

THE B.C. MOUNTAINEER



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Cover photos:

Front Cover: Phil Kubik on the summit of Claw Pk. Photo - D. Hughes.

Inside Front Cover: top - Alice Purdey near W Hutching Ck., Yosemite. Photo - F. Douglas.
bottom - A content apparition on the haute route. Photo - C. MacMillan.

Inside Back Cover: top - Skiing towards the Wall of Jericho above Skoki valley. Photo - M. Feller.
bottom - North Ck. skiing. Photo - B. Wood.

Back Cover: Julia Borchardt and friend, Enchantments area. Photo - J. Brawn.

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Todd and McKay on the Sphinx Glacier, Garibaldi park. Photo - R. Woodhouse (see p. 82).

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Club Philosophy

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club is an incorporated society founded in 1907 and about to celebrate its centennial in 2007. 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 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 Kevin McLane's "Alpine Select" guide, the Alpine Guide to Southwestern B.C., 103 Hikes in Southwestern British Columbia, A Climber's Guide to the Squamish Chief, Guide to Climbing in South-western British Columbia, and the Stein Valley Wilderness Guidebook. Club members regularly act as volunteer instructors in basic summer and winter mountaineering courses offered by the club to its members.

The club has been very active in conservation land use issues almost from its inception. The existence today of Garibaldi Park is a direct result of the discovery and exploration of the area by the Club. 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 Club runs a website (www.bcmc.ca) in which its various activities are described.

The most important function of the Club is the running of an extensive schedule of different grades 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.

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), [upper Lillooet (most recently in 1993), Chilko Lake area (1992), Pantheon Range (1991), Clendenning Ck. (1990) Banff park (1989), Premier Range (1987), Lake Lovely water (1999-2005), Garibaldi park (most recently in 2003 and 2005), Stein valley area (most recently in 2003 and 2004), Falls River/Tchaikazan region (1986, 1988), Ape Lake area (1983 and 2001), Mount Waddington area (most recently in 1999, 2000, and 2004), Bendor Range (2002-2003), 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. Extended hiking trips are also organized, most recently to the South Chilcotin mountains (2003 and 2005) and the Mt. Edziza-Spectrum Range area (2004 and 2005).

The ski touring program occurs throughout the winter and spring. This has included a Christmas ski camp as well as spring ski camps to such areas as the Lillooet Icecap, Kokanee Gla-

cier, Bridge Glacier, Fairy Meadows, Columbia Ice Fields, Stanley Smith-Lord Glacier area, Franklin Glacier, the Southern Chilcotin and the Homathko icefield.

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.

In December and June the club publishes its 6 monthly trips programs. Updates are given in club newsletters and on the club's website.

Social Events

Social gatherings are held monthly from September through June 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 and on the club website.

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), viewing the website, 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, expeditions, photographs and other material.

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
NORTHCREEK:	North Creek, Lillooet Valley
PLUMMER:	Claw Ridge, Mt. Waddington
WEDGEMOUNT:	Wedgemount Lake, Garibaldi Park.

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 cm 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 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.

1. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Stawamus Chief Gondola

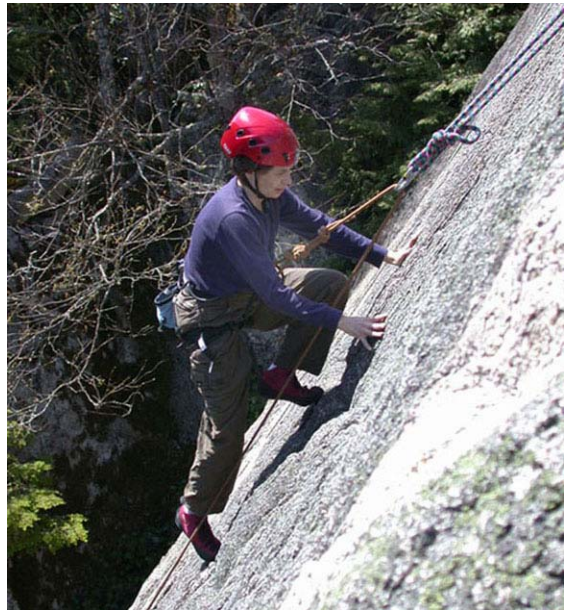
by Anders Ourom

In 2004 there was a proposal to build a tourist gondola to the second summit of the Stawamus Chief. The Climbers Access Society helped lead the successful opposition to the proposal, with many accomplices. The following, although undoubtedly subjective and incomplete, is my personal and unofficial recollection of the story. The Stawamus Chief and vicinity became a provincial park in 1995, while Shannon Falls had been a provincial park since the 1950s. One piece of land, a gravel pit between the two on the east side of highway 99, was still privately owned.)

The Climbers Access Society became aware of the gondola proposal late in autumn 2003. The government, especially at the political level, probably knew of it before then. Government doings are something of a black box, even at the civil service level, but are susceptible to freedom of information requests. It would be interesting to know what really happened. Soon enough we confirmed that the rumour was true – though not everyone even in government knew. Which led to meetings where one arm of government that ought to have known about the proposal, but didn't, was embarrassed by those from another arm, who did.

In early 2004, John Howe and Kevin McLane met with the developers, and we got the full picture. The gondola would start at the gravel pit, between the Chief and Shannon Falls, and ascend the upper edge of the Bulletheads and Tantalus Wall, before crossing the east side of the south summit to the central summit. The developers were in earnest – they owned a large resort development company based in Whistler. They had resources, plans, and connections. They probably also had a fair amount of (deniable) political support at the provincial level, and in the business community. They seemed to see provincial parks as a sort of land bank for development, a strategy that had worked well at Whistler and Blackcomb, which have steadily encroached on Garibaldi Provincial Park over the last 30 years. (A downhill ski area,

of course, is essentially a real estate development attached to a clearcut. A value added clearcut, but still a clearcut.)



On Squamish rock. Photo - K. Griffin.

Rumours about the proposal grew through spring and summer, with the odd bit in the Squamish media. In March, we wrote to premier Campbell, asking for confirmation of the proposal, and more information. We stated that we thought there would be substantial opposition, but that we wanted information before commenting. In April, he responded, saying that the letter was being forwarded to the Minister of Parks. (Eventually, in September, the Minister sent a letter to tell us about the process.)

Late in July, CBC AM reported on the proposal, and opened the issue to public debate. There'd been a tacit understanding until then that it be kept low key, although the proposal would undoubtedly become a matter of public debate sooner or later. I spent the second week of August in the Wind Rivers of Wyoming, which involved an absurd amount of driving on hot, boring roads. A good chance to think, and so I did. Especially about strategy regarding the gondola.

The key points seemed to be:

- 1 The proposal was serious, backed by resourceful and determined developers.
- 2 It almost certainly had significant political support, plausible denials to the contrary. If nothing else, the government wanted to appear friendly to such proposals. Economic development and privatization were high priorities, parks somewhat lower down. It had in fact botched some privatization plans, and wanted to allay concerns in the development community.
- 3 The developers would employ a public/media/government relations firm to present their plans. This would be hard to beat. (We later learned that they had employed a consultant – and ignored the advice.)
- 4 B.C. Parks seemed strangely silent – we later learned that they'd been told their job was only to manage the process, not to act as advocate for parks.
- 5 There seemed likely to be significant public concerns.
- 6 Governments don't stand or fall on issues such as this, but there was an election coming.
- 7 It was much more than just a "Squamish" or "Sea-to-Sky" issue.

I believed that the Access Society had the interest, resources, experience and reputation to help lead the opposition. The issues seemed to be:

- ◆ Conflict with existing, well-established recreational use.
- ◆ Status as a famous landmark.
- ◆ Possible nearby alternatives, with fewer conflicts.
- ◆ Park status, and the issue of appropriate development in parks.
- ◆ General public concern, as well as that of key communities – District of Squamish, First Nation, climbers & hikers. There were lots of potential allies.
- ◆ Funding for park management, appropriate development (if any) in parks, development in the Squamish-Whistler corridor, and opportunistic development supposedly tied to the 2010 Olympics.

Strategically, our best hope seemed an all out effort, enlisting all credible allies and tactics. The longer it dragged out, the worse. And the

sooner we got going, the better. If nothing else, it might be possible to take the developers, and the government, by surprise. Which is just what we did. Although to begin with the "we" was "me" – it was the dog days of summer, many people were away, so I simply went ahead and did what seemed best. A lot soon joined in.

At least a few climbers, playing devil's advocate, claimed to favour the proposal. Some said climbers didn't have a dog in the fight – a gondola might be an eyesore, and tacky, but wouldn't directly affect climbs or climbers, and might make the descent easier. One senior member of the mountaineering community, who had risen to a very high position in commerce, said the proposal made perfect sense, was an appropriate development, and that the entire area was a write off anyway in terms of natural values. Overall, however, the sentiment in the climbing community was overwhelmingly opposed. There were more than a few muttering about civil disobedience, if necessary.

The environmental organizations, especially those which endearingly disdain mere "rocks and ice", didn't seem likely to be of much direct help. At times chancy allies, with quite different agendas. Especially as no charismatic mega-climbers were to be found. Still, in the end some of the greenies did help get out the word.

The Access Society regularly communicates by broadcast e-mail, and has hundreds on its list. So, having returned early from the Wind Rivers, I drafted a broadcast about the gondola proposal. It outlined the issues, told people what we knew about the process, and told them how they could get involved. It suggested that a gondola to the top of Shannon Falls seemed to offer similar opportunities, with fewer conflicts – same highway access, same access to the Shannon Falls tourists. (The developers only considered this very late in the day. Surprising.)

I sent the broadcast on a Sunday afternoon – Monday morning e-mail catches people when they're fresh. For most, the news of the proposal was a complete surprise. It went to our contacts in the media. Monday afternoon, the Sun tracked me down and interviewed me. A substantial story appeared on Tuesday, making it a 'legitimate' issue, and a media firestorm resulted. Admittedly,

it was August – a quiet time for hard news. And the story was simple – B.C.’s mainstream media isn’t well informed about mountains, climbing and related issues, except perhaps for mountain accidents, but a gondola on the Stawamus Chief was a story they, and the public, could easily understand.

The story was eventually covered by the Sun, Province, Squamish Chief, Pique magazine, and other papers. I was on the Bill Good show two days after the Sun article, with Megan Olesky (organizer of the new “Friends of the Chief”), and one of the developers. Everyone else called in, I went to the studio. A good move – allowed a chance to chat during ads. It went fairly well, and with an audience of over 100,000, there were some interesting callers and feedback.

The developers might have been better prepared for the radio show. Their attitude seemed condescending, in effect “We’re developers from Whistler, and know what’s good for you.” They said it would be the Chief ‘Grind’ (gag). They claimed the trail and summits were only accessible to “the elite”, and said their project was for access for the disabled and elderly. (And here I naively thought it was about making money. Brad Zdanivsky and Warren MacDonald had agreed, if needed, to speak in opposition.) They said there’d be services at the base, including a well-known coffee chain – which hadn’t been asked, and was not amused.

We also got calls from TV stations, and some coverage. At one point I was scheduled to meet Global TV in Squamish. Sadly, it rained – the star of the show, as it were, wasn’t present. There was some other media coverage – radio and TV.

Most helpfully, we got a call from a climber and government relations expert in Victoria, who provided a lot of useful advice and information on what was happening and what to do.

The Access Society kept people informed as the issue developed, with broadcasts every week or two. They generated a lot of letters, and we kept key contacts informed. The government’s position was that it was up to B.C. Parks to run the process to determine if the gondola was supported by the four main stakeholders – the District of Squamish, the Squamish Nation, the 2010 winter Olympics, and the Ministry of

Transportation. (Why the latter two were stakeholders were beyond us.) If it was, the proposal could go to public consultations.

A possible ace in the hole was a lawsuit under the Park Act. It seemed at least arguable that the proposal was contrary to the Act, both in process and in that it conflicted with an existing master plan. There was time enough to explore this option later, if needed.

The developers planned to fence off much of the second summit, a relatively flat area. Presumably this would have reduced the tourist attrition rate. However, their claim that there would be no services at the summit seemed absurd. Can you say “profit centre”, boys and girls? Why wouldn’t you have a restaurant, gift shop, telescopes, trinkets, postcards, etc. there? It’s a natural monopoly. It’d be a nuisance to get water, supplies, and sewage disposal there, but why not? The economics simply for operating the gondola seemed marginal, given competition from other gondolas in the region (Grouse, Whistler), and especially given that climate might limit operations during much of the year. Anything to make it pay seemed likely, and if it succeeded, expansion and further encroachment on the park seemed inevitable. If it failed, we wondered who’d clean up the mess. Not that it could be, really.

The developers eventually created a website with information about the proposal, and an on-line survey. Having concerns about its objectivity, we cautioned people about completing it, and emphasized the importance of communicating directly with the various governments, who ultimately would decide.

The Friends of the Chief, largely Squamish residents, created its own website, providing information. There was also a great deal of work done in Squamish, by citizens who opposed the gondola. The mayor and councilors probably ended up with very sorely-twisted arms – many citizens had strong views on the subject.

Eventually, in mid-September, the developers were to make a presentation about their plans to the Squamish Nation one morning, and to Squamish council in the evening. The council meeting was open to the public. (Many members of the media attended.) It seemed the single opportunity to influence the only one of the four

stakeholders that was politically accountable. We asked that they move the meeting from council chambers to Brennan Park Leisure Centre, and strongly encouraged attendance. We wouldn't be allowed to speak (something we clearly communicated so that there weren't disappointed expectations), so instead had cheery red "Friend of the Chief" buttons made for everyone. Over 200 people attended, and council saw a sea of red. Our friends from the Squamish Nation were pleased with their buttons, and enjoyed the double entendre. Multi-purpose buttons – someone later asked if I supported John Diefenbaker. In the end, we distributed 500.

The developers' pitch was much the same as a month earlier. B.C. Parks made a presentation on the process, and, as it had become an issue, noted that a counter on the backside trail recorded over 90,000 annual user days. (Some elite. The grannies in the audience, who hike up every week, grumbled, and the mayor told them to be quiet.) Climbers add another 50,000 or so, not to mention campers and tourists.

Then came the good part. The developers were questioned by the councilors. One asked how their meeting with the Squamish Nation had gone. The developers responded that they'd had a good meeting, and while they didn't exactly see eye to eye, they were still talking. As it happens, several senior members of the Squamish Nation were present. They'd been at the meeting that morning, and were furious. For the simple reason that they'd turned down the idea of a gondola anywhere in the Chief-Shannon Falls area, pretty much killing it.

It dragged on for a few more weeks, before the developers formally but quietly gave up, muttering about suing the government for their investment. Which makes you wonder again what really happened in the backrooms. All in all, a success for Squamish, the Squamish Nation, and the climbing community. There's still great pressure on this area, and it won't be the last such inappropriate proposal. (We encouraged people to hang onto their "Friend of the Chief" buttons, both as souvenirs and because it seemed likely they'd be needed again.) But it was a good demonstration of how effectively climbers can work together when the stakes are high

enough, and the importance of our community working together.

Postscript: Late in autumn 2004, our friends at Mountain Equipment Co-op introduced us to The Land Conservancy of B.C., asked that we talk about issues in the Squamish, and committed significant funding to whatever was needed. We talked, and TLC went to work. In autumn 2005 it completed purchase of the gravel pit land, so ensuring other development proposals are forestalled. The land will be rented back to the highway project, helping pay for the purchase. TLC is now working on other issues in the area that are of concern to the climbing community and public.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT VENTOUX

by Ron Dart

Run to the mountain:
Shed those scales on your eyes
That hinder you from seeing God.
Dante, *Purgatorio*, II, 7

We had the experience but missed the meaning
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (The Dry Salvages)

Today I climbed the highest mountain in this
region, which is not improperly called Ventosum
(windy).

Petrarch

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (Little Gidding)

The Ascent of Mount Ventoux, by Petrarch (1304-1374), is a classic essay on the potential meaning of hiking, scrambling and climbing on rock spires, boulder and cobble studded traverses and white crowned peaks. The ascent and descent to such places can offer spacious vistas at many levels and layers of meaning.

There are those, of course, who go to the ancient sentinels and are only interested in the ages and types of rocks and various forms of plant and animal life. Then, there are those who only see the saw edged pinnacles as yet another challenge to conquer. Peak bagging and rock

jocks are aplenty, and many are the alpine magazines and organizations that deal with technical ascents and more challenging routes up ice or rock faces. Such experiences do offer a sort of meaning, but there is much the guardians of the old ways can speak beyond these more literal and empirical levels.

It is quite common in the history of literature and religion to see the mountains as places and sites of literary and spiritual meaning. Moses turned to Sinai to receive the Decalogue, and the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus was given on a flat rock rim high above the hurly burly of valley. The Greek word for mountain is *oros* from which we get the words oracle and oracular.

Dante (1265-1321) lived a few decades before Petrarch, and he used the metaphor of the peaks to track and trace the ascent and descent of the soul. It is significant to note that Thomas Merton's first autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, drew deeply from the well of Dante's thought, and Merton's main biographer, Michael Mott, entitled Merton's biography, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*. The earliest selection of Merton's journals was called, again drawing from Dante, *Run to the Mountain: The Journals of Thomas Merton (1939-1941)*. Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality*, by Kyriacos Markides, from different perspectives, tell their own convincing tales, of the power and beauty of mountains, to walk us to deeper places on our journey through time. And, then, there is the classic of the ascent to insight and meaning, *Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing*, by Rene Daumal. There is no doubt that mountains play a significant role in the literal, literary and deeper spiritual and contemplative landscape of the human body, soul and spirit.

Petrarch's, *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux*, therefore, works from an older line and lineage, and Petrarch was quite conscious of such a literary and spiritual heritage. Petrarch's essay can be broken down into seven distinct sections, and I will briefly touch on these in this brief essay.

First, Petrarch does the historical approach. He had been reading Livy's *History of Rome*, and in this history Philip of Macedon climbed a peak

and made certain claims about what he could see from such a place. Scholars of history could debate the veracity of what Philip saw (and they did), but this is not the primary reason Petrarch took to Mount Ventoux. The historical and scholarly debate might have some significance, and many are the historian, geographer and geologist that do the empirical and scientific deed, but Petrarch is asking more from the mountains. The world of mountain facts, information and technical statistics do need, in time, to give way to the soul of mountaineering, the more human, humane and deeper reasons for taking to the peaks.

Second, Petrarch, in preparation for the ascent, ponders who is best to take on such a journey. It is one thing to tolerate and live with others in the hurly burly of valley life. It is quite another thing to discern who to hike with to the peaks. A closer bonding is needed for the more strenuous tasks in life. If trust and closeness, affinity and commitment are not there, it is best not to bring the other along for the journey; much hurt and harm can emerge from unwise invitations. Petrarch makes it clear that in the act of doing something as difficult as climbing Mount Ventoux, he needs someone in whom he has a certain nearness and trust. It is this discerning insight of Petrarch that is most wise. There is nothing as sad, frustrating or tragic as doing something hard and difficult and the hiking companion is always wanting to quit or not strong enough for the journey. This testing of friendship for the hard ascents is needful and necessary. Climbing means being dependent on the other, hence it is vital that dependable companions are carefully chosen for the more demanding hikes of life. Petrarch finally chose his brother after pondering a variety of possibilities.

Third, the initial high spirited and romantic phase of the ascent was done with much haste and in a hurry. Optimism ran high, and the trek round and up Mount Ventoux was done with much hope and the longing to sit on the high peak and see the compelling peaks. The beginning of any adventure tends to be done with an abundant degree of hope and confidence. Petrarch, his brother and the two servants took to the rocky terrain well fed and keen to see what could be seen. The four rambles met an old shepherd

who tried to dissuade them from taking to the rock rim of Mount Ventoux, but such a negative and pessimistic attitude had little impact on Petrarch, his brother and the sherpas. It did not take long, though, before the actual demands and rigour of the mountain took its exacting toll. Weariness set in, and the inevitable temptation to quit and turn back worked its way into the depths. The decision to continue the ascent moved from a naïve optimism to a commitment to face the ordeal and challenge of the mountain. Romanticism gave way to realism, and depth of character was being tested. Being and non-Being, the virtues and the vices began to square off.

Four, Petrarch had mentioned earlier in the missive a quote from a classical poet: 'remorseless labour conquers all'. Now the test had come. The difference between Petrarch and his brother was becoming more clear and obvious. Petrarch's brother realized that if Mount Ventoux was going to be ascended, it was essential that the hard work of going up, up and ever up was paramount. Petrarch sought a gentle and roundabout way through the hollows, but this kept him from gaining the height he needed. In fact, Petrarch wandered about all over the mountain seeking the comfortable and easy way to the rock rim. He realized, deep down, he was avoiding the hard work and inner fortitude needed to face the challenge of the peak. Mount Ventoux was informing Petrarch there were some hard lessons he had to learn about himself. Petrarch began to ponder, at this stage, the spiritual significance of his lethargy. It is one thing to long to climb the peaks and dwell in the high regions. It is quite another thing to have the will to make such an ascent. Ovid assisted Petrarch in his searching. 'To wish is not enough: you must yearn with ardent eagerness to gain your end'. It was becoming clear to Petrarch that Ventoux was calling him to go deeper. Just as the literal mountain demands its due and yields its bounty and beauty to those who work for it, so the inner hike from the vices to the virtues, from lower to higher desires, from mediocrity to a full life means much work and effort must be expended to reach the heights of the inner life. The real difference between a spiritual voyeur and a saint is not in the longing and wishing for the deeper and higher

life. Both voyeur and saint can agree on this. The real difference is between the hard transformative work done by the saint and the unwillingness to grind ever on when the hike is truly hard and demanding of the voyeur. Indeed, as Petrarch duly noted: 'there is no way to reach the heights by going downward'.

Fifth, after much remorseless labour and ardent eagerness the effort paid off. The body could now rest from hard and demanding work. But, as the body had a chance to slow down and find some place to ease aching muscle, sinew and bone, the inner landscape, rolling hills, rock formations and trails had to be trekked. Petrarch pondered his inner journey from a resting place atop Ventoux. Misdeeds and misdemeanours, aspirations and longings could be faced in a cleaner and clearer way from such heights. The outer journey now became the inner journey. The outer ascent had been done. It was now time to do the hard work of the inner ascent, the inward Ventoux. Petrarch from such vistas pondered his journey and the complex nature of his many conflicting desires and longings. He often did what was detrimental to his health and healing, and the decisions that needed to be made for a full life, he often avoided. Why, he pondered, was he unwilling to make the hard treks in the inner life? Augustine became a new guide for Petrarch, and Petrarch had a solid affinity with the many conflicts of the inner life that Augustine ever struggled through in his honest and vulnerable journey. There was no flinching, on the roof of Mount Ventoux, from the hard questions of life. The day did run its circuit, and Petrarch realized only too well he had turned too far inward. His inner eye bowed to the outer eyes, and the full expanse of the Alps from Italy and Spain was basked in. The clouds below had shut out valley life for a short season. 'The sun was sinking and the shadows of the mountain were already lengthening below, warning us that the time for us to go was near at hand'.

Sixth, Petrarch felt the tug and pull of it all. The outer and inner journey needed to be integrated. He turned to Augustine again for insight and wisdom. The *Confessions* was pulled out from the knapsack, and much was neatly and clearly prioritized by the early lines of chapter 10 in

the *Confessions*. Petrarch read these lines to his brother, and all the dots were connected: 'And men go about admiring the high mountains and the mighty waves of the sea and the wide sweep of rivers and the sound of the ocean and the movement of the stars, but they themselves they abandon'. Such a tale is easy to interpret and decode. It is one thing to turn to the outer world for challenges and insight, but if we abandon the deeper longings and desires, we can do ourselves great hurt and harm. Nature can only take us so far on the trail. Petrarch, being the good Renaissance, Humanist and Christian that he was, turned to deeper sources (*as fonts*) for insight and wisdom. The Classical Greek and Roman traditions, like Nature, had much truth to tell. There was no denying this. General revelation and natural law have done much to shape, inform and discipline the great and grand traditions of the past. But, it was from the *Bible* as interpreted by Augustine, Anthony and Athanasius that Petrarch took his lead and cue. It is by the giving away of possessions and property to the needy and poor, and living the simple life that a deeper joy will be experienced. Petrarch said: 'I thought in silence of the vanity in us mortals who neglect what is noblest in ourselves in a vain show only because we look around ourselves for what can only be found within us'. It is this original state within us (the image and likeness to God) that is foundational to Petrarch's insights. Those who neglect and abandon such a hike doom themselves to perennial restlessness and a living far from the inner inn of life and meaning. Indeed, our hearts are ever restless until we can find the deeper inner centre, core and place of rest.

Seventh, most of the descent of Mount Ventoux was done in silence. Day star had slipped round the backside of the mountain, and the blue canopy of the day gave way to the gray of dusk. The real meaning of the climb was summed up well in the final few paragraphs of the essay: 'How earnestly should we strive to trample beneath our feet not mountaintops but the appetites which spring from earthly impulses'. It is these deeper impulses that often come to drive and dominate a person unless such a challenge is firmly faced. This is the real hike to the eternal peak. This is the real challenge that a simple climb of a literal

peak often obscures from rock jocks and peak baggers. The suggestive light of a full moon assisted the foursome the final few miles of the descent, and a warm and inviting inn greeted the hungry and tired travelers.

The Ascent of Mount Ventoux has a perennial ring to it. Petrarch realized, only too keenly and well, that if the inner journey and inscape is ignored and abandoned, much might be done in the world and on the peaks, in the valley and on glacier white peaks, but it all might just be a grand distraction. The hike to the peaks within, and the sights seen from such places, is the real hike one and all must take. There is the outer Ventoux and there is the inner Ventoux, and Petrarch knew only too well which peak was the harder and more demanding to climb.

T.S. Eliot in the *Four Quartets* (Burnt Norton) suggested that much of our life is one of being 'distracted from distraction by distraction'. *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux* offers us the opportunity to see through all the many distractions of life, and know the differences between literal, literary and spiritual ascents and descents to the real and more demanding peaks and valleys of life.

The Ascent of Mount Ventoux begins with the fact that Ventoux comes from Ventosum which means 'Windy', and the essay is dated April. These two metaphors and symbols should not be missed. How is the inner Ventoux to be climbed? Is it all alone? The Classical Tradition has often seen the wind as the breath of the Divine Spirit. It is as we are open to the breathing in and out of such a life giving reality, the ascent of Ventoux can be made. April is the sign and symbol of spring, new life and Easter in the Western calendar and culture. It is as we allow the Divine Spirit (like the wind) to live in us, we will know and experience the resurrected life that empowers us to face the harder challenges of the inner Ventoux and ascend such a demanding peak in a meaningful manner.

2. OVERSEAS AND FAR AWAY

**Ama Dablam (6856 m) – South West Ridge
October, 2000**

by Marcus Dell

For the last 12 years I have been reading articles in the "Mountaineer" and it is only now

that I have decided to record one of my own adventures. I have spent the last 15 years of my life working way too much. I was sitting in the office on a sunny Saturday in generally a foul mood when an e-mail arrived from Field Touring Alpine. Because I am easily distracted by climbing related issues, I was quick to read the announcement that there were only a few spots left on a trip to climb Ama Dablam in the Khumbu region of Nepal. I had previously read about the mountain and had gazed longingly at the photos of the mountain that is often referred to as the Matterhorn of the Himalayas.

Field Touring Alpine (FTA) is a commercial organization that runs climbing trips to many of the “destination” peaks of the world including Aconcaqua, Gasherbrum II, and Broad Peak. The difference with FTA is that they advertise a “hands off” approach to expeditions where they allow clients (team members) to move up and down the mountain at their own rate with or without the assistance of guides. Having previously climbed several significant mountains with only good friends, I was keen on a commercial organization that did not tell me when to move, how to climb, or when to go to the bathroom. I have seen too many commercial organizations that treat their clients like puppets on a string. These types of trips tend to attract incompetent members who want to be catered to all the way to the summit.

Considering my interest in the peak and the appeal of a loosely run commercial trip, I responded to the e-mail with keen interest. After several e-mail exchanges including a short summary of my climbing experience, and of course the obligatory deposit, I had committed myself to my first, and hopefully not my last, Himalayan adventure.

Once committed it was time to start training. Fortunately, there are always friends and fellow BCMEC members with whom to head to the mountains. One of the more intense outings including climbing Lefroy, Victoria and Huber (all over 3300 m) in one continuous 20 hour push with Colin Wooldridge. The best aspect about training for this type of event is that it is fun.

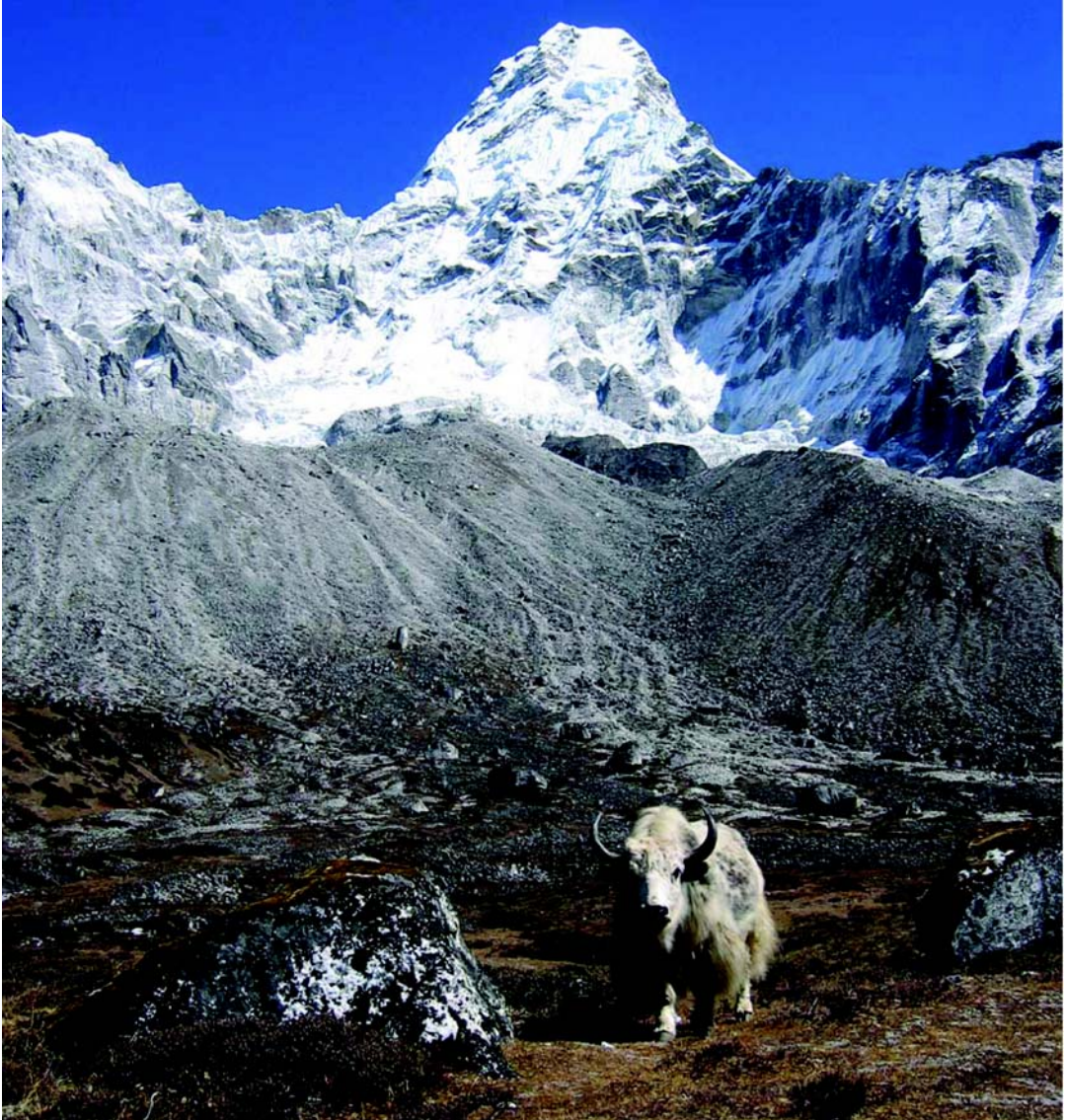
It was finally time to board the plane to Kathmandu on October 10, 2005 after a final push to organize projects at work and to pack the gear

and 18 days worth of high altitude food (we were each responsible for our own food above base camp and for our own cooking –this was a hands off trip). I arrived a few days earlier than necessary to allow adequate time to adjust to the 12 hours time difference and to help ensure I was well rested before the adventure began. Most team members arrived over a three-day period. However, two were to meet us on the approach having already climbed Island Peak. In short, our team members came from all corners of the world and were all good people.

Unless you are very keen and have an extra week to spare, most trips into the Khumbu region begin with a flight into Lukla. The risk of this flight is less now that the runway in Lukla has been paved. However, the view out of the windshield of the twin otter during the approach was still one that would excite many pilots given the short runway, its 10% grade, the mountainous ridge that extends steeply at the end of the runway; each landing is a one shot deal.

A fit and acclimatized person could reach Ama Dablam base camp (4400 m) on two long days from Lukla (2550 m). We stretched this trip out over 6 days to enjoy the surroundings and to help with acclimatization. We spent two of these days in and around Namche Bazaar. It was on a hike to the Everest Bakery in Kumbung (always good to have a bakery as a hike destination) that we got our first view of Ama Dablam and neighboring Lhotse. Even though I had studied the mass of photos on the internet I was not ready for the sheer magnitude and exposure of the upper slopes of Ama Dablam. Several of us stood at the view point and made comments about helping the other team members by carrying loads lower on the mountain and provided other indirect reasons why we might not summit.

Ama Dablam, whose name means Mother and her Necklace, is a beautiful mountain, located almost due south of Mount Everest and Lhotse in the Khumbu region. She is a distinct mountain in that she is separated from the surrounding mountains making the visual appearance very dramatic. The “dablam” is the hanging glacier on the south face that is visible to everyone walking into the Everest region. Everest is typically climbed in the late spring when the jet stream hopefully



Ama Dablam from base camp. Photo - M. Dell.

moves off of the summit for a short period of time. Ama Dablam can also be climbed in the spring but most of the commercial organizations prefer the fall when there tends to be a larger high pressure system over the region. However, the high pressure does not move the jet stream off of the summit of Everest, resulting in beautiful cloud formations on the lee side.

One of the keys to any good trip in Nepal is the ground support. FTA worked with Nema T Sherpa to help organize the travel from Katmandu to base camp and for all base camp services. All I can say is that Nema worked magic including freshly baked cakes at base camp. Our train of 55 yaks managed to deliver all of our baggage to base camp, including 850 eggs, with minimal damage.

Base camp was set in a beautiful grassy meadow below the south face. A stream flowing through base camp provided a source of water when it thawed in the afternoons. Once at base camp our team members started to move at different rates towards the summit. An advanced base camp was established at 5200 m with camps C1, C2 and C3 at 5700 m, 5900 m and 6300 m, respectively. The travel from base camp to ABC was simply a walk, albeit a tiring one on the first trip up. The fun began with 3rd class slabs below C1. The climbing from C1 to C2 was along an exposed rock ridge with the most difficult section immediately below C2 being about 5.7. However, it must be remembered that 5.7 in the Smoke Buffs is very different from 5.7 at almost 6000 m in plastic mountaineering boots with an expedition pack. Fortunately there was “fixed rope” on most of the difficult rock sections. Some of the “fixed ropes” on the easier 4th class sections were a little dubious but the steeper sections typically had several 10 mm ropes – you got to choose the one you thought looked to be in the best condition.

I was lucky and had a tent to myself on my first night at C1. In the morning I was having difficulty getting my XKG stove to burn the “fuel” provided. Previously it had been determined that pumping a half full fuel bottle to high pressures gave the best results. In my high altitude daze I managed to loosen the pump from the fuel bottle and fill both of my eyes with leaking fuel. Being temporarily blinded was less than ideal. Fortunately, one of my teammates, Sue, was a nurse and a contact wearer. She calmly used her contact solution to wash my eyes and reduce the burning sensation. My eyesight returned just in time to watch a large rock fall on the tent causing irreparable damage to the tent and the Therma-Rest inside. Fortunately my sleeping bag was not damaged and there was a spare tent at base camp. Ironically, the tent sites at C1 were so scarce that the new tent was placed in the same location as the previous one.

Most of the tents at C2 were precariously placed. The tent sites were in such short supply that ours was placed on a small ledge that had



Camp 2 from the ridge above. Photo - M. Dell.

previously been used as the toilet. Even after the strategic placement of several rocks the outer portion of the tent was hanging in space. The combination of the odour, the altitude and the fact that we had to sleep in our harnesses attached to the wall above, resulted in a poor nights rest.

The climbing between C2 and C3 was the highlight with mixed snow, ice and rock. Again there was fixed rope most of the way but on some sections it was of little value, particularly the traverses where it hung down considerably below your feet.



Climbing between camps 2 and 3. Photo - M. Dell.

One of our team members, Lyngve, and I moved into C3 at the same time as our high altitude climbing Sherpa. We had hoped to find the tents erected but we were left with this task as the Sherpa headed down to help a team member on a vertical ice section below. Digging tent platforms at 6300 m is a tough process, particularly when the people on other teams were handed hot drinks when they arrived at their fully erected tents that already had the sleeping bags inside. But in hindsight our trip was the type of trip I wanted – working hard on a mountain makes the summit more rewarding.

Summit day does not need to start early on Ama Dablam. With overnight temperatures around -30°C there is no reason to leave before the sun strikes the tent. With three people in a three-person tent full of down coats and sleeping bags there was little room to cook while we were

all trying to get dressed. Hence, breakfast consisted of marginally warm hot chocolate, two Power Gels and a Snickers bar. With calories in the belly I was keen to get ahead of some of the other parties so I made an early break. The slopes above C3 consisted of hard snow flutings up to 50 degrees in pitch. Again there was “fixed line” all the way, if you consider 6 mm polypropylene a reasonable “fixed line.” I reached the summit behind a European couple who did not stay long. Lyngve arrived approximately 20 minutes after me, having got stuck behind a slow party shortly out of C3. The 15 minutes or so I had alone on the summit created a lifetime memory.

The summit was an amazing place. It was clear and cold with the jet stream reaching down far enough to keep the prayer flags flapping. Many of the peaks I have read and dreamed about were in view – Everest, Lhotse, Makalu, and Cho Oyu. A beautiful plume of cloud extended off Everest where it carved into the jet stream. Thirty minutes was long enough to drive the cold through my thick down jacket and it was time to descend.

Exhaustion was setting in by the time Lyngve and I reached C3. Unfortunately, we still had a long descent ahead of us as 6 other team members were on their way up to occupy the tents at C3. A brew and GU packets were used to fuel up before heading down to C2 which was reached at about 5:30 pm, just as the sun was setting. The descent was made by down climbing very exposed snow and ice sections with rappelling used where the quality of the fixed lines permitted. Fortunately, the tents at C2 were still in place and we were able to crawl in for a much needed meal of instant noodles and some rest.

The descent below C2 became eventful when Sue (unfortunately Sue had had to return to C2 the day before having developed pulmonary edema during the night at C3) tipped over backwards on the rappel of the yellow tower. Her plastic boots slipped on the rock when trying to pendulum over to the station. The heavy weight of her pack dragged her backwards resulting in her being head down with 1200 m of exposure below her. Needless to say she let out one hell of a



Marcus on the summit of Ama Dablam. Photo - M. Dell collection.

scream that was heard all the way to C1. Fortunately I was able to pull hard on the rope stopping her descent and swinging her into the station, but not without the loss of some blood from her hands that were grasping for any available hold.

The FTA crew took good care of Sue in C1 allowing Lyngve and I to descend all the way to base camp just as the last of the light disappeared from the summit of Ama Dablam.

In summary, this was an excellent trip that was well run by FTA. I really appreciated the freedom and responsibilities we were given on the mountain. In my opinion, this approach results in a much greater sense of accomplishment while still providing a safety net if required.

The highest mountain in Africa

October 2003

by Steve Mumford

THE IDEA - It's Christmas 2002. I'm sitting in my Uncle Geoff's living room, flipping through his

travel books. Geoff, an experienced traveler, has been all over the world, and I, having caught the travel bug, am looking for my next adventure.

A book catches my eye. The picture on the cover is a colossal and solitary mountain. A giraffe stands in the hot, dry foreground and snow caps the peak beyond. The mountain is Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, and the tallest freestanding mountain in the world. [Ed's comment – this has been debated]. I know where I want to go.

Geoff senses my excitement. He had climbed Kilimanjaro over thirty years before and jumps at the chance of reliving his youth when I suggest we go together.

Early on, doubts creep into my mind. This trip is going to be expensive - intercontinental flights, hotels, park fees, climbing guides - what if I fly half way around the world, only to come up short? What if I get altitude sickness? Stop being such a pessimist, I tell myself. An adventure is an adventure because it is full of uncertainties. It's about being spontaneous and making the most

of what's given to you. I may not make it to the top of Kilimanjaro, but I'm going to try!

AFRICAN TOUCHDOWN - Welcome to the third world. The rich, the poor, and nothing in between. Welcome to Nairobi, Kenya. It's September in East Africa. My summer tan is gone. I'm a beacon. A white piece of lint on a black sweater. Before long, the entrepreneurs descend.

One after another, these men, which the Lonely Planet book call "touts," approach, and try to sell me something I don't need for a price that is nowhere close to being a deal. Not taking "no thanks" for an answer, they follow me around for blocks, trying to strike a deal, or simply to get a donation. "No thanks" is about as rude a response as they are going to get from me. After all, it's their country. Eventually I stop caring, and even start having conversations with them. Sure enough, they stop bothering me, assuming that I'd been in the country for a while and am comfortable with them, and immune to their tactics.

