



THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION  
ISLAND BUSHWHACKER  
1999



MOUNTAIN PICTORIAL WINNER  
Sunrise in the Blanka Glacier region of the Selkirks.  
Kayla Stevenson

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FRONT COVER

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS WINNER - Approximately 50 m below the summit of Mt. Whympier.  
Richard Keltie

BACK COVER

Cayoosh Peak from 7 or 8 Mile Lake - Margaret Brown



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# VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

## MT. SEPTIMUS

### THREE DAYS WITH A BLISTER

Peter Rothermel

July 30-31

This being my first multi-day trip with the Alpine Club, it sort of felt like a blind date, even though one of the group I know very well and three others I'd been on day hikes with before, I couldn't shake that faux-pas feeling, like I might fart and offend somebody or something.

Four folks came up from Victoria on July 30<sup>th</sup> and met Tom and me at the Parksville on ramp and off we went.

We started up the Price Creek trail and it was in pretty good shape considering this year's snow pack. Yet within the first hour I realized my new-ish boots weren't breaking in

too well. The fact was they were breaking me and I was developing a blister that I would limp along with for the next three days.

Another thing we realized pretty quick was we had two people with the same sounding name and their handles soon became Su-you and Sue-ee (by the way Sue's not fat).

After the Cream Lake junction the trail steepened into a root grabbing route, then

onto consolidated avalanche snow. My stiff boots worked better on snow where they could rotate through the snow as opposed to my heels rotating in my boots on forest ground.

Over the gap and we were at Cream Lake. Normally at the end of July the lake would have been a cold turquoise blue with a zillion mosquitoes. This day we hiked over the lake on at least a meter of ice and everywhere snow (good for my feet)

We camped at the South end of the lake and had a fine view

of our next day's climb. John and Su put up what appeared to be a ridiculously small tent. From our kitchen area it looked, end on, about two feet high and three feet long. I was thinking "They must really like each other," as John is easily over six feet tall.

After dinner the air was still warm in spite of camping on snow and was conducive for watching stars. Su and John went off to (a cramped) bed early saying "Set your alarms for five, we'll be climbing by six!" This left me thinking "An hour to get up and go? It takes me an hour to brush my teeth and pee,

let alone tea, breakfast and a poo" (whoops, a faux pas). Years ago in a second-hand store I could have bought the lawn bowling ball and taken that sport up, but no, I had to buy the old ice axe.

Well, we started up at eight thanks to a faulty alarm and a few lazy people. Catherine wasn't feeling well so she and Derek stayed back at camp and later hiked out.

Up the snowfield and up "Gully X" on

about a 30° slope, with everybody ascending in good form. Then we came to a bergschrund at the top of the right side of the "X". Down we dropped with no problem, but how to get out? Tom and I opted for the loose rock with no handholds and said "There must be a better way" to the others. John chopped steps in the hard snow and led the rest up. The bergschrund took about an hour to negotiate.

Now we were on the final leg of the gully, with the snow steepening to 45°. Up to the col, down and across an iffy snow



Mt. Septimus and Gully X. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

bridge. Then onto the "Hanging Glacier" where we stopped for lunch in a toasty depression warmed by the sun.

After the break we traversed across the glacier. First we came upon a recent avalanche and realized it was still "Spring" and then came across a huge crevasse and realized it was "Summer" and the glacier was indeed moving.

At the end of our traverse we went onto rock, if rock you could call it—more like a slag heap. Although not too steep, it still required us to climb like reptiles. You know, with your whole body being in touch with terra-unfirma, except for the appendage reaching out for the next upwards thrust.

After a small snowfield we were walking Cro-Magnon style (upright) on the last bit of ridge and to my disappointment on the summit. Disappointed because all day we were climbing in clear hot sun and now we were in the clouds. Once we got a view of Flower Ridge and another time I got a peek at Love Lake. Oh well, maybe next time!

We lolled on the summit in windless conditions, reading the register and replaced it into a new summit tube along with a waterproof notebook that we had brought with us, while we had a lazy second lunch.

Then down we went—Cro-Magnon ridge ok, upper snowfield ok, but when we came to the slag heap some balked, so we tossed down a rope for a hand line. I went down to untangle the inevitable mess of loops and to add on the second rope. About half way down I thought I heard someone say "Look, Look", so I looked up just as a grapefruit sized rock bounced a few feet over my head and realized they had been saying "Rock, Rock!" (my hearing's not so great)

Once all were down to the "Hanging Glacier", we roped up for the traverse. I jokingly said to John "Just because I said your girlfriend's cute, you didn't have to throw that rock at me". He didn't get it and said "I didn't throw a rock!" He's German so maybe it was a language thing or something. So for the record I must say—I was joking! (about the rock, not your girlfriend.)

We shuffled across the glacier tethered with our umbilical cords and up to the col. Here we dropped down into the moat and worked our way down almost to the bergschrund. We felt more like spelunkers and finally had to break our way out and up through the snow. There part of the group were belayed down into the bergschrund and Tom and John down climbed a different way than how we went up. We regrouped at the lower lip. As some still felt gripped John put in an anchor, tossed down a rope and again I went down to untangle the mess and tie on the second rope. After all were down the hand



John nearing the top of Gully X. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

line, John pulled up rope, rappelled and retrieved the ropes.

Still a bit more to go before we get to easy snow below, so back into a moat and after more loose and slimy rock, onto easy slope, then back to camp. Then after dinner Sue passed around a celebratory drink of Bailey's and brandy.

The next morning after a leisurely breakfast we packed up and headed down. As soon as we were off the snow my blisters came back with a vengeance and I limped my way back to the car. Then in for a refreshing swim in Buttle Lake and into more forgiving footwear.

Off to Campbell River for burgers and beer. Great trip with nice folks and good weather.

*Participants: John Damaschke (trip leader), Peter Rothermel, Su Castle, Sue Allen, Catherine Brandt, Derek Wells, Tom Carter and myself.*

## TEAM WORK ON MT. WHYMPER

Richard Keltie

When I was twelve, I read John Hunt's book on the British successful first ascent of Chomolungma. What fascinated me was the complex logistics that were required to get so many men and equipment through the Khumbu, across the Western Cwm, over the Geneva Spur and finally to the South

Col. A project of self sacrifice and commitment, done at altitude and in cold.

That endeavour became all the more impressive as I gained mountaineering experience and saw how weather and exhaustion can draw thoughts inward to self preservation, shrinking

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deliberate action towards helping others less capable of the objective.

Over many climbs I had searched, mostly in vain, for the feeling of community, comradeship and team work that I hungered for as an essential part of my mountain experiences. Occasionally, for a few pitches across difficult ground, we would look out for each other but beyond that we were individuals, travelling together but essentially sealed in our solo climbs oblivious of the suffering or doubts of the others. So much more could have been accomplished, besides the summit, had we felt compassion and topped out spiritually as one. Cooperation magnifies satisfaction beyond that felt on solo summits.

That was dramatically confirmed on the 1982 Air Canada sponsored attempt on the South Spur route. Documented by Al Burgess, it exposed selfish ambition and jealousy of the Pat Morrow and Laurie Skreslet summits. No pride of cooperative success in that team—just individual effort and luck of timing and gear.

So it was with delight that I found myself in the midst of a climb surrounded by friends and sharing exhausting route finding. Mount Whymper, January 1999 was such a experience.

The North West Ridge was out of reach with the time we had available. So we selected the South West Ridge—a moderate angle complicated only by deep snow in the year of 30 metres on Mount Baker. We had camped 300 metres above the Chemainus River with thin sliver moon to help with

supper and tent erection. We rose at a reasonable time and enjoyed a frosty morning alpine glow over El Capitan before starting up through the slash and then old growth. Immediately we encountered Selkirks powder, waist deep and bottomless and a real Hunt expedition began for me.

Oh Yes, we would easily reach the summit 700 metres above and 1000 metres along the ridge, no problem—o. It was the way we reached that summit—no exposure, no whiteout, no avalanche risk, just deep powder to band us together. The awesome experience in the group that day could intimidate at steeper angle but that powder made us all humble.

Every 100 metres a new lead—and the joy of the final summit block—a simple 200 metre white dome but so demanding that the lead changed every 10 metres. The exhausted front stepped aside for fresh lungs and followed the now easy steps snowplowing above. We all had a chance and cooperated to make the peak as a team. In my imagination, it was equal to the excitement felt by Hunts waiting climbers when the approaching Hillary gave the thumbs up.

Life and teamwork are closely linked. What is the worth of life or a summit reached if it cannot be enjoyed with companions—supporting each other and finally sitting on top laughing at exhaustion from self-inflicted demands—delighting in our humanity together.

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*Participants: Sandy Briggs (leader), Richard Keltie, Reinhard Illner, John Pratt, Lindsay Elms, Julie Deslippe, Doug Ravenstein, Scott Pearse. Happy birthday John!*

## KLUDAHK TRAIL

### RAIN PONCHO, GARBAGE BAG & SKINS

Susan Allen

March 13–14

What do a rain poncho, garbage bag and skins have in common? Let me tell you how it all started... think back to March 1999.

It was a Saturday morning, March 13, 1999. It was clear and cold. The air was brisk and our breath was visible as we exhaled. The temperature was -10 degrees Celsius... and we were off to K-Country. To Albertans that means you are on your way to Kananaskis Country, one of the premier back country ski locations in the West... but to Islanders it means you are off to Kludahk Country, a huge recreational area in the Sooke Hills on the west side of Vancouver Island.

For your information, Kludahk Country consists of private and public land used by several large forest product companies. The Kludahk Outdoors Club, in cooperation with Western Forest Products, Pacific Forest Products and Fletchers Challenge, is developing an 80 km long ridge connecting the San Juan Ridge from Leechtown to Botanical Beach, eventually to connect the Galloping Goose Trail with the Juan de Fuca and West Coast Trails. Five cabins for club members have been build along the trail. Much of the work has been

completed using volunteer labour. The trail is finished except for the addition of boardwalks to protect fragile marsh areas.

So, we were off to Kludahk Country. We, meaning a group of the members of the Alpine Club of Canada—a very fit and keen group of people. We were off to a weekend of back country skiing on the San Juan Ridge. Now, I exaggerated the truth about the weather. It was really warm, drizzly and cloudy. Grey sky poked through the clouds.

The expeditioners met in Sooke and promptly started to compare gear and equipment. Comments such as: "Are you using mountaineering or tele boots?" and "what type of binding set up?"... "What is your opinion of plastic vs. leather?"... "I think alpine is more appropriate than tele"... and so on. Just the typical type of conversation among gear connoisseurs.

So we loaded up the trucks and set out for Jordan River and onto a logging road heading up into the hills. Imagine driving though lush countryside, filled with ferns and huge trees covered by rich moss—and we were on our way to a ski trip. As we climbed uphill we began to see patches of snow at the side of the road. Soon there were distinct snow banks and, eventually,

the ploughed road ended and we parked the trucks. The snow banks varied from 3 to 6 feet in height.

By this time, the weather had broken—it was pouring rain and we were in the fog—but I guess this is typical for skiing Vancouver Island Style. It was wet! wet! wet! This wetness leaves a distinct feature on the snow. Not the usual type of snow—no grip was possible and this is where the skins come into action. You need them when you are skiing on little ball bearings.

As for the garbage bag—everything in your pack should be in the garbage bag or it will be soaked.

And now for the rain poncho. I geared up and put on my poncho (a most stylish skier). It was pouring rain. The group headed down the logging road in the rain and fog. We didn't have to worry about dehydration that day—everyone absorbed mucho water through the skin! Soon we turned uphill to the ridge. The rain became snow—huge flakes of snow which promptly melted as they hit our bodies. We climbed, climbed and climbed!! At the edge of the ridge we could see enormous drop-offs into bottomless valleys, all fogged in.

Eventually we reached the Tower Cabin. It was barely visible. The cabin is a two story structure built about 10 feet above the ground and this year we could barely find it. Only the top of the second floor protruded above the snow pack which was over 30 feet in height! Several of the keeners telemarked off the roof.

So we dug down through the snow into the cabin. It was as if we were in a cave. Our leader lit a fire and everyone huddled around it. The room became a joint communal steam room.



Second floor of the Tower Cabin. Photo: Sue Allen.

As it warmed up the skiers removed their wet clothing and the dampness swirled as a fog around the room. It was very exotic.

Dinner that evening would rival the Aerie! Spaghetti al la pesto and tofu, fresh vegetables, brownies and plenty of vino. All very important supplies. Eclectic conversation stimulated discussions ranging from kayaking to astronomy and federal fisheries policy to the merits of various ice climbing schools.

Next morning it was still snowing. The enthusiasts decided to ski to Blueberry Cabin. After we crossed our own tracks several times, we finally came to the conclusion we were skiing

in circles and might not find the cabin. So we headed down the ridge towards the sea. As we entered the clearing at the top, the sun broke through the clouds and the sky turned bright blue. Glorious warmth! We had a full vista of the Juan de Fuca Strait. It was a fabulous end to the day.

Following a leisurely ski to the trucks in the glorious warmth, all stopped to admire the spectacular

view of the Olympic Mountains when someone piped up, "It's so hot... this is a day for a cold beer!" At that point our leader pulled a bottle of chilled vino out of his backpack and shared it with all of us. We sipped and enjoyed!

So, fellow Mountaineers, in the future if you are ever asked what do a rain poncho, garbage bag and skins have in common, you will know! It means you are going back country skiing—Vancouver Island Style!

Participants: Gerhardt Lepp (leader), Katherine Brandt, John Damaschke, Barry Finnegan, Shannon Gelean, Don Morton, Mike Paget, Derek Wells, Ken Wong, Susan Allen.

## AVALANCHE WORKSHOP MT. KLITSA GULLY (SUPPOSEDLY)

John Damaschke  
March 15–16

Seventeen made it on the signup list, fifteen of them actually showed up, so on average, we were right at the group limit of sixteen. This seemed like a rather large group for that kind of a trip but, as it turned out, within the next seven hours from our meeting time, the group shrank considerably, not quite as in the 'Ten Little Indian Boys' by Agatha Christie. My

respect for Russ at this point who dared to face the real challenge of this trip—the drive to the trailhead.

Before the trip we all enjoyed the first warm and sunny spell in Victoria for this year—spring seemed to have started. So, we were all looking forward to a great weekend, after a long week of impatiently watching the great weather from inside

our office. We were quite wrong—on Saturday, it turned into the usual winter-weekend-trip weather: Rain. Nevertheless, at 9:30 AM, four car-loads full of enthusiastic mountaineers left Helmcken, a very convenient time, by the way. It means you still get several hours of sleep even after going out on Friday night. So, with short pick-up stops, one along the highway, and one at McDonald's (second breakfast), we were heading towards the "Goat-Town" Coombs. Meanwhile, to everybody's surprise, the rain had turned into rather slippery snow. So we picked up another 4 x 4 and tried out some off-roading along the way.

In Coombs, a man took the place of the goats, walking the roof. It obviously was too cold for the goats. We stopped for a third breakfast (lunch?) and a reassessment of the plan. Nobody seemed too keen on hiking for over an hour along the logging road through a snow storm and farther to get to the base of the Klitsa gully, just to stand around and freeze there during the workshop. For a while, we considered the possibility of digging a snow pit in the highway ditch. After some discussion, the Forbidden Plateau ski area seemed like a reasonable alternative: The ski lift takes you from the road right in the backcountry. We finally took off to Campbell River for a last regrouping at McDonald's and a (second?) lunch. When we got there, it was already too late to catch the last lift on the Forbidden Plateau, and the momentum of the group was interrupted. Also, we got the news that there was snow in Victoria. You don't get a chance that often to see snow in Victoria. At this point, several people decided to turn around. If you asked me for my personal opinion, I didn't crave the food at that particular McDonald's enough to justify the trip to Campbell River. Somebody in the group had the luxury of having a place in town. Dry beds, heating, pizza delivery—it's amazing what civilisation has offer to ordinary people these days. I heard sinful rumour about a hot tub and video that night...

Three of us decided not to overrate matters of minor importance like weather, warmth, dry clothes, and withstood the

temptations of modern society. Luckily, we had everything we needed—a fearless leader and a driver with a 4 x 4. We got to the last hill on the Forbidden Plateau road shortly after the ski area closed, just in time to watch the final competition of the downhill car slides. One driver managed a full 360 degree skid on the single lane gravel road. Proud of his success, he wore a winner-smile frozen on his face. Discouraged by that sight, we opted for the hike up the road. In the meantime, the weather had cleared, and we started trekking up the slopes. There, we learned about the risks when attempting a back-country trip on a ski hill, but with joint forces and absolute willpower, we declined the friendly offers of a snowmobile ride up the mountain, or to stay in the ranger's cabin. After reaching the forest behind the ridge and shovelling for two hours, we had the biggest, nicest, most comfortable, and probably the only quin-zhee on the entire mountain. In recognition of the location and the clear night sky we had by now, we named it "Forbidden Pleasure".

After a good night's sleep, the group of three participants, who had stayed in Campbell River, joined us, and we spent the morning covering the avalanche material, starting off with the piep's search. Among other things, we learned that it is significantly easier to find the beeper if you turn it on prior to hiding it in the snow. Next, we went over the clues you get from a snow pit. We not only felt very safe seeing how much effort it took Gerhardt to initiate a slide, we also enjoyed watching his adaptation of "Rumplestiltskin in the Snow". Thanks Gerhardt, I believe we all got a lot out of this workshop, in addition to just having fun in the snow.

Two of us wrapped up the day with half a day of skiing, the rest of us went for an early return to Victoria—early evening, that is, not early morning.

*Participants: John Damaschke, Gerhardt Lepp, Judy Holm, John Damaschke (the whole thing), Melissa & two other girls (for day two), Tony Pugh, Russ Moir, & 6 others (sorry I forgot your names).*

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## FORBIDDEN PLATEAU

Albert Hestler  
April 14-18

Trust Jack to come up with good ideas on how to spend one's spare time. Last year we skied into this beautiful area to climb Mt. Albert Edward and, incidentally, to celebrate my birthday, though this we could have done just as easily, possibly more easily, in town. (But I won't complain—it was nice.) Having had such a good time, we reconfirmed that this area could justify a few extra days to explore all the various possibilities for ski touring, especially the winter route from Circlet Lake to Mt. Jutland (first mentioned to us many years ago by Les Carter). So we extended this year's outing to a 5-day trip.

Again we were blessed with beautiful weather, sunshine,

balmy temperatures, and oodles of snow. A snowpit proved the snow to be well consolidated, though many well-trodden routes were filled in by snow drifts, and monstrous cornices on top of steeper slopes made some approaches definitely more risky. During daytime, snow could be seen sloughing off continuously, and the 'oomph' of rock falls and breaking cornices could be heard throughout our stay. In consequence we decided to forego Albert Edward and instead spend our time exploring the surroundings. We conveniently pitched our tents in the meadows near Sid's Cabin which was completely covered by snow and could only be identified by an intimate knowledge of various members as to its whereabouts.

We approached this whole exploratory experience in a very civilised manner by going to sleep in the fading daylight (around 8:30 PM) and rising when the sun hit the tents some 12 hours later.

The first day, Wednesday, was spent as usual with an early start in Victoria, a late breakfast in Courtenay and a 4 ½ hours ski-in via Lake Helen MacKenzie. Neither trailbreaking nor routefinding presented a problem. We estimated that there were still more than 20 feet of snow in the meadows and on the lakes. Only the very tip of the Rangers' Cabin was visible in this vast ocean of white.

On Thursday we headed toward Cirlet Lake and Amphitheatre Lake, heading in the general direction of Mount Jutland. From there we found a relatively easy slope which allowed us to comfortably zigzag up to the ridge which forms the T-junction between Albert Edward and Jutland. While hot and sheltered below, the wind on the ridge was quite fierce. The last 200 feet had to be bootied to the summit. Though the views were fantastic and absolutely clear, we didn't stay long because of the cold. Our surprise was complete when a snowmobiler, whom we had heard in the Oyster Creek Valley only minutes earlier, came roaring up to the spot where we had stashed our skis. Not wanting to start an argument, we accepted his offer of a slug of whisky, but decided to write to the Parks Department later complaining about the use of snowmobiles in the Park. The ski-down was quite easy, though only Jack managed to do a few decent telemark turns in the wet and sticky snow. After this valuable lesson in survival skiing we were back at the camp 8 hours later. It had been a wonderful, rewarding day in the snow.

