruit to start followed by Teriyaki turkey jerky, then the main entrée - chicken soup and Triscuits. Next, iced oatmeal cookies, a single 100 Grand chocolate bar (cheapest in the store), a Pop-tart, and finally with our backs against the wall and the last rays of sun, we finished with Worthiers and Jolly Ranchers. Feeling cheery we climbed into the porta-ledge for a full night's sleep. Sometime later I remember rolling over and staring up at the stars with my ears catching the sound of two faint voices high above. Something about cold, I chuckled, pulled up my sleeping bag around my head and then passed back into the dream world.

Morning came along with new energy and a zest for the climb but we made a quick mistake that would dog us for hours. We decided to split the next pitch in half as it was a thin crack, Karin's specialty, followed by a series of chimneys, something I've been improving upon. The result was for the next three pitches we had to haul the bags up through the chimneys instead of being able to get them outside and on the smooth wall. This caused the second to have to help the bags during hauling while the person juggled up the lead line - ultra slow.

Squirming up the second pitch I placed a cam in the crack and noted that for Karin to be able to jug, I would have to extend the sling. One double length was not enough so I attached another and then let it go. Three metres below me the karabiner came tight with the protection. I looked up; there were no pro placements visible. I was like a worm

at dawn, petrified to be caught by a bird; I inched my way up terrified of slipping. Slithering up my feet slowly, I wormed my way up another 6m before the next gear placement which then had to be extended by 2m, only to have to pull the whole maneuver one more time. Finally, going past a small shelf, the climbing got easier and I continued up. Spying another shelf I took to be the belay, I continued up only to be stopped by a taught haul line just 1m short. Faintly in the distance I could hear Karin yelling, "no more rope."

In the spring I had cut a meter of bad rope off the end: who would need every meter? It was the most awkward belay from within a slot. The haul proved to be one of the worst as well, with Karin having to jug alongside the bags and manhandle them over various edges. Constantly getting beat-up, squished, and tangled in the bags as I hauled, she fought her way up.

Reaching the belay she gave me crap, rightfully so as I had linked pitch 13 and 14 plus had done half of pitch 15. Salvaging some good mood we joked about the crappy belay before she set off.

Karin completed 15 and soon we were at the top staring up at 16. It was an easy ramp. Gradually increasing in grade until the upper third which went at 5.9. Karin wanted to lead and I was happy to let her go for it. The topo said 5.9 (loose): just what she hates! Flakes sounded hollow and several blocks flexed with weight. Some unseen drive pushed her forward and in only minutes she was on top...fastest pitch of the climb!

The pitch had traversed so I had to lower out the haul bag. Smart now, I hooked a locking karabiner onto the bottom of the second bag and clipped through the lower out rope (excess lead line). She started hauling and I started lowering. Instantly I saw my mistake. I had not tied the lead line to the belay and once the bags were out I would have to let go of the line - 350m off the ground and I with no rope!

For a moment I was in shock - what to do? There I looked up to the first piece of gear Karin had placed. It was 9m up and the lead rope ran through its sling. It was easy climbing and my nerve returned. I laughed aloud at my stupidity and then headed up - free solo!

A new day meant renewed hope, and we were enjoying the realm of The Last. We had eaten our

last dinner, slept our last sleep, and now we were having our last breakfast and would soon be folding up the ledge for the last time. The light grew and so did our strength.

I was to start the day, a long aid pitch in which two pitches could be linked if one was careful of rope drag; then my scare. Some 30m up the crack ended with a 6 m pendulum to a small ledge and the start of a flake. I tried several different angles but was still stumped. Each time I could gain the ledge but could not reach the flake. It was a committing move, dive for the flake in a desperate stab or miss and fall – 9m with a pendulum into a sharp dihedral.

I was shaken. The balance of the whole climb now rested on my ability to make this move. For several minutes I hung and stared, blindly, for I watched the images of defeat running through my conscious thought – rappelling down, hiking out, and driving out of the valley – defeated.

After a deep breath I warned Karin and then went for it. As I expected, the farther I moved onto the ledge the worse the holds became. My foot was slipping and my hand was greasing off. If I fell I would not be able to muster the nerve to try again, even if I wasn't hurt. Fear tormented me as I desperately yelled for more slack. Then I pushed up and to the right with all reserves of strength. It was done. I was falling, but the last push had brought the flake to within arms reach. I shot my right hand up like a rocket. Already the hold was falling away but the mountain yielded and my fingers sunk behind the flake. Dangling by one arm I had never felt more secure and I closed my eyes and breathed for a moment before clambering up.

We were making steady progress, slow but steady. However, the straightforward crack system would be short lived with Karin gaining the belay for pitch 20 – the infamous 'Thank God Ledge.' Avoidance of thought, this was how we tackled the knowledge of this pitch's existence. It was shown clearly in the topo and we had read the description of this ledge from the first ascensionists.

"The ledge appeared just as it was needed for the crack system we had been following had just ended. The ledge is absolutely horizontal and is less than a foot wide and after 50 feet it ends at a chimney. As you step onto the ledge the exposure of the climb takes hold as you

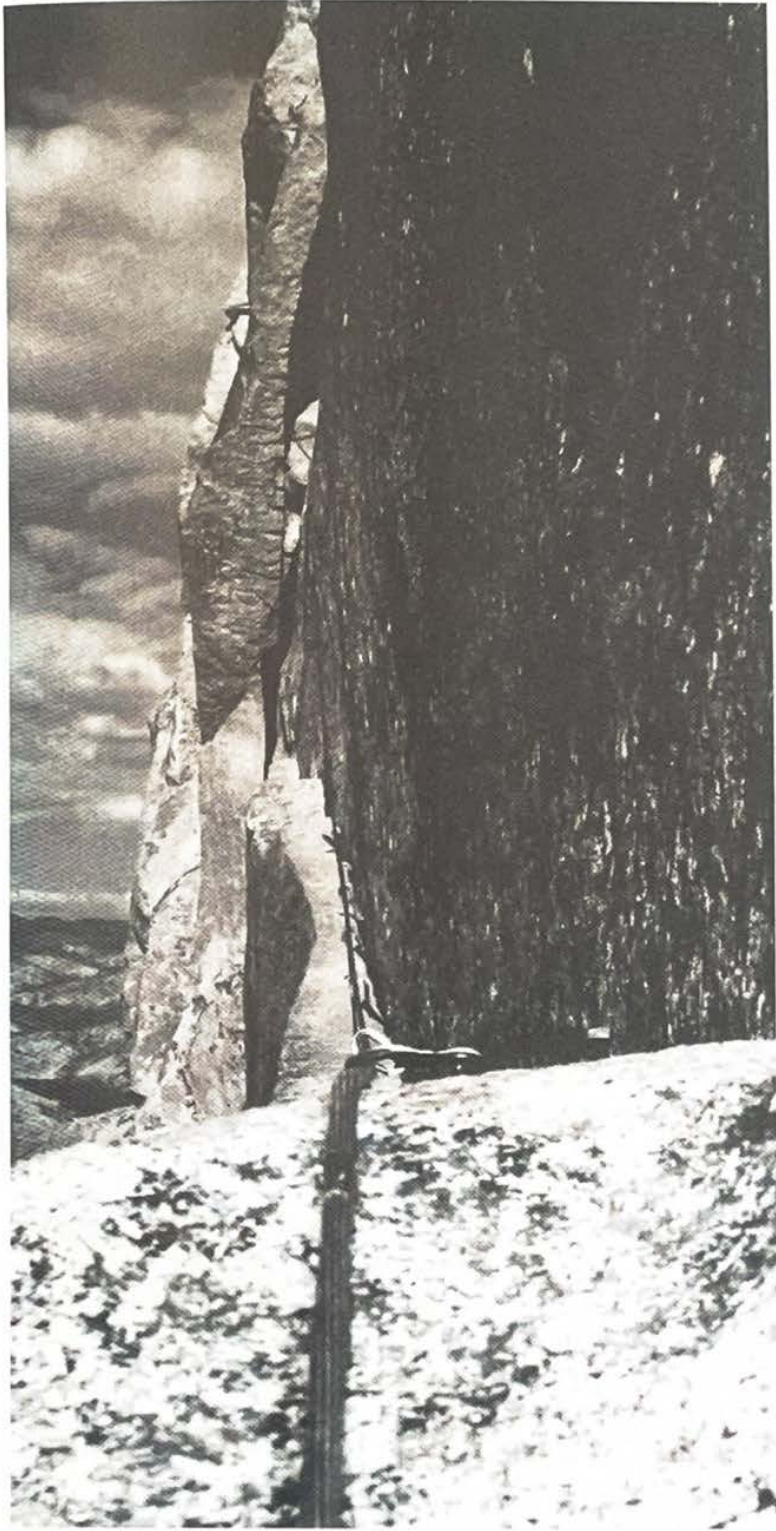
can stare straight down to the cliff's base some 1600 feet below."

As I leaned over Karin's belay I was elated to find our worst fear was unfounded: the ledge had a large crack running its length and would take gear all the way. The only problem was I'd have to be on my hands and knees to place it. Feeling somewhat like a two-year-old – I should be walking but crawling is so much easier – I etched out onto the ledge with uncertain steps only to cave into the temptation of dropping to my knees in three small steps. Nine metres out my body reached the spot, which my eyes had been avoiding. The ledge began to narrow to 20cm – crawling was no longer an option! I halted in the crouched position, allowing only my eyes to wander. It was a mistake as it usually is with climbing; this time it almost cost me my lunch. My gaze fixed on the tiny treetops at the base of the climb below. So vertical was the drop that a marble wouldn't hit anything but those treetops!

Sometimes the mind does silly things and math started grinding in my head: 450 meters, a fall's acceleration is about 9.8 meters per second to a maximum speed of... 'Splat idiot!' My brain suddenly shouted within the walls of my skull, 'that's all it means, nothing but red gush!' Breaking the trance I placed a cam, jammed my hands in the crack behind the flake, closed my eyes and rolled off the ledge. 'Quickly', I bade myself as I shuffled my hands one at a time twisting and locking off before moving the other hand while sliding my feet in unison along the smooth granite wall. A mixture of pride, relief, and triumph rushed through me as I rolled back onto the ledge after traversing the 5m of narrows, and allowed myself a moment to breath heavily.

Riding the high I charged at the chimney above with only a second's glance, and began slithering up its innards. Quickly fears of old came back to haunt me; I was now 6m up, holds were minimal, body jams were slippery, and there was zip for protection. With a verbal burst to the world in general, "#@\$%", I tensed my muscles and squirmed onwards. Five minutes later, noticeably trembling, I did a silent victory dance on a tiny belay ledge.

As Karin climbed up I had a few moments to relax and enjoy the view of El Captain, Washington



Thank God ledge. Photo - K. Pocock

Column and several of the domes of Yosemite National Park. Solitude and peace lulled me into a state of semi-consciousness; either that or the ridiculously low calorie intake to output ratio over the past few days. Then, clear as day, I heard,

"you're almost there, just a couple of hundred more feet," coming from somewhere behind and above me. Snapping rudely awake, I turned and looked up. There above me sat a young man, dangling his running shoed feet over the edge of the diving board, a long but narrow rock that juts out from the summit of Half Dome over the shear west face. Remembering there is a 'hiking' trail up the back of the Dome, I acknowledged his existence with some forgotten comment and then pulled out the topo - at the top of the route description it didn't say summit; rather it said "Tourists!"

The last three pitches became simple work as we began to tire and get itchy to be off the climb but soon enough we were on the last big shelf, our haul bags were up, and all that lay before us was a 15m easy scramble to the top. We gleamed at each other in a state of disbelief: we had done it!

On top, together, we marveled at the view and shared a magical moment of extreme accomplishment. Then packing up the gear we headed for the "cables".

In the early 1900's, the Dome had been thought to be unclimbable from all aspects. Not until 1912 when a determined fellow drilled 100 plus holes up a 45 degree slab (the least steepest line) and strung up a cable, was a person to finally stand on top. Now we stood at the start of this maintained cable handrail. At first it was easy but gradually the angle of descent increased until we had to grip the handrails with all our might while taking cautious baby steps. Things got worse yet. As the angle increased the rock became smoother, slick like greased glass, a byproduct of more than eighty years of tourist bums sliding down the same tract. Even Vibram soles were no match for the slick rock and we fought madly to keep our feet from slipping out from under us. Twice my feet slid out and I came crashing down on the haul bag, clutching the cables for dear life!

After what seemed hours, we finally reached the end of the cables and found a rock to rest against. Looking back was a fairy-tale sight. The cables twinkled in the failing light as they gently swayed, pushed by a slight breeze. They outlined a narrow highway leading literally to nowhere!

Once we had hiked down we ripped off the bags and dumped them on the ground. Unfortu-

nately half the skin on my hips went with the waist belt; blood and plasma oozed. We hugged, kissed, drank litres of chocolate milk, chewed bacon and tomato sandwiches, and slept. The next day (late the next day) we crawled out of our trailer and looked up just in time to see the first flash of lightning in the cloud-laden sky with Half Dome quickly disappearing in a blanket of snow. Winter was about to roll into Yosemite Valley, and we were about ready to roll out.

Our conclusion to big wall climbing is that it is truly another separate sport; something like ski touring is compared to downhill resort skiing. The introduction of added complications such as auling, new gear and the multi-day aspect, require added learning above and beyond the knowledge gained from single day rock routes. Learn and practice before you say **"I think I'm ready for a BIG WALL"**.

Mount San Jacinto
12 November, 2001
by Pamela Jenkins

On a recent November holiday in California, we first spent time in Joshua Tree National Park, where my friend Julian was able to join some real rock climbers and make a few more summits of the amazing rock jumbles of quartz monzonite.

One day, Julian went to a gym in Palm Springs, after driving me to the base of an aerial tramway up Mt. San Jacinto. I rode the expensive, glitzy, rotating Swiss gondola above spectacular vertical rock spires to a platform at 2596 m, arriving just before noon. Hikers who plan to venture beyond the area near the platform are required to register at a warden station below this mini-summit. I spoke with a warden who told me I was simply too late to attempt the summit, but that I had time to get to an excellent viewpoint at the Welland Divide. So off I went on that trail through open light forest, with little underbrush, just soil, dust and stones lining the route in less obvious parts.

It became a bit steeper below the Welland Divide. A young man was returning from the ridge, because he felt that was all he had time for. He must have spoken to the same warden. I stopped,

took a photo of my pack at the 9700 foot (2960 m) sign, and decided to go just a little bit higher to get different views, as I grabbed a bite to eat. I ate my apple as I hiked up further through the next grove of trees. The trail had been cleared between the low brush, which was something like our white rhododendrons.

I kept thinking I must turn around. My 2 pm turn-around time was extended to 2:30 pm. I met some hikers returning from the summit, who said I was too late. I got one hiker to take my picture and I took some looking back across the valley to the rock pinnacle supporting the gondola, but I continued on. More groups of trees and rocks and then I came to an old stone cabin. I went to



On the trail. Photo - P. Jenkins



The old stone cabin. Photo - P. Jenkins

look at this historic place from 1933 and peered inside. I looked at the rocks above and thought I'd just peek at them. To the right might have been possible before the accident, but I decided against that route. Somehow I stumbled on an easier way through the rocks, and then I heard voices above, so up I scrambled.

A man appeared followed cautiously by a lady picking her way through the rocks. I was so near the summit that it was too late to give up. The kind gentleman scrambled back up to take pictures of me at the summit and then hurried back to help the lady. It was just past 3 pm.



Pam on the summit of Mt. San Jacinto.

Photo - P. Jenkins collection

I timidly made my way back down to the rock cabin. Once on the easier trail I jog-walked as fast as I could go, which is not very fast. The other two were a long way ahead. I eventually caught up with them, thanked them and carried on. Julian was to be back at the gondola base at 4:30 pm. It was already 4 pm at the Welland Divide. The light was fading and moreso in the forest. Near a meadow a young man carrying a backpack was walking towards me. He assured me I was on the correct trail. Further down some young girls coming up the trail in the almost dark seemed to think it would be another hour walk. I plodded on, thinking how naughty I had been to keep extending my turnaround time.

Finally I saw a light in the trees. It was the locked up warden cabin. Even with a headlight I could not find my return sign out paper, so I filled out a complete one and stuck that in the box, then hurried up to the gondola. I just squeezed onto one about to leave and was entranced by the lights

of Palm Springs below. The P.A. system suddenly asked if a Pamela Jenkins was on the ride. I confessed. I was safely down by 6 pm., after a great day.

Thank you to the following people for making this trip possible and enjoyable: Julian Lash, Jade Jackson, Mike Gladych and others whose names I don't have, Gene Brentzel and Maria, Bob Nelson, and my husband Dennis Sims.

Shishapangma, Tibet

April - May, 2001

by Monika Bittel

Shishapangma is the only 8000m peak entirely within Tibet. I had my first glimpse of the mountain as our Toyota 4x4 bumped and jolted its way across the Tibetan Plateau. It is a beautiful peak made more dramatic by the flatness of the Plateau, which varied in colour from pale yellow, ochre, brown to dirty gray. Occasional swaths of lime green were the only telling signs that spring had arrived. The soaring snow clad peaks on the fringes of the Plateau contrasted sharply with the blue sky.

Starting our journey from Kathmandu, Nepal on April 21, we followed the Friendship Highway to Kodari, the last town before the Nepal/Tibet border. We walked across the Friendship Bridge to the Chinese border checkpoint, crossing the border mid-span. On the Tibetan side an old truck took us up the pot-holed road to the outskirts of Zangmu (elevation 2300m), the first Tibetan town across the border. We joined the throng of travelers waiting to be processed by the Chinese customs officials. Most of the travelers were heading overland to Lhasa. Our climbing expedition consisted of six climbers: Andrew and Shelley McKinlay from Saskatchewan, Fred Ziel and Erik Eriksson from California, and Grant McCormack and myself from B.C. Another Californian, Kevin Duck, tagged along with our group but intended to climb on his own.

Zangmu has really nothing to commend itself, other than it's setting: a spectacular steep-sided gorge, topped with snow-covered peaks. The river at the bottom of the gorge flooded over, under and

around massive boulders, the size of small houses. Zangmu was dissected by a single road, which switchbacks its way up the steep wall of the gorge. A jumble of buildings, some new, some old, most architecturally ugly, and many dilapidated and poorly maintained, lined both sides of the road. There was garbage everywhere. The town dump was a spectacular canyon, cut into the steep gorge wall by a cascading waterfall. Overloaded Tata trucks and smaller vehicles negotiated the narrow street, the hairpin curves, the pedestrians, and each other. The population appeared to be predominantly Chinese. Truck drivers waited their turn to pass through customs. Hundreds of civilian Chinese operated stores, restaurants, and businesses that service the Chinese government sector. Facial features and native dress easily identified the Tibetans.

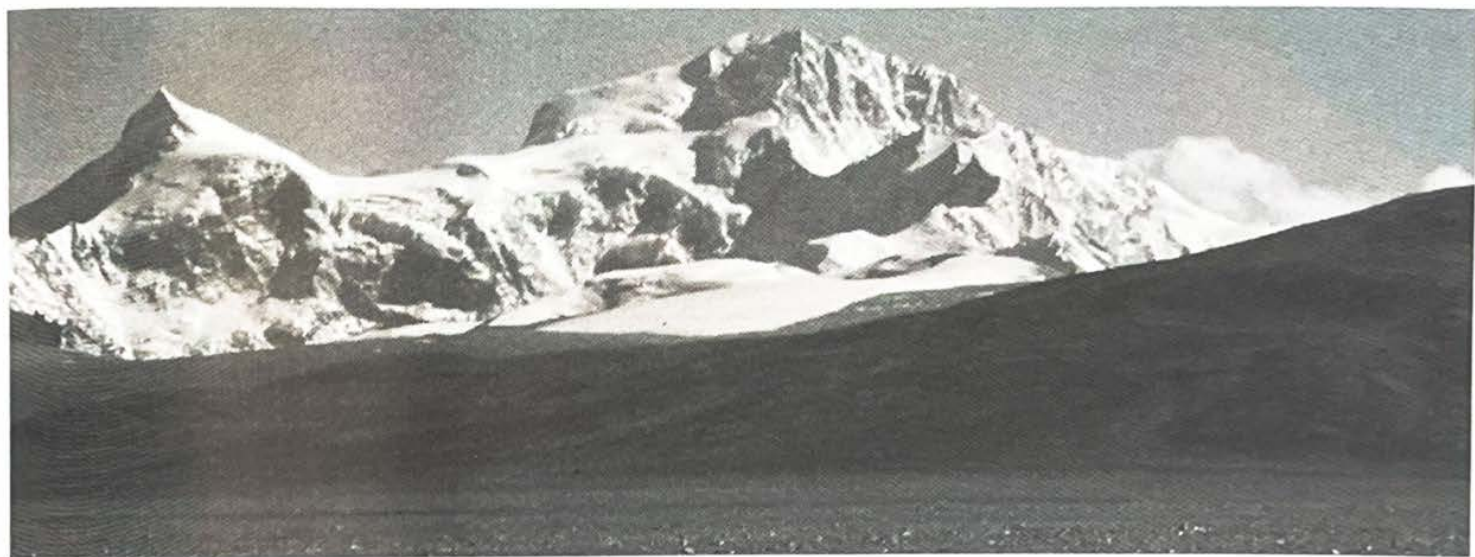
The day after our arrival in Zangmu, we piled into two 4x4 vehicles and started our journey to Nyalam, approximately 30km from the border. Our departure from Zangmu was delayed by the morning rush of traffic eager to cross the border. Tata trucks, buses, small cars, 4x4s, and motorcycles clogged the narrow street. Building materials stored on the side of the road and randomly parked vehicles, forced two-way traffic to funnel through one-lane gaps. Our driver was anxious to leave town. He raced up the road into a hairpin turn, only to come to an abrupt stop nose to nose with a Tata truck. Within seconds, both vehicles had a line of vehicles behind them, stopping further progress. Our driver attempted to manoeuvre his vehicle to the side of the road. Police, civilians and truck drivers all shouted directions to our driver. Finally he was able to extricate our vehicle and we continued our journey to Nyalam.

The Highway wound its way up the gorge. Being early spring, vegetation was still sparse. Bamboo was mixed with short evergreen trees and the occasional blooming rhododendrons and azaleas. This was in sharp contrast to our return to Kathmandu at the end of May, when the gorge was lush green with bamboo, blooming azaleas, spring flowers, cascading waterfalls and the air was filled with song birds and butterflies. The gorge ended abruptly as the Friendship Highway crested the lip of a hanging valley. From here the Highway followed the valley bottom for a distance

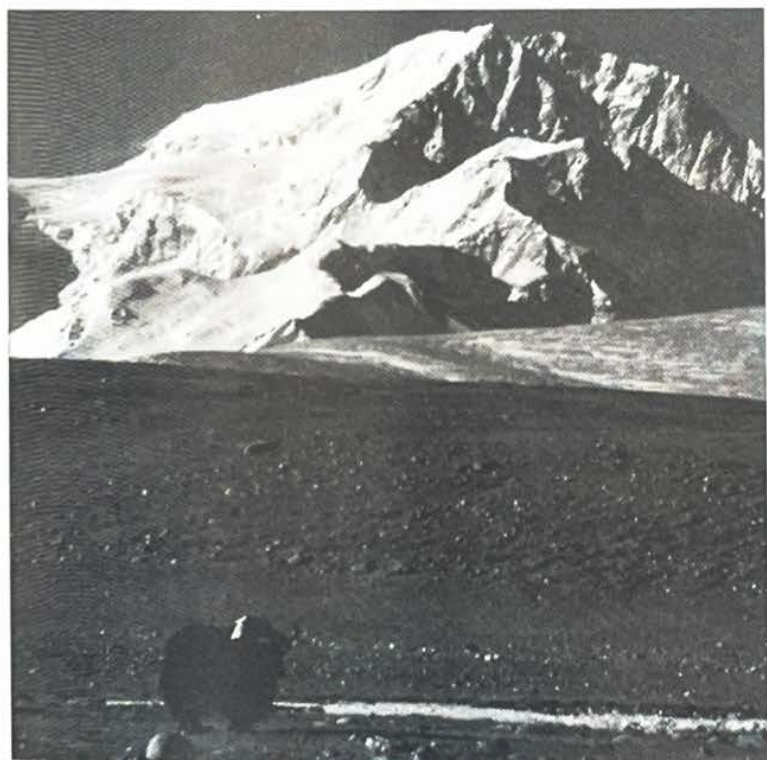
before zigzagging up the more gentle slopes of the valley, crossing a pass festooned with prayer flags, and dropping into Nyalam (elevation 3750m), located on the margins of the Tibetan Plateau.

We remained in Nyalam for two days to acclimatize, providing ample opportunity to explore the town and its surroundings. The upper of the two roads was quite pleasant. Tibetan buildings lined the road. There was a small temple with a giant prayer wheel and prayer flags. Yaks grazed in rock-walled pastures. The lower main road had the usual, ugly modern buildings with bland facades. A military prison anchored one end of the town and a disco hall the other. The military was a definite presence in the town. Little if any social interaction was apparent between the Chinese and the Tibetans. With no garbage facilities, the usual garbage lay around. Shredded plastic bags fluttered from bushes along the side of the road like prayer flags. During our stay we did several hikes up the surrounding hillsides, gaining great vantage points to gaze at the spectacular peaks around Nyalam, including a distant view of Shishapangma. Despite the beautiful scenery, the hiking was not physically pleasant. We were all lethargic, feeling the sudden elevation gain made over the past two days. It was cold and windy. The highest elevation gained was about 4900 m.

On April 25, we drove to Base Camp, at approximately 5000m. The distance that can be driven by 4x4s on half a tank of gas determined the location of Base Camp. There were no gas stations between Nyalam and Base Camp. Heading north, the surrounding mountains became hills, then bumps, then flat as we gained the Tibetan Plateau. A few Tibetan villages were scattered along the route, often a few km from the road. The barren plateau offered a harsh life for the Tibetan people. Fields were being prepared for the spring planting of barley. Irrigation canals distributed scarce water. School children waved as we passed. Herders slowly meandered behind their yaks. The further north we traveled, the fewer villages there were. Our two vehicles were tiny specks on this vast, empty landscape. We crossed two passes, the Tong-la (5120 m) and the Lalung-la (5124 m). It was incredibly cold and windy. Our drivers were reluctant to stop. A



Shishapangma from the Tibetan Plateau. Photo - G. McCormack



**Yak and Shishapangma from base camp with
the ridge attempted in the centre.**

Photo - G. McCormack



**Glacier between base camp and advance
base camp. Photo - M. Bittel**

smoke break, a pee break, a military checkpoint, and the high point at the two passes were our limited opportunities to take photographs.

Base Camp was fully equipped and well supplied by Asian Trekking, the Nepal company hired to get us to Base Camp and to man Advance Base Camp. Base Camp was relatively flat. A bump behind camp was perhaps 50 m high. The bump, decorated with prayer flags, provided great views of the Tibetan Plateau, lakes shimmering like mirages in the distance, beautiful snow-covered peaks on the fringes of the Plateau, Shishapangma, and our route to Advance Base Camp. There was a constant wind, which predictably picked up in the early afternoon, blowing sand into and through everything. Also predictably, Shishapangma disappeared behind a mass of dense clouds by mid-afternoon, sometimes re-appearing in the evening, tinted golden yellow by the setting sun. We stayed two days in Base Camp for acclimatization. We all felt the rapid elevation gain from Nyalam in our excursions to the outhouse, which was only a few m above the elevation of camp. The altitude aggravated the sore throat I got on the plane and I was already coughing. Not a good sign. Besides our group, there was an expedition from Hong Kong, a Basque expedition, an American commercial outfit, and a large Swiss commercial expedition of 25 members, half of whom were medical researchers studying the effects of altitude. Tibetan herders, their families, yaks and ill-tempered dogs joined the tent city when it was time for an expedition to make its way to Advance Base Camp. Tibetans poked their heads unexpectedly into tent doors. Curious eyes followed every move. Trinkets were offered for trade or sale. After two days, we were all anxious to leave. We suffered from sleep deprivation from a combination of altitude and the incessant nightly barking by the dogs. During the day, the dogs slept. Some well-aimed pebbles did little to rouse them from their sleep.

On April 28 we headed for Advance Base Camp, at 5600m. Our packs, gear, and food were entrusted to the Tibetans, who started loading the yaks. We watched as the herders loaded the yaks and as the yaks unceremoniously unloaded themselves. The Asian Trekking crew dealt with the usual complaints of too many bags and too

heavy bags. After making sure our bags were in the pile destined for Advance Base Camp, we headed off. It was an uneventful, but long hike, not because of the distance covered but because of our struggles with altitude. It took us between six to eight hours to hike to Advance Base Camp. On our return at the end of May, we covered the same ground within four to five hours, even in our wasted state. Eventually we reached the terminal moraine at the foot of the massive, broken glacier, which flowed from the flanks of Shishapangma. The flatness of the Plateau gave way to endless ups and downs as the route traversed the lateral moraine. As Shishapangma came closer and closer, we expected to see Advance Base Camp around every corner, only to be disappointed. By mid-afternoon, the wind picked up, the temperatures dropped, and the snow started falling. As more garbage littered the moraine, we knew we were getting close. Finally, colourful dots in the distance marked the camp, located on a flat area nestled in folds of the lateral moraine. Advance Base Camp offered good views of part of the route to Camp 1, Camp 1 itself, part of the route to Camp 2, Camp 3, and much of the ridge route to the summit. We could see a subsidiary summit but not the central and the main summits.

At Advance Base Camp, we were welcomed with hot tea and cookies by the Asian Trekking staff of another expedition. After warming-up and re-hydrating, we busied ourselves setting up the tents as the Asian Trekking crew set up the mess tent and kitchen. During dinner, we learnt of the first crisis involving the Hong Kong expedition, which had left Base Camp with us. One of their members had become disoriented and was not found until the next day, having spent the night in the open. Luckily, he had his down jacket with him and was able to keep relatively warm. The climber returned to Kathmandu.

Our first day in Advance Base Camp was spent organizing our food, group gear, and personal gear for the climb. The coffee addicts brought out their supplies of Starbucks coffee, enough to keep the camp well provisioned for the next four weeks. We set up one of the two tents borrowed from the Canadian Himalayan Foundation as our storage tent. The second tent we took with us the following day to use as a



Advance base camp. Photo - M. Bittel



Heading up the moraine with the glacier behind. Photo - G. McCormack



Heading up the moraine to the cache depot. Photo - M. Bittel

storage tent at the cache depot. Subai, our cook, and Da Tsheri, his assistant, organized the kitchen and set up the toilet tent. There were a number of expeditions already on the mountain – a Spanish team, a German group, an American commercial group, Ed Viesturs and his climbing partner, Veikka Gustafsson, and two individual climbers. With the Hong Kong team, the Basque team, the Swiss expedition and our group, there were about 60 climbers at Advance Base Camp.

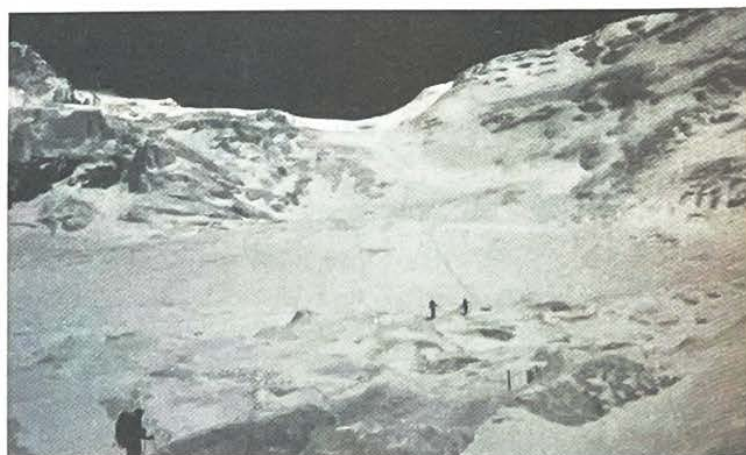
On April 30, we started the first of many trips to the cache depot, which was at 5,860 m, several kilometres up the lateral moraine. We carried with us food, stove, fuel, the cache depot tent and one tent for Camp 1. It took members of the party between 2.5 to 3.5 hours to reach the cache depot. We wound our way through the lateral moraine, taking plenty of breaks. We were all feeling pretty lethargic. As we acclimatized over the next few weeks, we covered this distance in 1 to 2 hours. I am always amazed at the size of these glaciers and moraines. We followed a route marked by small rock cairns or a trail of footprints in the snow. Occasionally we stopped to watch large boulders rumble down the steep moraine wall. Long legs came in handy, as we stepped across crevasses or fissures filled with debris. We crossed one large crack by scrambling down the collapsing wall, stepping onto a large chock-stone, which had conveniently wedged itself between the walls of the gap, and quickly scrambling up the wall on the other side. We all held our breath each time we crossed, knowing it was simply a matter of time before it collapsed. On one of our many trips through the moraine, we found the walls had finally collapsed filling the gap, making the crossing less of a balancing feat. As we became familiar with landmarks – a moraine lake, debris filled crevasse, a boggy sand trap, the chock-stone crossing, and certain boulders – we recognized the constant changes in the shifting moraine, sometimes subtle and other times dramatic. For our first few hikes through the lateral moraine to the cache depot, the snow pack was quite solid. As the weeks progressed, the snow pack thinned and collapsed under our weight, leaving a boot wedged awkwardly between rocks, sinking into a mud hole, or filling with ice-cold water. For most of us this was the most tedious and unpleasant

part of the climb. The glacier, however, did provide a dramatic and interesting view with its giant penitentes, large pyramid-shaped ice formations. The cache depot was positioned where our route crossed the river of penitentes and started the long slog up to Camp 1.