BUS RIDE TO TANZANIA - Geoff and I stayed at the Hotel Boulevard, which is about a ten minute walk out of the Nairobi city centre. The next morning at 7:30, we hopped on a shuttle for the long trip to Tanzania. The Kenyan and Tanzanian countryside is amazing, not so much the topography, but the people, the little shanty towns and the Masai herdsman. There was always something to look at. What I had grown up watching on the Discovery Channel was now right in front of my eyes - real African countryside. We were glad that we had packed water and snacks because it was 4:30 that afternoon before we finally reached our destination – the Marangu Hotel in Tanzania.

After checking into the hotel, we got straight to business. We would be starting our climb the next morning and there was plenty to do. We had our gear checked by the hotel staff. Kindly, they supplied us with the items we were lacking. We attended the orientation meeting, which gave an overview of the six day trek. The excitement was mounting. I wanted to throw my boots on and start hiking, but this was serious business. Mount Kilimanjaro doesn't let everyone reach its peak. Would it let me? The orientation guide went over the symptoms that preceded death.

THE CLIMB - At 6:30 am on day one, I woke up and had a shower, my last for a week. The lodge was bustling with activity. Guides and porters prepared gear, trucks arrived and began loading. Geoff and I were joined by a third man, Don, a 50 year old real estate lawyer from Seattle, who happened to be taking the same route up the mountain at the same time.

All together, our team was ten strong: three climbers, three guides and seven porters. The lead-guide, Winford, would lead the three of us from camp to camp, while the rest of the team would charge ahead to make sure everything was in place by the time we got there. All we had to carry was what we needed for the day – a water bottle, camera and hat. The porters carried our tents, sleeping bags, extra clothing and the food and cooking equipment.

We started our first day's climb from the Machame gate, about an hour's drive from our lodge at the head of the Marangu trail. An hour in



Steve beneath Kilimanjaro. Photo - G. Mumford.

a car, and we had only traveled part-way around the mountain. The scale of this massive volcano was starting to sink in.

We hiked for six hours uphill through rainforest on day one. The hike was fairly easy, and although altitude was not a factor at this point, Winford kept the pace slow, something we'd learn to appreciate in the next few days. We broke out of the rainforest just before reaching camp and arrived to find our crew hard at work preparing dinner, which turned out to be filling and delicious, much more than I was expecting. It was little surprises like this that kept us in good health and good spirit.

On day two, our destination was Shira Hut, situated on a plateau at 3600 m. At that altitude, even so close to the Equator, the nights bring subzero temperatures. At this point, we were above most clouds which form an ocean over the African plains. It's a fantastic sight to see peaks, both near and far, poking through the clouds. During the day, when the temperatures rose, the clouds roamed up the side of the mountain and engulfed the group. We got closer and closer to the towering peak of Kilimanjaro, but only when the clouds cooperated, did we get a view of the massive dome of rock and ice.



Steve and Geoff at Shira camp. Photo - S. Mumford collection.

By day three we were officially in the highlands. The terrain was looking more Martian than terrestrial. The trail wove between rounded boulders and the soil had an orange hue. We hiked to 4100 m. Now it was cold during the day, the air was noticeable thinner, and the effects of altitude were becoming apparent. I felt a headache come on. I did my best to ignore it.

1500 more metres to the summit. If I'm suffering from a headache down here, what is it going to be like up there? I noticed climbers in other parties packing their gear and leaving camp at dinner time. Were they so ambitious that they were going to keep hiking into the night? Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. People were becoming ill from altitude. The guides on those teams had to make the crucial decision to abort the climb, and make a rapid descent before sunset. The only easy cure for altitude sickness is a fast descent. One climber was already too weak and had to be rescued by a helicopter and flown to Nairobi.

On day four I woke up feeling great. My headache was gone and I was feeling strong. It was going to be a long, hard day of high altitude hiking, up steep ridges, then back down into valleys. Up, down, up, down for seven hours. Frozen rain fell from the fog and made melodious "tinks" as it hit the shale and rocky debris. We arrived at camp around 5:30 pm and were quickly given tea and dinner. The guides knew that what lay ahead would be one of the most physically demanding days of our lives. We went to bed at 6:30 and were told that wake up would be at 11 the same night. Although we were exhausted, it was hard to get any sleep, knowing what was coming. Just over four hours later, we would be making our shot at the summit.

THE PUSH TO THE TOP - At 11:15 pm we woke from our short sleep and anxiously geared up, double, triple checking everything. Geoff, Don and I and our three guides began our journey. It was cold – much colder than I was expecting. We had nearly seven hours of darkness ahead of us. For those seven hours, my headlamp lit up the metre of ground in front of me, and all I cared about was placing my feet where my guide had placed his, seconds before.

Little dots of light could be seen along the path, as other groups slowly made their attempt for the summit. We passed groups. Groups passed us. We were sometimes joined by others for a little while. Altitude was choosing its victims. Climbers were falling to their knees, vomiting out what little food they had eaten before the climb. The rest of the team would stand around them, silently, as if attending a burial ceremony.

Dawn finally arrived, I paused for a second and looked back, witnessing the most amazing sunrise I have ever seen. A blanket of clouds stretched to the horizon, and Mawenzi peak, the jagged sister peak of Kilimanjaro, stood tall across the valley. A huge red sun began to emerge. It looked as though it was cutting its way through the clouds, half way between me and the horizon. I took out my camera, loaded in the case which I had been keeping in my chest pocket to keep warm, only to find that it was no use – my camera was dead, frozen from the cold.

As the sun rose into the sky, I warmed up and got a burst of energy. Mind clear and feeling strong, I began to speed up, setting my own pace. Eric, a 23-year-old assistant guide on our team, joined me, and moving swiftly, fueled by excitement, we reached Stella Point on the rim of the crater. Eric pointed towards Uhuru Peak, the summit of Kilimanjaro. I caught my breath, took a drink of water, and we continued. Fifteen more minutes and we were there.



**Geoff and Steve on the summit of Kilimanjaro.
Photo - S. Mumford collection.**

I took my camera out again, to see if it had woken from its frozen sleep, which it had.....barely. I snapped a few photos until it froze up again, shook Eric's hand, then began the descent. As we neared Stella Point, I spotted Geoff and Winford. I gave Geoff a hug, then, still full of adrenaline from reaching the peak, decided to join him for a second shot at the summit. Half an hour after my original summit time, Geoff and I reached Uhuru Peak together. I had been near summit altitude for over forty-five minutes and was beginning to get a headache, so Eric and I headed back down the mountain to camp. After

more than twelve hours of intense hiking, we were given one hour to nap before continuing our descent. Far beyond exhaustion, we ate a bit and went to bed.

The final day we descended for three more hours and were picked up at the gate by a truck for the two hour ride back to the hotel. I took a much needed shower, then joined the team for some beer. Geoff, Don and I had all reached Uhuru peak and returned to tell the story – amazing.

Winter tramping in Scottish Hills Christmas – New Year, 2004-2005

by Alice Purdey

The Campsie Fells rise just on the outskirts of Glasgow, Scotland. They are deceptively benign in appearance, heath covered knolls that shone with a light blanket of snow when we arrived in mid-December. My sister Louise, her hubby Andrew James, and golden retriever Carla live on castle grounds at the base of the hills, a perfect location for trampers no matter the weather. I say 'deceptively benign' because it is in hills such as these that people become lost, some fatally, every year when the weather clags in. On one half-day outing we traversed two of these knolls – at least that is what Fred and I were led to believe. In heavy cloud we ascended the directissima on Slack Dhu (496 m) into a curtain of sleet sweeping across the long flat top then did a sensual bog trod – squish – squish – squish – across the moors following fleeting, foggy glimpses of our enthusiastic leader and, thankfully, kilometres of fencing (sheep pastures) which, instead of fallen logs, we clamboured over (they do lean and sway a lot with one's weight) over the streaming burrns (rolling Scottish arrs) to Earl's Seat (578 m) where a relocated, estate corner stone, carved with the number 1848 marks the 'top'. We decided to leave neighbouring Dumgoyne (427 m) for another day and dropped down below it to greet the sheep at the bottom then carry on to the pub for a warm-up.

Further to the east and rising above the loch of the same name lies Ben Lomond (976 m) - another destination. We really enjoyed the gentle tromp under clear weather but were taken aback with the force of the winds when we turned the ridge for the steady rise to the summit. "Only a



**Loch Lomond from the slopes of Ben Lomond.
Photo - A. Purdey collection.**

breeze” says Andrew, but instead of joining the hardy parties hunkered down for their summit snack, we dropped down over the other side for some respite. We experienced a similar “breeze” on Ben Ledi (879 m) another day. These were both easy half-day trips as well, which is why Scottish hill walkers can spend “a day in the hills” and still have time to relax and refresh in the pubs afterwards.

A few days on Skye meant that we could tromp up to Lochan Lagen in Coire Lagan in the Cuillin Hills (pronounce it ‘Corrie’ and ‘Coolin’ and add a West Highland accent), which is a premiere rock climbing area. We managed a glimpse of the soaring faces through the sleet. The rock we did scramble over to bypass the waterfall was comfortably solid. Climbers generally base out of the convenient Glen Brittle Hut of the British Mountaineering Council. We stopped in there to meet friends of Louise and Andrew (who also remembered Jack Bryceland) and, of course, toss back a wee dram for the Happy New Year.

A bridge to the Isle of Skye was built less than ten years ago and, fortunately for us, toll collection was ended just days before we went. Houses are whitewashed throughout Skye, which gives a very orderly effect, and there is a great similarity in the basic architecture of the stone crofts (cottages). Neist Point, which is protected from the wild Atlantic by the Outer Hebrides, is the furthest western point in Europe accessible by car (longitude 6° 53’ west, latitude 57° 25’ north) and, hence, attracts visitors. Another attraction is Coral Beach at Dunvegan Head where there is a long stretch of breaker-pounded sand that borders an amazing headland. We had fun leaning well into the powerful wind, which, in fact, wreaked



Louise, Fred, and Alice on the summit of Ben Lomond. Photo - A. Purdey collection.



Dumgoyne. Photo - A. Purdey.

havoc and high-water flooding over our tracks a few weeks later. There are many vertical, rocky headlands on western Skye that, if more suitably located, would be a huge attraction for climbers. Our hopes of hiking in the Quiraing Hills were thwarted when we had trouble finding them in the fog.

Our return to Glasgow took us through Fort William and the Cairngorms, popular climbing area and home of Ben Nevis, the highest peak in the UK. But, once again, mist enshrouded all (potential) views. Scottish hills have a lot to offer walkers, hikers and serious climbers. The low elevations and rolling hills, however, may deceive the unprepared; north Atlantic weather systems can suddenly change a bright summer's day into one of bluster, fog and confusion.

Party: Fred Douglas and Alice Purdey.

**Lake District Peaks
(Scafell Pike, Helvellyn, Skiddaw)**

16-18 May, 2006

by Ron Dart

The Lake Poets were the first of the fell walkers, that's if you count a fell walker as someone who comes and walks the fells, purely for the pleasure of walking the fells.

Hunter Davies *A Walk Around the Lakes* (p.100)

Child of the Clouds

Wordsworth, *River Duddon Sonnets*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's ascent, of Scafell Pike in 1802, is the first recorded climb of this peak which can be challenging. William Wordsworth climbed Helvellyn many times, and his last ascent was when he was 70 in 1840.

Haydon's painting of Wordsworth (with Helvellyn in the background) is a classic, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, 'Wordsworth upon Helvellyn' is a must read. When Napoleon was defeated in 1815, the Wordsworth and Southey clans hiked up Skiddaw and had a bonfire celebration that lasted the night. The Lake District Peaks, in short, are thick with poetic, political and mountaineering history.

My wife (Karin) and I took to the Lakeland area in mid-May to ramble up these enticing and evocative peaks. We had a place in Ambleside, and two Brits (Sean and Adrian) with extensive hiking experience in the Lake District area joined and guided us for the week. The rambling, ambling and yomping were experiences not to be missed.

The four of us parked our car near the trailhead (and by a pub) a few miles east of Keswick, hiked up the stiff early ascent, had lunch at the base of fine tarn at the bottom of horseshoe like Blencathra, did the arête of Sharp Edge, walked the whaleback ridge of Blencathra, descended the valley to Skiddaw House (a private Youth Hostel), then headed up to the peak of Skiddaw on May 16th. The clouds hovered just above the peaks most of the day, but by the time we reached the plateau peak of Skiddaw, thick clouds churned and enveloped us as we headed to the cairn atop one of the highest peaks in England. The journey down from Skiddaw was a treat and gift. The small mountain-nestled town of Keswick was bathed in light, and from our height it looked like an alpine village from a long forgotten fairy tale.

It is interesting to note that Chris Bonington and family now live, in a small village, at the lower base of Skiddaw, and the largest history of Everest expeditions has been showing a few miles east of him near Penrith, at the Rheged exhibition. It's quite a tour, and I spent a few hours at Rheged, walking through the tale of the many ascents (failed and successful) of Everest. Cumbria, in the Lake District, has been called 'the birthplace of climbing', and the Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition at Rheged ably demonstrates why this is the case.

May 17th we turned to Scafell Pike (the highest peak in England). The hike and scramble to the

roof of this historic peak was well worth the grind. We approached Scafell Pike from the West Water side. Wasdale is one of the main sites in England from which climbing and hiking began in the 19th century. Peaks such as Knapes Needle and Sphinx Rock are legendary, and the Wasdale Head Inn has plenty of photographs of early mountaineering in the area. We returned from Scafell Pike via Lingmell from which Great Gable and West Water far below could be clearly seen. Fell running is quite a popular sport in England, and Joss Naylor (the leading fell runner) lives, as a shepherd, on the edge of West Water.

Helvellyn was our challenge for May 18th. Many a fine poem has been written from and about this mythic peak. We left from Glenridding, and did the hike up near Red Tarn. Then, the thin arête of Striding Edge had to be crossed. 80 – 100 km per hour winds were blowing in gusts as we crossed Striding Edge. We often had to lean into the rocks to keep us from being blown off the mountain. But, the arête was traversed, and we reached the long plateau peak of Helvellyn. We had lunch in a rock shelter away from the stern wind, then descended by Swirral Edge back to Glenridding again.

We did 5 peaks in 3 days, and 3 of the peaks (Skiddaw, Scafell Pike, Helvellyn) are the highest in England. The Lake District has much to commend it, and mountaineering had many important roots in this area of the world. It was good to connect with a historic source of mountaineering and literary history for a few fleeting and not to be forgotten days. It was a pleasure, also, while inching our way up such rock slopes to see all sorts of Herdwick sheep (true thick wool dwellers of the highlands).

**A variation on the classic
European Haute Route
April, 2005**

by Brian Wood

It was mid-April in “downtown” Chamonix, France, and half our eight member BCMC party was standing in wet fresh snow wondering what had happened to the weather, and whether it would be worthwhile talking to the local professional mountain guides. After all, we had just arrived from Vancouver after a poor winter with

one of the lowest snow falls in many years, so bad that even Mt. Washington Ski Area on Vancouver Island (noted for huge snow accumulations) did not open due to lack of snow. It seemed strange and perhaps unfair to have so much fresh snow at about one thousand meters elevation in mid-April. We were to meet the rest of our party in Chamonix so that we could start on the “Classic Haute Route”(CHR), an alpine traverse from Chamonix to Zermatt, but were wondering what the avalanche risk would be, particularly for the classic start from the nearby Argentière hut. The early arrivals of the party included Ilze Rupners, Ove Albinson, Carol Macmillan and me. After a day Peter and Silke Gumplinger arrived and joined us at our *olde world pension* for the first of many planning sessions. Peter was our unofficial guide/leader, and in 1988 he had completed the CHR with Mike Feller and was familiar with the route and mountain hut procedures.

It was over forty-five years since I had first been here (summer of '59) when our high school party of over 50 boys had just completed the “Tour de Mont Blanc”, a classic European walking circuit around the Mont Blanc massif. Now I was hoping to ski the other European “classic” route, but things did not look so good, at least not at the moment. We had to wait for Mike and Evelyn Feller to arrive, but it did not seem to matter as the weather forecast assured us that we would not be leaving immediately. We had a warm-up ski using the lifts in Le Brévent ski resort just above Chamonix, and occasionally we saw the summit of Mt. Blanc peeking through the drifting clouds. While skiing at Le Brévent, I noticed that I still felt awkward due to my “fixed-heel” alpine touring (AT) gear which told me that I had not fully converted from “free-heel” telemark skiing. In 2003, when first contemplating the CHR, I finally accepted that my terminally dismal telemark technique would not improve any more, and my aching knees would only get worse. It occurred to me that perhaps a reliably releasing AT binding might be a good idea for this trip, especially in an area where AT “rules” as they say. It really is hard to teach an old dog new tricks, and after two years of trying, my new AT technique is no better than my old telemarking technique, but at least I do not

wipe out as frequently. Mike and Evelyn arrived the evening after our ski and so finally we were all set to go, but according to the forecast, the weather was not going to cooperate.

Over the 100+ years since the CHR was pioneered, many variations have been added to the original route because the Alps now have so many huts and ski resorts. Peter knew of an alternative and usually safer start at the Verbier ski resort, and he did not seem to be too concerned about all the fresh snow. We had several opportunities to sample the restaurants in Chamonix as we talked about the possible options, before finally deciding to do the Verbier alternative start. Not only is this alternative start safer than Argentière from an avalanche viewpoint, but it avoids a bus trip along a valley near the middle of the CHR. These changes required us to phone several huts to change bookings, but this is usual and the hut custodians expect last minute changes. Luckily Ilze could handle the telephone calls in French, and Peter could handle them in German, and so these logistical problems were easily dealt with. Also, because of Peter's knowledge of the area, he always led the party, and so the rest of us were merely "drones" on a very well run "guided" trip.

So, on Wednesday 20 April (Day 1), after a long lecture by our worried pension keeper warning us of impending doom from avalanches due to the fresh snow, we left the pension and walked through more fresh snow to the station. We took the train to Martigny by a very scenic and snowy route, then a connector train to La Chable, the station and town near Verbier. After lunch, an extensive lift system delivered us effortlessly through dense clouds to 2950 m, and in a total whiteout we cautiously felt our way down to the Mt. Fort Cabin (2457 m). For some of us this was our first experience with the luxury of European mountain huts, and we were impressed with the excellent four course meal, indoor toilet and a hot shower!

Day 2's morning was also a whiteout, so after getting up at 6 am, we returned to bed for a later start, with hopefully better visibility. The weather



En route to the Pfaffleuri hut. Photos - M. Feller.

was therefore to blame for us taking two days to get to the Dix Hut, via the Pfaffleuri Hut, instead of the originally more energetic plan of taking one day to get to the Dix Hut. Unfortunately, just as we were leaving at 9am, Mike could not find his climbing skins, and so he and Evelyn decided to return to La Chable to buy some new ones, and meet us at the Pfaffleuri Hut that night. This was the last thing that Mike needed as he was still recovering from jet lag and various medical procedures too numerous and complicated to mention. However, being from Oz, he would not let going down, buying another set of skins, returning to the cabin Mt. Fort, and following us to Pfaffleuri Hut, stop him. The whiteout persisted until mid-morning, and so the remainder of our

party followed fresh tracks from earlier parties that led us off the downhill area. Finally we broke out into sunshine and followed tracks over three gentle passes to finally climb our first bump, Rosablanche (3336 m), which we could ski almost to the top. Our magnificent views of the Matterhorn and Dente Blanche were soon threatened by encroaching clouds, and so we skied off on gentle, almost untracked fresh snow slopes, a rare condition in April on the HR. Our pleasant descent finished on a well-skied sideslip and traverse of about 1 km leading us to the Prafleuri Hut at 3 pm. This meant we could sample the “dolce vita” of European mountain huts, enjoying local drinks etc while waiting in sunshine until Mike and Evelyn arrived at 6pm. We heard that just after Mike had bought his skins and had them custom fitted to his new shaped skis, Evelyn found his other skins where they had had lunch the day before. So poor Mike had an extra pair of skins to carry as they would not take back his new purchase as they had been custom trimmed.

Day 3 dawned beautifully clear, and as could be expected we non-locals were the last to leave the cabin at 7 am. A hard frozen track led us up to the Col de Roux (2804 m) (verified by a signpost!) and we then headed south as a slow descending traverse along Lac des Dix for about 4 km. A stiff climb from the lake led us to a beautiful easy traverse to the Dix Hut (2928 m) while admiring fine views of Mt. Blanc de Cheilon. We arrived at the hut at about 11am to find many people relaxing in the sun. Some of us were tempted to linger as it was quite hot, but the weather was great and 11am was too soon to stop for some of us. So after lunch peer pressure had some of us skiing up the nearby La Lurette (3369 m) in the mid-day heat. Some of us were quite tired after the downhill run in heavy snow, and arriving back at the hut at 3 pm gave us permission to relax and join the locals with a clear conscience. Then I was entertained by watching the hut custodian, who had a good set of spare parts and a well-equipped workshop, repair the Titanal rod of a Fritsche Diamir binding. This seemed to be the most popular binding in this area, and he was very experienced in fixing the older model. Apparently the newer model of this binding is much better.

As we were again one of the last to leave the hut (at 6:30 am) on Day 4, we joined a long line of skiers snaking up the Cheilon Glacier towards the Serpentine Wall. Once over the wall and heading towards the Col du Brenay (3639 m), we had great views of the Matterhorn and Dent d’Herens, and noticed that most parties were heading up the nearby Pigne d’Arolla (3796 m). Our party was getting a bit spread out now, so those at the front decided to cache packs and climb this easily accessible peak, hopefully to get what our Cicerone Guidebook said was one of the best views in the Alps. Unfortunately, after a good start to the day, the clouds descended before we reached the top, and the hoped-for views were replaced by drifting clouds. While we were descending to the gear cache we met Mike and Evelyn climbing up. We learnt that Evelyn was going slowly due to problems with her boots, but they told us to descend without them. After a short while descending in a deteriorating visibility, Carol and I decided to wait for Mike and Evelyn, while the others skied on down to the Vignettes Cabin (3194 m). We became concerned about the delay, but eventually Mike and Evelyn appeared out of the gloom. We took some of Evelyn’s gear, and she bravely soldiered on with her sore feet, battling the heavily chopped-up slope of mushy fresh snow, which gave all of us problems in the poor visibility. We finally broke out of the cloud and saw the way down to the cabin, finishing by sideslipping down a smoothly skied-out narrow corridor. We arrived at the Vignettes cabin at about 2 pm and had lunch in this airy setting perched over steep drops, feeling satisfied that we had finally joined the CHR. Unfortunately the weather was now deteriorating and we were losing the views, and the weather forecast for the next day or so was poor. So we decided not to try for Zermatt the next day, and instead we would detour to the Bertol cabin, our guide Peter once again showing his mastery of this route. We hoped that the improving weather forecast would be correct, and we would then have good views for the run into Zermatt on the following day.

Day 5 was overcast and windy at 6 am when six of us left the cabin. We said goodbye to Mike and Evelyn who had decided to cancel their trip so as not to slow us up and to ski out to Arolla. To

be able to bale out from the HR at almost any hut, and to phone ahead to rearrange hut reservations are some of the advantages of this highly organized system. In poor light and snow flurries we broke trail as we traversed to the Col de Charmatane, then climbed up the Glacier du Mont Collon to the Col de l'Evêque (3382 m) by 9am. It should be added that to break trail for this length of time is a rare accomplishment on the CHR! Here we were joined by an American party from the Vignettes Cabin who took advantage of our fresh track. This party was guided by a telemarking American guide, Steve, who had also decided to go to the Bertol Hut instead of skiing straight through to Zermatt. Our combined groups skied across to the Col de Collon and then descended in a variable whiteout through breakable crust. I was very thankful to have switched to AT gear for this trip as I watched one of the young (and strong?) American clients flounder in these challenging conditions on his telemark gear. We joined the Haute Glacier d'Arolla and passed an emergency bivouac hut, Refuge de Bouquetins (2980 m) which looked bleak and much more

primitive (similar to our BCMC hut styles?) than the luxurious European huts we were getting used to, and so we were glad to give it a miss! At the glacier snout at about 2500 m we had a cold lunch, and then, still in poor light, we started the long climb up to the Col de Bertol (3268 m) which is well below the Bertol Hut (3311 m). In blowing snow we cached our skis on the narrow col, and cautiously climbed the airy, chain-protected "trail" and almost vertical metal ladders up to the Bertol Hut. This was certainly good practice for me for climbing the "via ferratas" of the Dolomites which was to be my next mountain trip in June. We could not believe that they would build a hut in such an exposed position, with intimidating exposures on most sides. A very impressive "shark fin" peak appeared to project above the biffy which was located some distance from the hut at the end of an airy metal catwalk partially covered with drifting snow. This turned out to be our most spectacularly-located hut on our trip, although we could not see very much on the day we arrived. We were fairly tired, so after lunch of the local fare, "röschti", most of us had an afternoon nap. This hut had a TV and



View from the Bertol hut. Photo - B. Wood.



The Bertol hut. Photo - C. MacMillan.

the weather forecast confirmed that we would spend the next day at Bertol in the hope that the bad weather would pass for our run into Zermatt..

On Day 6 Steve, the guide, did not bother waking us at 5:30 am as the weather was still bad. For most people the day was passed in the hut leisurely eating, drinking, reading and watching Steve demonstrate his crevasse rescue techniques, which he had never needed to use in all his years of guiding. We were all surprised that his guide backpack was smaller than most of our packs, and he claimed he had sufficient emergency gear for his clients too! I guess we BC backcountry types do not know how to travel light. For the first time this trip our two groups had been the only people in a hut, but a Swiss party



On the ridge leading up to the Bertol hut. Photo - B. Wood.

arrived in the late afternoon and so the English speaking monopoly ended abruptly. That evening's TV weather forecast was encouraging for the next three days, and so we planned to leave the hut the next day.

After early morning photos from our incredible perch, Day 7 saw us descending the steep ladders at 7:30 am in clearing clouds with the promise of a great day. After a pleasant descending traverse with the Americans across the upper Glacier de Mont Mine, we all climbed the easy Tête Blanche (3707 m) and spent a long time on top admiring the views. After a good ski down to the Col de Valpelline, the Americans left us and we climbed the Tête de Valpelline (3790 m) at the opposite end of the col. This too was an easy ascent which took us to the narrow summit by 11:30 am. Wow, two real peaks before noon, and the weather was still gorgeous and giving us magnificent views of the Matterhorn, Dent D'Herens, Dent Blanche and numerous other



Carol on, and views from, the summit of Tête Blanche. Photos - C. MacMillan.

peaks! Now the real skiing was to start and we were to be rewarded for waiting patiently for good weather. The descent from the Col de Valpelline to Zermatt was about 1900m, and the route skirted around the north west face of the Matterhorn to the north east ridge. Not being a “natural” at

skiing, I found it difficult to concentrate on the skiing and avoiding the crevasses, while watching the impressively steep terrain unfold on all sides. Luckily the snow was good, and we were not in a hurry to finish what was probably one of my best skiing days ever. As a bonus, I only fell a few times, mostly due to burning thighs and my distraction with the scenery! Finally, at about 2:30 pm we ran out of snow and finished walking along a dirt road



Brian beneath the Matterhorn. Photo - C. MacMillan.

lined with bare deciduous trees and some evergreens, our first trees for several days. Surprise of surprises, the first real building we came across was a restaurant at Staffel on the edge of a ski resort. Here we met the Americans who were about to leave, and after lots of photos, eating and drinking we left to ski out down the softening ski runs to a gondola, which downloaded us into the town of Zermatt (1620m) at about 3:30 pm. We found our pre-booked “olde worlde” Hotel Mischabel with good views of the Matterhorn which certainly dominates this town. While Zermatt is touristy, most of it is still attractively old and the town has been able to

withstand over a century of tourism without turning into a concrete highrise jungle. The evening was spent exploring this quaint, relatively un-spoilt, almost car-free town with its expensive restaurants and shops.

Day 8 saw us on the first gondola run of the day to “Glacier Paradise” near the Kleine Matterhorn (3883 m). The 2263 m climb in three gondolas took about an hour, and my older 192 cm skis stood out like a submarine periscope in the tightly packed gondola cars where most of the 150 passengers had newer short fat skis. By now we were getting somewhat blasé about the magnificent views, but we knew they would not last as we watched the clouds building as we followed the hoards of day trippers up the nearby Breithorn (4164 m). We were on top by 10:30 am but the wind was rising, spindrift was starting to spoil the views, and the crusty descent brought me back to reality. We then followed a fast track in a descending traverse to the Schwarztor (3731 m) which is a relatively narrow pass between the Breithorn and Pollux (4082 m). We had hoped to climb Pollux, but the building clouds and rising wind discouraged us. We cooled off quickly while having a snack, then descended the broken-up Schwarztor Glacier in deteriorating visibility. At one point we had to descend steep and rounded blue glacial ice where

the snow had been scraped off by previous skiers, and there were a few dubious deep (?) holes to avoid where people had jumped and fallen. If I were skiing this type of glacier terrain in BC backcountry, I would assume that I was off-route, but in Europe this was the route. This dubious section had obviously been skied by many, there were no obvious alternatives, and so others must unwillingly follow! Lower down, at the junction with the Gorner Glacier, we relaxed in weak sunshine with other parties, then joined the throng making its way slowly up to the Monte Rosa Hut (2795 m), which we understand is one of the most popular in the Alps. We arrived at the hut at 3 pm and it was a circus of thirsty patrons mobbing the bar.

The hut was not in such a spectacular setting as other huts we had visited, and the crowding and poor gear storage gave it a low rating on our approval scale. However the meals were good and we still had a pleasant evening, and checked our lightened gear for our planned climb of the Dufourspitze (4644 m), the highest of the four summits of Monte Rosa, the following day.

We were up at 4 am on Day 9, our earliest start yet, but for me it would have been too difficult to sleep anyway as the whole hut seemed to be up too. Carol and Ove decided they did not want to try the climb.

Perhaps they had a premonition of what was to come. After a hectic breakfast we left the hut at 5:30am and, as usual, were one of the last groups at the end of a long snaking line of headlamps. The clouds were fairly low on most peaks but we hoped that they would rise as the day warmed, but by now we had decided to try for Nordend, one of the lower summits of Monte Rosa. By early dawn the weather had not improved, and soon some of the parties ahead were turning around and skiing down past us. We put on ski crampons for the upper steeper sections, and continued upwards as more parties retreated past us. The wind chill was worsening and soon we were enveloped by swirling clouds in poor visibility. As we came over the top of what seemed to be the Silbersattel, a relatively flat saddle at about 4425 m, we met one party descending who were actually roped up. This was the first time we had seen people roped up on these European glaciers, although everyone we have ever seen out here routinely wears body harnesses as if they were fashion items. As the lighting varied, Peter, who was leading, began to notice more and more holes in the snow even though the terrain was becoming more level. Peter was becoming concerned about the crevasse risk in the poor light, and so, as we were all getting cold, we unanimously decided to turn around. Shortly afterwards, at about 11am, Peter fell into a small crevasse which was not visible in the whiteout.



Skiing up to Stockhorn Pass beneath Monte Rosa. Photo - B. Wood.



Approaching (upper), and looking back to (lower), Adler Pass. Photos - C. MacMillan.

Luckily he stopped himself by sitting on the crevasse lip- a good job he had his skis on! So that's why those guys were roped up! At first it

was quite slow descending as the other skiers had cleared snow off the glacier ice and exposed some narrow icy bridges, and like most other people we had seen we had not bothered to rope up. We also noticed that we seemed to be the last party to turn around. Crazy Canucks, eh! As we left the steep upper sections the visibility improved a little, but the heavy wet snow was severely chopped up by other retreating parties, and so the ski down was not fun, at least for me. I was pretty exhausted by the time we arrived back at the Monte Rosa hut (about 2 pm) and so I took an afternoon nap in the huge communal bed, now empty and peaceful compared with the noisy morning. That evening we celebrated Peter's 49th birthday by him buying us all pear schnapps – apparently a Bavarian custom.

On Day 10 we left the hut at 5:30 am, and it was much less crowded than the previous day as we climbed slowly over frozen rolling country for about an hour. Unexpectedly we encountered a large guided group waiting below a relatively steep but short rocky ridge, which had a short aided section of "via ferrata". Luckily they let us overtake them, as we quickly packed our skis and used chains, rusty steel cables and ratty ropes to negotiate this little technical section. This led to a nice view point on the opposite side of the ridge just as the sun was hitting it, and looking back we could see that the guided group behind us were going to be very slow getting over this obstacle. The day was promising to be hot as we climbed in bright sun over the gentle and scenic Stockhorn Pass (3387 m), and had wonderful views of Monte



Heading to the Allalinhorn. Photo - C. MacMillan.

Rosa, now totally clear in contrast with yesterday's whiteout. The route from here led north east over Adler Pass (3789 m), which was gained quite painfully for some of us after a long hot climb following a steep track with too many kick turns. A few of us cached our packs at the pass and skied up the nearby Strahlhorn (4190 m) to more scenic views of the Rimpfischhorn on the opposite side of the pass. This was followed by a nice ski down softening snow back to the packs for a welcome snack. At 3 pm we left the pass and skied quickly down the gentle easy snow of the Allalin Glacier, to a low point where eventually we could see our final destination, the Britannia Hut (3030 m). We toiled in the afternoon sun up to the large hut, which had been donated in 1912 to the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) by British members of SAC. This gave us an idea of how long there had been friendly international relationships in the Alps between those with a common interest. Like many of the huts we visited, this one had been recently renovated, and even had indoor toilets and washing water, presumably because it was close to the Saas Fee ski resort. It had been a long hot day, and most of us had a nap before the usual excellent dinner served in these huts, which sadly would be our last mountain hut of our trip.

At 7 am on Day 11 (Saturday 30 April), in the cold shadow of a ridge, we followed a rolling frozen snowmobile track to the "back entrance" of the nearby ski resort, now closed and quiet as it was the shoulder season. The route through a long connecting tunnel was not initially obvious, but soon we were climbing up the groomed runs (piste) in hot sunshine, surrounded by the usual resort clutter. It was so hot most of us stopped on the runs and removed our long underwear, the first day without it on this trip! We noticed there were many people above and below us catching this fine weather weekend, and so after caching our packs we joined the line of people wending their way up the track leading to the Allalinhorn (4027 m). Now fully converted to the European climbing style, we summited before noon and admired the wonderfully clear view of the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc. The ski down to the packs was good, followed by soft piste into the town of Saas Fee (1800 m), which is

much smaller and less crowded than Zermatt, and I feel more picturesque. We had a farewell meal with much appreciated cold beer on a café terrace in hot sun before catching the yellow Postbus down to Visp in the valley, and then by train back to Chamonix (8 pm) via Martigny. Now it was much more spring-like along the scenic rail line than it had been 11 days ago when we had left just after the late season snow fall. That rather apprehensive departure seemed a long time ago, and looking back we had been very lucky with the weather, in spite of a not-so-promising start.

Adventures in Ecuador
December 1999
by Paul Hawman

In 1999, I joined a group of American climbers to climb the three major volcanoes of Ecuador. My flight plan had me flying out of Toronto to Newark and then on to Quito via Bogota. Having been working like a dog right up to my departure. I enjoyed my first laugh in over a month as I waited in the lounge in Newark. As is common when travelling in South America, and I guess when travelling there as well, nobody listens to the boarding instructions. Although they call the back rows, it seems like everyone rushes the gate to try and get on the plane. "Back rows only loading at this time" is spouted constantly from the PA system, to no avail. I guess people just like to delay everything and that's exactly what happened. It is amusing to sit and watch the masses try to push and shove their way through, especially when it's pre-assigned seats.

The next thing they say over the loud speaker is that the flight to Quito "may" be cancelled. Now what's that? Is it cancelled or is it not? When are they going to tell us? In Bogota? It's just crazy. They finally move the masses and call for the passengers seated in the front half of the plane to board now, well now is a relative word they could also have said "as the current crowd clears" or "within fifteen minutes". I am one of the last passengers on and I find my seat, surprisingly with an empty seat beside me. All strapped in and ready to go we now hear the message we don't want to hear. "Ladies & gentlemen this flight will not be going to Quito tonight due to volcanic activity outside of Quito, we ask you to disembark

and talk to the Continental Rep. at the gate". So I book another flight to Quito via Houston for the following morning.

The next day as I flew into Ecuadorian airspace, Gau Gau Pinchichua decided to blow its top again. Apparently a major eruption with ash being sent across the city like a blanket of snow. Nothing I can do about Mother Nature. So it was off to Guayaquil in southern Ecuador and then try to figure it out from there.

Given that the flight was supposed to go to Quito, Continental did the right thing and put the passengers up in the Hilton Guayaquil for the night. In all my trips to South America I had never had the opportunity to enjoy first class accommodation. Having met a couple of the other climbers from my group, who had endured the same detour, we decided to adjourn to the bar to determine how to get to Quito. Five or six beers and a couple of shots of Tequila later, it was now 3:30 am and time for bed and still we were no closer to Quito. An early morning tap on the door to my room, and I was informed that the airport in Quito was still closed, but one of the women on another of the re-routed flights had organized a couple of buses, and was I interested? 8 hours, 3000 m, and \$10 later we arrived in Quito.

Once in Quito, we made our way to the pre-determined hotel and met up with the rest of the climbers and guides. As the lead guide counted heads, it was discovered two from the group had not arrived, turned back by the volcano. When climbing at altitude it is always wise to acclimatize. In order to help the acclimatization process we spent the next 3 days enjoying moderate hikes of between 4-7 hours climbing to altitudes of approximately 4000 m. Given the geographic nature of Ecuador these were relatively simple jaunts through vegetated hill sides.

Our first climb would be Cayambe, a volcanic mountain situated to the North of Quito. On the morning of our departure we were introduced to the "local" guide Benno who would accompany us on all three of our climbs. Benno, a Swiss national had been living in Ecuador for the past five years.

As we approached the mountain, Cayambe was shrouded in the clouds. Would this be foreshadowing of things to come? The

approaches to Cayambe and all three volcanoes we would climb, are very civilized with the team being able to drive to points less than 60 minutes hike to the mountain huts or Refugio's as they are called.

Situated on a ridge between the valley carved out by the receding glacier and the valley from which we arrived, the Refugio stood majestically at just over 4600 m. Hut life began. We met a few other climbers sharing the hut, which was large enough to fit a small army. They were fellow Canadians and recognized me as one with my MEC backpack. They would be climbing the mountain the same night as us. I awoke that first morning to a clear sky. The air was clear and crisp, and you could tell it was at altitude. As I took a short stroll to the edge of the ridge to look South to Antisana, another popular and somewhat more technical climb, the altitude caused a little huffing and puffing.

That afternoon we tramped around the glacier, and the bad weather rolled in with rain, snow and hail. I wondered how it would impact our climb later that night. Cayambe is known for its weather as it sits so close to the Amazon basin. As a result, it is dogged by significant clouds and the resulting rain, snow and hail. That night we ate dinner, did the dishes and then packed for the summit and hit the hay for a few hours sleep before the climb. This was my first experiencing using a pee bottle – an interesting experience. I discovered that when you pee in the dark and fill the bottle, you have little concept of how full its getting so when it comes time to pee again, if you forgot to dump the first “deposit”, it can be a little more challenging. 11:30 p.m., arrived, and I had slept through my alarm having only awoken by the sound of my fellow climber Otto and the strobe light affect of Marcia's headlamp whizzing around the room. Otto had been up for quite a while. I wasn't sure if he was feeling well. However, as the trip progressed I discover that Otto took three times as long to get ready, and then get re-ready and then check if you're ready and finally make sure he's really ready.

We were all ready to go, as the clock struck 1 am. Snow fell from the clouds both above and below the hut. There was no wind but it was definitely a little below the zero degree mark. The

snow had been falling for a few hours and this did not bode well for our summit attempt. We scrambled up the rock and snow for about 1½ hours, at a good pace, waking us up from our earlier sleep. By the end of the rock section we had gained about 250 m. At the foot of the glacier the clouds rolled around us like hungry lions, and it was time to rope up. We sat down to put on our gear to cross the glacier. The night was dark,, the “lions” still swarmed and the moon had no chance of penetrating this cloud. The snow had stopped falling. The snow that had fallen and the low visibility, would make the climb very difficult. In fact, John would later say that it was one of the toughest climbs he had ever done in South America.

Off we headed into the darkness, all roped up. It's fairly lonely climbing at night. Although your rope team is attached and only 7 m away, the darkness, the sheer blackness that surrounds you, makes everything seem so far away and the lack of communication (especially at this altitude) between team members enhances the sense of isolation. I was on a rope team with Otto and our local guide Benno. Otto's pace was alarmingly slow, unlike his scramble up the rocks. I attributed it to him not feeling well. However, later I would discover it was more a result of the initial opening pace across the rocks, his extra large summit pack stuffed with unnecessary items and a minor cold. Our rope team quickly fell behind the others. The snow started again and coupled with our slow pace I started to feel frustrated. We were going so slow that I was not sweating, or even breathing hard. As a result I started to cool down, which is never a good thing. Worse than this I couldn't get any type of pace (even slow) going and started to think the summit would not be attainable.

We reached the half way rock about 10-15 minutes behind the others. It was around 4:45 am and we knew it would be light soon. John, the lead guide, being unsure of Otto's condition decide to have me switch to another rope team. As I roped up, I realized how hard rope work can be in the cold. The rope was covered in ice and snow accumulated as it was dragged across the glacier. My prussik ropes were frozen and in the end I abandoned them. Not a smart idea, in

hindsight, but luckily there was no need that time. Off we went into the pea soup of darkness, cloud and snow— a much better pace. How John found the route I don't know, but he did a great job. Every so often he would stop and glare into the clouds trying to catch a glimpse of some feature on the mountain. He had been breaking trail since the beginning of the climb. Sporadically, we did see flags marking the general route, but in those conditions locating them was a challenge. My breathing started to become heavier, probably a reflection of the increasing slope, the higher altitude and the faster pace. The snow tapered off as the dawn emerged. We side stepped a few crevasses, and the snow settled below our feet. I didn't feel it, but John, Eric and Tim told of the uneasy feeling as it settled. We continued to the head wall, below the summit and waited for the other team.