On Friday we decided to take it really easy by skiing up Strata Mountain. The route follows a gentle ramp in a counter-clockwise route from Sid's Cabin to the summit ridge and a wonderful viewpoint at the end thereof. With lots of breaks we extended this trip to 4 ½ hours; after an early supper we went for an evening-ski around McPhee Lake. The most serious incident of the day was a near-mishap by the reporter who nearly fell into the fathomless pit of the latrine when the sidewall caved in. Only the well-placed anchorpoint of the

shovel placed across the abyss saved him from the horrible consequences of such a fall.

On Saturday we skied to Moat Lake where, again, the cabins were completely covered in snow. The lake resembled something of a desert with snow drifts forming large dunes in what should have been a flat expanse. We headed across the lake toward a diagonal ramp starting at the lower right-hand corner of the shoulder which extends from Castle Crag towards the Cruickshank Canyon. This approach is only feasible in the winter. We skied as far as the top of the shoulder, which allowed us to take a look at the summer route leading around the back of Castle Crag and over Mount Frink to Albert Edward. (This trip possibility would have to wait for another time.) Although the weather had become clouded and rain could be seen falling elsewhere, we remained dry and returned to our tents some 6 hours later. From far off we could see that Claire Ebendinger and the ACC members had arrived, who were participating in the trip to Albert Edward scheduled for this weekend. The rest of the day was spent preparing supper and talking with this overwhelming influx of newcomers. With an additional 4 tents and 8 people the place seemed to suddenly feel very crowded. I guess the perception of being in the wilderness decreases with the increase in the number of people.

On our last day, Sunday, Claire's group started to get up at 5:00 AM which more or less meant the end of our sleep, what with all the noise of boots crunching in the snow and the rustling of tentflaps and the packing of gear. 'We' got up when 'they' left'. While breaking camp we watched their progress on the mountain and confirmed our opinion that the heavy snowpack did indeed present difficulties which we had not seen before. (We heard that everybody made it to the summit, though the detail of that adventure will have to be told by someone else.) We had an uneventful ski-out to the parking lot, but a load of good memories to take home with us.

*Participants: Jack Fisher (trip organiser), Albert Hestler, Terry Lunn, George Smekal, Perry Therrien.*

## MT. ALBERT EDWARD

David Press

April 17-18

I decided to join this trip for several reasons, not the least of which was that it would probably be my last chance to get in some skiing before the season ended. So early (but not that early) Saturday morning, the six of us loaded up the cars at Payless, ready to head out for a relaxed and beautiful weekend. As an afterthought as we were about to leave, Claire decided to check that there were, in fact, poles in the Club's four-man tent we were bringing. Unfortunately, there weren't, so we brought two other tents instead. Perhaps it was a blessing in disguise, as Mike later confessed that he snored. Claire then had another afterthought, and decided she should probably

close the doors and trunk of her car before leaving it for the weekend.

We met Sandy and Lanaya in the parking lot, and were on the trail by about 11:30 AM. We paralleled the cross-country track (not on it, mind you) to Lake Helen-Mackenzie. About half an hour was spent on its shore, eating lunch amongst a shroud of aggressive whiskey-jacks, before we headed out across the lake and skied up to the Hairtrigger Ridge. There we ran into two skiers, one of whom was a ranger. He told us that there had been a group of snowmobilers in the park, suggesting that if we see them we take their picture and names.

doubt they'd have minded that too much. We arrived somewhere near Sid's cabin at around 4:00 PM, and set up camp in the same clearing as another group from the Alpine Club who had been in since Wednesday. They arrived back a short while later, and a heated discussion arose as to the purpose of the orange whiffle balls attached to Sandy's tent. It was finally decided that they were for snow golf.

The next morning was perfectly clear, but light clouds quickly moved in to keep the temperature down. The slushy snow had frozen overnight, which would make for a fast but frightening ski to the summit. We had our skis on by 7:30 AM, and began zig-zagging up to the Albert Edward ridge. A few spots were quite steep and icy, making for some scary moments, especially for Doug whose rental skins decided they didn't like the skis he was using. Most of us took off our skis and walked the steepest sections. Upon gaining the ridge, Claire, Lanaya, and Doug decided on celebrating the glorious weather and view by painting their faces pink, green, and purple. The rest of us looked on in horror as our trip leader was transformed into an eyeball-searing shorts-wearing sun-goddess. We made it to the summit (or just below it, as the summit was actually a huge overhanging cornice) at 11:30 AM.

On the summit, we were buzzed a few times by a low-flying sight-seeing helicopter that wouldn't seem to go away. Sandy tried unsuccessfully to dig a hole to the center of the earth, and then shrugged off his failure by saying he was building a wind-block. After an hour on the summit, it was time to head down, and I was finally glad I had rented clunky alpine touring gear rather than light telemark gear, as I was able to crank some ugly turns in the ever-softening slush. We reached the tents at about 3:00 PM, enjoyed a lazy snack, and headed out to return to the parking lot. The journey back was relatively uneventful, and the thought of clean clothes and socks drove Mike and myself hurriedly onward.

We reached the most important leg of our journey, the Courtney White Spot, at 8:00 PM. As I realized that I wouldn't get home until midnight, I began kicking myself for going on a trip the day before my English Provincial exam, but was grateful for the opportunity. Thanks to everyone, especially Claire, for a great weekend.

Participants: Claire Ebendinger (leader), David Press, Doug, Mike Hubbard, Katrin Brandt, Derek Wells, Sandy Briggs, Lanaya.

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## ARROWSMITH-ICE AXE WORKSHOP

### SURFER SANDY SHOWS HIS STUFF

Peter Rothermel  
April 24

I had given my eleven year old nephew, Bjorn, an ice axe for Christmas. We had been out a few times and I had shown him the rudimentary moves so I figured he was up for the workshop which was led by Sandy Briggs and Rick Johnson.

We headed up the "Saddle" route clanking and bonging our way up until we found the perfect slope with a nice runout.

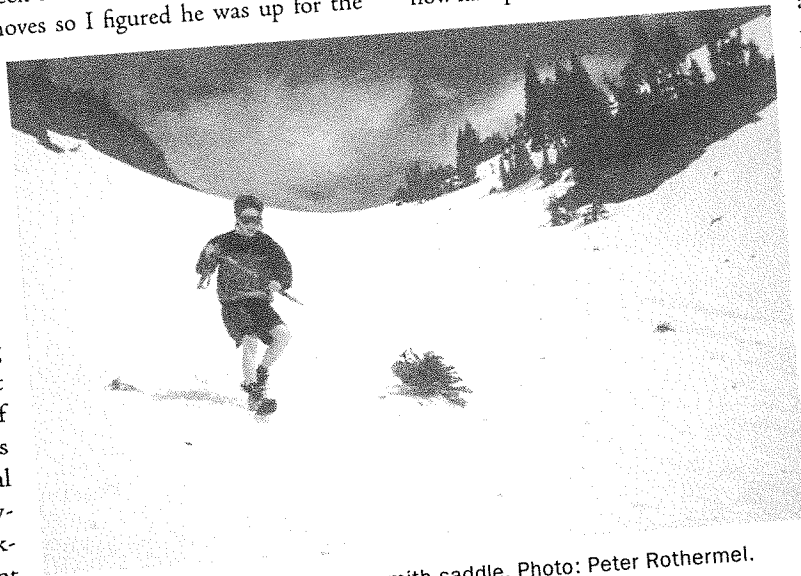
Rick started telling us about different styles and lengths of axes, showing his short almost technical axe and Sandy showing his trusted hickory handled ancient friend. Sort of like comparing a Porsche with a Model "T". Then Rick went onto axe nomenclature-

adze, pick, shaft, head, spike and "if anybody calls their axe a pick they owe me a beer." I think Sandy was the only one owing Rick a beer by the end of the day.

By this time I could see Bjorn was getting a bit bored, while he fiddled with someone's carabiner maybe wondering just how far a pack could travel downhill. In the nick of time it was

all action, huffing and puffing up the hill and after a bit of hesitation all were into the fun of it-sliding down on their bums and self arresting on their right side and then their left sides over and over again. Then Sandy and Rick had everybody do a head downhill on your back arrest. Bjorn was feeling a bit shy about this move and kept going downhill to try it without too much steepness, until I

finally had to holler "BJ if you keep going you'll be on the flats." Once he tried it a few times on his own terms, the little trooper was back to the top flailing with the best of them. At one point he asked me, 'Uncle Peter have you ever done this



Bjorn glissading the Cokely-Arrowsmith saddle. Photo: Peter Rothermel.



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before?" I had a vivid flashback to a time (not a practice) of arresting and catching a crampon (keep them up) and doing a backwards somersault then what seemed like a backflip, a couple half-gainers and a kip-up before I finally got my axe planted. But not soon enough to miss the tree well, yet soon enough that I didn't break the tree or me.

Again we were into a new move the face plant arrest, probably the hardest one and I had yet another flashback to walking down a moderate slope, catching a crampon on my gaiter and doing a near perfect swan dive and finally arresting just before I ripped the crotch out of my pants on a rock out cropping and maybe mine too! My father always said I was a clumsy boy—so what!

By now everybody was wet and tired, so down we went for lunch. Now no arrest. The contest was to see who could make it furthest down the slope. Remembering my high school physics—that mass over incline  $\times$  fat butt = I win! No, my nephew that weighs less than my day pack got the farthest. No wonder I flunked Physics 101.

During lunch Rick demonstrated how to put in an ice axe anchor in the snow and showed us some knots. Soon every-

body started fiddling with each other's carabiners and wondering just how far packs could travel downhill. So when Sandy said, "Shall we continue the practice? or should we hike up to the col?"—there was a resounding chorus "TO THE COL!"

Up we went and when we reached the col Rick and Sandy just kept going and like good little sheep we followed right up to the top of Mt. Cokely.

On the way down Sandy showed everybody how not to traverse across a loose snow slope and started a small slide and sort of surfed and shuffled his way out (that was a demonstration on purpose wasn't it Sandy?)

Finally a tired bunch made their way back to the cars and Bjorn and I went off for burgers and beer—well candy bars and root beer, just enough to spoil his dinner. All the while him asking imponderable questions like, "If you can cross your eyes and look from side to side, why can't you point both eyes out at the same time?" Anybody know the answer?

Well, Uncle Peter's pretty proud of his little mountaineering buddy and you can bet we'll be there again next year because "practice makes perfect" (especially for clumsy oafs).

## MT. MYRA

### THIRD TIME LUCKY

Tim Strange  
June 12-13

Mount Myra as a ski trip had been on the club's schedule twice before and had to be cancelled. The June 12-13 trip looked to go with a number of people from the Victoria area and three from the hinterland. The weather didn't hold a lot of promise but as the old song goes, you can't always get what you want... but you can get what you need. Charles Turner and myself had a very civilized start to the trip; meeting at my place around 10:00 AM. While all from Victoria were up at the crack of dawn to make the drive up island and into Strathcona Park. We left the Westmin mine site at noon for the steep hike up the penstock road to Tennent Lake while the main group was about an hour and a half behind us. Upon arriving at the lake we found one corner of a helicopter landing platform sticking out of the snow bank; a perfect tent platform. So we set about clearing the snow from the remainder of the platform and set up our camp while everyone else was making their way up to the lake. By late afternoon everyone had arrived, exchanged greetings, and completed setting up camp just before it started to rain. Nap time.

An hour or so later the rain eased and everyone emerged to make supper, swap stories, or check out the local landscape. Charles and I decided to go for a short ski up through the gully that is used to access the ridge leading to the top of Myra. We found excellent spring snow conditions in all aspects; even in the steep section of the gully. Charles elected to kick steps up the last steep section after executing an interesting seated kick turn on skis. We skied back down from the top of the gully

to camp and knew that unless the weather changed drastically the next day would bring an excellent trip to the top of Myra and lots of turns on the way back down.

Sunday morning brought a lower cloud cover and intermittent drizzle. The peak was in the clouds but everyone was keen to go up as far as conditions would allow. Flat light wasn't a problem and the sun even broke out for brief periods. One and a half hours of steady uphill brought us through a narrow section of the ridge and up to the first false summit. With everyone regrouped and a thinning of the cloud cover the decision to was made to move to the main peak. We dropped a short distance and skied up to what we thought was the main summit when a higher section appeared through the clouds. It became apparent that we still had a ways to go; the route was figured out and off we tracked through the clouds. The last section of the peak was gained by ditching the skies and booting it up a short distance to the cairn at the top of Mt. Myra. The peak afforded 360 degree views of the inside of a cloud. Everyone took their obligatory stand on the peak and then hustled down to lunch in the shelter of a wind cirque. We were joined by two other club members who had booted it up from the parking lot that morning.

Visibility became even worse for the trip back down and everyone made an extra effort to stay close and regroup often. The ski down more than made up for the lack of views at the top. The snow was well consolidated and very forgiving. Everyone looked sharp as they carved their way back down



the route to camp; pity those two guys on foot. Some skiers even opted for a second run down a particularly steep section. Return to camp was made by 1:30 PM and by 2:30 PM, we were all packed up and ready for the ski down the penstock road from Tennent Lake.

The trip down the road was challenging after skiing the morning with light packs. The ski out was punctuated with a few wobbles and sitzmarks but proceeded without incident until I decided to take a short side trip over a bank, through some alders and into some large rocks half buried in the snow. Major crash! Spectacular! Unfortunately nobody saw it. By the time I had sorted myself out and assessed any injuries everyone had already skied by unaware that I was down. Fortunately Andy Reynolds had decided to walk down this section of the road and as he came by I called for help. He quickly located me, reassessed my injuries and produced two triangular bandages which he used to sling my left arm. Whistle blows were sounded in hopes of alerting the rest of the group. With Andy's assistance I got back up to the road. He went back down the bank to retrieve my pack and skis. By this time everyone had stopped farther down the road, dropped their packs and skis, and started back up the road to locate us. Andy and I started down the road after figuring out a way for him

to drag my pack while I carried my skis down. After walking a few hundred meters we met the group coming back up the road. A plan was quickly made to split my gear and skis among everyone else so all I had to do was walk out. Safety in numbers. And it worked. After walking down for a little more than an hour I was back down to the power station at the mine. Charles had motored down ahead of everyone to get my vehicle and bring it back up the mine road to meet me. All my gear was quickly unloaded and with Charles driving we headed back to the hospital in Campbell River.

After a shot of Demerol and Graval, X-rays were taken which showed a separated left shoulder. I was given a fast acting general anesthetic and my shoulder was reset. In all only three hours had passed between the time of the accident and the treatment. I should be back to normal in a month or so. I was lucky in many ways. I was fortunate to be among such a great group of people. Many thanks to everyone for their unselfish assistance in getting me down.

*Participants: Greg Gordon, Charles Turner, Rudy Brugger, Mike Hubbard, Sylvia Moser, Kaj Jakobsen, Selena Swets, Gerta Smythe, Andy Reynolds, Linda from the Netherlands, and Tim Strange*

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## ARROWSMITH—THE LOST GULLY ROUTE IS IT THE PLUM OR IS IT A PEACH?

Peter Rothermel  
April 25, May 16

When I heard there were a couple of trips planned for the "Lost Gully", a new route to me on Arrowsmith, I just had to sign up. As my mother often said "If a tablespoon of cod liver oil is good for you then a double dose will be better!" So I signed up for both trips.

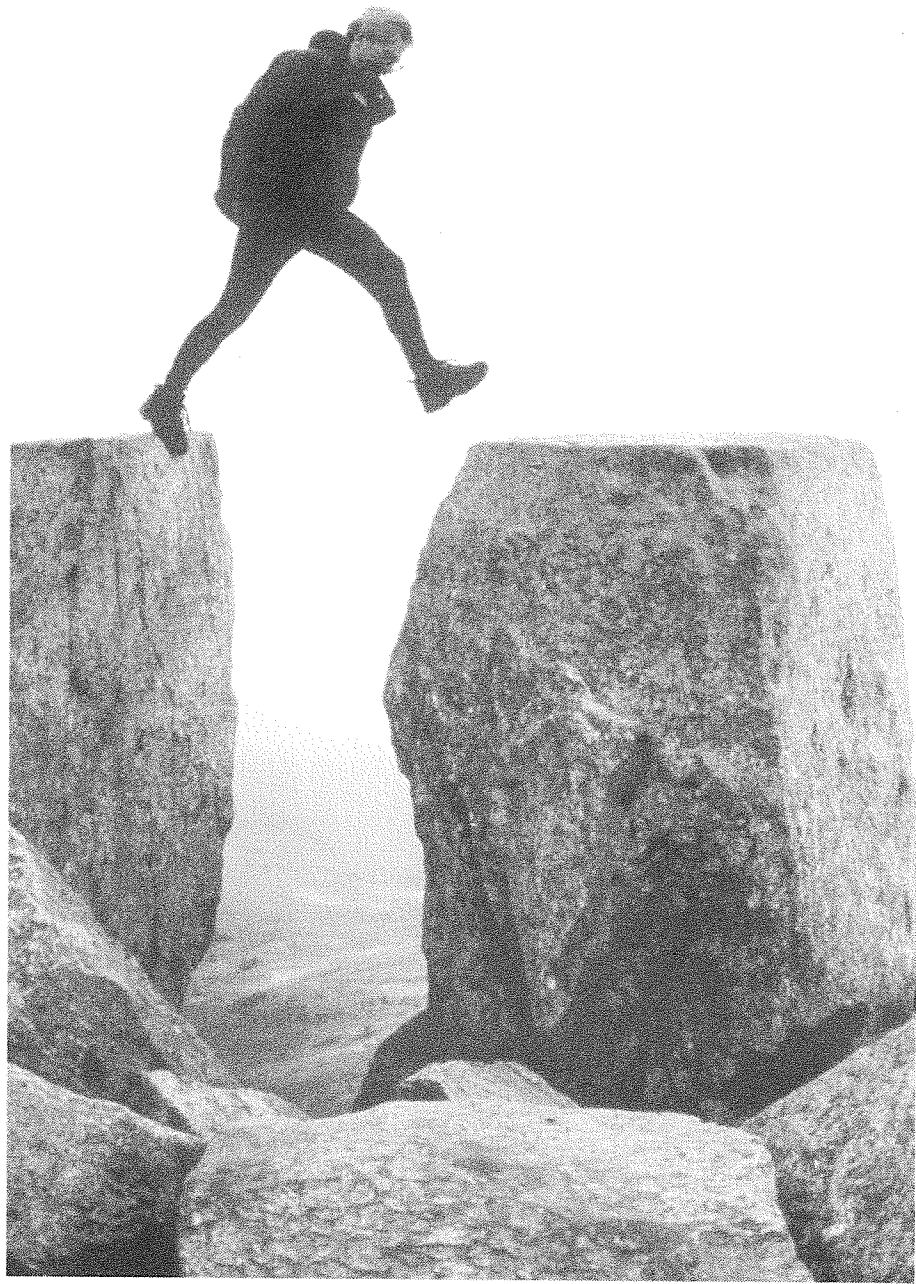
The first trip was with Russ Moir leading on April 25th in company with Dean Williams, Michael Kuzyk, Shelly Olenek, Catherine Brandt, Derek Wells and yours truly. Russ calls this route "the plum of Arrowsmith".

We parked our vehicles at the Judge's pullout and walked down to the second spur, onto the snow and started our trip. At the end of the road we headed up a broad ridge through first growth forest. I was thinking "elk country" and sure enough I stepped in elk... stuff. Up and up tending to the right but not too right, not into the gully yet.

We stopped for a snack where the trees started to thin (actually I realized later this was lunch). Then continued kicking steps up through a steepish section and through sub-alpine forest until we broke out to a broad open slope with a vertical headwall above. I took one look at this cliff band and thought "Oh no! We're going up that?" and started thinking of excuses I could use for heading back without looking too much a chicken "I have blisters—I left the kettle on". No, I was wrong. Before I could show my true colors we traversed to the right under the headwall and into the first couloir. Up we



Michael Kuzyk topping out on the Arrowsmith south summit (Fish Tail Lk. in the distance). Photo: Peter Rothermel.



**MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY WINNER**  
Rick Eppler on the summit of Tryfan, North Wales.  
Catrin Brown

went with me taking "sweep" position (that means slowest but sweep sounds more macho).