The day after our first carry to the cache depot, Andrew, Shelley, Fred and Erik decided to climb to Camp 1 to set it up. It had snowed overnight and was still snowing lightly. A patch of blue promised a better day. Both Grant and I needed another day to acclimatize and made a carry to the cache depot instead. The cache depot was pretty well provisioned by the time we dumped our loads – fuel, food and group gear. Grant and I lazed about for about an hour watch-



En route to camp 1 through the maze of penitentes.
Photo – M. Bittel



The end of the penitente maze and the glacier route up to camp 1. Photo – M. Bittel

ing the upward progress of our fellow climbers and the downward progress of two climbers. The two descending climbers were Viesturs and Gustafsson, who had reached the summit of Shishapangma on April 30. They arrived at the cache depot carrying huge packs. They were tired but had that satisfied look that climbers have after a successful climb. Extra food from their cache made its way into our supplies and spare gear was added to their already heavy, towering packs. They departed, eager to get down to Advance Base Camp. Grant and I followed shortly thereafter having decided to offer to help them with their loads since our packs were now empty. Tired as they were and despite their big packs, the two moved at a good pace. Grant finally caught up to a resting Viesturs and offered to take some of his load. Viesturs gratefully accepted the offer and handed over about 9kg of gear, appreciating that



Icefall near the route to camp 1. Photo – M. Bittel



Looking down from camp 1 towards advanced base camp. Photo – M. Bittel

Grant and I were still acclimatizing. Gustafsson also accepted the offer when we finally caught up to him. Given the weight of their packs, I am not sure that the 9 kg made much of a difference, except perhaps psychologically. They beat us down to Advance Base Camp. Grant and I could only envy their level of fitness and acclimatization.

Shelley, Andrew, Erik and Fred returned to camp in the early evening. All were pretty knackered and happy with the prospect of resting the following day. It had taken them about four hours to get from the cache depot to Camp 1. They had quickly set up one tent on a recently abandoned tent platform and deposited the rest of the gear into it.

The next day we rested. Some in the group were a little worse for wear from the preceding day's efforts. After breakfast, Viesturs and Gustafsson paid a visit, bringing cheese and books as an expression of gratitude. They had only set up two camps. Their summit day was 17.5 hours long. To reach the main summit, they traversed a knife-edged ridge from the central summit, a sharp pointed peak with only enough room for one, maybe two climbers. It took them two hours to traverse the ridge, alternating between *au cheval* and kicking steps on one side of the knife-edged ridge and plunging the ice axe in on the other side. If they did the knife-edged ridge in two hours, it would take us longer, given how fast they traveled down the moraine in their tired and heavily loaded state. For most climbers the central summit was the goal. A climber who wanted official recognition for summitting Shishapangma had to traverse the knife-edged ridge to the main summit. After the visit from Viesturs and Gustafsson, we organized the food and gear for the following day. We were all going to Camp 1, taking enough supplies for two days. If the weather held we would attempt to set up at least one tent at Camp 2.

We left Advance Base Camp early the next morning, with heavy packs – sleeping bag, thermarest or ensolite, glacier gear, warm clothes, extra fuel and food, and the gear we needed for Camp 2. Clouds were moving in and the weather did not look promising. At the cache depot, Shelley and Andrew decided to stay put because Shelley was not feeling well. Fred, Erik, Grant and I reorganized our packs, donned our glacier

gear, roped up and started across the glacier. For about an hour we wandered up and down through the penitentes. The route was flagged with wands. I was the last on the rope. Erik was leading. For most of the traverse, I could not see Erik and only caught the occasional glimpse of Fred. We snaked through a maze of corridors, scrambling up steep walls of ice, running down the other side, and navigating glacial ponds or crevasses. Once out of the maze, it was a steady uphill slog to Camp 1, at 6400m. About half way up the wind picked up, the temperature dropped and it started snowing. The trail breaking of the lead person did not help much as the wind quickly filled in the steps. Glasses frosted over, making it difficult to see. Gortex jackets were stiff with ice. We were cold and our fingers numb. We were desperate to get to Camp 1 and did not want to stop to pull extra clothes from our loaded packs. We stopped frequently en route, bent over our ski poles, panting for air.

We finally made it to Camp 1 and piled into our one tent, which had been hastily set up by the others. Half the tent was on a downward slope so it could sleep only two until the platform was improved. While Erik and Fred set up the second tent Grant and I started making soup and dinner. We spent a restless and uncomfortable night there. We were all feeling the altitude. The wind and snow blasted the tent all night. Trips to the bathroom were a hellish ordeal. Keeping re-hydrated is essential at high altitude, making trips to the bathroom inevitable.

The storm continued unabated the next day. Grant and I boiled hot water for breakfast and our water bottles. In the afternoon, we worked on the tent. We were steadily losing more of our limited tent space as the tent walls buckled under the load of snow. We cleared the snow from the tent, dug out the snow around the tent, built a snow wall to provide protection from the blowing snow, and re-staked the tent. Erik and Fred stayed ensconced in their tent. Their hands only came out at feeding time. In the evening the wind stopped, but it continued snowing. Occasionally we could hear the ice break off the nearby icefalls. We contacted Andrew and Shelley on the radio. They had returned to Advance Base Camp that day because Shelley was still feeling sick. Erik and Fred were

eager to set up Camp 2, but Camp 1 still needed work. The tent platforms had to be improved to allow both tents to sleep three. We also had to re-stake one of the tents. In our haste to get into shelter on our arrival in Camp 1, we used ice axes and shovels to stake it.

On May 5, we woke to find at least 30cm of new snow on the ground. After talking to Andrew, we decided not to push to Camp 2 but to return to Advance Base Camp. The weather forecast was for more snow. After breakfast, we worked a little on the tent platforms, gathered our gear, and raced down to the penitentes in less than an hour. Shelley and Andrew had relocated the cache tent when they spent the night there. There were a lot of climbers at the cache depot heading up to Camp 1. The Swiss team was using skis. In some ways I envied them. The snow was good that day and the ski down from Camp 1 would have been superb. But this was the exception not the norm. On most days, it was breakable crust. Skiing on breakable crust, at altitude, was not my idea of fun.

Sunday, May 6, was a rest day. It was a beautiful day. After breakfast Subai and Da Tsheri organized our prayer flag ceremony. Normally this is done before setting foot on the mountain, but we had managed to misplace the prayer flags Fred bought in Kathmandu. When we finally found them we were heading up the mountain. Da Tsheri got the food offering ready uncooked rice, crackers, popcorn, apples, milk and water – and strung the prayer flags from a previously well-built rock altar. Da Tsheri was initially going to conduct the ceremony, but luckily, an older Tibetan gentleman, a former monk, wandered into camp and he was happy to oblige. Apparently he had become a monk at age 25, but the Chinese closed the monastery where he had been studying and prohibited him from practising as a lama. After the ceremony, Subai and Da Tsheri fed him and then brought him to Fred and Grant for some medical advice for his aching shoulders and wrists. He was clearly pleased with the attention and gratefully accepted the medical advice offered. He gave Fred and Grant extra blessings.

In the afternoon, Shelley and Andrew headed for the cache depot. They planned to depart for Camp 1 in the morning as the rest of the group made our way to the cache depot and then

Camp 1. The plan was to establish Camp 2. By mid-afternoon a pretty stiff wind blew in bringing the cold with it. Anything not tied down took off. Our toilet tent blew over twice. Those of us who had washed clothes in the morning quickly gathered them before they blew away. Washing the clothes was easy, drying them was a challenge. The cold wind froze the moist clothes into stiff and crispy boards. It started hailing and snowing. Shishapangma disappeared behind a solid wall of clouds.

The next day, Grant, Erik, Fred and I headed up to the cache depot and then Camp 1. We made it to Camp 1 in good time, about 4 hours. We woke up to beautiful weather the next morning. We were all heading up to Camp 2. Erik, Grant and Fred decided they were going to stay the night. From Camp 1, the slightly ascending route took us to the bench where the Swiss expedition had set up their tents, all neatly lined up in a row. At the end of the bench the route went steeply up a headwall to a second bench. A few crevasses dissected the slope of the headwall. It took us between three to four hours to reach the second bench. The skiers zigzagged up while the rest of us went straight up. After gaining the second bench, the route leveled off, gaining elevation gradually. Shelley, Andrew and I dumped our loads with Erik, Fred and Grant and returned to Camp 1. The weather moved in that night, bringing with it wind, clouds and snow. We could not make radio contact with Camp 2. With no improvement in the weather the following day, we decided to stay put. We turned our attention to the two tents, clearing snow, re-staking them, and building out the platforms.

The next morning the weather looked good. We packed up and headed to Camp 2. En route, we met Fred, Erik and Grant on their way down to Advance Base Camp. The previous day they had re-located Camp 2 further along the bench. Camp 2 was now just under 7000m. It took us about four hours to get there. By late afternoon we were hit by another storm. Strong winds pummeled our tents. It snowed steadily. My cough got worse at Camp 2. In one of my coughing fits I pulled some muscles in my right chest wall. I tried to suppress the cough and ease the pain with a steady intake of cough candies, but without much success.

The morning of May 11 dawned without improvement in the weather. We were reluctant to spend another day in Camp 2, as it would really put us out of sequence with the others. However, moving about in deep snow and white out conditions was not a good option. We postponed our decision until 11:30 a.m. By then, two Sherpas from the Swiss expedition and some clients started their retreat. We decided to take advantage of their trail breaking, packed up, and headed out. Even with the trail breaking of the other climbers, it was a hard slog. The depth of the snow ranged from mid-ankle to just over the knee. After dropping off some gear in Camp 1, we continued down to Advance Base Camp, arriving just in time for dinner. After watching me cringe in pain in one of my coughing fits, I was not too pleased to hear



En route to camp 2 with the subsidiary peak of Shishapangma in the background.

Photo - M. Bittel



Lenticular cloud over the subsidiary peak of Shishapangma. Photo - M. Bittel



Monika en route to camp 3.
Photo - G. McCormack



Camp 3 at the base of the buttress ridge.
Photo - M. Bittel

Fred say that was the end of my summit bid. It was not unheard of for a person to crack a rib or two at high altitude because of severe coughing. I was pretty sure that I had not cracked a rib, but straining a muscle was not good either. Grant, the lung specialist, gave me some medication to suppress my cough and ease the pain. If the chest wall injury was going to heal, I had to stop coughing.

May 12 and 13 were rest days. We snacked, chatted, rested, read, washed, played cards, and chatted some more. We discussed options and made plans. We were making good progress and were ready for a summit bid. We were not scheduled to go home until May 27. This would potentially give us another chance at the summit if we were forced to retreat. We debated various tent combinations and permutations. Ultimately, we decided to take one of the 2-3 man Advance Base Camp tents and one of the Camp 2 tents to Camp 3. We planned to clear our gear off the mountain on our descent and packed some extra

bags in which to haul gear down. We set about organizing our personal gear and sorting extra food and fuel. Fred and Erik moved out of their Advance Base Camp tent and set up two one-man tents for themselves. Over the course of the day, we watched four climbers, two rope teams of two, making slow progress up the summit ridge. By 3 pm. Grant spotted two figures just above the gendarme at about 7800m. They were still going upward but had a way to go. Undoubtedly, the snow accumulation over the past few days was slowing their progress. By 5 pm Erik thought he saw the two climbers closest to the summit turn around. None of us had observed the second rope team for some time and thought they had turned around given the lateness of the hour. Over the course of the two rest days, I continued to take the medication as directed. I still felt a twinge of pain when coughing, but the right chest wall was much better. May 14 we headed up to Camp 1. The weather was not good, but the forecast was for good weather from the 17th to the 20th and we wanted to be in position at Camp 3 to take advantage of it. Despite having left gear at Camp

1 and Camp 2 on our previous forays, our packs were quite heavy. On our ascent to Camp 1 we met the four climbers we had observed on the summit ridge the previous day. They reported reaching the central summit and we congratulated them. About three-quarters of the way to Camp 1 we were hit by a storm. We reached Camp 1 in cold, very windy, and white-out conditions. We were frozen. One of the Basque climbers appeared offering some hot fluids from his thermos, which we gratefully accepted. We dug out our tents and crawled into them. Camp 1 was always cramped but this time it was worse. Since our last visit, the tent platforms had contorted themselves into new shapes and levels. Despite the medication, I was still coughing quite hard but at least the chest wall pain was under control.

We woke up to a relatively good-looking day and headed to Camp 2. The crevasses on the slope of the headwall were larger. A previous party had anchored a fixed line across the largest crevasse. Camp 2 was in good shape. We dug out our tents.

The weather did not look promising the next day, but we decided to move up to Camp 3 anyway. After packing up one of the Camp 2 tents, we set off. Shortly thereafter, we were in the worst storm we had encountered so far. Visibility was so poor that I could often not see either Shelley or Andrew on the rope in front of me. With each blast of wind you had to brace yourself and hunker down to avoid being blown off your feet. Occasionally we got a glimpse of a cluster of tents further to our right. Andrew, who was in the lead, finally came to a stop at an old abandoned tent platform. We struggled to set up the tents in the raging storm and retreated into them.

The next morning we were greeted with good weather and packed up for Camp 3, which was at about 7400m. The route to Camp 3 followed a long, flat, u-shaped valley. At the head of the valley, the route went straight up a headwall to Camp 3, perched on top of the headwall and at the base of the buttress ridge, which we would follow to the summit. Almost all of the elevation gain between Camp 2 and Camp 3 was up the headwall. At the bottom of the headwall we took a break. At this point, I unclipped from Shelley and Andrew's rope. I found their pace aggravated my coughing. If I traveled at my own pace I could keep my

coughing under better control. Although the terrain was steep, I felt comfortable enough on my own. Except for one crevasse area, the route was pretty straightforward. As we climbed upwards, panting for air, we used stretches of old fixed line, making the uphill climb somewhat faster and easier. Shelley and Andrew were among the first ones up and quickly got their tent set up. As I gained the ridge crest, another storm moved in. We settled in for the night. Unfortunately, sleep did not come easily. As often happened on reaching camp, the coughing fits were almost non-stop, even with the aid of Grant's medication. Shelley was also having severe bouts of coughing. She could barely tolerate fluids. Andrew good-naturedly put up with our incessant coughing.

The storm blew the whole night. There was no need to check conditions at 2 am. A summit bid was out of the question. We spent the next day



Looking down towards camp 2 from camp 3.

Photo - M. Bittel



On the summit bid, looking back down to camp 3. Photo - G. McCormack



The gendarme at 7800m. Photo - G. McCormack

tent bound, occasionally venturing out to scope out the scene or taking care of necessities. Members of the Swiss team only stayed the night for acclimatization purposes and returned to Advance Base Camp that day. We had Camp 3 all to ourselves. As the day turned into evening, the weather settled. It looked promising for the next day. We organized our personal gear. We were excited, nervous and impatient, not sure what the next day would bring.

At 2 am on May 19, the skies were clear, but we could see a bank of clouds in the distance. There was no wind. It was very, very cold. We got the stove going and those of us who were able, had some breakfast. We topped off our water bottles with hot water. We were on our way by about 4:30 am, later than intended. Erik, Fred and Grant led the way, followed by Andrew, Shelley and myself. Within an hour of starting, I unclipped from Shelley and Andrew's rope, finding it easier to travel at my own pace. I stayed within reach of Shelley and Andrew, who dragged the end of the rope behind them so that I could clip in if necessary. We slowly made our way up the buttress ridge. Sometimes the snow was nice and stiff, our crampons biting into the hard crust; at other times

we struggled in ankle- to knee-deep snow. Erik, Fred and Grant were doing all the trail breaking. Despite not feeling well, Shelley was keeping up with Andrew. At about 7700m, Shelley, Andrew and I took a break. At this point Kevin, who had been climbing with us, decided to return to Camp 3. The weather was definitely moving in but we were optimistic that we could get to the summit before the storm. We had a spectacular view of Cho Oyu, Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu, sitting in a cluster above a bed of dense clouds. Erik, Fred and Grant were ahead, debating which route to take over the cliff band in front of them. To the right it dropped off steeply to Camp 2; to the left, a snowfield. We watched as the three first explored the right, and then ventured left where they quickly bogged down in deep snow. They came back to the cliff band and went straight up, belaying each other. The three of us followed. I clipped back into the rope and we belayed each other up. This was an awkward steep pitch. At times we wallowed up to our hips in deep pockets of snow. Above the cliff band was another steep pitch of deep snow, which we climbed with the help of a stretch of old, fixed line. At the top of the pitch I unclipped from the rope as we

continued along the ridge. We could see the gendarme ahead of us at about 7800 m. The gendarme, a prominent feature on the ridge visible from Advance Base Camp, was fixed in all our minds as a major benchmark. It meant we were getting closer to the summit. I was still feeling good, despite the coughing. I caught up with Shelley and Andrew who were taking a rest. We were at 7825 m, the gendarme just behind us. Erik, Fred and Grant continued moving up after a short break. I watched them cross a bench on the ridge and start up a steep snowfield towards another cliff band above them. We anticipated that this would be the last or second last cliff band before a long traverse across a snow basin to the central summit.

During one of my coughing fits, I heard Andrew remark that they considered turning around. I was surprised to learn it was already one o'clock. We were making slow progress, averaging only about 50 m an hour. We had lost time on the last cliff band. At this rate it would take us another three to four hours to gain the additional 190 m to the summit, not including the long traverse across the snow basin to the central summit. This would take us well past our turn around time of 2 pm. The weather was deteriorating. The wind had picked up and the clouds were swirling around us. Advance Base Camp was completely hidden under a blanket of clouds. Much as I hated to admit it, I knew Andrew was right; the summit was out of our reach. Andrew talked to the three others on the radio. Fred wanted to reach at least the next rock band, so they continued upwards. Shortly, after the three of us turned around, Fred, Erik and Grant did the same. As they worked their way up through the snowfield to the rock band, the snow became bottomless. They did not like the sudden change in conditions, realizing the conditions would be worse in the snow basin, which was on the lee side. The storms over the past few days had deposited considerable snow on the slopes above.

As we descended, visibility varied. At times we were in white-out conditions. Then the wind briefly cleared the clouds away, leaving us to second guess our decision to turn around. Fred, Grant and Erik soon caught up with us. We rappelled down the steep snow pitch using the fixed line and then used our ropes to rappel down the steep cliff band. On our descent, my coughing

became worse. With each coughing fit, I doubled over with the pain in my right chest wall. Andrew suggested I stay roped up with them, even though I would slow their progress. On the last snowfield, within sight of Camp 3, I unclipped from their rope and let them go ahead. By the time I reached Camp 3, my coughing was almost constant, giving me little time to catch my breath between coughing fits. Andrew undid my crampons and I slid into the tent. Shelley and I made a pair. I, coughing like crazy, bent in half with pain, and Shelley, coughing and feeling nauseous, a bag in hand. Poor Andrew.

Next morning, despite the good weather, our tents came down and we packed up. We were short of food and all needed a rest. For me, a second attempt was out of the question. For the others, there was not enough time given our departure date. Before leaving Camp 3, we watched two of the Hong Kong expedition members pack up their tent and head up the buttress ridge with huge packs. They obviously intended to set up a Camp 4 further up the ridge. Fred, Erik and Grant headed down. Andrew and Shelley insisted on staying roped up and put me in the lead. I was able to carry a pack but needed help lifting the pack onto my back. I was not feeling too well. The coughing and right chest wall pain were definitely not improving. With each bout of coughing I was forced to stop and give myself time to catch my breath before moving on, otherwise I would immediately launch into another coughing fit. We finally reached Camp 2. Fred, Grant and Erik had packed up one of the tents. They were heading down to Camp 1. Grant took our Camp 3 tent and stove since we were going to stay the night at Camp 2. We would clear the rest of Camp 2 the next day.

The following morning, it took us a while to take down the tent. The anchors were iced in and the snow packed solidly around the tent. All the remaining food, equipment, and garbage from Camp 2 was packed into a large bag and tied on the rope between Shelley and Andrew. This was cumbersome, especially for Shelley and Andrew, but we did not have much room in our packs for the extra gear. We still had to clear Camp 1. We made our way across the flats and down the headwall. The large crevasse had become larger,

perfect condition for a climb, and next to it stood the Jungfrau – another consummate peak of the Swiss alps. You can find Grindelwald nestled in the Berner Oberland near Interlaken; it is your archetypal Swiss German alpen experience. I know there are beautiful places the world over, beautiful for different reasons. And the natural beauty of British Columbia is always right there, front and centre in my mind, but now the Swiss Alps are there too. The Swiss countryside is a marriage of high mountains, meadows and forests with timeless Swiss villages scattered here and there. The tiny villages are often beautiful with ancient chalets of black wood and narrow twisty streets, and peopled with relaxed and rugged looking villagers. Though you are never far from a cow or a goat.

I try not to, but I find myself comparing B.C. and Switzerland. Which one is better or worse? What do I like and what do I dislike? I could never tell you where I would rather be and I find myself loving both places for very different reasons. I miss the ancient forests of huge trees, the clear bubbling streams and pristine wilderness of the west coast. I also miss the fact that in Canada I am at home, a Canadian among Canadians. And now I find that I also love what the Alps have to offer. I have the feeling that people have lived in these mountains forever and that each valley has its own story. Hiking 10 km, such a short distance, you can see architectural details of the chalets and churches change. Or perhaps you find yourself changing from Italian to French or to one of the 20 or so dialects of Swiss German. Or perhaps you find yourself in a town where they speak Romanche, an ancient cousin to French that still exists here and there in isolated valleys and communities. It's fascinating when you consider how these mountain communities evolved through the ages, developing their own language and traditions, side by side but out of touch.

We spent the first day walking to the Schreckhornhütte at 2500m, a good 1500m above where we had parked our cars, though the path was well developed (as many trails in Switzerland are) and peppered with the occasional café (as many trails in Switzerland are...). We wound our way up the valley towards the hütte and the

glaciers, serac towers, and surrounding 4000+m peaks were spectacular. "WOW!" the sky was so clear that I felt I could reach out and touch the peaks on the other side of the valley.

In all we were seven people making our way up the valley. Pierre, Beatrice, my brother Colin, and I were planning to summit the Schreckhorn. Beatrice is a long time family friend of Pierre and a character of a woman who runs off every fall to hunt the wild chamois of the Alps. She speaks French with an incredible Swiss German accent.

We were accompanied by three day trippers – my sister Hillary, whose excuse for not coming to the summit was that she had to "study" as usual, Evelyn, a sprite girl and strong climber and the daughter of Beatrice, and finally Pierre's father, Hugo Weber, who at 68 years of age has opened his fair share of climbing routes throughout Switzerland. Hugo directed our attention to the sheer north face of the Wetterhorn nearby and described, in a humble and matter of fact manner, the route he had climbed only a few years earlier. The climb had involved 30 pitches of sustained alpine 6b and c (5.10b and c equivalent in North America, I think) topping out above 3800m. They had gone alpine and finished the climb in three days. Lately, however, he had slowed and had decided that he would not join us all the way to the summit, but would go as far as the hütte, but I could see from his look, as he eyed the perfect blue skies, that he wished he could join us.

On our way up the trail we laughed at a sign warning us to "beware of falling rocks" that was posted in front of a rock slide that was at least 200 or 300 metres wide... thanks for the hint. I talked about my girlfriend, Marianna from Sicily, and how we were so different. Hugo asked me if she climbed, and I told him "actually she cannot understand why I love to be in the mountains so much, much less what would possess me to climb". There was a long silence. I wonder though, if you are passionate about something, is there room for someone in your life who doesn't share that same passion? Marianna and I broke up a few days later... maybe I just answered my question.

We all made our way up the valley, crossing paths with parties of other euro climbers, hikers and day trippers: "buon journo", "guten Tag",

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We all made our way up the valley, crossing paths with parties of other euro climbers, hikers and day trippers: "buon journo", "guten Tag",

"buenos dias", "grüsslich", "bonjour", "hello". You never know what people were going to greet you with.

Of the alp experiences I could do without, sleeping in hüttes is one of them. Invariably the guardians are clean freak prima donnas and unfortunately the guy at the Schreckhornhütte was no exception. "you are not permitted to read the magazines in the out of doors, it is verboten!!!". Yada yada yada, we called him "l'ours" or "the bear". Lucky for them, Hugo and Hillary escaped most of his harassment by scuttling back down the valley. Evelyn decided to spend the night in the hütte with us and would head back down late next morning.

Colin, Pierre, Beatrice and I woke up with the other climbers at 1:30 am and were out the door, bellies full of Birschenmüsli, by 2:30 am, trudging

our way up the glacier. We climbed steadily under the night sky, brilliant with stars and arrived at the base of the pillar (3500m) by 6 am. The sun was just coming over the horizon as we front pointed over the Bergschrund and up the steep ice to the base of the rock wall. It was going to be another beautiful day - not a cloud nor breath of wind.

We roped up - Pierre with Beatrice and Colin with me - and started up the pillar. It was exceptional rock - red gneiss, solid and compact with lots of great holds. And as the sun rose higher above the horizon, and as the colour of the sky lost its early morning glow, the colour of the red rock changed. The air warmed, as did the rock, and we began to hear more and more rockfalls tumbling down the face. It was a relief to be on a prominent rib. In fact in some places, the pillar



The Schreckhorn with the ascent (centre) and descent (left of summit) routes shown.

Photo - M. Sanctuary

was no more than a delicate arête 1m wide with sheer drops on either side. A pillar so thin in fact that it hardly looked able to stand up on its own. I figured there would be plenty of fixed belays and intermittent pitons left from previous climbers, as occur on many routes in Europe. But I am glad to say that I managed to count only four pitons over the entire 600 vertical metres of the route. I had not climbed much over the last two years – most of my time had been devoted to skiing or backpacking here and there – and the lack of time on the rock made me feel that perhaps I wasn't up to doing a 600m 5.9 in plastic mountaineering boots, topping out at 4078m.

We got into our rhythm, climbing the pillar pitch by pitch and even running as many pitches together as possible. We reached the summit at 12:30 pm, moving slowly and really feeling the altitude after 6 hours of thrilling and exposed climbing. Given the length of the approach and the altitude, we had gone very light on the rack. I had two friends and 6 stoppers and a good collection of slings. It was great rock and protected well, but the lack of gear forced us to be creative.

We climbed higher and higher and the scenery around us changed as new horizons came into view. Standing on the summit we took in the 360° view; we could see Mont Blanc of France and its massif, the Eiger and Jungfrau close by, the Matterhorn, Dent Blanche, Dent d'Hérens, Grand Combin, Monte Rosa and countless other 4000m peaks of Switzerland, Italy and France under an immaculate, breathless blue sky. I will never ever get tired of mountain top panoramas, and on such a beautiful day, there is no other place I would rather be.

The descent off the summit pyramid was uncomfortable and slow, following the standard route (that the other groups had ascended and descended that day). It involved several long rappels and the serious worry of getting the rope stuck. ARG! I have said it before and I say it again – I hate rappelling – necessary evil. But most of the 600m descent was done free solo – with the exposure making it all the more exciting (maybe scary is the more appropriate word). I can tell when my brother stresses because he does this thing with his tongue, rubbing the roof of his

mouth. It drives me mad, but I am sure I am guilty of some odd quirk when nervous, and I am also sure he would gladly tell you what it is exactly that I do, especially after he reads this article. One final rappel put the four of us back on the glacier, and from there we made our way down towards the valley through warm, melting snow.

We quickly passed the hütte, avoiding the guardian, and made our way straight down the valley. It was a grueling walk, descending a total of 3000m from the summit to Grindelwald to the valley floor. As I neared the end of the trail, tired and sore, I passed a café hidden in the woods and filled with Swiss soldiers out training for the weekend (training in the café? go figure). One of them called out to me "hey are you the Canadian?" I hadn't realized I was so easily marked! It turned out that Evelyn had prepared Fettuccine Alfredo for us in the café's kitchen and had asked the soldiers to keep an eye out for a pair of Canadian brothers who would be coming down from the Schreckhorn. *Alilili* to be greeted by a warm steaming plate of rich creamy pasta, most needed to fill our aching bellies, empty from an exhilarating 20-hour day in the heart of the Swiss alps.

As I sat there next to my car, stuffing my belly, I couldn't help but look around at moonlit Grindelwald, with all its chalets and farms, and reflect on the memory of the typical west coast trailhead hidden deep in the forest at the end of some decrepit logging road, clogged with alder and punctuated with washouts from heavy autumn rains. I realized how far away I am and I wondered when I would see B.C. again.

2. TRIPS IN AND AROUND B.C.

Pacific Crest Trail - Harts Pass to Rainy Pass by Len Soet

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) is a 4240km trail from Mexico to Canada. I had previously hiked the most northern section of the trail, from Harts pass to Manning park, on two different occasions. In 2000, Peter Varsek, Dave Doroghy and I made plans to hike the next section of the trail.

Unfortunately Dave couldn't make it and I never had a chance to call back the many BCMC people who also wanted to join us.

We left Peter's house in Richmond on a Friday afternoon about 5:30 pm, arriving at the Colonial Creek Campground on Diablo Lake where we camped at around 9:45. We were up at 5 and locking up and hiding the mountain bikes and pannier bags in the trees at Rainy pass just as it was getting light at 6. We then drove down to Mazama and up to Harts pass, arriving there at 8 am. The trail actually starts 3 km south of Harts Pass near Brown Bear mine and an elevation of 1960m. The weather turned out much better than expected with not a cloud in the sky.

The Trail immediately offers its rewards as it climbs up to over 2100m with spectacular views in every direction. We frequently stopped to take pictures and look at the views. We ended up walking with a chap from Ontario, Oregon, named Rick. He was camped at Meadows Campground at Hart's Pass and was doing day trips on the PCT. We also met a chap coming the opposite direction, whose nickname was "Blister Free". He was a couple of days away from completing the whole PCT from Mexico over three summers. He said that this was the second most scenic section of the Trail, after the John Muir section in California, that he got his base pack weight down to 5 1/2 kg. without food or water, and that he had met two girls who had started the trail in April of this year in Mexico and who now were about one day behind him.

We hiked with Rick until Grasshopper Pass where the trail descends down to Brush Creek. On the way down we noticed three black bears frolicking in the meadow, far across the valley. The trail descends down to 1300m. It's amazing how warm and muggy and how far down 1300m seems when you've been hiking around 2000m. The Trail then starts gently climbing up the west fork of the Methowriver.

As the day wore on the mileage was taking it's toll. Around 5 pm the trail started to climb more steeply out of the valley and we were taking more and more breaks and walking slower and slower. We decided to camp at the last good water source at 6 pm. We had hiked 27km that day. Since I take minimal clothes and I was very low on energy, I

got really cold quickly. I had to stay in my sleeping bag and bivi sac as I ate my bowl of granola. Since the weather was so good Peter also didn't bother putting up the tent, sleeping on the ground on his ensolite pad. I was asleep shortly after 7 pm.

We were up at 5:45 and away by 6:35. It's amazing how your energy is restored after a night of sleep. Even though my legs were very sore I was able to run up ahead of Peter. Peter, whose pack looked twice as big and may have weighed twice as much as mine, wasn't interested in running. Nevertheless, he was a very strong and fast hiker with some good hiking experience. He climbed the Black Tusk with his dad as a day trip when he was 10 or 11.

It was nice being up around 2000m again and the views to the south were becoming very impressive. We were shortly meeting day trippers from Rainy Pass so we knew we didn't have far to go. At Cutthroat Pass we met the two girls who had hiked all the way from Mexico. They said that when they started they found it hard to hike 15-25km a day, but now they could do about 37km a day. One of the girls said her pack was relatively heavy at 16 kg! They were planning to meet their parents in Manning Park that day at 10 am. You can also read their journal on their web site at www.pctgirls.com/PCT/

We arrived at Rainy Pass at 12:30. Forty six km and 15 hours of hiking from Harts Pass. We were on our bikes at 1:30. I was able to neatly put all my gear in my panniers and easily strap my ensolite pad, sleeping bag, and back on my pannier rack. Peter quickly filled up his pannier bags and had his huge pack lying sideways over both pannier bags. From Rainy Pass the trail drops down and then climbs 200 m to Washington Pass. Not being accustomed to cycling, Peter found his leg muscles cramping and frequently had to walk. We switched bikes but it didn't seem to make much difference. Luckily, from Washington Pass it's mostly all downhill to Mazama.

At Mazama Peter was happy to wait at the restaurant/gas station/store while I finished the rest of the cycle to the Van. I left Peter about 3:45 and finally arrived at the van at 8:17 in the dark after cycling 71 km and climbing 1200m. On my back windshield there was a note from Rick telling me to look under the van for a final taste of

summer. He had kindly left two beers for us. Back in Mazama at 10 pm, I quickly fell asleep.

On the way home we made frequent tourist stops and had breakfast at the Marblemont Ranger station where I discovered that we were supposed to have a \$5 daily or \$30 yearly parking pass to park at the Forest Service Trailhead.