At 8 am we were only 200 m below the 5500 m summit. The second team arrived and they volunteered to make steps up the wall. "We're going to the summit boys!" announced John, happy to hand over the lead for a while. Leading is tiring and making steps even more so, especially with soft snow as it was that day. The steps made by Matt (guide #2) would be a key reason for the high summit success rate of our party. The headwall was slow and arduous but Matt did a great job and we found ourselves on the bergschrund below the summit cap. It still seemed a long way to the summit but we were definitely closer. Resting, sitting on the edge of the bergschrund we looked out into the blanket of cloud. The bergschrund was about 12 m down and 9 m wide. We were told that five years ago it didn't exist, but there was a snow bridge that was permanently across the one end. Permanent my ass! Mountains continue to change and that's what makes them magical. No two climbs are alike. We traversed the ridgeline of the bergschrund looking for a place to cross and hoping we would not have to descend into the bergschrund. All our hopes rested on a small snow bridge that would lie at one end. It had been there the previous year but no luck this time. Back tracking we located a safe point to descend into and across the bergschrund. Cornices hung precariously above us as we moved through the

bergschrund. Up the other side to a ledge we scampered all the time looking at the cornices from the summit ridge hanging precariously above. Once out we traversed along the ledge to the next section of the wall below the summit. .

Pushing on up the last section, as always a couple of false summits greeted us on the way to the actual summit. Finally at 9:30 am I saw John toss his ice axe in the air as he had made the summit and I was less than a rope length away. We took some photos but the sky was cloudy, preventing any chance of a scenic view of other summits and the Amazon basin to the east. The climb was far from over, as the summit was only half way. I would celebrate the climb later, as the group recounted its success.



From Cayambe looking east to the jungle. Photo - P. Hawman.

Our summit time over, it was time to head down. I took the lead, and the snow was soft. It took about an hour to return to where Otto and Benno had been sitting, haven forsaken the summit due to time. As we continued on down the temperature increased and I became more tired. As I continued the slog down I started to go into a trance and kept falling forwards. Sweat started to accumulate on my head so I removed my hat which in hindsight was not the best idea. The result was a forehead, void of sun tan lotion, the colour of a coke can, and no it wasn't diet. Continuing down we crossed a crevasse where I saw a hand print in the snow. "Otto I bet!" I said to myself –later to be confirmed by the man himself. We continued on, and at that point, exhausted and slogging

through the snow, which was now heavy and wet, I decided to take a break. The Kiwi/Canadian team which successfully summited soon after us, and were following us down said not to stop as it was only a few more minutes to the end of the glacier. How the hell did they know? They had never climbed Cayambe before and it was dark on the way up. I was tired and wanted to rest. What were they waiting for? I wasn't their guide. Obviously I was tired and getting cranky. Well that was one hell of a long five minutes and all I could see was a sea of white ahead. Finally we broke through the misty clouds and I saw the rocky area. Nearly there. The track headed over a small knoll and I was there, back on terra firma. As the rest of the rope team neared the rock, John tried to short cut the end of the rope and disappeared from sight, falling into a crevasse. He should have known that there are always crevasses at the end of glaciers. No rescue was required as we pulled him out ourselves. Everyone eventually reached terra firma. We un-roped, removed crampons and headed across the rocks. Most of the snow from the night had melted as we scrambled down to reach the Refugio at 12:30 p.m. As we reached the hut we are greeted by Otto with celebratory handshakes. It had taken us 11.5 hours to climb and return. (8.5 up and 3 down).

The climb was over and it was time to leave the Refugio on Cayambe. We packed up and headed out. The plan was for us to start hiking down while Otto drove our packs, Marcia and Katy, who was suffering from the altitude, in the Land Rover to the bus at the switchback. We would all meet up and continue down on the bus. Whilst it had been snowing on the mountain, it has been raining below the hut and when we arrived at the switchback all that was there was John. How did he get there? Snuck a ride the cheeky bastard. But more importantly, where was the bus? where was the Land rover? We would soon discover that due to the rain, the bus had been unable to make it up the road and the folks in the Land Rover had gone off to try and locate it.

The rest of us continued to walk down. After a couple of hours, the land rover reappeared. We were saved, but there were so many of us. The Kiwi/Canadian team had joined up with us on the jaunt down the mountain, as the transport they

had arranged previously had also been unable to make it up the mountain. There were 12 people including Benno who was driving, and four full packs. It appeared that two trips would be required. Benno would have nothing of it. We could all fit he said, suggesting people hang on to ladders, sit on the hood – whatever it took. Well we were successful in cramming (kind of like one of those 1960's VW Beetle photo shoots) all aboard. With four packs and three of us on the roof, the rest of us piled inside and we headed down, not knowing how far we would have to drive. Benno said the walk would have been at least 3 hours in good conditions, which the road was not. The folks on top got a great view. As for those of us inside – well to say we got to know each other is a bit of an understatement. It ended up taking 45 minutes to get down, including two evac's of the car to avoid a rollover on the muddy narrow track/road. The road was completely different with the rains, so much washed away.

We arrived at the bus and discovered the driver Carlos had wrecked the mirror, muffler and windshield wipers in his attempt to get to us, but the bus still worked. We piled on, all except Katy who would head back to Quito with Benno to recover from her altitude sickness and hopefully join us later.

After a couple of days rest in Cienega, the next challenge that awaited was Cotopaxi. We packed the bus with our gear and waited on board for our driver, Carlos. Carlos, stumbled up to the bus as drunk as a skunk, and maybe even a bit beyond that. He couldn't even stand. There was no way he could drive the bus, let alone climb the stairs onto the bus. The taxi driver who had brought Carlos to the Hospedajai from his home town had volunteered to drive the bus. So off we went with our substitute driver. Unfortunately the taxi driver hadn't driven a bus in ten years and it showed. Ten minutes to find reverse, driving and grinding the gears for about ten kilometres we were going slower than the local logging trucks. We were in trouble. The next thing we noticed was a strange burning smell, and it wasn't the exhaust. Unbelievable – the emergency brake had been on the entire time. We pulled the bus over, and Matt tried to flag down another bus to help us. He finally succeeded in relieving the emergency brake,

but with Carlos still three sheets to the wind and the taxi driver having demonstrated less bus driving skills than I think I might have had, a decision was made. We negotiated for two pickups at a local bus area for \$20 each. We were off again.

Cotopaxi is located in a national park, full of California fir trees (imported in the first half of the century). The tragedy is that little research was done prior to planting these trees. They are now diseased with an orange fungus and are being cut down to at least salvage the wood. We drove into the park, four people in the back of each pickup. The cover across the back of the pickup, protected us from the elements but also introduced a good build-up of carbon monoxide and other gas fumes. Upwards we drove until we came to a lake. Once filling the entire area (80 years ago) the lake had formed from the glaciers atop a now extinct volcano sitting just to the north of Cotopaxi. The volcano is now completely devoid of any glacier and as a result the lake had shrunk to just a shadow of its former self. The weather was a constant rain which we would see the effects of later that night. As we continued we drove through barren fields shrouded with boulders. These boulders were remnants of the previous eruptions and their subsequent snow, ice and mud flows. In fact, rocks from a prior eruption of Cotopaxi have been found on the Ecuadorian coast 100's of km away to the west. We eventually arrived at the trail head.

All geared up we headed up the trail and forty minutes later we were at the Refugio. Not as spacious as Cayambe but functional. The Refugio can hold upwards of 100 people and we would have about 70 on this day. We sat around chatting, drinking tea and hot chocolate, and finally getting a few glimpses of the summit. "That doesn't look that far" we would say, but little did we know! A pasta dinner, a small discussion about the route then a couple of hours sleep. Next thing we knew it was midnight. Outside the weather was snow, wind and around -8°.

We started at 1 am and the snow had stopped. A layer of clouds covered the horizon but the weather looked pretty good to start. With the amount of people in the hut earlier, we knew there would be a lot of people on the mountain this

night. We were the second to last group to leave. Headlamps on, we climbed up the west ridge....Climbing for 30-45 minutes we came upon a larger group of climbers. They were in the process of putting on crampons, getting gear ready and milling around. John, leading our three rope teams, would have nothing of this and blazed a new trail off to the right. It went straight through their line and we followed in tow. No crampons required at this point in time, the snow was too fluffy! We would see most of these teams waiting at the bottom of the headwall later that morning, as we descended. Onward we travelled. We would stop later only spending a short time to put on crampons and rope up. We travelled up through the maze of crevasses and seracs, crossing many a small snow bridge along the way. Once through the maze, we noticed the stars began to appear, the clouds were moving out. But with the stars came the winds, gusting anywhere between 60-100 km/hr. I was warm enough in my core, but my toes on the right foot were getting cold and I would worry about them for the next two to three hours until the sun rose. The next segment would be a snowfield where we soon discovered what the rest of the climb would be like. At least 30 cm of snow and high winds.

It would be a thirty-minute struggle until we reached the protection of a sheltered crevasse. Here we met Benno and Otto who had started out a good hour before us. They were both in good spirits. We would rest in this sheltered spot for close to twenty minutes. As I sat there in the dark, atop my pack, I was mentally drained from the snowfield below. My toes were cold and the calm from the wind was enough to relax me, dangerously close to sleep. I soon realized why people say freezing to death is a peaceful way to die. There would be no struggle, just a slow movement into unconsciousness. I shook myself awake and began occupying my mind to wake myself back up. We rested there for 20 minutes and no other party passed. Although in comparison to a usual climb on Cotopaxi we were not overly fast, on this day given the weather conditions, we were making good time.

We climbed out of the crevasse and back into the wind. Its velocity had not diminished in the last 20 minutes and I was glad I'd decided to

keep my down jacket on. The light of the morning was beginning to appear. We encountered a number of large crevasses and searched for bridges to cross. The snow continued to be deep and made for a difficult slog. Having crossed the last of the crevasses, we arrive at the headwall. This meant only 200 m to go, but it would be a tough 200 m. The snow accumulation from the storm was a good 50 cm (although Tim would later dispute this number saying it was closer to 150 cm. This coming after he scrambled his way up to the ledge on all four's. Tim would try to convince us that this was a new climbing technique called "the grovel". Eyewitness accounts from his brother Eric indicated he cried like a wee schoolgirl, with tears rolling down his red cheeks. However, such comments went uncorroborated.

Matt slogged on through the snow, breaking trail for our rope team with Brian and myself following. Later in discussions with Brian I would discover that we had similar thoughts at this point "we're close enough, do we really need to go all the way?" and "I went to hell today and it was windy, cold and white with ice and snow"! However, we persevered and using the various techniques: French, American and "Grovel" we made it to the ledge and a well deserved rest once again. Damn was this exhausting! Onwards we went around the hump to the final steep climb of about sixty degree ice. This lasted for about 10 m and then gradually decreased onto the summit cap. Two teams that were ahead of us from the start were down climbing the final section, as they returned from the summit. We endured the showers of ice chips as they descended and our fellow climbers ascended before us. Upon our descent, the log jam in this area would look like the Hilary step on an Everest summit day. So we were glad to be ahead of these groups. We had now completed the final wall and the summit lay just ahead in the clouds, or so we thought. We slogged on, the snow still deep and tough, our minds exhausted and light nausea in our stomachs. Matt told us this would be the summit, but how could he know as this was his first attempt on Cotopaxi. He was wrong and I knew it as soon as John on the other rope disappeared into the clouds. It would be another 10 minutes but we would finally make

the summit at 6:50 am – just under six hours. When asked how he was, Brian responded "I've felt better"! Once again no jubilant celebration, just some summit photos. There was no view, the clouds surrounded us like they had on Cayambe. We wouldn't even realize until we saw another photo of the summit that just to our left was the circular crater of Cotopaxi. So close, yet we never realized it.

We arrived back at the 60 degree wall and down climbed with a number of teams resting at the bottom. Some would succeed and others would turn back. It sure was a lot easier going down than up. As we continued the descent, Brian and I were both exhausted, and fell and floundered like rag dolls making a complete FUBAR of the situation. Luckily it was nice soft snow and no open crevasses at this point. We passed a team performing the "grovel" just to our "skiers left". They were so exhausted they couldn't even laugh at the goofy antics of Brian and myself. When we arrived back at the crevasse in which we sought refuge on the way up, the wind had shifted and now it howled through the crevasse, so we decided to continue on. The shift in the wind would begin to clear the rest of the clouds and give us some great views for the rest of the descent. Then, with the clouds gone, the sun appeared. The sun would thaw my toes and feeling would return. We made our way through the seracs and crevasses taking ample time to stop and enjoy the view. The light was great so why not shoot a roll of film? Eventually we made the top of the snowfield above the Refugio. Now in much better spirits we removed crampons and ropes and had some fun on the final section to the Refugio. Eight hours in total to summit and return. For me it was the hardest thing I had ever physically done. Twice in one week and I call this a vacation? What lay ahead on Chimborazo?

We packed up, and headed on down to the trailhead. Carlos was back at the helm, apologetic for his previous behaviour. We accepted his apologies as we didn't want him to drive us off a cliff in a moment of suicidal madness. Back to Ceinega we went to rest and eat, until Monday when we would travel further south to another Hacienda called L'Estacion located on the eastern flank of Chimborazo.



Sunset on Cotopaxi. Photo - P. Hawman.



Icefall on Cotopaxi. Photo - P. Hawman.

We arrived at L'Estacion, a small hospedaje, converted from a train station at the foot of Chimborazo. Upon arrival we were greeted by the "inn keeper" and one of the cutest little puppies we had seen. He would become everyone's best friend over the next couple of days. I wandered around with the puppy outside but the rain began to fall again and I retreated inside. This was no



The route up Chimborazo. Photo - P. Hawman.

different than nearly every other day here in Ecuador, quite unusual for this time of year.

Inside, the fire burned ferociously, drying gloves, socks and boot liners that were still feeling the effects of Cotopaxi. We retired to the loft. Time for a good sleep prior to our trip up to the hut on Chimborazo. After about an hour of sleep, I realized I was being inflicted with Chinese water torture from above. Opening my eyes I felt a splash of water hit my forehead. Was I dreaming? And then another drop, no this was no dream. The rains

had found a leaky roof and thus the water torture. Luckily another bed was available and an evacuation was necessary. Then and only then did a good night's sleep arrive.

We awoke late on Dec. 7th. This would be our first day to attempt to summit Chimborazo. But first we would need to travel up to the Refugio, probably a couple of hours. The land around "Chimbo" has become arid and less vegetation was apparent. The sprawls of Eucalyptus were far and few between. Eventually we entered the area engulfed by the base of the mountain. This was home to little except some pampas, a few vicuñas and a lot of volcanic rock. Suddenly, Carlos pulled the bus over and opened up the engine – over heating? Fan belts, transmission, what? It was soon discovered that the fan belt had broken. "I will now make up for Saturday" Carlos proclaimed as in he dived. After 25 minutes, he reappeared covered in grease, but the engine was fixed. Forty minutes later we arrived at the lower Refugio and prepared to hike to the upper Refugio at 5000 m. This would take about thirty minutes, through a snowstorm "I hope the weather improves because I don't want to slog though snow like on Cotopaxi" proclaimed one of the group. "Hear, hear!" proclaimed the rest of us. We arrived, and the snow did stop. It was time for some chow and next we knew it was 11 p.m. Off by midnight.

As we left the Refugio, the stars were shining and the air was crisp. It had stopped snowing before sunset and the wind had dropped. With such a clear night we would climb without our headlamps through the rockfield, using the light of the stars. Brian, Otto and Benno, who left about an hour earlier, would comment how they could hear us coming but not see us, which was somewhat spooky. The rock field was covered with a thin layer of snow and took about an hour and a half to traverse, quietly crossing the rock fall to reach the "corridor". Here we put on our crampons and roped up. The climbing was steep, but the snow was crisp and we were able to pass across the corridor and up the snow slope to the Castilla, arriving after two and a half-hours. (5500 m.)

The next section felt like an endless slog up the snow ridge – 45° travel for 100m and then a

ledge, and then repeating the same again, and again and again. At about 5800 m Marcia decided to turn back, not feeling 100%. She roped up with one of the guides and they headed back down. We continued on and as we hit 6000 m, I lost it! Mentally that is. I didn't want to go on, and said I should go down. There was no reason for it. I was feeling physically strong, but mentally I had set a goal of 6000 m and it was as though I was afraid to go beyond. Why, I didn't know. It's like I felt I was leaving my comfort zone. Benno said I was physically strong and I knew it was mental. I knew I had to change that. Break the barrier, so I got mad at the mountain, Initially, With every step I would slam my ice axe into the snow, swearing and cursing at this mountain, and eventually it passed. My mind improved as we come upon the first summit, Ventimilla and from here we could see our goal. The top of Chimborazo is enormous with a number of summit bumps around the now extinct crater. We set our packs down upon the Ventimilla summit and made the thirty minute traverse to the main summit. As I approached the true summit I had a real sense of goal accomplishment. I had resigned at 6000 m. and it was an achievement to make it this far. This was greater than making the summit itself. We finished the traverse and reached the summit at 8:30 am – 6310 m in the sun above a blanket of white clouds. Due to its geographic location and the shape of planet earth, the summit of Chimborazo is the furthest point from the center of the earth. [Ed's comment – some argue that Huascarán is further].

We began the descent; I was leading the rope team down. Otto described my leading skills as a "bull in the china shop". Straight down we went. We passed a couple of climbers on the way up. They were part of a team that was collecting summit core samples. They had set up a camp on the Castilla, and one on the summit. Downward we went, the consistency of the snow changing to mush in the morning sun. Plunge stepping our way down we made it to the rock-fall without incident. Through the rock-fall and we were back on the moraine approached to the hut.

The next day, we returned to Quito and headed out for a scrumptious meal at the Thai restaurant. A few Caiparini, a couple of Pilsners,

a few games of pool, some black sludge, a shot of Tequila, a visit to the casino and the evening was over. All in all, too much alcohol and a 3:30 am finish.

Saturday was my last day in Quito, and good old South America didn't disappoint even upon leaving. I was on a different flight to all my other climbers, but luckily as I checked in at the airport, I met up with a couple of fellow travellers and we adjourned to the bar until the flight was called. Finally it was time to board our flight. We were last to arrive to the stairs, since we had been finishing our drinks in the bar. Needless to say we were not the cause of the delay. As we reached the top of the stairs and entered the plane, the airline decided they were going to use another plane that was parked adjacent to ours. So it was back down the stairs for the 100+ passengers and onto the little shuttle bus to travel to the other plane. All of 100 m away. The pilot walked faster than we drove, I might add. We boarded and took off for Guayaquil to pick up some more passengers, before turning north and heading back to Houston. The flight time to Guayaquil, was about 30 minutes, which made my nine hour bus ride at the beginning of the trip seem even longer than it actually had been. In Guayaquil the last passenger to get on was a frail old man who they brought on in a wheelchair – fit to fly I thought? Less than an hour after take-off, the captain informed us that we would be making a medical emergency landing in Panama. That's right! – the guy was not fit to fly.

Landing in Panama at 2:30 am, they wheeled the guy and two others off the flight and informed us that we could not take off until they received more oxygen bottles. Well mysteriously it took three hours to get more oxygen – about the same time dawn broke. Coincidence? I think it was more likely that there was no one in the control tower to get us off the ground. Off we went again with many unhappy passengers who had now missed their connections. This was then exacerbated when we arrived at Houston and had to circle in a holding pattern for about an hour. So my five-hour layover in Houston turned in to an immediate turn-around. The final leg home was uneventful and consisted of a soggy meal and a bad movie.

Trekking the Yosemite wilderness

August 2005

by Alice Purdey

Yosemite. The word tugs at the hearts of climbers and conjures up visions of Half Dome, El Cap, sheer granite walls and bluebird skies. But there is much more to Yosemite than this; the extensive Yosemite Wilderness is laced with trails that give access to little-visited areas.

It all started at an annual VOC old timers' gathering when Barry showed pictures of a semi-supported trek he did with Clao Styron, active BCMC'er and editor in the 1970s and now California desert rat. Thus, Fred Douglas and I happily reconnected with Clao.

There are four ways to gain the required wilderness permit: reserve a space on one of the many access trails, show up and take a chance on getting a first-come permit dispensed on a daily basis, pay for a fully supported, commercial trek and stay at seasonal High Sierra Camps, or win the 'grubstake' lottery that allows you eat (prepaid) at the various High Sierra mess tents but otherwise camp and travel independently, without the burden of food and kitchen gear. Clao won the lottery last year and this is how she and Barry travelled. Then she won again and this is how Fred and I began planning to go. A record-heavy snow pack in the high country, however, resulted in the company cancelling its camps, leaving us with a plane ticket but without a wilderness permit. We decided to chance getting a permit and set off from Clao's home (~30 m elevation), via the Amtrak system (BART, two buses and a train), to Yosemite Valley (1200 m) with heavy packs lightened by optimism. And we got lucky. Not only did we get the access trail we wanted, in a round-about sort of way, but there was a bus leaving in a few hours to Tuolumne Meadows (2100 m), our trail-head. So we rented the mandatory bear-proof food canisters (1.2 kg ea) and repacked our week's grub into three of them, adding the additional weight onto our groaning backs.

Day One was a killer, though (mainly) an enjoyable one. It began with about 8 km of meadow walk beside a babbling brook (Lyell Fork), browsing deer, nodding wildflowers and



Lyell Ck., Tuolumne Meadows. Photo - A. Purdey.



West Hutching Ck. and Mt. Lyell. Photo - A. Purdey.

hikers completing their John Muir trail trek. At Ireland Creek we left the 'traffic' for a 7 km ascent through open pine forest and another long walk through meadows studded with mini paintbrush and lupines; we passed the large, High Sierra commercial campsite and at last (!) settled for the night near Vogelsang Lake (3100 m). We had been assured that it didn't rain here so travelled with bivvy sac and a tarp – on the off chance of a thunder storm – and were prompted

(unnecessarily) to hang the tarp by our wet-coast instincts on watching rain approach from the distance. The next day we dropped our packs in the nearby pass and enjoyed a scramble up the east face of Vogelsang Peak (3500 m) on good rock. We easily identified Half Dome from the summit, a focal point in most of our future views as it turned out. We then descended through piney woods, paralleling Lewis Creek, until veering onto a southeasterly branch and leaving one quiet trail for an even quieter one. We bedded down in woods full of boulders, not far from an apparent horse camp.

The trails in Yosemite Wilderness were originally made and used by the U.S. Cavalry when they were pressed into service to evict shepherds and their flocks after the Wilderness formally became a protected area (1896). This, of course, was the result of many years of work and lobbying led by John Muir. The trails continue to be used by horses and mules packing in park supplies and carrying tourists. While trails are generally in excellent condition, stream crossings are not organized for hikers.

Day three was short (yeah!). We hiked about 8 km across a mainly sandy, forested bench before heading cross-country on an endless, glacier-smoothed surface of granite. Think of a laid back version of the Squamish Chief's Apron, and magnify its extent almost beyond imagination. This is what much of the area looks like. We camped near "west" Hutching Creek where granite and forest meet. Some giant trees thrive rooted in mere cracks, fat trunks bulging onto rock like fat over a belt. The young Lyell Fork creek, recently born of surrounding mountains, here meanders through bright green marshes that attract deer, fish and plenty of mosquitoes. The following day we headed to Mt. Florence (3830 m), in turn ascending sculpted sheets of granite

with large erratics, meadowlets of colourful flowers, slopes of small boulders then enormous boulders, a grassy basin then finally a slope of chaotic boulders to the summit. Yep ~ there was Half Dome to the west with a perfect Ansel Adams moon hanging above it. Records in the cairn tube dating back to 1982 seem to indicate that most ascents are done by rangers and trail crew.

Day Five found us crossing Lyell Fork, in a much more vigorous stage of its life, over a fortuitous, fallen log then ascending 300 m to another forested bench. The trail then undulated up and down in a southerly direction, gradually losing about 300 m, turning westerly, crossing Triple Creek Fork, then rising again about 365 m to a beautiful sub alpine area of heather, brooks and tarns. There were marmots in the meadows, darker brown than the B.C. variety, with a rusty coloured tail and they seemed quieter, too – at least we never heard the familiar whistle. We camped here at 3050 m, close to the brilliant stars. Sunrise the next morning cast the earth's shadow onto the sky, darkening the mauve shading of pre-dawn light. Our trail continued across a slabby, rocky, meadowy bench, gradually ascending 335 m to well-named Red Peak Pass for all the red rock. The narrow col is guarded by a steep approach on both sides. Crew, however, have built a luxurious, multi-switch backed trail in which well placed rocks are packed with sand and secured with quality, rock retaining walls. At the col, we met a mutually surprised couple there to mark and reminisce a hike of 35 years ago. They showed us a black and white photo taken at that time when heavy sideburns and long hair were in vogue.



Fred approaching Red Pk. summit. Photo - A. Purdey.



Alice and Ottoway Lake. Photo - F. Douglas.

While this couple descended, Fred and I ascended Red Peak (3566 m) via a large snow patch to the east then through fractured rock to the summit where someone has scooped out a roomy basin. We descended to beautiful and peaceful Ottoway Lake (2950 m) for a lazy afternoon.

Fred made an early start on day seven for a solo ascent of Mt. Merced (3574 m). From the col and ridge crest south of Upper Ottoway Lake he scrambled across the upper south face to the summit. He followed an easier route back to the col. We set out by mid morning, again traipsing over broad, forested benches and through stretches of fairly recent burn. Since leaving the John Muir trail on Day One, we had met perhaps one or two parties per day; but the trail population began to increase as we got within a day or so of "out" and onto a more well used trail. Only on the first night (party of three), and now on this last night (one person and one casual, three-point buck deer), did we have campsite neighbours. Our final day took us along sandy trails through an extensive burn of standing and fallen trees that artistically caught and reflected charcoal light. Gradually, various Valley Domes popped into view. By noon we reached a major junction at a pass where we met several parties. The trail doubled in width and descended to join a popular day-hike loop. The closer we got to trail's end, the more people we met carrying their loads permanently on their bellies. Arriving at the Happy centre we happily boarded the Valley Shuttle Bus to the backpackers' campground for one last night under the trees and stars.

Travelling independently gave us a freedom to wander that would not have been possible had we been tied to the commercial venture, though our packs would have been considerably lighter and we could have had Clao's companionship. A recommended destination - different from B.C. and not a drop of rain.

3. IN AND AROUND B.C. Southern Coast Mountains/Cascades

Alpine Lakes – Enchantments
20-25 August, 2005
by Julia Borchardt

Preparation

Preparation for this trip started in early February. Permits for the Enchantments are notoriously hard to get and the allocation system gets tougher and more exclusive every year. So I timed my application to arrive on the first day they were accepting them and enclosed a letter, shamelessly begging and pleading the all powerful staff at the Leavenworth ranger station to hear my prayers and award me the 6 permits I was asking for. Getting permits is one thing. Getting permits for the dates and areas you're requesting requires nothing short of divine intervention. I sold my soul, and I waited.

I had spent 4 days in the Enchantments the previous September but the weather had been truly horrible with only one 4 hour window of sunshine. Being too cold, wet and miserable to fight with my water filter, I had foolishly drank right out of one of the lakes the last day. I paid for it for the next month as I battled Giardia. The trip had been a bust but the intoxicating beauty of the area had not escaped me, even when veiled in clouds and blanketed by snow. I couldn't wait to go back.

I had 4 people already committed before I sent off for the permits and was pretty confident I could fill two more spots by putting the trip on the BCMC calendar so I asked for 6 permits. Much to my delight, I received permits for the exact dates and places I had asked for. This was to be the first of many strokes of luck.

The trip filled up almost immediately but 3 weeks before, Telus went on strike and we lost two people. I had no trouble finding people willing to take their spots but it wasn't until about a week before our departure date that everything was nailed down. The final team consisted of Marian, Quirine, Tai, Mike, Jason, and me.

Jason was coming on the condition that I climb Prusik Peak with him. Since we'd never climbed anything together, it seemed prudent to at least do one warm up climb before we left to make sure we worked well together. I also wanted to make sure that he was comfortable with my ability and skills. I had been sport climbing for many years but had very little trad climbing experience. On Monday we descended upon Deidre, a classic 5.7 multipitch route in Squamish. It was obvious from about 5 minutes in that we

made an awesome climbing team. I led the 5th pitch which was my first notable trad lead. I never expected to lead on Prusik but it seemed like a good idea to at least have a little experience... just in case. After a great climb, we stopped for a bite to eat and more trip planning.

Day 1

Our adventure began with a 2 am meeting time. The team convened at Marian's house in Steveston for a group packing session. We had so much community gear it just made sense to dump it all on the floor and pack together. We quickly realized that we had about 14 kg of chocolate between us. This was going to be a great trip!

We piled into Tai's truck and Marian's CRV and were on the road by 3:20am, planning to stop at a gas station to fuel up on caffeine. Within about 4 minutes we had lost each other. Fortunately we had agreed to meet again once through the border so we hooked up again there. Thankfully, the border guard did not feel compelled to unpack our beautifully packed backpacks and we breezed through with no trouble.

We pulled into Leavenworth just after 7am. We had to stop at the Ranger Station to pick up our permits. They had also thrown in free parking passes which was ultra cool of them. You need an annual pass or parking permits in order to park at the trailhead. My annual pass had expired and there was nowhere open to purchase them at that hour of the morning so the rangers had kindly thrown in two free passes after a panicked phone call the day before. Then it was off to Sandy's Waffle House to carb load and inflict our excited sillies on the rest of the early morning breakfast crowd.

Since we'd done such an exceptional packing job at Marian's, there was relatively little messing about at the trailhead. My pack was heavier than it had ever been between the usual gear and food one needs for 5 days and the climbing gear Jason and I were sharing, but it was manageable as long as I had someone to pull me into a standing position. I wish we'd had a scale but I would estimate I had close to 30 kg and Jason's was probably well over 35 kg. After a few visits to a particularly smelly outhouse and

the token group shot at the trailhead, we were on our way at the respectable hour of 9:32 am.

The trail to Colchuck Lake is well graded and pleasant the whole way. We took several breaks along the way as we were in no hurry and wanted to conserve our energy for the dreaded Aasgard Pass which is a 700 m climb in less than 1.2 km. A bachelor party came upon us during one of these breaks where we were busy with the first of many very silly photo shoots. The girls posed with the groom since his friends were obviously too cheap to take him to Vegas for the weekend or even to a strip bar.

Tai had not slept at all before our early morning departure and had only been back from another extended backpacking trip for 2 days so he was feeling the pain of no sleep and a heavy pack. He managed to stumble and pull a muscle which wasn't helping matters. We were in no rush as we had allowed up to 12 hours to get to camp so we could all go at our own pace. Radios made communication easy as we made our way up to the lake.

Spectacular Colchuck Lake presented itself at 1:15 with its turquoise waters nestled at the base of Dragontail's famed Serpentine Arête route, the Enchantment range's precipitous cliffs, the steep, icy Colchuck glacier and the lush green forest that flanks its western shores. It took about an hour to make our way around to the south end of the lake. I had conveniently forgotten about the big boulder field we had to traverse before we could ditch the packs and enjoy a lunch break on the sandy beach at the base of our nemesis, Aasgard Pass.

Lunch was a light hearted, leisurely affair. Tai was not looking like a man who was ready to haul a heavy pack up Aasgard Pass so when he wasn't looking, I pillaged his pack and divvied up the spoils between Jason and I. Tai was so exhausted he didn't even notice. This was key to the success of the mission because had he noticed he would have insisted on carrying it all himself.

The weather was perfect and it required a great deal of willpower to remove my ass from the sandy beach and get cracking. Jason and I needed a bit of a head start on the hill ahead of us so we started off slightly ahead of the rest of the group at 3:15. For some reason, the first quarter



Charlie's Angels en route to Colchuk Lake. Photo - J. Brawn.

of Aasgard was the worst. Maybe we just didn't wait long enough after eating but we were both fighting off waves of nausea. My head was pounding and Jason was overheating like a furnace. We had made the first big clump of trees our goal and it was with precious little energy reserves left that we stumbled into our first rest stop. Mercifully there was a waterfall about 6 m off the trail where we were able to cool off. Mike and Marian joined us shortly and we all flaked out on the rocks for a while. My waist belt was not helping with my nausea so I dug out my camp towel which I used for extra padding when I at last decided to get moving again. That helped a lot and I was able to get a better rhythm going for the rest of the climb.

With my tummy padded and my baseball hat pouring icy cold water down my head, we set off again. I decided it was time for my secret weapon, so I fished out my mp3 player. What a difference a little heavy metal can make! I found I was able to just get into a zone and march. With AC/DC, Van Halen, Bon Jovi, Guns and Roses and a few other old friends I was able to rock my way up and over the top at a pace that quite surprised me. It took me 3 ½ hours to get up Aasgard. Once at the top, I did my best to convey my elation and awe at what was unfolding before me to the group still trudging up the pass in hopes of giving them a little energy boost. I then extricated myself from my pack and just soaked it all in.



Julia napping part way up Aasgard Pass. Photo - J. Brawn.

What a difference from last year! The last time I had been up here it had started snowing halfway up Aasgard so the Upper Enchantments had been a winter wonderland. This time there wasn't a flake of snow to be found. Even the glaciers were down to their bare icy bones. I had been able to see the Dragontail glacier from part way up Aasgard but had not even recognized it.

The Upper Enchantments basin is a barren, rocky place dotted with sparkling blue green lakes, surrounded by majestic, rugged, tantalizing peaks. It really does feel like a whole 'nother world up there. The other thing it is famous for is wind, a fact I was soon reminded of as I sat quickly

cooling off on my rocky perch. I was willing everyone else to join me as I was more excited about sharing it with them than I was about seeing it myself this time. Before long, Mike, Jason and Marian topped out and the oing and aahing began. Q and Tai were about 45 minutes behind and we stayed in radio contact with them. After such a steep climb, we practically skipped along the trail in search of the perfect camp site.

Our perfect camp site revealed itself about 20 minutes later at 7:10 pm in a big flat sandy spot overlooking one of the many lakes, nestled up against a large band of rock which afforded some protection from the wind. A waterfall provided the mood music as we quickly went about setting up camp. We weren't 10 minutes into the task when the neighbors, Momma and Baby Goat came by for a visit and all camp chores ground to a halt. I had spent 4 days up here last year without seeing a single goat so you can't imagine how excited I was. Jason went into full on National Geographic Photographer mode, capturing what was to be the first of many encounters with our woolly white friends. We were willing Tai and Q to hurry along so they could see them but the goats wandered off before they arrived. About 10 minutes later however, we got an excited call on the radio from them. Apparently Momma and Baby had decided to go greet them too.

With all the campers safely and happily in camp, we were ready for dinner! Jason had been promising something spectacular and we were not disappointed when he pulled about 6 kg of

food out of his pack. Tortillas, veggie ground beef, rice, organic bell peppers, cheese.....who'da think it? Burritos for our first night in camp! How decadent! Dinner was magnificent and much appreciated by all. The moon was rising now and put on quite a show for us, glowing bright orange/red. I tried to snap some pictures but my camera wasn't having any of it. Jason was happily snapping away though so I left him to the task, went to pee on a rock (they ask you to pee on the rocks because the goats love the salt in urine and will tear up any ground you pee on) and brush my teeth. It was a beautiful night but I was too tired to spend any more time watching the sky so I just crawled into my cozy sleeping bag and went to sleep, dreaming of our adventure to come the next day.....Dragontail and Colchuck peaks!

Day 2

We had set the alarm for 8 but we were all up before then. Once the sun hits the tent it's hard to go back to sleep. It had been a very windy night and I was glad to have packed my earplugs. I was sleeping with my pack beside me and every so often it would roll over on to me as the wind put the tent to the test.

It was a beautiful day and I could see the Dragontail glacier from the door of my tent. I had attempted Dragontail solo last year but had been turned back by winter conditions so I was anxious to finish the job. I had to admit that the glacier looked impossibly steep but I knew it couldn't be as bad as it looked as it was a well known scramble route.

The first order of business was to retrieve the food. Keeping food away from goats above the treeline is interesting. The key is to find a drop off that is too steep even for goats and to hang your food over it. Fortunately there was such a drop right above the 'kitchen' area of our camp site. The food bags certainly took a beating being dragged up and down this small cliff at least twice a day though.

We were back on the trail at the crack of 10:30. We had some business to attend to on the way and were very happy to find that the local potty was not in fact locked as had been earlier reported. There were two containers awaiting airlift that had been mistaken for the toilet but further



Inspiration Lake en route to Prusik Pk. Photo - J. Brawn.

inspection revealed a lovely little wooden toilet hidden in the scant brush. Aaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh much better!

We hit the trail again and hung a left at Aasgard Pass. Scrambling over huge boulders and rocky cliff bands brought us up close and personal with the Dragontail glacier. At this point, Tai decided that he'd had enough and would make a better base camp manager than climber. He was exhausted from the day before. Since we had not covered any particularly treacherous terrain to this point we decided that he'd be ok heading back to camp on his own. We gave him a radio and agreed to touch base when he got back on to the trail, and then every hour on the hour.

The sun was warming up the glacier and small rocks were coming down at regular intervals. We quickly realized that this was not the best time of year to be doing this. The closer we got the less steep the glacier became. The only real concern was the rock fall. Up to now it had only been small rocks but there was a huge pile of giant rocks perched precariously at the top of the glacier. This was where the small rocks came from so it was a little disconcerting to know that we were going to have to travel directly below it. We studied the problem at length and in the end, picked a line that would allow us to travel quickly and give us the most warning if anything above came down. The first move was to take shelter under a large boulder where we would put our crampons on and get our ice axes off the packs. We moved one by one with the rest of the group watching for rock fall and soon the 5 of us had



Dragontail Glacier. Photo - J. Brawn.

reached the boulder. We had just removed our packs when the rumbling started. Marian screamed "ROCK!" and everyone scrambled to ensure that they were protected. I couldn't see the rest of the group as I was tucked safely around the other side of the rock under a lovely little overhanging section. As the first rock came crashing down I shoved my pack out of my way and burrowed as deep into my little cave as I could get. I was then able to turn around and watch as the next rock came down. The ground was shaking and the air was filled with the rumbling of the rocks rolling down the steep glacier and the 'pop' and 'bang' as they hit other rocks. The rock we were under became a launch pad and I watched with shocked disbelief as a rock the size of a love seat bounced off of the roof of my cave, and spun in the air about 2 m above me like it was a football. Debris trailed out behind it like a shooting star as it rose in a gravity defying arch before resuming its course down the mountain. My heart was pounding as adrenaline coursed through my body and I remember thinking "when is it going to end?" as the third large rock headed towards us. I didn't see this one but felt it hit the top of or hiding spot. Q was yelling "FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!" I couldn't see him but apparently one of the rocks bounced about 1.5 m behind Mike as he was ducking for cover. Finally the rumbling and banging subsided, easing off as the smaller rocks and debris cascaded down. Finally it was over. Someone was yelling to me and I shouted back 'SAFE!' I could hear everyone's voices and breathed a sigh of relief that everyone was ok. Everyone instinctively stayed put, waiting for any 'aftershocks' to come down. Q's eagle eyes noticed a flash from far below and wondered aloud if someone was signaling us. I immediately remembered Tai and realized that if he had just seen what had happened he must be freaking out. I jumped on the radio as fast as I could to tell him 'we're ok!' He had seen the whole thing, watching helplessly as the rock came down on us but couldn't see well enough to know if we were safe.

Once the adrenaline started to wear off I quickly realized that all I wanted to do was to get everyone the hell out of here. We exited stage right, one at a time, using the same method we'd used to get under the boulder in the first place. Once

safe, I broke out the pharmacy and attended to Q's leg gash while Mike attended to his own battle wounds. They had both banged themselves up while diving for shelter.

Just then, two climbers appeared at the top of the glacier. They had obviously come up Colchuck and were planning to descend the Dragontail glacier. They say things happen for a reason and it was spooky to think what might have happened had we not been there to warn them of the danger. Jason was able to shout to them. "This route is suicide" and that seemed to do the trick. I had spoken with a ranger a few days earlier who had told me about another route which took you down around the back of Little Annapurna so Jason told them to go down that way.

The remarkable cohesion of this particular team shone through in the way we reacted to the situation. Everyone remained calm and worked together to ensure the safety of the group. The rock fall had been one of the most terrifying experiences of my life. Since I didn't know most of this group well, I worried about how they might react. In the end, I had nothing to worry about. I was so proud of everyone. This team seemed to thrive on challenge and adversity and only became closer and stronger as the trip went on.

We spent about 20 minutes sharing our respective perspectives of the experience before we began the scramble back to the trail. Back at camp, I deeply regretted not bringing my little voice recorder as nothing I can ever write in this trip report could ever come close to capturing the moment as perfectly as our real life accounts immediately after. Having Tai's perspective was particularly interesting. Watching had shaken him up pretty badly and brought up some painful memories for him. He was so relieved that we were all safe. As terrifying as the experience had been, I think I speak for all of us when I say that we had never felt so alive.

In hindsight, of course there are things we could have done differently. There really wasn't a safe way to get across that glacier given the weather/time of year. It wasn't even dropping down below freezing at night so an alpine start would not have solved the rock fall problem. The only solution is to do it earlier in the season when there is still a fair amount of snow on the route.

We also should have been quieter so we could have heard what was going on above us more clearly. We did a lot of things right too though which resulted in us all escaping injury and having a great story to tell. Climbing mountains is not without risk no matter how cautious and well prepared you are. We all have an acceptable level of risk. All you can do is mitigate those risks to the best of your ability.

After debriefing and lunch at camp, we decided to give McClellan a go. The beta we had made it look like a reasonable afternoon objective. Tai opted to stay back at camp. I think he was secretly planning to find Mike's cell phone to call his RCMP buddies for a helicopter rescue.

We were overlooking Crystal Lake in no time but the route was not obvious. I eventually realized that we were supposed to have headed south sooner. The route was a steep descent from the base of Little Annapurna down to Crystal Lake about 250 m below. Then we figured it was another 2-3 hours to the top. There just wasn't enough daylight left to get us back up on the trail by dark. The beautiful little lakes of the Upper Enchantment basin were beckoning so we decided to go frolic in them for a while, and then bag Little Annapurna which would also give us the opportunity to scope out the alternate Dragontail route.