Once up to the col that overlooks Fishtail Lake we stopped for a break to put on crampons and warmwear. It was windy and chilly. Then we set up a belay and Russ led up over a rocky step of icy krum holz. Once he was up and anchored the rope the rest of us climbed up protected on prusiks. Then we were into the second narrow couloir leading to the South summit. Proof that chickens can fly—I was first up and on the South summit and took photos as everybody topped out.

We regrouped at the top and I put on more warmwear—hell, everything I had I put on, it was blowing like snot. No, snot would have froze—well it was windy! Off we went on the traverse to the main summit. On a calm sunny day this would have been a skip and a hop and a photo-op. Today it was a plod and a plod and too-cold-to-stop.

On to the last step to the main summit and again we put in an anchor and belayed Russ up. Once he was up and anchored we climbed up protected again with prusiks, me

last for some self-chauvinistic reasoning that since I was first up on the first pitch so I should be last on this one. Man was it c-o-l-d at the belay. It was sort of like doing a mental fetal position with your face in your hood, thinking warm thoughts like my-teddy-bear-on-my-pillow-at-home kind of thoughts.

At last I was on top and berg heil and all that crap, Dean's heading down and he's my ride-good-bye!

There was a large party of Island Mountain Ramblers up the Judge's that day and had descended just before we reached the top and they all went down on a derriere glissade (bum slide) so the trail more resembled an otter slide. My descent down the Judge's was my fastest ever. Either there were a lot of Ramblers or they had fat butts. I sat down and did the Judge's luge in about 15 minutes, yet not quick enough—Dean was gone!

Now let me explain, Dean's one of my best pals and we hike a lot together. It's just that we're matched like the tortoise and the hare—except "Jackrabbit" Dean doesn't stop to sleep so Peter turtle never catches up.

So I hitched a ride with the Ramblers and had a chance to yak the ears off some nice folks about Arrowsmith politics. All in all a great day!

The second Lost Gully trip was on May 16th, led by Rob Eldred (Oh, by the way Rob, I melted your snow shovel and owe you a new one), in company with Tom Carter, Pat

O'Brien, Todd Patton and again me. This trip was to be more of a traverse so we shuffled the cars around so one was at the pullout for the snow gully route and the other we took down to the second spur. We had heard a report from a party from the previous week that ran into icy conditions and had to use every piece of protection they had in both couloirs, so we took extra gear. We had two ropes, snow pickets, ice screws, slings, carabiners, pulleys, jumars, gizmos, thingamajigs and whatyamacallits—just stopping short of porta-ledges. We were loaded for bear!

Up we went up the broad slope through the first growth and once again I stepped in elk... stuff! Same up and everything

until we reached the upper slope below the headwall. New snow was sloughing off raising some concern so I pulled out a stick of dynamite and... just kidding! We went high on the slope so as to do the traverse above the loose stuff. Then into the first couloir and about half way up realized it was icy enough for crampons. On a very small nook with room for two the five of us dressed up for warmth

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Peter digging a slot to China. Photo: Tom Carter.

and put on our crampons. It was much like doing a ballet with one hand tied behind your back and lots of sharp pointy things around and getting them on without poking yourself or others. "Is it snowing? OOPS, sorry about your down jacket!"

We got under way and soon reached the col and stopped for a chilly lunch. After the break we went up the krum holz step without needing a rope and Rob led up the last couloir to the South summit. I tried to get a few classic shots but the clouds descended and the photo-op was for naught.

The traverse to the main summit was totally socked in clouds with that flat kind of light where you lose your depth perception and can't tell ground from sky. Sort of like walking around in cotton batting, not knowing where your next step is landing, until you bump into something or drop down a step a little further than you expected.

At the base of the last step to the summit I noticed a hole in the cornice and did a sort of spread eagle shimmy up to it and looked through—yikes!—I should say I looked down about a thousand feet! Tom wanted to have a look so I backed off about six feet, leaned on my ice axe and it plunged in to the head. "Um Tom... you better back off real easy like." After this bit of foolishness we went up the last step, again sans rope.

On the summit we tossed around the idea of rappelling down the "Nose" and doing a real traverse via the "Saddle Route" but decided it was too grippy and masked our fears by saying it was just too late in the day and so it was decided to

go down the "Snow Gully" route as originally planned.

At the top of the couloir wisdom called for a rappel and my quaking vote was loudest. Finally we could use up some of this gear we'd been lugging up the mountain all day. I dug in a deep slot and put in a "T" anchor with two snow pickets. No way was I going to stand around and let someone jam in a single vertical picket and expect this old bag of bones and lard to put his weight on it. I put in an anchor that would have held a Mac truck. My slot was deep enough that the echo that came back was in Chinese. Then peering down into the cloudy gloom we could see two young guys making their way up. They offered to bring our gear down to us as they were planning to down climb back (Ah, youth). They were quick, up to the summit

and back down before we were fully assembled in the cirque below. They came down wearing big grins with our pickets and ropes in a big ball that resembled spaghetti upchuck (damn youth).

After getting the mess straightened out we bum slid and hiked our way back to the car. Then off to Coombs for burgers and beer, A fine way to end another great day!

Russ may be right when he refers to the Lost Gully route as "the plumb of Arrowsmith". I don't know, I haven't yet done all the routes on Arrowsmith such as Blackie's route, the Un-Judge's or the Stegosaurus (?) but when I do I'll let you know. All I can say is the Lost Gully route is a peach!

## BENIGHTED ON MT. KLITSA

### A LESSON EARNED & A LESSON LEARNED

VANCOUVER  
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Peter Rothermel  
August

None of us had ever been to Mt. Klitsa before but we had heard from a guy that knew a gal that had a friend that had once been there. So the word was that the old route was overgrown and not used anymore but that there was a new trail on the west side built by laid off forestry workers on a government grant. On this trip were Darlene Lane, Tim Lane, Tom Carter and myself.

We found the new trail without any difficulty and boy, was it new—staircases and handrails and bridges over nothing that were wide enough to drive a car over. Our boots never seemed to touch ground—at least not until the funding ran out. From this point the trail was a mellow single track that led to Brigade Lake, where we stopped for a snack and a swim. After the break we followed bits of flagging into total bushwhack. Our source had also told us that the trail was being worked on from both ends, so we expected at any minute to emerge from the alder and blueberry brush onto new trail. It never happened. We just kept following bits of tape with the bushwhack interrupted now and then by tarns and ponds. In retrospect I now realize this must have been a winter ski route when everything is frozen and flattened under a layer of snow. What else could explain why there was flagging at each end of the tarns yet none following around them. But being a hot August day we thought the lack of flagging around the ponds meant swim and swim we did! Tromp, pant, sweat, sploosh! I think half the distance we covered that day was using the breast stroke.

When we finally reached the summit someone said "what time is it? What? Five o'clock!? We're not going back that way! No way!" Fortunately the summit register told us that the old way down was still there and would only take us a couple of hours down, so we dawdled around and fiddle-farted our time away.

Finally down we went and lost our way again and again following some other poor fools flagging tape who is probably

still lost on that mountain. After bluffing out on the East end of the hourglass shaped lake we realized we were on the wrong side of the lake. Back down at the narrows we figured to swim across. With our packs we sank like stones, so nixed that plan. "Who thought up that stupid idea?!" (blush, blush). So we resigned ourselves to hike all the way back around by the lake shore. Isn't it amazing how every time one loses their balance on slippery rocks, providence always provides something to grab onto... like devils club!

Once around the other side of the lake we found an old fire ring on a small peninsula, stopped for a rest and after getting the last of the spines out of our paws, fished our head lamps out of our packs because now it was dark. Casting about with our lamps found a trail with flagging and the conversation went something like this:

Curly: "Look flagging!"

Moe: "Yah so? We've been following flagging all day and look where it's gotten us!"

Larry: "Yah but there's a trail!"

Moe: "We know where we are now on the map. If we go down that trail we might get really lost!"

So it was settled, we were going to bivvy, hunker down and bunk for the night (nuk nuk nuk—whoop whoop whoop!). We gathered up all the fire wood we could, broke out the raingear, sweaters, extra food and settled in and had a real in-your-face view of the Milky Way.

After a not too bad night, we woke at first light, stoked up the fire and had our last bagel, candy bar and gorp divided up four ways—thankful we were so piggish about packing lunch. Then we got our gear together and headed out.

It turned out the trail we found was the right way out but maybe a good thing we didn't go down at night as part of the trail was washed out and finding our way was a bit difficult even in daylight. Down we went and a long hike on the logging road back to the car. Then off to Port Alberni for burgers

and beer—whoops, wrong time of day—I mean phone calls to our significant others, coffee and breakfast!

The lesson earned? We had rain gear, head lamps, topo map, fire starter, sweaters and extra food for a hot August day hike. Number eleven item I've added to the ten essentials in my day pack is a short piece of ensolite foam (man was that ground hard!).

The lesson learned? Don't take second or third hand advice from someone that's never been there before. Ask Sandy,

## ARROWSMITH CREVASSE WORKSHOP

Peter Rothermel

June 13

My pal Tom Carter had done a crevasse workshop before and said "You have to keep practicing. You'll be surprised just how much you forget even a week later."

So I read over and over my "Freedom of The Hills" and even set up a rope in my shop to prusik up and down. Maybe that's how I saved my harness, prusiks and a few carabiners when my place burned to the ground. (Its a long story and I won't burden you with the details).

At any rate I showed up at the workshop wearing day hiking boots and borrowed raingear. I had dug my crampons out of the ashes, fixed new straps, borrowed an ice axe and was ready to go. As it was we didn't need crampons. Guide Pat Post from slipstream Adventures Ltd. led the workshop and if he reads this I can answer his question about cooked crampons—once they lose their temper throw them out! The first time I front pointed on anything hard they bent like noodles. Actually I now have a hanging sculpture of melted 'biners, crampons, ice axes and assorted climbing gear that would make Salvador Dali proud.

We started the workshop with our knots—overhand, figure eight, double fisherman's, Munter hitch—yawn! We know all this stuff! So onto the French prusik, belay device self ratcheting, garda hitch—a bunch of new stuff—great! Now you have to realize, I pride myself on knowing my knots. I can tie a bowline with one hand blindfolded—honest—can you? Hell I even know the Scottish shoelace knot! Once shown a knot I never forget it (or so I thought).

Next we went onto anchors and Pat told us to put in any kind we wanted, then we tied a rope to each anchor in turn and all heave—ho'd and tried to pull them out. The single vertical picket—ping! A horizontal ice axe in a shallow slot—ping! Some held some didn't. When my horizontal picket in a slot with a vertical ice axe back up took the test, I have to admit maybe I didn't pull with all my might but it held and I could stop sweating. The two surprises of the test were the snow bollards. Todd dug a huge bollard about six feet across, ten feet long and about two feet deep (he's young and has energy!) To our surprise a single rope sliced right through it like a hot knife through butter. Then Pat put in a bollard almost small enough to hug your arms around and about a foot deep. Two wraps of the rope and a pair of gloves to back it up and there

Claire, Russ or Rudy—they've been everywhere!

I'm thinking of doing a day hike to the Moyeha river valley next year. In the cafe over breakfast after our Klitsa hike, the waitress overheard our conversation and told me about a guy her ex-husband met in the bar who knew an old guy that had done this trip as a day hike. I have a map and route description on a napkin, somewhere. Look for it in the next trip schedule. Any takers?

was no way we could pull it out. Yet in the end it all comes down to the condition of the snow which may be fine here but twenty feet over may be mush or fluff.

Now we were ready for the nitty-gritty and roped up to rock and roll, or in other words slip, slide, arrest and rescue.

Arrowsmith doesn't have any glaciers hence no real crevasses, so we had to ad-lib. It was just a five minute walk from where we parked at the "Saddle Route" to the perfect "crevasse" where the creek was undermining the snow slope. So here we were roped up in teams of three with the bottom "victim" jumping into the hole and the other two on the rope going into self arrest.

On our turn my axe slipped through the snow like undoing a zipper. Either our victim hit bottom or we held their fall, I'm just not sure which. While Jules held on arrest I got busy setting up a rescue anchor, then belayed her down where she dropped our victim a loop of rope, set up a pulley system and we got our victim out of the hole. We took turns the rest of the day being victim, anchor or rescuer until we felt pretty cocky and self assured.

The last thing Pat showed us was how a rope party of two can rescue each other. He was so fast I didn't retain one iota of his demonstration. If I ever really do fall into a crevasse, I sure hope there's someone like Pat uphill of me!

Then off to the Chalet Cafe at the end of Cameron Lake for burgers and beer and everyone told their "nearly bought it" stories. Rick had an especially good one about taking a crampon in the butt.

The following week Tom and I were back up to re-practice our rescue techniques. Starting up late we met Dean (early start) coming down the "Saddle Route". We tried to talk him into being our third on the rope and even with the promise of letting him be victim and not really having to do anything, he declined saying something about mowing the lawn or something important like.

Lacking a victim we loaded up our packs with snow, named it "Charlie", and tossed him into the hole. By the time we discussed the different systems, set up our rescue and fished our victim out of the hole, "Charlie" died from hypothermia.

The bottom line is practice, practice and practice some more, because someday you might be "Charlie!"

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# MT. COLONEL FOSTER SE SUMMIT

Charles Turner

July 1-3

We left the parking lot at 12:30 PM. Ahead of us was another Alpine Club trip to climb the main summit of the Colonel. Rather a wet trip with lots of snow and many trees down across the trail from the winter storms.

We were able to walk across landslide lake. No, we don't walk on water—it was still frozen and so were we. The rain was turning to slush at this point, and not wanting to have any more wet clothing, we continued in what we were wearing. The tents went up in a hurry and everyone disappeared from view.

We camped at Iceberg Lake just below the other group. It took us 6 ½ hours from the cars.

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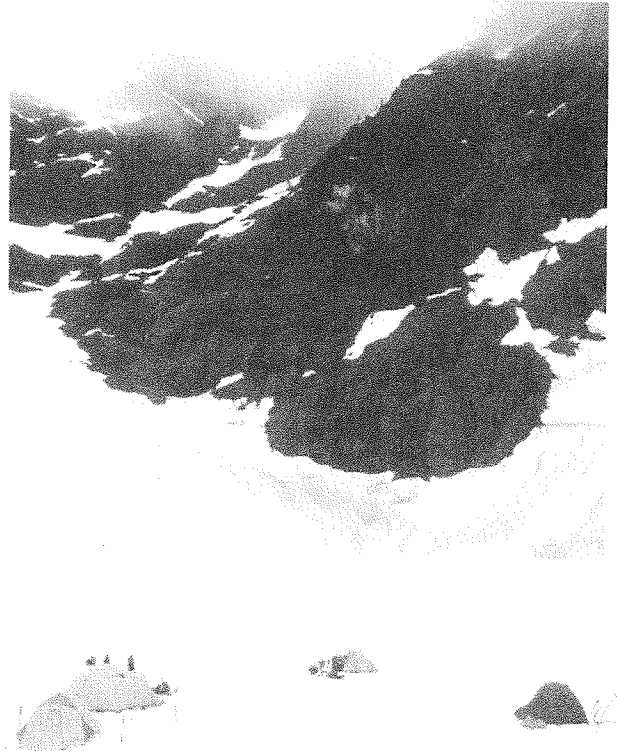
It wasn't raining the next morning and the cloud was above us at about 4500 ft. We decided to try for the summit. We left camp at 7:30 AM and were on the summit 5 hours later. No views but, hey, you can't have everything. We were on snow for all but the last 600 ft. which was a fairly easy rock scramble.

We had a very pleasant evening sitting around our group table. With Tak's group and 2 friends who showed up to climb the next day, we were 14 in all. It was quite a banquet.

*Participants: Charles Turner (leader), James Adams, Rob Adams, Greg Gordon, Silvia Moser, Wen Redments, Derek Wells, Katherine Brandt, Brian Ross.*

Camp below the Colonel on Iceburg Lake.

Photo: Ken Redonento.



## HIDDEN TALENTS REVEALED ON MT. WHYMPER

Lindsay Elms

January 24

Sandy asked me two days after this trip to write the account for the Annual Bushwhacker. I knew that if he had of waited until later in the year to ask the account might have been a bit deranged due to the training required to get in shape for the big Millenium Party. My memory would have been somewhat fuzzy and blurry and at times I may have fabricated the story to fill the page. I could easily have said that the Y2K bug had hit my computer early and it was out of action and then passed the buck to someone else but I couldn't do that. At least right now the trip is fresh and vivid in my mind, however, my eyes are still a bit red and sore from leaving my sunglasses in the tent on the morning we started climbing. But on the brighter side of things, no matter how bad the photophobia is at least one good thing about a computer is you can type in what ever size font you want. Luckily I didn't need to use the font size and boldness of the big letter E on the top

row of an Optometrist's eye chart.

We all met Saturday afternoon at the gate on the Chemainus River Main near the highway south of Ladysmith. Sandy had made arrangements beforehand with MacBlo to get a key for the gate in case we couldn't get back out by 6 PM on Sunday night and we are profoundly fortunate that Sandy has a pre-disposed uncanny sense about details like this. No doubt this stems from his wealth of knowledge and experience from previous trips. The gate-keeper waved us through and said: "Have a good trip!"

We drove to the cross-ditch many kilometres up the valley, parked, organized our packs and then put them on our backs. There was already more snow on the road than Sandy had anticipated but without those energy-saving devices called skis and snowshoes we could do nothing about it except plunge boot-deep into the snow and slog our way up the

valley. "Hey Sandy, you're the leader, break the trail!" someone called. "Don't worry," Sandy said laconically "I'll do my share, you just get started since you're ready to go." After a couple of hours we were at the c27 turn-off and ready to start uphill. "Is this where we turn off Sandy?" a voice called from out front. Another hour saw us at the junction of c27 and c29, a nice flat area to pitch the tents and admire the views; at least with what was left of the rapidly dwindling daylight. Tents were pitched, the stoves lit and a brew made, and then Reinhard brought out the 'hors d'oeuvres'—a plate of Tiger Prawns with a home-made sauce; heaven for the seafood lovers. Then it was time to cook dinner but for many it was like going from the Med Grill restaurant back to McDonalds.

It was a cold, clear night when the stars came out and danced about just like in Robert Service's poem 'The Cremation of Sam Magee.' In fact so-much-so that Sandy found the lure too great and recited the whole poem from memory. But alas for us there was no boiler-fire from the "Alice May" to keep us warm this night as we all stood around and listened spellbound while our lashes froze. The cold even drove through our Goretex and stabbed like a driven nail. Following Sandy's rendition I recited the Australian classic 'The Man from Ironbark' (we needed something from a warmer climate) and then John Pratt jumped in with some of his own verses. Finally, we looked towards the heavens (not for divine inspiration) and tried to pick out the various astral constellations with Reinhard's help since it was such a clear night out. By the time we were all chilled clean through to the bone we were ready to be cremated to our sleeping bags. I believe everyone's blissful sleep that night can be attributed to those soothing lullaby's and our melodic voices.

Sunday morning everyone arose cheerfully before dawn, brewed-up and then chowed-down breakfast. By 7:15 AM Sandy had come to the conclusion that the Northwest Ridge was not in condition because of the soft snow therefore he suggested that we go up c29 and find a more direct and shorter route to the summit. We hadn't moved very far from camp when the morning sun began to cast its fiery tangerine flush over the surrounding Mounts Landale, El Capitan and Service. This sent everyone into a frenzied panic as they searched through their packs for their cameras to capture the Vesuvian glow on film before it quickly faded. However, it soon dissolved and in no time we were on our way again looking for somewhere to deek off the road and into the forest where there was not as much snow (to start with anyway). Then the rhetoric began which kept us all amused and guffawing as we climbed.

Now as any one knows a trip with Sandy is like listening to comedy night at the local watering-hole. Add to the equation John Pratt, and the elements are there for a non-stop play on words. For example, John brought up the topic about logging practices in Malaysia and said: 'Malaysia is an Occident waiting to happen.' Sandy replied with: 'Maybe they need some Korea counseling.' And then John again: 'Well bless my Seoul.' It finally ended with John saying: 'Maybe they should be Peking around the corner for advice. No need to Taiwan down to a specific agreement.'