Alternative methods - Crater Mountain

July 2001

by Michelle Martineau

Having got rained out of the Kettle Valley, and trying to escape the fire-ban zone (yes, such contradictions do exist!), we found ourselves sitting by a campfire in the vicinity of Cathedral Rim Park, pondering what to do with our oneremaining day. I wasn't in the mood to hike half a day up a trail and back; I wanted to conquer something! After weighing the pros and cons of hiding the bikes somewhere, we revisited the trail stats for Crater Mountain: 26 km round trip; elevation gain 1600 m, a lot of which was on old logging roads and cattle trails. Maybe we could shorten the uninteresting part with a bit of pedalling...

The next morning, we drove less than 1 km to the first switchback and parked. The road was steep and covered in loose rock. As we got ourselves ready, a very old man with a very old dog ambled past, heading uphill. He said he hiked here most days and warned us that it was steep. I felt a bit silly getting on my bike with my helmet, gloves and water bottles, but reasoned that he wasn't going to the summit and we were. It was actually difficult to get going due to the steepness, and a fair deal of zig-zagging was in order. Every few hundred metres, or sometimes much less, it would be too rutted, or we would simply run out of steam, lose our momentum and end up pushing our bikes up the darned mountain. At these times, I seriously thought to myself how much easier it would be hiking up without a bike to push. However, we alternately found great bursts of energy and would get way ahead, each egging the other on, through young forest, open woodland and increasingly inspiring views.

Perseverance paid, to a certain point, but eventually we had to abandon the bikes and continue



The view from Crater Mtn. towards Cathedral Park. Photo - M. Martineau

on foot. A little further on, the path petered out and some bushwhacking was required. The odd blue or yellow ribbon didn't prevent us being led astray by the meandering cattle trails. It wasn't until we cleared the tree line that we could see the summit and feel the strong wind that had blown up. After about five and a half hours, we had reached the shoulder, but it was too blustery to stand up on the craggy peak, so it hardly made a pleasant rest stop. The panoramic view over Cathedral Park warranted a quick photo, then we started back down.

We reached the bikes in about half an hour and tightened our helmets for the descent. I tried to save my brakes by only slowing for the drainage ditches and switch-backs, but had to stop 3 or 4 times to rest my weary wrists. On one such stop my altimeter politely told me that I was descending at more than 1800 m per hour - it was payback time! The speed was quite exhilarating and after a mere 40 minutes we were back at the car. Steve's rear brakes had almost disappeared, but we were intact and laughing. Our windswept appearance must have deterred the waitress at the Trading Post in Keremeos, until we told her of our adventure. Then she was quick to bring large jugs of water and warm, crunchy bread rolls, before serving us the best pasta dinner...mm-mmm.

Uztlius Mtn. - not a useless or ugly trip 29-30 September, 2001

by Karl Ricker and Nina Evans-Locke

Coquihalla '01 was sidestepped in favour of a Fraser Canyon approach in order to avoid lengthy logging roads and the tollbooths. The line

of peaks on the east side of the Fraser tends to sag to forested ridge tops between the granitic monoliths of the Anderson River Group to the south and the barren peaks of Stoyoma Mountain and Mt. Hewitt Bostock to the north. The exceptions are some locally half-bald summits in the headwaters of Spius, Maka and Uztlius Creeks which sport granitic rock with easy ways to circumvent the few precipitous cliffs that do exist around them. "Uztlius Mountain" lies in the heart of the "Anderson River Ranges", which are adorned with high level logging roads to out-flank the gorge in the river basin itself. George Mercer Dawson in the 1870s, however, had the benefit of only moccasin trails and native guides to lead his geological expedition from Boston Bar to the Coldwater-Nicola valleys. The trail led up the native-named Uztlius Creek, which translates to "creek of the boiling waters", as suggested by the swirling flow over and around its bouldery bed. Dawson obviously passed through the ranges earlier in the season than we, because the creek was at a low level trickle during our September weekend, which had a surprising turnout of 14, with no dogs, but three from Merritt who elected to go through the toll booth to reach our meeting point at Boston Bar. Crazy! They had an easy direct route.

The weather was at its Indian summer's best. That's the seventh such climatic event in the 29 years of Coquihallaying - 1976, 1979, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1993 and 2001. The trips in 1984 and 1996 weren't bad either but slightly cooler and definitely not short sleeve shirt temperature as in the other 7 years. At a leisurely 1530 hrs the gang emptied out of the Boston Bar café for a ramble up the logging truck-free Anderson River road, which begins just south of town. Twisting and turning our way for 15 km along the walls of Anderson River valley, it was a relief to enter the Uztlius basin at its elevated valley floor level. George Dawson must have also welcomed the change in steepness. Locally it is called the "Useless Creek" road by the loggers and foresters, despite the fact it provides easy access to the Merritt Forest District with an easy pass at the head of the central tributary of the creek. Fifteen to 16 km further upstream at a three-way creek fork (NE, E, S) the procession came to a halt at this tributary. The

objective, "Uztlius Mtn.", lay between the east and south forks and the latter has the road access to it, which was rough and washed out in my 1996 visit to the valley. At that time it was an ugly place to camp. Retreating down the valley for about one kilometre, an old unofficial hunter's campsite was found, well shielded from an amazingly quiet road. Camp was pitched in the late afternoon, and the large campfire was ablaze by nightfall.

Sunday's awakening sky brought out a surprise - the northwest flanks of the objective had been recently logged - reached from this side (Boston Bar) or from the Merritt side? Because the "Useless Creek Road" did not have that fresh logging truck use look, the organizer quickly said it must be the latter. Heading out from camp in 4WD vehicles he was soon to eat those words. The road into the south fork of Uztlius valley had been completely re-built since 1996 and the loggers had already cut and run, leaving the usual tank traps to drive through. At almost due west of the objective and about 750 m below its summit, the organizer called a halt. We had to go up rather than drive by it on the level, and fearlessly he lead the assault up through the chest-high fireweed hiding the underlying logging slash. Four of the party were not amused by the uphill invasion; two decided to turn around and go home while Norm and Paul proceeded to check out the road ahead.



Looking from Uztlius towards Old Settler (middle on horizon) and Mt. Urquhart (right on horizon) across the head of the S Fork of Uztlius Ck. valley. Photo - K. Ricker.

Nearing the upper limit of the slash, a half hour later, a horn began to blare above us! The road did switch back to the new cuts on the NW flank of the mountain after all, and the organizer profusely ate crow as each of the party members emerged from the morass below. Norm provided some consolation, however, saying that they went several k's up valley to find the turn off, and then the tank traps really began to scrape the bottom of his truck in the climb to this point. Re-assembled, with a fine view of a nameless peak on the west side of the south fork ("Boiling Water" or "Useless" Mtn.?), the road was walked up hill to the north where it met the uncut forest above. Above the road, the going was steepish, with relatively little underbrush, and we passed through the talus slope residue of two cliff bands before the open heathery alpine terrain was met, about one km to the NW of the highest summit. Thick overnight frost was melting and the lichen covered granitic rock was very slippery; the route stuck to heather and krummholz bashing to reach a slightly lower NW summit (with no cairn) and a short rest.

Moving quickly again over a broad and rolling to knobby ridgeline, the main summit was bagged by lunch time. While Theo quickly dismantled and hid a junky tripod, once a surveyor's support for a tellurometer, the organizer studiously recorded the data from a brass survey plug [BC Legal 581 (1980) 80H2758] located a few metres SE of the cairn, and about one metre below it in elevation. Meanwhile Norm

Hansen said that it was a waste of time, as he quickly read off the coordinates on his tiny GPS unit. The comparison would be interesting because there were already two different map elevations for the peak (see end of report).

Well, the summit was darn pleasant; people stripped off their jackets to absorb both a long lunch and the tremendous view. Any thought of traversing around the entire south fork basin had quickly evaporated because most of the ridgeline was covered in trees, and too much time had been wasted on the logging roads. Strangely, the gang on Meslilloet Mtn. on this very same day was also suffering from the same ethereal air. Imagine, two BC MC parties of 12 each dozing on their summits, 120 km apart, at exactly the same time of day in total lethargy! Ed provided the perfect example by reclining on a mossy bench for an hour while others gazed at two golden eagles cruising through the entire Anderson River drainage basin - our first such sightings in 29 years of trips in these ranges.

For the descent it was a move to the south ridge on mixed meadows and krummholz in order to gain an advantage on the mischievously located logging road below. The object was to reach a mapped pond on the ridge, about 1 km south of the summit and then cross a lower flat bottomed basin to the west of it to gain easy contours which would ease the pain of reaching the road junction below. Less than halfway to this pond Ed decided to drop into a creek gully instead. It was back to



Ed on the summit of Uztlius.
Photo - K. Ricker



Theo, John, Nina, Norma, and Don (L to R) on the summit of Uztlius. Photo - K. Ricker

jungle warfare, hanging tenaciously to each azalea and blueberry bush on the steep, slippery slopes; the creek bottom offered slippery, mossy rocks as the alternative, but it bushed-in and the troops had to retreat out of the gully back onto open floor forest-covered slopes. While awaiting to re-collect the strung-out procession, Norm spotted holes in the ground which he quickly identified as these of the rare mountain beaver (*Aplodontia rufa rainieri*), and not the ordinary American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) which plugs up every stream in the countryside. This guy has no big flat tail and lives in confined tunnels, found only (and rarely) in the Cascade Mountains of British Columbia. Norm was elated with the discovery of a new locale to report to the Conservation Data Centre in Victoria, and he quickly pulled out the trusty GPS unit to determine coordinates on the site. Alas, the unit failed - not enough satellites could beam into their reclusive mountainside to provide a fix. Then one bright member of the party asked: "Does this mean that they will log them out"? Soon after, the upper switchback on the road was reached in a blazing hot sun. No doubt about it, we were two k's uphill from the wanted road junction and likewise Norm was one to two k's down road from his truck! The prospect of walking in the wrong direction on a hot logging road before we could swing back to the cars below was not appealing. Some waited for Norm to retrieve his vehicle; others went straight down through the logging slash to the road below, "daylighting" near their vehicles.

Returning to camp, it was quickly dismantled in order to reach the Boston Bar café at supper hour. For those who had a 9 pm ferry to catch to Nanaimo, the authors of this epistle, it was a quick coffee on the run, making the ferry with only minutes to spare. Every Coldcoqu trip has its last minute calamities.

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Southeast Stein Traverse

July - August, 2000

by Peter Pare

The aim was to finish a complete circumnavigation of the divides enclosing the Stein River and all its tributaries. In the summers of 1996 and 1999 (see BC Mountaineer 1998 and 2000) Lisa and I had done a one week traverse along the south west divide between the Stein and the Nahatlatch/Mehatl starting at Kwoiek Needle and finishing at Lizzie Lake (1996), and a 3 week traverse from Lizzie Lake around the north rim of the Stein to Lytton (1999). The remaining bit was from Kwoiek Needle northwest around the headwaters of Kwoiek Creek and then northeast past Skihist and Petlushkwohap to the mouth of the Stein. This time we convinced Geoff Mumford to cross the waters from Nanaimo and join us. Geoff is so strong and fast in the mountains that a verb was invented to describe his characteristic locomotion: "mumfording" along. Mumfording is an apparently effortless rapid way of crossing all sorts of terrain, especially on the return trip to camp and food!

July 31 - we took off from a Valley helicopter site 5 km north of Boston Bar at 1:20. It was 30°+ in the Fraser valley and we flew directly toward our food cache site on the divide between Vesuvi-anite Lake and Nesbitt Creek. Lisa jumped from the chopper to stash our two plastic buckets and an extra fuel can and then we made a quick trip back south east to be deposited at 2100m on the long west ridge of Kwoiek Needle where Lisa and I had camped 3 years earlier on the first leg of the circumnavigation. As the noise of the parting chopper died away Geoff gave a loud whoop of joy at being back in the mountains again. After

lunch and setting up camp we chased Geoff up the west ridge of Kwoiek Needle under scudding clouds. It was windy on the peak but there were still good views of our intended route and of the clearcuts in Log Creek. The summit register had an account of Geoff's ascent of the peak on a BCMC trip in 1971 and Lisa and Peter's visit in 1996. We were back in camp at 7:30.

August 1 and Geoff's ...th birthday was partially clear and cleared progressively. We followed goat paths along the ridge to the west until near its end we came to a sudden drop with the whole of the Chochiwa Glacier spread below us. As we started the 150m descent to the glacier we noticed a lot of goat tracks in the snow and looking up we saw 29 goats, including 4-6 kids crossing the snout!! We roped up at about 12:30 and trudged west up moderate slopes. After about 6km and at 5 pm Geoff called for vodka and tonic! Geoff's gigantic pack was enough of a handicap that we were all well matched for speed when fully loaded. We camped at 2400m on the snow beside a rock island in the glacier, equipped with melt pools and a flat ledge for cooking and enjoying the spectacular views of Kwoiek Peak, Kumkan and Mehatl to the west.

The sun woke us at 6:30 the next day and we decided on a day without packs, ascended Kumkan (2700m), in swirling mist and sun where we got good views of the North Mehatl in all its pristine (and protected!) beauty and then up Kwoiek Peak (2750m) for lunch where we found a sheltered spot among the rocks and fell asleep in the sun. We wended our way back through some monstrous crevasses to a sponge bath on the rocks and a pleasant dinner on sun-warmed rocks.

August 4 - Up at 6:10 and in increasing cloud we went westward across the divide between the Chochiwa and Rutledge glaciers and then descended 270m to the base of Mehatl Peak (2600m) which we climbed by its north ridge. The summit register had an account of Roy Mason and Dick Culbert's first ascent in 1958 and the 1971 ascent by Geoff. Good views were had of the three spires of Tierra Tower to the east, first climbed by Geoff, B. Butler and P. Kubik in 1971 (climbed since?) By 3 pm when we regained the glacier the sky had completely cleared and it remained that way for

the next 8 days!! We crossed the 2 km wide glacier to its northern edge where we found a stream and some granite slabs for camp.

August 6 - we headed north toward Mount Nielson, ascending a knife-edge moraine to high above a lovely lake in a hanging valley, which drained into Kwoiek Creek. As we got higher above the lake it looked as if there was going to be no way to descend, but finally we found a well-traveled, foot-wide goat path that wended its way down the only possible descent route. Lunch and a refreshing swim in the lake was followed by a trudge to the divide between the Kwoiek Creek and Stein River drainage to the south west of Mount Nielson and then a long descent to a lake at 1800m in the headwaters of the creek west of Nesbitt by 7 pm...bugs at this elevation!! Splendid alpenglow on Doss Peak to the east.

The next morning we finally turned east and crossed several 2300m cols before reaching the valley below Doss Peak that contained Vesuvianite Lake and our food drop. We found a marvelous campsite (2100m) in a meadow with swaths of wild flowers and views of Kwoiek Needle to the south across upper Kwoiek Creek and our starting point only 10-12 km away as the crow flew.

The next day was a rest day to eat some food and wash clothes but Peter and Lisa managed to climb Antimony Mountain by its long west ridge. The lower part of the ridge is the site of an old mining claim and we found lots of old junk including claim posts, an axe head and a tin chimney. We returned to camp by crossing the lovely meadows at the head of Nesbitt Creek, surprising a big stag drinking in a tarn on the way.

We moved camp 2 km to the east the next day and left the tents by the stag's tarn while we climbed Skihist Mountain via its southeast gully. What a pile of rubble!! Giant talus heaps of reddish rock till shortly before the summit at 2970m. Back in camp we had a warm bath in a small tarn and a long sunset dinner reclining against the heather covered rocks.....a foretaste of heaven!

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Peter and the north side of Kwoiek Pk. Photo - L. Baile



Geoff and Peter on Kumkan.
Photo - L. Baile



Camp above Vesuvianite Lake. Photo - P. Pare

little dodgy due to loose rock but the descent was on easy snow and we soon gained the Skihist Glacier, which we followed to its snout, camping on a flat sandy spot between its lateral moraines which was frequented by goats.

The next day was a delight; we left the moraine and ascended flower - strewn south facing slopes above North Kwoiek Creek. We could hardly walk a step without taking a picture. We slowly trudged up the easy slope in the hot sun coming across a stag sitting in a pool of water on the way. Halfway up to the crest of the divide Geoff's boot sole fell off! Luckily in his heavy pack he had some nails and an ice hammer with which we hammered it back into place. After reaching the crest of the Cantilever Range we headed north on the divide between Earl Creek and the west branch of Stryen Creek and found a grassy nook at 2150m by a bubbling stream with great views west to Petlushkwohap Mountain. The next day was a rest day and while Geoff used epoxy to

mend his sole, Peter and Lisa explored along the divide.

August 11 dawned overcast so fearing a weather change, we decided to try to make it to the Forks of Stryen Creek. We headed northeast along the ridge toward Akasik Mountain and then dropped steeply into the west branch of Stryen to where there was purportedly an old trail. Well the trail is all but gone, and after a lot of bushwacking we finally reached the Forks in the gathering dark. After a quick swim in a lovely pool we camped among trees for the first time in 12 days. It should be noted that Geoff wore shorts for the entire trip!

The next day we found the trail down Stryen Creek and, after startling a couple of guilty looking black bears, emerged into the dry and sunny Fraser valley where we easily picked up lifts, first to Lytton and then onto Boston Bar where we reluctantly began the rest of our life!



Peter looking into upper Earl Ck. with Petlushkwohap Mtn. beyond. Photo - L. Baile



Peter on Pk 2470m with Skihist Mtn. (left) and Petlushkowhap Mtn. (right) beyond upper Earl Ck. Photo - L. Baile



Lisa and Peter on the summit of Skihist Mtn. Photo - G. Mumford

I wasn't at the Church that Sunday...

by J.P. Shason

*God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
he walks with us silently out of the night
These are the words we dimly hear:
You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing,
Embody me.*

R.M. Rilke

I did not go to your Christening service with the rest of my family; I was at Mt. Seymour. It was a sunny day, with occasional patches of fog rolling over the ridges. Ski season had ended the previous weekend - so I had the mountain almost to myself. There were only three cars in the parking lot; I saw

no one. The trail towards the first peak was consolidated snow, with a few icy patches. It did not require any concentration to keep hiking, so there was lots of time for random thoughts. I was a little apprehensive about hiking alone in the spring, a season for startling a bear or coming across a cougar. I thought of unstrapping my ice axe from behind my pack, just so I would have something in my hand in case an animal surprised me or I it. But I did not want to stop and break the comfortable rhythm of uphill steps and slightly heavy breathing.

I remember the first time we saw you twenty years ago. In the maternity ward crib, among a dozen other newborns. My first recollection is that of seeing your feet sticking out and remarking that you will be a great hiker. And you are, though the hills you climb are not of rock and trees.

It took over an hour to get to the top of the hill. It's always a relief to finish the uphill part of any climb knowing that most of my calf- and lung-work is below me. I took off my heavy pack and started to look around. The ocean and islands to the west, lots more mountains to the north, inlet and the valley to the east, city to the south. Comfortingly familiar. I know the names of most of those mountains, I have been to some. I have visited a few of these islands. I know the inlet and the valley beyond. Having lived here, I'm familiar with here. It's a nice place to be. I sat down facing the city and the ocean. The snow was cool and comfortable to sit on, and I would be getting up before my clothes soaked through. I ate some trail mix, sipped on water. Snow is finally starting to melt, and some of the rocks and most of the treetops are peeking through. I turned around and looked for any other people on the mountain. I thought I saw someone on the next ridge, but could not be sure, as there was no movement. Maybe she/he was resting, just like me, and looking in my direction, not sure whether I was a rock, a treetop or an animal.

You said you met some folks about a year and a half ago who inspired you to study the Testament - and look at your life in a different way. I am amused but not surprised that you bring the same intelligence and enthusiasm to this new discovery in your life as you've done with other learnings

and experiences. You are well-equipped to be in this garden of forking paths.

Now the sun was at my back. It was quiet and cool and fresh and warm and bright. I sat there for quite some time, and then chose a steeper route to come down to the main trail. Snow was getting softer from the sun. On the steepest section, I needed to use my ice axe and full concentration to avoid slipping. I needed to watch my stance, my slightly bent knees, placement of my boots and the axe spike. I also needed to breathe in between. Soon I was back on the regular trail. I hurried along downhill, and for the first time met a family going up. A dad, two daughters, and their lab. The dog took the time to sniff me while we stopped to say hello and agree on the goodness of the day. As part of your studies and fellowship, you are involved in volunteer work: once a week working with the homeless youth. You are sharing and caring. It is natural for you, as you grew up in a sharing and caring environment. Embracing formal religion was not a stretch for you, you have been learning and practising those values all the time.

On the drive back from the mountain I encountered my first bear of the season. It was a fat, or pregnant, black bear about to cross the road to go to the other side of the forest. It ambled down out of the trees, heard or saw my car, and without stopping or looking towards me, turned around and went back in the trees. A sudden flash of graceful fluid motion. I was happy to see it, and glad that I had not seen it before or during my hike.

I was able to get back from the mountain in time to not entirely miss the gathering at your house. The lunch at your folks' place was delicious; I always make a point of eating a lot after my hikes. It was a formal occasion. Everyone else was dressed for Sunday service. I was in my hiking gear and boots. You opened and read the presents and cards you had received. You looked happy as your family and friends were there. I had a nice hike. It was a good day.

Rock On/Off
December, 2001
by Kevin Harper

If you like to climb in the Coast Mountains, you know rain. The many manifestations of rain include (and ranked in order of least common to most common) -

1. Soft rain which begins the evening after completing the climb
2. Rain the night before, enough so you know to call it off
3. Rain which begins as you drive to the base, increasing in intensity all the way
4. Rain which begins as you begin a descent, usually on class 3 or 4 slab
5. Rain which begins as you flake the rope at the base of the climb, ready to start
6. Rain which begins as you reach the "no turning back" part of the crux pitch.

So, given the above variables (and constants), I had been trying the entire summer to attempt a local (Squamish) classic rock climb called "Rock On". This climb is renowned for being nasty on the final crux pitch if wet. And for drying slowly.

Each time I had rounded up a partner to give it a try, it rained. And rained. Then it would dry out for a couple of weeks until I could free up some time and find a partner again. Then, the day of the climb, it would...

Finally in the middle of September, everything suddenly fell into place. It was dry and clear, and Tavis said he was up for doing it again. We were on our way a bit late, about 1pm. We headed up the Sea-to-Sky highway (generally the most dangerous part of local climbing), and managed to elude the Squamish/Whistler traffic cops, who apparently lead a troll-like existence hiding under local bridges. Things were looking good.

We hit the climbers parking lot in reasonable time. Tavis had decided earlier in the year that he climbed better in rock shoes which were totally worn through at both big toes. While he taped up his toes for some marginal degree of protection, I reached into the trunk and started sorting gear.

I had been told the climb was a stiffly rated 5.10a. After much discussion, and slagging absent friends (who always took too much gear, in our

opinion) we took my rack, supplemented with a couple of large nuts (didn't use) and his Aliens (used all our combined Aliens each pitch, and wished for more). I was talked into leaving behind my beloved big Hexes and Tri-Cam. Food and water - oops don't have any. Headlamps? Glanced at the Chief - yes, just in case. At the last moment, we also decided to take a second rope. It proved useful...

By 3, after the usual semi-lost thrashing about in the forested approach, we were at the base. My Rockport tennis shoes, made for pirouetting gracefully on a clay court, were doing their usual mischief on slippery and wet rocks and roots. I was muddy and tired. There was a small rockfall high on the climb. We could hear the rock coming towards us, but it was hard to tell where exactly they were or how big they were. A minute or so later, 4 smallish stones sailed over our heads. And then it was silent again.

Nobody was around. We could hear nobody on the climb. I had been told that "Rock On" was subject to horrendous lineups (a three and a half star rating in the guide tends to do that, I guess) and major traffic jams up high.

So we were a bit surprised by the silence. I looked at the first pitch dubiously. It looked like you went up via a hand crack, through a blocky overhang at about 5m. The rest of the pitch is hidden from view. It was dry (mostly), but confusing. "Is this the right climb?" Mysterious. How to get through the overhang was not apparent. "OK just start" ...

The first pitch was fun, with a couple of laybacks just long enough to get you puffing. Tavis led the next 5.9 pitch. We swapped the rack and I prepped to launch off. Suddenly we heard voices at the base of the climb. A guy and a girl. To this point it had been church-quiet, there didn't even seem to be any birds about, twittering and calling. Just the sound of water dripping, somewhere high up.

I worked through the crack, another 5.9. The main difficulty was ignoring the inviting crack on the right, which unfortunately leads nowhere. At the top, I could hear the team below us more clearly - Hey they're catching up! I set up a station and belayed Tavis up. We sorted through gear again and he set off on the crux pitch.

After a few moves, he had disappeared. It is an interesting aspect of this route - on almost every pitch you lose contact with the other climber for the majority of the pitch. You are usually alone leading, or belaying blind.

I was kind of surprised when a guy popped up through the crack below a few minutes later. We exchanged pleasantries while he set a station to belay his partner up. The ledge was a bit cramped to hold 2 people comfortably, so I was happy to be quickly off to follow on the crux section.

It was a brilliant pitch (10.a), although it resembled a small waterfall for the final moves. We were now high up the South Gully, and starting to get some pretty good exposure. Every sentence reverberated through the gully, and the Squamish Starbucks was a forlorn dot ... way down there.

As I prepared to lead the last pitch, Tavis commenced a play-by-play of the girl leading below.

"She's really bold, must be 5m up and she hasn't placed a piece yet."

I was ready to launch. I surveyed the route above.

"Hmm, kinda cute." he said, "She just put in her first piece."

"I'm off" I said, to little reaction.

"Here I go," I said. There was a flicker of tension on the rope. Good enough. I made a few moves and was lost to his sight. The last words I heard were "Wow, this girl either likes running it out, or just doesn't know how to place pro."

I topped out. I set up a station. I pulled up the rope and said all the usual things, in triplicate, as the Chief bounced my comments through the Gully and off the two giant rock faces. No reaction.

A cold wind blew around at the top. The sun was fading into a pinkish sunset. It was about 7 pm. I tugged the rope. I shouted a bit more. No reaction. I looked around for a good rappel station. There was only one, but it was way off to the right of the route. I tugged at a few scraggly trees, which would provide a direct rap - maybe not...

Then I could hear a voice from below - Tavis' - "Rope"..."Fell"... Not what I wanted to hear. I shouted down what I had done and could do. The wind whirled my voice around.

"Rope"..."Fell"..."Come Down"... I felt very cold and quite alone. I strung my rope around

the base of the two best scraggy trees and rapped down. As I reappeared, he explained the situation. The bold girl had run it out, placed a #3 cam, run it out, placed a bad nut, run it out, placed a very bad small cam below the crux. As she moved out of the crack onto the face, the small cam popped out. She saw it, shifted her weight, and then looked back again to see the nut pop out.

She paused, looked up and down several times and then attempted a desperate lunge - the crux move - and fell.

She knocked her head on the wall by the #3 cam - 6m below - and kept on going. Another 6m later she was hanging upside down in free space ... the last piece had held. Had it not, she would have continued falling past her partner (helplessly belaying) the length of the rope to the belay station...the final test...

There was a moment's silence, and then she called out "Guillaume, I'm alright!" Incredibly, she hadn't broken anything, and her bike helmet (we found out later it was a recent present from a friend) had done its job. She'd survived with nothing but scrapes, bruises and shock. But resumption of climbing wasn't going to be a viable option.

Guillaume lowered her back down to the belay ledge and called up that their rope was now stuck. Tavis lowered our second rope down and belayed him up. Guillaume managed to free the rope on the way. They discussed setting up a pulley system to help her up, but the sun's final descent below the horizon made a convincing argument that we all rappel down instead.

As Tavis explained all this I begin to pull on the rap rope to retrieve it. It didn't budge. I pulled harder. I yarded on it from both directions. I swore at it. My swearing reverberated weirdly through the area. Tavis and I both pulled on it. It didn't budge. It was hopelessly snagged, probably between the roots of one of the trees it was run around. Meanwhile, it kept on getting darker.

We abandoned it. We strung the doubled rope through the anchors and Tavis rapped down, followed by Guillaume. I took a last glance at my rope, silvery in the failing light. Then I rapped down to the next ledge too.

It was pretty crowded. 4 people where I thought it was a bit cramped for 2 before. I

introduced myself. Linda was obviously quite shaken, but managed a couple of feeble jokes. She was Swedish, with an interesting accent. Her helmet sat askew on her head. She zipped her fleece open to reveal some nasty abrasions and bruises. Tavis rapped down; they followed using a buddy rappel system. It was almost completely black now, and depth perception was somewhat challenging. The ledge kept seeming to shrink. I heard them talking, but couldn't see anything below. Finally I heard "off rappel", pulled the rope through my ATC and stepped off into darkness.

It was a clear night, with the wind steadily increasing. At the next station was a sling (age unknown) wrapped around a large tree. Upon landing I pulled out my headlamp. Linda had one too. It was a weird scene, two beams of light crisscrossing in the quiet, occasionally highlighting the faces or forms of two others, pulling and coiling ropes. I remembered that my rope lay trapped far above. I mentioned it to Linda, who had revived enough to immediately offer to retrieve it the following day. None of us thought she was going to be in any shape to climb for a while. She would be stiff and sore for quite some time. But she was bold...

A final long steep dark rap deposited us at a different base from which we had started. It was 8:30 pm. We were only lost in the woods now. A nice camaraderie developed as we thrashed through the typical challenging coast underbrush. Linda was uncomplaining, but must have been incredibly tired and sore. We told jokes and all fell once or twice. We were only imagining trails, and eventually gave up and followed a steep wet creek bed down. After quite some time we heard a car go by, and soon broke out onto the forestry road not far from the climbers parking lot.

We waved goodbye as they drove off in a classic beater. I couldn't relax until I had all my gear and harness off. Then a wave of relief washed over me, and left me feeling clear and alive. I could hear a symphony of birdcalls, nighthawks, and wildlife rustling in the forests around us. The night air was like perfume on a cut. The stars and moon were as if magnified, clearer and stronger and more defined than usual.

Two weeks later. My rope was dropped off at Tavis' place, neatly coiled and smelling of pine

resin. On the Smoke Bluffs trail he hears a strange yet oddly familiar accent. A girl that sounded and looked like Linda leading "S&M's Delight" (what's in a name?) – but the gear was frequent and well placed! "It must be another Swede". No-indeed it was Linda – climbing a hard 5.10b for her first lead since falling.

"Why weren't you placing gear like this on Rock On?"

She replied, "Rock On is why I'm doing it like this now."

Cold, Confusion and Clouded Judgement - The 1998 Garibaldi N ve Traverse by Steve Grant

With weather obviously unsuitable for a N ve traverse, it was remarkable 15 people showed up for the trip. Because we doubted the traverse would be successful, only a token effort was made to leave transportation on the Diamond Head road, and the whole group proceeded to Garibaldi Lake. Crossing the lake to Sentinel Bay was a tiring exercise in frustration, with snow sticking more tenaciously than the finest glue, even on freshly cleaned skis. A scientific investigation of the adhesive qualities of such snow would surely yield invaluable information. At one point, in utter desperation, I tried walking and found it only slightly slower than skiing with 10kg of snow stuck to each ski.

It was late in the day before we got to Sentinel Bay, where the leader commanded us to continue onto the N ve rather than settle into the shelters. A dark and descending overcast suggested we were really in for it.

The south wall of Sentinel Bay is formed by a fairly steep slope that extends from the Table to the Sentinel Glacier. The customary route up and down this slope is nearest the cabin. The slope's steep snow is punctuated by small rock outcrops. After a "descent" of this slope years ago by a prominent BCMC member, better known for his climbing skills than skiing ability, we subsequently referred to it as "The Pinball Machine". The group headed up this slope.

A little further up the valley is a gentle wind cirque that provides a much easier and safer access

to the glacier above. Those who stayed sulking at the cabins finally gave up hope the group would choose to stay at the cabins, and rather than brave the pinball machine, headed up the safer route. The pinball wizards spotted them and flocked over to follow the now-broken trail. We were beginning to get a feel for the style of this trip.

By the time we climbed one or two hundred metres we were up in the whiteout, but pressed on. Soon the combination of whiteout and darkness caused obvious problems stumbling over snowdrifts and maintaining course. Regardless, it still was necessary to have a disagreement about whether to continue or camp. This time, the campers won, and we dug in for the night as a windy snowstorm began.

Jayne and I prepared to cook with our stove sitting on a shovel blade in the tent vestibule. As usual, we had trouble keeping the Whisperlite running. While investigating its lethargy, I discovered the shovel blade was a pool of gas, with the stove sitting running in the middle of it. At least now we knew where all our gas had disappeared on a previous trip. After promptly extinguishing the stove, I found the fuel supply hose had an invisible hole under the braided metal sheath. These things are deadly, and anyone with one of these stoves should check it regularly.

After a cold supper, a very stormy night, and the following morning's cold breakfast, we observed the whiteout storm outside and awaited a decision to go home. However, the majority ruled that we must continue until it became obvious continuing didn't make the slightest sense. One would think we were already well past that point, but we got up and started breaking trail. I made a mental note to report that at this time, the marketing executive had yet to emerge from his office.