The route up Little Annapurna was a blast. If you stay a little to the right of the boot track, you can scramble up on low angle slab most of the way up. The effects of the previous 10 hour day with a brutally heavy pack started to catch up with me and for the first time all trip I didn't feel very strong. Then I remembered that I hadn't had anything to drink since lunch time. I re-hydrated and was feeling much better by the time we reached the summit. Although Little Annapurna is just a walkup mountain, it's still well worth climbing. The views are fantastic and it's really fun to climb up the east side and down the west. We climbed up 'Baby Little Annapurna' too which is just to the west of the true summit. Jason and I goofed around under a cool overhanging rock and looked waaaaaaay down to the nasty gully we would have to ascend en route to Dragontail the next day in order to bypass what had been affectionately named 'the bowling ally' on the



In the upper basin. Photo - J. Brawn collection.

Dragontail glacier.

We meandered along the ridge for a bit hoping to find an alternate route. We did find one we thought would go but would later realize that it wasn't going to work. On the way down to Isolation Lake, Mike, Jason and I came upon a teeny bit of glacier with a tunnel running right through it. That was too much to resist so we all got filthy and wet slithering through it. It was great fun. When we finally made it down to the lake, we stopped for a photo shoot. After much more goofing around and funky ballet moves we started heading back to camp. We would have made it too had a ptarmigan not refused to move from our path. This of course prompted another photo shoot. We were on the move again for less than 5 minutes when another one of these crazy birds nearly got stepped on. It was so nice to have the time to take crazy pictures and terrorize the wildlife. It's really like a playground up there. I could easily spend at least 2 weeks just roaming around.

Day 3

We awoke to a chilly morning with some



Little Annapurna summit. Photo - J. Brawn.

clouds. Not enough to change our plans but enough to be a little worrisome. We had breakfast and packed up as quickly as we could but still got a later than optimal start. Jason and I were planning to climb Prusik and the rest of the team was heading for Enchantment. Enchantment peak is said to have the best view of the rest of the Enchantments basin. The Enchantment crew took off first but we were not far behind them. It was so exciting seeing Jason's reaction as we hiked



Sealhead from Little Annapurna. Photo - J. Brawn.



Prusik Pk. from Gnome Tarn. Photo - J. Brawn.

through the Enchantment basin. It sounds so cliché but it really is a magical place and every step just reveals more and more beauty. We were so enjoying the scenery that we completely missed the turnoff to Prusik. This is particularly embarrassing since I know exactly where it is. Marian put it well when she said “I would have expected a unicorn to pop out at any moment, but I would never have expected Julia and Jason to miss such a well marked turn off.” I’m not sure how much further along we would have wandered had Tai not radioed and snapped us out of it. DUH! We were almost at the end of Spirit Lake. The

turnoff for Prusik is at the end of Perfection Lake and is extremely well marked with a wooden sign and a trail that is practically paved with flat stones. It wasn’t a big deal and I was actually happy to have wandered a little further so Jason could see a little more of the Lower Enchantments area as we were not going to be passing through that way again.

It only took us 15 minutes or so to get back on the right track and soon we were huffing and puffing our way up Prusik Pass. At the top of the pass we dumped our packs and took in the view. I had not been up this way last time so I was happy to check out Shield Lake and Edwards Mesa. We also got our first peek at our route up Cannon Mountain which we were planning to climb on the way out on Wednesday.

After a little scrambling we came to the big balancing rock where we swapped our boots for our rock shoes. Jamming feet that have put the kind of kilometres and elevation on that ours had in the past couple of days into rock shoes was not a pleasant task. Finding the route

proved to be more challenging than we’d anticipated. The more we looked, the more we realized that our beta was woefully inadequate. The wind was picking up and I was re-thinking the wisdom of my wardrobe choices as I shivered in the shade of the dark and looming north face.

We gave up looking for an obvious route and decided to just climb. Jason took off, lamenting the size of his rack. We had to travel light so we couldn’t bring all the pro we would have liked to. Fortunately I have the utmost faith in Jason’s pro placement so I didn’t mind freezing my ass off while he took extra care to ensure that each nut and cam was going to hold in the event of a fall. With Jason leading, the climbing was easy for

me. The rock was very sticky, albeit a bit sharp sometimes. To say Jason's nut placement is solid would be an understatement and this was driven home on the second pitch when no amount of smashing and bashing on my nut tool with a rock would loosen one of the nuts. I hated to leave it behind because we already had such a skinny rack but it wasn't coming out. When I topped out, Jason went back down to give it another try but it wasn't leaving its crack. As he was climbing back up, I noticed something white tucked into a crack and pointed it out. To our extreme delight, it was 4 pages of route beta including diagrams. What were the chances of that?

We soon after pulled ourselves up onto a ledge on the ridge and into the much welcomed sunshine. It felt soooooooo good to warm myself in the sun and get out of the icy wind. In spite of our new found beta, the route still wasn't popping out at us. Jason went on a recon mission that involved a few tricky moves. Convinced that this couldn't possibly be the route, he returned to the ledge, dropped back down the north face, and tried a really scary, nasty traverse. I couldn't see him but his colorful language painted a pretty clear picture. Just then, two climbers who had obviously just finished rapping down came into view. We called out to them and they graciously shared a lot of valuable information with us.

The original scary route was indeed the right route. We were on track and that route beta we had found was theirs. Jason was not at all pleased about down climbing what he had just done but he made it back in one piece. We hopped back up on the ledge and had another look. It was 4:30. There was no way we were going to have time to summit and get down safely before dark and the wind was turning us into climbersicles rather quickly. There really wasn't much choice but we still agonized over the decision for several minutes. We wanted this SO badly but it obviously was not meant to be, so it was with heavy hearts and frozen bodies that we rapped back down to the trail.

By the time we made it back to our boots the wind had reached gale force. I have seriously never experienced anything like it. We cowered under the balancing rock listening to the wind roar around us. Apparently the cold and altitude were

getting to us. The tired sillies took hold with a vengeance as we imagined all the ways in which the resident goat population might help to warm us up. We laughed until we were both clutching our stomachs in pain and tears rolled down my face. After the disappointment of Prusik, it was nice that we could still have a good laugh. As soon as the wind dropped to the point that we could escape without being blown all the way across the Enchantment basin, we scurried back to the trail and started the long hike back to camp.

Dropping down 100 m from Prusik Pass then back up another 200 to our camp went by much more quickly and painlessly than I expected. Perhaps it was just that it felt so good to have circulation in my feet and feeling back in my legs. Or maybe it was just the great company. Jason and I got along like old friends right from the get-go, so hiking with him even after getting spanked on Prusik was still a pleasure. The spectacular scenery helped to ease the pain too.

Before long we were back at camp and chowing down on Black Bart Chili, courtesy of Q and Marian. It was then that we realized that our fuel supply was not at all what we had expected it to be at this time. Jason and I had done the math over and over and we should have had enough fuel to boil 78 liters of water. Our two fuel bottles were feeling uncomfortably light however. So it was with much regret that we decided to forego the mystery dessert Q had planned for us that night. The wind was still howling and no amount of layering could keep out its chill. We really needed to have a group meeting about the next day's plans but it was too cold to continue sitting in our little kitchen area. Q mixed up hot chocolate for everyone and we all huddled in the vestibule of my tent. Then Q did something that ensured that she would be the last person to be voted off.....she brought out a platypus full of Bailey's!

That was the best damn hot chocolate I have ever tasted. But there was an even bigger treat yet to come. We started discussing the plan for the next day. The Dragontail route we had scoped out the day before no longer looked feasible now that we had had a good look at it from up on Prusik. We couldn't get to Colchuck without getting up Dragontail first so that was out too. We could do McClellan, or just poke around exploring and ridge

walking. Jason and I both really wanted to try Prusik again but I had told him I didn't feel comfortable leaving the group again and that it wasn't up to me. I wasn't even comfortable suggesting it. Jason obviously didn't want to bring it up either. It wasn't until pressed by Q that he admitted our desire to have another go at it. No one even hesitated. The decision was unanimous and genuinely enthusiastic. Of COURSE we should try again! I could have kissed everyone. Once again, I was absolutely floored by this wonderful group of people.

We decided to move camp in the morning to put us closer to Cannon which was our objective for day 5. There were several spots we could camp along the way around Perfection, in the meadow at the bottom of Prusik Pass, or, there was a beautiful spot at Gnome Tarn, right at the base of Prusik. We decided to play it by ear and just see how it looked when we got there in the morning. We set the alarm and snuggled into our sleeping bags, warmed by Bailey's and the anticipation of another exciting day ahead.

Day 4

No clouds today! It looked like the weather gods were smiling on us as Jason and I prepared for our second attempt of Prusik Peak. We were all up before 7 am. We had assigned tasks to each team member the night before to ensure a speedy departure. As it turned out, we all ended up doing different things than we'd planned, but it didn't matter because everything got done. Just another example of how seamlessly this team worked together. If something needed doing, it just got done. No tea this morning as we were fuel rationing. Camp was packed up, bellies were filled with oatmeal and we were on the trail by 8:30. It was a very chilly morning so I couldn't bring myself to take off my down jacket before setting off. As expected, I was sweating by the time we dropped down out of the wind.

The day before I had found a toilet with a magnificent view of Prusik so we made that our first stop. It was at Inspiration Lake which was about the half way mark between our old camp and Gnome Tarn which was to be our new camp. The wind was incredible. I was almost able to lean into it without falling over. Brrrrrr! All this time

Jason had been packing his kite around. Surely today would be the day he'd get to fly it! We had a good laugh at the intersection of Prusik Pass, remembering how Jason and I had breezed right past it the day before. Rather than climbing up Prusik Pass today, we would take a hidden trail Jason and I had found on the way down yesterday that would lead us right to Gnome Tarn.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up we came upon a male goat and two babies - the males seem to take a very active role in child care in the goat world. Soon we were on the flat, open, sandy shores of Gnome Tarn. Given the current wind situation, we opted to set up camp up against the rocks which would afford us better wind protection. Tai and Mike, however, sacrificed a good night's sleep to art and pitched their tent in the best location for a night shot of the illuminated tent with Prusik rising up behind it. The standing water in the tarn looked a little dicey so Q and Marian generously offered to bring water up from the river 100 m below. In the end, they hauled up 10 liters each.

Nine goats immediately began doing laps around our camp site. We joked that they were just the recon team and that an army of thousands probably lay in wait. Eventually the goats settled down on a patch of sand beside Tai and Mike's tent. Jason and I decided to take this opportunity to infiltrate the herd in order to learn more about their diabolical plans and in doing so hopefully save the team from certain death. With stealth and cunning we strapped crampons to our heads and descended from our lofty bipedal positions to adopt a more goat like posture. Slowly we began to approach the herd. Our clever disguises afforded us much confidence as we knew we blended in seamlessly with the surrounding ecosystem. In order to establish our dominance, we engaged in a mock battle, butting horns and pawing at the ground. Our dominance in the bag, we approached nearer still, pausing to forage on the rough grass that dotted the landscape. After all the exertion and fiber rich food, I enjoyed a good roll in the gravel.

It was time to put my new goat powers to the test. Prusik wasn't going to climb itself so after chowing down on a quick lunch, Jason and I packed up and began the short hike back to the base of Prusik's dark, cold north face. It was much

colder than the day before but this time we were prepared for it, wearing virtually every stitch of clothing we had. There were two other climbers just starting their first pitch when we arrived at the boot removal station below the balancing rock. They looked to be very off route already but we were hoping that they, in fact, knew something we didn't and that we would be able to follow them up. It quickly became evident that they were even less prepared than we were so we scampered past them and started looking for where we had started climbing yesterday.

It was the strangest thing. I felt like someone had rearranged the face overnight. Nothing looked familiar except for one lonely yellow rap sling. We ended up traversing further along than we needed to but Jason thought he recognized a dihedral mentioned in the route beta so we set up a belay station and he headed up. Seemed like the further up he went, the worse it got. I was very aware of the time and didn't want to have to turn back because we had run out of time so when the going got rough, and then rougher, I encouraged him to sling a flake and come back. We knew we could get up via yesterday's route so I didn't see much sense in continuing up what was obviously not the right route.

After yet another scary downclimb for Jason, we traversed back along the trail and found our original route. The wind just got stronger as Jason headed up. I eventually managed to squeeze myself into a gap that afforded a little bit of shelter. Jason called down that he could bring me up to where he was but I told him to just keep going. I wanted to keep moving with the least amount of screwing around with gear possible. It was a very long pitch and I was frozen solid when Jason shouted that he was safe. I stomped my feet and swung my arms around to get the blood moving again before setting off on my own. I immediately recognized the rock from yesterday and moved as quickly as I could. Happily, all the pro came out relatively easily this time as the rock was very cold and unpleasant to hang on to for any stretch of time. Soon I was up on the ledge with Jason, warming my hands in the sunshine.

During our ascent to the ledge, the other team had decided to turn back. They'd climbed themselves into trouble and were freezing and

had deemed it unsafe to continue in this weather. I was surprised to find Jason seriously giving this sentiment consideration. I pointed out the fact that it may very well be dangerous for them, as it had been for us the day before, but today we were prepared with the right clothing. Jason quickly snapped out of his temporary insanity. I think it may have been brought on by acute rack envy as the other team had about 5 times more pro than we did and I know he was worried about it.

From our perch we could see our own camp site and Mike and Tai moving around. What a thrill to have an audience! We waved to them excitedly and chattered on the radio. Being so high up and so exposed suddenly didn't feel so bad since we could see 'home' from where we were. It was definitely a comforting feeling and I again felt very blessed to have such a supportive team. I had left my camera which has a 10x zoom on it with them so I hoped they would get some good shots of us climbing.

It was time to face the crux. Jason had done all the hard work up 'till now and I knew how much he hated slab so I offered to lead it. I still had an overwhelming drive to keep moving. I had only lead two previous trad climbs. One easy 5.6 at Mount Erie several years ago and the 5th pitch of Deidre in Squamish on Monday. To say my experience was inadequate was an understatement. But there was one cam fixed on the route which if it hadn't come out by now, wasn't coming out and beyond that, there were very few places to place pro anyway. What scared me the most was the wind. I'd never experienced wind like this anywhere, let alone while climbing with little more than friction keeping me on the mountain. I decided not to put much thought into it, however. We'd made it this far yesterday and I'd be damned if I was going back now. After a very stern lecture from Jason telling me that if I needed to come down he didn't care what pro I had to leave behind, I was off.

The first little bit was not difficult. I clipped into the lost cam and I was soon able to girth hitch a lovely solid feeling horn. I enjoyed the feeling of security it offered as I knew it was the last time I was going to feel that way for a while. Once out from behind the protection of the west ridge, the wind was ferocious. I couldn't even



Julia on Prusik Pk. Photo - J. Brawn.



Upper and lower Enchantment basins from just below the crux on Prusik Pk. Photo - J. Brawn.



Jason on Prusik Pk. Photo - J. Borchardt.

breathe. I traversed left to the base of the scary slab where I found an ancient fixed pin that could very well have been there from Fred Becky's first ascent in 1957. I tried to get a nut in but the crack was just too shallow. Communicating with Jason required me to curl my upper body up against the slab to get the radio out of the wind. The wind was quickly sapping my body heat and I knew that if I hung around too long I'd lose my nerve so I told him I was just going to clip into the pin and get it over with. Unbeknownst to me, Jason suddenly found religion at this point.

I quickly scanned the smooth face of the slab looking for any 'thank god' holds I could look forward to but there were none. 'Keep moving!' I told myself and before I could think about it I made my first move. I moved slowly and cautiously, making sure I always had at least 2 solid points of contact. The wind continued to drive into my back as I inched my way up the 5 m slab. About half way up I paused for a moment at which time I indulged myself in contemplating the possibility of a downclimb. A quick check below put an end to any hope of retreat. It was up or bust. There were a couple of better holds near the top but I continued with the same snail like pace for fear of being blown right off the route. Finally I hauled myself up over the top, swinging my right leg over the south face while my left trailed down the north. I heard Tai on the radio say something like 'that was the scariest shit I've ever seen in my life' which made me grin. I must be having fun then! My straddling position felt relatively secure and I tried desperately to get a nut in. My hands were

freezing and try as I might I just couldn't get a decent placement. I decided that the hump I was currently straddling would serve as a kind of protection in the event I fell down the south side, which was where I was headed so I stopped fiddling with my crappy nut placement and moved on. The south face offered 100% protection from the wind and a nice wide crack into which I quickly placed a cam before finally allowing myself to relax somewhat. There was a nice long horizontal crack which served as a bit of a cat walk. Without the savage wind, the going was much much easier.

At the end of the traverse there was ample room to maneuver and set up a belay station. It was then that I realized that I hadn't really brought anything with which to set up a good anchor. I mentioned this to Jason and told him I was going to try to MacGyver up an adequate anchor but to make himself comfortable as I knew it was going to take a while. Kicking myself for not bringing more slings, I started hunting around for a good place to put a cam. I found one and quickly clipped myself into it. After much fiddling, I had a nut in to my satisfaction and clipped into that too. I tried and tried to sling a rock but I just couldn't reach. I managed to sling a bit of a horn overhead but in the end it was just too difficult to equalize with that one in the system and I decided to make do with what I had. Jason told me to use the rope by tying figure 8's on a bite and to equalize the system as best I could. After much fiddling around, I came up with a pretty solid anchor. I removed the unused sling and looped it through everything just for extra backup. I later learned that the way I had it through the wire of the nut was a bad idea but it worked with the cam.

I yanked and jerked and yanked some more. When I was finally satisfied that I had a bomber belay station, I radioed Jason that he was on belay. It seemed like mere seconds had passed before Jason's head popped up over the top of the slab. The nut I had placed there came out easily in his hand which wasn't terribly surprising but that was the only shockingly bad pro placement. Thankfully my anchor passed inspection and Jason decided to go on a bit of a recon mission to scope out the next pitch.

After about 10 minutes Jason had found a

route that would go. I offered to lead it but was not at all disappointed when he said he would do it. I'd pretty much used up all my macho reserves on the last pitch and was positively giddy with the accomplishment and the fact that the rest of the route looked relatively straightforward and obvious. We were actually going to do it this time!

The next pitch was a very fun traverse with a fantastic photo op. Jason actually had me downclimb back to the photo op spot and I'm so glad he did. The photo is amazing. Moving quickly and easily with the security of Jason's placed pro and a solid belay I was over the traverse in no time. Much to my surprise, Jason was standing on a beautiful big ledge that even had a bit of grass and a few wildflowers. Even more surprising was the fact that the wind had stopped. And I mean stopped. It was almost as if the mountain was saying 'ok fine... I'm obviously not getting rid of you two so go ahead and climb me.'

Snack time! After gobbling some snacks and enjoying a nice long pee we were both raring to go again. A beautiful corner crack beckoned. Jason loves crack climbing and this pitch was less exposed than most so I took this opportunity to snap pics of him. His camera was so heavy and bulky it made me nervous to be taking pictures while belaying. This pitch seemed pretty benign, however, so I snapped merrily away. Jason did not seem pleased with his performance on this pitch but it looked good to me. When I followed, I never really had a good position from which to take out pro so I can only imagine how much more difficult it had been for Jason.

Thankfully, it was a short pitch and we were soon back in the sunshine again. The summit was truly in sight now. Jason continued to lead and seemed to be making things more difficult for himself than absolutely necessary. I suggested that he move a little to the right and from there he quickly and easily ascended the flake. He was out of sight now and I took in the magnificent views as I belayed. Lake Vivian sat nestled up against Prusik's south face. Above that, Spirit Lake seemed to be sitting on an impossible angle, slowly tipping its contents into Vivian. Our cozy camp and cheering squad lay far below.

Jason dumped most of his gear so he could squeeze into the chimney for the final push to the

summit. Before long he was whooping and hollering and I knew he had summited. My turn! In 4 or 5 moves I was on the ledge below the chimney. I tied a figure 8 on a bite and started clipping stuff on so Jason could haul it up. Finally it was time to haul myself up. I wedged myself into the chimney and used my elbows the way Jason suggested to wiggle my way up. In a couple of minutes it was all over and I was standing atop Prusik Peak. Marian and Q had been watching our ascent from where we had left our boots and we heard Q shout out 'We love you guys!' They had been taking pictures of everything and we leaned over the big summit block for one last shot.

The true summit was about 6 m away so we quickly scampered over to place our hands on the very top. At just over 2400 m, we felt as if we were on top of the world looking down on the breathtaking beauty that is the Enchantments. Jason was kind enough to help lighten my load for the rappel down by sharing my chocolate stash. After a nice rest and many photos, it was time to head down.

The first rap station was quite a sight to behold with loads of multi-colored slings and many rap rings. Doesn't get much more bomber than that. I had spoken with a park ranger who had been up here about a week earlier and I knew that they had taken down about 10 kg of webbing from the route so I was pretty confident in what was left. The rap off went off without a hitch and we were soon back on the trail that traverses the north face. It felt like we were much further east than where we had started off and I was not looking forward to hiking for any length of time in my rock shoes. It also seemed like we were awfully low and a steep ascent back up to our balancing rock was not high on my list of things I wanted to do that afternoon. To my great delight however, we weren't nearly as far away as I expected and in less than 10 minutes we were huddled back under our rock, extracting aching toes and feet from rock shoes.

No hiking boots had ever felt so good. My new Dunham Waffle Stompers felt like slippers just then. Still high from our summit success we decided to try a new route back to camp. We had fun scrambling down large boulders, most of which stayed put and were back in camp shortly

thereafter.

What a wonderful, warm reception we got! My heart felt like it would burst. Marian, who has been my climbing/hiking partner for 4 years now, was genuinely happy for us which was very big of her. She would have liked to have climbed Prusik but it just wasn't possible for all 3 of us to do it this time so she was an incredibly good sport about it. I couldn't believe how much I had lucked out with this team. So incredibly supportive... such great attitudes... they really embodied the word 'team' to me. Their presence was felt every step of the way as Jason and I climbed Prusik. I would definitely consider it a group effort. It would have been a sweet climb with just the two of us but having everyone cheering us on made it so much more special. No matter what I climb in the future, this experience will always hold a very special place in my heart.

Climbing with Jason had exceeded my greatest expectations. We seemed to work together with an adhesion you would only expect from climbers who had been climbing together for many years, not from two climbers who had only just met. His experience and skills were instrumental in getting us up and down safely. His personality, sense of humor and lack of ego made the experience totally and utterly enjoyable, even in my coldest, scariest moments. I had complete confidence in Jason's judgment, ability and skills which made it much easier for me to ride the rails on the outer edge of my comfort zone.

Jason got to work on the stove in order to get some water boiling for dinner. I sorted out the rack and the rest of our gear and by the time everything was put away the dinner bell was ringing. I didn't feel the least bit hungry but the moment I put a spoon full of that delicious veggie lasagna in my mouth I was suddenly ravenous. I positively shoveled food into my mouth. Someone passed parmesan cheese around and I happily doused what was left. Tai broke out the English muffins and I merrily piled lasagna onto one, devouring it bite by bite. When I was sure I couldn't scrape another bite of food from the sides of my cup I went for the brownies. We ate 1.2 kg of Two Bite Brownies on this trip. They're heavy but worth every drop of sweat.

Lethargy was setting in fast. I was so grateful



Above Inspiration Lake. Photo - J. Brawn.



Gnome Tarn camp below Prusik Pk. Photo - J. Brawn.

that Tai took on dish washing duty that night. I couldn't move. I finally dragged myself upright and gathered up the food bags for hanging. After Tai and I hung the food, I crawled happily into my tent. I read for a little while then drifted off into the best sleep I'd had the whole trip.

Day 5

Normally I'm ready to head home by the end of a trip but that was most definitely not the case this time. I really didn't want to leave this perfect place. I expressed as much to the team and found that I wasn't the only one having a hard time saying goodbye. But it wasn't over yet. I had another exciting day planned for us. We were going to hike out via Cannon Mountain, then down the

northwest ridge to hook up with an old logging road which would take us back to the parking lot. This area doesn't receive a lot of traffic and apparently the views from Cannon are awesome so that took the sting out of knowing that this was our last day. While there wasn't actually a trail, I had a lot of good route beta including a GPS track on a map so I was confident. I had even spoken with a park ranger and a local about the route, both assuring me that it was do-able.

Camp was all packed up and we were hiking by 10 am. The goats immediately moved in but would have been very disappointed in what we left behind. We were a very conscientious group packing out everything...and I mean EVERYTHING. Tai somehow managed to get the job of garbage/sewage pack mule. I guess that's what you get for being a nice guy.

At Prusik Pass there was a nice family of 4 and we took pictures of each other while chatting about our intended route. The father knew the area well which bolstered my confidence even more. He told us to say hi to Coney Lake for him and we were on our way. It was fun being off trail and we picked our way easily along the back side of Enchantment and over to Cannon's eastern slopes. Mike and I hiked on up ahead to ensure that we weren't leading the rest of the group into trouble. We could radio back if the route didn't go but go it did and soon we were at the Lorelei Lakelets. A weasel (I think) was hastily carrying its baby along the lake shore away from us. The lake was beautiful and we enjoyed a little rest and snack break while we waited for the rest of the group to catch up. I had another look at the map and saw the route very obviously leading up from the end of the lake. We headed off again with Jason and I bringing up the rear. We were enjoying drawing out the trip and savoring every moment. We let everyone race up the last steep slope we'd have to ascend on this trip while we took in the views, reliving moments of greatness and marveling at the scenery.



Conga line up Prusik Pass. Photo - J. Brawn.



On top of the Druid Plateau. Photo - J. Brawn.

Our slow pace allowed me to notice a skull in the sand at our feet. Looking at the teeth on this thing, Jason suggested maybe a saber toothed marmot. A quick Google search just confirmed our suspicions... it was a marmot all right. We stopped for a little photo shoot but we couldn't drag it out much longer. In a few more minutes we topped out on the magical 'Druid Plateau' just below the summit of Cannon. The Druid Plateau is several football fields in size, flat as a pancake save for the stepping stone type rocks covering much of its surface. We had fun running around, hopping from rock to rock and taking in the stellar views. Dragontail, Colchuck and Stuart were laid out before us like a postcard. A lone goat lazed on a large rock pile looking at us disapprovingly. After

at least an hour of horsing around, we shouldered our packs again for the short hike to Cannon.

We left our packs at a nice lunch spot and began the scramble up the summit of Cannon. I tried to avoid looking at our descent route. It looked much steeper than I'd bargained for so I just pushed it out of my mind and hoped that it would look different by the time we came down from the summit.

Scrambling up Cannon was fun and the views just got better and better. The true summit was the top of an enormous boulder.

With my awesome new boots, I knew I could scramble up and down it. The bottom of my boots feel like suction cups on slabby rock like this and, as expected, I scrambled up without incident. I was only able to talk Jason into joining me however. I was thrilled to have gotten Tai up another mountain. Little did I know that getting him up Cannon was going to be infinitely easier than getting him down!

We climbed back down to our picnic spot and had our first good look at our route. Unfortunately it hadn't gotten any better looking since the last time I'd looked at it. So I announced that it would probably look better after lunch and herded the group back up and away from the edge. The last meal on a trip like this is usually pretty forgettable but lunch was a veritable feast! Jason really deserves a lot of credit for hauling a lot of really heavy, really yummy food all the way up there. We gobbled up every bite and got down to the serious business of discussing the route.

It was already after 3 pm so one thing was sure – I wasn't willing to tackle the ridge. There was no way I wanted to be stuck up that high when the sun went down and the wind started up (as it did every night). Going back did not seem like a very practical option. So I figured as long as we could get down to the tree line by dark, we'd be fine. The gully looked steep but manageable so I tried to convey a confidence in my body language and voice that I didn't really feel. I felt sure that

everyone could do it, but that they wouldn't be very happy about it. We hadn't been moving for 5 minutes when we ran into the first spot of trouble. Q and Tai didn't feel they could descend with their heavy packs on. No biggie....I'd take their packs. I would much rather shuttle packs than turn around so I just told them to leave their packs. I figured this was the worst of it and if we could just get down this first bit it would get easier. Jason and I worked together to get everyone and everything down but it wasn't getting any easier. Poor Jason seemed to be a loose rock magnet and rocks that had happily held my weight would pop loose under his greater weight.

Pretty soon Jason suggested that we take out the rope and while he helped people down with the rope, I began shuttling packs over a new route I had found that seemed more solid with nice big boulders. Jason had had enough of the mountain slipping out from under him so he set up a rap station which we used to shuttle packs and ourselves down while the rest of the group picked their way down the loose, steep gully. Unfortunately things were just going from bad to worse but no one was complaining so I wanted to keep up our forward momentum. The next rappel was nasty, dropping quickly over an overhang. I was worried about being flipped over by the weight of the pack so I hooked a prussik on to the rope and the chest strap of Tai's pack. His pack did not fit snugly into my back like my pack did and sure enough as soon as I hit the overhang I flipped over like a beetle. Every muscle in my body fought to right myself but it was futile. My left quad was on fire and there was nothing I could do to relieve the strain. I was afraid that Q and Tai might be watching and I knew that it looked bad so I shouted out "Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!" like in that goofy commercial so they'd know I was ok. Righting myself was impossible so I just continued to lower myself in my incredibly uncomfortable position right down to the ground where Jason could help me up.

My next rappel went even worse. This time my left hand got caught between the rock and the rope when I dropped off the overhanging part. Hanging helplessly from my left hand I realized that I couldn't climb up and I certainly couldn't go down so I had no choice but to just yank my hand

out. I continued down as fast as I could because if I was really injured I didn't want to be hanging from a rope when I realized it. It looked ugly and it hurt but I didn't think I was really injured. I got Q to take a look at it just in case and she gave me a green light. I wasn't too worried about the cuts and scrapes. I was more worried that I may have damaged some tendons when I yanked it out. It seemed to be functioning well under the circumstances so I just wrapped it in a gauze bandage to keep the worst of the dirt out.

Jason decided to take the last two packs down on his own employing the same method one uses to get one's pack out of a crevasse. He was all ready to go by the time I scrambled back up to the rap station but I pointed out that I did not have first aid supplies to cover a botched vasectomy, motioning to the sharp ice axe point just inches below his bits. He was determined that it would be ok and was being very stubborn about the whole thing but did wait long enough for me to tie my sports bra top around it.

I cleaned the rap station and scrambled back down in time to watch Q's \$400 Mountain Hardware tent bouncing merrily down the mountain side... and she was laughing! Delirium had clearly set in. Fortunately the tent did stop and she was able to retrieve it without further incident.

That was the end of the pack shuttles. The sun was setting fast though and we couldn't even see the tree line. I desperately wanted to get everyone down to the tree line by dark. Jason had the brilliant idea of setting up a hand line so with Mike in the front, Jason in the middle and me taking up the rear, we were able to string out 60m of rope for the others to hang on to. We had hoped we'd be able to move more quickly this way but it was still slow going. I got frustrated with the pace so I found a secure spot for myself and told Tai to just rap off me down to where everyone else was. This worked beautifully and secured my position as team belay station for the next several hours.

Jason would scope out a good tree/boulder/anything I could wedge myself in behind. I would get in position. Everyone would then rap off me down the full length of the rope. Mike always went first, scoping out the route and finding the next possible belay station. Then Tai, Marian and Q



Rappelling down. Photo - J. Brawn.

would go. Tai has indoor climbing experience so this wasn't totally new to him. Marian has loads of experience and flew down like a pro. Q, however, had never done anything like this before and was having trouble just trusting the rope. Going down a mountain backwards went against every natural instinct in her body (naturally!) but she never once complained, only asked for clarification and support and moved slowly but surely down the mountain.

I have to say a few words about Q here because she really did a remarkable job. Over the course of that long long night, her confidence grew exponentially. She was smart enough to tell us when she wasn't ok but trusted us enough to do what we told her to do. Jason rigged up a chest harness for her with some extra webbing and put her on a prussik so in the event that she fell and let go of the rope, she would still be safe. I really admire her quiet determination and self control. Not once did she panic and she always kept her wonderful sense of humor.

The sun was setting fast. It really was a beautiful sunset. I told Jason that I wished it would just get it over with because then the pressure would be off and when it finally did set, it was almost a relief. No more racing against sunset. It was dark. No big deal. Just keep moving. Up until this point I had been scrambling down, unroped, after everyone had rappelled. But now it was dark and the prospect of descending the gully solo was not particularly appealing so on the next rap, after everyone but Jason and I had rapped off, we used the little shrub (to call it a tree would be an overstatement) to rap off. Jason found a boulder

we could use for the next 30 m. I went first and found our group perched on what could not even be described as a ledge. I started hunting around for anything we could rap off of but it wasn't looking good.

It was really dark as the moon had not risen yet. Even when it did rise, it would be a long time before it came out from behind the mountain. The stars were beautiful and they put on a great show for us with shooting stars and even a display of the Northern Lights. Everyone remained positive commenting on how we would have missed all this if we'd gotten down sooner.

By the time Jason joined us I still hadn't come up with anything. Jason got to work on a crack while I continued to explore the cliff looking for something better. I had dropped the rope at the end of my rappel and traversed this cliff solo earlier but this time I looked down. Yikes! For the first time on our descent I was a bit freaked out so I told Jason I wanted a belay to get back. He was still working on setting up an anchor and it seemed like forever before I was finally able to get the heck out of there.

Everyone was getting cold but there wasn't much room to maneuver so no one had bothered getting more clothes out of their packs. I knew I was going to be there the longest so I did take the time to find a place where I could lay my pack down and get some more clothes out. Jason went off in search of a better rap station. Nothing was popping out at him so I put him on belay so he could explore the cliffs on the opposite side of the gully. He soon gave a triumphant cry as his fingers found two lovely cracks just begging for pro. Working as quickly as he could, Jason set up a fantastic rap station and we were soon back in business. Using the section of rope I had used to belay him, we were able to make a hand line across the gully. As had become the custom, Mike went first, traversing the gully and then rappelling down off Jason's anchor. Mike's confidence and experience had been a very nice surprise and a real blessing. We were desperate for some flat ground where we could get warm clothes on, rest and have a snack so we waited with baited breath as he descended down the steep gully into the night. His headlamp marked his progress and before long he was on the radio describing a much

more hospitable place. Tai went next, then Q. This was the steepest section we'd had to contend with so I suggested that Jason just tie her in and lower her. This worked brilliantly as Q felt much more confident with the constant security of a lower and she was able to move down more quickly than ever. Marian shot down the rope like a bolt of lightning and then it was my turn. First I had to get Jason's pack over to him so I used the hand line to cross the gully and come back. Then, I tore down the station, tied myself in so Jason could belay me, and moved slowly over the rocks and gully with my own pack. Jason was freezing and I felt quite helpless as in our precarious position there was really nothing I could do to help him. All I could do was get down as fast as I could so he could follow.

Mike had indeed found a great spot. I immediately dumped my pack and went off to find the next belay station. Trees! There were actually two or three options. I take back everything bad I ever said about trees. (I'm an alpine junkie and have been known to make disparaging remarks about hiking through trees.... I repent.)

Jason seemed to be taking an awfully long time but I knew what he was doing. He had to tear down the rap station, leaving just one nut and rap off that. Rapping off one nut is not much fun but if anyone can find a solid nut placement its Jason so I was confident that the extra time he was taking would ensure his safe descent. I also knew he was freezing so he'd be moving more slowly than he'd like. Finally his headlamp was on the move so I found my last cliff bar and met him on the 'landing pad.' He insisted on bringing down the rope before attending to his own comfort which is pretty characteristic. I had quickly learned to pick my battles with Jason when he's being stubborn so I let this one go. As soon as the rope was down I took it and the rack and moved them down closer to our next rap station.

Tai dozed on the ledge while the rest of us piled on every stitch of clothing we had. The night was mercifully mild, the mildest we'd had all trip in fact, so with all our clothes on, we were cozy and comfortable. A rest was mandatory so we hung out for about 30 minutes, fiddling with gear, eating the last of our food, and slurping down the last of our meager water supply. I had finished

the last of my water just below the summit and was very surprised that I wasn't particularly thirsty.

Day 6

Now that everyone was fed and warm, we were ready to get moving again. Having reached the tree line seemed to have boosted morale. The worst was behind us and now it was just a matter of bushwhacking our way down to the trail. I had my GPS on but I wasn't in a hurry to share the information I was getting from it. We were still over 2100 m. The trailhead was at 1050 m. It was almost midnight when we started down again. We had 2.4 km to go but as we rapped down 30 m at a time, we were covering the distance agonizingly slowly. After a couple of rappels we were able to walk down about 12 m without the rope so we thought we were 'out of the woods' so to speak. Our optimism proved premature, however, when the terrain became quite steep again, requiring more rappels. Jason's brand new rope was a mess. It had survived rock fall, tons of sand and dirt, and now tree sap. It was so dirty I couldn't even find the middle markings on it now when I was setting up rap stations. Obviously a new rope would be added to the expense sheet at the end of the trip although Jason was still stubbornly refusing. We told him it wasn't up for debate and he finally acquiesced.

The forest got thicker and the footing became more solid. I had long ago lost count of rappels. I would estimate between 15 and 20 by the time we finally put the rope away for good. Soon we were embraced in the loving arms of slide alder. I've never seen alder so thick in my life. I had to put my poles away as I needed both hands just to swim through the stuff. This was the first time the darkness really felt oppressive. The going was still steep and uneven so it was a little unnerving to be crashing blindly through slide alder, not knowing if I was about to push through and find a cliff on the other side. The ground was covered in a good 30 cm of alder and deadfall so that every step involved crashing through dry wood and ankle wrenching branches.

This was getting old very quickly so it was a serious relief when we finally came upon a long talus slope. The rocks stretched out as far as the eye could see which was much farther now that

the moon had finally risen over the mountain and was providing a bit of light. Most of the rocks were pretty solid which was a nice change from the last stretch of rocks we'd endured. At one point there was a flat little patch of sand just slightly larger than my boot. I took a few moments to enjoy the feeling of flat, solid ground under my feet, alternating back and forth between left and right. I pointed it out to Mike so he could stand on it too. This was seriously the ONLY good footing we'd had since we left the top of Cannon and would be the last we'd see until we made it back down to the trail.

Our talus slope dwindled and dumped us back into the steep forest again but we soon came upon a small stream. WATER! We quickly filled a 4L water bag, fished out some Gatorade powder, and Mike got to work on the temperamental MIOX. "Low Salt" it kept saying, over and over. He passed it to Tai, announcing that Tai had the magic touch but even the magical Tai could not make it work. I knew what everyone was thinking so I reminded them of the Giardia I had come home with from my last trip up here after I drank untreated water. It was decided then and there that MSR would be held accountable for this. It was to audible groans that Tai poured out the 4L of water, before we continued down the stream bed.

Q was quite rightly suggesting that we needed a rest so at the very first place 6 people could sit down, we stopped for a nap. It was 5:30am and the sun was just starting to rise. It was extremely difficult to get comfortable since not one of the huge boulders we were sitting on was flat. Marian shared her sleeping pads with Q and Jason. I unrolled mine and found a spot where I could wedge my feet under a dead tree to keep me from slipping down the rock. I curled up, pulled my hat down over my eyes, and to my extreme surprise was dead to the world in about 2 seconds flat. I slept for a good solid 5 minutes before my body told me it was time to switch positions. I've never fallen asleep so quickly or slept so deeply in my life. I'm certain that those 5 minutes got me down the rest of the way without injury. The last 30 minutes before the power nap had been fraught with ankle turns at almost every step.

For the first time I noticed that my fingers and hands were not working very well. Rolling up my

sleeping pad was agonizing. Getting it into its stuff sack was even worse. Untwisting my poles was torture. Jason was having a similar experience, but was not going to let us go without getting a group shot of our little nap nest among the boulders. Amazingly, Jason had continued to document our entire descent which had contributed greatly to keeping us all from taking the experience or ourselves too seriously. If Jason was still taking pictures, everything must still be under control right? He'd put the camera away if we got into trouble.

Just then, Jason got into a bit of trouble of his own. He was standing above me directing everyone into their places for the photo when suddenly he disappeared from view with a crash. The log he had been standing on had been too dry and weak to take his weight and had snapped, depositing him unceremoniously into the branches below. Of course his only concern was for his camera and it was several tense moments before I could get an answer out of him as to HIS condition. Surprisingly, he was unharmed. Even more surprisingly, neither was the camera which had managed to lodge itself in the only place a camera could safely lodge itself.

It was light now and Mike laughed as he pointed out a grassy meadow about 30 m from us. We'd been balancing our weary bodies on these hateful boulders when there'd been a meadow less than 10 minutes away. Ah well. Had we made it to the meadow, we probably would have been tempted to get more comfortable and it would have been harder to get moving again. As it was, my body had gone into some kind of semi paralytic state and it took a good 15 minutes before I was moving freely again.

I staggered like a drunk down to the meadow which was really not much of a meadow. While Jason reconned north, I went south. South looked better so we moved off in that direction. It was relatively easy going for a while and we soon came upon more talus. We alternated between talus and forest before we finally heard the much anticipated sound of Mountaineer Creek.

The trail ran parallel to the creek all the way from the trailhead to Colchuck Lake so we knew we were close. There was plenty of evidence of bear activity but being in a group of 6 meant that

we were pretty safe as there has never been a documented bear attack on a group of more than 4. Even so, we made a point of making plenty of noise to let them know we were coming. The devils club proved slightly more difficult to avoid. We were almost within sight of the creek when Tai and his heavy pack tumbled off a log we were scrambling over. One of the branches he'd been using for support had snapped under the weight, dropping him over a metre to the ground but not before puncturing his shoulder and tearing a large chunk out of his thumb.