Of course there were many more witty comments made, jokes recited and some short ditties sung and tunes whistled, but there was a noticeable lack of whistling from Sandy. When asked about it Sandy informed us that the reason for this was that on a previous trip he had been whistling a simple little tune which appeared to confuse everyone. He then asked if they could recognize the tune. They all listened intently but slowly scowls of confusion became apparent across their brows and then in unison they shook their heads and said emphatically—no! Sandy commented that he thought it had to be fairly easy to recognize but still they said no. He couldn't believe they didn't recognize the simply little tune of 'Twinkle, Twinkle little star.' That was when Sandy decided never to whistle again (except for the odd cat whistle).

By the time we emerged from the trees into the alpine the snow conditions were more labour intensive. We all took turns at breaking trail and the humorous banter became grunts and groans of despair as everyone ploughed their way through thigh deep snow towards the ice-encrusted phallic symbol on the top. But everyone was determined and at midday we all arrived on the summit.

Everyone shook hands and took the usual summit photos and then Sandy suggested we move down the normal ascent ridge to a more sheltered spot out of the wind for lunch. Down we went sliding and frolicking and taking delight in not having to trudge uphill in the thigh deep snow anymore until we reached 'The Lunch Spot'—the mountaineers equivalent of 'The White Spot.' Here some unexpected goodies were discovered hiding in the confines of Sandy's pack. As it happened, it was the day before John's birthday and Sandy decided there was no better place to celebrate his big 50 then on a mountain where John loves to be. Out came a huge card with photos from trips Sandy had been on with John (we still don't know how the card managed to make it up without any creases) and then the Graham Cracker bear biscuits and to wash them down he dredged out a Mickey of Whiskey. Now that was what everyone called 'A fine mountain lunch.'

We all drank our wee dram and when the cold began creeping back into our bones we decided it was time to move. The trail-markers nailed on the trees were sighted and we were able to find our way down to the top of the old logging road which led back to our tents. The road seemed to go on forever but by mid afternoon we were back at the tents and ready to roll them up. A last brew and then on with the packs. As usual we all found the logging road monotonous and it didn't help when then the darkness crept in before we got back to the vehicles. It was fortunate for us Sandy had the key because 6pm had come and gone before we reached the gate. Later we all rendezvoused in Duncan for dinner at the Doghouse and then some tired puppies drove home for a well deserved sleep after having climbed the highest mountain in Canada south of the 49TH.

*Participants: Sandy Briggs, John Pratt, Richard Keltie, Doug Ravenstein, Julie Deslippe, Shelley Olenick, Scott Pearse, Reinhard Illner and Lindsay Elms.*

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# MT. LANDALE

## HALLOWEEN TREK

Barb Baker  
October 31

The change of time set the stage for this lighthearted trek. Are we leaving at 6 AM? 7 AM? At least the downpour has stopped but no leader. When John does appear, he is wearing full Halloween costume—a red SuperJohn suit—which he denies are his longjohns, a long white and black cape and his boots and gaiters. Everyone, including him, enjoys this celebration of Halloween and this continues all day.

We drive up Cottonwood Creek on a sunny morning with colour all around, even the road is carpeted. At the trail head John brings out the waiver, reminding us to read carefully. People sign while getting into boots, joking, watching a few painting their faces in readiness for a good trek. Our chairperson is also carrying a "climbing rack" of old 'biners, household utensils and a plastic hand; this in the spirit already set by our leader.

This renovated road has become a lovely grassy trail up to markers heading into the woods. The going is easy and cheerful up to Lomas Lake just as the sun comes out over Landale, covered with new snow! The lake lies peaceful, but beyond where there was a stand of trees, is now a startling mound of broken trunks and branches over last year's snow. Working our way into and over this debris is slow. Also disturbing. These trees were 30-40 years old, broken off violently well up their lengths and fallen down toward the lake... avalanche? wind sheer? In the gully, the creek runs down under bridges of last year's snow pack. Randy advises us to cross over onto a heathery route to the right, covered with beautiful new snow. Here is a high overlook of Lomas Lake where SuperJohn considers trying out his flying cape. We head up into the meadows, gaining the summit in the sunshine with a winter wind blowing. John demonstrates his super technique by scaling the cairn and requesting photographic documentation. Someone in mask and snorkel apparently swimming to the top!

Views all around. So many landmarks from this spot... Olympics, The Pacific Ocean, Coast Mountains, Baker, Gulf Islands, interior Island ranges. During lunch, John reads from the waiver we have signed earlier. Most of us, not heeding his warning, have signed to allow him all manner of disciplines on our persons as well as rewards of beer and other privileges. He has made his point! Read what you sign. A debate to continue over El Capitan was met with too little energy. The days are now short so we returned as we had come by 3 pm, too early for some.

A great hike, fun in the sun!

*Participants: John Damashke, Tony Pugh & Anita, Mike Teachman, Doug Goodman, Vesa Myllyniemi, Pat & Murrrough O'Brien, Su Castle, Claire Ebendinger, Randy Aitken, Barb Baker.*



Halloween on Mt. Landale. Photo: Barb Baker.

## TRIPLE PEAK

Charles Turner  
August 7-8

Lost in the twilight zone, we spent 6 hours beating around in the wet bush and ended up camping, less than an hour from the cars. Where did all the time go? Nobody seems to know. So much for the short cut to Triple Peak. At least I know which way not to go.

We camped at 600 m on about 3 m of snow—very strange place and with a temperature of about +4°C it felt like we should have been 3 times as high.

Early next morning we pulled out and headed for Mt. Arrowsmith. We had a great day and did a traverse from the Arrowsmith-Cokely col to the summit and down the Judges Route. A really enjoyable route!

*Participants: Charles Turner (leader), Don Morton, Pat & Murrrough O'Brien, Greg Gordon, Mike Teachman, Gerhard Lepp, Wayne?*



# MT. MORIARTY NE RIDGE

Peter Rothermel

October 23

This was plan "B" (or was it "C") for a trip Sandy Briggs had originally planned for Zeballos Peak. After canceling a three day weekend it was to be done on a normal two day weekend, then further down graded to a day hike to Moriarty because of weather, thank God!

I'd heard Sandy's hikes were popular but I had no idea. Fifteen souls and one dog met at 7:30 AM at the NW Bay logging toll gate on Oct. 23rd. in a foggy state, (of weather too). With blue sky above I figured the haze would burn off but everyone else had listened to the radio forecast and said it would rain. The tree frogs had been croaking the past few days and as everybody knows, that means a change for the worse in the weather. Once again an optimistic fool can't will away mother nature's plans.

Last time I had been up this route I seemed to remember it taking about fourteen hours, gate to gate and two thousand foot exposure in places. Usually memory tends to down grade hardship, just the opposite in this case. It was a fun romp in the heather!

The trip started down logging roads that deteriorated by the kilometer until you have to park, unless you own a "monster truck" and even then you'll only gain another 500 m or so. The hike continues for about an hour and a half, hiking up an old logging road through an area clear cut in the early 70's when "waste was great", with piles of rotting logs in a sea of stumps and the only standing trees left killed by out of control slash fires. Maybe in forty or fifty years this could be a pleasant hike through second growth forest, but not today. Now it's a testimony to human greed and will probably be re-logged as soon as it starts looking good again. Sorry, I digress, but to me

it's a sad part of this wonderful hike.

Once onto the first growth ridge you're on mixed heather and sub alpine forest. The trail is evident through the heather but in the scrub trees it's, "Where's the @#%\*ing trail?!"

Then onto the crux, the exposed ridge. I said to Sandy, "Last time we went to the right". He said, "Left's easier" and so it was. When we got to the false summit I said "Up and over?" Sandy said, "Right's the way" and again so it was and there we were on the true summit in no time at all.

Everybody signed into the register while we had a windy, cloudy lunch. The dog's master is a vegetarian. The dog is not and followed my every bite of sausage to my mouth while slobbering all over my pants (the dog, not me) until I finally gave her a piece. This dog is a weird bit of creation. She's a Rhodesian Ridgeback/mutt cross. Her back looks like my worst hair day and she seemed to think her purpose in life was to trip me into falling down the mountain. She was a climber dog though. Except for one crux move over a slippery log, she held up pretty good.

The trip down was pretty much the same in reverse except for the dog hanging around me and we had no need for the two ropes and harnesses we packed up, damn it! Gate to gate took only about seven and a half hours, including rest breaks, almost half my previous time.

Finally we all got into the cars, just as the rain started in earnest and then went off to the Rod And Gun Pub for burgers & beers. The bottom line? If you want to go on an easy outing up Moriarty's N.E. ridge-go with Sandy. If you want fourteen hours of toil, exposure and madness-go with me!

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## TRANSCIVER FAMILIARIZATION & REFRESHER

Barb Baker

November 20-21

A small band of concerned members, armed with umbrellas, met on a Saturday morning in Beacon Hill Park. We were issued transceivers and sorted out their various functions. Before starting the practice, Greg made an important point: that no one should need his/her transceiver locating skills if the avalanche hazard has been correctly read. To emphasize this, he had copies of "Basic Avalanche Awareness" questions for our consideration before going out in the white stuff. For our purposes today, a grassy meadow was the stage. All transceiver batteries were first checked for transmission & range. Jack then explained the theory of an induction search and we set off, listening for the increasingly loud sound of the transmitter, turning to listen for it with our receiver sensitiv-

ity reduced until we located the hidden transmitter. Repeating this exercise to with eyes closed forced closer attention to the sound. We also utilized the Grid Line method of search. Over a ridge, Richard had hidden a number of transmitting transceivers in a supposed avalanche path. Again, each person's transceiver range had been checked before starting. Quickly deciding a leader, we followed her instructions and commenced a "search", after placing a spotter. With several transceivers transmitting, the search was more confusing & probably more realistic.

Next day, the group met at Mt. Douglas. As we ambled along, the "avalanche incident" was suddenly and loudly initiated by an "injured survivor" giving sketchy information of the

number of "victims" buried. The first requirement was to reassure some nearby Samaritans that this was a simulation. In some panic, the leader tried to set up a search with a team short in numbers. Visual clues were not given attention in the rush to begin searching with the transceivers, but the 3 searchers did manage to dig out the transceivers after 14 minutes, several of which were spent digging right over and around a transmitter. Another simulation followed with even fewer searchers and a longer time.

#### Conclusions

1. The scenario is not going to present itself as you practiced or imagined. Surprise should be expected. i.e. the injured victim in the first simulation was unrehearsed and should have been assigned immediate attention.
2. Visual clues to be checked first thing.
3. Transceiver is very hard to expose when buried, even though the beeper has been located by sound.
4. Frequent revisiting of the use of transceivers keeps those skills current.

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We must again thank Jack Fisher, Greg Gordon and Richard Keltie for devoting hours of their weekend to a small number of participants.

*Participants: Jack Fisher, Richard Keltie, Greg Gordon, George Smekal, Carrie Farr, Jules Thomson, Barbara Baker, Perry Therrien*

## OF ARROGANCE AND ACCIDENTS

Reinhard Illner

I had had great plans for September 20, 1999. The date marks the 40th anniversary of the first climb which I ever recorded in my climbing register—on September 20th, 1959, my father took his then 14 and 9 year old sons up a 30 meter high sandstone tower in the southern Palatinate. I was the 9-year old, the tower was no more than easy fifth class, but we had to rope up and do a proper rappel. With real pride I started to record my climbs on that evening, a habit which I have kept to this day.

Many incidents happened during the many climbs following that inauguration. In 1969, our party was swept down in an avalanche on the Finsteraarhorn, but no one was buried. In 1971, I took two falls rock-climbing, a lead fall off a big overhang, and an unexpected fall in the Dolomites when a little rock tower collapsed under me. In no incident was I, or anybody else, seriously hurt but luck was certainly on our side. We grew more careful as the years went by, and we felt more confident when the dangers of the mountains confronted us. In 1980, crossing a treacherous glacier in the Bernina mountains of Switzerland, the third member of our party took a terrible fall into a sheer bottomless crevasse. The rope stopped his fall, and as we were properly roped up and prepared, we

brought him out unhurt.

Fast-forward to the Labour Day weekend 1999. My friend and colleague Chris Bose and I were in Strathcona Park, trying to climb Mt. Elkhorn. Friday, September 3, 1999, was a late summer day of great promise; the sky was a deep blue, and we progressed with

enthusiasm and expectation along the Northwest ridge of this beautiful mountain. I had been on Elkhorn before and had reached the summit via the Northwest Gendarme, an exposed and spectacular route. This time, we wanted to go through the West Gully, which is the standard route and which I had never done before.

We did not make it. The upper part of the gully, normally dry this late in the season, was blocked by treacherous remnants of spring snow—too steep and hollow to climb over. An attempt to bypass the snow led us off route, onto steep and loose rock. After a short discussion we decided to turn back, only about one hundred meters below the summit.

Actually, we left the shady gully with little regret, because in this way we gained several hours which we could spend on the sunny knoll just below the Northwest gendarme, a spot of spectacular beauty. We stretched out there and ate lunch.

## STILL WATERS

Gil Parker

Silence,  
the stillness of morning,  
fog filters the rain forest.

Their small voices,  
their questioning eyes  
are absent here.

Climbing now, as in a dream;  
mist shrouds the route.  
Droplets form on bracken and salal  
by my trail.

Sunlight invites  
from forest to meadow.  
Rivulets are sparkling, rushing  
in directions that seem random  
yet are bound by natural law.

So it is with me.  
At day's end, I must camp  
by still waters.

The panorama from this place must be seen to be believed. The view reaches over the Elk River Valley towards Mt. Colonel Foster, with Landslide Lake and Iceberg Lake glittering below its huge East Face. The Golden Hinde and Rambler Peak dominate the southern horizon; through the gaps between these mountains, the heartland of Strathcona Park, still mostly buried under snow, is reminiscent of remote Alaskan landscapes. Yet our eyes were continually drawn away from this beauty, Southwest towards the open Pacific ocean, northwest towards the distant towering peaks of Victoria and Warden, and northeast towards the Coast Range, where the expansive pyramid of Mt. Waddington rises prominently and deceptively close above all else. Little insects buzzed about us; the air was warm and silken. The only sign of human civilization visible from this isolated spot was a thin column of smoke rising from the pulp mill at Campbell River. We smoked the cigars I brought to celebrate the day and felt at ease with ourselves and the world.

Suddenly Chris spoiled the mood by asking: "What if we have an accident up here?" With my forty-year record to back me up, I replied without hesitation: "You just can't afford to have one. You have to pay attention and concentrate. We are too far from help." Or something like that. I remember that I believed what I was saying. It made sense, too. Except that accidents happen accidentally, and I had assumed, erroneously, that we were not susceptible to this basic principle.

Anyway, after a long time we reluctantly started to descend to the tent, which we reached at about 5 PM. Our campsite was in the forest, on a flat spot above a steep hillside and gully which are traversed by the route. The black flies and mosquitoes were bad—very unusual for this late part of the season, but rather typical for the very wet spring and summer of 1999. We decided to leave and hike out to the car—about 1,100 vertical meters and 10 kilometers, and much of that on a route that barely deserves the name "trail". It was reasonable to assume that we would get to the trailhead at 9 PM, still in daylight.

Soon we were on a very steep part of the descent route, following flags that actually avoided a steep and loose gully we had struggled through on the way up. The route was unpleasant—very buggy, full of bush, including devil's club, and wet—every few dozen meters or so one steps into steep, brown mud. I was grateful for the trekking poles, which added to my balance. Our packs still felt heavy.

Suddenly, my left foot starts to slip in the mud. Not a big deal, this has happened several times before, and my muddy behind bears witness to these little mishaps. Except this time, my right foot gets caught in a root. In an instant, the foot gets twisted sharply to the right and up. I hear something crack and feel something snap, feel a sharp stinging pain in my ankle... then the plastic boot turns the foot back into its position. I sit in shock. Chris, behind me, has seen me fall and shouts down to me: "Are you OK?" I respond: "I don't know. I may have broken something. Maybe not." Carefully, I test the leg. I find that I can put my weight on it without too much pain, but when I turn the foot outward, it has a tendency to swing freely to the right, with a liberal dose of sharp stinging. But the foot is still usable, and I decide to continue

the descent for as long as possible. Not that there is much of another option. We are in a terrible spot, on a steep, bushy, wet slope, far from any help and with the night only three hours away.

The descent that followed was nightmarish. I had to put much of my weight on my trekking poles, and climbing down over fallen logs, over steep roots, through rocky creeks, took all the strength and concentration I could muster. The black flies were having a field day with my face, my ears and my arms. But I was able to keep going, until, at 9:30, we lost the route in darkness, still some 200 meters above the bottom of the Elk River Valley. Above a cliff, and below a small overhang, we found a soft and reasonably large place for a bivouac.

Through all this, I had kept my pack, instinctively knowing that we would need our sleeping bags and other camping gear. We were faced with only remnants of food and one bottle of water. In the night, it started to drizzle. We spread the tent fly above us and managed not only to stay dry, but even to collect rainwater to drink. In fact, both of us slept rather well—I in my mountain boots. It was clear to me that I could not risk taking the right boot off—for one thing, it was likely that I would be unable to put it back on, and secondly I was afraid what I would find.

At seven in the morning, we continued the descent. The rain had stopped, but I was not able to carry my pack any further. While I worked my way down, very, very carefully and slowly, and on my behind wherever the slope was too steep, Chris made two trips and brought both of our packs down to the river. At my speed, he had no trouble of staying ahead of me. After crossing the river on wet logs (try that with a broken ankle), we reached the main trail and knew that we were safe—many hikers would travel on the Elk River Trail that day.

It took us another three hours to cover the remaining 4 kilometers to the car. During the first hour, we met a friendly ranger who volunteered to carry my pack. At 12:30 PM, in agony and exhaustion, I reached the car. Never had civilization seemed so sweet.

The rest is a standard tale. I slept all the way home, while Chris drove. The boot came off 24 hours after the accident, in my garage, and the leg promptly swelled to the size of a watermelon. In the hospital, they confirmed a broken fibula bone, fractured just above the ankle. On September 11, I was operated on: They put a plate with five screws behind the bone (in the X-ray, it looks like a piece of the Johnson Street bridge), and for many weeks I found myself limping around on crutches, with a big plastic cast. As I write this, November 14, the cast is gone and the ankle is usable again, but it still swells up every day.

The accident happened in a fraction of a second, much faster than I could comprehend. It was a sobering wake-up call for a climber who felt that he had matured to a point of minimal risk. The fracture brought me close to an edge from which I thought I was safely distant, an edge about which I spoke with arrogance only hours before I touched it. It is a jagged and irregular edge, and if I have learned anything from my experience it is that we have to be prepared to cope with accidents whenever, wherever we are.

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# THE MOUNTIES ALWAYS GET THEIR MAN

## VICTORIA PEAK

Peter Rothermel

July 12-13

Tom and Bob had been to this mountain before but not to the top and vowed not to follow Fairley's guide book this time. As Tom put it "We followed the book to a T but it just wouldn't go." This time Dean got the route description from Charles Turner and he was right on the money, well almost.

Tom Carter, Bob Schroder, Dean Williams and I got a 7 o'clock start from Qualicum Beach and after stopping at the Can-For office in Gold River to get a logging road map, found ourselves at the end of the road and hiking up the ridge by 1 o'clock. After a couple of hours of hiking and a lunch break we found a rocky heathery island in a sea of snow to make our camp. Conditions were more like June than July.

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It was only about 4:30 by the time we set out our bivvy bags and had a couple of mugs of hot tea, so decided to do a little recky trip. We hiked up to the top of the steep snow below the pile of red rocks where Charles said to "descend to the lower snow field, traverse across and up the obvious ramp to the right." With field glasses we could pick out the faint boot prints of a previous climbing party probably from a few days earlier. Or was that two parties? One set of tracks went up the right side of the upper snow field then angle traversed left and up. Another set of tracks went up to the left to a rock pitch that appeared to be a full rope length then straight up a 50% snow slope. Well at least 49½%, very steep indeed!

Back down to camp and we had dinner made by Tom, canned tuna with ichi bon noodles and a magic ingredient that Tom won't reveal, made for an excellent meal. Or maybe it's just a fact that anything tastes good when you're up high in good weather with good friends. Try eating watery lukewarm instant oatmeal out of a plastic cup at home at six in the morning and maybe you'll get what I mean. Over hot tea we pointed out mountains to each other-Rambler, Colonel Foster, Golden Hinde, Elkhorn and a prominent unknown peak towards Gold River.