Mike Peel, being more intelligent than any of us, and probably knowing what was going to happen, felt ill and went home.

Not far above, but out of sight of our tents, I ran into a broken trail. We thought there was a VOC group at Sphinx camp, but were a little surprised anyone else would come up here in these conditions. Since the other group had come up the pinball machine, they probably hadn't seen our tracks, and so wouldn't know where we were.

There was a little visibility as we passed between the Glacier Pikes, and down at the bottom of the Warren Glacier, we caught up to the last of the other group. There were 12 of them, using quite a variety of ski gear ranging from a split snowboard to what appeared to be track skis.

They broke a relatively accurate trail up into the gloom past the Shark Fin, and on up to the top of the Névé. We decided they must have a GPS. But near the top, where their trail went in a large, almost full circle, we dumped that theory. By now, all of our group had caught up, and the two groups merged. Once this happens, it is difficult to get the groups separated again. We waited a safe distance below while a very energetic member of the other group plowed a deep trail up the last steep slope between corniced areas, onto the apex ridge of the Névé. Then the mobs crowded up onto the windswept southern exposure of the ridge.

We couldn't see anything. The groups convened about 4m apart to have route-finding discussions. According to a description of the trip written by the other group, they had already observed our group committing blunders, although our mere presence would seem to be easy evidence. The discussions went on and on. I lost my patience, and knowing we were higher than and west of the ideal spot to cross the ridge, decided to ski down to the east to reach the little rocky col marking the ideal crossover. Keeping careful track of the faintly visible horizon line about 10m to my left, I did slow, small turns down the slope, thinking I was headed east. Of course I hadn't even checked a compass. A couple of people from the other group cautiously followed.

After a few turns, I was doing a left turn towards, and while watching, that horizon line, when suddenly I realized I was airborne. Very interesting. I couldn't see anything because of the whiteout and the cloud of stirred-up snow. I could tell I was in the air, and was curious to see how long this would go on, and what would happen when I landed. I knew the cornices in the area were small, and had safe runouts, so I wasn't very worried. After a few moments, I could tell I was in contact with the ground again, and waited until it felt like I was no longer moving. End of event.

Now I should tell a story from a trip many years ago on the glaciers up the south side of Mt.

Shuksan. Like this trip, we were ascending the mountain, in whiteout conditions, with a large BCMC group. On the trip was a very long-time member of the club, whom I had read about for years. This was the first trip I had been on with this legendary mountaineer.

The usual "large group in a whiteout" scenario played itself out. The people leading would stop to reconsider continuing. There would always be others, different people at different times, who, having a broken trail to follow and therefore feeling confident, would go past and continue either a little or a lot further. The result was the group continued up into unsafe conditions. I recall we made it up the mountain, but finding our way back down the glacier was a problem. Our up track was impossible to find and we got off route. We would ski a short distance, then stop to regroup and pretend we knew where we were going, then continue.

On one of these regroupings, it became apparent someone was missing, and it was the reknowned mountaineer. Since he had been towards the front of the group, we very cautiously began snowplowing straight down the glacier. Visibility was so bad we couldn't even see his tracks to follow them. Just as I realized I was at the edge of a large dropoff, I saw the missing person, almost vertically below, and about 10m lower. He had skied off the upper edge of a snow-filled crevasse, and was preparing to exit its much lower downhill edge. Fortunately he suffered only a minor injury, had not dropped into the real bottom of the crevasse, and was able to ski out easily.

I remember the first thing I thought when I saw what had happened, was that either he had made a very unusual error, or if what he had just done was not unusual, he had been very lucky to survive so many years of mountaineering.

Below the cornice on the Névé, reflecting on the fact I had just done the same stunt, I felt my error was not unusual, and I had better smarten up if I wanted to do many more years of this stuff. A couple of worried heads poked over the crest of the slope, and I jokingly warned them to watch out for the cornice. Since I had landed almost on top of one of the exploratory ski trails, it was simple and quick to rejoin the groups and feel stupid in

front of the large audience. Everyone was still standing in the wind, even less sure of what to do now.

It turned out only one of the other group had crossed the Névé before, and that was in summer. Some members of their group apparently had never done anything like this before. Our group had dozens of Névé traverses behind us, but seemed unable to make much use of that experience by deciding, for instance, to turn around. What to do? The other group had now lost any remaining confidence they might have had in our competence, and disappeared into the murk to the southwest.

Robin and Greg roped together and tried to lead us off on a bearing. The problem with this was that people kept passing them, and there were frequent pointed comments about how to proceed. Reminiscent of a fiasco in a whiteout on Mt. Wood, where a party comprising many of the same people descended into a vast realm of frighteningly steep slopes by going on a mistaken bearing 20 degrees west of south instead of east of south, again we were heading too far west. This got us over into the precipitous slopes on the south side of the Tent, where we ground to a halt, unable to see anything, but knowing anywhere but back was too steep.

Then the other party appeared directly below us, travelling east. We determined from them the



On the Névé traverse. Photo – the party

steep slope between us and them might be safe to descend, so we did, only to find them at the top of another such steep slope disappearing down into the whiteout. They asked us to wait at the top while they descended it one by one. Completely sensible.

However, given the number of people, this took forever. As usual, the skiers went down in descending order of skiing competence. Each one took longer. Our even larger group strained at the leash, with people becoming unable to contain

themselves and starting to edge down. The last two members of the other group turned out to be unable to get down the slope in less than an eon, and our group eventually lost all discipline and plunged down past them in a big dumb mob. Why will people spend hours digging themselves out of falling with a heavy pack in deep soft snow after every attempted telemark turn, when they could easily get down in a fraction of the time and energy by traversing, side-slipping and kick-turning? Heaven forbid they should even choose to walk now and then.

Soon after, it felt like we were on the ramp that drops to the southeast onto the vast flat portion of the Névé between Cinder Cone and Mt. Garibaldi. By the time we got to the flats, the two groups were hopelessly entangled again. The leader of the other group had been using a technique that impressed us by its effectiveness. He had a long ribbon tied to an ice axe. He'd throw the axe ahead the length of the ribbon, then ski up to the axe, and throw it again. This allowed continued, though slow, travel into the whiteout without fearing crevasses. It was not, however, effective against all dangers.

Since we knew this area was completely flat and crevasse-free, we became impatient again and went ahead. The plan was to continue until noticing the undulating terrain just before the drop-off into the head of Ring Creek. This went fairly well for quite a while, until the slope suddenly steepened uphill. We looked up to see a very large cornice almost above our heads. Quick, retreat!

This seemed fairly stupid again, but even the ice axe technique wasn't proof against this hazard. At least we finally knew exactly where we were, and turned east to swing around to the north of Cinder Cone. The hours continued to tick by on this most inefficient journey.

Now, it might be time to look into what was going on here. I can't speak for the other group, but it was evident once we found their tracks, that our group would not turn back before and unless they did. Because of course if they made it across to Diamond Head and we didn't, that would prove they had better genes. Along the same lines, both groups carefully examined the actions of the other, carefully noting signs of either superior

or inferior abilities. This seems to be the case whenever groups come into proximity on these sorts of trips.

I remember a Spearheads traverse when our BCMC group played leap-frog and competed with an ACC group to see who could make the most errors on yet another whiteout trip. For instance, while traversing the top of the Blackcomb Glacier, our group inconsiderately passed above the ACC group. Their leader sensibly told his group to stop until we were safely past them. In the whiteout, we climbed a ridge far too high above the descent gully to the Decker Glacier. The next day in the continuing whiteout, they skied to the edge of a cliff near the Ripsaw. There were a few other similar incidents.

Many of the worst disasters in mountaineering appear to happen when parties with any significant differing characteristic (such as: nationality, club affiliation, commercial company) find themselves together in difficult circumstances. It seems inevitable that situation clouds judgement. Ironically, making the best decisions seems to be more difficult the more public the outcome will be. Presumably the survival of the characteristic of egotism suggests egotism is a survival trait, often resulting in superior accomplishments. That has to be balanced against the fact that in certain circumstances, particularly common in the mountains, it's a killer. Is it possible that the elaborate score-keeping performed by mountaineers (summit records, first ascents, journals, books, club meetings) is another aspect of a culture that has ego problems? Could it help explain why people whose lifetime hobby is mountaineering are three times as likely to die while mountaineering as lifetime skydivers are likely to die on jumps? The subject of risk comes into consideration. The search for the addictive rush of adrenaline we get from taking genuine risks results in accidents. A mountaineer or party can take risks whether or not they have company. Certainly solo mountaineering parties, where no one else will ever know the outcome, are not immune to taking bad risks and having mishaps.

The accidents involving individuals or parties acting in isolation may be different from those involving multiple parties or publicized endeavours. It seems parties in difficult situations where the

outcome will be public, cannot help but have their judgement impaired, and so the instance of mishap may be greater. Maybe that is difficult to conclude because it's difficult to know the achievements and mishaps of those who mountaineer incognito – but would there be so many accidents on Mt. Everest if no one outside the party would know the outcome? Some people certainly back off in the face of risk with publicized outcome. But I'd bet that most end up taking greater risks.

On the Spearheads traverse, I felt uncomfortable about the presence of another group, and I know our presence wasn't a cause for them to rejoice. Until I thought this through, I assumed it was because both groups wanted to maximize their feeling of wilderness travel by having the place to themselves. But it's possible both parties understood at some level that unless the parties happily join forces, the level of risk was increased. Compounding the discomfort was knowing that others would know of any screw-ups. And screw-ups seem to be unavoidable, if not plentiful, when we insist on travelling above treeline in whiteouts.

One difference between our groups on the Névé was that we very much wanted to get home that night, while the other group seemed unconcerned by the passage of time. We weren't even sure they had shelter, since they had stayed at the Sphinx hut. While appreciating their ability to stay out of trouble, we hoped they recognized the value of our knowledge of the area. Both groups failed to recognize that probably neither would have made it across the Névé that day had it not been for pooling resources with the other group. Behind all this was the disappointing realization that without a GPS, it was basically dumb for anyone to cross the Névé in these conditions. Sure, you can use clever little map and compass techniques to do so and feel smart about it, but what's the point beyond that? And since we had no way of detecting all the possible dangers, was it worth it? We never even got any enjoyable downhill skiing. As for views, you've got to be kidding.

So we travelled east, again proceeding ahead of the axe-man. But we cut the corner into Ring Creek a little too sharp, as Greg discovered when his skis dropped over the side of some emptiness. He had almost dropped into one of the steep gullies

off the Névé. He prevented a fall by dropping onto the snow, but couldn't get enough purchase to move back off the edge. The mobs went into spectator trance mode until Robin skied over to help Greg. However, with skis on, Robin couldn't exert enough force to pull Greg back. Emerging from my own stupor, I removed my pack and skis, and we hauled Greg back from the dropoff.

A call went out for the ice-axe man to resume the lead. It seemed pointless, almost amusing, as the axe would sail off, with us expecting to see it fall lower, only for it to land level, or even higher than us. But now, everyone stayed behind. Just as we got used to this, the axe went sailing out of sight, followed by the entire ribbon. We crept up to what surely must be a huge steep dropoff, fearing the axe was lost. However, it was just on the other side of a teeny little snowdrift.

Finally the hours of tension ended as we emerged below the clouds just by Opal Cone, and we could see the trees down Ring Creek valley. I started to think we might make it home tonight. But now we ran into deep fresh snow, warmed to cloying stickiness by the day's heat at these lower elevations. The anticipated glide to the Ring Creek crossing point was mostly a plod.

Just across the creek, we had the choice of doing the short steep climb to where the old summer trail is, or going a little downstream to ascend the shooting gallery of avalanche slopes. I chose the short climb, but the snow on it was too deep for skis. It was too deep even without them, so I took my pack off and shovelled a hip-deep foot trail up the slope. The other party stopped for a very late lunch down at the creek, and it looked like they were preparing to bivouac. Away from the creek, we located a snowed-in ski trail to climb to the old road. Unfortunately, there was such a severe chute down the avalanche track that we were forced to do some extra climbing before being able to rejoin the old road. Our group now repaid the other group's trail breaking by proceeding to Elfin Shelter. The deep heavy snow slowed us quite a bit, but anyone who has been off route through there knows it would have been much worse had we not known where to find and follow the road.

We reached the Elfin Shelter at 8 pm, just as it got dark. No doubt the rangers were puzzled at

the sight of 26 people filing by into the night. The skiing along Paul Ridge was quite unpleasant, as I was too tired to ski with skins on, my wax wouldn't grip, and I was saving my flashlight batteries for the run down the road. Thankfully, we had a broken trail. We got quite strung out, and I rationalized this was ok because we were "safe" and still had to sort out transportation.

After snowplowing all the way down, the advance members of our group met at the Diamond Head parking lot. It was deserted, so there would be no convenient rides.

Our group did have one small car halfway down the road, and it would just hold all our drivers so we could go get the rest of our cars. But then a couple of people from the other group caught up to us, and they needed assistance. Even less well prepared than us, all of their cars were at Black Tusk. We agreed to give one of them a ride to get one of their cars, but at the cost of taking one of our drivers. They would then take our remaining driver back to Black Tusk to retrieve our last vehicle while fetching the rest of their cars.

As we walked down the road, I went into rubber-knee condition, and decided to ditch my pack and skis. The others with me followed suit, and we clomped down the endless, dark road, in boots most unsuitable for hiking downhill. Five of us jammed into the little car, and drove up to Black Tusk.

More than an hour later when we got back to the Diamond Head road, I drove up to begin picking up people and get my pack and skis. People and gear were scattered the length of the road. During the first stop, near the bottom, the other group's first vehicle caught up, and then I continued up the road, picking up Jayne on the way. She was still carrying all her stuff. After getting my pack and a few more people, we headed back down, puzzled that we hadn't seen the other group's vehicle. The mystery was solved when we found it parked at the bottom. The fellow was using his parent's Pathfinder, and as is customary for Pathfinders equipped with automatics, it had chosen this inconvenient time to eat its transmission. Upon realizing the ramifications of this, our leader decided his responsibilities were concluded, and went home.

So another member of our group had to go back to Black Tusk (his second trip up that evening), with the remainder of the other group's drivers, plus our last driver. Meanwhile, people continued staggering down the Diamond Head road. Now approaching midnight, some of the other group had been on their feet since 5:30am. I added my load of people and stuff to the growing mountain at an all-night restaurant, and went clear back up to the Diamond Head parking lot before finding the last members of the other group. I could understand their pleasure in removing their packs and travelling by sitting in a warm vehicle.

Finally everyone was either at the restaurant, or headed to Vancouver, and at long last we could go home, where we arrived at about 2 am Monday. Needless to say, my employer did not get full value from my pay that day, and I hope none of the other group had to write exams at UBC. That week, a Canadian Tire flyer arrived. It contained an ad for GPS units on sale for \$135. I bought one so fast it wasn't funny (and still haven't used it on a whiteout trip).

Participants: Robin Tivy, Betsy Waddington, Greg Stoltmann, Jayne Hardy, Steve Grant, and a cast of dozens.

**Delayed deployment on
Mt. "Alex Phillip" (2487 m)
20-21 April, 2002
by Karl Ricker**

Mt. "Alex Phillip" – so much press, and so many cancellations, over the last four or five years (I've lost track), and no action. The trip schedule compilers and editor were threatening a boycott on any further announcements – "Get it over with, we have had enough of promises and no delivery on this fictitious peak. It's not even shown on maps". Okay, okay, the pressure was on. The first task was to make sure that the Intrawest dynasty was not to close down Blackcomb on the scheduled date. To cover the odds the third weekend of April was chosen, believing I had the fourth if the weather shut us down as is so often the case on April trips. But Intrawest-Blackcomb Division put the clamps on; the third weekend was their last

day of operation for this year. Take it, or wait until mid-June. Talk about pressure from all sides, with no room to wiggle. The weatherman added his own salvo – clear on Saturday but likely rain and clouds on Sunday – then Thursday night he relented – the clouds and rain would come on Monday! I breathed a sigh of relief and dropped the matter of going elsewhere when we met on Saturday a.m. at Whistler.

By Friday the ranks had swelled to nine, and on Saturday morning in Parking Lot #4 (the only overnight allowed at Whistler) a 10th showed up – a record turnout for my on-and-off Spearhead forays. The crew was a mix of: old and new, young and ancient, fit and worn out, executive and rabble, healthy and ailing! On the latter I began the trip in sick bay (intestinal rumbles), and another two later in the day joined my ranks. There were no wealthy or penniless, but Ed had to take on the role of Swiss banker because the youngest two, Carys and Christian, had forgotten that a Spearhead trip required money to get on the lifts! As it turned out these two had the "wheels"; Carys of Eco-Challenge event renown (Borneo, etc.) was the dynamo, despite her limited ski touring experience, and it was the first ever trip for her brother Christian. Dave, Rhys and Bill, however, kept them in check, sending them back to help the ailing who were dragging the rear (me!).

The first "huffer" of the sparkling Saturday was the climb to the Spearhead-Blackcomb Col from the Show-Case T-bar. We were greeted by an early spring migrant, an American pipit. As well, the objective, Mt. "Alex Phillip", stood out as a black obelisk to the east. No other birds were seen for the remainder of the day as we then contoured around the north side of Decker to the west rim of Trorey Glacier. Somehow we always miss the easiest chute to descend to reach this glacier. Dave and Rhys opted for the hardest (closest to Decker); Ed balked and steered the rest of us back to the second one further north where most of us took our skis off to ease the descent. A party of three others arrived and skied by us impressively through the knee-deep crud. Yes, it was a busy day in the Spearheads. People were testing the steep slopes everywhere along with a plethora of tracks left over from the previous two or three days.

After lunch on the Trorey the gang opted to reach the Tremor Glacier by following a nice set of zigzag tracks up to the col between the north and south peaks of Mt. Pattison; this was no millionaire's route, but it by-passed the usual way to the head of the Trorey and then around the south end of the south peak of Pattison before descending onto the Tremor. Our selected base camp site was located mid-way on the Tremor Glacier between the Pattison col and our objective, Mt. "Alex Phillips". At the col the troops took time off to bag some peaks. Some of us decided to traipse up the easy north peak with no cairn (el approx. 2390m), while Dave didn't have enough, by leading Rhys, and Leslie to where Bill was sleeping on the north ridge of the south peak (el 2483 m). While they continued the longish ramble to the peak, others descended the steep crud to set up camp on the Tremor Glacier, located mid-stream at elevation 2230 m (GPS gave a slightly higher reading).

The youth were bivouacking for the night and so, after quickly digging their pits for their beds, they were off in a flash to do some announced skiing before dinner. The older and more tired worked on supper and camp duties. What's this? We looked up; Carys and Christian had removed their skis and were climbing through mixed rock and snow on an unnamed peak ("Lesser Tremor"), satellite to and located mid-way between, Tremor Mtn. and the south peak of Pattison. Ed checked their progress with his binocs. They stopped one metre below a corniced-topped summit much to mother Nina's relief. So peak number three was bagged on the day, and some were now talking about multiple ascents for Sunday. Wishful thinking to say the least.

Thick fog greeted the early risers on Sunday; at 6 a.m. it was no better but a brief lift of the clouds gave us a squint down Tremor and Wedge Creek Valleys into the proverbial black hole. However, the clouds about us began to swirl, providing a peek to Tremor Mtn. A raven called to taunt us. These provided us the impetus to set out for Mt. "Alex Phillip", located about mid-way on the long NNW ridge of Tremor. The old and tired led the charge to the snow and rubble-covered west slopes, which were steepish. Skis set aside at glacier edge, the footwork on breakable crust slowed the

ascent to the skyline north ridge of the peak. Alternating leads and persistent bashing put us on the ridge about 500 m north of the summit. It was also darn narrow, and so we stayed just off of it on the west side, scrambling up to a very pointed summit. One would be hard pressed to stand on it. It was about 9 a.m. when Ed and I reached it, but right on our heels after starting half an hour later from camp was Carys who by-passed Evelyn enroute. Soon after, Dave, Evelyn and Christian arrived, the former noting that this was one of the few peaks in the Spearheads where some honest grade three scrambling was required! (The Ripsaw and Mt. Macbeth would be slightly less so, but Mt. Cheakamus and Diavolo-Angelo would be Grade 4.) Scrambling back along the ridge we found the last departer from the camp, Bill, who quickly moved on to the summit. Descent from ridge top to skis was rapid and the first arrivals were back to camp at 9:45, others showing up over the next half hour while camp was quickly dismantled. Those who stayed at camp in the meantime had recovered sufficiently from the illness of night to move on.



Christian and Carys at the Tremor Glacier camp with "Mt. Alex Phillip" and the ascent route behind. Photo - K. Ricker.



**Evelyn, Carys, Ed, Dave, and Christian (L -R)
on the summit of "Mt. Alex Phillip".**

Photo - K. Ricker.

The idea was to ascend to the col south of the south peak of Pattison (the usual route) and then contour high on the Trorey Glacier to the Trorey-Decker col, descending easy, south slopes of the latter to reach the alpine floor of Decker Creek basin, and then an easy traverse to the "Cloud Nine" run on Blackcomb. Lack of visibility killed the plan; all reluctantly agreed to retrace our steep steps up the steep crud to the col between the two peaks of Pattison. Out of the murk three quick-moving Spearhead traversers emerged on the Tremor Glacier. They had camped on Ripsaw Glacier, attempted to contour Naden Glacier, but the lack of visibility turned them around. They were moving fast; by the time we had trudged up to the col they were gone, never to be seen again. Breakable crust and flat light played havoc on the descent of upper Trorey Glacier. Some floated on the surface, others plowed under, but the dreaded Trorey-Decker chutes were reached without serious mishap. Skis were shouldered for the steep climb up through the number two chute. The first arrivals at the top dropped their loads spiritedly and went back down to help those who were struggling with the steps that were set at a giant's stride apart! It was a relief to make it up and out of the Trorey. We then knew that another night out could be avoided. The weatherman's revised prognosis was too optimistic, but at least it gave us a window to get out. Swoosh! - it was a quick descending traverse on our old uphill tracks on the north wide of Decker. Passing over the recent cornice collapse of previous days, it was only a

matter of a slight uphill climb to the low point, the "Ninth Hole", which separates Decker from the "Disease Ridge" area of Blackcomb. There was another colossal cornice collapse of debris in this hole to scramble through. Now the clouds were slightly above us, and the route around the side of Decker Creek basin had already been ski tracked. Open slopes to steep tree-covered slopes on the south end of Disease Ridge were quickly dispatched. What was this? The lift company had made a trail off the basin edge below the ridge to connect to Cloud Nine (ski run). This made it an easy and graceful exit from the back country.

The best skiing of the day was down the runs of Blackcomb by way of "Sunset Boulevard" (nice for heavy packs) and ending up on Dave's favourite "School Marm", while three of us rode the lift down to avoid the perceived slush. This put all ten of us at Merlins, the lift base, hosting a pint to end the saga of Mt. "Alex Phillips" on a high note. It was pretty for the first day, but ugly on the second.

And who was Alex? He and his wife, Myrtle, came to Alta Lake on spec in 1911 or 1912; they bought land from Charlie Chandler and over the 30-35 years built up an enterprising Rainbow Resort on Alta Lake. They were the core citizens of the valley, his wife becoming a school board trustee in later years, hence Myrtle Phillip Elementary School. It is only fair to have her husband's



**The 3 chutes loading from the N side of
Decker Mtn. to the Trorey Glacier.**

Photo - K. Ricker.

name enshrined on a local feature. So again, here's to Alex; you will like your namesake.

No cairn was found on "Alex" although one flatstone near the high point could suspiciously be a base of an old one. We built on the site leaving a film can register record of the trip in a rock crack beside it. I am not aware of any prior ascent of the peak but who knows? It is not a heli-skier summit.

Coordinates for "Alex Phillip": 514040E, 5546180N (1983), or 514100E, 5546025N (1927); elevation is 2487 m on the 1:15,000 scale ortho-photo map and 2480 m+ on Baldwin's ski tour map (1:25,000).

Peaks Ascended: Mt. Pattison (S. Pk.), Mt. Pattison (N. Pk.), "Lesser Tremor" ("Tremblor") (2530 m) and Mt. "Alex Phillip" (first recorded ascent).

Participants: Ed Zenger (commander-in-chief), Bill Andrews, Rhys Gibb, Leslie Cowan, Evelyn Feller, Dave Hughes, Nina Evans-Locke, offspring Carys Evans and Christian Evans (with no Locke) and Karl Ricker (organizer without dog).

Winter ski camps with a portable cabin by Michael Feller

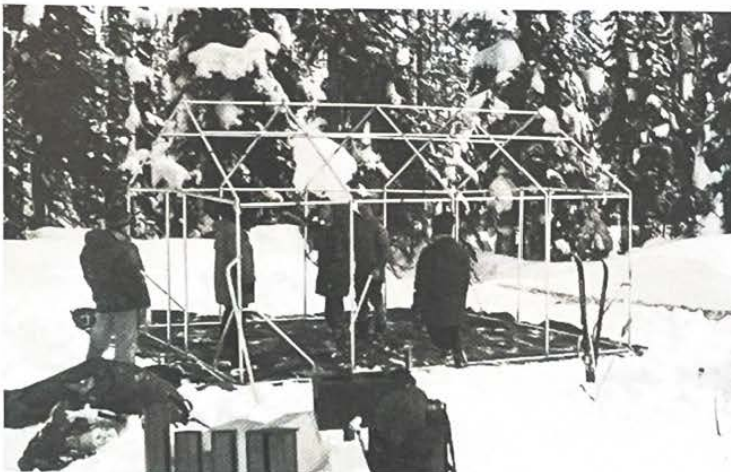
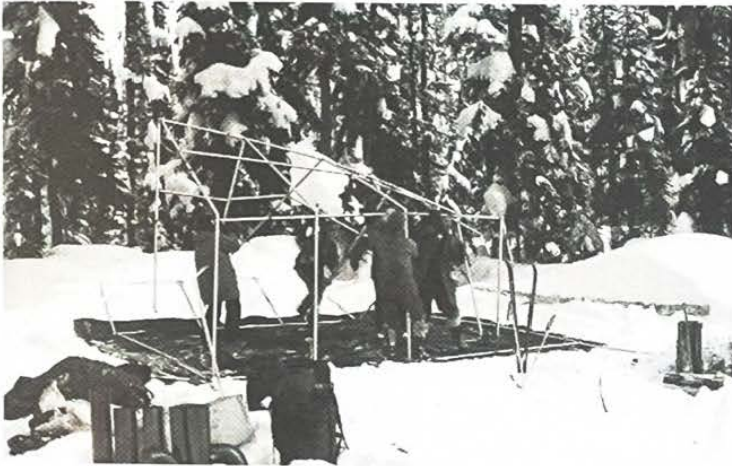
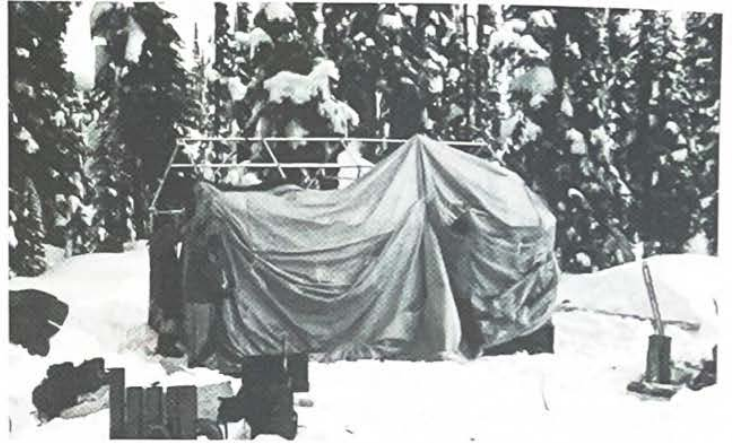
The Christmas-New Year period has always been a time for rest after a hectic year. One can relax, recuperate, think for a change, and generally lift one's spirits. The ideal place for all this, of course, is in a wilderness setting. Extended ski trips at this time of year couped up in small, cold tents are not to everyone's taste, however, so we had developed the habit of finding nice warm huts. In the early 1980's, these huts began to seriously fill up during the Christmas - New Year period. As crowds tend not to be conducive to rest and relaxation or to enjoyment of wilderness, we began to look further afield. We tried the Eremite-Tonquin cabin in Jasper park. This had been booked for the exclusive use of an ACC party, we were told. So we joined this party, skiing in prior to the ACC trip to spend a few enjoyable days with Vancouver friends. The ACC trip was a disaster - with a leader who treated people like kindergarten kids, excessive charges for little food, chairs thrown out of the cabin to prevent

people from sitting around the stove, and finally, the arrival of a Kamloops party which had been given permission to stay in the cabin booked for the exclusive use of the ACC party. That was my first and last ACC-organized extended trip. There had to be a better alternative.

I can't remember whose idea it was, but someone came up with the idea of using a large tent, which would function as a portable hut. We would then not have to compete with others for wilderness or hut space. Ross checked out tents and came up with one designed for mining exploration camps. Eight people put in about \$200 per share, with one person buying 3 shares. Ross purchased the tent - a Canadian Can-Tex tent from Ontario, measuring approximately 4m x 5m x 3m tall (apex) with walls approx. 1.6m high. The tent itself was canvas, with a heavy-duty tubular aluminum frame. Ross designed and added firstly a polyweave tarp fly and floor then, after our experiences on the first trip, clear plastic windows on each of the long side wall, frost liners for the roof, and long ensolite pads to fit under the floor. It could sleep 5-6 in comfort with a corner for a kitchen and another corner for our firewood and wood-burning fold-up metal stove. Fold-up deck chairs provided seating and a large Coleman 2-burner stove prepared our meals.

As some of the tent poles were 2 m long and the entire tent and poles and tarps and stove weighed over 100 kg, it could not be carried on one's back - motorized access was required. We used a helicopter. By visiting areas unlikely to be visited on foot, we hoped to minimize conflicts with other wilderness recreationists.

Our first trip with the tent was to Phelix Ck., just after Christmas, 1983. We set up the tent quite close to where the VOC cabin is located today. Bad weather and heavy snowfall dominated that trip, although we did have one sunny day. Subsequent trips have been to Lost Valley Ck. (2 trips to 2 different forks), Noel Ck., Upper Birkenhead valley, Sockeye Ck, Mt. Currie area, Downton Ck. area, Gott Ck., Upper Hurley, Wasp Ck., Monashee Park, Prospector Peaks area, and the Fowl Lakes area. All but one of these have been based out of Pemberton. The lone foray into the interior - to Monashee Park - coincided with initially low temperatures of -30° C. This resulted



Assembling the tent. Photos - M. Feller

in our plastic windows cracking as we unrolled the tent. The temperature soon climbed as the snow descended. Snow and cloud stayed with us until we departed to the Nakusp hospital with an ailing Jack. The lowest temperatures we have experienced, have been around -35°C . With these temperatures outside, temperatures inside the tent have been $+15^{\circ}\text{C}$ - with a fully cranked up stove, needless to say!

The tent has allowed us to have extended trips to areas we might otherwise not have visited. Although some of our destinations, such as Phelix Ck., Noel Ck., and Gott Ck., now have logging roads providing easier access to the alpine, along with the easier access has often come the snowmobile and the loss of peace and solitude. We have been harassed by snowmobilers only once - in the upper Hurley - which we visited while ignorant of a snowmobiler's cabin constructed in nearby Lone Goat Ck.

Although we have been unaware of mountain climbing or hiking trips to some of the areas we have visited, we have never claimed first ascents, believing that prospectors or others would have tramped the areas before us. We noted with interest, however, that several years ago, a Lillooet

resident claimed some first ascent of peaks around the head of Lost Valley Ck. that we had previously skied up.

One disadvantage of the tent has been our reliance on helicopter access. This is clearly not the most desirable way to enter the mountains, and it is highly dependent on weather. Twice our party gave up waiting for flying weather and dispersed to several other destinations. Poor flying weather has caused us to change destinations or delay departures on several occasions. Only once, however, have we been unable to fly out according to schedule, and that was due as much to a disorganized helicopter pilot as it was to bad weather. The club radio was put to very good use on that trip and the B.C. Tel operator displayed a motherly concern during the several days we had to wait out the weather!

Another disadvantage of the tent is its great demands on space and maintenance. Canvas must be thoroughly dried to prevent rot and the tent must be spread out after every trip so it can dry properly. It will not fit in a standard living room or a one, or even 2, car garage. It requires factory space which, fortunately, one of our shareholders has. Floor and fly need patching after every trip,



Upper Lost Valley Ck., 1984. Camp was downvalley to the right. Photo - M. Feller



Flying in to Lost Valley Ck., 1984, with one of the peaks ascended right of centre.

Photo - M. Feller



Skiing in Upper Lost Valley Ck.

Photo - M. Feller

as a result of itinerant sparks. After 19 years we have had to replace our fly. Our lanterns and whitegas stove require regular cleaning and maintenance and, the worst job of all, our portable wood burning stove requires cleaning and oiling after every trip to prevent it rusting away. These maintenance jobs we share. We are currently considering replacing this stove with a custom-made, lower maintenance, stainless steel unit. These space and maintenance demands argue against the BCMC purchasing a similar tent simply because there is no guarantee that they can be met now or for an extended period.

The enjoyment and satisfaction derived from

our tent have greatly overwhelmed these disadvantages, and we have been privileged to explore many superb areas on skis.