He was obviously in pain and if Tai's letting you see that he's in pain, he's hurt. I was more concerned about his wrenched shoulder than for his wounds at this point, but he still seemed to have good mobility. Still, I wanted to empty his pack to reduce the strain on his shoulder. He was having none of that though. I had told him several times through the night that I really needed him to be straight with me when I asked him how he was doing and reminded him of this point again. He assured me that he was ok to carry his pack so after very temporarily patching up his gaping thumb, I helped him up and hoisted his pack up to him. He grimaced but took the weight and carried on. We were so close to the trailhead now I told him to just keep going when we got to the creek so I could patch him up properly back at the cars where we had clean water to clean his wounds with. What a trooper.

Minutes later, we were at the trail. I dropped to my knees and kissed the ground. There are no words to express the feeling of being on flat, solid ground after 17 hours of the polar opposite. Tai, Q, Marian and Mike were off like a shot. I hobbled along as fast as my abused knees would take me and Jason seemed content to keep pace with me. In spite of the incredible adversity we'd endured, there was still a small part of me that didn't want it to end. After about 30 minutes, the end was in sight. We must have looked pretty funny coming crashing out of the forest, filthy, scratched, bruised and exhausted at 8:45 in the morning. There were several groups preparing for departure at their cars. We'd been hiking for 23 hours, 17 of which had been the descent from Cannon.

Thankfully, we had plenty of water waiting for us in the cars and it was consumed voraciously.

Gear was sorted and loaded into the cars while I attended to the worst of Tai's injuries. Marian's car battery was dead but Tai had jumper cables so that was taken care of quickly. Soon 6 very dirty, smelly and slightly delirious hikers were back on the road, and headed for the Circle Y restaurant for a well deserved breakfast.

This was hands down the best trip of my life. The spectacular destination was only part of what made it so special. The way this team gelled and worked together was beyond my wildest expectations. I don't think it's even possible to put together a more complementary mix of skills and personalities. The Northern Lights don't have anything on the remarkable display of human spirit put on by this team. A special thank you to Jason who stepped up before we even left organizing gear and didn't stop crossing t's and dotting i's until everyone was safely back at the cars. I am proud, and more than a little astonished at how well Jason and I worked together through this whole trip but particularly on the descent from Cannon Mountain.

The muscle stiffness has abated. The cuts and scrapes have scabbed over. The bruises have turned that particularly ugly color bruises turn right before they start to fade. Soon the physical evidence of our adventure will be gone but I will never be the same again. This was one those rare experiences that has really touched me deeply. As tough as it was, I don't regret a single moment. Thank you to everyone who made it possible. I can't wait to start planning our next trip together!

I guess its not your time - Yak(ky) adventure by Dave Morriss/Jack Pals

"I'm sliding, I can't stop, I just can't stop, I'm going over the edge", a scream and then silence. I watch in horror as my climbing partner for the day slides over a cliff edge. For what seemed like an age, in a state of shock, I just stood there transfixed, not daring to move in case I followed him, not wanting to see the result of that fall, trying to convince myself that it hadn't happened.

The image keeps on popping into my mind, I can't help it. A helmeted, backpacked climber standing silhouetted against the evening sky, the last light flashing off the glacial trickles around



The south side of Yak Pk. Photo - J. Pals.

his feet. Granite slabs above him, steeper rock stretching hundreds of meters to the forested slope below him. The image is sweet and traumatic at the same time.

The trip had been on our minds for a long time. We knew that as soon as one of us would bring it up, the four of us would clear our calendars to do Yak Crack on the south face of Yak Peak. It wasn't exactly our nemesis, but we had all failed on this fourteen pitch dome of sheer rock in the Coquihalla area at least once.

Hearing reports that it was a notorious sandbag just spurred us on more. Doing a climb reported as 5.7/8 that gets steeper as one climbs, combined with sunshine and sweet alpine winds, makes one forget about the warnings of 5.10 moves, chimneys and areas of rock described as "popcorn held together with spit".

Early September during our regular Wednesday session at the climbing gym one of us said: "How about doing Yak next Thursday?" That was it: the trip was on.

The four of us meet near Yak Peak the night before so we can have a good night's rest and

still get the approach hike over with before the sun warms the rock. The days are getting shorter after all. We are travelling so light that there isn't much to check before we tie in and scoot up the first rock slabs to the start of the "real climb". Our water weighs as much as our small rack it seems, but it's eight o'clock and the sun is starting to come around the mountain already; we'll need all of it.

I feel a bit apprehensive as I take my turn to lead again and find few places to place gear in the sandfilled crack up to the "Lunch Ledge". But I blame it on excitement and the great desire to finish this time.

Paul and I stopped for a "bite and gulp" after pitch 3. Sitting there in the warm sun on gorgeous steep rock, admiring the view of nothing but almost white rock to the sides and above us, brings back the wave of happiness I had experienced there before. Climbing now turns to gracious moves and delicate stances when the rock gets "iffy". I silently thank my friends below for getting me into climbing years ago.

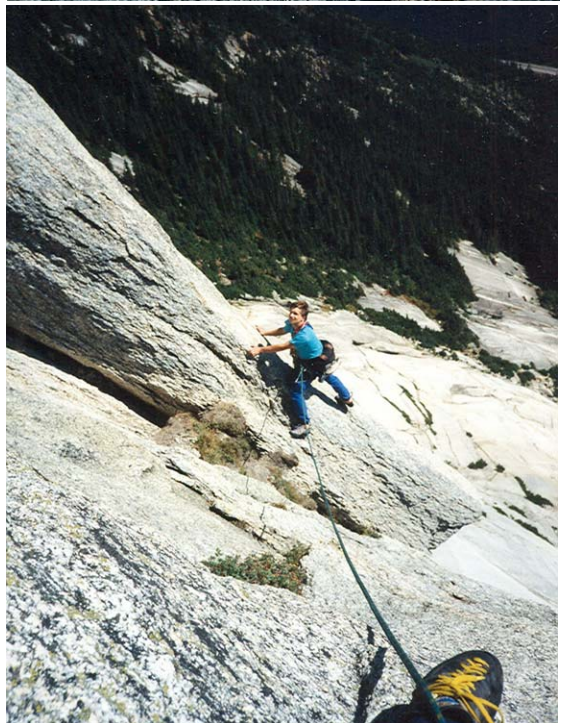
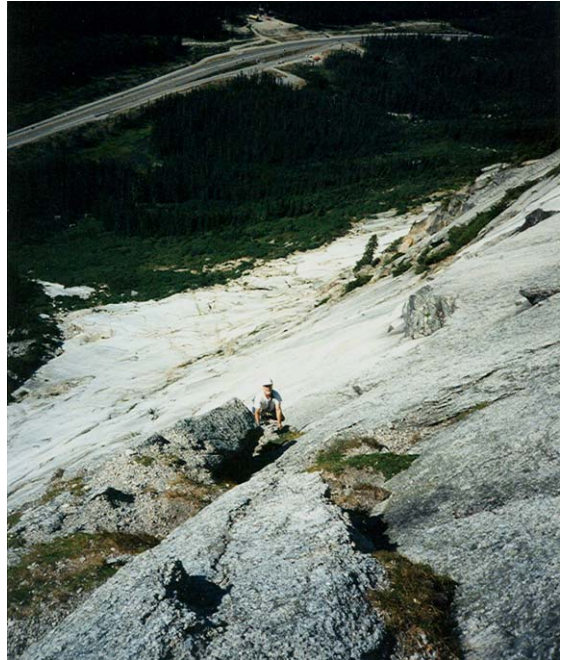
The pitches easily flow as total concentration takes over and time stands still. Groove follows

crack, follows face, follows friction climbing. Then we are at the "Cave belay". Paul is unerring in his memory of the route and fearless in his attack on the uncharacteristically blank section that features the start of the, by us, untravelled part of the route. There is now just the great dihedral left to climb, easy going after that, according to the guide book. Dave and Kit on the other rope are right behind us and seem to be climbing well as I lead up from the big chockstone. Offwidth crack, laybacked, curving and one side polished mirror smooth by winters of sliding ice, it smiles it's crooked smile down at me as I laboriously make my way up. At one point I feel myself starting to fall as I try to place a wire that just won't sit right. It takes total body tension to keep me in position and a little later I am enormously grateful to find a half decent belay spot that will take a couple of pieces of decent pro. I sit there out of breath and look up at the steep curve away from me to the "Ledge" 20 m above.

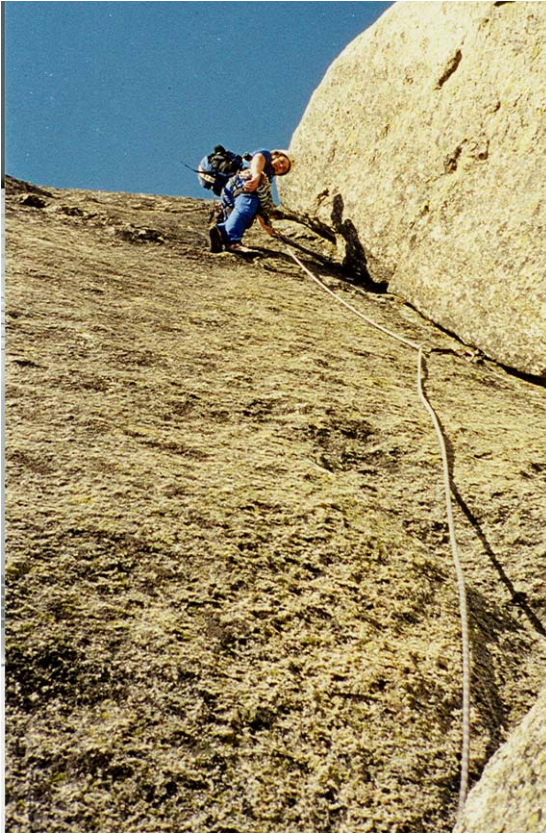
Realizing how tired I am, I think of different excuses I can offer Paul for not going on and taking a chance that the rope was long enough to reach the Ledge. The guidebook didn't mention a belay here after all?!

"I'm secuure!!!" I yell into a gust of wind, "No chance to play the hero now". I feel relieved. Of course the next pitch proves to be just fine. We climb past the Ledge, change into our approach shoes and scramble to the top where we arrive at four thirty. What a great feeling, we did it!

As the books tell, the trip is only half over when you reach the top and since, rather than rappel, we had decided to descend down slabs and gullies around the east side of the mountain, I clamber over to the col to scout a route down past the late ice and snow sections. Paul and I then relax, eat and drink, waiting for our friends who shouldn't be far behind. An hour later, still no white helmets peeking over the edge, we go back down to investigate. Paul rappels down to the Ledge and finds Dave and Kit. Despite valiant efforts on the dihedral they need some help from above. Again I realize how constant exposure and tension can drain strong bodies of strength. Paul makes the arrangements and belays Dave to the Ledge where climbing turns to scrambling. Kit comes up and then the four of us scramble to the top,



On the climb. Photos - J. Pals.



High on the route. Photo - J. Pals.

where Paul and I left our packs. We are finally all there! With the sun going down quickly now, it makes us realize how important it can be to climb with two teams. It would have been a very uncomfortable night for those two, and it could have been us! After we have a quick drink I use Dave's camera to take one last "Hero shot" with the warm sunlight just glancing over the ridge and lighting up three smiling faces.

Then it is high time we go down. We follow a ramp that leads us to the downward slope around the side of the mountain. We have to slither our way down between the over-hanging edge of an ice field and the sheet of rock below: bums on slab and helmets hitting the ice above. Big white blocks of broken off ice further down strangely look like giant pieces of styrofoam in the gray and green surroundings.



Topout. Photo - J. Pals.

Four of us were on the descent of Yak Peak after completing Yak Crack. We had lost the trail and were trying to bushwhack our way down as nighttime approached. The climb had been more problematic than we anticipated, a bit of a sandbag, poor protection and for some pitches the consistency of tortillas. As darkness descended I began to curse leaving my head torch behind. However, we had two between the four of us and with clear skies and moonlight it wasn't such a problem. Breaking through the trees, we crossed a series of slabs and cautiously eased our way down making for a gully on our left. Paul and Jack had already made their way down when Kit, easing his way down a section of steep slab covered with small stones and scree, started his slide.

Because of the failing light there is an urgency in the air. When the slope levels off a bit we speed up, the faint trail running out on rock slabs. Next we're slithering over small gravel fields and the low growth of an avalanche slope. We follow a gully for a while but remember the guidebook's advice to stick to the mountain's edge where it meets the trees. There is no more trail now. But we are experienced and travelling carefully down, single line, rock slabs down on the right and small trees to hold onto on the left. Following Paul, I cross a small section of gravel suspended on a slab. It feels like walking over marbles on a mirror and I take a few quick steps to a big boulder, fearing the whole section will start sliding. I move around to some "Krummholz" bent by snow and ice, using it as "vegetable belays".

Then I hear screams behind me. I turn around and see an unmistakable figure sliding down the

slab on his back, legs pointing down and arms in the air, it's Kit! "Turn over!!!" I yell as my instinct takes over and assumes he'll slow down more that way, even though there's no ice axe to arrest his fall. He disappears over the edge to another slab below - he still slides on his back, quiet now. Oh my God, please don't let him die! Like a cruel joke it occurs to me that this all seems just like a shot from a TV show. As I look down he again falls over an edge then all is silent. My body curls up in horror.

All I can see is hundreds of meters of steep slab below and I wait for a rolling body to appear..... it doesn't. Confusion. Paul and I start moving on, along the edge of small trees and bushes to a dry creek bed that runs down beside the rock slabs below us. Dave is up behind us in the trees, realizing his position is essential for rescue. All three of us are having visions of spending the night on the mountain and wonder who will go to get Search and Rescue, a chopper maybe?

I recovered my composure and reluctantly had to face up to what had just happened. By moonlight I traversed across to some boulders, avoiding the treacherous scree and into some small trees at the edge of the slab. I was now in a position to look down and witness what had happened below although I really did not want to. Hanging precariously from a tiny tree at the edge of the slab, I could see a head torch below me. It was Paul. "How's Kit?", I call hopefully. An answering cry, "I'm okay Dave, just get me off". It was Kit, but how could it be, I'd just watched him go flying over the edge. Luckily I'm carrying the rope and still in my harness. With Paul below me, I set up a rappel off three tiny trees and throw the ends down to Paul. With Jack in the gully giving directions, Paul rappels in Kit's direction. He is still in a dangerous position, on the edge of a water covered slab with a huge drop into the forest below, not daring to move. The rope isn't long enough for Paul to reach him. I tie it off and Paul continues down on a single strand. By the time Paul reaches him, there are only about 5 m left and with two of them on the rope I'm not happy with the tree anchors. Having tied myself in to separate trees, I belay them across to the gully and safety, hoping that the combined anchors will hold any slip. They make it, thankfully. Jack guides me across the

treacherous gully and we all meet up where Kit is resting, shaken up, cuts to his hands and arms but otherwise okay. How he survived we have no idea. Jack sums it up - "I guess it just wasn't your time Kit".

Then we hear: "Yahoo!!" and a few seconds later "I'm allright!!!". Instantly Paul and I speed up, to the side of the slab and then down the shallow gully until we can see him.

Forty meters down and over, there he stands!... like an apparition. He's supposed to be dead or at least terribly injured, and Kit is standing up! There is wet rock all around him, the edge he stands next to drops like a doorstep into oblivion. He cannot take one step without a good chance of slipping off. "Throw me a rope!" he yells. "I want to get off here!" That gets our brains going again. Paul carefully pads over water-run slab and gravel until he is halfway between Dave and Kit below. He is in a dangerous place. I want to get out there too, in the worst way. Adrenaline is now flowing at top speed and, more clearheaded than normal, I acknowledge that a body in a safe place is also needed in case something else goes wrong. I hope I will also be in better shape to lead the others down once Kit and Paul are safely off. At least I have a good overview of what is happening and can relay proceedings as Kit cannot see his rescuers from below the last rock ledge.

We are all still wearing our harnesses and Dave luckily carries one of the ropes. In the gathering darkness he sets up a rappel around three tiny trees. Paul clips into it halfway and then throws the rest of the rope down to Kit, but the strands are not long enough. Dave pulls the rope back up and ties it off. It is dark now. Paul and I have headlamps and turn them on. I tell Kit what is happening. They try again as I light up the general area. Minutes later Paul and Kit are both tied in and traverse to the creek bed I'm in. I scramble back up to where Dave has to cross, so I can light his way. He gingerly rappels sideways across the slab and then he is in the gully too. I look down and Kit is lying down tied into a small bush, Paul beside him. "Thank God we made it off" I murmur to myself. We inspect Kit's wounds and when nothing major turns up, rest a little. Kit is definitely shaken, and stirred, but enormously brave about the whole ordeal. We discuss the

situation and decide that we'll keep on going down.

Because I've stayed in the relative safety of the gully for the last hour I know my nerves are less shredded and lead off finding a way down into the steep night. We swing along down-curving branches of small trees along ridges, through gullies and along small areas of slabs. The sliver of moon helps little. Kit doesn't want to see rock but manages to keep going at our pace. Finally we make it down to the forested area at the bottom of the main slabs and find a faint trail in spots. Everyone relaxes a little. In the dim light we can just make out the giant wall to our right and where the edge of the forest runs. We work our way along it around monster boulders and along little streams that appear and disappear. While the others rest again I go on and find where the approach trail ends at the edge of the rock. A clamber down the boulder field and steep forest floor, leads us to the marshy area near the road. Now my head lamp has given up and by Paul's single light we cross the swamp into the lights of the highway. Relaxed and tired we slowly make our way back to the rest stop where cars, water and fresh clothes await us.

The rest of the descent goes slowly at Kit's pace and with Jack leading the way, we make it down about four hours later. Each of us monitoring his progress looking for any signs of shock or injury. He makes his way cheerfully down, no doubt knowing what a lucky guy he is. At the parking lot Jack hands round a bottle of scotch and we drink Kit's health before heading for home.

We celebrate our final success in the parking lot with peanuts and a few belts of scotch: a slug for success and a slug for serendipity, because this is what climbs are made of. It is twelve thirty and we are really ready for dinner!

Two weeks later, I'm sat at my desk at work and the phone rings. It's my wife, Wendy, "There's been a report on the TV news", she said. "Yossi's been killed". I sink deep into my seat. He had been guiding a party to the summit of Cerro Presidente in Bolivia when they were hit by an avalanche. Two survived but Yossi and a Canadian woman were lost. Although more an acquaintance than a friend, we shared many mutual friends back in the UK. He had been

guiding in Bolivia for a number of years, and his guidebook to the area was published just a few months ago. How could he be lost? My thoughts drifted back to that night on Yak Peak and the vision of Kit sliding over the edge and I tried to remember the last time I'd seen Yossi, it was clutching a pint in a pub in North Wales after a day's climbing. As I sat at my desk, Jack's words came floating back "I guess it just wasn't your time Kit".

"Rough" and "Twisted" - Spius Basin revisited 1-2 October, 2005

by Karl Ricker

Well, not quite "Twist and Shout" but some fancy footwork was used to re-visit this basin of initial discovery in year 2000. That was when Pierre the Great retreated to the pine box at life's end - exactly five years ago in fact but it was not scheduled to be this way. Rather, the trip of 2005 was to go to the very south end of the "Anderson River Ranges" for our first visit to this part of the Coquihalla drainage, Squeah Mtn. being selected as the victim to attack.

The recent rise in the price of real gold, however, had interfered. Yep, we had to go elsewhere as Norm found on his reconnoitre ten days before we were to strike forth. The access to Squeah was to be via the Carolin Mine road which veers off the "Coke" near Ladner Creek, but ebullient and aspiring miners had it closed solid, telling Norm in no uncertain terms that we were not welcome anywhere near this area, by car, bike or foot, unless we had a deep pocketed investor among us. Carolin Mine was closed down due to low grades and poor recovery in the mill in the 1980s, but now it's slated to be a phoenix, rebirthing to take advantage of higher gold prices. Another investor shell, and a way of keeping us from exposing their game. Quickly our Coquihalla venture was swung to the headwaters of Spius Creek, which we had visited, with surprising finds, in 2000. At that time the weather was non-cooperative, nullifying any serious scrambling and the highest peak in the basin proved to be only a hike (BC Mountaineer, 2000, p. 32-37).

Again, a party of seven assembled at Boston Bar, where the gas was then cheap (\$1.04/litre) because the locals were desperate to flag down

the traffic to restore some economic energy into what appears to be a fading commercial scene. Both gas station and adjacent cafe took our money gladly, while coming and going on the weekend. After fill-ups the Anderson River road was ascended to the Hydro lines, turning off there to the northeast on secondary roads and finally onto the now not used "Third Creek" spur to Spius Pass. This road had collapsed culverts, so beware. At the pass the logger's road ends, but another klick on the old miner's road in falling snow took us to some ponds where we camped in 2000. Decidedly wet and cool, the tents were pitched on the road itself in a hurry, and a big fire was lit under some tall subalpine fir trees to thwart the chill of wet snowfall. Then a Barred owl hooted its presence nearby, and suddenly the clouds began to part in the gusty wind to expose the galaxies above. Was it the sudden weather change, our unwanted arrival, or the smoke and light of the fire which prompted the hoots?

Optimistically, I said the wake up would be 6:30 am to take advantage of the change of weather, but the owl blasted a pre-emptive hoot at 6 am. We left camp at 8 a.m. nonetheless, leaving tents and vehicles, as they were on the road. Clouds were moving in while we huffed and puffed up the short and steep heart burner trail to Spius lake. Reaching the lower lake, the day's objectives to the west of it were already clagged in, but Norm had already punched in their summit coordinates on his GPS, and so we continued to the upper lake, a scant 1-2 metres higher, and began the traverse around its south shore. An old campsite slovenly abandoned by those who had packed in and discarded 30 to 40 cans of brewski was encountered before entering dense, wet sub-alpine bush. We could have avoided this impediment if we had gone to the open but longer north shore route, as done five years ago. It was a struggle to reach the obvious wide gully by our miscue route; the gully leads to the saddle between "Rough" and "Twisted".

The former is slightly higher and hence the prime objective, Norman's GPS saying that we were 200 metres below summit elevation (1909 m) and only 265 metres away from it. So despite the lack of visible summit, Bert and I elected to reach it on a more direct approach from the col

scrambling up rock gullies well endowed with krummholz; John Sapac decided to lead out onto a longer heather and rock slab approach. John's group easily strolled to the summit before us, finding it without a cairn but with a lonely *Pinus albicaulis* near it. Slowly, the clouds began to part and provide a view into the Fraser Canyon, and a few hide and seek glimpses of other summits nearby. It was only late morning and so, after building a cairn, we decided to descend to the saddle via the easy route and begin the traverse on the north ridge of "Twisted". Overhead a large Buteo hawk was being chased by a crow, with the quarking calls of encouragement from a nearby raven.



Rough Mtn. (left) and Farout Mtn. (right) from the N summit of Twisted Mtn. Photo - K. Ricker.



Spius Mtn. from the upper slopes of Rough Mtn. Photo - K. Ricker.

The granitic rock on the ridge was lichen-wet slippery and to avoid it meant a wet thrash through alpine shrubbery laden with new snow. Suddenly a big vertical gap appeared, but John led out and



John, Jenny, Jean, and Barry on Rough Mtn. with Twisted Mtn. and its N ridge above them. Photo - K. Ricker.

weaseled his way under the krummholz, covering a steep gully, to daylight onto a broad col. From there the party scattered on the easy hike to the highest summit, flushing out a spruce (Franklin form) grouse and a very rare Rock ptarmigan along the way. The latter is a new locality record hitherto unknown for the Cascades of B.C. (Birds of B.C., Vol. 2, Royal B.C. Museum, 1990). It is my first sighting of the species anywhere in the province. The summit (1903 m) had a small cairn on it; the view from it was better, by now under a higher cloud deck, although a tenacious cumulus hung spectacularly on the north face of Mt. Urquhart. The cabin that was found in 2000 was clearly visible beyond the lakes below us and "Logger Mtn." (1923 m) was now enticingly close by to the southwest. However, a triple bagger was not in the cards; a huge ugly black cloud was approaching from the north, over Lytton. Prudence prevailed.

The descent to Spius Lakes was via the south ridge with its awkward vertical steps. One particularly high one was descended by sliding on top of very tightly packed krummholz in a steep gully - a first for all of us and a good laugh. Once down the ridge to a point directly above the lake a



Jenny, Karl, and Jean near Lower Spius Lake with "Twisted Mtn." and its S ridge above. Photo - K. Ricker collection.

huge pile of awkward talus blocks was outflanked by descending a steep and wet heather slope on its south edge. One slip on that stuff was a sure way to nullify a winter ski season. The answer to the footing problem: with rain gear on, it was a nice long, and safe bum slide and very quick compared to those in shorts who elected to tackle it standing up (in full ice axe arrest position!). Now smiling at our good fortune it was only a matter of an easy creek bed to descend to lakeshore, and a very pleasant walk around its south side to pick up the access trail at its edge. Now the two peaks were fully visible, and amazingly the day's circuit around the basin plotted out as a closed loop on the GPS - even the luddites like me were impressed.

Camp was reached at 1430 hours just ahead of the ugly black cloud which began to spew snow while tents were dismantled. During the day new tracks had appeared around them indicating that a crew of ATVs and/or trail bikes had passed through. The precipitation intensified in the drive back to Boston Bar where we refueled both man and mechanical beast at 4 pm. Another climb in our annual Coquihalla pilgrimage had been luckily completed in a very brief weather window of opportunity - - its now been 33 consecutive years and counting for such trips; will we see it to 2007, or beyond?

Participants: John Sapac, Jenny Faulkner, Norm Hansen, Bert Parke (age 73), Barry Berto, Jean Lederer, and Karl Ricker (organizer)

Coordinates: (NAD, 1983); UTM Zone 10. "Rough Mtn" (1st recorded ascent) 620350 East, 552902 North, Z-1909 m "Twisted Mtn " (at least one previous ascent) 620960 East, 5528300 North, Z -1903 m.

BCMC Rutledge Glacier Climbing Camp 31 July – 8 August, 2004

by Todd Ponzini

I had originally planned to spend a week of climbing in the Rutledge Glacier area in 2003, but we headed to Wedgemount Lake instead since our group didn't have enough 4 x 4s. In 2004, armed with my new truck, I was again eager to visit the area. There seemed to be some nice peaks near the Rutledge based on some old BCMC trip reports, and Fairley's guide indicated

that the area was pleasant and not often visited. I did a recce trip about a month before the trip, and was surprised to see that a key bridge on the Kwioek Creek road was about to be removed, which would mean about 10 km of extra walking in each direction. What good are 4 x 4s if they don't even let you drive the road! However, I called the Forest District office in Merritt, and they were very understanding and simply delayed removing the bridge until after our trip. As a result, we were able to drive right to the end and parked at the last landing, about 28 km in from the Fraser River and 66km from Boston Bar.

We arrived in the early afternoon, and it was hot, very hot. We sorted gear, heaved our packs onto our shoulders, and staggered off. We hiked a grand total of 10 m until we hit the bush – what a start to the trip! After bashing our way to the creek we straddled a log to get across, and got very wet in the process, which was actually a nice break from the hot day. Once we were all across and our boots were back on, we headed up through open forest. Based on the map, our route looked like a nice hike up generously spaced contours (note the foreshadowing!).

As we worked our way into the valley up which we were going to travel, the bush started to thicken, although there was always a way through. The valley has a large swamp for most of its length, with steep sidehills covered in either bush or tottering rockslides or both. Not the best for travel with a pack full of climbing gear and a week's worth of food! We hadn't planned to make our proposed campsite that day, but we also hadn't planned on the complete lack of flat camping spots along the way. At last we spotted a semi-level area of bush, and with a few renovations we set up the tents as it got dark.

We awoke to a brilliant day and quickly packed up. The bushwhacking wasn't too bad, mainly B2 but with some B3 and a few short bits of B4. As a reference, B1 is forest walking and B5 means that direct bush-aid is needed for forward/upward progress. We broke out into a large meadow around lunch, and could now see our route to the alpine. The meadow presented a few wet spots and a bit more bush, but then we were in the clear and climbing steadily. I was a little worried that our proposed campsite on the map would be



Tricky creek crossing (above) and upper meadows (below) on the approach. Photos - D. Johnstone.

nothing but talus, but we stumbled onto a perfect campsite at gr 738510 with flat sand for camping, a meandering stream, boulders for lounging and excellent views of Skihist and the other peaks to the north. As it was mid-afternoon, everyone was content to rest, although I wanted to explore the upper lake where I also thought we could camp. Without the pack, I felt as light as air and in about 30 minutes was at the upper lake. Unfortunately, the area was all slabs and snow, and all looked quite bleak – not the nicest place to spend a week.

What to do on our first day? Climb the highest peak in the area, of course! We decided to climb Kwoiek Peak by 2 angles: Alex, Anja and Matt would climb the large snow couloir due east of

camp to gain the glacier that flows northwest from the peak. Derrick, Paul and Todd would climb the glacier to the south and then a steep northern couloir to gain the north ridge. Alex's group found the snow couloir to be challenging but good climbing as the snow was very hard, and crampons and belays were needed. The hike up the glacier to the peak was scenic but somewhat melodramatic after the exciting climbing in the lower section. Derrick's group gained the steep couloir but found an uncrossable bergschrund, so they continued to the northwest ridge, where solid class 3 climbing lead to the north ridge. Fairley calls this ridge Class 4, but he must have been going the other way, since we rappelled the easier climbing and were stymied by a lack of protection on the uphill parts. We traversed to the west face to finish the climb, and the views were stupendous, especially of the wicked looking Tiara Tower. A easy walk down the glacier and a long and tedious downclimb of the lower couloir to camp finished the day.

After the difficult hike in and a long, hot day on Kwoiek, we were all ready for a rest. The fact that Tuesday dawned cool and showery added to our lazy attitudes. After a late start, Matt and Paul hiked to the col between Kwoiek Creek and the Rutledge Glacier and scouted the route to Mehatl. Alex and Todd hiked up to the col between The Woodpile and Mt. Neilson and admired the view to the northwest across miles of wilderness. Some bouldering on the flawless granite near camp rounded out the evening.

The next day was also cool and cloudy, but we packed up and headed out to climb Mehatl. We had hoped to get up the north face, but we decided on the west ridge due to the large amount of soft snow that was still on the face. Paul and Matt's scouting trip paid dividends, and we were across the col and down to the Rutledge in short order. Crossing the flat portion of the Rutledge was tricky, as there were plenty of crevasses and only a thin cover of snow. However, once we had reached the far side and were ready to start ascending Mehatl, the snow cover increased and our tensions eased. The weather had socked in, and we headed up the glacier in a whiteout and light rain to reach the west ridge. The digital pictures that Paul and Matt had taken the day



Tiara Tower (left) and Mehatl Pk. (right). Photo - M. Westwood.



Paul on Mehatl Pk. Photo - D. Johnstone.

before proved valuable, as we could confidently make route decisions and avoid crevasse fields, even with the whiteout conditions. We stopped in 2 places to belay across snow bridges, and eventually gained the west ridge at about the same



Steep snow on Kwoiek Pk. Photo - M. Westwood.

time the weather turned from lousy to just plain awful. We had a chilly lunch on the lee side of the ridge, then dropped our glacier gear and started climbing the west ridge. On a sunny day, it would have been a delightful 3rd class romp up solid



Matt surveys the Rutledge Glacier. Photo - T. Ponzini.



Brockenspecter on The Woodpile. Photo - T. Ponzini.

granite. For us it was driving rain, many detours due to the whiteout, cold hands on wet rock, and slick-as-ice lichen. Eventually, we reached the top and had a quick handshake and read of the register – not many entries! We scurried down, and suddenly the rain stopped and there were actually a few brief glimpses of the next valley over. The skies slowly lifted and we had a good glissade back to the Rutledge, and after trudging back and de-roping we were glad to see that the peak was still in clouds. Somehow you seem



Summit of The Woodpile as a storm clears. Photo - T. Ponzini.

more satisfied with bad weather all day long then days when the weather clears after you've already climbed the peak in a whiteout...

Despite the clearing trend at the end of the previous day, we awoke to plain 'ol rain. This was not a problem for most of us, as we simply rolled over and went back to sleep. But Derrick had to be at a wedding, and he bravely suited up and hiked out to the trucks, where he retrieved his bike and rode all the way back to his car which was parked at the beginning of the Kwoiek Creek road.

Meanwhile, back at the campsite, the showers showed signs of ending around 2 pm. Matt, Alex and I decided to try climbing The Woodpile, as it was not too far away and we'd likely be back by dark. We left at 3 pm and promptly got drenched by one last shower. That was the last of them, however, and a stubborn clearing trend commenced. Some steep snow got us onto the northwest ridge, which turned out to be good 3rd class climbing. The higher we climbed, the more it cleared, until we were basking in the evening sunshine on the summit. We were even treated to a brockenspecter, a rare phenomenon where sun from above casts your shadow surrounded by a rainbow onto fog below. After snapping some pictures, we headed down and had a lovely sunset hike back to camp, which was reached just as the alpenglow faded from Skihist.

Our last main objective was also the hardest, the Tiara Tower. We had saved it until last, and were keen to go and give it a try, especially after the cloudless sunset of the night before. However, when we awoke Friday morning, there was a rapidly descending overcast, a large ominous lenticular cloud forming on Skihist, and the smell of rain was in the air. By 8 am, it was raining in the way that made you think it would rain all day. So since there was no point sitting in the rain all day just to hike out the next day, we packed up and headed for home. The rain was actually pleasant, as we kept cool and the bugs were nowhere to be seen. After all, it was the last day of the trip, so



The group ready to hike out. Photo - P. Hawman.

who cared if we got a little wet? Well, we ended up getting a lot wet. Instead of the tedious sidehilling on wet boulders, Paul, Todd and Matt decided to make a bee-line through the beaver swamp for freedom. The water was usually knee high, and up to the waist on occasion. It was really no faster, since the willow thickets in the swamp were overpowering. All this with a pack full of climbing gear – the beavers must have thought we were crazy. We bushwhacked down the opposite side of the creek on the way back, which was somewhat easier, but the wetness of the bush meant many slips and slides. The stream crossing near the trucks that we forded with such great care at the start of day one was slogged through with nary a blink. In my modest mountain climbing career, I don't think I've ever been wetter! At least it rained all the way home to vindicate our decision to come out a day early. Thanks to everyone for a great time in the hills.

Participants: Alex Boston, Derrick Johnstone, Paul Hawman, Anja Pakendorf, Matt Westwood and Todd Ponzini (organizer)

Grouse Mtn – winter solo assault 2005

by Howard Price

Abandoned by my fellow climbers, I decided to make a rare winter solo assault on Grouse Mountain.

Day one: Following an early start at the crack of 9:30, I successfully passed the first difficult part ascending the steep section around the fence. Following the rocky track for several hours, I finally came to the perilous bridge crossing. Much later I climbed the almost vertical section known as "Devil's Drip," I hacked out a flat spot and set up camp at the 1/4 marker.

Day two: My pack much lightened by having nursed a six-pack of medicinal beer during the night, I charged on. (note to self: next time bring cans not bottles) The first 5 or 6 hours over rough ground at about 70 degree pitch were fairly easy and then I hit the famous "Klimhold's Wall" Five hours on the "Wall" and I staggered to the 1/2 marker. Luckily, there was a 50 x 50 cm flat spot to pitch my tent.

Day three: My pack much lightened by having nursed a bottle of medicinal wine during the night, I charged on. (note to self: next time just bring

“wine in a box” not bottles) The hard part of the climb began. First, I took the “Emmit’s Folly” up the “Grand Wall” and then after lunch the “Life is a Living Hell” line up the “Even Grander Wall.” Both lines were badly iced and in the afternoon there was water pouring down the infamous “Dirtydog” section of “Life is a Living Hell.” Exhausted, I flopped onto the ledge at the ¾ marker.

Day four: Low on food but my pack much lightened by having nursed a bottle of medicinal Scotch during the night, I crept on. The end was in sight, which was just as well because I had dislocated my shoulder on “Klimhold’s Wall” and broken my ankle on “Emmit’s Folly” and I had run out of Aspirin. After just 12 more hours, the chalet was in sight.

Much later: After closing the bar I took the last tram down.

Lake Lovelywater Summer Camp 9 - 16 July, 2005

by Barb Kornatowsky

Saturday, July 9 - After most of us made our pit stop at Starbucks in Squamish, we all arrived at the airport and, as most of us were first timers at this form of travel, we were fortunate to have a number of experienced members who aided Peter in the loading and unloading, while the rest of us muddled through with our toughest job consisting of staying back and letting the others do their jobs. Despite so many inexperienced people, one of our turn-around times was only seven minutes, which I understand is a record setting pace. Eighteen of us were about to embark on a week long adventure to explore the peaks surrounding Lake Lovelywater with one of us, Fred Douglas, dismissing the easy form of transport and hiking to the cabin the old fashioned way, by foot. He had devised a trolley to help with the river crossing and was already en route by the time his other half, Alice Purdey, had arrived at the landing strip. In all the years this camp has been held, no one else has shown the initiative to hike the trail. Go, Fred!!! Three members of our party – Monika Bittel, Dave Scanlon and Grant McCormick – were proceeding on to Red Tit Hut (or so they thought) and the rest of us – Paul Talbot, Bruce Cassels, Alice, Fred, Dennis Lalonde, Donna Bailie, Andrew Dunlop, Clarence

Kornatowsky, Ronald Caves, Bob Woodhouse, Vida Morkunas, Kim Talbot, Natasha Tam, our fearful (oops I mean fearless) leader, Peter Woodsworth, and myself, Barb Kornatowsky.

Black Tusk Helicopters tried, unfortunately unsuccessfully, to get Dave, Grant and Monika to their high camp from every angle. Kudos’ to them



Lake Lovelywater cabin (above) and the group outside it (below). Photos - V. Morkunas.

for trying!! As the first attempt by the Red Tit Hut party to be let down was squashed by weather, they spent their first day lollygagging around camp waiting to see if the skies would clear to allow the chopper to take them to their destination.

The eager beavers, which consisted of most of the rest of the camp, set our sights on bagging the first peak of the week – Iota Mountain. We experienced our first traffic jam at the bridge as we started off for our jaunt. Barb, Clarence and Paul elected to stop at Iota while everyone else, except the school, continued on to bag their second peak of the day – Mt. Pelops. Peter took the school, consisting of Donna, Kim and Natasha, with Vida joining for the day, to practise their ice axe arrests and then summit Iota, not arriving back at camp until about 8'ish. We lost 2 nalgene bottles, Ron dropped his camera, breaking it, Paul's pack slid partway down the mountain and all but two of the cell phone batteries died. Would these mishaps become a trend?



View from Iota Mtn. Photo - C. Kornatowsky.

July 10 – Peter felt sorry for the school after subjecting them to such a long day the previous day so they stayed at camp, working on their techniques. Waking up to a nice day, our hard core group consisting of Andrew, Bob, Ron, Dennis and Bruce bagged their third peak of the trip – Omega. Bruce took out the notch from 4th to 5th while down climbing to the rap station, destroying the integrity of the pitch. During the long wait for their rap turns, Andrew and Bruce caught up on some missing sleep by napping on the summit, but after much debate, Andrew declared himself “the expert napper at a rappel station”. The descent after the rap was slick greenery and was simply a controlled fall through the vegetation, more

admirably called “A Sylvester Stalone workout”. Fred and Alice decided to break away from the hard core group and went off exploring Niobe while Vida, Barb & Clarence pattered around camp and explored the area.

The Red Tit Hut group was finally able to chopper out for the start of their adventure that morning. Fifteen minutes after arriving at the hut, another chopper arrived dropping off Peter Talbot and two army men. Dave, Monika and Grant had taken a tent even though they were told the Red Tit Hut was empty. A good thing as the new arrivals had no tent!

They made camp, then geared up and went up the NE face of Serratus to its summit. They experienced snow to 50°. During the night it rained and the wind blew. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday were a repeat of Sunday. Unfortunately, they couldn't fly out as visibility was down to nil so they spent most of their time watching the air flight engineering unit and Peter Talbot struggle putting up the new ACC Jim Haberl building. Monika and Dave spent hours and hours talking about everything – one session lasted 3 ½ hours straight.

Meanwhile, down in the Lake Lovelywater camp, while dinner was being enjoyed by all, the clean up crew decided that only one plate per food group should be allowed so they wouldn't be washing dishes all night.

July 11 – We woke up to rain so everyone, yes I mean everyone, took the day off with most of us participating in an excellent and very informative map and navigation course conducted by Ron. At some point during the day we considered offering Peter as a virgin sacrifice to the weather gods, but decided that such a lie would only bring even fouler weather. During the afternoon, Vance, Alice's son, showed up looking like a drowned rabbit for an overnight visit. Talk of munter hitches, butterflies, beer knots, prussiks, etc. was flying around the tables for the better part of the day. With their new learned navigational skills from Ron, the school then planned their route to Mt. Thyestes for the next day.

Kim and Paul shared their Cadbury chocolate straight from England with the group and then proceeded to end their evening with bondage and....



Paul and Ron enjoying a “bath” on the trail to Mt. Thyestes. Photo - C. Kornatowsky.



Descending Alpha Mtn. Photo - C. Kornatowsky.

July 12 – The three musketeers - Kim, Natasha and Donna - were let loose on the mountains accompanied by Paul, Clarence and me. After planning their bearings etc. for a simple, quick hike to Thyestes, the group experienced dense fog on the start of the ridge and soon realized the “walk in the park” was over. Navigation came into force and they found the ridge longer and steeper than planned. We all arrived at the top of the col when, lo and behold, who should we see, but Ron who met up with us there, disgustingly having left almost one and one-half hours after us. We made it to within eyesight of the top, but a turnaround time had been set and was stuck to. Paul, Clarence and Ron continued

on and discovered a bath tub in the middle of nowhere and played around there, with Ron going to the peak. Fred, Alice and Bob took Vance to the Niobe/Lydia col where he departed for Mt. Sedgwick while the other three continued on to summit Niobe.

July 13 – Bob, Bruce, Ron, Andrew and Dennis climbed the west side of Alpha with a nice view to the north and west, but everywhere else was soaked in. The rock was dry and they only had one wet, mossy area to rappel from on the south side that drops down from the ridge.