The next morning Dean was chomping at the bit. After a peanut butter sandwich and another recky hike he was pacing back and forth. "Mellow out man! I want to savour over my

gruel and tea and then I'm going to do my morning meditations!" (Just don't forget the toilet paper next time. Snow works OK but it's cold).

Up we trudged and I was glad I brought crampons. Under crystal clear skies the early morning snow had the consistency of blue Styrofoam. Good for me but not for them that don't bring their fangs.

Down we dropped to the lower snow field, traversed to the obvious ramp and up finally to a wide ledge at the base of the "class 4 step". Maybe we picked the wrong step to climb or maybe we're getting too old but afterwards the unanimous vote was that it was low fifth class (this was the

only part of Charles route description we didn't agree with). Tom led the twenty meter pitch putting in a couple of nuts, a cam and a sling around a horn-good going! I went next tied in above the rope's half-way mark, then Dean towing our second rope and finally Bob dragging up Tom's pack and cleaning gear. In retrospect, after Tom leading without the encumbrance of a pack, we

should have consolidated the load into three packs. By the time Bob reached the belay ledge humping an extra pack and pulling gear he looked tuckered out and none too happy.

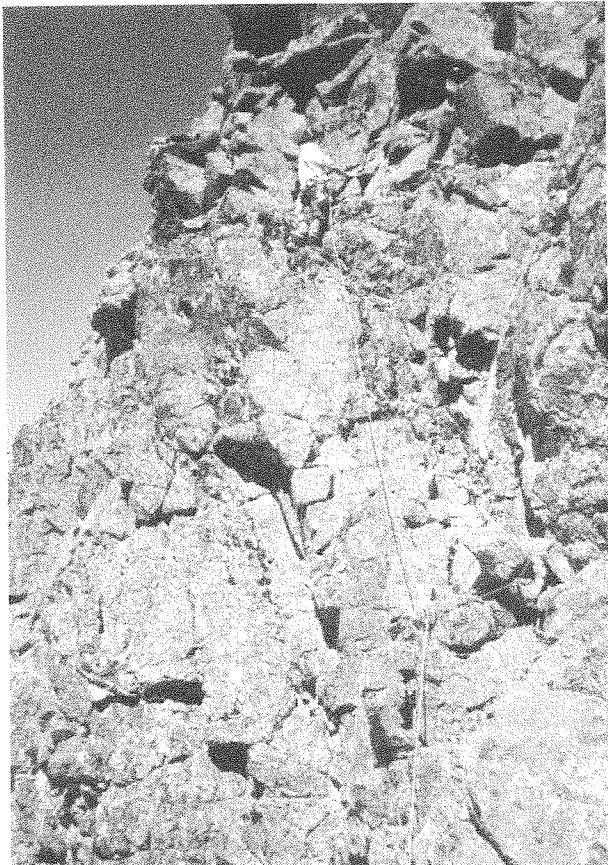
After scrambling over more rock and a bit of snow we pulled up to the base of the upper snow field and stopped for lunch. Crampons off, for now we were in a solar oven with the snowfield facing south and huge rock buttresses on either side. Up we went angling up towards the left kicking steps in the soft snow. I hadn't had a chance to take those annoying little side shields off my new glacier glasses and now realized their true purpose. Not to cut the sun's glare but to act as blinders to the exposure! Here we were traversing across a 40° sometimes 50° snow slope with absolutely no run-out. I may be known to exaggerate a bit from time to time but I don't think I am here. One slip and down you'd go. A self arrest wouldn't work in this steep soft snow, you'd only slow death down a little. If you didn't come to a mangled stop on a rock island you'd hit a two meter wide shelf full of scree and if this didn't stop you, you'd drop over a cliff onto another snow field



Victoria Peak. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

and pick up enough speed to launch off a fifty meter plus wall to the lower snow field pocked with more rock islands to find yourself thousands of feet down in the valley bottom. Needless to say—don't slip!! After working our way up a moat and a bit of rock we were there. If going up is bad enough, what's it going to be like angle traversing down and why is it that the beauty of being on a summit is often marred by the thoughts of the descent?

Well the summit was gorgeous. It's sort of like a half of a castle turret facing south complete with a north facing notch to shoot your arrows towards the ascending hoards. In this natural windbreak we basked in the July sun and read the summit register. The top of the tube was missing and everything inside was wet, so if anybody's planning a trip to



Tom leading the pitch. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

Victoria Pk., please bring up a new tube and the newly plastic sealed cremation certificate of Stephen Andrew Haigh (see Judy Holm). There's already a waterproof notebook we placed up there.

The descent down was pretty grippy as the side shields on my glasses weren't working since I had to look down for my next step. We rappelled the class "4" step and even rapped part of the ramp as it made things faster and safer. Then Dean was off like a bat out of hell and the rest of us just strung out and ambled along. Almost to camp I had just done this nice glissade that ended up in an out of control, arms wind milling, stumble and a hop thanking god nobody saw me. I looked up and saw two folks trying to control their laughter, a mountain guide and his client camped and ready to go up the next day. I stopped for a chat while Bob and Tom drew up. After a bit I excused myself as I was in great need of a hot tea and a rest with Bob not far behind me while Tom yakked a bit more, as he and the guide had Nepal connections (also Tom's a talker).

Back at camp Bob, Dean and I were debating weather to stay another night or head out with Dean leaning towards "go" and Bob voicing "stay" and me in the middle thinking here/rest versus home/hot shower. Then Tom tromps into camp and announces "We have a guest". I glanced up and saw a guy in yellow and blue raingear with a revolver in his holster. A gun? It's a cop! Before I could get a good alibi formed in my head, constable Mark Fisher from the Gold River detachment asked for Dean. It seems his son had a skateboard accident and was in the hospital, so off went Dean and Mark. After a bit we also packed up and headed down. The mountain had lost some of its glow in the light of Dean's predicament. Good thing too because there was a big lightning storm that night and I'll bet the guide and his client have a pretty good story to tell.

In the end Dean's son Ryan recovered and is happy, healthy and as troublesome as ever. It just goes to show, you can climb in grippy places and not have a mishap or you can just be tooling down the street and bang!

Constable Fisher our collective helmets are off to you for your dedication to your job, coming all the way up a mountain you weren't familiar with and carrying all that hardware GOOD ON YOU! Yet we still wonder, did you keep up to "Jackrabbit" Dean?

Great hike and climb with great friends!

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## UNEXPECTEDLY FINDING EDEN

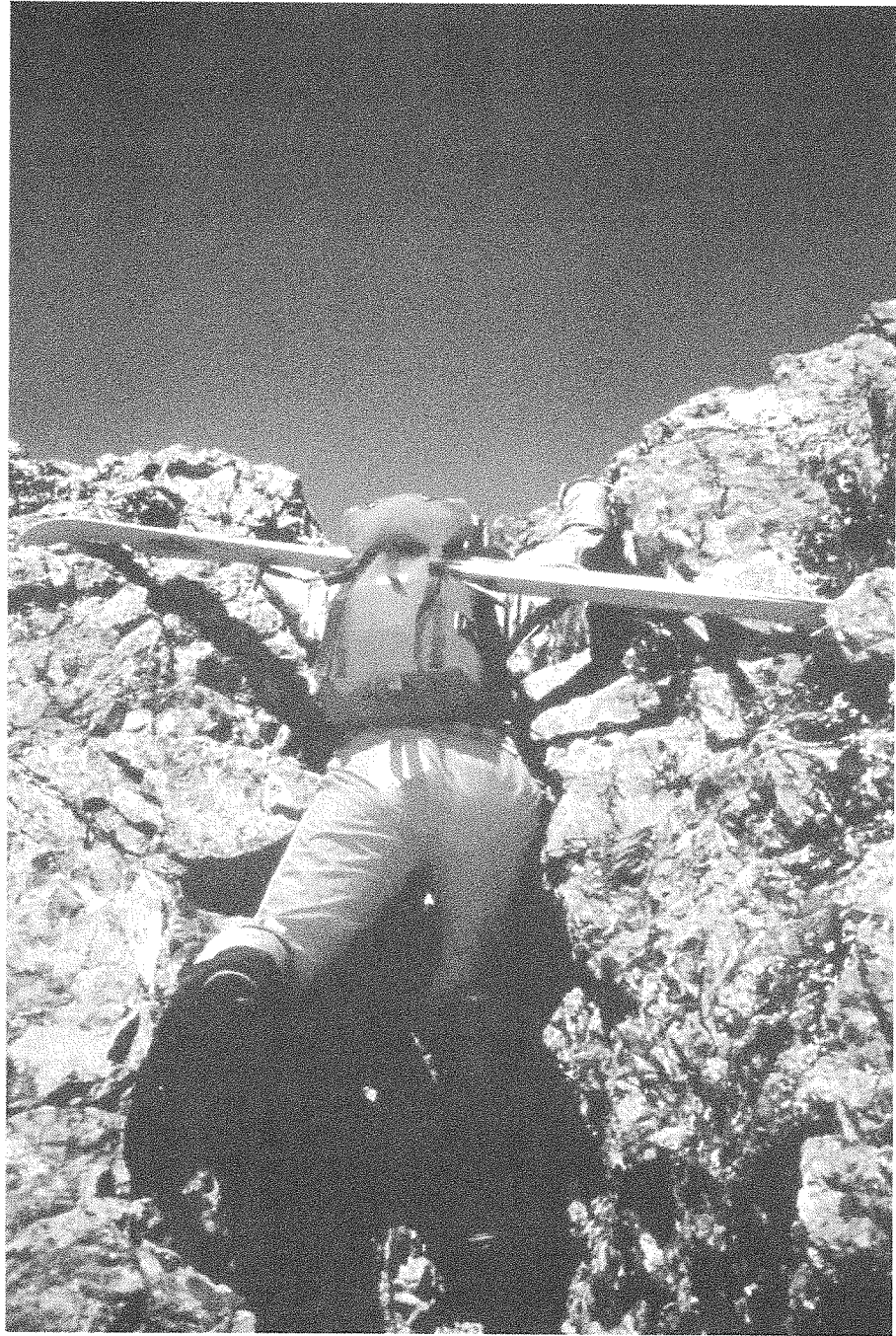
Lindsay Elms

August 24, September 28 & October 22

Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet, have been immortalized in the mountains that bless Northern Vancouver Island. Their summits are forever apart and never shall meet (unless a cataclysmic earthquake up-heaves them) but they can stare starry eyed at each other across the Montague Valley and dream of a future union. However, as mountaineers we can take our blessings from one to the other when

visiting their summits.

Again, as one of those spur of the moment decisions, I decided to reconnoiter Mt. Romeo and the Kunnum Creek area opposite the Eve River. Tuesday morning I managed to sneak in with the convoy of forestry workers as they headed off for work up to the head of the valley—my red Pathfinder obviously looking a bit conspicuous in amongst the dust encrusted



MOUNTAIN HUMOUR WINNER  
Claire Ebendinger ski mountaineering on Vancouver Island.  
Gerta Smythe



white MacBlo pick-up trucks as they set the pace on the gravel logging roads. Before too long I was left in their dust so they didn't see me turn onto the East Kunnum Main a few kilometres from the highway.

Armed with my Topo map and the logging road map book, I began looking for the ridge that went straight up in a south-east direction to Mt. Romeo's summit. Clouds were swirling around both the summit and the valley and it wasn't easy to locate the correct road. I found spur KE4 so drove up it as far as I could. Across the creek I could see another road ascending the valley but it also appeared to end in the old growth. I decided to stay on the north side of the creek and then further up the valley cross to the south and move up to a col. From here (according to the map) there was an easy ridge up to the summit.

KE4 had been put to bed and the vegetation was growing back in a healthy way. I scrambled along it and entered the forest at the end of the road. I was hoping for open old growth to travel through but found Devil's Club lining all the small creeks and rivulets as they looked for the most direct route to the valley floor. After an hour, whereby I only covered 1.5 kilometres, I could see clear-cuts on the other side of the valley so descended to the creek and then struggled up through the slash to the road. The summits were still hidden by cloud but the road continued up to the head of the valley and the terrain corresponded with the map. Half an hour later I was at the end of the road looking at an easy slope up through the slash to the forest.

While climbing through the forest brief showers of rain fell on me but occasionally there was the odd glimpse of the summit and it was looking fairly close. I continued zig-zagging through the small bluffs, scrambling over the wet slippery rock and brushing the moisture off the Copperbush and Huckleberry bushes and getting thoroughly soaked. The higher I got the less visibility there was but the terrain was easy so there was no need to stop.

At 10:45 I stepped on to the summit and was struck by a chilling breeze. After putting on some warm clothing I sat down to wait for the mist to partially clear so I could see something. I didn't have to wait long for the clouds to part and to see my surroundings. Looking behind me to the north I could see another high mountain that according to the map shouldn't be there. Pulling my map (92L/8 Adam River) out I tried to work out where I was. The mist moved in again and another brief shower passed by. Mt. Romeo is situated near

the bottom of the map, therefore I was unable check what mountains surrounded me to the south. Again a brief clearing but this time I could pick out another peak slightly northwest of me that was about 300 feet higher. If I was supposed to be on Mt. Romeo there was something wrong with the map but then maps aren't that inaccurate. I began thinking that I must be on a peak just to the south of Mt. Romeo but as it wasn't on the map I had with me I couldn't be certain.

The clear spells became longer and I decided that the peak north of me, that was also 300 feet higher than where I was, must be Mt. Romeo. So what mountain was I on? I couldn't recollect what other peak was nearby and I knew it wasn't Mt. Juliet as I could see it across the Montague Creek. Below me to the east were more logging roads and these also didn't fit in with the terrain around Mt. Romeo. I would just have to take this information home with me and then check out the map that covers the area.

I began the descent to the col taking my time to avoid slipping on the wet heather and rock but continued observing the surrounding terrain for clues. Eventually I made it back to the clear-cut and scrambled down onto the logging road (KE8). This time I followed the road all the way out. About three kilometres down the valley I could see my vehicle on the other side but I wasn't going to climb down through the heinous slash and up the adjacent slope to reach it. I could see the East Kunnum Main not far

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Mt. Eden in the Kunnum Creek area. Photo: Lindsay Elms.

away so I continued down to it and then wandered along to KE4 and climbed back up to my vehicle.

Later that afternoon I arrive back home and pulled out the other map (92L/1 Schoen Lake). Finally I could accurately work out where I was and found out to my surprise that I was on the Southeast Summit of Mt. Eden. Now I know more about the terrain around Mt. Romeo and Mt. Eden and next time I visit the area there won't be any confusion about where I am and which mountain I am on.

*Next time:* I returned to Mt. Romeo at the end of September with a weather forecast that didn't sound too great but as usual I thought 'what the hell'. Driving up island I passed through an early morning downpour but as the summits were clear I continued on to Kunnum Creek and as good luck would have it, I had an enjoyable day in the mountains. This time I had no problem finding the correct logging road and finding my way to the summit of Mt. Romeo. With a sprinkling of fresh snow on all the surrounding peaks I had a distinct feeling that summer was over and autumn/winter was

here. Was this my last climb of the millenium or would I be able to sneak another climb in—I would just have to wait and see.

*Another time:* Once again I was back in the Kunnum Creek area but this time late in October when it should have been raining according to the almanac. The weather had improved and I was able to sneak in a couple more unexpected climbs in the sun. I went back up the spur road KE8 and then climbed

up onto Mt. Eden's North Ridge. Just before the summit I deked around on the east side and scrambled up some 5th class rock to the summit. The weather was incredible: it was warm and clear and the mountains, from Rugged Mountain in the west to Mt. Waddington in the east, were sharply etched against the turquoise blue October sky and climbs were planned for next year.

## MARBLE MEADOWS TO ELK RIVER

Gerhard Lepp

August 30–September 5

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Following the ridge from Marble Meadows is definitely the hard way to get to Golden Hinde; it is a long, rough hike. I was concerned about the snow pack since winter in the alpine lasted into August in the summer of '99. The snow conditions were better than I expected. Many of the meadows were still buried in snow but the snow was hard and easy to walk on. The north slopes were covered in snow but the south slopes were snow-free.

We hired a boat and driver from Strathcona Park Lodge. The driver met us at the Auger Point parking lot on the east side of Buttle Lake and ferried us across the lake. The first day of hiking was only 6 km but the elevation gain of 1340 m with full packs was a painful exercise. A wall of snow surrounded the hut at Wheaton Lake. The log book said that one party dug down 8 feet in July to get to the hut. The mosquitoes were late like the snow and were feeding ravenously to make up for lost time. We had a good view of Mount McBride to the north as we swatted bugs.

The next day we continued over Limestone Cap, Bad Boy and Tibetan Peak to the south. There was a steep cliff north of Greig Ridge that required us to lower the packs and down-climb on belay. Our light 7 mm rope was very useful on several cliffs on this hike. The trail down from Greig Ridge to Schjelderup Lake is a tough descent on boulders, bush and cliffs.

Brian and I had a rest day at the west end of Burman Lake while Ken and Jamie tried to climb the Behinde. They got close to the summit but didn't want to traverse the final ridge without a belay. It is difficult to visualise the huge vertical component of the landscape from a 1:50,000 map.

The accident happened on a tough side-hill bushwhack north-west of Burman Lake. Brian had light boots and a heavy pack. He heard something in his ankle pop and his hike was over. We each carried a portion of his pack while Brian hobbled to Twin Lakes where there was a flat, open area for a helicopter landing. One of the items adding weight to Brian's pack was an SOS emergency location transmitter (ELT). We activated the transmitter and placed bright objects in a triangular pattern.

The transmitter is designed to transmit a distress signal to a satellite that relays the signal to a search-and-rescue clearing-house in London, England. After 20 minutes 2 military jets flew over. After an hour a Buffalo, twin engine, fixed wing Coastguard aircraft started making passes over our meadow.

It was a clear day for flying; the Buffalo make 7 passes and then dropped a parachute with a radio. I radioed the pilot according to the instructions: "Mayday, Mayday. One hiker with a broken ankle. We require helicopter evacuation for one person." I expected to see a little Jet Ranger arrive but a big, yellow, twin-rotor Labrador helicopter descended on the meadow. The lake was churning from the prop wash.

Two guys in moon suits came out of the rear hatch, scooped up Brian and took him inside the chopper. "The most dangerous thing you've done today" they said "was to get inside this helicopter." Some people say that a flying helicopter consists of 100,000 spare parts working in harmony. A crashing helicopter consists of 99,999 spare parts working in harmony. There was a fierce wind, a lot of noise and clatter and Brian was gone but his pepperoni and other choice items from his food bag remained.

The rest of the trip had less dramatic scenery but more difficult hiking; ice axes and crampons were essential. Parts of the upper Elk Valley was buried in 4 m of logs, snow and avalanche debris. We met Sandy Briggs and Don Morton in the Elk valley. They had been climbing Golden Hinde during the air show and were very curious about what had happened. The smooth, easy Elk River Trail was a treat after 10 days of rough hiking.

Brian had an interesting story to tell when we returned. The commanding officer at Comox phoned him and asked about his Emergency Location Transmitter (ELT). It was transmitting on a channel that was reserved for downed military aircraft. Brian and many other people purchased the ELT at a marine supply store in Victoria that imported them from Britain. The CO was not pleased at the thought that there could more injured hikers out there imitating military aircraft. I'm very tempted to rent his ELT for my next adventure. Without the transmitter or radio Brian would have waited for 3 days while the rest of us hiked out and phoned for a rescue. There are very different points-of-view on the use of radios and phones for mountaineering. As cell phones and satellite phones become more common, I'm sure that the issue will be raised whether we like it or not.

Participants: Gerhard Lepp, Jamie Duncan, Brian Adams, Ken Wong



# MT. COLONEL FOSTER

Lindsay Elms

August 27-29

The grip of my left hand was slowly weakening and I knew that my right had to find something real soon or I would be coming off. I desperately searched for the hold that Pete had found which enable him to get up but my reach wasn't long enough. I gave Pete the warning saying that I was going to try and make a lunge for the hold but to possibly expect a sharp tug on the rope. I pushed off but still couldn't reach it. The tight rope ensured that I didn't fall too far but I was left there shaking my arms out and looking at the moves again. A few minutes later I managed to make the moves (no thanks to gravity) and climbed up to where Pete was anchored to the rock.