Current shareholders are - Ron Andrews, Peter de Visser, Evelyn and Michael Feller, Ehleen and Erich Hinze, and Ross Wyborn. Other users have included Jack Bryceland and Ellen Woodd (frequent), and Mairilyn Cram and Nancy Henderson (occasional).

BCMC Bendor Range Summer Camp

11-19 August, 2001

by Dave Scanlon

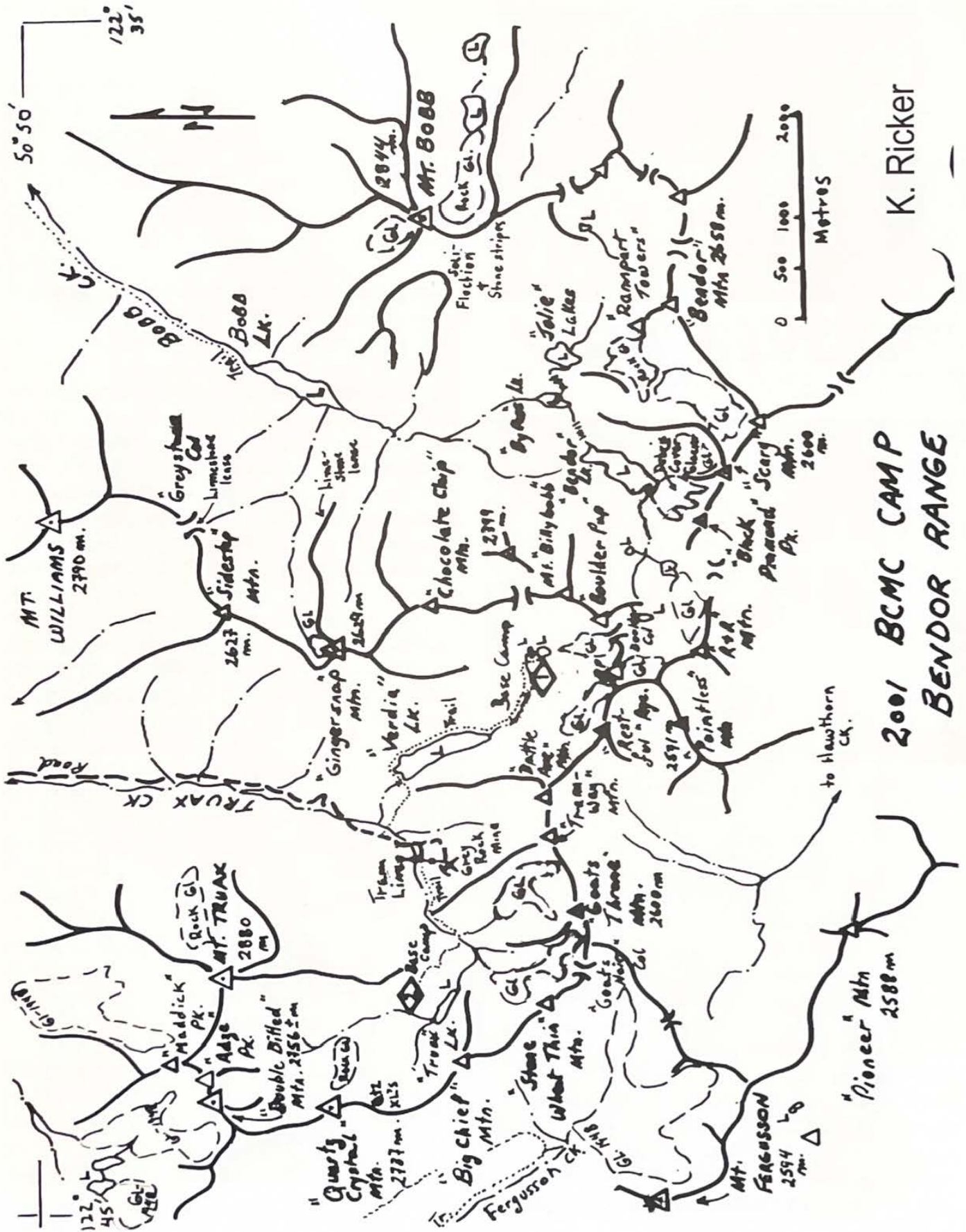
I'd been to the area 3 times in the summer of 2000. During one of these trips a friend mentioned that this area would be a good place for a club summer camp. An idea was born. Not having done this before I thought it would be similar to a weekend trip. Mistake! I had about 45 interested calls, 32 indicating they were coming, and 27 showing up! This meant hours and hours on the phone.

I'd indicated the camp was a hiking, non-technical one with foot access, thus giving people a third option for the summer, after Peter Woodsworth's and David Hughes' camps - which were both fly-ins.

We accessed the area through Pemberton, the Hurley River Road and picturesque Gold Bridge. Then along Carpenter Lake to the trailhead at 1750 m. En route to camp we trekked beside Verdi Lake for a kilometer, this being one of the most beautiful lakes we'd ever seen. By 6 pm we were all at camp beside a high alpine lake at 2100 m, at the foot of a small pocket glacier.

Our camp was between 2 lakes. Bathing was done in the lower lake, but it was a case of self-inflicted pain as the water was quite cold. Tents were set up on the many flat sandy spots - a great area.

We named all of the peaks, rivers and lakes in the area, some for their geographical features ("Greystone Col"), some for the wildlife ("Goat's Hair Hairy Col"). Some for old mining claims we encountered (Big Chief). These names I'll use as I ramble on.



2001 BC MC CAMP
BENDOR RANGE

K. Ricker



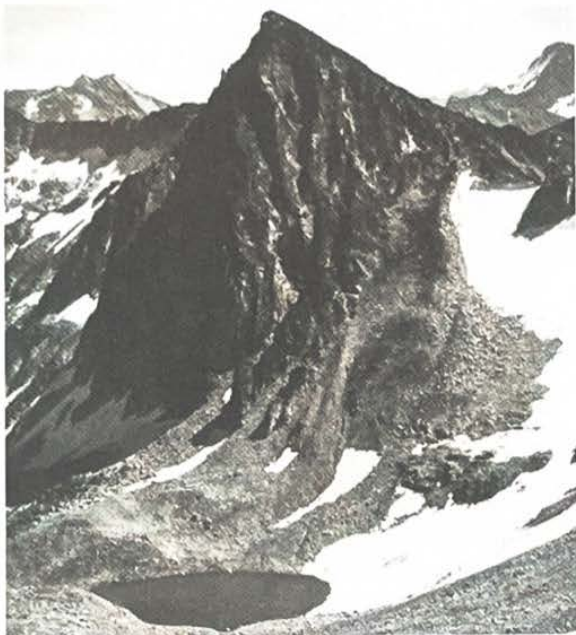
Bendor Range camp organizer, roughing it. Photo - D. Scanlon collection



Bendor Range camp troops at the first camp.
Photo - M. Feller collection



View from "Restful Ridge" looking towards "Chocolate Chip Mtn. to right. Photo - M. Feller



Black Diamond Pk. Photo - M. Feller



John Sapac on lower slopes of Mt. Bobb looking at (L-R), "Black Diamond Pk." "R&R Mtn.", "Pointless Mtn.", "Restful Ridge", "Billybob", and "Chocolate Chip Mtn."
Photo - K. Ricker

Day 1 had a group go to Williams Peak (2790m). They went over "Gingersnap Pk.", "Sidestep Mtn", and through "Greystone Col." Two of the group went east through "Boulder Col" past beautiful Bendor, Bypass, and Jolie lakes and on up Mt. Bobb, (2845m). Two of us made a circuit near camp scrambling up and over "Chocolate Chip" and "Billy Bobb" mountains.

Day 2, Monday, was a rest day for some, but Peter Woodsworth and I headed east over "Boulder Col" to "Black Diamond Peak". We tried 3 different routes on the west side before we could get up to the summit. Then on we went east to "Scary Mtn." (2600m). This was where Peter led us up a wild 5.14d (!) freeclimb to its summit. We were truly isolated here. Not a sign of anyone ever having been here before. We rappelled down and had lunch before heading back.

Day 3 had a group of 5 go to Mt. Bobb. One group went east to "Boulder Col" then south past "Boulder Pups" then west past "R & R Mtn" and on to "Restful Ridge". The ridge overlooked camp giving great views.

Day 4 was moving day. We all packed up and hiked back to the road end, where some people went back to the cars for more food, while some people explored the old mining ruins there. The buildings have long since given in to time and weather but make for great exploring. The only building still erect houses the old donkey engine which is still there. The cable that comes from the mining shaft far up the mountainside was still intact.

After lunch we packed up and said our good-byes to those who had to leave for other commitments. There were now 17 of us who made our way up to camp 2-1½ hours away just south of Mt. Truax. We camped on a large grassy meadow by a lovely stream.

Did I mention the flag? Guess not. I'd brought a Canadian flag which I set up at each camp. I even had a flag pole - a piece of 19 mm PVC pipe. We awoke the next morning and the flag was gone! It was found on the other side of camp, but more on this later.

Day 5 was Mt. Truax day. At 2890 m, Truax is the highest peak in the immediate area. Mt. Truax's south ridge is my favourite as it has what-

ever degree of difficulty you wish, from a hike, a scramble, or a climb to the top. We were in different groups everywhere, hiking, climbing, totally enjoying our day. We all had lunch together on the summit. Took pictures and had fun. Oh yeah. We had the flag too!

Inside the summit cairn there was a champagne bottle indicating that a wedding had taken place on the summit. This discovery brought on considerable debate about people's ideas of places to get married - great fun!

Our group now headed east, with 7 of us making a short side trip up Maddick Pk. En route we came across a "Mt. Dildo". A Telus (?) repeater relay tower? Beside it was a steel tower with a solar panel on top. The temptation was too great for us all. We just had to climb this tower. So we did, taking lots of pictures.

Shortly after this, by the Adze, 3 of us headed directly back to camp going down the valley. The rest of our group carried on to "Double Bitted Mtn.", then turned south to "Quartz Crystal Mtn.", then down to camp.

When our last group arrived back at camp, the flag was back in its original position, but beneath it on the flagpole was a pair of underpants! We didn't know who was doing this, but we had our suspicions.

We also saw a tent missing. Hugh found it. The wind had blown it away from camp as I guess it wasn't secured well enough, which was in itself bad enough, but where it came to rest was even worse. It had landed in the stream totally blocking it. It took 3 of us to pull it out. Everything inside was soaked but the 3 girls, with lots of help, managed to get things dried out - you should have seen the rocks they put in to hold down their tent from then on - 100's of kg.

The next day, Friday, Donna and Marsha went back up "Quartz Crystal Mtn". They had found some quartz crystals the day before and were going back to try to find more. Some of us went south to "Goat's Hair Hairy Col" with 5 going up to play on "Goat's Throne Mtn" (2600m). John Sapac and I went on another 4km to Pioneer Mtn. We found a dilapidated cairn with a glass tub inside. In the glass tube was a bill



Descending "Gingersnap Mtn." toward camp 1 by the lake left of centre. "Boulder Pup" and "Restful Ridge" are above and to right of camp. Photo - M. Feller



View from Mt. Bobb towards "Scary Mtn." and Black Diamond Pk." to right. Pioneer Mtn. is the dark rocky peak above the snow/rock bumps, right of centre. Photo - K. Ricker



Troops at the second camp. Photo - D. Scanlon

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c/o Bridge River B.C.

2 fire doors	30 lb.	\$7.20
2 ash tray under doors		<u>\$2.40</u>
		\$9.60

Aug. 4/1930

On the back of the bill was written -
Wed. Aug. 20/1930

Fred Perry

Tom Shellshear

H.G. Selwood

Of Burrard Field Naturalists Club coming from Pioneer
Gold Mine.

Other entries on another sheet of paper read-

Aug 2/36 **Nicholas Peters** (Pioneer)
Robert Smith (Pioneer)
Wordie Hetherington (Pioneer)
Nov 28/36 **J. Peters** (Pioneer)
Aug 22/37 Snowy - no wind - ceiling low
Jack Dickout (Pioneer)
Stan Roberts (Pioneer)
Harold Harrifan (Pioneer)
Aug 24/37 **Wordie Hetherington**
John Last and Bill Simmonds
(Pioneer)
Aug 1/54 Slightly cloudy warm little snow, flies
abundant
Andre Germain coming from **Bradian**
Aug 6/56 **Club Alpin Francais**

The last recorded climb was 45 years ago!

The flag - we arrived in camp and we still had a flag. But, not Canada's! The flag of Japan was up. And the tale goes on. Hugh said some day hikers had come up the valley that day. Upon seeing the flag, though, they didn't come near camp. Heaven only knew what they were thinking! We laughed and laughed. At our gathering that night a group of 8 very solemn, silent, people slowly carried the flag across camp giving it back to me. What a hoot! I still don't know who the flag culprit was.

On day 8, Saturday, others had to leave so we said our goodbyes. The weather deteriorated a bit that day and we wondered how things would turn out. A group of us went to "Goat's Hair Hairy Col" then turned north to "Stone Wheat Thin Mtn". We left a small tube on top (2530m). Monika, Marilyn and I carried on over "Big Chief" to "Quartz Crystal Mtn.". We wanted to look for some crystals for ourselves. En route, it snowed a bit - not a lot, just enough to test us, I guess. We came across a mining claim which I'd found last year. There was an old tin with a Western Family vitamin bottle inside. Someone had put the claim inside the plastic vitamin bottle to preserve it. It read -

March 29/36 *Jess Davis*
Dick Fletcher - Agent
Big Chief Claim #1 & #2- 18199,
18200

We poked and probed on "Quartz Crystal Mtn." as the snow blew, looking for crystals. Finally the cold drove us away, but, we'd found some. Donna and Marsha from the day before had the best of the lot, though. Back at camp the others were all excited as they'd found grizzly tracks which were followed quite a distance.

Sunday, and out we went to Gold Bridge hotel for a logger's breakfast and lots and lots of coffee. That was when we got out the topo and proceeded to name all the rivers, lakes and mountains.

We had had a fine week - great weather (30°C one day), new friends, old friends, lots of laughs, feelings shared. Each night we all met to share our adventures of the day. Karl Ricker one evening shared some of his rope skills with us.

For those who missed this year, see you next year. Same time, same place.

Participants: Donna Bailie, Carol MacMillan, Ellen Woodd, Michael Feller, Evelyn Feller, Blake Drummond, Ziff House, John Sapac, Dave Hughes, Adrienne Hughes, Nancy Napier, Randy Enomoto, Hugh Kellas, Norbert Eckert, Trudy Rey, Marsha Ablowitz, John Blown, Karl Ricker, Nina Evans-Locke, Peter Woodsworth, Meg Fellows, Monika Bittel, Marilyn Cram, Julian Douglass, Ehleen Hinze, Erich Hinze.

Bendor Range Summer Camp vital statistics by Karl Ricker and Marsha Ablowitz

Camp 1 (Williams)

Participant's average age = 51.5
Median age = 54

Average number of relationships
(marriages, etc.) = 1.2; max = 3, min = 0

Camp 2 (Truax)

Participant's average age = 52.3
Median age = 52

Both camps

- Oldest = 65 years
- Youngest = 25 years

Pioneer Mountain, Bendor Range and a piece of BCMC history - Fred Perry by Michael Feller

The summit cairn on Pioneer Mtn., ascended during the club's summer camp in the Bendor Range, showed that Fred Perry and two others had possibly made the first ascent of the mountain in 1930. Fred Perry was one of the BCMC's many larger-than-life characters. He was a founding member of the club and remained active with the club for 46 years until his death in 1953.

Born in England in 1880, he became a journeyman, taking to the road as "*an itinerant tailor who worked when he had to eat but who could never be cajoled into a tailor's shop when the sun was shining, the birds singing and the flowers blooming in the beautiful English countryside.*

Coming to Canada in 1904 he hoboed through New England, picking up a few dollars here and there making a suit for some backwoods farmer. This was not for him, however, as he had the urge to see the country and struck out for the Pacific Coast, hoboining his way across the continent, of which adventure in the telling he was mightily proud, and arrived in Vancouver in 1905.

A lover of the out-of-doors, the mountains attracted his attention and soon claimed him for their own. Joining a few other early mountaineers, notably the late Billy

Gray and Fred Mills, they built what was known as the Red Shack on the eastern slopes of Grouse Mountain, overlooking Mosquito Creek" (Anon. 1953). The Red Shack owners and other like-minded souls got together in 1907 to found the Vancouver Mountaineering Club, whose name soon changed to the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

Around 1910 several club members developed an interest in mountain flora and natural history in general. John Davidson, the recently appointed provincial botanist, was brought to the attention of the club. He became a club member and devoted considerable effort to communicating his enthusiasm for botany and the study of nature to the BCMC. Perry had been a botanical enthusiast who, in 1911, became the first person in charge of the club's newly formed Botanical Section. Perry was one of a small keen group within the club who actively encouraged John Davidson to run a class in botany for club members. This class started in 1912. The group studied botany and went on botanical expeditions around the Lower Mainland. The Botanical Section of the club grew and grew - to the point where its membership was larger than the active membership of the club. It also expanded beyond botany to include all organisms and environmental factors that influenced plants. Thus, in 1916, the Botanical Section changed its name to the Natural History Section, with John Davidson as its leader. Meanwhile, an Arbor-day committee had formed in Vancouver to stimulate school children's and the public's, interest in trees and flora. This committee became an Association in 1917, then the Arbor-day Association merged with the BCMC Natural History Section to form the Vancouver Natural History Society (V.N.H.S.) in 1918. Davidson (1957) considered that the V.N.H.S. had its inception in 1911 in the BCMC. This can be attributed to a large extent to the enthusiasm of Fred Perry in building up the Botanical Section of the club.

Perry, meanwhile, had become Vice President of the BCMC - a position he held for at least 3 years (1912-1914). During this period he was described as "*a disciple of Thoreau in his indifference to bad weather and his love of the woods*" (Anon. 1913).

Perry went on to become the club's first major writer of natural history articles, empha-

sizing flora, for the club's newsletter "The B.C. Mountaineer" in the 1920's. He continued writing prolifically for 3 decades, describing the flora of widely scattered parts of the province, from Bella Coola and Tweedsmuir park to the Chilcotins and Monashees, as well as the Hope and Lower Mainland areas. To explore such a wide range of environments during the early 1900's set him apart from most of his fellow Vancouver-area mountaineers. Perry joined the Burrard Field Naturalists Club sometime in the 1920's and gave lectures in Vancouver on B.C.'s flora, advocating their protection against destruction by people. By the 1930's he had become the club's authority on plant identification.

Perry's expertise covered more than just plant identification or taxonomy, however. He became knowledgeable about native uses of plants (Perry 1934) and plant distribution, or plant ecology. In this respect, in 1937 he described the zonal distribution of plants in B.C. (Perry 1937). Although not new to science, it was to be over 30 years before such concepts truly escaped the narrow confines of academia to be used by politicians and land managers in B.C. In the 1930's Perry would have been one of the extremely few non-academics to understand these concepts.

For his outstanding contributions to the club, Perry was made an honorary member of the BCMC in 1942.

He does not appear to have been a highly technical climber interested in the climbing challenges of mountaineering. Rather, he was someone seeking beauty in the mountains; aesthetics and the study of natural beauty propelled him into the mountains. As he stated - "...the climbing of peaks and dizzy crags should not be the final object of the mountaineer but rather in the observation and study of all the conditions and features that go to make up our interesting mountain areas." (Perry 1930).

Nevertheless, as an exploratory climber, he made the first ascent of quite a few mountains, including Mamquam Mtn. and others in Garibaldi park.

The last article Perry wrote for the BCMC was published in July, 1953, only 5 months before his death. The article was titled "Mountaineers as naturalists". In it Perry stated - "*The mere climbing of mountain peaks is a passing condition, and is a form*

of athletics that merely produces muscular stimuli; while an interest in the plants, animals, and insects, or the forces that make up the mountains stays with the traveler long after his climbing days are over." (Perry 1953).

It is for reasons such as those put forward by Perry that the BCMC has been blessed with many outstanding natural historians who have enhanced our appreciation of the mountains. The next article is written by such a person. It is an article that is true to the philosophy of a club member who explored the Bendor Range more than 70 years ago.

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Bendor Range Summer Camp

Natural History Notes

by Karl Ricker

The Bendor Range lies on the rain shadow or leeward side of the Coast Mountains. The name is a contraction, taken from the old Ben d'Or (Ben of gold) mineral prospect, located in the Truax Creek basin, according to an old B.C. Ministry of Mines report. Ben d'Or was an English duke who had mineral claims in the area. Certainly mine exploration throughout the range, in the first half of the 20th century especially, is one aspect of the natural history that cannot be overlooked, and it provided the ease of access to the BCMC campsites, used in year 2001.

GEOLOGY

Tectonic Evolution of the Bendor Range - Southeastern Coast Mountains

The origin of the Bendor Range is far flung, to say the least. The dominant rock assemblage of the range is marine sediments and volcanics, the latter of which are the backbone of an ancient submerged volcanic ridge which erupted spasmodically in a deep oceanic basin, floored with a gelatinous ooze (today's sharp flinty type of rocks - cherts). The ooze was composed of minute siliceous shells of radiolarians which were once floating in the overlying 4000-5000 m thick water column. The "pile" of volcanic flows and their associated ejected rubble is intercalated with soft sediments, the two types accumulating over tens to hundreds of millions of years, beginning in the Mississippian (Carboniferous) period of the Paleozoic Era and terminating by the Middle Jurassic of the Mesozoic Era (i.e. a total time span of 340 to 160 million years ago). At some stage during the growth of the submerged ridge (Late Triassic) the water depth along its flanks was shallow and warm enough to promote the growth of reefoid organisms with their skeletons of calcium carbonate. These are today the small pods of limestone which appear within the volcanic strata (e.g. "Greystone" Col).

How lengthy and where was the submerged volcanic ridge? The early day geologists measured the accumulated pile around Mt. Fergusson, where the strata is highly mineralized and hence drew the attraction of the early Bridge River prospectors. So, during the heyday of the Bralorne mining scene in the 1930s it was re-labelled the "Fergusson Series". Over the years, however, geologists mapped it to the northwest, east and south-east of the Bendor Range extending through the Cayoosh Range, and along both sides of the Fraser River, and into the western side of Manning Park (and Mt. Outram), where other geologists were defining it as the Hozameen "Series" or Group. This lengthy exposed ridge of disrupted volcanics and deep oceanic sediments is now re-defined as the Bridge River Group (Roddick and Hutchison, 1973). This was the perceived geologic picture before the advent of "plate tectonics". That is the Bridge River rocks did not accumulate at the

ancestral edge of North America, but were moved as a tectonic plate from an oceanic basin (located to the westward) toward the edge of North America by the Early Cretaceous Period (i.e. from 105 to 160 Myr ago).

A moving discreet "package" of rock is now called a "terrane"; hence, the modern name: Bridge River Terrane. It moved several hundred to thousands of kilometres eastward out of a deep region of the Pacific basin, its exact place of origin not yet exactly known. Arrival of other subsequent terranes to the new accreted continental margin generated the inevitable buckling, disruption and alteration of strata. A synthesis of the evolution of the southern Coast and adjacent Cascade Mountains by Monger and Journeay (1984) notes that **uplift** on the east side of the Coast Mountains was about 15 km in Late Cretaceous time (i.e. 65 to 105 Myr ago). This was generated by (1) the collision and under-thrusting of later arriving terranes from the west; and by (2) the upwelling of granitic rock from huge magma chambers below. Locally, the Bendor Pluton (a batholith) is the granitic rock of interest. It punched up, and altered the surrounding Bridge River strata to the rich brown and greenish piles of rubble that tormented our camp participants.

The tectonic upheaval did not end in the Cretaceous Period (60-160 Myr ago). The Pacific edge of North America was continually strained by the actively moving under-thrusting floor of the Pacific. Only 35 to 46 million years ago the Bridge River Terrane, and its inclusions of piercing granitic rocks, were shredded apart by the fault demarcated by today's Fraser Canyon (Fraser-Straight Creek Fault).

Relative to the east side of the Fraser (the Cascade Mountains), the west side was considered by Monger and Journeay (1994) to have moved 140 km horizontally to the north with several kilometres of vertical displacement upward on the western block. Much erosion has taken place since this time to strip away the Bridge River strata to expose the underlying granitic rocks (the 57 Myr old Bendor Pluton) and to bring about an almost general accordance of summit elevations on the two sides of the Fraser Canyon (the east side is still roughly 300 to 400m lower).

Now, what are the interesting facets of the geology from the mountaineer's point of view as seen in the area of the summer camp?



View WNW from Mt. Bobb with, from left to right, "Chocolate Chip Mtn.", "Gingersnap Mtn." and Sidestep Mtn." across the Bobb Ck. valley. Above these peaks are the rocky peaks, from left to right, "Quartz Crystal Mtn.", Mt. Truax, and "Maddick Pk." Arrows indicate limestone outcrops on the ridge to right of "Sidestep Mtn." and slopes below "Gingersnap Mtn." Photo - K. Ricker

Local Geology

The camp areas were in two strongly contrasting rock types: rubbly russet brown to greenish metamorphosed volcanics and sediments of the Bridge River Group, and starkly resistant white granitic rocks. The former completely surrounded the latter at both camp sites. It would be convenient to show the contact on the attached map of place names but clutter is the pervasive evil of all diagrams. The Verdia Lake basin drainage base camp marks the north-west corner and apex of the larger Bendor Pluton. From there it extends about 20 km ESE in a crude broadening pear-shaped exposure. On its north side "Stone Wheat Thin", "Goat's Throne", "Tramway", "Battle Axe", "Billy Bob", "Boulder Col Pups", and "By Pass" lake are within the pluton, whereas Mt. Bobb, Mt. Williams, "Side Step" Mtn., "Gingersnap" and "Chocolate Chip" Mtns. are on the metamorphosed rubble of the Bridge River Group. To the west the brilliant russet hue of Mt. Fergusson is part of the rubble, whereas its contact to granitic

rock cuts through the summit ridge of "Pioneer" Mtn. Hence the "Pointless-Scary" Mtn. ridge lies in the heart of the pluton.

Within the chocolate brown rubble the resistant ribs of rock are volcanics, whereas the gullies and smooth slopes are underlain by recessive metamorphosed sediments of chert, argillite, phyllite, biotite schists and quartzite. At "Greystone Col", however, a stark creamy-white pod of limestone is found. It may harbour Triassic-aged micro-fossils. The volcanics are not really thick, as their resistant expression implies; they are made up of greenstone (metamorphosed volcanic lava flows) and brecciated debris of andesite and basalt.

The granitic rocks of the pluton are light coloured granodiorites. Small black specks of dark minerals (biotite and hornblende), according to Roddick and Hutchison (1973), occupy less than 12% of the rock mass, whereas quartz can be up to 20%. Rocks with a darker cast, and so a higher percentage of biotite/hornblende, are diorite or quartz diorites. They make up a minor portion of the pluton. Quartz-deficient rock (syenite) is also present but of lesser amount, while pure granite does not appear to be present. However, quartz-rich monzonites lie between a granite and granodiorite in mineral composition; they are found in narrow sills as offshoots of the pluton into the surrounding Bridge River Group rocks. The granitic rocks of the Bendor Pluton are boldly massive, with wide spaced vertical cracks (joints) as displayed on the north faces but, with lower inclined joints the main surfaces afford easier climbing, especially on the south exposures. Differential chemical weathering on these surfaces is brought about by the dissolution of feldspar and the dark hornblende minerals to expose the quartz as resistant irregularities to assist in the climbing.

At the base camp area in the Truax basin a much smaller pluton, a stock, similar to the Bendor, is exposed. The two could be connected at depth. The following features lie within this stock: "Truax Lake", "Quartz Crystal Mtn.", "Double Bitted Mtn.", "Adze" Peak and the south-west side and parts of the south ridge of Mt. Truax. The pluton extends west across Fergusson Creek, onto the north-west ridge of Mt. Fergusson, terminating on

the shoreline of Noel and Kingdom Lakes. Elsewhere the brown rubble of the Bridge River Group prevails, highlighted by the jittery volcanic ribs on the skyline of "Big Chief Mtn."

Superposed on either kind of underlying bedrock are the intolerable scree and lesser patches of coarser talus, modified here and there by frost-sorting mechanisms into stripes, lobes and net-like features. Finer rubble is characteristic of the Bridge River Group whereas large blocks of talus are typical of the pluton. The frost sorting features of the finer rubble are especially prevalent on the upper slopes of Mt. Bobb, whereas talus cones are typical at the base of gullies in the granitic rock. Broad fields of granitic blocks (felsen meere) cover the gentler slopes of ridge tops, such as "Quartz Crystal Mtn."

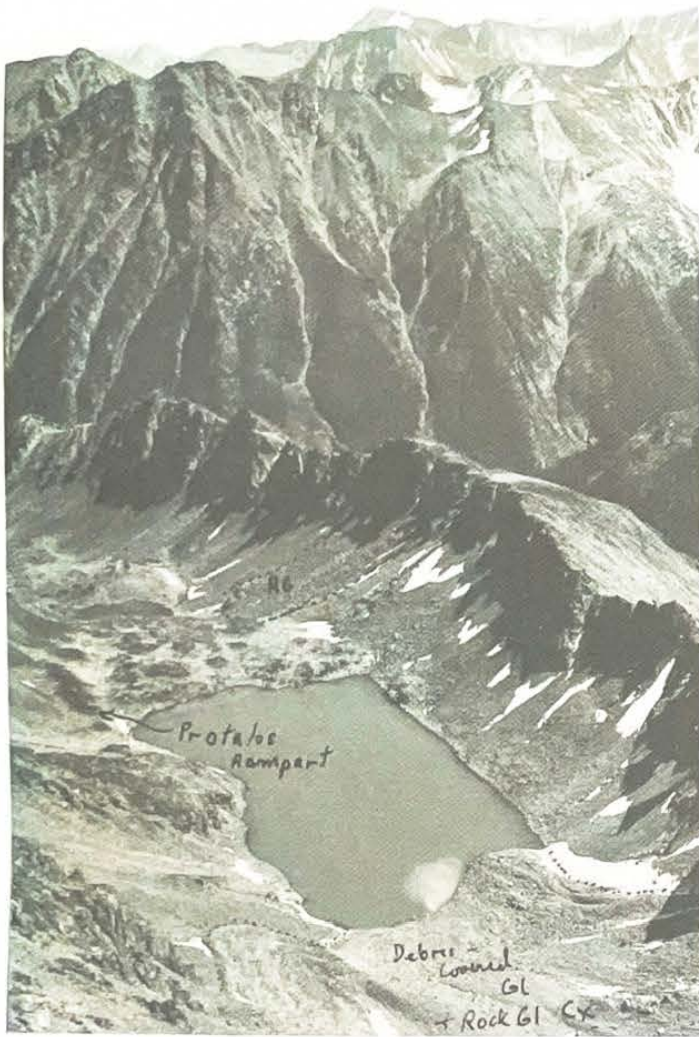
Some of the talus, however, is slowly moving in the form of arcuate lobes, on intermediate slopes. It is either being mixed with underlying and slowly decaying glacier ice or is being invaded continuously by atmospheric moisture to provide a film of surface ice to reduce friction and induce downslope movement. These are "rock glaciers", and some of the obvious large ones are shown on the map. The spectacular debris-covered glaciers, which are advancing into the south end of "Bendor" Lake, are the former type of rock glaciers, also nourished at present by avalanching snow, with sporadic inclusions of rock, to form a rock islet in the lake - known as a "protalus flatiron". That is, the boulders roll over the avalanched snow into the lake, forming an islet when the apron of snow melts out. Rock glaciers in Truax basin do not have an underlying glacier ice core and hence the gravitational movement is assisted by atmospheric moisture.

Glaciers & Glaciation

At several times within the last 1.6 million years the Bridge River and surrounding mountainous areas were covered by ice sheets, or at least an array of glaciers intertwining from one valley system to the next. The ice sheet phase of the last glaciation (30,000 to 10,000 years ago) enveloped all but the peaks of the Bendor Range, reaching a surface level of about 2300m. Locally it was fed by ice from cirques situated at higher

elevation (up to 2800m), but the general character of most ridge tops above 2400m suggests that the Cordilleran Ice Sheet did not reach this level. The scouring action of the Ice Sheet(s) was profound. Truax valley is a remarkable "U-shaped" feature which joins the Bridge River valley in "hanging" position; that is, its floor level (about 1300-1500m) is 700 to 900m (or more) higher than that of a sediment-filled (now a reservoir) Bridge River Valley. Headwaters of the Truax are marked by a complex of cirque basins ("Goat's Throne" and "Tramway" Mtns.) and lesser hanging valleys of "Verdia" Lake basin and Truax basin (550 and 1000m higher, respectively). In Bobb Creek basin there is a "pater noster" series of lake basins situated in a stepped profile as follows: Bobb at 1600m, "By Pass" (1920m), "Jolie" and "Bendor" (1980 and 2040m) and small lakes (2160m) to the west of "Black Diamond Peak". The last ice sheet melted away quickly in a time span of about 5000 years (Clague, 1994), with the area becoming relatively ice free by 10,000 years ago.