The school and others spent the morning learning how to set up rescue devices. Paul then led the school out in the field at the Russian Army Camp to put their new taught crevasse rescue skills into play. Much to the school's dismay, when we got back to the lake the “Alpha Team” had left us the “tank” (the red rowboat) and taken the good boat. That's when we realized that chivalry in the mountains is dead!

Vida and Alice toured the Russian Army Camp with cameras in hand while Peter enjoyed his day off from teaching and relaxed at camp and watched the delivery of the parts for the new \$15,000 privy.

July 14 – The Red Tit Hut team (Dave, Monika and Grant) were finally able to fly down to the Lake Lovelywater camp that morning to sun, warmth and the rest of the group. They had spent the majority of their time stuck in a tent due to rain so Grant stopped long enough to grab his fishing rod and then headed home in the chopper. Dave and Monika ascended Niobe's east ridge looking to climb anything after being tent bound for so long. A very, very fun class 3-4 scramble.

Peter took the school and others up the north face of Omega. The descent consisted of a 30 m. rap. The weather decided to hold for the day despite the gloomy look of the morning and we had a gorgeous, sunny day.

The Omega team arrived back at camp about 8 pm feeling so proud of their accomplishment that a few adult beverages flowed freely before and after the 9 pm dinner.

Ron, Bruce, Andrew and Dennis departed the hut at 8:30 am for the northeast ridge of Niobe. Dave and Monika followed and joined the others at the summit. They descended over Pelops to



**Donna rappelling off the N Face of Omega Mtn.
Photo - C. Kornatowsky**

the Niobe basin where they met Fred and Alice also descending from Niobe. Ron concurred with Peter's comment when he called this route "very sweet".

July 15 – Weather that day was overcast with showers, so it was a lazy day for most of us. Andrew actually resorted to taking two naps to fill

his day. During some clearing periods the boats were used to play as well as to give Kim and Paul paddling lessons. Fred did trail clearing again!!!

July 16 – We woke up to inclement weather again, but as the day progressed, it improved. A group started on a trek to Pelops and then the plan was to proceed to the summit of Niobe. Vida and Natasha went as far as the col, but then elected to turn around and played in the snow rather than fight with the krummholtz en route to Pelops. Barb and Clarence traveled to the summit of Pelops and Paul, Donna and Kim continued on to Niobe where they met up with Dave, Peter and Monika, who came up Niobe's north ridge. Paul, Donna and Kim went down with Dave, Peter and Monika via Niobe's NW side to the lake, thus doing a circle route of the peak. They also had the good fortune of a boat ride back to the cabin. The 6 of them (and packs) crammed into the rowboat, staying quite

close to shore as it was very overloaded. Dennis, Fred and Alice explored the areas of the Russian Army Camp. Andrew and Bruce climbed to the col and then decided to nap for a few hours (definitely our sleeping beauties) and Ron and Bob summited Lydia and still made it back in plenty of time for the potluck dinner, setting a new speed record.

Peter gave out his awards and, unarguably, Ron and Bob won with 7 stars each. The school

sang a melody to Peter thanking him for his hard work, to say nothing of his patience and also extended a heartfelt thanks to Ron for his navi teaching and Paul for enlightening them on crevasse rescues. We feasted on so much food that we actually had to leave some behind, but the pièce de resistance was Ron's entertainment of the evening with Dave joining in the "double bivy show".

I can only speak for myself, but would like to say that a better group could not have been handpicked for our trip. This was definitely an experience to remember and I would like to extend my thanks to Peter for his dedication to this successful camp for the past number of years and also to Fred for his hours and hours of trail clearing that he performed during the week.

BCMC Garibaldi Park Summer Climbing Camp 30 July – 7 August, 2005

by Todd Ponzini

"If you want to grow old, eat lots of french fries" – Franck Prat, during a rest break

I chose the peaks near the eastern end of Garibaldi Lake as the location for my 2005 hike in/hike out summer climbing camp. Our plan was to hike up Helm Creek, head to Gentian Pass, find a nice campsite and spend a week climbing and exploring. A mix-up in the directions of how to get to the trailhead delayed our start by a few hours, but the BCMC satellite phone saved the day and we were packed up and heading up the Helm Creek trail at the crack of 3 pm. Due to our late start and heavy packs, we spent the first night at the Helm Creek campground along with some other campers. The mosquitoes were out in force but the weather was very pleasant.

Sunday started off cool and cloudy, and we packed up and headed off towards the Helm Glacier. It is a very gentle glacier and we didn't use crampons, even on the bare ice of the lower glacier. Near the top, we used the rope as the snow was now covering the ice, and even a small slip into a crevasse would have been very unpleasant while carrying heavy packs. We had a leisurely break at the top of the glacier, and scouted out potential camping spots. Although Gentian Pass is a very pretty area, camping there would have involved billions of mosquitoes. We

decided to head up onto Polemonium Ridge and try find a nice spot with some breeze to keep the bugs down. The steep descent to Gentian Pass had some tricky spots, and we did some slipping and sliding on the damp grasses with our heavy packs. After hiking west from the pass and climbing a hundred metres or so up Polemonium Ridge, we found a nice spot with views of Garibaldi Lake and the Sphinx Glacier, a good water source and a nice breeze. McKay and I hiked further up the ridge to scout out other sites, but the best one was back where we had dropped our packs. The clouds closed in after dinner, and we had a windy and rainy night.

We awoke on Monday to clearing skies and grand views all around. Even though we could plainly see the park's busiest areas such as Battleship Islands and the Black Tusk, our few extra km of hiking had left us in pure wilderness, and it felt like we had the whole park to ourselves. In fact, we saw nobody until we returned to the Helm Creek trail on the hike out. We decided to climb Mt. Carr for our first objective, and started hiking up Polemonium Ridge marveling at the views. As I hiked, I remembered (most of) a quote from Fairley's introduction to the Garibaldi Park section of his guide: "Anyone who has not made the 10 km hike up Rubble Creek to Garibaldi Lake has missed seeing a landscape that had captured the hearts of mountaineers since the earliest days of climbing in British Columbia".

We reached the edge of the Sphinx Glacier and roped up. As we hiked up the glacier, I was impressed with the amount of snow cover. While the 2004-2005 winter had little snow at low elevations, it seemed like a good year for snow up high as the glaciers were mostly still covered with a thick layer of snow. We decided to use a loose gully to gain the north ridge of Carr, and had to climb the gully one by one as rockfall was unavoidable. The north ridge turned out to be a nice solid scramble, and we lounged in the sun on the peak while reading the register and gazing at peaks. A careful descent back down the loose gully and a short glissade brought us to where we'd left the ropes, and after tying in we had a pleasant afternoon hike back to camp.

The satellite phone was very useful for providing reliable weather forecasts, and the



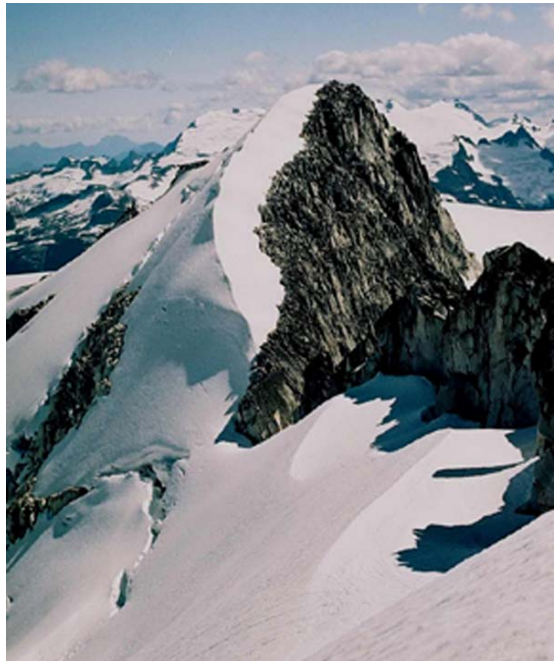
The Bookworms. Photo - R. Woodhouse.



Todd on the Helm Glacier. Photo - R. Woodhouse.



McKay on Castle Towers Mtn. Photo - M. Savage collection.



Parapet Pk. from Isosceles Pk. Photo - M. Savage.



Descending Isosceles Pk. Photo - R. Woodhouse.

weather on Tuesday was predicted to be perfect. We wanted to have a long day and explore the Isosceles area, so we left camp at 6am and headed off. The snow on the glacier was perfect, hard enough not to sink in while walking but soft enough so that crampons were not needed. We made good time and had a break at The Bookworms, which looked much more impressive up close than the view one gets from down at the lake. We were unsure of the best route down to Gray Pass, but we followed our noses and after a few detours around crevasses we arrived in the pass in time for an extended lunch.

The view from Mt. Carr the day before suggested that one could climb Isosceles, then



Todd, McBride Range, and Mt. Pitt. Photo - M. Savage.

traverse north over Parapet and climb both in a high-level loop trip from Gray Pass. The route looked uncertain, but we decided to give it a go. A long rising traverse that featured great views of Crosscut Ridge lead to some steep snow and a small saddle just southeast of Isosceles. We had entertained thoughts of climbing Hour Peak as well, but it was a hot day and we were only halfway through it, so we scrambled to the summit of Isosceles on flawless golden granite. After a break, we descended a large windlip of snow and downclimbed some 3rd class rock to the col between the two peaks. From there, a gradual climb up the northern glacier lead to one lead of steep snow and the summit of Parapet. Unfortunately, as I was downclimbing Isosceles, a large sharp rock toppled onto the top of my left foot, and revived an injury that I had sustained in a rockfall about six weeks previously while descending Slesse. The pain slowly subsided and I carried on with the help of a few Advils, but I was a little worried about how my foot would fare on the way back to camp.

We had a quick break on the top of Parapet and admired our traverse line over Isosceles, which turned out to be a great mountaineering route, although it seemed improbable from below. We had a long glissade down the eastern slope of Parapet, and then a short trudge back to Gray Pass. We found some shade for a rest and

eventually started the climb back up to The Bookworms, which was tiring after a long day in the sun. The shadows were growing longer as we crossed over to the Sphinx Glacier, and as we hiked back to camp the light was



Climbing Parapet Pk. Photo - M. Savage.

great for snapping photos. Norbert even stayed on Polemonium Ridge to watch the sun go down and take some sunset photos.

Wednesday dawned crystal clear, and we discussed what to do while swatting mosquitoes over breakfast. Bob and Serena had to hike out that day, and Norbert had to leave the next day. We decided to move camp up to a perfect mini-meadow that was at an elevation of 2300 m on the side of Castle Towers as it would be less buggy and would have even better views. Unfortunately, on the hike up Polemonium Ridge, my foot was really bothering me, and I had to call it quits as I didn't think my foot could handle any more climbing and still be able to hike out to the cars. Franck, who as a doctor was designated official trip physician, concurred that based on the symptoms I shouldn't do much more climbing or else the injury might worsen.

We decided that Anja, Norbert, McKay and Franck would climb Castle Towers and that we'd all hike out as a group on Thursday. I was very disappointed, as I had wanted to climb Mt. Davidson the next day and also try to climb Phyllis' Engine, a peak that I had come within 3 vertical metres of climbing back in 1999. To add insult to injury, the weather was predicted to be good right into the weekend. The group headed off for Castle Towers and I slowly walked to the top of Polemonium Ridge with my water bottle, a book and some snacks and spent the day reading,

lounging and watching the others climb the peak. Entertainment was provided by the seracs of the Castle Towers Glacier as they collapsed in the hot sun, sometimes with impressive results. As I saw the group heading down from a successful climb, I walked down and met them for the hike back to camp.

Thursday was going to be another hot and sunny day, and we packed up and were away from camp by 8am as we wanted to do the climb

from Gentian Pass to the top of the Helm Glacier in the cool of the morning. We spread out, everyone taking their own route to the top. When we met up again at the top we had a long break and a last gaze at the peaks around our home for the previous five days. The hike down the glacier to the trail was very pleasant, and although my foot was sore, it was holding up well. Upon reaching the trail we started to see people again, and we stopped for a long break near the Helm Campground. After many days above the treeline, it's always a big contrast to be back down in the green world of the forest. The hike down to the Cheakamus River was long and hot, and my foot was not in a good mood when we finally reached the bridge over the river. We waded into the river and splashed around for awhile, which is always a treat on a hot day, and the refreshment of the swim made the last trek to the parking lot pass quickly.

Thanks to everyone for a great time in the mountains – can't wait to go back!

Participants: Norbert Eckert, Serena Levy, Franck Prat, Anja Pakendorf, McKay Savage, Bob Woodhouse and Todd Ponzini (organizer).

Spearhead-Fitzsimmons Traverse

9-12 April, 2004

by David Hughes

Easter 2001, I led a very successful traverse from the 900 m level on the Railroad Pass Road west to Mt. Samson and on to North Creek via the

Boomerang Glacier. I had hoped to repeat a variation of this trip Easter 2004. Unfortunately the Squamish Forest Service continues to lock the gate on the Upper Lillooet Forest Service Road at the bottom of the Railroad Pass – Hurley River Road in the Lillooet Valley. As



a result, North Creek, our descent return route, now leaves you about 11 km away from the locked gate at the bottom of Railroad Creek. The Forest Service has now effectively made a helicopter or snowmobile a requirement, if one is to avoid long return trip traverses from North Creek. Given the access problem, I was forced to cancel the scheduled North Creek Club trip.

Peter Gumplinger had a problem. Peter now had an all girls trip and he was looking for several additional males. So Erich, Peter O, Cameron and Mark and I joined Peter, Silke, Nancy, Ilze and Carol. Peter was relieved to have us join as he was fighting the flu and it was a test of will for him to make it around the Spearhead.

We started on Good Friday on a bright sunny morning with 10 participants. We rode the Blackcomb lifts to the top of the Showcase T-Bar and started the Traverse late morning. We avoided Blackcomb Peak and the Spearhead as they can be easily reached from Blackcomb ski area. As it turned out, there were few other peaks we would bypass on this year's traverse. It has become popular to do the traverse in either one (a race) or two days (few ski runs). We had decided to climb a number of peaks and enjoy more ski runs. The original traverse in 1964, before Whistler and Blackcomb ski areas, took 7 days.

Our first lunch stop was on the east side of Decker Mountain on the high traverse. Cameron and Mark decided to take the lower shorter route and we did not meet up with them until our camp

On the traverse. Photo - E. Hinze.

at night. Five of us were feeling fit so off we went to ski up Decker Mountain (2421 m) before returning for lunch with the others. From there we proceeded southeast along the ridge toward Mt. Trorey, passing under Trorey's north face. We hadn't planned to climb Trorey (2461 m), but its steep east face looked inviting for skiing – so off we went. All eight of us were on top soon thereafter and we were rewarded with great views and a good ski run.

From there it was a short jaunt to the col on the south side of Mt. Pattison. Most of us abandoned our skis and climbed the higher south peak of Pattison (2483 m) via its south ridge. We then skied down onto the Tremor Glacier where we debated whether to camp or keep going.

We elected to proceed to our first camp a few hundred metres beyond the Tremor-Shudder col on the Platform Glacier at 2580 m. The day was not done, however. The beavers were eager and we all went off to climb Tremor via its east ridge. The peak of Tremor is the high point on the traverse (2691 m). A beautiful sunset and evening rewarded us for what had become a long day.

The next morning was cold and clear and the snow was hard and icy. Cameron and Mark decided to complete the traverse in two days and they were off quickly. The remaining 8 delayed putting on the skis by climbing Shudder Mountain above our camp (2671 m). In case you are wondering, several of the names at this end of



Scenery on the traverse. Photos - E. Hinze.

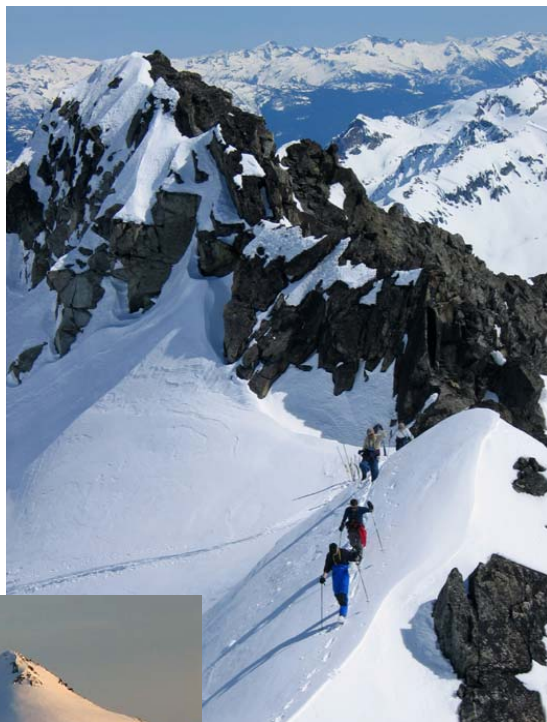
the Fitzsimmons Creek Valley were chosen because earthquakes were felt during initial climbs in the area. On returning to the Platform Glacier we headed southeast toward the Quiver – Ripsaw Col. This col, like a number of spots on the traverse, could be very confusing in bad visibility.

From this col three of the girls – Nancy, Silke and Ilze, joined Erich and me to climb the south face of Quiver and on to the high point at (2676 m). This climb required ice axes and a fixed line was set up for the descent.

We then proceeded across the head of the Ripsaw Glacier, although a ski run down this glacier could be well worth the effort when conditions are good and time permits. Through a col at 2440 m and down on to the Naden Glacier where we left our packs for a trip up to Mt. MacBeth. We approached the peak (2639 m) via its col with the Ripsaw and up its steep north face. Mt. MacBeth is a great vantage point and a good ski run was experienced down the top part of the Curtain Glacier. This glacier if followed to the bottom would put you near the head of the Fitzsimmons Creek Valley. The Curtain and the MacBeth Glaciers are two of the potential escape routes if bad weather on the traverse traps you.

The original traverse, which was completed by Club member Karl Ricker and party, went down the Naden Glacier and back up Detour Ridge to the Diavolo Glacier. Parties now prefer to cross the Naden Glacier near the top, passing through to the MacBeth Glacier via another 2440 m col. After proceeding $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down the MacBeth Glacier, we crossed a steep slushy slope on a downward traverse to the Iago Glacier. A better suggestion would be to ski down this slope to a lower point on the Iago Glacier even though it means more uphill on the south side of the Iago Glacier valley.

We skied up to the top of Iago Glacier and to a col or notch in the ridge at 2400 m where one proceeds down to the Diavolo Glacier. We were in the groove now, so off with the big packs and up to the top of Mt. Iago (2506 m). While on top, we were rewarded with a great view of two parties skiing the very steep north face of Mt. Fitzsimmons. Several parties were camped on the platform near the notch on the Iago Glacier. We decided to ski



**MacBeth and Ripsaw
Ridge. Photos - E. Hinze.**

down and camp on the Diavolo Glacier at 2200 m in the soft evening snow rather than face ice in the morning.

Easter Sunday brought another beautiful day and six of us decided to tackle the north face of Cheakamus Mtn. (2588 m). This mountain is often missed on the traverse, which is a pity as it offers a little climbing on the ridge and a great north face ski run. The peak was climbed by the north ski face and along an exposed ridge west to the peak. Erich had climbed it many years previously by the northwest shoulder. Snow conditions will affect your decision about



Camp near Pattison Col. Photo - E. Hinze.



lago (above). Photos - E. Hinze.



Quiver from the col. Photo - E. Hinze.

which route to try, although our route is probably the better ski run.

After climbing Cheakamus, we broke camp and headed up the long haul on the Diavolo to a south gully that separates Mt. Fitzsimmons' two peaks. We climbed the gully and the east peak on foot to reach the top at 2603 m. Again a little climbing was involved to get to the top.

From Fitzsimmons we proceeded through the col with Mt. Benvolio (rather than going over the top of Benvolio) and proceeded to the northeast side of Overlord Mtn. Here we left our packs and backtracked to the west side of Mt. Benvolio (2613 m) then over to the top of Overlord (2625 m). Our day ended down on the Overlord Glacier where we camped at 2250 m below Refuse Pinnacle.

Easter Monday brought overcast skies and light rain in the late afternoon. We had sufficient time to climb Whirlwind (2427 m) and Fissile Pk. (2439 m) via its south ridge. The latter was largely on foot. On top of Fissile we met a Dutch skier who had come up from the Russet Lake Cabin to ski one of the extreme north facing chutes.



Views of Overlord Mtn. Photos - E. Hinze.

The balance of our trip out via Singing Pass, Oboe, Flute Bowl, Burnt Stew Basin and Whistler ski area was hastily completed to avoid the drizzly rain. A great traverse when the weather and



On Cheakamus Mtn. Photo - E. Hinze.



Cheakamus - Diavolo camp. Photo - E. Hinze.

conditions are good with lots of chances for ski runs and many ski and modest climbs along the way. We climbed 15 peaks along the traverse, missing most noticeably Diavolo and Angelo



Fitzsimmons - Benvolio col. Photo - E. Hinze.

Peaks, which would have required another day for us.

Four day participants: Peter and Silke Gumpfinger, Nancy Henderson, Erich Hinze, Carol MacMillan, Peter Oostlander, Ilze Rupners, David Hughes.

Two day participants: Cameron Long and Mark Visscher

**Prospector Peaks Mini Ski Camp,
9-12 March, 2006
by Todd Ponzini**

My original idea was to organize a weekend ski trip to the Prospector Peaks, but after I reflected on the past trips that I've had to the area, I remembered that I've always wanted to stay a third day...matter of fact, a fourth day would be nice too, what with the longish drive and all.....and the idea of a four day mini-ski camp was born!

Prospector Peaks is a triple summited mountain located up the eastern branch of Phelix Creek, an area that is less known than the western side of Phelix Creek where the Brian

Waddington hut is located. Thursday morning found us skiing up the road under clearing skies, and spirits were good as there was fresh snow and lots of sun in the forecast. At the end of the road, we skied into the forest and followed a mostly open route to the broad pass south of Prospector, where we found an excellent flat meadow with running water for our camp.

As we set up our tents and as the sun went down, the temperature started dropping – fast! We ended up cooking in our tents and bundling up for the chilly night. I woke up overnight and although it was -15 in my tent, it was a nippy -25 outside. At least the snow would be good!

In the morning we discovered that our camp was not quite far enough from the ridge on the other side of the valley for us to get the sun, at least until about 9:15 am, and at 10am the sun disappeared back behind the ridge until 11:30! We headed for Prospector, skiing north from camp up a gentle valley, where Peter and Bob decided that they'd forgo the peak and make a few runs in the valley. They watched the rest of us as we continued to the high shoulder west of Prospector itself. As we crested the shoulder, we were surprised to see a group of ten skiers come up from the other side! It turns out they were a guided ski touring party from Seattle that was staying at the McGillivray Pass Lodge. They looked at us quizzically when we told them that we were in tents in the -25 degree night....

They proceeded to make a run down the north glacier, and once we saw that they were going to break a trail up the main part of the glacier towards the highest peak, we decided to follow them. The run down the glacier was good, and they packed out a nice uptrack to the final peak. We watched them as they made a long run down the glacier, but we wanted to finish the climb. Diana elected to stay on the ridge, and David, Ilze and Todd made their way towards the rocky tower that guards the summit. The snow was very hard and an axe was necessary to make the climb safely. Ilze graciously lent her axe to David and waited in the sun while David and Todd climbed the peak. The climbing was class 3 on mostly solid rock, but it's always trickier wearing ski boots. The final summit was reached, and we joined up again at the col where Diana was waiting. Now came the best part - a



Ski terrain near Prospector Pks. Photos - R. Woodhouse

600 vertical metre run down smooth slopes right back to camp. In the past, I've skied this slope in conditions that have ranged from breakable crust to very breakable crust, usually accompanied by flat light, but that day it was a superb run through light powder in the sun. Back at camp, we found that Bob and Peter had constructed a nice kitchen, and we bundled up and had an enjoyable dinner under the stars.

Next morning seemed even colder, so we waited to get up until the sun hit the tents. We decided to ski towards the unnamed peak to the south, which David wanted to try and climb. This area has some wonderful gladed runs, and Peter, Bob and Diana decided to take advantage of the sun and the excellent snow. In the sun the snow was good, but in the shade it was as dry as cold smoke. They made a leisurely three runs, while David, Ilze and Todd traversed under some menacing cornices and after a long search decided on the safest looking route to the peak. They gained the ridgeline that lead to the peak, but the snow on the ridge was bottomless and climbing the ridge would have been excessively frustrating. As compensation, they skied up a 2160 m bump and had some nice views down the far side. A good run on steep, solid snow took them down off the ridge, and after crossing the bowl they skinned up for a superb run down through the steep glades to the valley bottom. One last skin up left them directly above camp, where they laid down a final showboating run for those already in camp as the sun turned the snow orange. Another chilly dinner under the stars and off to bed.

Our last morning didn't seem as cold....or were we just getting tough?!? The last night was probably the coldest, as even the running water of the creek froze. We decided to do a bit more skiing, so we all headed out to ski another bowl near camp. The snow was perfect and we picked our lines and whooped our way down, with yours truly going for big air but succeeding in a big cartwheeling wipeout. It was one of the best runs yet, but alas it was time to head home. We packed up camp and had a mostly easy ski through the forest, as we picked the best parts of our route in and avoided the not-so-good parts. The logging road had a crust on it that made for tedious skiing,

but eventually we all reached the bottom. It was a big change to be back at the cars in the warm sun and wearing light shirts after the cold nights, the icy water bottles and the frozen food of the past four days...it seemed that spring was here at last.

Participants: Diana Diaconu, Ilze Rupners, David Scanlon, Bob Woodhouse, Peter Woodsworth and Todd Ponzini (organizer).

North Creek
18-26 March, 2006
by David Scanlon

How time flies. I'd been to the cabin on a Michael Feller trail clearing trip in the past, but didn't realize how long past until I read the log in the cabin - 7 years previously in 1999. Every year with good intentions I've thought of going to the cabin but always got distracted for one reason or another. This was to be the exception though so onward and upward to the cabin for a spring ski trip.

Pemberton helicopters charters out their machines in the winter to a heli-ski operator every day, so to get flown it we had to be there by 7:30 am - we had to get up really early! We all made it though, did our pre flight and were off. Three of us leaving from the airport and the others from the Lillooet river road up the valley. We first three found that we had a good snow pack this year and we had a lot of work to do before we could go and play. Peter Woodsworth started shovelling off the roof to get at the chimney, Peter Oostlander began shovelling out the front door, and I the outhouse. Peter Oostlander had the most dangerous job as there was a large cornice hanging over the front door. In the cabin we found a long nylon rope that was thrown over the cornice. The two Peters pulled the rope back and forth in a sawing motion and cut it off. It came down with a most gratifying crash. By now the others had arrived and all were helping to get things organized.

Gear was then put away, packs and boxes emptied, and food stored in the refrigerator {snowbank}. Then we started to do what we came for. Our early start would let us start skiing sooner as work was finished by noon. We went due west from the cabin up the nearest valley towards Sugus Mtn. In my exuberance I ended up leading all of the way to a small summit at the head of the



**The cornice over the cabin door is felled.
Photos - B. Wood.**

valley. Guess I didn't mention that the weather forecast was for clear and sunny; and it was! A sound kept coming now and again that we couldn't quite figure out. AARRGG! Turned out to be snowmobiles. They were a long way off on the Boomerang Glacier. Even over 5 km away they could be heard. Thank goodness they didn't get to the hut! We were now about 1.5 km from Sugus Mtn., but we figured that we'd done enough for one day with the early start so began the ski back down to the cabin. The snow was quite good except near the bottom where there was some crust that could be avoided for the most part.

At our pre trip meeting the idea was put forward to take turns cooking for breakfasts and dinners. It was a great idea. We all felt a little bit bad though as one of our group wasn't included as she was away for the meeting and her partner ended up not coming leaving her on her own. We didn't find this out until the airport so couldn't change things at the last minute. As the days went by though she did ok as we all had lots of food and she received numerous treats. Did I mention that we ate well? Very well! Pancakes with maple syrup, granola and yogurt, fresh oranges, spaghetti and meatballs, pie, pork chops, potato

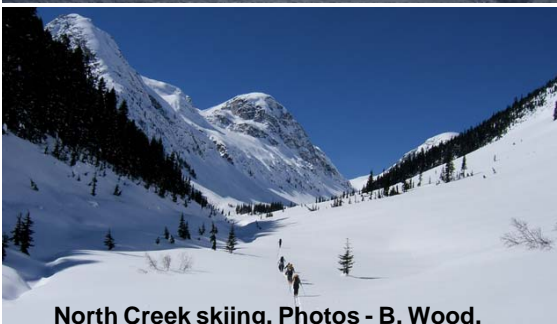


North Ck. scenes. Photos - B. Wood.

chips, marshmallows, apples, strawberries twice. We may not have gained any weight, but, we didn't lose any either! There were also a few kinds of beverages to be had with various amounts of alcoholic content. Contentment after each meal. Yes! We were all sufficiently sufficed.

The next day we were away at the crack of ten for the Hemionus Mtn. area. The route took

us SW towards a long east west valley then turning south and up the south eastern slopes. The going was most pleasant, the weather clear, and the company great. A high point was attained and a decision was made to not go any higher as there was a risk of avalanches. The snow was very good, so down we went. It was so much fun that we skinned back up to do it again. A slightly



North Creek skiing. Photos - B. Wood.



North Creek skiing. Photos - B. Wood.

different different line was taken down this time and we continued to the valley floor and back to the cabin. One thing happened that stood out this day - Peter Woodsworth had borrowed Brian's bright lime green cap for the day. He lost it. It was such an awful color that some were glad that it was gone. No names will be mentioned to protect the guilty.

Day three and we went over to the area of Sessel Mtn. Our route took us up the Boomerang Glacier to it's high point between Sessel and Delilah. The day was sunny and getting quite warm. As we started up Sessel after lunch it kept getting warmer. The conditions were good until we came to an icy crust that we couldn't get past, so we decided to go back down. The slope was nice and steep so we all had a good ski down. It is a long run down the Boomerang Glacier but it was over all too fast. We all mulled about for a while near the bottom trying to decide what to do next. We decided to go back to the cabin. An early finish to another great day.

Why is the weatherman right when he should be wrong and wrong when he should be right?? The forecast for day three was for bad weather and the forecast was right. We tried to go to Sugus Mtn. but we had to turn back as the wind, snow, and visibility, were all against us. So, chores were done about the cabin. Three large blocks of wood were brought out from underneath the cabin and split to be taken in and replenish the supply. The stove was propped up, cleaning done, inventories done of the tools and kitchen supplies. A fire escape ladder was put in for the rear upstairs

window. The front porch was sagging quite badly so all the snow was shoveled off it and braces were driven in under it for support. It was also noted that most of the posts holding up the cabin were in bad shape and needed replacing. All that was done was written down for future reference. No! I wasn't a slave driver. Everyone did their share of the work voluntarily, really, just ask me and I'll verify!

About 25 cm of snow had really come down overnight. A winter wonderland was there. A few of us went for a short ski up each of the lateral moraines then went back to do some transceiver practice around the cabin. This is something that we never do enough of. We found out that one of ours wasn't working right and a couple of us learned more about our equipment and how better to use it.

Thursday morning looked to be a bit better as the snowfall had eased off a bit and visibility was better than in the past 48 hours. We wanted to get over to try and see the Pebble Glacier, which on the maps looked to be quite large. Alas this was not to be as the wind was howling and visibility at altitude wasn't good. Our ski down wasn't very much fun as the slopes were icy. You know; it wasn't fun at all! A great many worried moments were had as we all slipped and skidded down. Anyhoo – at the valley bottom and part way back we stopped for a leisurely lunch. This was to be our last lunch although we didn't know it then. Back at the cabin it was +4° C, and dangerous too! With the relatively high temperatures the large



The happy mob in the cabin. Photos - B. Wood

balls of snow on the trees were falling down all around, and on us. Some of them were quite large. The snow lower down around the cabin was very soft.

We talked about the conditions for a while and the decision was made to call out to get a weather report. Pemberton helicopters said that the forecast was that the freezing level was going up to 1900 m. meaning that the snow was only to get worse. Then the freezing level was to go down to the valley bottom. In effect freezing all of the soft snow making it unskiable. I can't remember who broached the subject, but the question was asked – did we want to go out a day early? With the weather getting so bad; and it was then raining, the consensus was yes. I then called back and asked if we could be picked up the next day. Yes was the answer. Our ride came the next morning



and we were going home. Dinner was had in town and then goodbyes were said. Same time again next year? Who knows?

Our North Creek Cabin is in a great location for skiing and hiking. The spring approach is avalanche prone but the rest of the summer it is fine. The cost of our winter fly in was **The photographer - B. Wood.** about \$325 each. I hear of so many trips that people pay upwards of \$800-\$900. Yeah, I know. Someone else does the dishes and cooking. but, isn't that a small price to pay to stay in a great cabin, in a great area ! Am I going back? You can bet your booties!

Participants: Participants: Carol MacMillan, Monika Bittel, Peter Woodsworth, Peter Oostlander, Brian Wood, Leone Knaus, and David Scanlon (organizer).

Central Coast Mountains

Tellot Climbing Camp
25 July – 7 August, 2005
by David Hughes

It had been a number of years since the BCMC had held a general climbing camp in the Waddington area, and in particular, the Upper Tellot. Our last Club climbing trip there was in 1997 when we successfully climbed Mt. Tiedemann by its North Ridge. A second purpose of this year's camp was to repair the BCMC's Plummer Hut, located beside the mid-point of the Tellot Glacier at 2680 m. The hut is the only shelter in the Waddington range and was built by the BCMC in 1969. The hut's original outhouse was long gone and the Club cabin chairpersons - David Scanlon and Peter Wordsworth - had designed and built a prefabricated biffy to be installed during the camp.

Twelve members signed up for the camp along with two others who were going in to try the

original ascent (Wiessner-House) route on the southwest side of Mt. Waddington. The party arrived in two shifts with the first group flying in Sunday, July 25 and out on Tuesday, August 3. The second group flew in July 28 and out August 7. The second group included participants who were attending the Lake Lovely Water Camp just prior to this camp.

We arrived at Tatla Lake late Saturday afternoon after a 9+ hour drive. As we were approaching Tatla Lake, we noticed a spectacular and interesting shaped cloud over the west and northwest sky. As we got closer to Tatla Lake and the turn-off to Bluff Lake and Mike King's White Saddle Helicopters, we recognized the cloud as a large colourful plume from the two large forest fires that plagued the West Chilcotin in the summer of 2004. The largest fire was in the Lonesome Lake Valley on the southwest side of Tweedsmuir Park. This fire wiped out the historic and locally famous homesteads in the valley and was similar in size to the 2003 Kelowna Okanagan fire. The second fire was on the interior extremities of the Pantheon Range above Kleena Kleene. This fire was the reason for the normally peaceful Bluff Lake – White Saddle base being a beehive of activity. Mike King's was the centre of command for the fire fighting effort in the Pantheon Range. At the peak, there were over 150 firefighters based out of Bluff Lake. We were told that there were between another 300 to 350 firefighters for the Lonesome Lake valley fire.

Despite the first priority being the firefighting command, Mike was able to get us into the Plummer Hut early on Sunday the 25th. Steve Flynn, from Blackcomb Helicopters was our pilot for both the Sunday and Wednesday groups. He was flying an A-Star, which was larger than Mike's Jet Ranger, but Mike only billed the Club his Jet Ranger rate. The A-Star, however, turned out to be advantageous as the second group was able to fly directly to our high camp SE of Dragonback Peak at approximately 3100 m.

We arrived before 8 am on a beautiful clear day. Under Dave Scanlon's direction, Theo, Norbert, Marcus, Paul and I started to clear a site for the biffy. After several hours, the assembly began. The new biffy, definitely the Club's finest,

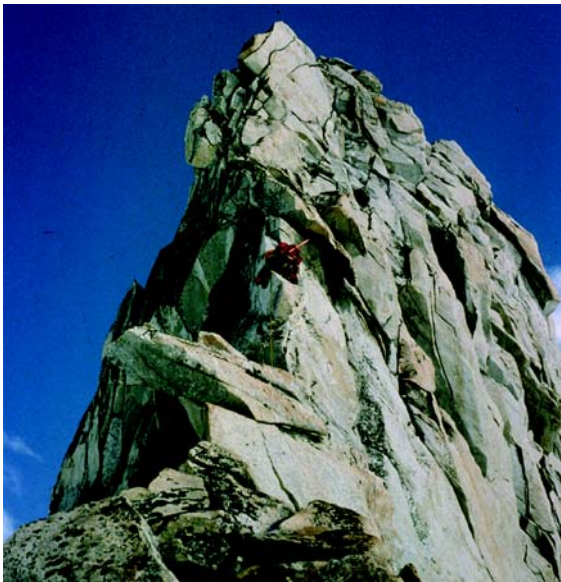


Construction of the new outhouse. Photos - D. Hughes.

was designed and prefabricated by Peter Wordsworth.

Sensing the weather/visibility would deteriorate with the shifting winds and forest fire smoke-haze, Marcus, Paul, Norbert and I set off to climb the standard west route of Claw Peak. The main route is rated 5.6 on good rock but its exposure provides a good warm-up for harder routes in the Upper Tellot. There is an awkward discontinuity on the ridge between the hut and the start of the rising ridge. This break in the ridge requires a difficult move above the 5.6 rating but can be avoided by going lower and around.

After climbing the Claw, we returned to find Dave and Theo making slow progress on the biffy.



Claw Pk scenes with the Plummer hut to the right of the peak on the ridge above the snow ramp (top and middle) and on the hardest pitch (bottom). Photos - D. Hughes.

They had found that a number of prefabricated pieces would not line up as they were supposed to. Prefabricated pieces often do not align up as well in the mountains as they do in town.

The next day, Paul and Marcus set off for high camp. Norbert, Theo and I decided to stay and help Dave Scanlon with biffy construction, but not before a walk to Photo Point, a half kilometre west of the hut. After great pictures, we proceeded back to the weak snow bridge across the bergschrund to Claw Ridge and the hut. I proceeded safely across but Norbert following me decided to take himself and the entire bridge into the schrund. With a very unstable edge, it took the better part of an hour to retrieve Norbert. The very dry weather and low winter snowpack had left everything in the area with difficult to very difficult bergschrund crossings. Getting to the rock on the Serras, for example, was very difficult that summer.

The rest of the afternoon was spent working on the hut. The biffy was supposed to assemble in a couple of hours. Alignment problems and extra work caused by our battery powered screwdrivers running out of juice led to a lot more work than anticipated. All in all, several days were spent working on the assembly and the surrounding concrete work.

On Tuesday, 27 July, Theo, Norbert and I left for high camp at the ridge area known as the Dragon's Tail camp. The route up the Tellot Glacier is normally very straightforward. The 2005 low snow pack, however, caused more diligence as we had to do some zigzagging around crevasses. Dave Scanlon stayed at the cabin to work on some additional Plummer Hut repairs.

Wednesday brought serious forest fire smoke as the wind was now from the north. As the five of us were about to set out for the southwest face of Mount Shand, the second group arrived with Blackcomb Helicopters. We were now 10 as Peter joined Dave to check on cabin and biffy. After greeting the second party we were off to the Shand-McCormack col. This col is usually the easiest way onto the Tellot Glacier from the Radiant and points north and east. This year climbers had to rappel down from this col to Cataract Glacier. This is the preferred route to the Cataract and Radiant Glaciers according to Don Serl's Guide and our experience at the 1997 Tiedemann camp



Mt. Asperity, Serras, Stiletto Pk., Block Pk., and Mt. Dentiform from Plummer hut. Photo - D. Hughes.



Looking up the Tellot Gl. from Claw Pk. Photo - D. Hughes.

supported his advice as the col was relatively straightforward that year.

Mt. Shand's southwest face is normally a class 3 snow climb, but the dry conditions had made the face a good warm-up ice climb. After summiting we retreated via the south face with some significant down climbing to navigate the eastern edge of the bergschrund.

On Thursday eight of us climbed the East Peak of Dragonback. Marcus and Paul, having climbed the Dragonback traverse earlier, headed off to climb Serra One. After climbing the East Peak, six of us continued on to complete the traverse to the West Peak. A great class 4 climb with a difficult short 5.9 section near the low point in the ridge half way between the east and west peaks. In the meantime, Marcus and Paul had great difficulties getting across the bergschrund on to the rock of Serra One. Subsequent route finding had them crossing between the east ridge and the southeast face with the resulting climb being more difficult than the east ridge 5.4 rating. Back at camp later we were joined by Dave Scanlon and Peter Woodsworth.

On Friday 10 of us headed to the upper Tellot Glacier. Again serious bergschrund problems limited our summit ascent of Tellot Dome to three. Meanwhile Marcus and Paul played successfully on Mount Tellot and Tellot Spires.

The good weather continued and the group split to tackle separate peaks. Marcus, Paul, David H., and Nancy successfully climbed Mt. Argewicz by its south buttress. A mid 5th route and well worth doing. The two summits of Argewicz do not easily connect so we retreated by taking two long near vertical rappels to just reach the glacier below. Again great views were had of the Radiant Glacier and Mt. Tiedemann. Our 1997 route on Mt. Tiedemann looked next to impossible this year.

Dave Scanlon led the others over to Termination and a class 3 climb. Norbert and Theo climbed the W ridge of Mount McCormick, which proved to be more difficult than its 4th class rating.

August 1 had seven of the group climbing Eaglehead via its N ridge, while Dave Scanlon and four others climbed Mt. Shand via the rock slopes on the W side of the S face snow slope.

On August 2 and 3 the first group flew out from the Plummer Hut. The second group stayed

the rest of the week but poor weather prevented any significant climbing.

A special thanks to Dave Scanlon and Peter Woodsworth for taking on the Plummer Hut biffy project and cabin repairs. Thanks for many more who chipped in. BCMC would also like to acknowledge a donation of helicopter time for transportation of one sling load for the biffy. Mike King of White Saddle and Steve Flynn of Blackcomb Helicopters shared the donation.