We had left camp at Iceberg Lake at 6:30 AM and moved up through the rock bluffs towards the South Col but then turned off at the last minute in the direction of the Snowband Route on Colonel Foster. It was late in the season for this route but we were hoping the snow at the bottom of the rock-break would still give us relatively easy access onto the rock. Unfortunately, nothing is ever easy on Colonel Foster. The top of the snow was quite undercut with deep moats on either side but we decided to trust the snow and moved up to the upper lip. A three foot leap across the moat onto a narrow gravelly ledge saw us on the rock and ready for the first pitch. The rock here had been worn smooth by the retreating snow and ice but there were enough small holds to get us to the bottom of the rock band. We looked up at the rock-break that had first been attempted by Adolf and Ulf Bitterlich from Vancouver in 1955. Their failure only brought about a number of attempts by other strong climbers, however, it wasn't until June 1976 that Joe Bajan and Mike Walsh were able climb the barrier. They tried several different starts to the climb before they managed to succeed. Joe described that the rock-break could be divided into three sections: the first 5 feet, the second 80 feet and the third 160 feet. That first 5 feet took Mike Walsh 35 minutes to climb and was classed at 5.10 on an overhang with loose blocks. It also took Joe 35 minutes to second and he said that the main hold, which he called the 'Thank god hold', was loose and came out when he put his weight on it, however, after replacing the hold he was able to follow Mike's lead. Without that hold he said it would be impossible to climb. The second 80 feet took Mike 60 minutes to lead through a series of overhangs with dicey holds going in the wrong direction. Eight runners were used—the most ever placed by Mike in one lead. Joe lead the third 160 feet in 20 minutes with one runner. Pete and I weren't game enough to try this route but there was a variation that, although a bit longer, Pete knew would go.

At the bottom of the rock-break we moved out to the left to the bottom of a gully descending from the mountains South Ridge. It was this first pitch that we had trouble making the move, however, the next 5 pitch's went fairly smoothly up to a narrow ridge that came down from the Southeast Summit.

Here we found an old sling which I later found out was from Joe Bajan and Ray Paine when they had climbed the gully in 1972. (It appears as though there are no routes on the mountain Joe hasn't attempted!) By the time they had reached here they were in a white out and didn't know how far it was to the ridge above. Joe built a cairn a little higher and was later able to confirm that he was not far from the Southeast Summit. They then had to deal with snow which began to fall during their descent. We, on the other hand, had beautiful weather and from here a 50 metre rappel almost brought us out onto the upper snowfield.

The weather was good so there was no need to stop. We traversed across the steep firm snow, our crampons doing perfectly the job they were designed for, and then climbed up onto the Summit Ridge by the Gendarme. Out to our right we could see a couple of rappel stations with old webbing attached in a steep gully. We decided we would go up onto the ridge and follow it along and see how we would do. We could save the gully for rappelling on the way down.

The ridge continued to surprise us but nothing to serious, however, a few false leads forced us to look for the correct route. A couple of tricky moves into a notch and then another steep pitch. Here the rock was more solid then other places on the mountain and we found the climbing enjoyable. Another steep pitch and then the ridge flattened out and it looked like the summit was in the bag. We decided not to start gloating yet: as the old saying goes—it's not over till the fat lady sings. Anyway our throats were too dry to sing.

We took our packs off and moved with just the rope and a camera for the ultimate point. The summit rock was again the loose stuff we were use too but we made short work of it up to the summit bivvy site. Here we found a pair of old undies drying in the sun and exposed for all to see. It wasn't hard to imagine what had happened and why they were there so we didn't pick them up to see if they were good enough to take back to the Good Will Store. Ten minutes later we were finally standing on the 'Foster's' main summit and digging into the summit register. According to the book, we were the first to the summit this year although I know that climbers had been to some of the other summits. Charles Turner had led a group to the Southeast Summit in early July and a day later Charles lent his crampons to some others and just two weeks ago I had been up on the South Col with Joe Bajan and his 14 year old son Adam, Tom Volkers and Peter Koughan. We were hoping to traverse across to the main summit but the weather allowed us to only get as far as the Southeast Summit. I also knew of a new route on the East Face that went up a snow filled gully to the notch between the North Tower and the Northwest Summit by Chris Lawrence and Chad Rigby.

Pete and I only spent 5 minutes on the summit before we began the descent. It was already 7 PM and the day was no longer young. We realized that we would probably be forced

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to bivvy for the night somewhere but we wanted to get off the summit ridge. We quickly retraced our steps back along the ridge, rappelling the steep pitches, and moving confidently over the now familiar route to the big rappel gully we had seen earlier. We set up the rappel and then Pete took off down in the rapidly fading light. In a couple of places the rope had snagged so Pete had to recoil the rope and throw it again but it eventually got him down onto the snow at the upper snowfield. Without a headlamp I began the rappel in the pitch dark. By 10 PM we were both on the snow filling our water bottles from a small melt trickle. We hadn't found anywhere to fill our bottles since leaving the lower snowfield in the morning and we were a tad dry.

After half an hour we resumed our descent with the aid of a full moon down the snow towards the rock barrier, however, we decided to first go to the bottom of the snow to where there was running water. We filled our bottles and finally ate our lunches. Here we found a nice flat spot and decided to spend the rest of the night. We were really low on warm gear as we hadn't expected to bivvy but luckily it was a reasonably mild night. We snoozed through till 3 AM and then began moving around to warm up. Finally by 6am there was enough light to begin climbing again.

We climbed up the snow and traversed across to the top of the rock barrier. Here we got the two ropes out and set up the first 50 metre rappel. This rappel required us to angle across to the middle of the rock-break to find another anchor whereby we could rappel straight to the bottom of the barrier. The second anchor was a little dubious so we backed it up with a piton and then rappelled. Pete went first and when he got to the bottom called back up to me saying that I would

like this rappel as it got him to the bottom with 1 foot to spare. I clipped my figure-of-eight in and took off. As I neared the bottom I could see the red rope wasn't reaching all the way. I mentioned it to Pete but he said it was no problem as there was still the stretch in the rope. At 12 feet from the bottom I was at the end of the red rope. Pete scratched his head and said: "I guess it's because of the 40 lbs difference in our weight!" I got Pete to hold the end of the purple rope and asked him to be prepared to grab a hold of me as I dropped the last 12 feet. Fortunately, there was a lot of drag and the red rope didn't start running through the anchor. We both tugged on the purple rope and down it started sliding without a single hitch.

We had one more rappel to get us onto the snow but we would have to rappel into the moat. The snow that we had first stepped onto the rock from had collapsed. Once at the bottom Pete belayed me as I climbed the vertical ice out of the moat onto the lower snowfield. Here we put the rope away and raced back down to our lonely looking camp at Iceberg Lake for a well deserved brew and brunch.

Early that afternoon the drizzle began and by 6pm it was pouring. Next morning we awoke to the continued sound of on rain on the tent but by 8 AM it began clearing. I looked out the tent door and said to Pete that it looked like fresh snow on the summits. Pete poked his cranium out but said that it must be the wet rocks glistening. Half an hour later the summits cleared and sure enough we saw a fresh coating of snow covering the rocks where we had bivvied. We were sure glad we weren't up there last night.

*Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms.*

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## DELLA FALLS (BOOTS FOR SALE)

Peter Rothermel  
August 9-12

I was off for my yearly hike with the young guys (see "Stag Hike" Bushwhacker 98). All a year older and maybe wiser? Not!

On this hike were Ed Jewer, Marcus Brett, Chris Kalbsleisch, Yash Kadlubowski and my lazy, out of shape nephew David Rothermel. This was going to be fun! (I didn't make up any names, honest)

We brought along a couple of 14 foot aluminium boats to get up Great Central Lake and our cars more resembled metal turtles on roller skates than autos.

I had brought climbing gear in the hopes of maybe getting up Nine Peaks. So when we divvied up the gear one of the young guys took my cook pot and stove and another some of my food and I still ended up with the heaviest pack of all!

We launched part way up the lake at the Scout Camp. Off we went with these two tiny motors that were older than me. One was a Sears Ted Williams Special, I kid you not! There

we were heading up the lake at a slugs pace, sputtering and belching smoke. Part way up I asked Marcus if he had my food bag. "No? Whoa stop! Who's got my food?" Someone said they thought they saw it in my car. "Who put it back in the car?" Silence! I wish I had a lie detector then and there, since I strongly suspected someone with the initials of DR! So back to the cars to retrieve my food bag. As it was, having enough food would definitely not be a concern on this trip.

The trip up the lake was slow and uneventful except for seeing a bear, an eagle and having a Mars Water Bomber almost land on us. This was shaping up to being a typical trip with the young guys!

At the end of the lake we decided to stash the motors in the bush. I mean, who'd want to steal these old clunkers anyway? Yash laid them right on top of a hornet's nest and proceeded to do a dance that looked half flamenco and half funky chicken. I was laughing so hard I had tears streaming down my face

and I almost wet my pants. Well, at least those venomous little buggers would stand guard over our motors!

A pre-trip call to BC Parks told us all the bridges were damaged and a couple might be out and that there was still lots of snow, so we didn't know what we'd be heading into.

Once on our way, the young guys took off jabbering and bouncing up the trail like a troop of monkeys and I started to develop blisters on both heels. I couldn't believe it, I'd had these boots up Arrowsmith a half a dozen times, up Victoria Peak and Septimus. How long can it take to break in a pair of boots? Is anybody interested in buying a pair of slightly used, almost broken in boots? Between my pack weight and my blisters, it was no wonder I couldn't keep up with the young guys. Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it!

Some hours later we made camp in a nice spot on the South side of the creek, with a fire ring and a view of the falls. With all this year's heavy snowpack melting the falls were in fine form, not the usual trickle at this time of year, but gushing.

Dinner was a long multi-course affair starting with smoked oysters, going through many entrees and ending with bags of cookies. After dinner I sipped on a Scotch while the young guys sucked on a thing called a "Bong".

Just before bed we threw a rope over a tree branch to bear-bag our food. When I hefted the pack I said, "Christ, this must weigh fifty pounds. What did you guys bring?" I took a peek inside and there were cans of oysters, cans of tuna, cans of peaches, cans of milk, enough bagels to open a retail bakery and bags and bags of cookies. Well, we weren't going to starve and if a bear did happen to break into our cache and ate its fill, there'd still be enough left over for us too.

The next morning I was up at 6:30, fed and ready to go by eight when the first of the young guys was just getting up and was still ready to go at nine when the last of the young guys were getting up. "How was your sleep?" Between slanted tent sites, leaking thermarrests, rocks and roots everyone had complaints, except for me. I had found a nice duffy nook to put my bivvy bag and extra thick thermarrest with a fine view of the falls.

Finally by 10:30 we were ready to hike up to Della Lake. We crossed the creek on the steel beam bridge and headed up towards the main camp ground. The Love Lake Bridge was collapsed and required a leap of faith on slippery planks. At the main camp grounds the bear bag lines were strung as tight as piano wire with the snow pulling down on them and the outhouse was only showing about a foot and a half above the snow pack. The next bridge was ok, just missing a handrail,

but the last log bridge was gone. Luckily upstream we found a snow bridge and quickly snuck across.

Now we were in what normally would have been a meadow of devils club but now it was all buried under snow. Finally the snow was doing some good. Then we followed the route up the bluffy section, hanging onto branches and roots. My nephew David has a fear of heights and his eyes were as big as saucers with the whites showing all round. I was really enjoying this bit and had to chuckle to myself, thinking how the trip down would be.

Next we went up a ramp, then onto snow and soon we were at Della Lake which was still half frozen. It was hot and we were sweaty, so we did what a guy's just gotta do and all striped down and jumped in. It was so cold that there was a sensory lag of about a full second after you hit the water. Then the cold reality hit you like the force of a nuclear explosion. My cojones were somewhere up in my chest. But afterwards it sure felt good to be clean and letting the sun dry you while sitting on the warm rocks.

Marcus and I had dragged a rope, harnesses, crampons and ice axes up with us, but Nine Peaks still looked a far ways off. If we had got off to an earlier start maybe it would have gone and so decided not to go for it and not because I was tired!

Ed had brought up a fishing rod and started casting into the lake while the rest of us basked in the sun watching. At first he wasn't having much luck, then David pulled out a tin of secret super bait-smoked oysters. Once the trout got a whiff of this stuff, Ed pulled in some nice fat fish. After spending a few fun hours at the lake we packed up and headed down. My expectations about David's descent were satisfied to the

fullest—he was gripped to the nines. He, he, he!

That evening we had another multi-course dinner, but the main course was butter fried trout (yes, we also brought two pounds of butter). We sat around eating fish with our fingers, telling stories and talking about what to do the next day. Go to Love Lake? It was frozen the week before when I got a peek at it from Septimus and was probably still hard as a rock. Maybe Beauty Lake? We had passed an avalanche chute back down the trail that looked like it might lead up that way. "Lets sleep on it".

Up early again the next morning I was ready to go. Over breakfast we decided on the chute and Beauty Lake. At about ten o'clock we started pelting Chris's tent with fir cones—"come on sleepy head, wake up!"

By the time we got started the sun was high and hot. The

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Marcus taking the plunge. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

first part of the avalanche chute was bouldery and full of wood debris, then onto an area where the snow had recently melted and percolated away leaving everything loose. Above we could see where the gully bent to the right. "let's take a look around that corner and see where it leads." Soon we were on snow, still hard even in the hot sun. Here David turned back, all fagged out and I lost my entertainment. The snow slope was about 30° with lots of duff and sun cups, making it easy for hiking.

Once around the bend we had three choices—a gully to the left, but leading away from the lake—a gully to the right full of lots of loose rock—or the gully straight ahead. It had a bergschrund but we could see blue sky at the top and must be close to the lake.

We picked the middle gully, started up and soon the slope increased to 45° and I was glad to have my trusty ice axe and clunky boots to kick steps in with. After about 50 meters of this we dropped into a moat. The moat wouldn't go—too steep and slippery. The bergschrund was at least 20 feet deep and I'd left my rope and crampons back at camp. "Maybe we should try the gully full of loose rock. Lets have lunch in the moat and think about it."

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About half ways through lunch we heard a sound like distant gunfire popping away and watched as a rock slide came down the loose gully where we might have been if not stopping for a break. Rocks bigger than basket balls were leaping down the snow slope and around the corner where we had been just an hour ago. This sort of blew the wind out of our sails and I started feeling really stupid for being in this place with an inexperienced and ill equipped group. I fashioned some sharp stakes from some yellow cedar branches that were among the debris in the moat and gave one to each of the guys that didn't have an ice axe.

Then over the lip of the moat and down we went with me kicking steps in the snow slope and Marcus chopping them deeper with his ice axe for the others, all the while hugging the far side of the gully and hopefully out of reach from any new rock fall. Once at the corner spot we scampered across the avalanche fall line as fast as we safely could and into the lee of the lower gully where rock fall couldn't reach us.

Here we stopped for a breather and I said, "OK guys, let's

stay grouped close together in case one of us dislodges a rock, then at least it won't gain momentum before you can give warning."

My advice fell on deaf ears—off they went like the troop of monkeys they are. So when I accidentally knocked loose a rock they were too far ahead to hear me yell, "Rock, Rock, Big Rock!", above the sound of the creek. Thank God it didn't reach them (and they never knew just how close to God they actually came!)

Back at camp I said to my nephew, "Gees Dave you missed all the fun. When we get back I'll take you up Arrowsmith" (and I did but that's another story).

That night we had a food orgy when someone said, "Let's eat it all so we don't have to carry any back". There must have been a dozen cans of oysters and sardines for hors d'oeuvres, noodle and rice dinners for main course and for desert, cans of peaches and bags of cookies all washed down with the last of the Scotch and the ever present Bong. I think this was the first hike I've been on where I gained weight.

The next morning I slept in until seven, yet thinking "I'll be up, packed and halfway down before they wake up." No, this morning the young guys were all ready to go by eight. I said, "What's the rush we're hiking out?" Again wisdom fell on deaf ears. Maybe it had something to do with wives and girlfriends, four days of abstinence and the guys testosterone levels, but we were gone in a blink of an eye.

Once on the trail my blisters let me know I was alive and mortal. Chris (maybe out of sympathy) hiked along with me while the rest bounded ahead. Down at Great Central Lake we all had a long swim and then played a game of "stones" to see who would have to fetch the motors from the hornets nest. Marcus lost and somehow didn't get stung. He said, "Just don't step on the rotten log."

Off we went down the lake at a slugs pace, with me thinking "Last year I said never again with these young guys and this year I mean it—NEVER AGAIN!"

We loaded up at the end of the lake and then off to the Fish & Duck pub on Sproat Lake for burgers and beer. While congratulating ourselves on a fun trip, of course I just had to open my big yap and say, "Where to next year guys?"

## THE THROAT OF TITUS

Lindsay Elms  
May 8

Climbers habits are deeply ingrained and at times are hard to break! I know, I have my own quirks and idiosyncrasies but you would never know (yeah right). However, I was reminded of this at the end of the day after the climb when we were eating dinner at the Salmon Point Pub. I had really screwed up Charles Turner's and Brian Ross's morning routine as they had missed their usual morning breakfast at Patty Joe's in Campbell River. Having to get up at 3:45 AM and then drive up to Buttle Lake so that we could have the canoes in the water by 6:15 was asking a lot. There was nothing unusual

about this for me as I want to get onto the climb as soon as possible, preferably before the crow farts at first light, so that we could have a good long day in the hills. Breakfast was a cup of tea and a muffin at home and that would usually satisfy me until mid morning or lunchtime. I just assumed the others would eat before they left home or pick up something quick along the way.

As we drove up through Campbell River and on to Buttle Lake we talked about what each of us had been doing for the winter and what we had in mind to climb this summer. We

stopped briefly at the Mohawk in Campbell River for coffee and I could see Brian and Charles looking longingly down the road towards Patty Joe's but I didn't put two-and-two together and they didn't say anything so we drove on.

We passed the BC Parks Headquarters at Buttle Lake and then drove another 1.5 km past Lupin Falls parking-lot and found a little pull-out down by the lake. Here we unloaded the canoes off the truck and carried them down to the water. It was 6:30 AM and the lake was quite calm but clouds were

linger around the summit of Mt. Titus obscuring the view of the notch on the summit ridge. That had been the high point Sandy Briggs and I had reached last year before we became bluffed out (see Island Bushwhacker Annual 1998). We had noticed a big gully system that came up from Buttle Lake on the mountain's East Face and this was what we had come in to climb this spring. Sandy was hoping to come to grips with the mountain again but a throat infection a week before caused him to have second thoughts about subjecting his body to any long term disabilities. In a squeaky Mickey Mouse type voice Sandy said that he would have to wait for another day to do the climb. We quickly put our packs aboard and then paddled the 15 minutes across the lake to the Titus Marine campsite. We didn't know about this until we found a BC

Parks biffy nestled in amongst the trees. The canoes were pulled well up from the shore and tied down then we headed into the bush.

We found a nice open spur to climb for about 100 m and then we came across a big band of bluffs. Looking around to the left we found our way blocked so we had to go to the right and drop into the narrow creek coming down from the gully. The rocks were slippery as we crawled our way up trying to avoid getting wet feet. In places we were hauling ourselves up through Alder thickets by tree roots that had disassociated themselves from the rock-wall and we found our ice axes on our packs were snagging on every protrusion and trying to push us over backwards. Eventually we came out onto a tongue of snow (the Larynx because of the throaty roar of water emanating from below) which we hoped would then lead all the way up the gully (the Throat) but unfortunately it was just a patch. Looking further up the creek we could see it was thick with Slide Alder so we climbed onto a spur on the lake side of the Throat and entered a beautiful open forested slope. We ambled up about 300 m and stopped for a snack. Below we could see the Throat was now choked full of snow so we

decided to try and find a way back down through the bluffs. From where we were it looked like we would need to do one or two rappels but we found a little ledge system that angled through the bluffs and brought us safely onto the snow. It was now just a long plod up the soft snowy Throat of Titus to the notch.