Since then, small cirque glaciers have reappeared in the Bendor Range. "Re-glacierization" of cirque basins occurred in the last 5000 years. Three pulses of this "Neoglaciation" are documented in Garibaldi Park, but only the last pulse ("Little Ice Age") of the 1800s is visually displayed by retreating and downwasting ice and the appearance of fresh moraines. Our first base camp in "Verdia" basin was located on a succession of two such moraines with the glacier behind camp ("Boulder" Col.) scooping out the lake basin between the inner moraine and present ice terminus. This glacier is not shown on any topographic map, nor are many others, which were obvious to the camp participants. Yet they show on aerial photos, and on the attached map I have sketched the outlines of a few glaciers shown in our field photography of 2001. Interestingly, the old 1948 topographic map shows the outline of three glaciers on the north side of the Mt. Truax - "Double Bitted" massif as well as a larger glacier in the headwaters of Fergusson Creek. Yet the glaciers around the scene of mine activity at the head of Truax Creek are not shown, where today there are spectacular moraines of recent vintage. Out of character, however, is a long, low ridge with



Stepped lakes on the E side of Mt. Bobb with rock glaciers (RG) and a debris-covered glacier indicated. Photo - K. Ricker.

boulders perched here and there at the camp site in Truax basin (slightly above "Truax Lake"). At this location there was no recent Little Ice Age glacier; so, I can only surmise that Truax basin had a sizeable cirque glacier between 2000 and 10,000 years ago, strangely facing to the south. The age dating and actual extent of this glacier will require detailed field work to sort out.

Mine Exploration Activity

The Bendor and Truax plutons have generated an environment of mineral enrichment into the surrounding older Bridge River rocks, as shown by the rich brown colours of sulphide mineral alteration (pyrite, etc.). There are at least

eight prospects near or at the contact to the Bendor Pluton. Almost all are gold-antimony in quartz vein showings, except for a copper-iron prospect in Piebiter Creek (S edge of the pluton). The obvious mine ("Grey Rock") in our camp area also carries galena (lead) (and other lesser elements). Ziff House went to the trouble of digging out the annual reports of the Minister of Mines to track its development. Exploration before actual mine development was underway in the 1930s, and the road up the valley to the camp (collapsed), and the entrance portal was built during or just prior to World War II. When work stopped, leading to abandonment, is yet to be sorted out. So, we do not yet have a record of the amount of ore shipped out on the tramline which still stands between tree line and vertical cliff face on the north facing buttress of the northwest ridge of "Tramway Mountain". Bralorne's mining bonanza lay not in the Truax basin, however, but 7 km to the southwest in Cadwallader Creek valley. Have we seen the end of mine exploration in Truax basin or elsewhere in the Bendor Range? Likely not. However, within the pluton itself there is not apt to be any interest, because the granitic rocks are monolithic, without showing much discoloured hints of mineralization.

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEYING & GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

The first detailed topographic map of the National Topographic Series (NTS) of the Bralorne map-area (92J/15) was published at 1:50,000 scale as two half sheets in 1948-49. While BC government air photos (1947-1949) were used to plot the contours at 100 foot intervals, the requisite ground control surveying was carried out in prior years. A triangulation network was set up throughout the Bendor Range to provide the control elevations. The surveyors set up a series of cylindrical cairns for the task, usually on a solid bedrock base, measuring about 1.5-2.0 m in height and about 1m in diameter. Obviously, any one cairn was built upon conclusion of surveying from that point! and it was used for backsighting from a new station to follow. In our rambles over the Bendor Range standing cairns of this type were found on Mt. Bobb, "Quartz Crystal", and "Double

Bitted" Mountains. That on the lattermost was built on an unstable base on its **lower** peak (about 10 m lower), and it now resembles the leaning Tower of Pisa. Cairns were also built at Mt. Williams and "Gingersnap" Mtn. (ginger colour and a snap to ascend from base camp!), but are no longer standing in solid cylindrical forms. Oddly enough, the surveyors did not place a cairn on Mt. Truax, although they did erect two to the northwest of "Double Bitted" and one on the summit of Mt. Fergusson.

The latest NTS map of Bralorne (full sheet) is based on some re-survey and the re-contouring of newer aerial photos. Some elevations have changed a bit, from as little as 1 m more for Mt. Truax to as much as 11m higher for Mt. Bobb – the area's second highest peak. "Quartz Crystal" Mtn. has actually decreased 1m (wrong boulder on the summit!) and several other spot elevations are provided on the new map.

The new NTS topographic map adheres to limited geographic names shown on the old, with family names from the older generations of the Bralorne-Goldbridge community being the source. In Dave Scanlon's long rambles to ridge tops, a Big Chief Mining claim and a Pioneer Mine invoice were found on or near the summits now depicted on the attached map. These are unofficial, as are many others applied to the camp areas by the various participants. These are shown in quotation marks. Undoubtedly, some will be turned down when the process of application for approval is initiated.

FLORA & FAUNA

Flora of the Bendor Range

Trees

The upper limit of shrub tree line on "Gingersnap Mtn." was astonishingly high – 2350m for spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) and 2450m for a five needle pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), and shrub willows (*Salix* spp.) at ground matt level were even higher. The forests of valley bottom and lower mountain slopes are dominated by Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and lodgepole pine. Flora were identified without the help of guide books, as none were brought. The following plants were observed:

Shrubs

Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), white rhododendron (*R. albiflorum*), alpine willows (several *Salix* spp.), dwarf juniper (*Juniperis communis*), crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), red heather (*Phyllodoce empetriformis*), white moss heather (*Cassiope mertensiana*), dwarf huckleberry (*Vaccinium caespitosum*), black huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), spirea (one or more *Spiraea* spp.), mountain bilberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), mountain ash (one or more *Sorbus* spp.), Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), false azalea (*Menziesia ferruginea*) and other unidentified shrubs at valley floor road level in Truax valley.

Flowers

The following are noted as sp. if a single species or spp. if two or more are suspected.

Flowers (White)

Starwort (*Stellaria* spp.), rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*), Orchids (*Platanthera* spp.), Saxifrage (*Saxifraga* spp.), chickweed (*Cerastium* spp.), False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*), Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum* spp.), white pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp.), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Anemone (*Anemone* spp.), mountain Valerian (*Valeriana sitchensis*), Mountain Dock (*Polygonum* sp.), Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), whitlow grass (*Draba* spp.), white dryas (*Dryas* sp.), Lousewort (*Pedicularis* spp.), Grass-of-Parnassus (*Parnassia fimbriata*), partridge foot (*Luetkea pectinata*), and alpine Lychnis (*Lychnis* spp.).

Flowers (Brownish-green)

False hellebore (*Veratrum viride*), nettle (*Urtica* sp.), mitrewort (*Mitella* spp.), twayblade (*Listera* spp.).

Flowers (Yellow-Orange)

Buttercup (*Ranunculus* spp.), stoloniferous saxifrage (*S. flagellaris*), Fleabane (*Erigeron* spp.), hawkweed (*Hieracium* spp.), dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp., *Agoseris* sp.), stonecrop (*Sedum* sp.), monkey flower (*Mimulus lewisii* – also pink), cinquefoil (*Potentilla* spp.), groundsel (*Senecio triangularis*), snow lily (*Erythronium* sp.), lousewort (*Pedicularis*

spp.), Arnica (*Arnica cordifolia*), goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.), and false asphodel (*Tofieldia* spp.).

Flowers (Red to Pink)

Wintergreen (*Pyrola* spp.), shooting star (*Dodecatheon* spp.), mountain sorrel (the camp site lettuce eaten by some participants – *Oxyria digna*), lousewort (*Pedicularis* spp.), leatherleaf saxifrage (*Leptarrhena pyrolifolia*), mountain saxifrage (*S. oppositifolia*), western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), Spreading Phlox (several colours, *P. diffusa*), moss campion (*Silene acaulis*), and Paintbrush (*Castilleja* spp.).

Flowers (Blue to Purple)

Lupin (*Lupinus arcticus*), Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium* spp.), alpine speedwell (*Veronica* sp.), gentian (*Gentiana* spp.), silky Phacelia (*Phacelia sericea*), coltsfoot (*Petasites* sp.), alpine harebell (*Campanula* sp.), mountain bluebell (*Mertensia* sp.), mountain daisy (*Erigeron* spp.), Forget-me-not (*Mysotis* sp.), thistle (*Cirsium* spp.), elephant head (*Pedicularis* sp.), fireweed (*Epilobium latifolium* and *angustifolium*), Aster (*Aster* spp.).

The above were the obvious easy-to-identify flowers (to genus level); there are likely 2 to 3 times as many that could be added to list upon careful collection and exacting identification in a laboratory.

Because most grasses, sedges, mosses, ferns and lichens are not easily recognizable there was no attempt to list the species or genera in the camp setting. Natural history wise, however, some are very important components of the alpine setting – especially when the rock is wet and the boots are slipping on an unwanted crustose or foliose lichen!

“Mega” Fauna of the Bendor Range

We will leave out the Latin names because there is little confusion on what are the mammals and birds, easily seen by most of the participants, provided we skip over the mice, voles and other small mammals which nobody saw. The highlights were the conspicuous goats and noisy marmots and so they are at the top of the list.

Mountain Goats – At the Verdian Valley base camp a mother and kid were seen in the cirque to the

north of camp headed by “Gingersnap” Mtn. Goats were also seen on several occasions between “Boulder” Col and “Bendor” Lake – the Bobb Creek drainage basin. The herd size on the latter is at least six. At the Truax base camp one lone goat was seen north of camp. However, at “Goats Hair” Col curious goats visited our tracks on two successive days and thus another group is located in the headwaters of Fergusson Creek basin.

Hoary (Whistling) Marmot – After the severe coastal winter of 1999 marmots all but disappeared in the alpine areas about Whistler and Garibaldi Park. A prolonged snow pack over the summer season had possibly trapped marmots in their winter quarters for too long, leading to starvation. Marmots were seen and heard throughout our rambles in the Bendor Range.

Pikas – Seen in rock piles throughout the camp areas.

Mule Deer – One observed on the moraine areas between “Truax” Lake and “Goat’s Hair” Col. Numerous tracks were seen in this area as well as out of the forest in open glades and on alpine slopes.

Northwest Chipmunk – One at the Truax base camp.

Red Squirrel – Seen and heard about the car parking areas on the Truax Valley road.

Grizzly Bear – Not seen, but very fresh tracks appeared in the morainal area between “Truax” Lake and Goat Hair Col, while participants were at the Truax camp area.

Birds Seen Out of the “Verdian” Valley Base Camp – The avian fauna was sparse about the camp site but flocks of 15 or so American pipits and gray-crowned rosy finches were spotted in Bobb Creek Valley, especially at the outlet of Bendor Lake. Also in this valley we saw a sole red-breasted nuthatch, unidentified Chickadee species and a couple of American crows. On the ridge crests about camp was a soaring raven and an unidentified *Buteo* hawk.

Birds Seen Out of Truax Valley Base Camp – Enroute to the camp an American dipper was working Truax Creek; red crossbills and a Clark's nutcracker were seen near timberline. Soaring the ridges above camp were two ravens and a kestrel.

To summarize – the natural history features of the Bendor Range are extraordinary and would appear to warrant a weeklong naturalists' camp to fully explore and catalogue them.

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Mt. Sloan - Southeast Buttress by David Hughes

1. Episode 2 – 8-9, September, 2001

The February 2002 issue of the BCMC Newsletter described our September 2000 Labour Day weekend trip to Mt. Sloan. Snow and fog

prevented a repeat of the Southeast Buttress, but four BCMCers did manage to find a way up the furthest gully into the glacier cirque on the south face.

So once again a club trip was scheduled for Labour Day weekend, but poor weather and a dismal forecast resulted in the trip being cancelled. Despite a degree of frustration, a smaller party agreed to try the following weekend. Our new attempt was to be a two-day trip rather than the past three-day weekend trips.

Mt. Sloan is a spectacular triangular shaped peak above the western end of Downton Lake and an obvious landmark from Goldbridge and Gun Lake on the interior side of the Coast Range. This wonderful peak offers, at a minimum, three worthwhile climbing objectives – the Southeast Buttress, Northeast Ridge and a North Face route as described in Bruce Fairley's *Climbing & Hiking Guide*. Kevin McLane's *Alpine Select Guide* also includes the Northeast Ridge and good pictures of the mountain.

Access is via the Hurley River Forest Service road which is reached by going over Railroad Pass from the Pemberton Valley. The first ascent of the Southeast Buttress was made by a BCMC party lead by Martin Kafer in 1974. In the 1970's the Hurley River Road did not connect with Railroad Pass and the trip involved 8km of tough, narrow, one lane, cat track driving.

Two routes can now be used to access the mountain from the Hurley River Road. The newest and shortest route is via a new logging road to the middle of Ault Creek. The trip through the forest to the upper Ault Lakes involves some bad bushwacking. We again chose the older route, up and over Green Mountain. This approach is on a pleasant forest lookout/old mining road with no bush. This route would be better for our descent, which would be in the dark at the end of the second day (given the trip was going to be for two rather than three days).

We arrived at the abandoned lookout mid-Saturday afternoon. We found one remaining snowpatch and a sandy bench for camping just below the summit of Green Mountain. Here we enjoyed a great evening and a beautiful sunset.

Around 7 pm and just before sunset Don Funk, a solo climber from Vancouver, came through our

camp. Don has a habit of traveling alone and we had met him in North Creek back in April. He had just climbed Sloan via a "messy ugly" gully on the south side. Don was on the way back to his mountain bike which he had stashed near the top of the forest lookout road.

The next morning under a promising sky we set off about 6 am. After traversing along the Green Mountain ridge to the col with Peak 2200m, we dropped down to 1750m, crossed Ault Creek and proceeded to an upper Ault Lake at 1950m. From here a good view of the Dragon Couloir and the Southeast Buttress can be obtained. We proceeded up to the base of the Southeast Buttress, arriving at 8:30 am.

The route up the Southeast Buttress is comprised of three sections. The first heads almost west, paralleling the valley heading into the glacier cirque. We climbed the first spur reached at the base of the mountain (rather than proceeding further into the Dragon Couloir). This first section is a mixture of class 3 and 4 climbing. On the second section, the buttress, now more a ridge, turns north and heads toward the Peak. Almost immediately after changing direction, the one low 5th class section presents itself in the form of a narrow steep rib that connects the first section with the second section of the buttress ridge. Continuing up this mid-section is mainly class 4. This section ends when the first south face gully tops out against the Southeast Buttress. The last section of the Buttress route requires a little more

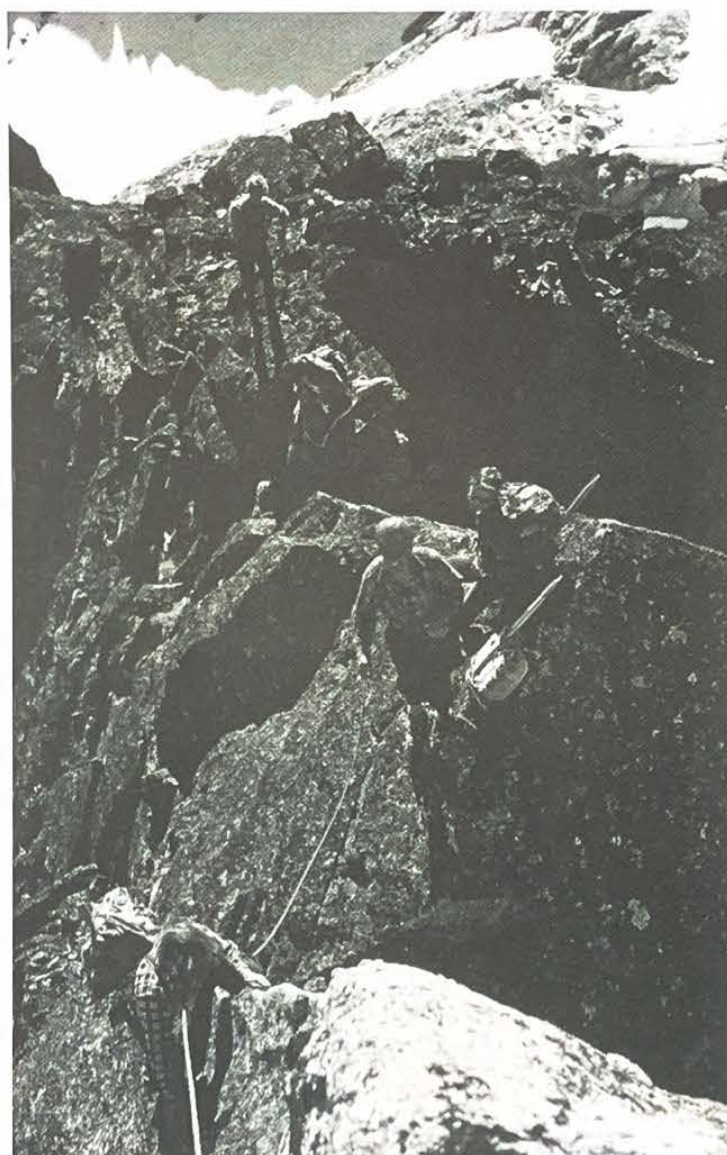
route-finding. The route now involves climbing large blocks or finding routes in short gullies around the blocks. In general we stayed on the ridge blocks - class 4 with some 5th class moves.

The route ends right at the Peak. The climb, although not particularly difficult, is reasonably sustained. Our time was about 5 1/2 hours, which was almost identical to the time of the first ascent in 1974 as recorded in the BCMC cairn register.

After a leisurely lunch in the sun and lots of photos, we started down. We crossed over to the second peak (westerly peak) a short 10 m or so



Mt. Sloan right of centre with the SE Buttress on the left skyline, and the NE Buttress on the right skyline. Photo - D. Hughes



Class 5 pitch on the NE Buttress of Sloan.

Photo - D. Hughes

away. From here the top of the second south face gully can be seen. (This gully in turn splits into two gullies near the top. The other branch of the second gully tops out mid way up the last section of the Southeast Buttress route). This second gully route looks like an attractive descent from the westerly peak, but our previous reconnaissance found a steep cliff part way down and a dangerously narrow exit at the bottom. From the west peak the ridge proceeds west and down, and given good visibility an outline of the third to fifth gullies can be made out. The fourth and fifth require traversing some distance along the ridge and part of the descent route to them is on the north side of the mountain.

We proceeded down the third gully, which proved to be straightforward and relatively safe from rockfall. The exit requires some class 3 down climbing heading to the right edge of the gully at the end just as it drops into a fairly steep face. We believe this is the "straightforward" Class 3 route. The bottom is marked with a cairn at 2360m. Our descent down the third gully was about 1/2 hour. Our trip back to our Green Mountain camp took about 1 1/2 hours and we arrived back just after 6 pm. We reached our car parked close to the Hurley River Road about 8:30 pm.

Participants: Peter and Silke Gumplinger, Ian Hopper, Tammie Sibbald, and David Hughes (Organizer).

2. Southeast Buttress Routes

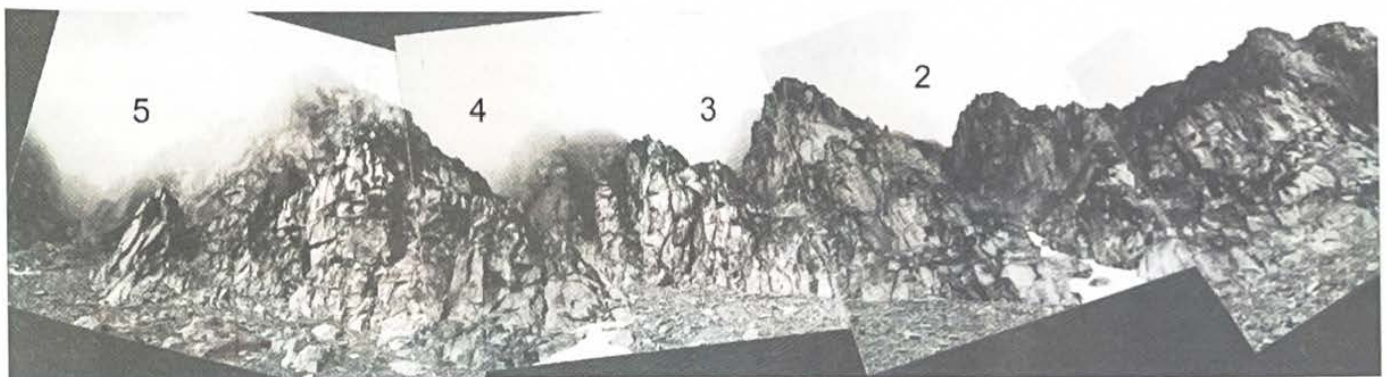
Two of the three great climbing routes on Mt. Sloan were put up by BCMC parties. The Southeast

Buttress was led by Martin Kafer in 1974, and the Northeast Ridge was climbed by Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik in 1976. I was fortunate enough to be on Martin's trip and I have wanted to introduce the Southeast Buttress route to a new wave of BCMCers.

Mt. Sloan is accessed from the Hurley River Forest Road by either the Green Mountain Forest Lookout Road - 74 km from the PetroCanada gas station in Pemberton, or the Ault Creek logging road, another 1.4 km toward Goldbridge. The Ault Creek logging road route is relatively new and in theory is shorter. Two different accounts have widely different opinions on the Ault Creek access route. One opinion on bivouac.com suggests a straightforward 3 - 4 hours from the cars to upper Ault Lakes. The other from climbers using it in August 2001 reported the bush was awful. The Green Mountain route involves going over Green Mountain then down to the upper Ault Creek Lakes. This route may be a little longer but is very pleasant with no bush and great views.

The south face of Mt. Sloan is a series of buttress/ridges and gullies. The Southeast Buttress offers sustained 5 1/2 hours of class 3 to low 5th class climbing. The Southeast Buttress is relatively easy to find if the weather is clear. The GPS coordinates at the start of the buttress are N50° 46.802' W122° 57.875' and the elevation is 2260 m. it is located immediately west of the large "Dragon Couloir".

At the end of the valley on the south side of Mt. Sloan is a small glacier cirque. Five gullies lead up the south face from this cirque. The first of these south side gullies actually tops out 2/3 of the way up the Southeast Buttress route. The second gully



The S face of Sloan with 4 of its 5 gullies. Gully number 1 is off the photo to the right.

joins the Buttress route near the top. The Southeast Buttress route leads directly to the top of Mt. Sloan.

The greater navigational problems arise on the South Face class 3 route. This is also the descent route. Bruce Fairley's Southwestern B.C. guide reports that "a large, hidden gully which is unmistakable" provides a straightforward Class 3 route to the summit. However, there are 5 gullies rising from the cirque after you round the Southeast Buttress. Starting from the Southeast Buttress the gullies are:

1. First gully tops out 2/3 to 3/4 of the way up the Southeast Buttress route. Explored by Alfred Menninga, David Hughes and Trevor Norman.
2. Second gully is very narrow and dangerous. This gully splits 3/4 of the way up. The eastern arm tops out on the Southeast Buttress a little below the summit. The western arm, which appears to have a cliff band, tops out between the west and east peaks of Mt. Sloan. These peaks are only 10 - 20m apart.
3. Third gully is the preferred gully. This gully appears difficult at the bottom in that there is approximately a rope lead of class 3 climbing up a cliff band. The band is actually quite easy and safe on the left (west) side. After the entrance the route is straightforward, topping out on the West Ridge of Mt. Sloan just below the west summit.
4. Fourth gully has a very large chockstone that blocks the route a little above the bottom. In the accompanying picture this gully is filled with snow.
5. Fifth gully, the furthest into the cirque, is very loose but relatively straightforward at the bottom. After turning the corner the route finding becomes more complex. This route ends up traversing on the north side of the West Ridge before passing gully 4 and eventually connecting to the top of gully 3. This route is not recommended.

Central Coast Mountains

The Tahumming traverse (Lessons in Coast Range travel, Volume CXXVII) Summer 2001

by Jack Bryceland and Brian Wood

This traverse, one of John Clarke's favourites, was first completed in 1986 in the company of John Baldwin. Several parties have done the trip since then. The route is a classic horseshoe traverse, following ridges around the headwaters of the Tahumming River, and was originally completed in sixteen days, starting and finishing at sea level and using three food drops. Being older, wiser, and corrupted by modern influences, we planned a more leisurely trip. We packed three-and-a-half-weeks supply of food, most of which was strategically helicopter-placed in four drops. To save us the initial grunt from sea level, we were dropped off at 1700m, with five days of supplies. To reduce the chances of getting lost we had marked the John's ingenious and scenic route on our maps and were equipped with GPS, EPIRB and VHS radio. It would have taken a lot of effort and bad luck to produce an old fashioned epic. Since the average age of our participants was twice that of the 2 Johns, all the accumulated learnings of an experienced party are no good if those earlier lessons are forgotten and previous mistakes repeated. Not that any of us have ever made mistakes, you understand!

The party consisted of Lisa Baile, Peter Pare (who, together, had been planning the trip for years), Jack Bryceland, Marg Ellis, Brian Ellis and Brian (Woody) Wood. On a fair Saturday afternoon in late July we all flew out of Powell River, Jack in a helicopter with the food drops, and the others in a Beaver float-plane with the first five days of food and fuel. The Beaver's low level scenic flight took us over Desolation Sound and up Toba Inlet to land in shallow water at the mouth of the Tahumming River, almost at the head of the inlet where the Toba River estuary provides extensive wetland habitat. We waded to shore from the plane and waited a short while for the helicopter to fly us and our gear to join Jack at a beautiful campsite near the end of the ridge on the east side of the



The mob on the traverse. Brian, Marg, Jack, Woody, Peter, and Lisa (left to right).

Photo - B. Ellis

river valley. Although broken cloud hung around the high country, Jack reported that there had been no trouble with the food drops and everything was in place on the first day, which is always a relief. What a marvelous start to a trip. We could have a snack and set up our three tents. As we wandered around our airy perch with the clouds drifting in and out, we gradually recovered from the "culture shock" of the rapid and effortless transition from civilization to wilderness. Across the Tahumming valley we could sometimes see the peaks, ridges and glaciers on the west side, only 10 kilometres away as the raven flies, where we hoped to be in three weeks time.

The weather that day was typical of the next twelve - occasional patches of blue sky suddenly hidden by rapidly moving cloud, the peaks appearing then vanishing in the mists. Several mornings started with blue skies but as the day progressed the valley clouds would rise and condense further on the high snowfields; sometimes condensing enough to fall on us. Our first day of travel did not start until 2:30 pm since the route ahead was not obvious in the poor visibility. That is another characteristic of this trip that we learned early; if you cannot see the way ahead, the map, compass and GPS are of little value. The route covers complex terrain that requires continuous assessment. Our admiration, already high for the pioneers, went even higher. The second day of travel taught us another couple of Tahumming lessons - it would not be possible to climb all the peaks enroute; and the maps did not show a number of significant glaciers. We roped up for one of the

latter since the crevasses were of people-swallowing size. Day 4 did allow us to climb a couple of peaks with the added bonus of camping on a spectacular heather bench at day's end. The bench faced west across the Tahumming valley with a steep drop-off below - another characteristic of this area, with its numerous glacier-scoured sheer granite walls.

The fifth day provided a minor setback as we found our progress along the ridges stopped by a narrow section capped with a threatening cornice. The solution was to backtrack and traverse north of the ridge on another unmapped glacier. Since the threatening cornice was now above us as we traversed, it was not an ideal solution, but the only one available. We wandered along the next ridge and came across a small cache of fuel and climbing gear left by a previous party. This was one of the few signs of previous visitors to this area. Just before arriving at our camp for that night, there was an amazing view east to the head of the Klite River; the walls below Portal Peak dropping more than a 1000m to the valley floor.

Day six had the travel-incentive of a food drop to find, but since we had located all drops in significant cols, taken GPS readings and placed flagged wands, finding the first one was not a serious challenge. We also managed to summit a couple of bumps along the way. The drifting mist and flat light provided an oh-shit-how-could-we-do-this? lesson as Marg and Jack almost walked over the lip of a wind-cirque returning to camp from one bump. Peter and Lisa, having energy to burn, went east along the ridge to view the top of Headwall Creek; which National Geographic Magazine called "one of the great wonders of the planet". Camp that evening was, as usual, on snow but with rocks on which to cook and laze and stare at the amazing scenery. That evening we burned the plastic food barrels, using white gas to soak the wands and any burnable garbage we had accumulated. Luckily there was a good wind that helped combustion and there was negligible residue, which was a relief. Next day, all day, the amazing scenery was lost in the rain and sleet. We practised our tent-relaxation techniques.

The eighth day was still displaying the drifting-mist syndrome but we got away by 9:15 am and played more crevasse/icefall games. It's



From camp 2 looking W across the Tahumming valley. Photo - B. Wood



From camp 3 looking back across a just-traversed unmapped glacier NE of Pk 2190m. Photo - B. Wood



Near camp 4 looking back to Pk 2190m and unmapped glacier. Photo - B. Wood



From camp 4 looking N to the route along the curving ridge, Tahumming valley to left. Photo - B. Wood



Peter looking up Klite River valley towards Portal Pk. Photo - B. Wood



From camp 7 looking down to the Orford/Tahumming pass. Photo - J. Bryceland

always interesting to speculate, latterly, how much is skill/experience/judgment and how much is luck. Whatever the answer, we cruised through the broken ice down onto the flat glacier and set up camp under the south wall of Mamook Peak just as the rain started in earnest. Next morning, fortunately, the rain had stopped; but since it had rained overnight, the waterfall that we had to ascend was flowing freely. Here was another lesson, hopefully learned earlier: cinch up your jacket at wrists and neck but loosen your pants at the ankle. Let the water that runs in at the top have free rein to run out at the bottom! Peter cruised up the pitch so quickly that he barely had time to get wet - another lesson to remember- do not dawdle under waterfalls! Being the gentleman that he is, Peter also provided a much-appreciated ice-axe handhold for those following. From there a long snowfield led to the rocks on the south side of Nanitch Peak, where we dropped our packs and scrambled to the summit, first climbed in 1968 by an Oregon party! The summit ridge displayed some amazing fractured slabs even with the existing snow cover. What must they be like with the snow gone? A descending traverse around the north side of the peak led us to the northernmost point of the traverse. From here we would turn south, down along the west side of the Tahumming drainage. It is an interesting psychological milepost when one turns for home on a trip. From husbanding resources on the outgoing leg, one can now start to relax slightly since it is 'all downhill from here'. That reasoning may apply to some trips, but not to this one: there were still challenges to be met and lessons to be learned. The camp that night was on a massive granite slab with views south down into the Tahumming/Orford divide: the pass for which we were heading.

Next morning we were to descend snowfields and slabs down to the pass, and this looked straightforward enough but there was a slightly convex curve to the slope, which disguised the final incline. Lisa, Marg and Jack decided that the consistency of the upper snows made crampons worthwhile, while Peter, Brian and Woody felt that they could plunge-step it! At the top of some polished slabs beneath the snowfields we all regrouped to investigate the remainder of the descent. In these types of situations it is encourag-



Weaving a route through the slabs.

Photo - J. Bryceland

ing to know that previous parties had found a way through. A couple of hours of investigating up and down ramps found a way through the slabs and gravel-covered ice to the moraines. Here was another lesson in the leather/plastic boot controversy. The slabs were of steep-enough angle that those wearing stiff plastic boots were having problems keeping enough sole-surface on the rock for sufficient traction, whereas those wearing softer leather boots were just fine! Woody and Jack sweated their way down the slabs, literally and figuratively, in their airtight plastic boots while the others waltzed ahead onto the gravelly meadows in their living, breathing cowhide.

The sun was shining and it was such a fine site on a small island in the Orford River, that we decided to spend two days there doing washups and walkabouts. Although the weather next day was variable the situation was so magnificent as make the weather insignificant. We walked along the flat valley to where the west fork of the Tahumming River drops 800 m over a wall to join its other tributaries. The river is a gorgeous green colour flowing over white sand and granite slabs, contrasting with strange red lichen. After a surfeit of wild topography we hiked back to the camp to have tea with the zinging hummingbirds. Not that we were complacent: lots of fresh grizzly tracks kept us looking over our shoulders, just in case!

The next morning, day 12, was an early start since we had stretched ten days of food, and

needed to find food cache number two. Unfortunately the cache was down the river, through some dense bush, up a moraine gully to the snowfield; 10 km ahead and 500 m higher. It was good that the heavy rain did not start until we had cleared the gully which had intimidating, steep walls of wet gravel and mud from which car-sized boulders projected like large teeth: another lesson in choosing your time and place! As we trudged across the glacier, the mist and rain came down and the wind got up. Brian, who was a long way ahead (as usual), thankfully spotted the food cache and saved us from wandering past. Three plastic buckets were a wonderful sight; particularly since white buckets partly buried in snow are not easy to see in a storm!