Congratulations to Nic Ranicar and Colin Wooldridge for successfully climbing Mt. Waddington by the original Wiessner-House Route.

Participants:

July 25 – Aug. 3: Norbert Eckert, Marcus Dell, Paul Morton, Theo Mosterman, David Hughes (organizer)

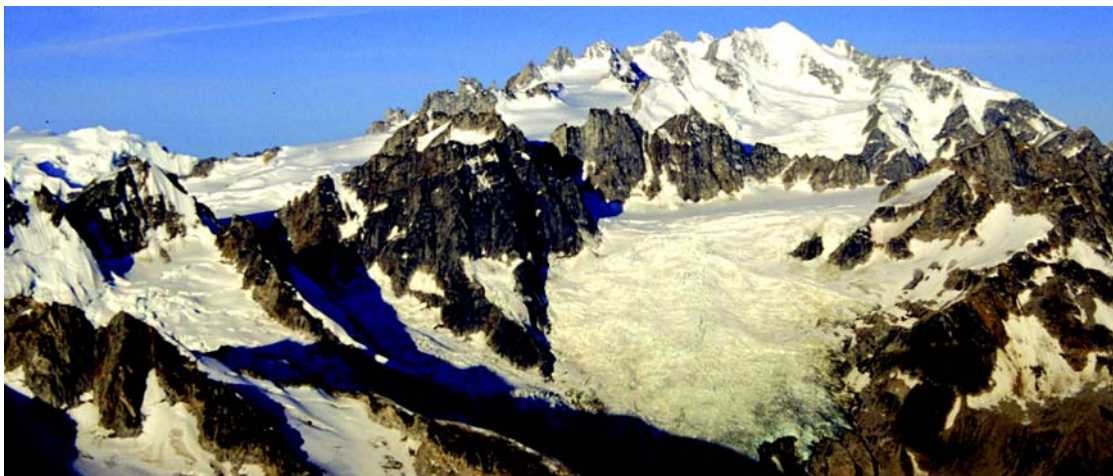
July 28 – Aug. 7: Isabel Budke, Marg Ellis, Nancy Henderson, Carol MacMillan, Brian Wood, Peter Woodsworth.

David Scanlon was in at the camp for both periods.

**The Plummer Hut Chronicles
or a privy of a tale
24 July –7 Aug, 2004
by David Scanlon**

The BCMC hadn't been on a trip to the Waddington area for a number of years. Reports had been coming in about the hut needing some upkeep and repairs. Also there wasn't an outhouse there. So, being new to the position as cabin chair person, a trip was suggested to go to the area and do the necessary repairs. Dave Hughes did the yeoman's work of organizing and recruitment of the slave labor. Oops, did I mention that to go on this trip the participants had to work? Participants would be asked to give some time cleaning up the area and help in the construction of a new privy. Peter Woodsworth was the co-chair on the committee and he took on the task of building the new outhouse. Being the superior carpentologist he is, he designed and built a new space age, state of the art, outhouse.

The drive to Mike King's was for the most part uneventful except for passing through a large area where a forest fire had raced through. We flew in the next day, arriving at the hut at 7 am.



Mt. Tiedemann from the north. Photo - D. Hughes.



Mt. Waddington from the Tellot Gl. Photo - D. Hughes.

Clear and sunny. And now to work. The privy was flown in and Theo and I started to work finding a place to build it and start construction. Dave Hughes, Paul, Norbert, and Marcus went to climb Claw Peak.

Next day Paul and Marcus left for Dragontail camp north of the hut and about 700 m higher. The rest of us went for a stroll to Photo Point. The

views from there were stunning. The Tiedemann Glacier far below, Sunny knob, Mount Munday, and far above all else, Mount Waddington itself. Off in the distance we could see Marcus and Paul, in the midst of a crevasse field on their way to Dragontail camp, with us wondering why they were there. Later they would tell us that from their perspective they couldn't see the crevasses and



Looking southeast from the Plummer hut.



**Heading down the Tellot Gl. to Plummer hut.
Photo - D. Hughes.**



Heading to Tellot Dome. Photo - D. Hughes.

they were also following old footprints made when the snow was a little deeper, and there were more substantial snow bridges. We were to learn later that one of them went through to his pack and needed aid to get out.

We then ambled back to the hut. To get to and from the hut from the Tellot glacier required a snow bridge. As the year goes on the snow slowly pulls away from the rock leaving a smaller and smaller snow bridge to cross the moat. Earlier

Paul and Marcus had crossed the snow bridge with full packs on their way to the high camp. Dave Hughes crossed, then Norbert. Then, no Norbert! The snow bridge collapsed and he disappeared. Theo belayed me to the edge and I looked down and saw Norbert. He was ok! He was partly buried, and he'd lost his ice axe, but was all right. He managed to dig himself out and then with a great deal of effort found his ice axe too. In assessing his situation he saw that the best way to get out was to just walk out at the far end of the moat. He was under belay and did just that. We now had to put in a new way to get to the hut, which we did. We set up a rope for safety just to the south where the slope was much steeper.

On Tuesday Dave H., Norbert, and Theo were off to Dragontail camp. I worked on the privy. During the day a couple arrived; they had been climbing on the Serras. Their plan was to climb for a few more days then hike out. They were to meet up with us a few days later at the high camp.

The next morning a chopper arrived with Peter Woodsworth and gear but only Peter!! Unbeknownst to me the other party had all made arrangements to fly directly to the high camp. Strange, as Peter, I, Brian and Isabel were to all share gear. The others were now at the high camp with no stove and no tent. They ended up making do with borrowing from others until Peter and I arrived later. Peter and I then worked on the privy and the hut. The hut had been around for nearly 36 years and was in need of a lot of TLC. A great deal of work was done on it. One thing that was most disturbing was that people had been taking rocks from the foundation to build wind breaks for their tents leaving only one 2 by 6 holding up the entire left front of the cabin. This all had to be built up again. The siding took over 200 new screws, the front door was repaired, as well as the stove, air vent, porch [as best as we could], and a large amount of garbage packed up and taken out. More work needed to be done. Perhaps at a later date.

The next day was to be a moving day for Peter and I. We packed up and went up to the Dragontail camp to join the others. We met them just as they were leaving for their day and we all exchanged stories and caught up on the news. With not much room there we had to do a great deal of work to make a tent platform for ourselves.



Smoke coming up the Tiedemann Gl. Photo - D. Hughes.



On the summit of Dragonback. Photo - D. Hughes.

Dragontail camp was at the bottom end of a rock ridge that looks like [you guessed it] a dragon. It was about the only place to camp without being on snow. The views were breathtaking.

As mentioned earlier we drove in through a forest fire ravaged area. A large forest fire was burning to the north of us and some days we could smell the smoke. Other days the sky was very hazy with smoke and there was ash on our tents one morning. It made for spectacular sunsets but was something we could have done without.

The time came for some of us to go. Those going out were the ones who had flown directly to the high camp. Some of them in their wisdom brought in more than they needed just because they were flying in and they now had to take all the

extra gear and food out with them. Some had two packs on - one on their back and the other trailing behind or to the side as it drifted all over. One person also had a 22 litre can trailing, swinging all over the place. They were to be picked up at the hut and flown out. The forecast was for a low pressure system to come into the area and the clouds started forming as the party left. Those of us remaining hoped the others could get out. Around 4 pm we got completely socked in. We heard at least one chopper so we knew that least some of our party got out.

Snow. Wind. Cold. Well, we were at 3100 m elevation but it was the beginning of August and we were snowed in. No visibility. The wind was really blowing on the ridge top. The other two from the hut were now here too waiting for a break to hike out. The next day the same. Also the following day, except that we had had enough. The forecast was for more of the same so we all agreed to try to get down to the hut. We were fortunate in that Peter had taken GPS readings on our way in. I'd been in this situation once before and didn't like the idea at all. We were going to follow the GPS readings to the cabin, fine. But the person leading couldn't see where they were going and the possibility of falling into a crevasse was very real. Not that they would perish (we of course were completely equipped), but the experience was one that we really didn't need, By the way, did I mention,



Serra 3 and 4, Mt. Asperity, and Mt. Tiedemann (left to right). Photo - D. Hughes.



Looking towards Crenelle Mtn. from the Tellot Gl. Photo - D. Hughes.

I was to lead! It was rather unnerving not knowing where you were going but all went well and we all arrived safely. We stayed the night in the hut, as Mike King couldn't get in to fly us out. More work was done on the cabin while we waited. Gear was put out at the landing area to be ready for the morning in case our ride could arrive.

Our ride finally arrived and away we went. With two large forest fires burning out of control, there were then 13 helicopters stationed at Mike King's small airfield, with about 350 forest fire fighters all under the control of the BC Forest Service. It was just like flying over an army camp. Tents, tractor trailer units, generators, all of the

equipment needed to keep 350 people and equipment going. One of the reasons we couldn't get out was that all of the pilots were at, or near, their maximum allowable hours of flying time, and the Forest Service was loath to give them time to get us and take them away from fighting fires. Later we found that Peter and Brian didn't get out until the following day.

All in all we had a good time. The hut area is well worth going to again. Would I go back? You betcha! The summits climbed were Claw Peak, Dragonback Peak (East and West), Eaglehead-Tellot Dome, Tellot Peak, Mt. Argewicz, Termination Peak, Mount McCormick, Mount Shand, and Serra 1. Marcus and Paul were the most ambitious and did some of the harder routes – Argewicz's mid 5th South buttress-, Serra 1 (5.4 and an 11 hour round trip). Norbert and Theo did a challenging climb up Mt. McCormick. One of the other more challenging routes was the snow and ice climb up and down Mt Shand, and Dave Hughes' hard work on Tellot Dome.

The whole purpose of the trip was to build an outhouse for the hut and get as many repairs done as possible in the time allotted. All on the outing helped and should take pride in a job well done. The club owes them thanks for their efforts in making this happen. It always helps when members give a little back to the club no matter what the chore.

The Plummer Hut was built in memory of Paul and Winnie Plummer and their two children who perished in a plane crash in 1968. They were very active mountaineers. One of the things the club did was to put up a memorial in the hut and at Mike King's airstrip along with a write up on its history. The cabin and trails committee also installed envelopes and a notice about the club's hut fees in the hut on the premise that those using the club's facility would contribute to the upkeep. Especially, now, with the new outhouse. To date we've received nothing! Zilch! Nada!

We now have a 2500 m state of the art crapper with arguably the most awesome view in the world. Well worth a trip in itself to see.

Hardest part of the trip was spending 72 hours cooped up in a tent with Peter and Brian. No last names to be mentioned to protect the

innocent. Best part was the accomplishment of all that was done. Thanks to all participants.

Mount Waddington: Queen of the BC Coast Mountains by Ron Dart

It was thought by many, for years, that Mount Robson (3954 m) was the reigning monarch of all the jutting rock peaks of BC mountains. But, in 1925, BC climbing legends, Don and Phyllis Munday, having climbed Mount Arrowsmith (near Port Alberni), descended, binoculars in hand, gazed northward across the Georgia Straight, and saw a white crowned peak that altered the direction of their hiking lives. Don summed up the telling experience, in his insightful and evocative way, when he said:

"Phyl's eyes shone as she handed me the binoculars and pointed to a tall mountain nearly due north through a new cloud-rift. The compass showed the alluring peak stood along a line passing a little east of the head of Bute Inlet and perhaps 150 miles away, where blank spaces on the map left ample room for many nameless mountains.

It was the far-off finger of destiny beckoning. It was a marker along the trail of adventure, a torch to set the imagination on fire."

The peak that could be seen through the cloud-rift was the rock spire and spear point of Mount Waddington (4016 metres). Such a sighting did, indeed, set the climbing imagination of Don and Phyllis on fire. The fire provided warmth and much light for many for decades. The quest was on to visit, dine with and get to know the queen of the BC Coast Mountains. The Mundays made many attempts, beginning in the spring of 1926, to scale the arduous glaciers, ice fields and plant a firm flag atop Mount Waddington, but they were denied such an honour. Munday Peak in the Waddington Range was named after Don/Phyllis, but the torch was passed onto others.

'Mystery Mountain', as Waddington was called by Don, welcomed and drew many to her challenging embrace. The publication of **Round Mystery Mountain** (1935), by Sir Norman Watson and Edward King, emerged from the hard decade long research done by the Mundays in the area. **Round Mystery Mountain** is replete with historic photographs of the journey round the feet and

lower garments of Waddington. The tome is well worth the curious read for literary and historic reasons, although those with a more technical interest in the Waddington Range and the many glaciers in the area might crave something more demanding. But, **Round Mystery Mountain** does hold the reader spellbound with well crafted phrases and descriptions of the tough and rigorous nature of the adventure round mountains others longed to do more than go around.

The fire lit when Don/Phyllis Munday first saw Waddington continued long after Watson/King had finished their ski adventure round the base of this queen of the glaciers and sentinels of old. The fire that was lit upon first sighting Waddington in Don inspired not only many a literal hike and climb in the area, but pen also took to parchment. Don Munday was a superb wordsmith, and he could tell a tale well. And, in the 1940s Don wrote the tale, in a most inviting way, of the many trips he and Phyllis and others took to the Waddington area.

Don's literary efforts were rewarded by the birth of **The Unknown Mountain** (1948). WW II was now well over, and **The Unknown Mountain** walks the interested and curious reader, chapter by chapter, into an important phase of BC history and mountaineering. Those who are more than mere rock jocks and given to mountain machoism cannot help but be held, entranced and intrigued by the way Phil unfolds and unravels the many trips to Waddington in **The Unknown Mountain**. Fine photos abound, and the descriptive text draws the reader into the actual experience of being in the area. The 27 chapters in this well wrought literary urn are not to be missed. And, to think this was a form of mountaineering before much of the modern garb and gear we have these days. Weights carried were immense, tents were not as light as today and climbing equipment much less sophisticated. But, Don and Phyllis and others sought to know this unknown mountain, this queen of the Coast Mountains, and they went back year after year to draw ever closer and know ever

better the delights and joys of Waddington, the unknown and mystery mountain.

Don Munday died in 1950, and most of his voluminous writings are still in the archives, awaiting someone to draw them forth and publish them. **The Unknown Mountain** can still be purchased, but the bulk of Don's missives and novels, essays and prose patiently linger, eager for someone to publish them, to walk them into the public reading environment.

Phyllis Munday continued her passion for the mountains after Don died, but trips to Waddington waned as age thinned out energy and aches and pains demanded their due. A new generation, in the 1950s-1960s, turned to Waddington to test their skills against the queen of the Coast Mountains.

The publication of **Aware of the Mountain: Mountaineering as Yoga**, by Gil Parker (VP of the Alpine Club of Canada from 1976-1980), tells some interesting tales of



Waddington. Parker has a great admiration for Roger Neave, and Neave attempted to (**Photo - D. Hughes**) climb Waddington in 1934. He never made it to the summit, but his ascent paved the way for Fritz Weissner and Bill House who scaled the rock turret in 1936. **Aware of the Mountain** is a finely written missive, and within its many compact and evocative pages, Parker recounts a climb with Roger Neave up Mount Noel in 1977 when Neave was 71 years of age (p. 99-107). **Aware of the Mountain** also includes Parker's time spent at Waddington and the Plummer Hut (p. 90-99).

The publication of **The Mountaineers: Famous Climbers in Canada** (1979) was significant for three reasons. First, the book by Phil Dowling was published through Hurtig Publishers, hence the important Canadian nationalist, Mel Hurtig. Second, Dowling does a fine job, chapter by chapter, of highlighting the lives and main ascents of significant climbers in Canada, BC and the Coast Mountains: Charles

Fay, Val Fynn, Albert MacCarthy, Conrad Kain, Ed Feuz, Phyl Munday, Fred Becky, Hans Gmoser, Brain Greenwood and Dick Culbert. The Waddington Range is important for such a climber as Dick Culbert. **The Mountaineers: Famous Climbers in Canada** did much to reveal a vivid mountaineering history in Canada, and, rightly so, it concluded with the climbing exploits of Dick Culbert.

Both **The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology** (1994) and **Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering** (2000) build on the pioneering work of **The Mountaineers** yet deepen and broaden the work and research of Phil Dowling. **The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology** suggests, and legitimately so, that 1960-1975 in the BC Coastal Range should be called 'The Culbert Era in the Coast Mountains'. Bruce Fairley is spot on when he says, 'Dick Culbert was, for the 15 years between 1960 and 1975, the most famous and prolific climber in the Coast Mountains' (p.273).

Chic Scott, in **Pushing the Limits**, very much agreed with the assessment of Fairley about the role of Culbert in building on, yet going beyond, the heroic work of Don and Phyllis Munday and their work in the Coast Mountains and Mount Waddington (p. 237-241). Culbert's two missives on BC mountaineering, **A Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of British Columbia** (1965) and **Alpine Guide to South Western British Columbia** (1974), are now classics and part of the rich lore of the West Coast. Both books were essential building blocks and foundations stones for the fuller yet somewhat dated, **Climbing & Hiking in Southwestern British Columbia** (1986 & 1999), by Bruce Fairley.

It is most interesting to note that Dick Culbert dedicated **A Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of British Columbia** to 'the land of beyond' - its explorers, its dreamers, and its victims. 'The Land of Beyond' is a poem by the well known Canadian people's poet, Robert Service. Service was, in many ways, a poet and prose writer of the peaks, and he wrote with much artistic beauty and descriptive insight of the Gold Rush days, and the arduous and death dealing trip by many over the Chilkooot Pass. This brief description from Service's **The Trail of Ninety-Eight: A Northland**

Romance (1910) tells it all. "*Like a stream of black ants they were, between mountains that veered up swiftly to storm smitten palisades of ice*". Such a line, and there are many like them, could not but hold and charm Dick Culbert. This is why, in the 1960s, he wrote many a verse in the ballad like style of Service, and why **A Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of British Columbia**, drew its inspiration from a title of a poem by Robert Service.

The climbing life of Dick Culbert connects well with both Glenn Woodsworth and Arnold Shives. Dick, Arnold, Glenn and Ashlyn Armour Brown were in the Howson and Seven Sisters Range in 1962, funded by the BC government with a grub stake grant. But, it was in 1964 that Arnold Shives took to the SW Range of Waddington in the Franklin and Confederation glacier area, while Glenn and Dick took to higher peaks and did more ascents in more challenging areas of Waddington. Glenn wrote the first climbing book to the Chief in Squamish in 1967, and Glenn's recent book, **Hot Springs in Western Canada: A Complete Guide** (1999), remains the best book to date on hot springs in Western Canada, Washington and Alaska. There is little doubt that Arnold Shives is one of the finest and most nuanced mountain painters in British Columbia. His work has been highlighted and showcased in many magazines and art galleries. Trevor Carolan's article, 'The Wilderness Sacraments of Arnold Shives' (*Image*: Summer: 2001), walked the extra mile to make abundantly clear the sheer vigour and depth of Arnold's artistic contribution to West Coast mountain painting. The Waddington Range has done much to welcome and inspire painters and poets, climbers and cloud walkers of the finest and best. Dick Culbert, Glenn Woodsworth and Arnold Shives, without a doubt, have paid much homage and rightful due to the Queen of the Coast Mountains.

Chic Scott, to his credit, goes far and does a good job on unpacking the many ascents of Waddington in his chapter, 'Coast Mountains' (p. 226-254). The graphic and eye gripping images in **Pushing the Limits: The Story of Mountaineering in Canada** up the ante to a much higher degree and quality about reporting on Canadian and BC mountaineering. Scott has rendered more than exquisite yeoman's service

to the tale and drama of mountaineering in Canada, the BC Coast Mountains and Mount Waddington. The passion and mountain commitments of Don/Phyllis Munday, Dick Culbert, Glenn Woodsworth and Arnold Shives are raised to new heights, and the queen of the Coast Mountains could not help but be more than pleased with the services offered and effort rendered at the royal court fully decked in the purest of white.

It would be impossible to hike much further in this journey without mentioning another hiking/climbing couple that has done much to point the way to the Queen of the Coast Mountains. Martin and Esther Kafer became key people in the BCMC, and in 1969, they played the lead role in building the Plummer Hut near Mount Waddington (2004 BC Mountaineer, p. 120-124). 'The Plummer Hut, 1969 to ? (I hope a Long Time), by Martin Kafer, tells in exquisite and not to be forgotten detail the reasons for the building of Plummer Hut and the building of it at the base of Claw Peak. The front door of Plummer Hut gazes into the long glaciated face of Mount Waddington. In many ways, Martin and Esther Kafer became the Don and Phyllis Munday of the 1960s-1970s in the Coast Mountains and beyond, and they should be recognized for such a full and hearty contribution to both the building of the Plummer Hut and the support they gave to so many in the BCMC and beyond.

It might be valuable to backtrack for a few fleeting moments. The fact that Don Munday's, **The Unknown Mountain**, was so well written did not go unnoticed. There was many a call for a reprint and new edition. But, such a reprint had to also deal with the extraordinary lives of Don and Phyllis. Hence, in a recent republication of **The Unknown Mountain** (1993), Angus M. Gunn, has written an admirable and generous introduction to the book and the life of Don and Phyllis. 'Behind the Unknown Mountain', by Gunn, hikes the reader into the fascinating life of the Munday family and their life in the BC mountains. Gunn's timely introduction to the legendary Munday family should be read alongside the recent biography of Phyllis Munday. **Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer** (2002), by Kathryn Bridge, although wanting in some context and depth, does offer a fine primer

into the creative and energetic mountain lore of, mostly, Phyllis Munday. There was a desperate need for such an introduction to the climbing life of Phyllis Munday, and Kathryn Bridge should be offered many a kudo for her primer. Much more work needs to be done on the life and times of Don and Phyllis, the BC Coast Mountains and Mount Waddington, but it is impossible to understand the appeal and drama of the Queen of the Coast Mountains without significant attention being paid to the Munday family and Dick Culbert.

The cover of the **Canadian Alpine Journal** (2002) has a splendid picture of Bruce Kirkby in the Mount Waddington area (peaks and snow aplenty in the background), and the **Journal** is not shy about including in the 2002 edition an article on Mount Waddington.

The most recent and without doubt the most important book on the Waddington Range is by Don Serl. Serl contributed a significant chapter to **The Canadian Mountain Anthology** ('The Traverse'), and he was featured in **Pushing the Limits** (p. 254-259). Serl has, as a climbing prince of Waddington, been to the stately Queen often, and he has lived to write about his many climbs. **The Waddington Guide: Alpine Climbs in one of the World's Great Ranges** (2003) stands in a class of its own. The book is written well, the photos speak volumes and the routes listed, mentioned, tracked and traced, tell us many things about the various routes and paths to the Queen of the Coast Mountains. There is no doubt that Don Serl's **The Waddington Guide** is a keeper that will last for many a decade. Serl has paid his dues, and he writes about what he has said, seen and done (while listening closely to what others have done, seen and said) in an articulate and readable manner. Those who dream and hope of taking to and seeing the Queen of the Coast Mountains (and the great ranges round Waddington) should sit, chew on, inwardly digest and thoroughly absorb Serl's **The Waddington Guide**. The book is a comprehensive guide to not only Waddington but the beauty and fullness of the best of the Canadian Coast Mountains.

We have come quite a distance from 1925 when Don and Phyllis saw Mount Waddington from Mount Arrowsmith. The imagination of many has

been set on fire. The Queen welcomed Don and Phyllis, but she never allowed them too close to her mystery. Fred Becky and Dick Culbert drew much closer to the unknown mountain and the mystery, and they lived to write many a fine book about the Queen of the Great Ranges. Don Serl has taken the challenge to a greater and fuller level.

Southern Chilcotin Ranges Traverse Second Installment – 6-14 August, 2005

by Karl Ricker

How many trips the B.C.M.C. has taken to the Chilcotin Ranges over the last 100 years I cannot hazard a guess. For 2005, the Club in cahoots with the Whistler Section of The Alpine Club of Canada completed its second full west to east traverse between Lorna and Tyaughton Lakes. Caucasian penetration of the area likely began well over a hundred years ago in the hey day of exploration for the sources of placer gold being found in the dark sands of the modern and abandoned courses of the Fraser and Bridge Rivers, which began in the 1850s and 60s. But as for mountaineering trips there is scarcely a murmur about this region in any journals of the B.C. Mountaineering Club or The Alpine Club of Canada. The V.O.C. Journals, however, do have a few reports on ski mountaineering in the Spruce Lake area, and Fairley's climbing and hiking guidebook notes that, for anyone planning an extended backpacking holiday, this area "offers a refreshing change of pace from the more rugged parts of the Coast Mtns. to the south and west".

The first known long traverse by the club from lake to lake was "led" by Brian Wood in 2003 and, according to his lengthy account in the B.C. Mountaineer (2004), it was a near epic of repeated postponements, civil unrest, intermittent unwarranted changes of route and objectives, party dissension by a group of old forgetful fogeys, with periods of lassitude interrupted by uncontrollable bursts of peak bagging, and what's this – bystander-style of leadership from the rear! Nonetheless, fourteen mountains were climbed, including the highest in the area, "Sluice Mtn." (2906 m).

So for the second trip a new leader emerged from the ranks with 7 of the 10 previous trip

participants signing up to tolerate again the above-noted antics. I, as one of the seven, volunteered to be the leader, while Woodie thought it to be to his best advantage to steer clear of the whole operation altogether. Scheduled for the summer of 2004, the group once assembled would decide when it was to be advantageous to set forth. But the leader was suddenly steered to a knee operating room in late May to an unexpected result: a "Don't walk" edict for six weeks! Ouch! The doc said the trip could be no sooner than late August, and as the knee very slowly responded to rehab in early August, without much hope of being ready to carry a pack two weeks hence, the weather, thanks to the All Mighty, changed to a very wet cycle, and thus there was a graceful and logical exit from what would have been a lame medical excuse to cancel it.

So, year 2005 brought out the call for participants on a re-scheduled traverse. It was now down to 6 of the 10 originals of 2003 but more than a dozen other interested parties responded. Then a phone call to the Tyax Air Service pilot, Dale, for a flight of 15 participants departing on August 6 hit a snag. New park regulations that limit the fly-in visitors to Lorna Lake at 12 per day is firm. Miraculously last-minute cancellations by some, when a flight deposit was requested, brought it down to the 12, but another "ad-hoc" group who agreed to be of no acquaintance to us would come on August 7.

There we have it: **Team A**, that is the Ardent Alpine Adventurers, left on the sixth with leader nowhere near the front, and with defined objectives of Trail Ridge Mountain (area's 3rd or 4th highest at 2851 m), Relay Mtn. and Cardtable Mtn., plus a first day optional hike to Elbow Mtn.; and **Team B**, standing for **Behind** (always), and with their own statement of purpose – avoid all bushwhacking, bugs and babble from those in **Team A**, who left on the following day. For the 16 (**A & B**) it was a 3 to 1 sex ratio, but the fewer women were decidedly strong.

• **Ziff "Light-weight" House** – a returnee with a ridiculously light pack, again, and he is certainly confused on the shortest way (by time) between Bradner and Goldbridge (especially on a Friday afternoon);

- **Fred “Everywhere” Douglas** – hasn’t slowed down, who provided lessons on spelunking and balancing on volcanic terrain in airy conditions;
- **Alice “Unflappable” Purdey** – can recognize a rest afternoon, and knows how to pick the optimal campsite; an early starter, each day;
- **Al “Five cents” Nickull** – marshaller extraordinaire, another returnee, with two cracked ribs;
- **Doug “Birthday” Wylie** – lead the route in 2002 with a private expedition, but suffers from memory lapses; had a unique knack of reducing his pack weight 5 to 10 grams each day by being a generous librarian;
- **Peter “Hop-A-Long” Stange** – knee brace and all (with the biggest pack), he used pain killers to walk the distance, quickly;
- **John “Stoic” Halliday** – another returnee, who had trouble fathoming each day’s announced start times (subject to political change);
- **Rich “Web site” Strobl** – slow, but strong, but with a great pictorial ending, just see it on WWWI;
- **Evelyn “Tenderfoot” Feller** – well not really, armed with a huge pack but ill-fitting footwear, she booted right along;
- **Ed “With Excess Food” Zenger** – last-minute organizer when the leader disappeared for all of July, finished trip with 12 breakfasts left in his pack;
- **Bert “Retro” Parke** – at his age what would you expect; a fine performance to the awe of all;
- **Adrienne “Marathoner” Hughes** – another birthday person on the trip, but three years younger than Doug who was one of three at median age – “Go Figure”;
- **David “Ex-Boss” Hughes** – team “B” leader along for the ride;
- **Silke “Legs” Gumplinger** – always in shorts and hence a member of the triple “B” brigade;
- **Peter “Atomizer” Gumplinger** – works at TRIUMF but so far has not yet learned how to zap horseflies; and
- **Karl “Organizer” Ricker** – leader, not always up front, but nonetheless the leader, with the

retro pack – a Trapper Nelson, it’s not quite 100 years old, but half way there.

Amazingly, the entire contingent managed to re-group at the end of each day’s outing, except for Hop-A-Long who leap-frogged ahead on some days. No one strayed off course unless it was an intentional exploration sortie. The mapped walking distance was 87 km but allowing for slope, zig-zags, etc. at least 110 km of travel at an average of 12 km/day transpired. Up-hill walking (by map) was at least 6130 metres while descending was a farther 6400 metres, or a cumulative 1400 metres of up and down each day – – – 1750 metres is probably closer to reality. The latest in GPS gear, Fred’s had a map screen to show where we were on the 1:50 thou topo maps, proved to be useful as the satellite reception was very good.

In all, 14 peaks varying from high summits, to rounded hills, to two sets of volcanic gargoyles were ascended (Fred bagging the most at 10 or 11) with an overall average elevation of 2406 metres. The highest, Trail Ridge Summit, is higher than nearby Mt. Warner (not ascended) and is either the third or fourth highest in the area. A GPS elevation on “Sluice Mtn.”, ascended in 2003, and corroborated by an aeronautical chart, is 2906 metres, making it the highest. The second highest is an unnamed neighbour to the east, roughly 30 metres lower, while the neighbour to its west “Crushed Gravel” vies with Trail Ridge for third – both with identical map contours (9300 feet), and Fred’s GPS providing a 2851 metre reading while on its summit.

While traversing through Taylor Basin on the second to last day, a memorial plaque to Bob Harris (famed historian and bridge engineer of VNHS) was found at the col entrance to Pearson Creek basin. This tablet pronounces the ridge extending on either side of the col to be recognized officially as Harris Ridge. Hence the peak indicated on the map in the B.C. Mountaineer, 2004, as “Sunset Mtn. (2306 m), should be now referred to as Harris Ridge (summit west). All party members climbed at least one of the three prime objectives of the trip, and in all 13 ascended Trail Ridge; 14 reached the top of Relay Mtn., and 14 summited on Cardtable Mtn. All party members ascended at least two peaks over the

nine-day period. The weather was remarkably good and hot throughout, except for one late afternoon spatter of rain in (big) Paradise Creek basin, after successfully climbing Relay Mountain (2702 m).

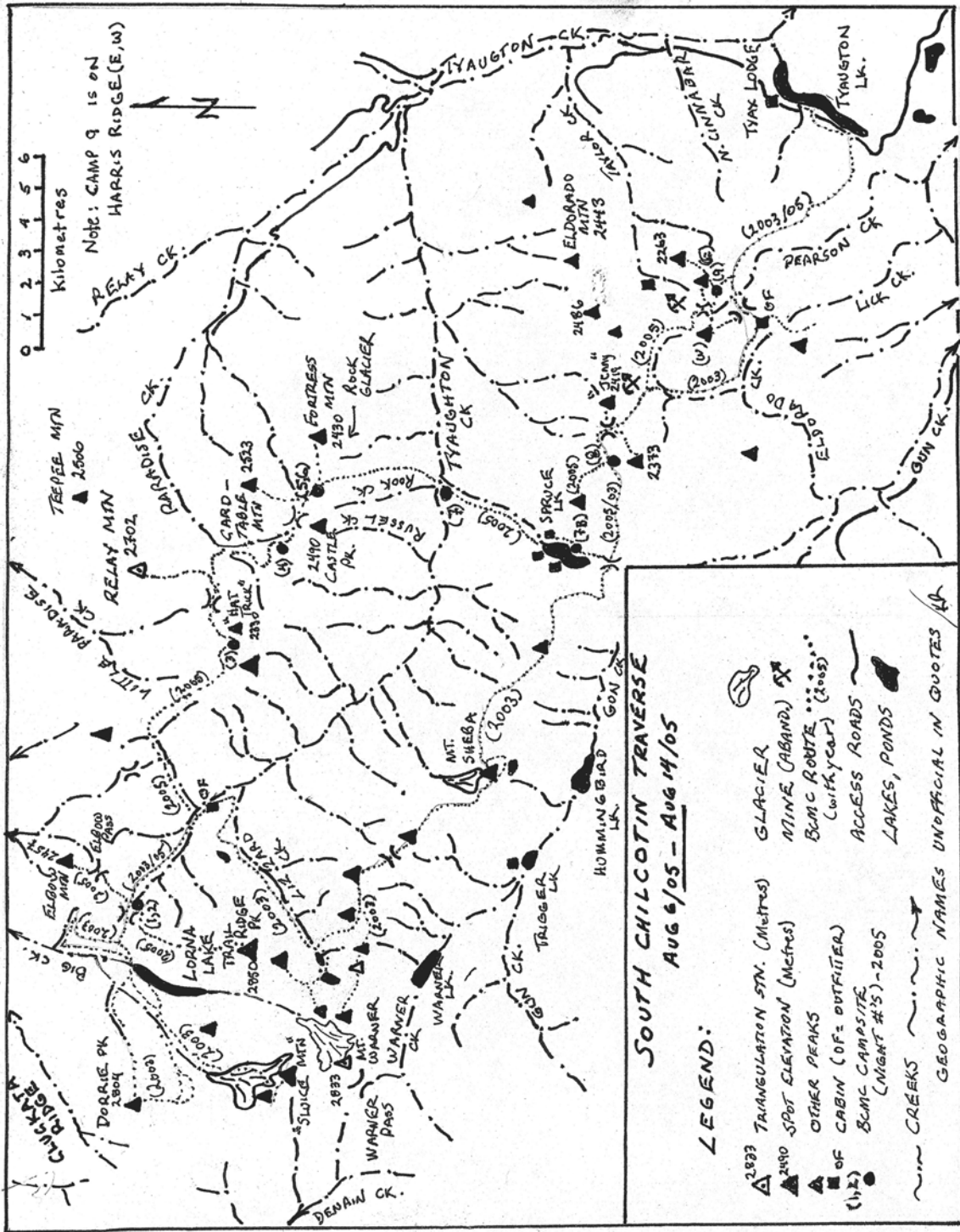
In 2003 the general line of the traverse was on the south side of the Tyaughton Creek basin, more or less on the crest between Gun Creek valley on its south. In 2005 the general routing was on the north side of the Tyaughton, dipping into the Little Paradise, and (big) Paradise Creek basins on its north side. Once through Castle Pass two routes were used to reach the floor of Tyaughton valley, managing to cross the creek at the ford used by horse parties, and then ascending a pleasant Spruce Creek trail to Spruce Lake. The Windy Pass trail, used in 2003, was reached at its west end of the lake for a repeated crossing into the Eldorado basin. Wishing avoidance of the 2003 route in this basin to reach the Pearson Creek exit, for 2005 we went to upper Taylor basin using the alternate trail in Eldorado, and then contoured to Harris Ridge to reach Pearson Creek basin. Thus, there were only two days of route duplication in the two traverses.

In the last year of the NDP's reign of B.C. politics, they hurriedly gazetted the entire region east of the Big Creek Valley (a park on its own, designated in 1995) as a newly-proclaimed but controversial South Chilcotin Mountain Provincial Park, much to the dismay of some local Lillooet residents who felt they had been betrayed by the LRMP process that adjudicated land use decisions throughout the region. Well, "the process" did not reach a consensus on the South Chilcotin and they left it to the provincial government to cast a "final" decision. Strangely, "final" did not mean final in the eyes of the Liberals who swept into power in 2001, and shortly before re-election time in 2005, they desperately needed to regain the confidence of the local electorate who had been sandbagged by many cutbacks in government services in their region. So, the park size was reduced by about 20,000 hectares to appease some of the locals and new park boundary signs now appear on both sides of Spruce Lake, within shouting distance of it, proclaiming a Spruce Lake Provincial Park, South Chilcotin being removed from its name. The

boundary, however, has yet to be shown on any official maps, or any provincial park publication of any sort, but as far as can be surmised, most of the area east of the lake, and possibly including the astonishing picturesque Windy Pass region, is outside of the park and is now in a special management zone, which allows mine exploration activity. Ironically, though local residents wanted the park reduced, they refused to re-elect a Liberal representative for their riding!

Day 0 – Again a Friday evening rendezvous at the Gun Creek campsite, maintained by B.C. Hydro on Carpenter Lake – it's a free campsite! Those from the east – Al and Bert – arrived in the early afternoon to stake out our tent sites and those fighting Vancouver traffic were there by 2100 hours or so. We noted a new map by the Sierra Club of Canada (and other supporters), scale 1:100,000, which is in shaded relief format, using orthophoto technology, perpetuates the same trail errors shown on the out-dated map issued by the B.C. Ministry of Forests (scale 1:75,000).

Day 1 – Three groups of 4 were flown by Beaver float plane to Lorna Lake, the first group being asked to hoof it right away to Lorna Pass and find water for a 2-night campsite. They found ample sources, even at the pass from snow bank melt. At Lorna Lake there was a large camp full of mountain bikers who had ridden to the lake from several directions, while their gear of tables, chairs, propane stoves and an impressive array of cooking gear was flown in. Nearly all were Whistler "muni" workers. By the time all groups had arrived at "Lorna Pass", about two hours after landing at the Lake, some were already at Elbow Pass (to the north) heading for Elbow Mountain. Others had a leisurely lunch and began to set up camp before strolling the ridges with four more eventually climbing Elbow Mtn. The two-tiered camp system began here. Four tents were pitched on the stony pass with another five on the soft turfy alpine meadow below on the east side. Comparing hiker notes at day-end the departure from Lorna Lake saw its outlet, Big Creek, crossed at four different spots by the groups before ascending the trail to the pass. This was to be a daily occurrence – two or more ways of going to a day's destination regardless of predetermined route selection.



where to put their food for the night. This camp had all the amenities except trees, being well above them. The site was reached about mid-afternoon despite the long hike and Fred could not stand the pain of two hours lassitude. A huge gargoye of tottering volcanic rock beckoned and he was off to bag it, finding an hour later no cairn on its very precarious summit which could topple through the campsite if we had an earthquake. Soon he was back, claiming a first ascent, the only one for the trip as it would eventually turn out. After dinner Ed repeated the ascent saying it was a very dangerous scramble to the top. The peak which hardly shows on the topos because its backside barely rises above the ridge connecting to Relay Mtn. was dubbed "Relay Hat Trick" by the ladies of the camp – because it looked like a hat and it was a mean trick to be able to climb I guess (coordinates 498550E by 5661600N, NAD 27, 2330 m el). Still worried about the grizzly, several stashed their food in pillows for the night; Doug went one step further by splitting his food into two different duffel sacks leaving each on separate boulders about 100 metres from his tent, much to the amusement of all, while families of marmots popped up to watch the spectacle. And the overnight survival rate: the bear did not re-appear; food left in packsacks near the tents or in pillows were untouched but did those marmots love one of Doug's duffel bags! – – another way to lighten his pack as it turned out.

Day 4 – Another clear morning, and today was the big day; Relay Mountain was the target. This is a mountain shown on almost all maps, regardless of scale; it had to be a prime target! It was a full 3 to 4 kilometres from camp and about 550 metres higher. But from our view it appeared to be much higher and farther away, and as it turned out it felt like it when we reached the top after 3 hours of non-stop slugging. Before the ascent, however, camp was dismantled and packs hoisted to the low point on Relay's long southwest ridge, known locally as "Relay" or "Paradise" Pass because it separates Little Paradise Creek basin on its west from (Big) Paradise on its east. The trail had already been well-indented by horses, including those of yesterday's party. It is a **main** trail and not just an **overland route** as implied by several maps. On

the east side of the pass our packs were stashed near tree line, Al and Peter decided to forgo the rubble before us to be climbed, electing to wait it out. Steep fine grained rubble with the consistency of hard early morning snow was side hill gouged to the 2250 m high col connecting the southwest ridge to the main massif. A lengthy southwest facing slope of more fine rubble (broken up shale of the Taylor Group) was then ascended as if we were on a snow slope, with fourteen of us strung out over the entire length. At 2500 m elevation the fun was over. Suddenly, we passed through the geologic unconformity, scrambling on loose and razor sharp volcanic blocks of Plateau Basalt all blissfully cruising downslope when stepped on awkwardly. Finally, some real rock in place (?) was reached at 2600 m at ridge crest, but an ugly gendarme ready to maim any intruder forced us back to the rubble on its west side, which was really on the move. But once around the obstacle it was just a plod up to the summit where the early arrivals, Ed and Bert, had decided to build their Eiffel Tower for a cairn. The official summit was actually the Dept. of National Defence's tripod and brass survey plug about 10 metres beyond and three metres or so lower. So 8866 feet (2702 m) on the maps understates the height - don't believe what the map says until you find that survey plug! On Relay Mtn. the weather began to cloud over and after short summit formalities it was a very quick descent – the fine rubble on the lower slopes was glissaded, leaving a fine track for any passer-by to view. Nonetheless, it was perplexing to not find a single game trail on this upper mountain, yet much coarser rubble on the higher Trail Ridge has deep grooves of game trails a plenty. Perhaps the sheep and goats will now take the cue after our work to prepare a track! Down at the pack stash Al was located sleeping nearby in the shade, but Peter had left. Descent into (Big) Paradise Basin's alpine meadows (1800 m) brought out the first rhubarb on a route to be taken. The horse trail clearly stayed to the north side of the tributary leading to Paradise Creek, but because we were to go upstream on the main branch of the creek Dave spotted a potential shortcut trail on the south bank. He was at the rear and Al was at the front following Peter Stange's footprints. Rear to front shouts only managed to



Evelyn, Fred, and Alice above Warner Pass surrounded by sorted stone circles. Photo - K. Ricker.

stop four in front of Dave, who quickly investigated. Yep, it was a real trail, but it hadn't been used recently. Reluctantly he agreed that its use would only add to the confusion, and besides his wife was up front! Common sense prevailed; Fred stopped the entourage at the critical creek junction, luckily endowed with trails crossing it and leading toward Castle Pass. The first klick was through forest and meadows; it had that horse wandering aspect; that is, an obvious trail through the trees which then disappears in the meadows in the nags' search for grass. We were sucked into a western tributary where Doug had camped in 2002; we had wanted the southeast branch which lead to Castle Pass; a trail/junction had been missed, but the oversight was rectified by a bush bash to an open, low bush-filled meadow, when it began to rain. Doug now at the head of the exasperated group quickly set up his tent to which the 14 followers had no complaints. Fred had a quick run to Castle Pass to find Peter S.; he was there tent-bound in the rain and was told that the rest would see him tomorrow. End of conversation and a gallop back to camp by Fred – in no time!