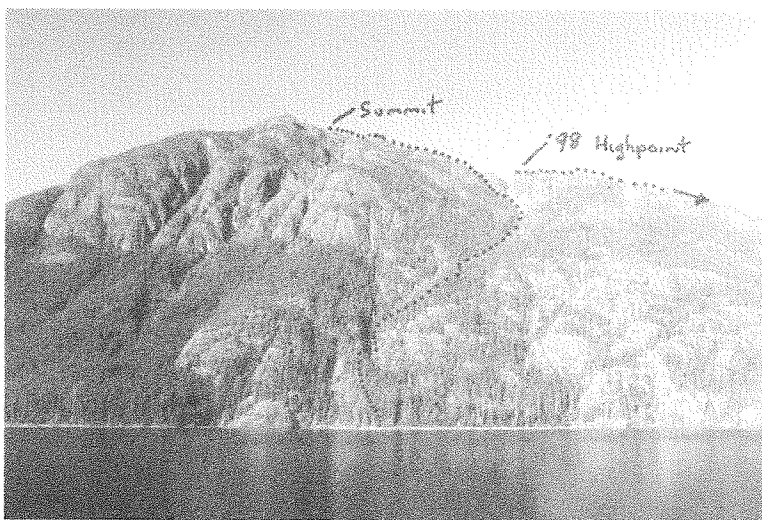
Just before we entered the notch we noticed a steep, narrow, hanging gully coming down from the summit ridge on the left hand side. Here was the Epiglottis, the last section of challenging climbing before we got thrown-up onto the summit. We just hoped that Titus wouldn't swallow anything and flush us back down its Throat. The ice on this section was hard and gave us a short bit of enjoyable ice climbing. Once above the Epiglottis a low angled Tongue of snow brought us onto the summit ridge where we were able to see what the weather was doing. Dark, grey clouds hung low over many of the mountains

but we did get the occasional glimpse of heavily snow-covered peaks in the middle of Strathcona Park.

We strolled along to the summit and pulled our thermoses out and had lunch. A little further to the south along the ridge we could see another high point that looked like it might be one or two metres higher. It was one of those optical illusions that we couldn't ignore. We had to go and check it out. In places we

stepped into patches of thigh deep snow and after extricating ourselves we had to back track to find harder wind packed snow to walk over. Fifteen minutes later we were on the second summit only to find that the first summit with our packs sitting on was definitely the higher. Ah well, if we hadn't of gone across we would have been wondering to this day whether we were on the higher of the two.

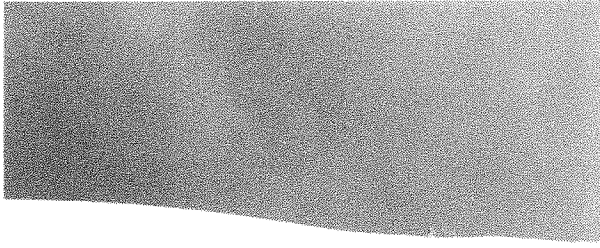
Back to our packs and then down into the Throat for some boot skiing where the snowed allowed. Although it wasn't very hot, the UV factor was high and the snow was softening up rapidly. Fortunately the mountain's upper slopes were quite stable and we had nothing to worry about from avalanches. Eventually we found the ledge that took us back up onto the opened treed slope. Brian and Randy were keen on finding a way down to the lake that didn't require us going back into the creek-bed, however, after searching around and becoming bluffed they resigned themselves to the fact that they would have to deal with the manky Slide Alder. Around 4 PM we were back down at the canoes, loading them with our packs and paddling across the lake. Just as we pulled up on the other side a wind squall hit the lake which made us glad that we



Mt. Titus and the Throat in summer showing the winter route.

Photo: Lindsay Elms.

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Approaching Mt. Titus' summit in winter.  
Photo: Randy Davies.

weren't still in the middle paddling through the choppy waves. We were imagining ourselves swimming to shore with our pack as a flotation device and our plastic boots as flippers. The summit and the notch on Titus were clear and the sun was breaking through and sending down a Jacob's Ladder (a shaft of light between the clouds) illuminating the upper slopes with a soft diffused light that had Brain and Randy scrambling for their cameras for the farewell photo.

Later that afternoon we were all sitting in the Salmon Point Pub having a nice cold ale and waiting for our meals to arrive. This was when Brian and Charles told me about their usual ritual of stopping somewhere for breakfast before the climb. I apologized for the break in tradition and suggested that they could make it up by having seconds of their hearty dinner if they were still hungry as we were only 45 minutes away from home and there was no need to rush anymore.

*Participants: Lindsay Elms, Charles Turner, Brian Ross and Randy Davies.*

## THE INK POTS

Gil Parker

Even then,  
as prairie-bred, unknowing teens  
we explored above the Canyon  
on a trail that died in stunted spruce.  
Found, unmarked and mysterious  
deep, dark pools with bottoms boiling.  
Failing further trails we halted,  
stood in awe of meadows lush,  
soaring spires of fossil limestone  
marked with age  
contrasting with our youth.

Even now,  
with eyes fogged over  
but limbs and lungs still able  
we cross the pass on Sawback  
to find the pools, fenced and labelled,  
with tourist paths and benches.  
But the valley is unchanged,  
meadows crowned by serrated slabs, and,  
resting from the avalanche scourge,  
measured green of alpine slopes.

Man has changed the landscape  
and the pools have altered too,  
but the broad sweep of Nature  
remains the same,  
inspires fleeting days of youth  
with beauty and adventure,  
and ageing men, with sadness.

# THE ASCENT OF MOUNT M

Shannon Galean

It was a long approach, not as long as for some mountains but including all the preparations (physical, emotional and spiritual), the training, and the actual approach, this mountain took decades to summit. It had called out to each them, enticing them for years but neither was able to find a suitable rope partner that could get them near those mysterious, misty heights.

The actual approach hike started from Victoria in spring where the two climbing partners met for the first time, unsure of the skills that each would bring to this rope team. Hesitantly, they set off, a wary eye on each other, watching for any kind of slip or misstep that might lead to them calling it off.

The first phase complete, they were still unsure of each other and how they would operate as a team. They bivvy'd separately, as the weather permitted but communicated regularly.

The second stage saw the weather warm up tremendously. This phase included rafting and kayaking, to speed the distance to be covered on their approach to that elusive summit. Barry led this leg, as this was the area where Shannon had the least experience and he excelled. It was here on this portion of the journey that the team solidified.

The river brought them to the point where they could start up into the foothills. The heat intensified and the bugs were thick, distracting with their constant buzzing and biting. Oh, the bug bane bewildered both but they bravely bounded beyond those bothersome bugs. Finally, well into the foothills could they dare hope that this time the summit would be in their grasp? Up and up, Shannon led on, then Barry, trading off back and forth as the exposure and exhaustion grew.

Finally, up into the snowy reaches. Much discussion on what was the best route, both options wound through areas threatened by icefall and avalanche. Through much discussion and finally upon reaching a consensus on a route (and with a ready back up plan) they hoped that with the right timing they would get through this mid-section of the mountain. This would bring them closer to their ultimate goal. They set

out around midnight following a line that wound up under a hanging glacier, across a rocky rib and onto the main glacier. They crossed through a crevasse field; the crevasse maws gaping open ready to swallow anything within reach. After successfully navigating the crevasse labyrinth they were up and over the tango steppe.

Then the ice wall directly below the summit ridge blocked their path. Shannon was worried about Barry's feet, where they OK or were they getting cold? Her feet had gotten cold earlier in the climb but Barry had let her warm them on his bare stomach, probably saving her from serious frostbite and aborting the climb. But no, his feet were fine. They decided to bivvy again to replenish their fluids and get whatever rest they could. Early that evening, the wind picked up, blowing ferociously (later they were to hear that it was a record-breaking wind for September). The jetstream had picked a fine time to lower. Again, there was much discussion. Should they stay in the tent and wait it out or would it blow itself out?

The wind let up in the wee hours of the morning and Barry and Shannon saw this as their window of opportunity. They started out, Shannon setting pro in the steep blue-grey ice to the first belay stance and then Barry took a

strong lead up the last pitch of ice and then through waist deep snow. He waded through ploughing a trench that Shannon could easily ascend. Finally on the 543rd day of their climb they came to the summit. Once at the summit, they searched around for highest ground and the registrar but to no avail. To their amazement, they realized that conditions and time between summits must have carried the registrar away. Eventually a registrar was established, they signed in and the rope team celebrated by calling all their friends and family from the summit.

And now begins the long down climb from this successful high on Mount Matrimony.

Thank you to Sandy Briggs for being our MC at our wedding and keeping people calm when we realized that there was no marriage commissioner!



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# COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

## TRAVERSE CAYOOSH TO MARRIOT BASIN

Barbara Baker

August 10-12

COAST  
MOUNTAINS  
& THE  
ROCKIES

On an ideal morning, we set off into the treed valley of Cayoosh Creek: Margaret Brown our fearless leader, Claire Ebendinger fearless Chair, Gerta Smythe the well-known climber, and myself junior member. After a look round a well-kept cabin close to the trailhead, we commenced the usual bushwhack through dense shrubbery & trees, over logs and creek crossings, watching for a few flags Margaret had placed when the snow level was high. I follow Gerta over a log crossing and find her snared on a branch. With the sound of water deafening, I note Claire & Margaret beckoning but don't understand till we reach them. There is a bear cub in the trees above us. So cute! WHAAAT? Where is the Mom? We're between the mother & cub? Isn't this classic bear trouble? Let's get outta here! Margaret in the lead shrieks upon seeing Mom, & the bear heads off to the right; we hustle off to the left. I'm in the rear. Fortunately, the forest is more open here as I repeatedly check behind. No bear appears in the dappled woods. Soon a marked trail takes us out into the sunny valley where life is good and our blood pressure only up to

the work, work being a mellow pace through thigh high greenery of fireweed, dotted with red columbine and white valerian. To the left and filling our view ahead is Cayoosh Peak, with Cayoosh Creek coming down from a high level for which we

are heading. While I delay the party trying to cross the creek, Margaret finds an exceptional and heavy fossil-bearing stone, duly documented. A short ascent up blocks like a stairway

brings us out to the lake from which the creek falls. This lake & its setting are spectacular! The Cayoosh glacier & icefall dominates high & close. The turquoise lake, only partially thawed, is bracketed by huge curvilinear crevasses in the snowfield. Sun dazzling. A memorable place!

Turning east to cross a boulder field, our views to the south are of the Joffre-Matier massif. Gaining a little elevation through heather, we arrive in a wide green basin centered around a lake, very inviting at the end of a hot day. A long green ridge on the right leads NW to several rocky peaks leading to Marriot Peak, tomorrow's destination. The major question in setting up camp here is who gets what incredible view.

Next morning we follow the ridge, angling up through green vegetation, heather and swamp laurel, lovely to see, but this slope is steep and requires attention. I use 2 axes and almost wish for a trail. Coming to the edge of a shoulder, we

get our first look into a barren rocky valley with snow patches leading up our route to a high ridge that must be gained to access the still unseen peak. Margaret & Claire study the terrain and decide on a snow slope as the best way up. This slope,



Cayoosh Peak from 7 or 8 Mile Lake.

Photo: Margaret Brown.



once we are committed to it proves to be about 80 degrees!! At the bottom of the line, I struggle to keep my toes & axe connected to hard snow. With some relief and Gerta's encouragement, we exit the snow climb, rock clambering to a notch where I resign, thankful to have a few meters of flat earth under my feet. We seem to be following a goat route; there is a definite trail of animal tracks across a steep snow slope on the shady northeast side of the long ridge. This ridge is comprised of barren boulders, beckoning my companions to the unseen peak. From a snug recline I watch the weather approach and pass by, drowsily noting a faint whooping from the summit team, now at the top at 9000+ feet. They are happy and exhilarated when they get back to my spot. We

take a goat route back down, a descent demanding constant attention. The going is easy on snow patches through the valley debris, over into the green lake basin and a meander back to camp after an exciting 12-hour day filled with varied terrain, flowers, fabulous views and a new peak.

The next day, as Claire had predicted, the weather had turned. Mist and cloud obscured the views and no one was rushing to break camp. Late in the morning, with a little hopeful clearing we loaded up and climbed the ridge again to traverse over the ridge and east into the Marriot side. Inter-

mittent showers made lunch brief, so we carried on along the top, searching for a way through a long snow cornice to start the descent into the upper levels of the Marriot drainage. Not surprisingly, Gerta found a rock ridge down onto snow and Claire lined up for some serious boot skiing; more whooping! This valley was hardly past winter. A high lake

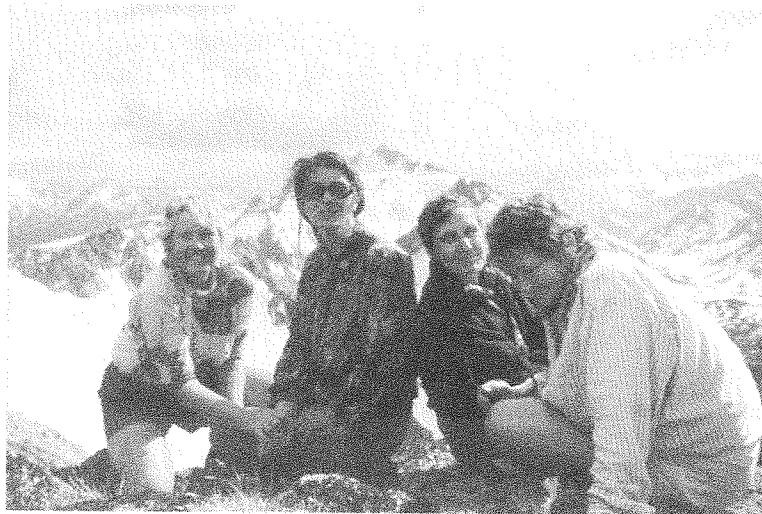
frozen, lots of snow slopes and creeks picking up on the way down through boulders and snow to lakes at the next level and another, now getting heathery and treed. There are ridges all round and views out toward Mt. Rohr. Margaret led us down and across ponds to the top of Marriot Lake where we picked up a flagged trail. It took us around the lake and down through forests, mud and blowdowns,

across the Marriot Creek and out to Claire's car only a couple of kilometers from our start. We had made the traverse in mixed weather at a relaxed pace, taking all day. Back to the Brown's cabin for hot showers, dinner, and the satisfying glow of a thoroughly enjoyable trip.

Thank you to my dear friends for their leadership, encouragement and fine companionship.

*Participants: Margaret Brown, Claire Ebendinger, Gerta Smythe, Barbara Baker*

COAST  
MOUNTAINS  
& THE  
ROCKIES



Gerta Smythe, Claire Ebendinger, Barb Baker, and Margaret Brown on Marriot Peak looking beyond Cayoosh Peak to Joffrey/Matier. Photo: Timed exposure.

## SPEARHEAD TRAVERSE

Kaj Jakobsen

April 2-5

The rain never seemed to stop last winter, so despite the odds being against us, somehow the weather, the long weekend, and Judy's planning miraculously combined to make for a memorable trip of the Spearhead Traverse. Gerta, Doug, and Charles made the approach to the Holms' cabin in Whistler by way of the Nanaimo ferry. Judy and I (having made the tortured decision that the last day of classes were worth sacrificing for this trip) took the 1pm ferry from Swartz Bay so we could pick up Marg who was flying in from Calgary that afternoon. Somehow both cars managed to arrive in Whistler at the same time. Our good karma continued the next morning with complimentary lift passes from Blackcomb. We managed to survive the chair lifts with our loaded packs, much to the disappointment of Doug, who waited poised with his

camera in the hope of a humour photo at each station.

The first day turned windy with intermittent whiteout as we slogged up, and stumbled down the various cols and glaciers that make up the traverse. Somehow Doug and Charles managed to carve nice turns in crust, crud, avalanche debris, and ice. We all had great fun however, and the views and the tempestuous weather were fantastic. The tricky spot of the day was side-slipping down a steep gully through the cliffs that separate the Decker and Torey Glaciers. We dug our tents into the NW slopes of Tremor Mountain where it seemed the least windy, and settled down for the night.

The morning dawned clear and beautiful. Doug decided that Charles' shovel looked bigger, brighter, and more attractive than his own as an outhouse tool. Doug is now only

allowed to use his own shovel on trips. It was an amazing day with spectacular views and much speculation by those less interested in eating over which mountain was Fissile Peak. After many route-finding, or eating breaks depending on your priority, it was decided that conditions were not favorable for the high route over Mount Fitzsimmons, Benvolio, and Overlord, and we would opt for a lower route. A fun decent of the Macbeth Glacier and a few more eating/route-finding breaks put us on the snout of the Fitzsimmons Glacier. Not wanting to descend to Fitzsimmons Creek, we contemplated going over the shoulder that separates the Fitzsimmons and Overlord Glaciers. While we sat munching, enjoying the view and pondering our route, a group of three proceeded up our proposed route. A broken trail was too

good to pass up, so with a last mouthful of chocolate we climbed up to the top of the shoulder well spaced out. The lead party had already reced a route over the other side to a great campsite by the time we reached the top to join them, so we all traversed over to where we could set up camp overlooking the Overlord Glacier and the elusive Fissile Peak to the west. Gerta played her recorder, and we all enjoyed a brilliant red sunset.

We awoke Easter Sunday to another day of stormy weather. The morning passed quickly however, with chocolate and plastic flowers from the Easter Bunny, aka Judy, and Gerta's

recorder music. Convinced the poor weather was here for the day, we set off adorned with our Easter flowers onto the Overlord Glacier by 10:30. Some interesting route-finding had us arrive at the Himmelsbach Hut at Russet Lake by the early afternoon. A guided group of 12 Americans were preparing to leave the hut as we arrived, and after a long and agonising debate of probably no more than 10 seconds, we decided

to stay at the cabin to wait out the weather. Hopefully better conditions on the morrow would allow us to continue the traverse over the musical bumps. Our friends who had broken trail up the shoulder the day before could be seen climbing up Fissile Peak for a ski down a long steep couloir. They had an incredibly impressive run, and with much cheering we welcomed them back to the hut.



Photo: Doug Hurrell.

We on the other hand, had an energy conserving afternoon of playing hang-man, snoozing, and eating abandoned American food.

Day four dawned clear and cold, and with an early start we descended into Singing Pass, and skied over Oboe, Flute, Piccolo. The descent into whistler village was fun, but as the crowds became thicker and the temperature warmer, I think we all wished the traverse was not over.

Participants: Judy Holm, Doug Hurrell, Kaj Jakobsen, Marg Saul, Gerta Smythe, Charles Turner.

## WEDGE MOUNTAIN

Greg Gordon

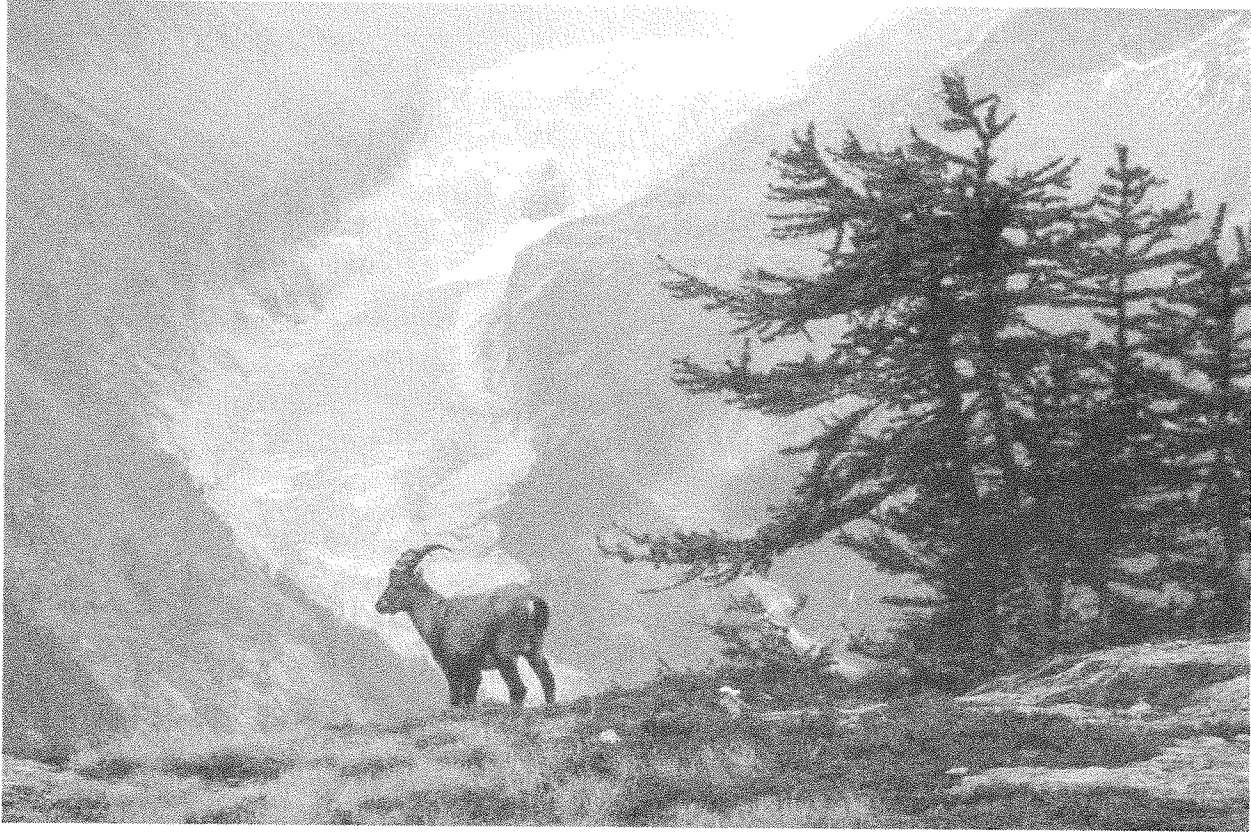
May 22-24

Third time lucky they say. Ha phooey! It should be third time really close but no cigar. This was my third year in a row trying to get to the top of Wedge via the north arete. The first attempt in 1997 didn't even leave THE island. Instead we did Kings Peak as a plan "B" in the rain. Last year the weather was no better but we spent a pile of money on the ferry and hiked up to Wedgemount Lake in the pouring rain anyway. The weather remained the same all night and into the next day so we spent a pile of money on the ferry and went home.