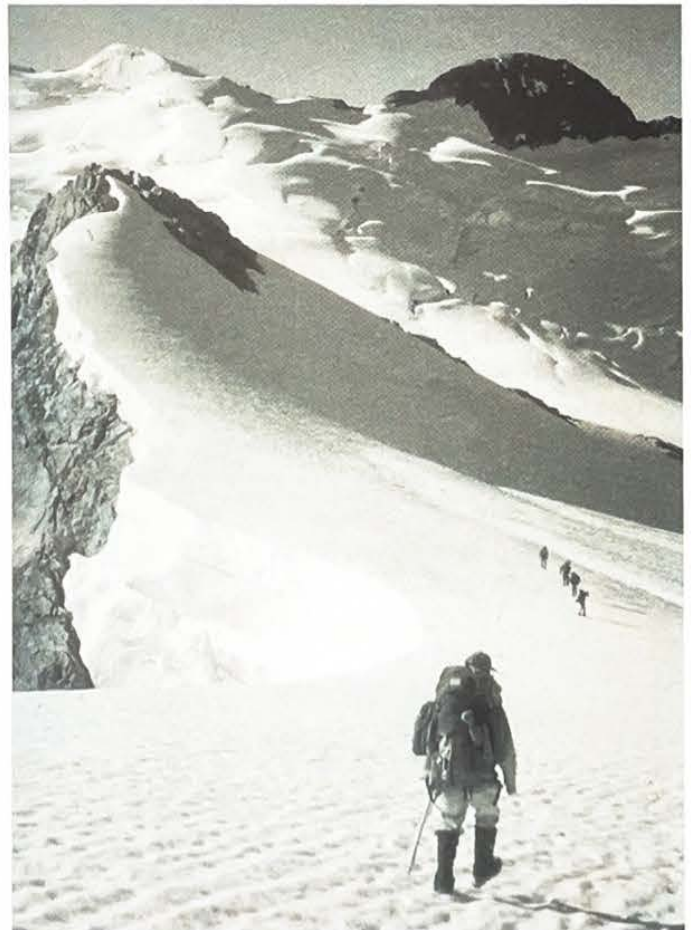
Should I list the library now? What did we read during the next five days of rain, snow, sleet, mist and driving winds? Luckily (?) we did not have to burn fuel to melt snow as we could collect ample supplies of rain in our pots and buckets! How did we occupy our time? This type of situation is the origin of tentscendental meditation with related fasting, particularly since the next food cache was 20 km away across broken, unknown ground. Am I sure that I want to eat that second granola bar? Perhaps the weather will not clear until September! How thin will I be then? I will slip into crevasses more readily! Will I still be able to carry my pack? I wasn't carrying it very well before! Thankfully the Tahumming Regional District Mobile Library Service toured this isolated community of windblown soggy tents every few hours, thus ensuring that its members were well supplied with the latest best sellers.

Day 18 had some sun and cloud with a rising barometer; we were away by 8:30 am. There was a major glacial traverse before us, paralleling some large crevasses. It was nice to be able to see where to go. From the map contours, this west side of the Tahumming valley looked to be simpler terrain. However, a steep, rocky, heather ridge required a hand-line; then farther careful descent into a col. Not a place to slip while carrying a full pack, or while carrying nothing for that matter! Then another lesson that map contours do not tell the whole story! A steep little gap with gullies dropping off on either side required lowering

packs and another hand-line. There were also some interesting double cornices along these ridges: not too bad in August, but it would be very challenging earlier in the season. If it had not been so cool we would have again raised our hats to the pioneers of this fantastic route.

So here's a part-way trip perspective. We had planned for a laid-back, casual, take-it-easy, do-lots-of-peaks, with seniors discounts type of trip. Instead we had not done many peaks; it was day 18, an eleven-hour day and we were only three-quarters of the way around! Ah, but it was a grand place to be; and what a sunset over Orford Tower! These are the moments we should try to remember, not the breathless, peak-bagging ones.

Wednesday, 8 August, our lottery ticket numbers came up! Never going to church finally paid



Day 19 - the route rose up through the crevasses to the col between the two 2400m peaks. Photo - J. Bryceland

off! Wearing a hat indoors, while kicking the cat, holding a burning candle and throwing salt over my right shoulders were all worthwhile! Cloudless blue sky – and it stayed that way until the end of the traverse. We also found the next food cache. Oh happy pigs!

The days just got better and better. Although there was some steep downclimbing over rock and heather on occasion, the terrain was certainly smoothing out; and, of course, the snow was vanishing. Which meant that there was more heather and slab on which to travel (and sit!). Then on day 21, icing on the cake, our helicopter pilot Dan Canton landed his Hughes 500 just for a social call while waiting for his fishermen-clients to have their fun. We lightened up with happy talk and also by giving him a bunch of gear and excess food to fly out. Later that day we located our last food drop and discovered that ziplock bags inside leaky plastic buckets do not necessarily keep out water. We presumed that melting snow floated the buckets and rolled them over, thereby allowing slow seepage of water past the lid gasket, and eventually between the lips of the ziplock. Luckily we were not short of food and so the local critters probably had a little feast after they found our buried mushy oats, granola, rice, etc.

The ridge here is wide and rounded with lots of bare rock between heather patches. The exit route to the east drops 300 m down bare slabs to a spectacular lake, then through the trees to the clearcuts in the Tahumming valley. Most of this was visible to us and we were relieved to note that the bare slabs were not as steep as they had first appeared when we had viewed them head-on and foreshortened. However, we still had two days at our disposal so we turned west to Champion Peak – a beautiful horn with an obvious northeast ridge. We climbed this peak on the recommendations of the Johns, and it was well worth it. As it was a day trip, we had the luxury of light packs and cavorted (or so it seemed) like mountain goats; at least along the level sections of the approach. The ridge has a spectacular aspect and is a pleasant class 3 on solid granite with confidence-boosting incut holds and flake edges. Descending was airy and a 30 m handline was strung for security on one steep section. The route provided otherwise straightforward.

The final day before descending, we moved camp a little way down the ridge to a pleasant flat area beside a shallow pool. Farther down the ridge was a fine diveable pool where everyone porpoised in and out a number of times, and some explored the deceptively rolling walk to the end of the ridge and were rewarded with good views down to Toba Inlet. Just to avoid nasty surprises, we also checked out the slab descent to the big lake and decided it was not good for plastic boots but was OK for sandals or runners. The big lake at the bottom of the slabs provided some excellent swimming around massive half-submerged slabs.

The descent day was fine and dry. We left early and it took eight hours of relatively straightforward travel to reach saltwater. Descending the open slabs we were initially very cautious, but soon acquired great confidence in the rough, coarse-grained granite with its superb friction. It was a little surrealistic; like walking down an airfield runway, which had been tilted and cracked by an earthquake. After Jack and Woody put on their plastic boots, we followed the toe of the slabs along the edge of the forest to hit the big trees just above the old clearcuts. Although there were roads in the cutblock, the swift-running creeks had washed away the bridges and gouged deep gullies in the hillside. A crossing was not impossible, just dangerous. The simplest solution was to take the line of least resistance down through the cuts to the valley bottom and the mainline. We arrived on the shore of Toba Inlet at 4 pm, camped, and Woody did his end-of-trip white-gas laundry, aka shirt flambé.

Early next morning, right on time, Bob Bates arrived with his Beaver and we were whisked back to civilization????

Ape Lake Climbing Camp **4 -11 August, 2001** by David Hughes

The last BCMC camp at Ape Lake, on the north end of the Monarch Icecap, was in 1983, the same year the BCMC had a climbing camp at Mt. Monarch, which is at the southeast end of the Monarch Icecap. At that time, I was in the

successful Monarch trip and had a chance to see Ape Lake when we flew there to pick up some climbers. Access then was generally by float-plane from Nimpo Lake.

In the fall of 1984, Ape Lake changed. The Fyles Glacier, named after a past BCMC member, blocked the western end of Ape Lake. The lake until 1984 drained to the east to the Talchako River before eventually draining to the ocean at Bella Coola. In 1984, the lake broke through the ice by creating an under-ice tunnel and the lake was drained of close to half of its water volume. At least two more "jokullhoups" have occurred since 1984. As a result, Ape Lake now drains to the west proceeding under the Fyles Glacier and emptying into the Nolick River and eventually into the South Bentinck Arm.

In planning for our 2001 camp, both Nimpo Lake and Hagensborg (near Bella Coola) were considered as access points to Ape Lake. Float plane from Nimpo Lake is still possible, but no longer preferred. Ape Lake is between 50 - 65% its pre-1984 length and to land a float plane requires favourable wind conditions. As a result, Hagensborg has become a preferred departure point, despite being a longer drive and a little more expensive.

It is a long drive to the Bella Coola Valley. Some of the camp members chose to leave Friday night to get 4 or 5 hours traveling completed. Others left very early on Saturday, August 4. We arrived in Hagensborg after approximately 12 hours total driving time from Vancouver. Despite the heavy clouds and threatening rain, our pilot, Richard Lapointe of West Coast Helicopters, had us packing up and we were off by 7 pm that Saturday. We were now down to eleven persons, as Margaret Hanson felt sufficiently sick not to fly in.

Our trip by helicopter to Ape Lake took 0.9 hours. The first run was directly from the Bella Coola Airport and the second was from a pickup about 15 km up the Nusateum River valley. There is a rough trail from near the head of the Nusateum valley that leads to Ape Lake. A local guidebook states 7 to 12 hours of hiking is required. On arriving at a suitable campsite, we were faced with rain and pending darkness while setting up camp and cooking dinner.



The Jacobsen Pks in 1983 (top) and 2001 (bottom). Photos - D. Hughes

Sunday, August 5, brought more rain and a base camp day. Our camp location was about 200 m south of a small private cabin, which was completely filled with construction material and unuseable. Our site at about 1370m was close to where the lakeshore used to be and was now a good 500m from the western end of the lake. The snout of the Fyles Glacier, the former western end of the lake, was little more than one km to the west. Here the river draining Ape Lake proceeds down to the glacier and runs under it through a massive and spectacular ice cave and tunnel. The river eventually comes out the snout of the Fyles Glacier between 1 to 2 km further west, and wraps around the balance of the snout of the Fyles as the beginning of Noeick River.

Monday brought less clouds and a light drizzle. Mid morning the sound of a helicopter was heard and just as it came into view, it suddenly nose-dived toward the ground and completed a 180° turn. One of our party saw a young grizzly at the top of the moraine to the west of our camp,

less than 50 m away. When the helicopter landed, out jumped Margaret, much relieved that she could still come. The pilot explained he noticed the bear and shooed him down the valley. In the Bella Coola Valley, there are many grizzlies and the locals do not take them lightly.

While we had acquired our 12th member, we unfortunately were about to lose two others. Andrea Weiss had developed severe back spasms and could barely walk. Andrea and her companion, Julian, decided to take advantage of this unscheduled helicopter landing and elected to fly out.

That afternoon, the weather broke a little and six of us started down the north side of Ape Lake and succeeded in hiking up to a pass east of Musician Peak. From here we were rewarded with good views of the Ape Lake Valley, the Jacobsens and the Fyles and Ape Glaciers. Poet and Musician Peaks, immediately north of our camp, and Ape Lake, were inviting non-technical ascents. Neither were climbed, however, on our trip as the bush and scrub firs were about as thick as the bush on the west side of Vancouver Island. Passage through was extremely difficult in most places.

Tuesday morning, August 7, brought the promise of clearing weather so eight of us set off up the Ape Glacier for a high camp at the top of the Fyles Glacier 2400m. Peter was also having back problems and he elected not to come. Michael then decided to stay down and climb with Peter.

The next morning with clear skies, we were

up and away before sunrise on our way to climb East Jacobsen, 3027m. Our drop down the other side on a scree gully was uneventful, putting us on the Monarch Icefield. From here we proceeded to the south end of the West Jacobsen and up the south glacier gap to a col between the two Jacobsen at about 2500 m. From here we had a relatively pleasant climb on varying sections of dry rock, snow and a little ice. Eric and Tim broke trail up the steep snow slopes arriving on top around noon. By 1 pm everyone was on top.

The weather was excellent but views were significantly impaired by the extensive forest fire haze. Much of the northern Chilcotin and Cariboo areas of the Province up to Prince George were under fire to try and eradicate the serious pine beetle infestation. As a result, Talchako, 3060m, to the east and Monarch, 3533m, were barely visible. After a leisurely two-hour lunch we retreated, returning to our high camp after a 12 hour day.

Thursday brought a group decision to go down the Fyles to a large rock island that separates the lower Fyles from the Ape Glacier - a wonderful campsite with swimming pools, great vistas and the bonus of late and early sun.

Friday, we were off again well before sunrise to climb Mount Fyles, 2750m. Our route up the broad glacier on the east face went well but there was only one place to cross a major crevasse that crossed the entire face. 2001 was a very low snow year. We first climbed the west peak of Fyles from the col to the south - one short section of Class 3.



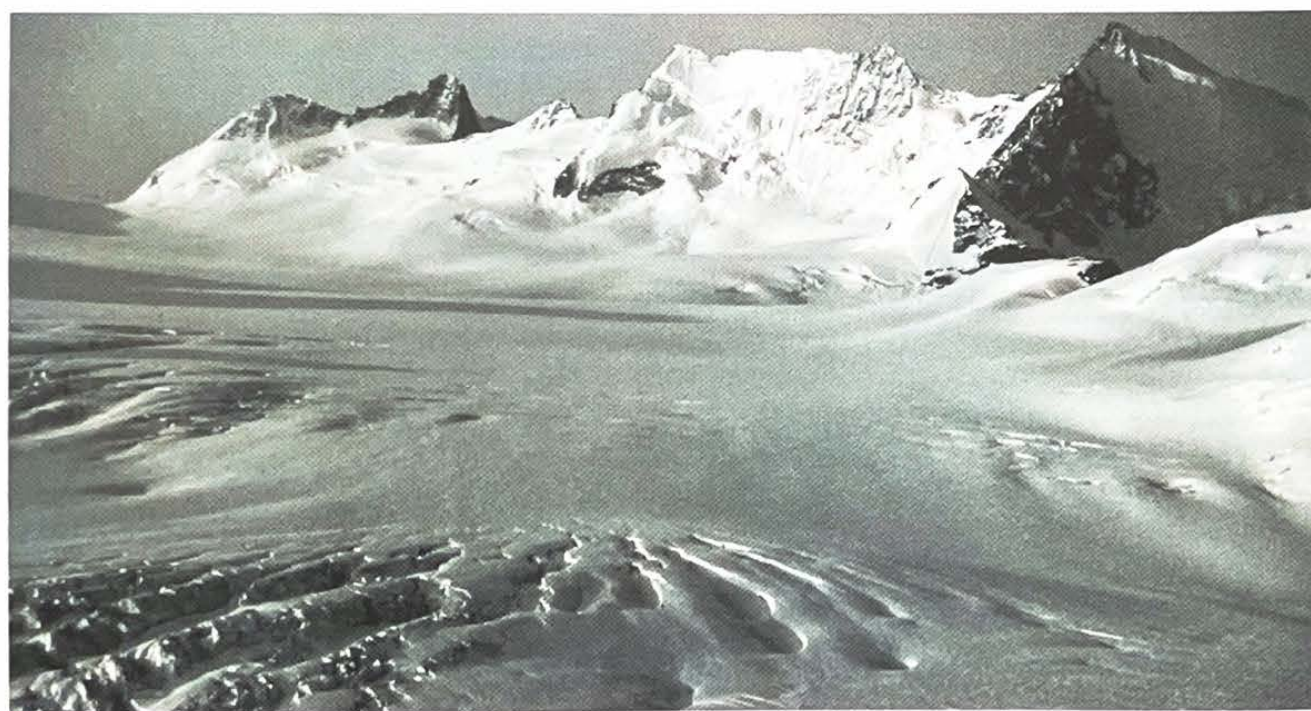
Tim, Eric, and Dave on the second peak of Mt. Fyles. Photo - D. Hughes collection



Joe, Norbert, Mirella, Margaret, Erich, Eric, and Tim (left to right) on the summit of E. Jacobsen Pk. Photo - D. Hughes



On the W peak of Mt. Fyles. Photo - B. Hughes



View across the Monarch icecap to Chili Tower to left. Photo - D. Hughes



Rock and ice near the second high camp. Photo - D. Hughes



Mt. Fyles (right of centre) above the Fyles Glacier. Photo - D. Hughes



W. Jacobsen Pk. from the top of E. Jacobsen Pk. Photo - D. Hughes

After a lunch break, five of us proceeded to climb the middle and highest peak of Fyles from its col with the west peak. This relatively short climb offered a rewarding low 5th class section. The views from Fyles are excellent and fortunately we had less forest fire haze to contend with. We returned to our second high camp, packed up and proceeded down to our base camp arriving about 7:30 pm.

Saturday, August 11, was one of those unbelievable weather days – warm and crystal clear. Most took the day exploring the flowers, the large ice cave on the eastern edge of the Fyles Glacier and the lakes around the northern terminus of the Fyles Glacier. At least one 50 m. serac fell off the snout into one of the lakes during our sightseeing causing a minor tidal wave. At 6:30 p.m. our helicopter arrived and we were off to Hagensborg and a great dinner.

Our thanks to both West Coast Helicopters and Richard Lapointe as well as the Bella Coola RCMP who kindly returned my lost camera bag and all my film which I had left behind at Mackenzie's "Rock".

Participants: Eric Hughes, Erich Hinze, Tim LeCouteur, Jos van der Burg, Norbert Eckert, Mirella Lioce, Margaret Hanson, Michael McCrae, Peter Stange, Julian Douglass, Andrea Weiss and David Hughes.

Columbia and Rocky Mountains

Fraser Headwaters Traverse August - September, 2001 by Betsy Waddington

Robin had wanted to do a trip to the Fraser Headwaters for many years but previous attempts hadn't been successful for a variety of reasons, so it was on the top of our list of destinations for this summer's traverse. The first idea was to hike up the Fraser from highway 16 to Fraser Pass. However, after a quick look at the map showed 46 km of bush on the route, I quickly vetoed that plan. We then looked at approaching from the west, but if roads exist, we couldn't find any

information about them. Further study of the map revealed an better plan: We would start hiking up the Astoria River at the Cavell Hostel, go over Verdant Pass and drop into Simon Creek, hike up Simon Creek to Beacon Creek and follow this up to Beacon Lake. From there we could cross an easy pass into the Fraser drainage a short walk from Fraser Pass. More careful study of the maps showed that it might be possible to get back to Simon Creek via a pass south of Mt. Elephas. We would then hike to the head of Simon Creek and cross a pass back to the Astoria River and follow the trail downstream to the Cavell Hostel.

We drove to Jasper on August 25 and spent our first night at the Cavell Hostel. The next day we hiked up to Verdant Pass, where the trail ended. For the next week we would see no signs of people. At Verdant Pass we were treated to spectacular views of the Hooker Icefield to the south. We spent the afternoon wandering through the large meadows at the pass to a small lake at the southern end of the pass where we camped. After dinner we hiked up a small ridge near camp and watched a herd of elk grazing in the meadows below us.

The second day we dropped into Simon Creek and started hiking up it. Simon Creek was much larger than I expected; we would have to cross it eventually and it looked like it would be very difficult. I hoped it would be easier upstream where the map showed that it split into two



Hiking up Simon Ck. Photo - R. Tivy

channels. The first few hundred metres of travel were very easy going, following game trails on the dry terrace next to the creek. Then we got to the swamp. The edge of Simon Creek became overgrown and difficult to walk along, so we thought it might be easier to go through the middle of the swamp. Big mistake. The middle was a mess of tall, narrow hummocks with deep pools between them. Eventually we decided to head for the forest. Just before we were safely out of the swamp a nasty little tree pushed me off a hummock and into a pool, soaking both boots. Once safely into the forest we were able to follow intermittent game trails to a series of dry open gravel bars. A short distance upstream the valley narrowed and again we followed intermittent trails. We soon came to a large logjam that neatly solved the problem of how to cross to the south side of the creek. We continued upstream in thick forest, now following a very high quality moose trail that avoided most obstacles and was nicely benched. By 7pm I was tired and hungry and no longer cared about a nice camp spot; anything relatively flat would do. So we squeezed the tent between some willows next to the creek and hoped the creek didn't rise much overnight.

Next day we continued up Simon Creek, and within half an hour came upon a wonderful, dry, open gravel bar, next to a clear stream that would have been an ideal camp spot. We continued following the gravel bars and moose trails, until the moose started heading upslope. Some study of the map indicated that this might be as good a place as any to start up Beacon Creek, so we kept following the moose to some boggy meadows part way up Beacon Creek. Above the meadows the moose trail became indistinct and we followed the creek. A large debris flow had come down a tributary of Beacon Creek, probably within the last season, as fresh mud marks were visible 3 m up tree trunks where the flow had been diverted out of the creek. Above this mess we were able to get onto some talus slopes that we were able to follow up valley to the tree line, thus avoiding almost all the thick bush in Beacon Creek. The final headwall, near the top of Beacon Creek, looked intimidating for most of the time it took us to hike up to it, but proved to be easy once we got to it. As soon as we



Camp at Beacon Lake. Photo - R. Tivy

were over the headwall we were treated to a spectacular view of Beacon Lake - a large blue lake surrounded by steep rocky peaks and glaciers, with a flat tundra bench for us to camp on.

The fourth day was a short one - around Beacon Lake, across the pass, then a meadow walk up to Fraser Pass. The walk around Beacon Lake was a bit more difficult than expected due to several hundred metres of steep, tippy boulders, the remains of a rock glacier. Once across Beacon Pass we descended some meadows next to another rock glacier, then climbed to a small lake for lunch. From here it was an easy meadow walk past the toe of an active rock glacier to Fraser Pass. Near the rock glacier we saw several little piles of greens neatly laid out on rocks. Had we interrupted someone's lunch or were the marmots collecting herbs for winter? We were at Fraser Pass by early afternoon and spent a couple of hours lying around in the meadows there before descending to some running water to set up camp. At about 5 pm we decided we should see if the high point of the Cube Ridge was climbable, so we left all our stuff in a pile and headed off. Once again an intimidating head wall proved to be relatively easy and a couple of hours later we were on the summit, enjoying views of Robson to the north and Mts. Brown and Kane to the south.

Our fifth day was the crux of the trip. There were two possible routes back to Simon Creek that would avoid retracing our route past Beacon Lake, but neither looked completely certain on the map. Completing one of these routes would



Robin near the summit of the Cube Ridge.
Photo - B. Waddington

be much shorter; we would save at least a day of travel over retracing our steps. If we tried and neither of the routes worked we would then have an extra two days of travel to get out. We decided to gamble on making one of the passes work, so we retraced our steps to below Beacon Pass then climbed through steep, very closely spaced trees to meadows south of Blackrock Mountain. The first pass was just north of this mountain. The 1:50,000 map showed 2 close contours near the top and the 1:100,000 Jasper Park map showed a small glacier. I thought this pass was the least likely, but it was also the first one, so we detoured up to it only to find a very steep, loose rock slope above steep snow, possibly with ice at the top. The tricky bit was only about 50m long, but definitely too dicey for me. So we retreated. On the descent we noticed numerous little piles of leaves and flowers on stones; more marmot lunches? We continued south to the second pass just south of Mount Elephas. The 1:50,000 map showed wider spaced contours under a small glacier, and the 1:100,000 map showed that this glacier had retreated enough that there might be a way past it. This time we were lucky and a steep boulder slope lead us down to the valley flats. We followed a rock glacier and then a moraine ridge down to a meadow bench where we set up camp. This was one of our most special camp spots; a small heather bench high in a mountain valley with spectacular views to the peaks across Simon Creek. There was also a moose

grazing below our camp spot. As we set up camp the moose wandered up valley toward us. I hoped he would stay some distance away. He eventually settled into a lake and meadow area a few hundred metres below us where he spent several hours grazing and napping before disappearing down valley. When we got up the next morning the moose had returned with a friend for another feed. It was nice to see who had been making the great trail we followed a couple of days previously.

The sixth morning was a little damp so we got a slow start. The hike down this valley toward Simon Creek was lovely - lots of little streams and pools with flower meadows in between. By the time we got down to the trees an intense thunderstorm developed and we donned our rain gear before continuing up valley. Moose trails again led us on a good route through the forest, coming out to some recent moraines at a narrow gap between cliff bands. This day we had to cross a series of large glacier creeks. Luckily the rain eased off by the first crossing and we were able to warm up a bit after each creek. Mastodon Creek was the largest, up to the bottom of my pack, and fast flowing. Robin led the way and I followed gingerly. But once it was crossed the last of the difficulties were over. We continued up Simon Creek toward the pass between Fraser Glacier and Penstock Creek. By mid-afternoon it looked like another thunderstorm was imminent. We found a flat terrace 3 m above a little creek and managed to get the tent set up and a supply of water collected just before the rain started again.

The seventh morning was again wet, so we spent the morning in the tent. We had decided that we should leave camp by noon to get to Amethyst Lakes by dark. Luckily we had filled up enough water bottles the night before because the clear creek we camped next to had become very muddy. Fortunately the rain stopped just as we finished lunch and we were able to get over the pass and down to the trees in Penstock Creek before a hailstorm hit. We camped that night at a designated camp spot on Amethyst Lake.

Our last day was sunny so we decided to climb Mount Clitheroe on our way out. We followed the high trail from Amethyst Lakes, which had the added bonuses of good views

and no boggy sections. We climbed a scree slope on the south side of Clitheroe that got us to the lower, east summit. The higher west summit was separated by an uncrossable, by us, notch. After this diversion, we returned to the Astoria River trail and followed it back to our car at the hostel.

**A tale of two haggis, Trophy Mountains
Christmas, 2001**
by Jack Bryceland

“It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom,
it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness,
it was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair,
we had everything before us,
we had nothing before us,
we were all going direct to Heaven,
we were all going direct the other way “

- in short . . .” we were skiing from the Trophy Mountain Chalet over the Christmas/New Year break. The haggis? We will get to that tale shortly.

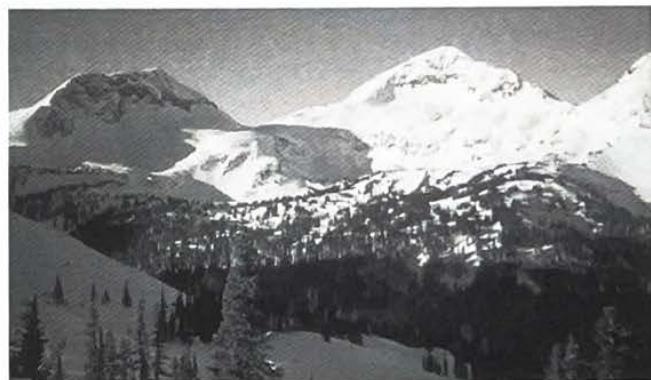
Those present for the festivities were Doug Berner, Jack Bryceland, Samantha Elvin, Helen Habgood, Neil Lang, Annette Muttray, Robert Nugent, Shirley Rempel, and Geza Vamos. Sydney Carton was unable to attend. The concept and execution of the trip was in the hands of the Nugent/Rempel cartel.

The Trophy Mountain Chalet is a privately owned/maintained hut just inside the southern border of Wells Gray Provincial Park. Not only is the hut in excellent condition, it has technologically sound, environmentally sensitive facilities, such as a Clivus Multrum toilet, solar-driven lighting and an indoor propane-fired sauna. It's better than I have at home! But you go for the skiing, right? It has that too! The hut is situated at tree-line with lots of available alpine tops, wide runs on various aspects, steep gullies into frigid bowls and tree skiing for misty or avalanchy days; not that we had any of those! The access to the chalet is via a 1950s-throwback snowcat, converted and rebuilt many times by the friendly proprietor, Ian Eakins. The 'cat rattles, joggles, shakes and bumps you up the road for 12 km. You need only pack your gear 4 km and 550 m of ascent up through the open forest to the hut. However, if you carry as many wine bottles as Doug or as big a turkey as Robert had, you may have to make two trips.

I'll try not to dwell too much on the food and wine, since the skiing was first class, but we did eat well! Since we were there for ten days, it was the usual arrangement of 'everyone cooks a meal for the group'. Just to give you a flavour of what we had - there was lamb curry, sesame pasta, shepherd's pie, salmon & asparagus pasta,



The Trophy Mtn. Chalet.
Photo - J. Bryceland

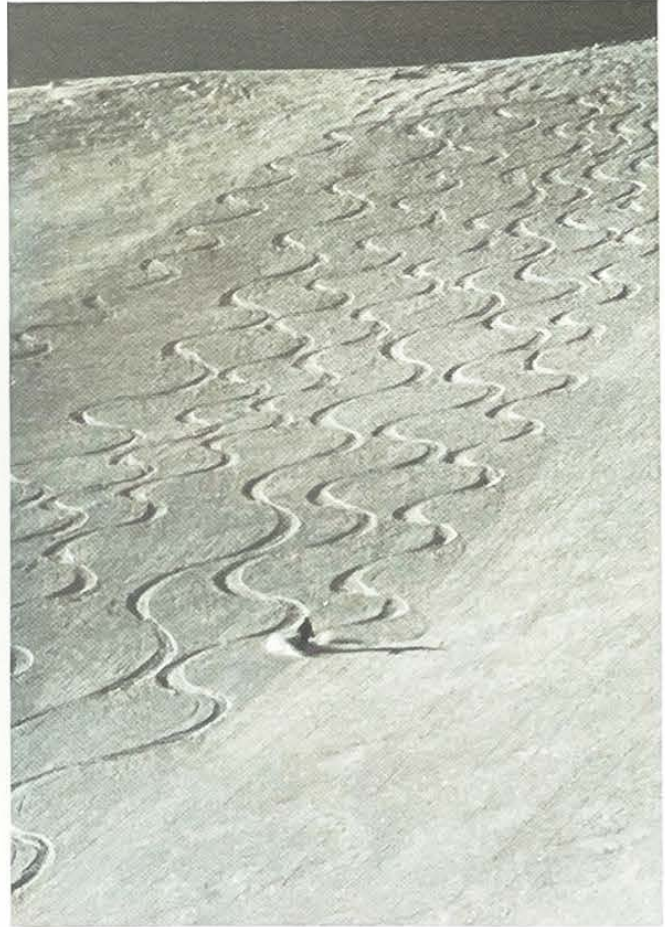


Looking N to Trophy Mtn.
Photo - J. Bryceland

sausages & mash, squash curry AND THEN THERE WAS THE TURKEY. I did not weigh the bird, but it looked to be about 35 kg, the size of a small Rottweiler. If Robert had only purchased it alive, it could have carried a pack up to the hut; or better still, all the wine bottles. Since the story so far has been pleasant, perhaps even euphoric, it is time to dampen your spirits with the tale of the haggis (being Christmas, perhaps it should be hagi). Robert, Neil and Jack, being descended from a race of oatmeal-savages, Sam and Neil had brought along two 2 kg frozen haggis for one of their dinners. You are all licking your lips in anticipation at this point; I can tell. I know you would like nothing better than to tuck into a plateful of the "great chieftain o' the puddin' race". We were in similar anticipation. To delay the meal and heighten our sense of culinary delight the haggis was hung inconveniently under the eaves of the hut. This was also to prevent Robert from

nibbling at them when the rest of us were otherwise occupied. Unbeknownst to us, there were uninvited guests at the banquet. A pine marten established a new world record in the standing high jump by leaping up to the bag, ripping it open, then dragging our delicious dinner-to-be off to some infinitely deep hole in the snow. Prolonged and exhaustive digging by Sam and Neil produced only great mounds of snow: no haggis. It was a dickens of a time; tears were shed! Not that we were short of food. You know how it goes at turkey-time: you have one meal of turkey and seventeen meals of turkey leftovers.

The skiing? The snow conditions were so good that by the end of the trip I was beginning to delude myself that I knew how to ski (recent coastal crud has restored my sense of reality). We made at least one track on every skiable run in the area. Helen in particular, was ticking off the gullies one by one. The snow was consistently good and the hazard



Skiing in the Trophy Mountains. Photos - R. Nugent

was minimal. Doug dug a massive pit and then a Rutschblock. The block wouldn't even move when we swore at it in German! On the way in we asked Ian Eakins about the chances of summiting Trophy Mountain. He thought it so unlikely that he promised a case of beer if we were successful. Well we did but he didn't: so he still owes us a twelve-pack. Of course he gave us a free ride out on the snowcat, which was not part of the original deal. So perhaps we are even.

Was it a great trip? But of course. "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done ..."

3. POT POURRI

The Antidote

by Anders Ourom

Squamish climbers were shocked and appalled to find that the popular extreme moderate route Penny Lane ("A modest climb, with much to be modest about."), in the Little Smoke Bluffs, had recently been patented. A meter and sign appeared at the base of the route, and a sinister figure clothed in blue was seen nearby. Workers also erected fences, awnings, meters and other equipment at the base of many other climbs. The Patent Office reports that hundreds of climbs, in Squamish and elsewhere, were recently patented by Blue Troll Enterprises and other corporations. Their address is 666 Under a Rock, Beside a Tree, Squamish.

On investigation, our star reporter discovered that BTE plans to charge fees for climbing this and other routes at Squamish. Rates will be:

- Ordinary climbers: \$2.00 (weekdays), \$5.00 (weekends), \$10.00 (high season).
- Hangdogs, 'sport' climbers, and other lightweights: double.
- Guides: \$50/person.
- Movie wankers: \$50,000 (real money, not coloured confetti) a day. Or more.
- Climbing photo-/porno-graphers, and people who want to write about BTE climbs in magazines, or include them in "50 Crowded Climbs": negotiable.

- Pervertical dancers, Climbers for god (in any and all of her manifestations), top-ropers, dry-toolers, rosin users, motivational speakers, and other weirdos: no admission.
- Boring egomaniacs who teach others to climb because it will make them better people: don't even think about it.
- Trolls, cats, anyone in RRs or EBs, and RR (with or without RRs): free.