Day 5 – Well, yesterday's efforts had popped a few gaskets in many of the old farts, as well as the young, never mind the young at heart category who don't know when to quit. Day 5 was slated to be an easy one beginning with an easy one hour pack on an alpine trail to Castle Pass (2280 m), starting at the turreted tower of Castle Peak, the whole way. This spike of unstable-looking volcanic rock defies the laws of glacial scour

erosion; it should have been an easy push over 10 to 15 thousand years ago. This was the fourth of seven passes to be crossed on the trip, and it vied with Relay (Paradise) Pass for being the highest. Peter S. welcomed the well strung-out line of backpackers but couldn't muster any takers to join him on an ascent of nearby Cardtable Mtn. All wanted to set up tents beside

his exquisite campsite located between Castle and Fortress Mtns. As the day rolled on groups of threes and fours gradually summoned the energy to bag Cardtable (2523 m) and the Fortress (2337 m) or vice versa. While most parties took the usual gully route on the southeast side of Cardtable, Peter, who was later followed by Fred, Alice and Evelyn, climbed the basalt columns of the south buttress. Fortress was ascended via the west ridge, requiring one class three move to mount the final step to the summit. Both peaks had mighty cylindrical cairns, a full 2 to 2.5 metres in height and 1 to 1.5 metres in diameter. Definitely a labour of art by the surveyors who built them long ago, only to be topped with an ornate inukshuk on Cardtable, through the additional artistry of Ed and Bert. Beside it a table with stools were added, using the abundance of flat stones, and by the time Dave and Adrienne arrived the three of us were playing a card game of casino. The mountain's advertised attribute was used! While the wandering from peak to peak took place Peter explored the upper sides of Castle Peak, returning to camp in late afternoon saying that an easy way up it did not exist. From higher Cardtable, careful binocular inspection of the peak by Ed did not show any hint of a cairn on it, and so the die was cast for the following morning.

Day 6 – With rope, but not one piece of climbing aid other than a few karabiners and slings, the hopeful set out to find a way up Castle. The Fairley guide had its usual line of nonsense which obviously translates to “don't know, but it should go”, and so it was a quick ascent to its base by prospective climbers and a bigger throng of onlookers who were there to watch the

spectacle. One lady met yesterday from a campsite 2 km to the east said that she was with several Outward Bound instructors who managed to climb three of the several tiers of volcanic strata, while she watched from the lowest one. This only added to the curiosity. Our climbers walked around the entire base of the peak testing the lower tiers of rock here and there. From the south side they advanced up several steps before vertical walls without obvious weakness stopped progress. Fred decided to investigate further by nearly circumnavigating the peak at that level using a cave-like tunnel to bypass one exposed corner, much to the laughter of those below. But, alas, without direct aids and helmets the mountain's defences were invader-proof, except for some ambitious marmots who managed to jamb their way to a grassy ledge, and hence had full protection from any carnivore, though not to a passing eagle. Ed erected two cairns on this ledge to signify the height of their attempt. By 11:30 all were back to take down camp for the next stage of the traverse which was the descent to the floor of Tyaughton Creek valley, and perhaps onward to Spruce Lake. The route down to valley floor had been a hot debate for a full 24 hours. The map suggested a route directly down the ridge from Castle Peak adjacent to Russell Creek, it being done by Doug in 2002; he was not enamored by the start to the route, finding the steep side hilling with heavy pack to be very awkward. Those who gazed upon another option from Fortress Mtn. favoured a much gentler ridge to the east of Rook Creek whose headwaters were our campsite. The Castle route exited out to the crossing of Tyaughton (a log jam) by hikers on foot and thence up a well-used trail "3B" to Spruce Lake. The "Rook Ridge" route exited at the horse-ford crossing of Tyaughton about two kilometres downstream leading directly onto Trail "3A" to Spruce Lake via Spruce Creek. Peter and Silke had left earlier in the day to use another trail which diagonally descends eastward through a series of meadows to reach the main valley trail a full 4 - 5 km downstream of the Spruce Creek trail "3A". The ladies who were camped east of us had used it for their hike in, and fresh tracks of at least three mountain bikers were also on it, and so the Gumplingers chose to explore its evanescent

qualities. The "Rook Ridge" route had two prominent limestone knobs on it to provide luxurious views during the descent. A horse trail of sorts lead to the first and higher, and a sketchy foot trail lead down to the second one with only a bit of loose rubble between the two to discourage the beasts of burden. It was a park-like promenade for another kilometre downslope before steep forested slopes were reached. A plethora of game trails without significant underbrush among them made for an easy descent to reach steep grasslands rising up to 100-150 metres above valley floor. Suddenly the descent was finished on a broad dusty trail with nary a fresh footprint on it. The Gumplingers hadn't reached that far yet in their round-about route. The horse ford was checked, an easy wade for those so interested, but aspiring bridge builders had their own ideas nearby. Great confusion on design and construction methodology ensued, and those with the loudest voice (Bert) got the job done in about half an hour while we waders watched in amusement. Well, it had taken their minds off backpacking, so much so that nearly all elected to camp there for the night rather than plod another 4 to 5 clicks to the campsites at Spruce Lake. Dave and Adrienne decided to continue to the lake and 15 minutes later the Gumplingers showed up to follow suit. Peter waded across the creek while Silke gave the bridge her full approval, then both tried to catch the Hughes to no avail, and had trouble finding them when they did reach the lake in the early evening.

Day 7 – It was an agreeable 8 a.m. departure for all of the creekside campers (**Team A**) and a very pleasant stroll along side Spruce Creek to reach the lake in about two hours. The dude camp at lake-side was empty, and the Forest Service camp next door had darn few occupants. Eventually, **Team B** was found at fireside at the other campsite at the south end of the lake – as the only occupants, having a late breakfast, and **Team A's** second as it turned out. The destination for the day was the highest meadows on the west side of Windy Pass, not too strenuous and about 5 clicks uphill on a good trail often blitzed by mountain bikers. This is Trail #2 on the new map and at the junction with "1A" south of the lake a

horse riding party of 16, plus pack animals, were already assembled. A few of **Team A** started ahead, but those of us who now appreciated the speed of mountain horses held back; so once again the crew was strung out, and **Team B** had no intention of leaving lakeside for another hour at least. The horses didn't go as fast as we had thought; one pack mule kept slipping his load giving the wranglers a big headache when we rear-enders strolled by, but the dudes kept their steeds moving along to the meadows. By this time **Team A** had re-grouped, and Alice was asked to go ahead and find that ideal ladies campsite. It was a good one near the base of the pass on a dry open meadow, with a nearby supply of downed trees decimated years ago by a rogue avalanche. After completion of camp building (with logs to sit on) lassitude set in, but deservedly so according to John who claimed his body had been well beaten up over the last few days. After an hour of bliss the restless began to move when **Team B** arrived. The nameless but tooth-ridged peak (2288 m) opposite camp beckoned, it rising only 300 metres above and with only meadow and scree to ascend to the rock atop of it. It was a race: Fred left camp last but was first there; Doug slugged it to second placed with an early start, and Ed and I finished the touch to the cairn in a dead heat for third! It provided a powerful vista of where we had travelled from Day to 1 to Day 6, and a plan view of Spruce Lake below, hence the local (?) name of "Spruce Lake Peak". Others at camp chose to climb it at a more leisurely pace. The day finished with a campfire fed by the debris of trees generated by the avalanche.

Day 8 – The first and prime objective for the day was the peak (2372 m) on the south side of Windy Pass; it was a pleasant stroll to one of the best views to be had of the Coast Mountains to the south and west. Surprisingly nearly everyone accepted the suggestion and climbed it as had been done by four of us in 2003. I elected to go up the steep screes to a Hinze-Hughes designated "Mt. Jennifer" (2419 m) on the other side of the pass. The second goal of the day was to cross over two more passes and set up the final camp at the head of Pearson Creek basin, mysteriously known as Cinnabar Basin. The descent into Eldorado Creek basin was first and again the

procession was strung out. Ziff had gone ahead to look for one or two old mines, Lucky Gem and Lucky Strike, with Peter Stange who wanted to finish the trip on the same day, while the Gumplingers brought up the rear. Finding Ziff proved to be the problem, when reaching the Eldorado-Taylor divide. Comedy of errors reigned until we moved on across a newish trail around the headwaters of Taylor Basin, finding Ziff patiently waiting for us just below the final pass for the trip – the Taylor to Pearson Creek divide, with nearby newly installed bronze plaque commemorating Bob Harris, and an officially proclaimed Harris Ridge, which rises between the two basins. Obviously, the trail passes over what should be called Harris Pass (ca 2120 m), the low point on the ridge. A campsite was selected in a nearby lush meadow below outcrops of shiny green serpentinite. This was our last camp of the trip; peak baggingitis then raged for the remainder of the late afternoon to meet pre-trip planned quotas I would guess. **Team B** immediately set out for Harris Ridge East (2257 m) rising above camp, by following a horse track from Harris Pass to its top. Spouses stopped out there, refusing to go to another peak, isolated to the north above the Taylor Creek cabin; it was 4 metres higher, with Dave and Peter polishing it off in short order. Meanwhile, Fred set out on a longer mission to Harris Ridge (west) stopping at the pass to quickly climb an adjacent gargoyle, waving to the camp while balancing himself on one of its slender prongs. Shortly after he strode over a minor summit, carrying onto the highest (2306 m), which had also been climbed in 2003 by several of Woody's crew ("Sunset Mtn."). Then he dropped down to the Lucky Strike Mine in Taylor Basin, before sprinting back up to Harris Pass and then down to camp, all in less than two hours! By this time the remnants of **Team B** had regained the summit of Harris East to be met by four on horses plodding up to its summit, bringing out the guffaws of those watching from camp. After supper several repeated the **Team B** trip, both peaks, and then climbed the gargoyles before return to camp. Meanwhile the camp readers had finished Doug's book of short stories, torn out story by story throughout the eight days on the trail.

Day 9 – An agreed 8 am start fell apart (again) with several bolting from camp at 7:30. The lure of hot showers or a swim was overpowering. After a half hour down the beautiful trail the well strung out procession met the branch from Eldorado Basin, used two years previously, and from there on it was a 2.5 hour repeat of the same trip, without stop to Tyax Lodge; it's showers for some, a quick departure by those bound for California the next day, and to the bar for the rest of us. Two headed east, and it should have been two or more other masochists who live east of Langley, while the rest of us went over the Bermuda Triangle of B.C.; its roads (the Hurley) claimed yet another vehicle on the way home. B.C.M.C trips never have a free ride over Railroad Pass (!) which is a not-so-fitting way to celebrate the club's centennial, even if the trip did jump the gun by a couple of years. Nonetheless it was a good time in beautiful weather and spectacular terrain – easy slogging at its best; perhaps another trip to come to celebrate our centennial in blissful lassitude, wrinkles eliminated, and Brian Wood back to join us.

**Nature History Notes – Southern Chilcotin
Traverse, 2005**
by Karl Ricker

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The general features of the South Chilcotin are described in our previous report (BC Mountaineer, 2004, p. 113-120) and hence for the traverse of 2005 we will focus on what was found of significance each day. The route, lying north of Tyaughton valley for the first few days, was predominately above tree line with minor exceptions. The hills and ridge tops on this side of the valley are “soft” in form and with various shades of brown in overall colour (photo). The terrain underfoot, when off the horse trails, is a carpet of low growing heath and mosses with open patches of fine erosional detritus. The continental ice sheets of tens of thousands of years ago did not have a tough resistant strata to gouge so there is little evidence today of such glaciation. However, unmistakable out of place granitic rocks on the summits of Elbow and Cardtable Mountains indicate that ice sheet(s) of

Pleistocene age, covered the area to as high as 2600 m elevation, or more. Thus, if there were plant or animal refugia while the Cordilleran Ice Sheet(s) were present, they would have been on the higher Warner Ridge, including Trail Ridge (2851 m). Surprisingly, above “Lorna Pass” this ridge has little vegetation to enhance a refugia claim; a stony barren alpine desert was traversed. It is indented here and there by mountain sheep and goat trails, but with little vegetation to justify this sort of traffic. Perhaps the use is for their escape from insects or large predators, in their travels from one alpland to another (e.g. Lizard Lake basin and connecting ridge to Mt. Sheba).

2.0 GEOLOGY

2.1 Bedrock Geology

The route followed the approximate long axis of the Tyaughton Trough, as described before – an ancient basin of accumulated erosional detritus with sporadic input bursts of under-water volcanism. The notable difference to the previous traverse of 2003 is the conspicuous capping of much younger flat laying Oligocene to Miocene-aged terrestrial volcanics (“Plateau Basalts” – Chilcotin Group) which lie with obvious discordance on the severely folded and thrust faulted rocks of the underlying Tyaughton Basin assemblage. Relay, Cardtable, Castle and Fortress Mountains are capped by several layers of the younger volcanics made up of vesicular basalts, lesser andesites and related interbeds of tuffs (volcanic ash) and spectacular breccias – all very loose and hazardous to the serious climber who is obsessed with the vertical (photo). The succession of rocks in the Tyaughton Assemblage was described in the B.C. Mountaineer, 2004 (p. 115-116). The daily log of the bedrock geology, underfoot, refers to that sequence of geologic units as follows:

Day One (“Lorna Pass” to Elbow Mtn.) – the pass is on the trace of the Taseko Fault with Lower Cretaceous-age Relay Mountain Group (sediments) thrust over a slightly younger Taylor Creek Group (sediments). Much older Triassic-age basalts of the Pioneer Formation is also exposed on the south flank of the pass.



Dark flat-lying oligocene plateau basalts of Castle Pk. overlying older sedimentary and volcanic strata, taken from the descent ridge to Tyaughton Ck. calley floor. Photo - K. Ricker.

Day Two (Ascent of Trail Ridge) – exposed on the north ridge is the Pioneer Formation, dipping moderately to the south, with the younger Relay Mountain strata overlying it on the east flanks of the ridge.

Day Three (Lorna Pass, Tyaughton Valley to Little Paradise Valley) – the Taseko Fault zone is followed to as far as the unnamed tributary valley that leads to the Little Paradise basin to the north. This tributary cuts through older Jurassic-age sediments of the Tyaughton Group, overlain by the sediments of the Relay Mountain Group. Camp was placed on the Relay below a cross-cutting volcanic conduit (“Relay Hat Trick Mtn.”) which fed lava to the overlying and much younger flat-lying Plateau Basalts (photo).

Day Four (Ascent of Relay Mtn.) – The Relay Mountain Group is pierced by two ribs of Eocene-aged felsitic volcanics, exposed glaringly on the ridge which connects the massif of Relay Mountain to the ridges paralleling Tyaughton Creek valley. Lower slopes of the mountain itself are of overlying and steep west-dipping Taylor Creek sediments, soft underfoot, but uncomformably overlain by coarse rubble of

resistant tiers of flat-lying Plateau Basalts, beginning at about 2450 m elevation. Erratics of the ice age were not found in the rubble, nor along the summit ridge crest (elev. 2700 m). The Taylor Creek Group underlies the departure route off the mountain through adjacent “Big” Paradise Creek basin to our campsite near but

west of Castle Pass.

Day Five (Camp shifted from the west to east side of Castle Pass; ascent of nearby peaks) – Castle Pass is underlain by Taylor and Relay Mountain Group sediments. The ascent of Cardtable Mtn. nearby was up onto the basalt columns of Plateau Basalt, several flat-lying tiers, with capping platy-fractured volcanics on its summit. The basin east of the summit is in underlying Relay Mountain strata but is pierced by Eocene-aged felsites on the lower slopes of nearby Fortress Mtn., which in turn is capped by a few tiers of Plateau Basalt.

Day Six (Castle Mountain reconnoitre, descent to Tyaughton Creek) – Castle Mtn. is of loose, cavernous-weathered Plateau Basalt, with spectacular hexagonal columns in several tiers to near the summit (photo). The basalt overlies upper Triassic-Jurassic Tyaughton Group sediments which include thick lenses of white limestone as well as shales, greywacke and coarser sediments. Several knobs of limestone were traversed in the descent from camp to the valley floor of Tyaughton Creek. It is a mystery as to how the slender spire of Castle Mtn. survived the forces of movement by the Cordilleran Ice Sheet some 10,000 to 20,000 years ago.

Day Seven (Spruce Creek trail to Spruce Lake, High Trail to Windy Pass camp) – Half way to the



Active rock glacier (right foreground) on the S slope of Fortress Mtn. Eldorado Mtn. (el), Rosy Finch Mtn. (rf), Jennifer (J), and Windy Pass (wp) are on the skyline. Photo - K. Ricker.

(greenstone volcanics, basalt, deep sea chert, argillite, etc.), the oldest formations encountered in the trek.

lake from Tyaughton valley floor the trail climbs above the Tyaughton Group and onto overlying Relay Mountain strata, but above Spruce Lake the ascent of the High Trail is on northwest directed thrust fault slices of older Triassic-aged Hurley Formation of argillite, conglomerate and volcanics; these strata are vertically exposed on "Spruce Lake Peak".

Day Eight (Windy Pass to Eldorado, Taylor and Pearson Basins) – The Hurley Formation underlies the route throughout the upper Eldorado Basin, but strata are weathered red in the approach to the Taylor Basin divide as it is a gossan zone to underlying mineral deposits. Ziff found tetrahedite minerals in the mine dumps. While contouring around the rim of Taylor to Harris Ridge, green lenses of serpentinized ultrabasic rocks (peridotite) were encountered, enclosed in fault bounded slices within the Paleozoic-aged Bridge River Group

Day Nine (Harris Ridge, Pearson (Cinnabar) basin and out to Tyaughton Lake) – the Bridge River Group, as above, underlies all of the route in Pearson Basin but is rarely exposed on the valley trail, and has only a little outcrop along the west side of Tyaughton Lake.

Throughout the traverse there was an absence of typical coarse grained, light-coloured granitic rock, except for the erratics brought from far away sources by the Cordilleran Ice Sheet.

2.2 Periglacial Features

The spectacular modifications to the landscape are the array of features developed in permafrost, and by seasonal frost action. On the valley floor of Big Creek we walked through patterned ground – an array of orthogonal polygons outlined by trenches, suggesting underlying ice wedges which occupy cold temperature-induced terrain cracks, due to contraction in winter months. These features are located down valley from the outlet of Lorna Lake which is blocked by two incomplete ridges (terminal moraines), with a pond between the two.

At the “Lorna” and Elbow Pass areas, loose rocky detritus has been moved by seasonal frost action into subtle-shaped nets on gentle slopes, giving way to alternating strips of coarse and fine stones on steeper slopes. On at least one slope, however, the debris has been stacked in elongate terrace fashion, termed altiplanation terraces in sub-polar scientific literature. Whereas, on many turf covered slopes, the forms of debris resemble a series of subarcuate treads, as in a staircase, each about metre high. These are solifluction lobes, which become saturated during spring thaw, and are moved by gravity over the underlying frozen terrain, to produce festoons of draped lobes on many moderate slopes.

The most spectacular features are rock glaciers. The one on the south slope of Fortress Mountain (photo) is made up of exceptionally blocky volcanic rocks, derived from the Plateau Basalts on the ridge crest, which at present are spectacularly encroaching onto a turfey alpine meadow on lower and flatter slopes below. A pile of similarly coarse and bouldery debris was crossed on the upper trail in Eldorado Basin. From a distance it looked like a mine dump, but

once we were on it, it had the appearance of a rock glacier. However, this feature is at the exit of a narrow gully, and it is more likely a result of a sudden discharge event – a rock avalanche or debris flow brought on by slope collapse at the head of the gully.

3.0 FAUNA

3.1 Mammals

- Hoofed animal tracks were ubiquitous, but actual sightings were few, Mule and White-tailed deer only at 3 or 4 locales. Based mainly on tracks the following were found:
 - White-tailed deer – two animals on snow patch above “Lorna Pass”
 - Black-tailed (Mule) deer – Tyaughton valley, near trail junction to Little Paradise Basin, talus slopes on “Spruce Lake Mtn.” tracks on Castle Pass, Windy Pass, numerous mountain slope trails in Tyaughton Valley
 - California Bighorn sheep – tracks only, Trail Ridge, Castle Pass
 - Rocky Mountain goat – tracks only, Trail Ridge
 - Moose – tracks only, Big Creek valley
 - Grizzly bear – yearling or two year old, Little Paradise Basin, many dig-out pits among marmot colonies elsewhere
 - Unidentified voles – widespread
 - Black bear – camp below Windy Pass, probable two year old
 - Hoary marmot – ubiquitous, all alpine terrain except Trail Ridge
 - Northwest chipmunk – few, “Lorna Pass”, Windy Pass, and elsewhere
 - Pika – “Lorna” and Elbow Passes and elsewhere
 - Red squirrel – Tyaughton Valley, Spruce Lake, Pearson Valley – numerous

3.2 Birds

Populations were again scant as in 2003, the heat of the day possibly creating the lack of consistent sightings, except for the ubiquitous

Clark's nutcracker. The species list for the trip is as follows:

- Barrow's goldeneye – 3 on Lorna Lake
- Northern harrier hawk – Elbow Pass, Trail Ridge summit (!), Relay Mtn.
- Unidentified *Buteo* hawk – Spruce Lake
- Spruce grouse – “Big” Paradise Basin, Spruce Lake
- Unidentified grouse or ptarmigan with young – Windy Pass, one brood
- Northern flicker – Pearson basin, one or two
- Barn swallow – Tyaughton Lake and Tyax Lodge – many
- Raven – Spruce Lake, Harris Ridge, few
- Clark's nutcracker – Lorna Lake and Pass, Trail Ridge, Relay Mtn., Cardtable Mtn., Castle Pass, Spruce Lake, Windy Pass, everywhere but few in number
- Black-capped chickadee – Pearson basin, few
- Mountain chickadee – Little Paradise basin trail in Tyaughton Valley, few
- Winter wren – Eldorado basin, one only
- Horned lark – Relay Mtn., one only
- Townsend's solitaire – Relay Mtn., one only
- American robin – Spruce Lake, Windy Pass, Pearson basin, few
- Fox sparrow – Eldorado basin, one or two
- Pine siskin – Tyax Lodge, numerous
- Gray-crowned rosy finch – Castle Pass, Harris Ridge, few
- Red crossbill – Windy Pass, one or two
- Unidentified finches – Relay Mtn. a small flying flock (Siskins?)

Eighteen species in total; far less than the 38 enumerated during the previous traverse in 2003. The result, however, is not surprising because summer counts in the Pemberton and Whistler area were also low in 2005.

4.0 FLORA

In the interest of pack weight, the alpine flora guides were left at home. However, the trip was in prime flowering season, with the exception of the absence of late spring bloomers: avalanche lily, dryads, some cinquefoils and anemones. In 2003 the balsam root sunflower, *Balsamorhiza sagittata*, was noted on south facing slopes of

the upper Tyaughton valley. Though past prime bloom condition they were also noted farther down valley opposite the mouth of Spruce Creek as well. An unusual flower which escaped us in 2003, and in fact not recognizable by any of our party, was found growing in loose scree above treeline on “Spruce Lake Mountain”. So unusual in fact that the identification stands tentatively at *Lewisia* sp., a bitterroot of the purslane family, but not any of the species described in any of the popular identification guidebooks for the flora of British Columbia. The plant has a very long taproot to counter the gravitational pull of the ever-moving scree; its leaves are fleshy and crudely lance-shaped, and the flowers are small, clustered and rosy white. Ours is similar to the Okanagan fame flower (*Talinum sedifforme*), except that the flowers were much smaller and the habitat is alpine and not grassland or sagebrush slopes. Another relative with an identical taproot is the thick-rooted spring beauty (*Claytonia megarrhiza*), but its flower colour (white) and its long paddle shaped leaves do not fit our specimens, though the habitats do agree. Our specimen is now in refrigerated storage, awaiting expert scrutiny.

All other flowers seen throughout the traverse were readily identified to generic level, and all of us concluded that Spruce Lake was suitably named, not only for the spruce trees along its shoreline but also for the spruce grouse seen with regularity on the trails around it.

5.0 REFERENCES

There are no additional sources to those cited in 2003. The time has come, however, for the Geological Survey of Canada to produce an easy to read colour-printed geological map of the area. The current Open File map by Tipper (1978) is very difficult to interpret. His map by the way is at a scale of 1:125,000, not 1:250,000, as indicated in the B.C. Mountaineer, 2004, p. 113-120.

Northern Coast Mountains

Spectrum Range 2005

by Jack Bryceland

This trip had a long, difficult gestation period. It was conceived in 1994 at the end of a north-south traverse through the northern half of Mount



Dancing princesses on the trip with camp and Little Ball Lake behind. Photo - J. Bryceland.

Edziza Provincial Park: which had included an almost-ascent of Mount Edziza itself (just another in my long list of almost-climbed peaks). As our group of nine descended out of the mountains to our pickup lake we were walking away from multi-tued peaks and ridges (the southern half of the park) that well deserve their name. We all vowed to return.

Two years later a group of ten excited mountaineers flew in to Arctic Lake at the south end of the park. The plan was to follow the colourful ridges north, ascending peaks as we went, to exit out the same creek and to fly-out from the same lake as two years previously. Now I know that you'll all be amazed when I quote Robbie Burns but "The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley" and on this trip we were doing no better, maybe a little worse, than the mice. So we crawled into our holes for a couple of days to consider options: then crept back to Arctic Lake and flew out . . . homeward to think again . . . beaten by poor weather and lack of group consensus.

At every club meeting, in the intervening years, we would mutter to one another "Dya wanna do Spectrum this year?". The answers would start with those well-known reservations "Well maybe . . ." and "Oh, yeah if . . ." and "Sure, but . . ." and "Certainly, although . . ." and "Definitely, however . . .". In the air around the ANZA club you could smell, almost taste, the burning enthusiasm to get out there and 'do this thing'. Yeah right! So the years passed!

What was the catalyst to make the 2005 trip go? If I knew the answer to that I would own a multi-million dollar travel agency. Suffice to say

that, as it began to come together in the spring, there were more prospective participants than one hike can handle: ecologically and safely. We had to turn down a number of experienced and qualified people yet still ended up with 14 – a number that provides numerous potential-nightmare scenarios when in a northern, trail-less area above 1800 m elevation. There are 1:50,000 scale maps available but they are only available in monochrome. The maps are dated 1974; and with the retreat of snowfields and glaciers we were unsure that our route planning would be feasible on the ground. We had resolved a couple of the difficulties in the aborted 1996 trip but there were still many questions to be answered. Obviously, other people have done this trip; but we wanted to follow the high ground and climb some peaks whereas other groups seem to have concentrated on just getting from A to B by the simplest way. And while we are on the topic of getting from A to B note that flying into the park from Tatogga Lake requires a 1600 km drive from the Lower Mainland – no mean feat in its own right.

July 25 saw all fourteen of us, on a pleasant misty morning, packed and ready to fly. Three flights by Beaver put us on the shores of Little Ball Lake: two days north of where we had landed in 1996. Now it is only 27 km, as the crow flies, from Little Ball Lake to Mowdade Lake from where we were scheduled to fly out nine days later. However we're not crows (we're mice, remember?) so there was lots of up and down and sideways in our plan..Which is just as well since there was lots of up and down and sideways in reality too. The 'pleasant misty morning' stretched into a cloudy, showery couple of days. But from our first camp at the head of Ball Creek we managed an ascent of Yeda Peak by its crumbly south ridge. The camp entertainment featured a fine big mother grizzly with two frolicking cubs. Happily, when she finally got our scent, she took her family and boogied for the backcountry: we all heaved sighs of relief. A day of mixed rain and showers provided some ugly flashbacks to camping in this same location in 1996 in similar weather. However as the day wore on it dried out promising travelling-weather for the morning.

Since a traverse over the top of Yeda Peak would be the classic, but suicidal, line; our route



Kounugu Mtn. illustrates why the Spectrum Range got its name. Photo - J. Bryceland.



North to the final exit ridges above Chakima Ck. Photo - J. Bryceland.

involved a crossing of the glacier in Yeda's northeast bowl to gain the ridges running north to our next summit – Kitsu Peak. The maps show the Kitsu Glacier flowing north right from the summit; but thirty years of global warming and glacial recession can wreak havoc with the topography. On reaching the summit we were



Down to the final camp with Walkout Ck. in the middle distance. Photo - J. Bryceland.

delighted to find an easy walk off the summit rocks on to a glacier with well-covered crevasses. Our second camp was at the toe of the glacier on the southeast end of the extensive Kitsu Plateau. The misty, cloudy weather had been providing only occasional tantalising glimpses of the dramatic



Sunset on Tadedda Pk. Photo - J. Bryceland.



North of Yeda with Stewbomb Ck. on right. Photo - J. Bryceland.

country around us. There had been partial views of the isolated and beautiful Hankin Peak to the south: and, across the gulfs of Mess Creek and the Stikine River to the west, were the spectacular Boundary Ranges.

Travelling north across the Kitsu Plateau involves passing the west ends of Obsidian Ridge and Artifact Ridge: both well-named. In 1994 we



On Tadedda's West Ridge with the Boundary Ranges behind. Photo - J. Bryceland.

had seen many fine pieces of obsidian as we walked the benches west of Mount Edziza: but it was nothing in comparison to this! Every couple of paces you were tempted to stoop down to examine another shiny, black, natural



South along the exit ridges. Photo - J. Bryceland.



Avoiding the North Face of Yeda Pk. Photo - J. Bryceland.

masterpiece. It's good that we are all supremely ecologically conscious and would never remove samples from a park (oh yeah?). The plateau's northern boundary is Raspberry Pass which involves dropping 300 m down to subalpine terrain. The pass was the route of the Yukon

Telegraph and a faint trail was still visible: probably more a game trail now. How to ascend out of the pass was in question. From the map it seemed best to take easier contours to the northeast: but we'd heard of other travellers ascending a closer gully. When we arrived at the toe of the gully it was dry and looked like good going so up we went to the next section of volcanic plateau. At the top were some Osborn caribou but they were not interested in us and did not hang around. In order to find a campsite with water we kept moving until we reached some tiny lakes on the western slopes of Tadedea Peak. In 1994 we had seen this fine spiky summit and, without paying enough attention, had

assumed that it was Armadillo Peak: a named summit on the 1:50000 map. (Tadedea only being named on the 1:250000 map). This also demonstrates our lack of biological knowledge since, as someone latterly pointed out, armadillos are not spiky!

Our Tadedea summit-day was not as fine as the previous evening's sunset had promised; but the big peaks of the Boundary Ranges were still visible as they slipped in and out of the cloud. The west ridge of Tadedea is a fine little volcanic scramble with an initial false summit to add extra interest. Not everyone was willing for the final delicate dance to the top but that was just as well: it is not a fourteen-person summit. Back in camp we packed up and headed out for the final exit ridges. Half the party opted for a traverse around the 1800 m contour whereas the other half thought that an ascent and traverse of the Tadedea Glacier would be a better route. We all arrived at the same col about the same time. Although the Parks information suggests that the Spectrum Range is only south of Raspberry Pass, we were still following the multi-hued ridges that had caught our attention in 1994, along the well-worn game

trails on the crests.

As we began the final descent, a still-partly-frozen little lake caught our eye as a more aesthetic campsite than dropping all the way to the Chakima Creek/Walkout Creek col, so the tents were assembled. As if to emphasise the quality of our choice, a trio of trail-building Stone sheep wandered through camp. (we should consider awarding honorary BCMC membership to Stone sheep: they pick such excellent lines in the mountains). The final bonus was a wild sunset over the Boundary Ranges. Kate's Needle and Devil's Thumb are there but our lack of maps extending that far prevented accurate identification of which spectacular peak was which.

Overnight there was fresh snow on the tops (Edziza was plastered) with the snow-line not far above us. An unsettled morning followed. Since we had a day to play with, some tried for the last few of our colourful summits while others noodled around the tents taking it easy in preparation for the final pack out to the valley floor and Mowdada Lake. There is an actual trail down Chakima Creek and Parks has done some recent improvements. Our 1994 trip involved seven wet crossings of the creek; it was much better this time with bridges having been built. Unfortunately the creek was running high and the last bridge was sitting isolated in the middle of the creek. It's the first time that I've ever had to wade out to a bridge, walk across it, then again wade to the far bank. It's a long drag down this creek but eventually we



If this is a bridge, why are my feet wet? Photo - J. Bryceland.

were at the dock and a swim in the lake is a grand finale.

The Harbour Air Beaver flew in next morning, not just in time, but early! Three flights got us back to the (relative) civilization of Tatogga Lake where we quickly jumped in the truck and headed out for . . . but that's another story.

Participants: Liz Ball, Emilie Berger, Heinz Berger, Monika Bittel, Jack Bryceland, Marilyn Cram, Brian Ellis, Marg Ellis, Jenny Faulkner, Ehleen Hinze, Erich Hinze, Carol MacMillan, John Sapac, and Ellen Woodd.

Rocky Mountains

Skoki area skiing

March 2006

by Michael Feller

When I left the world of chemistry many years ago, my main reason for entering forestry was that I wanted my laboratory to be the outdoors and the mountains rather than the conventional room with test tubes and toxic powders. This move was something I have never regretted. In recent years my laboratory has encompassed the southern Canadian Rockies and I have been fortunate to collaborate with a biologist on the staff of Banff National Park – Cliff White – who is a fellow pyro also interested in determining the effects of people on fire regimes and on the resulting vegetation. Prescribed burning in the Bow valley of Banff park was not bringing about successful regeneration of aspen, as it was supposed to. Cliff determined that this was due to the presence of people which were avoided by wolves. Elk soon figured out that people meant few wolves so elk populations in the valleys near people increased drastically. Elk eat young aspen shoots, so few shoots grew into trees. Elk are now being translocated away from people and wolves are being encouraged, partly to allow aspen to come back. The obvious solution of removing people is politically unacceptable.

The decline in aspen had been noted by simply visually comparing current landscapes with the same ones photographed in the early 1900's. Analysis of repeat photographs of the same scene, taken many years apart, is a technique that can be used to quantify vegetation

changes with time. Most photographs taken in the early 1900's were taken in valleys close to roads where large, heavy, cumbersome cameras could easily be set up. These areas, however, were subjected to much disturbance and fire from railways and early European settlers. While comparing the present valley bottom landscape now to that in the early 1900's is informative, it is a comparison using historically the most highly disturbed landscapes in the region, so it may not allow much to be concluded about vegetation trends in the backcountry.

Within the backcountry of Banff park, a lodge was built in 1930 in the Skoki valley about 13 km NE of Lake Louise, as the crow flies. This lodge became one of western Canada's first ski resorts, although this skiing was all backcountry skiing as no lifts were built and it was a 17 km ski in from the Lake Louise railway station. Byron Harmon, a well known Rocky Mountain photographer from the early 1900s, had photographed the country around Skoki lodge in the early 1930's – a little disturbed area where repeat photographs would be particularly informative. Thus, the scientific rationale for a ski trip was established!

We left the warmth and blossoms of Vancouver in mid March, and arrived in snowy Banff at -15° C on a Sunday evening only to find it devoid of drinking water due to contamination during water mains reconstruction. The local supermarket had a huge supply of bottled water, however.

Next morning we met Cliff at the Banff park warden's office then drove on to Lake Louise and the Skoki trailhead, adjacent to the Lake Louise ski area on the road up to Temple Lodge. Cliff's Parks Canada vehicle then took us another couple of km up the road to the first of the downhill ski runs. From here we set off up a very well beaten trail, packed by snowmobiles ferrying supplies to Skoki lodge and numerous skiers either using skins, waxes, or waxless skis. Today Skoki lodge is a popular backcountry ski lodge for those with a few dollars.

The trail climbed gently up to a pass – Boulder Pass, in whose lee out of the wind we had lunch, taking in the vast vistas typical of the Rockies.



Skiing up to Boulder Pass beneath Ptarmigan Pk. Photo - M. Feller

After lunch we dropped down to Ptarmigan Lake, which we travelled on for over a km before climbing up to another pass – Deception Pass. From here we had some downhill so skins came off and we soon found ourselves in perfect powder heading down towards Skoki.

Down in the Skoki valley we stopped as Cliff had recognized a knoll photographed by Harmon over 70 years ago. Harmon's photo had several skiers on 2 m+ long skis hurtling down. Our party was to re-enact the scene. Evelyn, Ellen, and I skied up the back side of the knoll while Cliff manoeuvred himself into the same position Harmon occupied all those years ago. When the sun came out we were off, even feigning the old style skiing – not difficult for me at all!

Where once several well dressed gentlemen descended a snowy knoll with a couple of trees on it, our motley mob descended a snowy knoll with a patch of forest on it. The photograph may even appear in an about-to-be-published book of repeat photos of the Rockies!

The scientific objective of the trip essentially fulfilled, we continued on down until about 500 m from the lodge, we put skins on again and skied up a track heading up a side valley, south of Skoki Mtn. One km up this we again took off skins for the final 5 km of mainly downhill to our destination – a warden's cabin in the Red Deer valley. This we reached without incident. The cabin was a typical well appointed log cabin for park staff, complete with ample firewood, wood burning stove, propane fridge, oven, and lights, radio for



Heading around Tilted Mtn. (right) towards Lychnis Mtn. Photo - M. Feller.



Getting closer to Lychnis Mtn. Photo - M. Feller.

the daily sched, and thick foam mattresses for our bunk beds. After warming the cabin up from its -15°C (the outside weather slowly warmed during the week, up to around -3°C), we retired to luxury.

Next morning we soaked up the luxury of our temporary home and its superb setting – at the edge of a 1 km wide valley surrounded by snowy peaks. A mid morning departure had us heading up a side valley to the east of Oyster Pk. – the prominent peak across the valley from the cabin.

Our route took us to a hidden lake, then up to a cliff band, also well hidden by the wide-apart contours on our map – a characteristic of the Rockies. We actually had to descend through this cliff band – at a place where we could only return with difficulty and not on skis. Pleasant benches, open forest, a monstrous bus-size bivy rock with hundreds of animal tracks heading to it, then a steepening slope, took us to moraines below a small glacier. Falling snow and windswept rocky ground with little snow, also characteristic of the upper slopes in the Rockies, caused a retreat. Superb powder and a better route through the cliff band had us back to the cabin.

The snowfall stopped that night and a full moon came out. The others had gone to sleep and I was coming back from the outhouse when I saw a couple of people skiing towards the cabin. I waited at the door until they approached. It was a warden from Waterton Lakes park who knew Cliff, and was working at Skoki, as well as one of the Skoki cooks (if you cook all day you can only ski at night – but it was a superb night for skiing, headlamps not being needed due



Approaching the Lychnis Mtn. - Oyster Ridge col. Photo - M. Feller.



Ptarmigan Pk. (left) and Fossil Mtn. (right) above Baker Lake from beneath Lychnis Mtn. Photo - M. Feller.



Skiing down to the Red Deer valley beneath Cyclone (left) and Pipestone (right) mtns. Photo - M. Feller.

to the brilliance of the moon). I felt guilty not inviting them in, but the others were all asleep.

Next day we skied over to the lodge, the weather not looking that promising, and my guilt feelings of the previous night were compounded when the cook gave us some freshly baked cakes. While Cliff was talking to his friend, we looked at the old photos and booklets about the lodge, and generally checked things out.

Eventually we left and skied all of a km before stopping for lunch at a campsite, sheltering

beneath trees as the adjacent Merlin valley filled up with cloud and snow. We then skied up a very steep trail over the NW flank of Skoki Mtn., taking us into the upper Pipestone Ck. Valley, then up to a broad pass (so broad we couldn't locate the high point) into the Red Deer valley, down which we skied for 2 km back to our cabin, completing a circumnavigation of Skoki Mtn.

The next day was to provide the best skiing. From our cabin we skied south up the valley beneath Oyster Pk. and Fossil Mtn., heading towards Baker Ck. Valley. Near the head of this valley we turned east and climbed steeply up through forest, heading into a side valley between Tilted Mtn. and the Oyster Pk. Ridge. Superb views of our route in over Boulder and Deception passes, to the peaks around Lake O'Hara and Lake Louise to the peaks above our valley – Tilted and Lychnis Mtns. – in brilliant sunshine were only enhanced by a relatively stable snowpack (not characteristic of the Rockies) and perfect powder yet again. We stopped about 50 m below a pass at the head of the valley, deskinned, then commenced a perfect 600 m ski descent down to the valley on snow so forgiving that it put no stress at all on my arthritic knees. This run could have continued forever. Down in the main valley again all we had was 5 km of gentle downhill in the glow of the late afternoon sun to take us back to the cabin.

Next day, in deteriorating weather, we closed up the cabin then retraced our route in, with cloud and increasing snowfall hiding the scenery. A final ski down one of Lake Louise's runs took us back to the car. Needless to say we had spent considerable time looking at repeat photo opportunities.

Party: Cliff White, Ellen Woodd, Evelyn and Michael Feller.