Area and time based passes will be available. Climbers who take longer than the allotted 20 minutes/pitch, or who whine excessively, will be charged double.

A spokesman for BTE, Mr. Blue Troll, 853, refused to discuss this with the climbing media, denouncing them as "A bunch of advertising-driven sellouts." Troll said that he used to oppose the commercialization of climbing, but now saw that resistance was futile. "Back in the good old days, I never thought that climbing was a sport or a business", he said, "but simply a challenge to human spirit and ability. And lots of fun. Sort of. In retrospect." He added "These days corporations patent genes, though they don't own the organisms that the genes came from, didn't create the genes, and don't have a clue what the genes do or could be used for. I found Penny Lane, had a vision of the route, and created it with a lot of hard work. And I sure know what its good for. Why shouldn't I benefit? Why should other climbers, who never put in any effort to create new routes, get a free ride? Besides, I'm a believer in fee enterprise. Isn't everyone?"

Squamish, which owns the land the routes are on, was initially unamused by Troll's plans. However, once he announced that BTE would give the town 20% of all money collected, it was mollified. An unauthorized spokesman said "Finally we're going to make some money off those climbing bums." She looked forward to developments, saying "This could be a gold mine."

Opinions in the climbing world of this dramatic development differed. Denizens of the dirt-bag climbers' campsite on the Mamquam River, making good use of their higher educations and middle class backgrounds, mouthed monosyllabic obscenities. They said "Climbing isn't a business,

and isn't about property or image. It's all about being free. Free for us, anyway. We have a right to do whatever we want, and couldn't care less about anything or anybody else. We're over-educated and under-employed, and just having fun before we get a real life or become guides or join a rescue team or something." They then headed downtown to Ishmael's coffee bar, where they hoped to hang for a while, feed their ill-trained four-legged child substitutes a few kids, read "Theory of the Leisure Class", bullshit, and preen and strut, before going to the post office to pick up the latest cheque from their moms, and P'ter'o'dac'tyl, Pattyphonia, and South Fake catalogues. Troll, livid, replied "Yeah, right. Climbing is all about being free. Free as in freeloading, maybe."

Rumours of outraged climbers organizing a climb-in seem unlikely. They might manage the climbing part but, to misquote the immortal Don Whillans, most climbers "Couldn't organize a f— in a brothel." However, they plan to complain to the United Nations, write their M.P.s, and otherwise ineffectually squawk. Vertically challenged Doug Fir, rumoured to be a leader of the Climbing Underground, said "We'd rather hang separately than hang together." He sheepishly admitted "Actually, as you can tell from the name, we're cavers. But everyone looks down on us. Even climbers." Fir, sitting under an umbrella, snarkily remarked "At least its both waterproof and breathable. More than you can say for some things, eh?"

Pretentious Pompous, snowbird leader of the Airborne Climbers of Calgary and Canmore, contacted at the other solitude of Canadian climbing, couldn't comment until he found his guide. "I'm useless without a guide", he said. Once the guide, and a translator, had arrived, he looked puzzled. "B.C.? Squamish?" he asked, "Are they in Canada?" He then huffed "This is a scandal and an outrage. How dare these scoundrels!" When pressed, he admitted that under 2% of Canadian climbers were members of his club, which is subsidized by industry and government. Despite this, Pompous said, "We alone represent the glorious traditions of Canadian mountaineering, and are the one true

church. Enough of these schismatic heretic folks, already. We know what's best, for everybody." Pompous lives in a tacky tourist town in eastern Canada. He was last seen boarding his helicopter, on the way to Tunnel Mountain for his afternoon amble.

The Festival of Films Having as Little to do with Mountains or Climbing as Possible commented, "We may be interested. But the fewer films about mountains and climbers, the better. They're marketing poison! And boring!" The festival features outdoor films about picturesque people, weird wildlife, and eccentric Europeans and their asinine antics (too many rats in the cage...). It last included a (short) film about climbing in 1996.

No one from the Be Cheap and Cranky Climbers' Club ("Canada's Provincial Alpine Club") could be located for comment. A barely readable sign on the door said "Gone plodding across snowfields, cranking in the devil's club. Later." It is rumoured that no member of the club has climbed at Squamish since 1986. None who will admit to it, anyway.

The Climbers' Excess Society, a bunch of do-gooders, said, "We'll publish a newsletter or write a letter or have a meeting or build a toilet or something, and everything will be ok." T. S. Quire, president of the Barking Mad Alpine Club, speaking from her orifice at a bucolic bungalow in Kitsilano, said, "All climbers should be committed, to an asylum or at least daycare." The Federated Federation, an ineffectual hikers' environmental organization, said "Its not our problem. Why should we care about those ungrateful climbers?" Asked if it planned any change, it said "No. We haven't changed for 20 years, and why should we start now?"

Squamish first peoples, whose name for the Stawamus Chief roughly translates as "big ugly grey rock that's not good for much," commented "Our ancestors and peoples are perturbed by this insult to our spiritual home. From time immemorial, or at least since we had to put our land claim in writing, the Chief has been just that - the Big Kahuna. We are deeply upset and a bit pissed, especially because BTE will make a buck on this and we won't. However, we hope to do a

deal with them for the concessions. Works for the Curry Company." Holder of the Walking Stick, Chief PissesonGreyRocks said "I can see real possibilities - guided tours, coin-operated telescopes, tacky souvenirs made by oppressed Asian workers, videos, tee shirts, postcards, greasy food, RV campground, the whole nine metres."

Crisp Barker, peasant of the renegade Pagans Club, interrupted: "What about climbers' spiritual values? Who left us out of this discussion, anyway? Climbers' spirituality is as good as anyone's." The Chief said "He's speaking out of Stick, but he's got a point. For the Dance Platform we're planning a wedding chapel, sweat lodge and spirit dancing. That should be enough spirituality for anyone." He observed that most climbers were in need of spiritual cleansing anyway, but admitted that they might sweat a bit just getting to the Platform. When challenged on its suitability for dancing, he smirked "Oh, they'll dance all right. Especially if I have anything to do with it."

The bishop of Rome, once a climber himself, muttered "Its better to be in the mountains thinking about god, than in church thinking about the mountains." No one was sure. Neither was he. As mountains feature prominently in the early legends of his religion, he was probably being opaque. Either that or speaking pig Latin. The Deli Llama, merry mountain monarch and role model for theocrats everywhere, said "Until 1950 the lives of my people were nasty, brutish and short. But they worshipped me. Since then their lives have been nasty, brutish and short. Plus now they have to learn Mandarin, and put up with patronizing westerners. And they still worship me. Go figure." He was surrounded by idle rich supporters, who twittered about, simpering "This is so quaint! Isn't he adorable? Isn't Dumddhism great?" The Deli was later seen at the Super Sandwich Shoppe, asking, "Make me One with everything." He got a Big Yak.

Local envirocrit Burt E. Brane, of the Society Opposed to Pretty Much Everything Except Birds, Bunnies, and Bushes, said, before being asked, "We're opposed to it." No one knew what he was talking about. Once the situation was explained, he became apoplectic. "What about the birds, bunnies, and bushes?", he said. "They're all rare,

at risk, and endangered. Or they will be soon. Maybe. Plus I want to hug each and every fuzzy wuzzy one of them. Troll is clearly Eevil Incarnate, or at least a pretty bad dude. And dude is a four letter word."

Asked if he knew that the Sierra Club began as a mountaineering club, and that both John Muir and David Brower were climbers, Brane shrieked "No! It can't be true! The horror! The horror!" Troll drily remarked "I'll believe Burt's legit when I see him hug an old-growth devil's club. Well-meaning, utbay otnay ootay ightbray, eh?" To prove his point, he shouted, "Look! A loon!", while pointing at Brane. Brane became agitated, shouting "A loon! I must see it and tick it off my list!" Once he settled down, he said "Sorry, have to go to Inuvik tonight. There's been a report of a Lesser Spotted Dimwit. I must see it. It's life or death. Maybe worse." Brane, owner of a five bedroom suburban home, leaped in his Bridge Explosion sport futility and headed for the airport. He denied that he was a prisoner of his idiotology. Troll cracked "If he's looking for a dimwit, he should have a look in his mirror."

Taking no chances, or prisoners, Troll announced that his company will also apply for trademark and copyright on the routes. Writers will be charged a fee for including any of BTE's climbs in guides and magazines; Troll said, "They benefit. They'll pay." Armchair climber Sub Litterit responded, "This will devastate climbing literature." Troll responded, "Climbing literature my rear end. Mostly butt wipe. A climber has about as much chance of winning the Nobel Prize in literature as a Canadian." Grade 6 student Pete On, who wrote an essay on his ascent of Penny Lane©™, recently received a demand letter from BTE for infringing its rights.

There are rumours that BTE will buy patents on as many routes at Squamish, and elsewhere, as possible. It hopes to go public. Some new route climbers a.k.a. patent holders are pleased at the prospect of finally earning something for their labours. Carrie Biner, 37, who has created many new routes, said "BTE is doing something that will benefit the whole climbing community. In the global economy, the only values that matter are economic values. Money makes the world go

round. The sooner we can show that there are lots of climbers, and lots of money in climbing, the sooner we can really have some clout. Plus the royalties mean that my mom will stop bugging me to get a real job and move out." Phil O'Sopher, contacted at I. Vree Tower University, asked "Since when does economics have values?"

BTE also carries on business under a myriad of permutations, combinations and variations of the names Little Smoke Bluffs Ltd., Squamish Climbing Inc., Papoose Climbs Limited, Malemute Crack Climbs Incorporated, and Cliff-formerly-not-known-as-the-Squaw.com. Troll threatened, "Use any of our names and you'll be sorry!" Rumours of ties to West Pole Gear™, Stupid Hats Inc., and other makers of fancy equipment are apparently true. The Grand Wall will in future be known as the BTE-West Pole Grand Wall, and a billboard will soon appear on the route. "A fine bit of crass-marketing", chortled Troll. "The gear is hyped-up junk. And only an idiot would believe that better gear makes a better climber. But, as P.T. Barnum said..."

The Secretary General of the UN commented, "2002 is International Year of Mountains. We'll form a committee or have a conference or something. Interesting things are found in the mountains. Hardy peasants. Exciting healthy pastimes. Exotic wildlife. Clean water. Caves. Al Qaeda." Challenged on the latter, he said "Maybe not." He added, "People like to say the UN is a bunch of ineffectual hypocritical self-serving windbags, lying for their countries. Like the U.S. Congress. But this time we'll make a difference. Especially if those American know-nothing isolationist deadbeats finally pay their dues." The Secretary General was in Oslo to give some speech, but denied being pressured into proclaiming, "Some of my best friends are trolls" from a downtown balcony. At the time, he was surrounded by large, hairy, multi-hued, knock-kneed individuals wearing dark glasses and long overcoats with peculiar bulges.

The Good Troll Society said at its office in Utter Bunkum "Trolls are people too. Its great to finally see trolls taking their place in the spotlight. To be honest, we could do with a bit more entrepreneurialism amongst trolls. It's a scandal that when a troll finally tries to better

himself, others only crap on him from a great height. We view any criticism of Troll and BTE as anti-trollism, and will deal with it severely." SPCT went on to note, "He's not just a troll, he's a troll of colour. Doesn't anyone care how oppressed and downtrodden his class is?"

No one from Pedants' Agains't Apos'trophe, Adjective and Alliteration Abus'e and As's'orted Grammatical Atros'ities' was immediately available to comment. A member was later located on Lions' Gate Bridge. Informed of developments, she alternated between heaving over the railing, and climbing onto it. After a stiff drink, she said "The next climber who tells me he's going to "access" "the alpine" is going to get smacked upside the head with a 5.08 x 10.16. Not that he's likely to notice."

Violette Lilac, interviewed at Ishmael's on the Drive, said, "Globalism is evil. It oppresses everyone involved, destroys the environment and ingenious cultures and stuff, and is only about making money. Mindless consumerism must be vanquished!" She was dressed in tattered cast-offs, claimed eleven piercings (seven visible) and eight tattoos, and had hair tinted a lurid green. Seventeen of her friends in the café were similarly garbed, each subtly proclaiming "I'm unique." Pressed, Lilac, or perhaps her inner goddess, added that "This is all part of the corporatist elitist sexist racist ageist anti-woman anti-gay conspiracy. We know who's behind it, and they'll pay." Lilac, an organizer in Rent-a-Crowd, a noisy, colourful anti-everything group, said her next protest would be at the World Peace & Goodwill Conference in Jerusalem. "Its completely transparent.", she said. "The Palestinians and the Israelis only made peace because the corporate elite wanted it. We know what's really going on. Its just part of WTO, APEC, the G8 and their plans for a world government. You can't fool us." Asked about BTE and its plans, she wrinkled her nose and remarked, "Well, those climbers are just going to have to join the struggle. Not that they'll be of much use."

Unightly Equipment, a Squamish manufacturer of klimbing knick knacks, welcomed the news. "Its about time that climbing got on a proper business footing.", said P.U. Rine, its suave and

debonair owner. "We're looking forward to working with BTE, making money, and so on. Plus those climbing bums are always after us for freebies. As though they can't afford to buy them." Coop-er-ative, a Vancouver conglomerate with cracker-barrel furnishings, refused comment. "We're better than you.", a spokeschicken didn't say. "Plus we're smug about it." Escorted out by a surly rooster, your reporter noted that the office was draped in red flags, and as he left, the birds clucked a rousing chorus of the Internationale. Ego Bore-dom, owner of Bore-al Urban Wear, was interviewed at his fortress factory. He would only say "This is all part of the conspiracy, isn't it? You commies will do anything to get me. Well, you can't stop me. I have a right to free speech, and to make a fool of myself. Wait and see." Asked if 25 irascible years had been worthwhile, he snarled, "I've been cranky since before most of those punks were born, let alone cranking."

There are also rumours that BTE plans to 'improve' its routes. Bolts will be placed every two metres, grades will be scientifically calculated, and automated booking will be in place, eliminating line-ups. This will increase traffic, ensure a quality, predictable, sanitized, extreme adventure, and maximize profits. The pending privatization of provincial parks is an opportunity that BTE seems unlikely to pass up. It may buy the Stawamus Chief, with plans including a cable car, revolving restaurant, and endless ridiculous film stunts.

Some Loggers' Sports events, such as log-rolling, will take place on the Apron next year. "Why not?" said Troll. "It adds a bit of a thrill for the turkeys, and should sell a few hot dogs. Plus it's a sure winner for Extreme Reality Survivor TV." Snowmobiling may be an off-season possibility on the Apron. Troll said "It's a high-marker's wet dream, and keeps up the cash flow. Plus if it means fewer of those obnoxious bozos in the backcountry, who'll complain?" Sledhead Ima Krettin gushed "Isn't BTE wonderful!! Everyone else hates us. We just want to have a little fun. And make some noise. Well, a lot of noise. And spill some gas and oil, spew a shit-load of fumes, and leave garbage everywhere. And build a few shacks. And chase the critters. And chew up some little trees. And harass the skiers. Just

some harmless fun. We have a right to share the backcountry, too. Plus if snowmobiles are so bad, why does the government keep giving Bombardier money? What'd you think, anyway, that its because its from Quebec or something?" Asked if wilderness snowmobiling wasn't an oxymoron, Krettin bristled "Who're you calling a moron?"

Another likely profit centre for BTE is cycling. Troll pithily observed "Wheelheads are even loonier than climbers. They'll fall for anything." Plans include the usual trick riding, plus trails on the Apron. "Those new sticky tires will stick to darn near anything," said Troll, "and if they stick better than the climbers, that's tough for the climbers. Plus the cyclists buy way more junk, and have to replace it more often." He noted that trails on the Apron wouldn't need much maintenance, and that "It should be easy to find, and clean them up, afterwards." Troll was undecided about unicycling, however. "Mountain bikers I can work with. Unicyclists, maybe not. They're a bit weird. And if they're so cheap or poor that they only have one wheel, how much stuff will I sell them, anyway?"

The new ApronSports™, and other activities planned by BTE, will require some logging. Troll said, "Couldn't pick a better spot for a bit of logging, eh? Might be a few unemployed lumberjacks around here somewhere. Maybe a lumberjill or two, to make it all PC. We'll make a buck on the logs, plus improve the view for the tourists. Economic development rules!"

BTE's business strategy includes corporate ties with a variety of mega-corporations, exploiting every commercial opportunity available. "The sky's the limit." said Troll. "Literally. The Chief is the world's largest billboard. When I think of all the rich idiots who drive past it to and from Whistler, I just about wet my pants. The perfect target market. Fancy cars, fancy liquor, fancy clothes, you name it. The Chief is going to be consumer-driven, not climbing-driven."

BTE is said to be exploring international opportunities, and Troll has been in discussions with representatives of various governments and multi-nationals. Company and webname reservations using virtually every famous mountain and climb name were recently made,

with literally hundreds of thousands of names taken. In future, all those using the names "Chomolungma" or "Mount Everest" will have to pay a royalty, and the logos of software bully Megahard™, oil company Excess™, and Extreme EColi Burgers™ recently appeared in flashing 200 m high letters on each of the mountain's main faces.

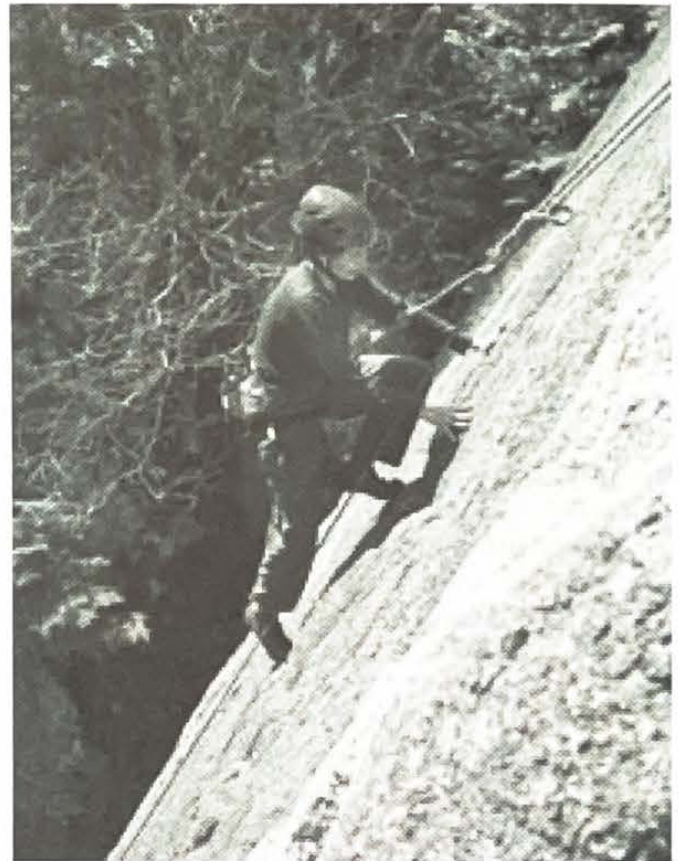
Next morning, the Colorado tabloid climbing press, in unison as usual, screamed, "Bolt from the Blue Troll!!" Then the fun really started.

Grade IV, 5.9 - Now what to take? by Brad Hansen

You look at the grading for the climb; Grade IV, 5.9+, and then thumb back to the front of the guide book to look for its definition of a grade IV - a single but very long day. By definition, a moderately paced team in the waning days of August will be working parts in the dark. And if something else should screw up - poor route finding, bad weather, jammed ropes, freaked leaders who have to switch with their partner after half a pitch - anything but smooth progress can mean being benighted.

Now what do you take? Too much and you'll slow down, guaranteeing a night out. Not enough and a cold possibly wet night at best, with the worst of all unthinkable things possible. I've travelled a lot and spent many a night out on grade IV's for all of the above-mentioned reasons (yes I've been the freaked out lead climber). I've yet to find a 'warm' ledge near the top of a mountain - because you're always near the top, as you just didn't quite make it! Be it in the Sierras, Cascades, Canadian Rockies, even Red Rocks Nevada, by 3 am it's always somewhere between cold and frigid any time of year.

The assessment and gear I'm about to describe has withstood a 25 cm snowstorm during the day and then a further drop in temperature due to clearing skies as night fell, temperatures plunging to about -10° C. Sleep was fitful at best, but we returned with all our fingers and toes and didn't have such a bad experience as to swear off alpine climbing forever.



Do I have the right gear for a grade IV climb?
Photo - K. Griffin

Assessing:

Technical Gear: You need what you need for climbing and you have to study the topo carefully to determine pro to what size, but there are tricks.

1. Cams - one of each up to the size you need, maybe doubling a couple of favourites or suggested sizes by the topo and then 4-5 hexes of the larger sizes as back up. They are lighter than cams but give you extra security should you hit the longer wider pitch. **Trick:** use the hexes in the belays wherever possible saving the cams for the leader.
2. Along with a standard set of nuts include a set of HB offsets which can come in extremely handy (especially for old pin scars). **Trick:** make sure you have some small nuts, even RP's, as they can often be your last piece before a crux move and they weigh almost nothing. Once in Red Rocks,

I was 5 m above my last piece when I hit the 3 m crux (topo said 5.8 'tricky'). Stemming off the varnished sandstone I stared at a perfect RP placement in the dihedral which then closed up making even an RP in sandstone a bomber piece. We didn't have any - if I could have down-climbed I would have. I whimpered my way through.

3. At least 4 slings and 3 doubles for extension to reduce rope drag. Rope drag slows you down and could mean a night out. Trick: slings also can be used as emergency wrap webbing.
4. Cordellet (5 m): Alpine belays can be messy, requiring a lot of extension. As well this can be used as emergency rap material and is a must for emergency raise and lowers. Trick: use as little rope in the belays as possible as often the pitches are long and the leader may need every cm.
5. Rope(s): we use two 50 m 9 mm ropes because:
 - a. It was the standard length prior to the 90's, so older classic lines rarely have pitches longer than 50 m (but often right on 50 m).
 - b. Doubles allow reduction in rope drag as you can clip ropes in a straighter line. Note that twin ropes (8.2 mm) must be clipped together as a single rope is not considered adequate for a lead fall and therefore does not have the same drag reduction potential.
 - c. Two ropes give you an option of long rappels (again 9 mm are a whole lot beefier than 8.2 mm when you have to hang on a single line): Once we had to retreat 600m on a single 60 m rope - it was long and tedious, cost about \$500 in left gear, and had several scary marginal anchors.
 - d. As a single 9 mm rope is strong enough to take a fall, just one can be used on easier terrain in order to simplify the process.
6. Pins? Then you need a hammer and two if you want to retrieve them - basically I've never needed pins on a more common route. Yes they can be good for retreating but I don't

leave the parking lot if I expect to retreat. For more obscure climbs we've taken them for security...I've yet to pound one in.

7. Shoes: how many times have your feet and toes been killing you and you found yourself on a little ledge, with your shoes clipped to the belay and blowing in the wind while you do the cold rock barefoot dance. Alpine is not sport climbing! The best is that old pair of washed out shoes in the back of your gear closet—the ones you have to wear with the nice warm woollen socks. If you need your precise single pitch sport shoes to get up the climb, you're probably in over your head for alpine climbing. Oh, and before you take off your shoes you should read John Longs 'How to Climb Big Walls' book...in it he tells of a story where a fellow dropped his shoes and had to finish the climb barefooted—he doesn't walk so well to this day!

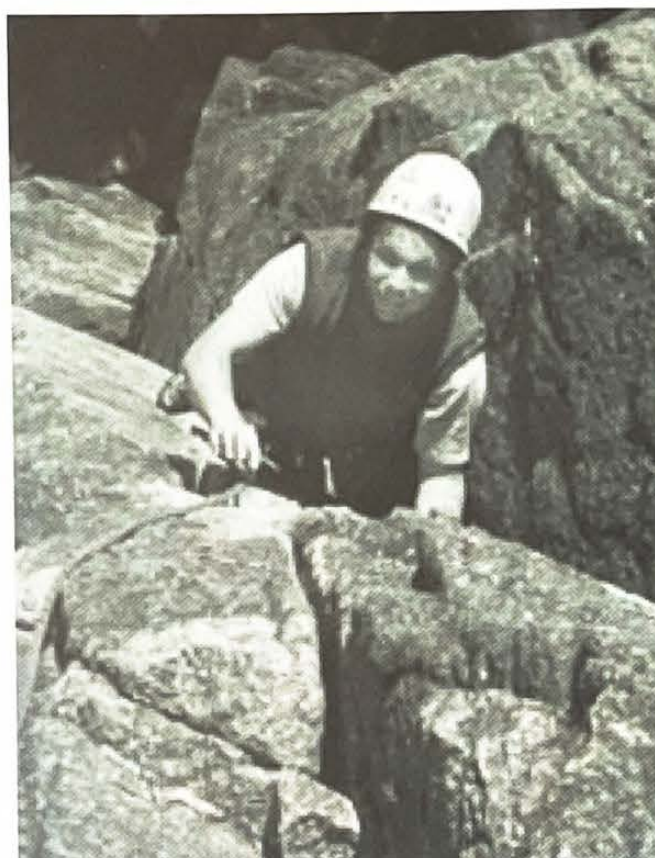
Now the fun stuff - what do you take to stay alive - should progress be less than perfect.

1. Food: there will be no stove, so ready made stuff is essential, but really it is your choice; just do not skimp. If you have to spend a night out it will be cold and, considering the previous day's effort, your body will be screaming for calories with which to try and warm up. Feed it prior to sleeping, so your little furnace has a chance.
2. Water: a necessary evil as it is probably the heaviest thing you will carry. Again, the more you skimp the worse you will feel and the less likely you will be able to keep warm. However, every climb is different so my only trick is to use squishable containers like a camel pack or the 'Big Wall staple,' a 2 litre plastic bottle which can be crushed while emptied. This makes a huge difference in pack room.
3. Garbage bags: two each, as one can be used as an added rain/wind guard in sudden thunderstorms and the other for general use.
4. Light down jacket: or something like Patagonia's Puff-Ball which will give a heck of a lot of warmth while still squishing down small in the pack.

5. Gortex/Rain Jacket: some kind of shell for absolute rain and wind protection; should have a hood as well.
6. Wind Breaker Vest: quick, small, and light, great for daytime climbing when the wind picks up or the sun goes behind a cloud. Also, under the down jacket it helps trap extra body heat close in.
7. Long Underwear: Fleece for the colder climbs. Although a pain, be sure to put them on at your bivi site – remember, it's not really cold until 3 am. Dancing around half-asleep and shaking cold could lead to a whole lotta bad!
8. Rain Proof Shell Pants: as light and thin as you can find. Mountain Hardware makes a really good pair with full zips for sudden storms.
9. Toque: times two! I use a thin fleece for climbing during the day and then back it up with a heavier one for nighty night.
10. Gloves: something thin just to take the edge off.
11. Space Blanket: Not your regular space blanket bought at Canadian Tire – they help but tend to tear and are hard to keep over your body. I mean the tougher material space blanket bivi sack which used to be hard to find but is now for sale at MEC in the First Aid section.
12. Tarp: the lighter the better (commonly known as a guide's tarp). Integral Designs makes a super lightweight one but its a bit pricey.
13. FA and Communications: It's your call on these but if you need them you'll want them...when it comes to communication do your research for the particular area to which you are going. Note that the clothing listed would just be enough to keep someone warm in the event they were injured and had to wait for the other to go get help!

Setting up the Bivi:

1. Another use for the double ropes: One can be used to smooth out the rough spots in the floor of the bivi site while the other can be strung as a fixed line for safety while moving around the site or out to the crapper.



Will I have to bivi here? Photo – K. Griffin

2. The tarp should be tied or anchored so that it is slightly above your body to help prevent condensation.
3. Use your pack as padding; even your chalk bag can be used to round out a spiky rock.
4. Wear your helmet! It acts like a pillow in keeping your head up since there is not much left for a pillow.
5. Finally, try and find that little opening that allows you to breathe straight outside, reducing condensation.

Options:

For those with cold feet either an extra pair of socks or even just a plastic bag. Stick both feet in and tie loosely around your shins – amazing warmth!

Keeping in mind the goal of a grade IV climb is to get up and down before dark, pack carefully for each climb but taking all this stuff still makes

a manageable pack—even for leading. Nevertheless, your worst enemy will not be weight but your alarm clock.

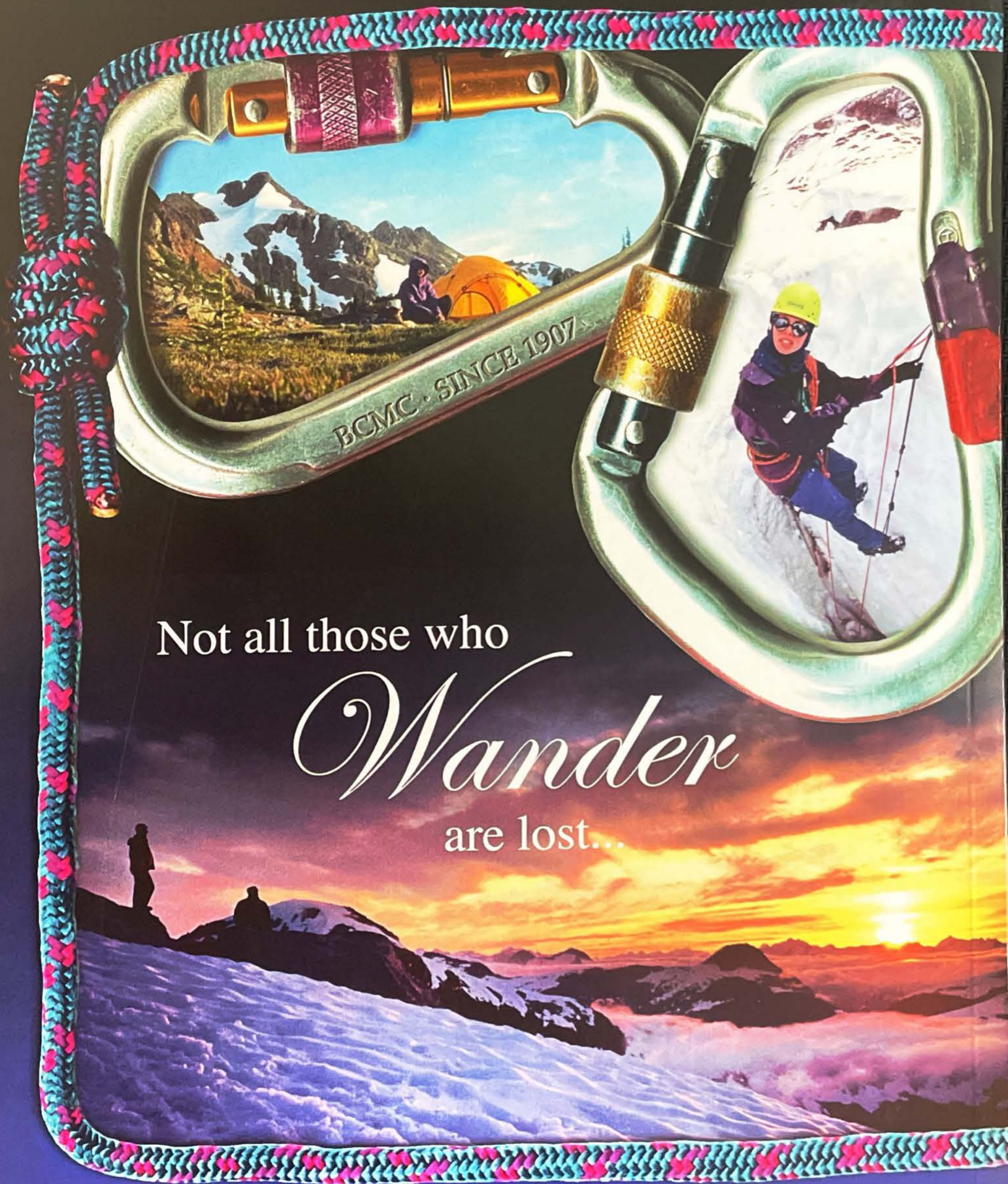
Had we actually been up on time, we would have: Got off Middle Cathedral Rock (3 person party), not had to sleep on the final ledge of Higher Cathedral Rock, reached the rappel before darkness on Clyde Minaret, not had to bivi on the top of Lone Pine peak, reached a comfortable ledge on Liberty Bell, not had to have done the last pitch of Half Dome in the dark, and beaten a slow 2 man party to the base of Free Blast – I think you get the picture. **Trick:** make a thermos of hot water and coffee the night before your start so there is no need to fire the stove for oatmeal and drinks in the morning. May you have smooth fast climbing and warm cozy nights!

This article is the opinion of one climber and cannot be considered complete for each climb.

MOUNTAIN SCIENCE

Glacier Update by Karl Ricker

September, 2001 was the end of a La Nada lull in the El Niño – La Niña oceanic-atmospheric cycle. Hence, our glaciers should have stalled in advance or retreat. August and early September, however, were very warm, melting old and new alpine snow cover. Hence, Overlord Glacier retreated an average 7m on the main snouts while Wedgemount lost another 12m or more (the surveys gave conflicting 12 and 15m answers, yet to be rechecked), over the period of September, 2000 to September, 2001.



Not all those who

Wander

are lost...