This year I was really hoping for good weather—I mean, after all I think I've paid my dues in the weather department on this one and besides I had a pretty faithful group of repeat customers returning year after year hoping to climb Wedge.

I wished really hard for a spell of good clear weather and then wished a little more. As the big weekend approached the weather forecast gradually improved day by day until the weather office was calling for a full on heat wave—the first one of the season.

The winter of 1998-99 delivered record snowfalls, most of which had barely even begun to melt due to the delayed spring. Now we were bracing for a heat wave. Heat wave + record snowpack = avalanche. Could it be the forecast was too perfect? To confirm my fears, the night before our departure I flipped on the TV news only to see a report warning people of the extreme avalanche hazard building in the mountains with the sudden rise in temperature. The warning went something



MOUNTAIN NATURE WINNER  
Martin Davis

like this : "If you are planning a trip into the alpine regions above treeline you are strongly urged to change your plans. An extreme avalanche hazard exists." Oh shoot I thought to myself. We're intelligent well educated mountaineers. If we simply hike up to Wedgemount Lake we'll be in a better position to judge for ourselves.

And so with that thought in mind we piled into two vehicles and headed for Garibaldi Park. At the trail head it was warm but not too hot and we began the task of dividing group equipment and deciding what to leave behind. We began hiking by mid afternoon and encountered snow almost immediately. The trail was lost within minutes of our departure but routefinding was easy with tree markings periodically showing the way. When we reached tree line we deviated slightly from the standard route to avoid potentially dangerous slopes just below Wedgemount Lake. We reached our CAMP BY early evening in time to catch a sunset bathing the upper slopes of Wedge in a pale orange glow. There was considerable evidence of recent avalanche activity on moderate slopes of all aspects and so it was decided that I would wake at 2 am to assess the snow CONDITIONS at that hour. Red flags were flying in my head telling me that the conditions were not right for safe climbing but when the alarm sounded at two o'clock I crawled out of the tent to find the snow to be very firm and crunchy.

Now I was getting excited and being the asshole that I am I took great pleasure in waking all the others in our camp to tell the good news. After waking everyone I thought I would try and raise their spirits by singing a lovely rendition of "On Top of the World" but nobody seemed to appreciate my efforts.

We pulled out of camp by 3:30 am and were roping up on the toe of the glacier a half hour later with daylight fast

approaching. There were a total of ten of us on three ropes leapfrogging the lead up the glacier. We took our first good break on a flat area above the ice fall and being only 7 am it appeared we were going to have no trouble sacking this one. Although the sun was shining all around us, the steep slope leading up to the north arete remained quite icy and upon reaching the ridge CREST, several people donned crampons. I think at this point everyone was extra glad to be alive and in the mountains. The view from here is a little better than that from my couch and the summit was now only two hundred meters away. The ridge leading up is easy to climb albeit a little exposed and so we buried a few pickets to keep the comfort levels to a maximum. Throughout the morning we had been climbing on mostly shaded slopes, but once we were on the ridge crest it was a completely different story. The sun had been hitting the eastern slopes for a few hours by that point and the snow was already very rotten and sliding frequently. We regrouped and discussed the situation. With the frequency of the slides it didn't take much to come to the conclusion that any further ascent would be risky if not deadly.

With less than 200 m to the summit we slowly retreated feeling disappointed but assured that this was the right thing to do.

The remainder of the day was spent laying around, eating, sleeping, sunning, eating, snoozing, resting, eating, farting, breathing, sleeping, grunting, eating, sleeping, lounging, drooling, eating and resting.

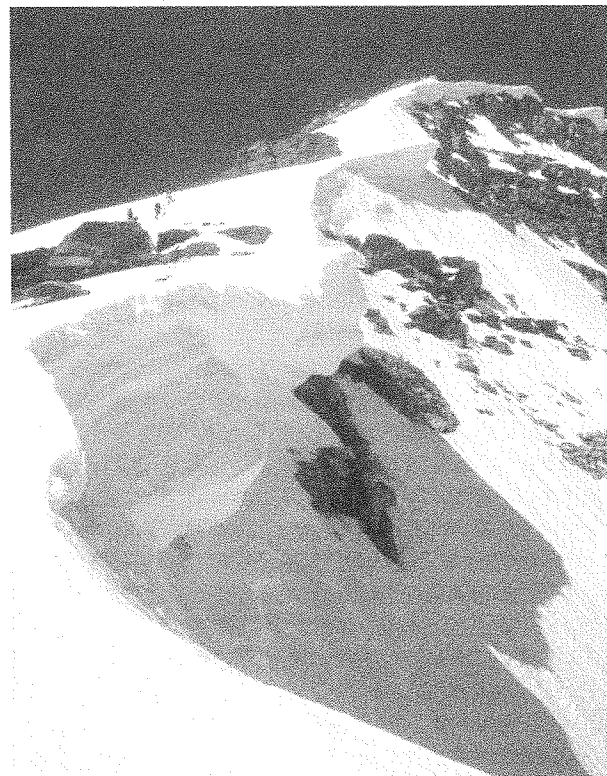
Participants: Kevin Bartlett, Katherine Brandt, Greg Gordon, Kaj Jakobsen, Murrough O'Brien, Tak Ogasawara, Selena Swets, Jules Thompson, Derek Wells.

## CANADIAN ROCKIES 1999

Tak Ogasawara

Castle Mountain (July 24-25): Halfway up Castle Mt. there is a small hut that sits on the edge of the cliff on Goat Plateau. We sat in front of this hut and enjoyed the view of the entire Bow Valley. Canmore to the east, Lake Louise to the west. Streaks of rain clouds covered Mt. Temple and once in a while we would hear thunder from far in the distance to the east. It started to rain a little and a perfect circle rainbow appeared beside the big lower cliff. We looked at this magnificent natural painting for quite a long time.

The temperature was dropping down a little so we retreated to the hut, cooked our supper and played cards until around 9:00 PM when we went to bed, hoping for good weather the next day. At 6:00 AM. I went outside to check the weather. It was cloudy and the thermometer read -2°C and it looked like there was frost on the rock face above. After breakfast we hiked along the bottom of the upper cliff to Eisenhower Tower, East Ridge when we reached the point that divided



A day out on the President & Vice President.

Photo: Tak Ogasawara.



# BLANKET GLACIER SKI TRIP

Kayla Stevenson

COAST  
MOUNTAINS  
& THE  
ROCKIES



Clockwise from top left: No avalanche danger with sunny weather and perfect snow; Jack Fisher shreds powder on 'Jack's Run'; The Blanket Glacier chalet. From left to right: rear: Doug Dalquist, Jack Fisher, George Smekal, Terry Lunn, Tim Strange, Brain Money, and Graham Bennett; centre: Donya Dalquist, Louise (hut manager), Linda MacKay, and Nancy Dyer; front: Graham Maddocks, Richard Keltie, and Paul Clements; From Cariboo Ridge; Donya Dalquist on Cariboo Ridge.



south and east. The wind picked up, the temperature dropped down and the summit was no longer visible. We talked a little about what to do next. Tom and Cedar decided to go back to the hut, Rod and I decided to try at least the bottom of the head wall, 2 or 3 pitches above.

I started off the first pitch of a loose gully then Rod continued to much more stable rock to big plateau (the place is often called the "Dragon Back"). This was where the real climbing started. When we got there snow was falling quite heavily, I was not expecting these kinds of conditions in the middle of summer, so we decided to turn back after taking a good look at the head wall for the next time. Three careful rappels along the loose gully and we were down to bottom of the route, then hurrying back to the hut where Tom and Cedar were waiting for us.

*Mt. Andromeda Skyladder* (July 3–Aug. 1): At 2:30 AM Keven knocked on my van's window and said "Tak wake up it's 2:30 we should be ready to leave hear at 3:30". I asked him about others that he said Chris was up but Rod and Tom were not. I went their tent and told them it was time to wake up. They mumbled something about wake up times that we had talked about the previous night. Rain had fallen a little during the night, I looked up at the sky, dark clouds filled up half of the sky but they were moving very quickly. I thought it was going to be OK. After a quick breakfast we drove to the

parking lot halfway up the Snocoach road and began the long march to the toe of the glacier. We reached it at around 5:00 AM. but it was not bright enough to continue onto the glacier so we had to wait till dawn.

We roped up from there and negotiated a couple of seracs, then into the upper glacier and the Andromeda Skyladder route proper. What a difference from last year there were basically no bergschrund (just a small one) nor ice on the route. For the first bit of steep slope we remained roped up and moved together, after 100 m or so we reached a small rock outcrop. There we felt that the snow was indeed firm enough to feel safe so we unroped there and climb at our own pace to the top. The weather cleared up and the view from high up on the Skyladder was fantastic. The Snocoach buses were already busy on the bottom of the Athabasca Glacier and on the other side of the Athabasca Glacier, Mt Colombia, Snow Dome and Mt. Kitchener were visible behind thin clouds.

The higher we went the Mt. Bryce started showing up from behind the ridge. After four hours of climbing we were at the top of the Andromeda, I was so tired I had to have a little

snooze while the others ate lunch. From there we planned to descend from the "AA col" to the "AA glacier". The route looked very long and had lots of snow. Since we were not sure of the condition of the "AA glacier", we decided to climb down the same way we had come up. Rod offered to go down last so we joined two ropes together and the four of us rappelled 110 m. Rod then unclipped the rope and climbed down. A loose snow avalanche started came down the shallow gully beside our descending route, after five rappels got us down to the bottom of the skyladder without any mishap. We then marched down the glacier and the scree slope to Snocoach road. We got back to campsite around 6:00 PM, it was a long day but we were satisfied with our effort.

*The President and Vice President* (Aug. 2–3): The sound from the Yoho River filled in the air. I followed the wide flat trail towards the head of the valley, halfway up the trail at the Laughing fall, the trail branched out to the little Yoho Valley. The first 1 km of this trail zig zagged up the side of the



On the Skyladder. Photo: Tak Ogasawara.

mountain then gently climbed up along the Little Yoho River. A couple of hours from the Laughing fall, the trail suddenly opens up into the Little Yoho Valley. On the far side of this beautiful valley the President and Vice President fill the sky and at the very edge of this opening, was where the Stanley Michelle hut sat.

I woke up at 6:30 AM the next morning and it was a glorious sunny day. At 7:30 AM

I left the hut for the President and Vice President. I crossed the river then up to the moraine and into the glacier. The sun had already softened the snow considerably so I went up the left side of the glacier under the shadow of the Vice President. Just below the President and Vice President saddle I joined other party's footprints and followed them to the saddle. The party ahead of me had just started up to the President so I decided to visit Vice President first. It took me one hour to climb and get back down to the saddle. I then followed the footprints towards the President. Half way up to the ridge I met a party, exchanged short greetings with them, and continued up to the summit. After 45 minutes from the saddle, I was on the summit enjoying the 360 degree view of Yoho Park and the Wapta skyline. It was not much climbing but certainly a good outing indeed.

# THE NORTH RIDGE OF MOUNT ASSINIBOINE

Doug Hurrell

August 8-9

Our climb started at the Mt. Assiniboine Lodge. We followed the excellent trail along the north side of Lake Magog, cheered on by dozens of Columbian ground squirrels. The trail then angled up through a pretty flower meadow to the "Gmoser Highway", a cairned route leading through the bluffs, snow fields, and ledges of the headwall which rises above the south west end of the lake (the obvious snow gully is considered unsafe because it is threatened by icefall and because a stream runs below it). We soon reached the Hind Hut, which I found rather dark, but quite clean and tidy. It featured foamies, a set of dishes suitable for afternoon tea at the Empress, a propane stove and an architecturally stunning outhouse. We couldn't see much of Mt. Assiniboine which was shrouded by clouds.

I got up early the next morning, could see the summit, and woke up Rudy, who quickly jumped into high gear. We soon were traversing the rough terrain to the base of the mountain. After ascending several hundred vertical feet of scree we reached the rock of the north ridge. This is the standard route up the mountain, and probably sees many ascents during a normal summer. It consists mainly of Class 3 slabs and small bluffs. The rock is generally quite sound but is littered with loose debris, typical of the Rockies. We climbed slowly but steadily up the ridge. Climbing conditions were excellent, but as we moved up the clouds unfortunately moved down. When confronted by the beautiful cliffs of the red band we had to traverse to the right and climbed up through an easy chimney. Just below the grey band Rudy felt it was time to get out the rope, and he led up the narrow cliffs of the ridge—steep exposed climbing on fine rock. We then soloed through the grey band via a grotty chimney with wet down sloping holds—I was a bit nervous. Just below the summit we again used the rope for half a pitch and after a bit more scrambling reached the summit snowfield. We then waded through the rotten snow in a driving scotch mist to the top, reaching the summit about 48 hours after leaving Vancouver Island.

On the descent we used the rope for three rappels including the nasty bit on the grey band and down climbed carefully past many more rappel stations which could be used when



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conditions were more slippery. We made it back to the hut for a late lunch. In the evening the route cleared off and I hardly could believe that we had climbed it—it just looks so awesome!

The next day we mainly rested on our laurels—taking in the magnificent scenery, solving the world's problems, eating macaroni, and hiking up a peak behind the cabin. On the following day we enjoyed a beautiful sunrise and descended down through the clouds to Lake Magog. After chatting with the friendly folks at the lodge and feeding the mosquitoes we took the first helicopter back to the parking lot.

What a great thing it was to climb such a beautiful and famous peak with such a fine companion. Thanks ever so much Rudy.

## MOUNT MATIER

Greg Gordon

May

I've been to Mt. Matier three times before but conditions always prevented a successful climb of this beautiful peak. Judging by previous Bushwhacker reports it seemed this would be a good place to lead a ski trip and so I returned with a familiar group to try for a fourth time.

It was a long weekend so we took our time driving up the

Duffy Lake Rd. Actually we were forced to drive slowly. My car was packed with four people (Gerhardt, Joanne, Doug, and myself), four big packs, four pairs of skis and poles and only four small cylinders to power our little four wheel drive forward. Charles was right behind us in his truck along with Tim and Andrew.



There was not a lot of snow on the ground at the trail head and in places we found ourselves skiing (sort of) gingerly over patches of open ground. The weather was co-operating quite nicely and we arrived to find Keith's hut rather busy so most of us opted to sleep outside with the good weather. I brought with me two cupcakes to celebrate Charles' and Doug's birthdays the following day. I gave them to Gerhardt to look after since I couldn't trust myself not to eat them.

The next morning was clear and crisp. Joanne decided to stay back at the hut and do some yo-yo skiing. Charles, Tim, Gerhardt and I planned to go up Matier while Doug and Andrew were off to climb Joffre Pk. Gerhardt was having difficulty keeping his skins on and was forced to return to the hut.

We roped up to ascend the Anniversary Glacier but it was rock solid with no signs of crevasses so we figured it would be safe enough to descend free of the rope. We stopped for a break at the Joffre-Matier Col. From here our route up the north ridge was clearly visible with no signs of serious obstacles. It didn't look too difficult so I thought it would be fun to ski from the summit.

Doug and Andrew left us at this point and skied over to the Australian gully, a beautiful very long couloir that leads all the way to the summit of Joffre Pk. We could see them on their route and they could see us which made it interesting to exchange descriptions of what each party saw.

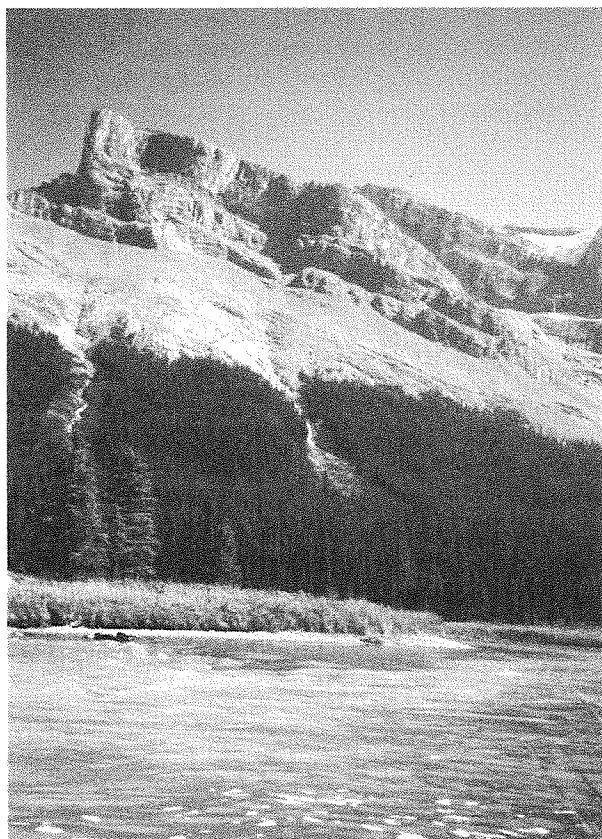
We didn't follow the north ridge exactly. Instead we traversed under it partly and then climbed straight up. About half way up the snow became much harder and chunky from

previous avalanches so we donned our crampons. As the slope angle approached 45-50 degrees and more icy as we climbed we began wondering exactly why we wanted to ski off the summit. We finally gained the corniced ridge and reached the summit with no problems. We drank in the views from this the highest peak in the region. Mountain ranges spread out before us in all directions like ripples on beach sand. We watched as Andrew and Doug moved very slowly up their mountain and they could see us on our summit

Only an idiot or a really very good skier would try to ski off this summit under these chunky icy conditions so we left our skis strapped to our packs and began the descent. Only once we had dropped through a band of rocks and the slope angle was less than 40 degrees did we put on the boards. Even then it was pure survival skiing over the fist-sized chunks of avalanche debris. Doug and Andrew later commented how "extreme" we looked. From their perspective the slope appeared much steeper than it was. As we dropped the snow began to soften and the ride down the Anniversary glacier was far more enjoyable.

We reached the cabin by early afternoon and lounged in the sun on the front porch waiting for Doug and Andrew to return. With binoculars we watched them as they struggled down the glacier on a late afternoon refrozen crust. They arrived high as kites thrilled with their day's achievement. Now it was time to celebrate birthdays. Gerhardt went to get the cupcakes and candles but returned with only one cake. Apparently the local Whiskeyjacks ate one... Sure Gerhardt.

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## SIFFLEUR-DOLOMITE TRAVERSE

Claire Ebendinger  
August, 1998

With a keen sense of adventure, well loaded packs and a great forecast, Brian, Russ and I set off for a nine-day traverse in the Banff National Park. After a leisurely lunch at Lake Louise we started up the Mosquito creek trail, a few kms North of Hector Lake. Brian had done a few trips in this area and wanted to explore some more. We reached a designated campsite within a couple of hours and settled there for the evening. Russ had been hiking in Texas as his boots needed a resoling job, on the go (shoo goo works well and fast). As the creek name indicates the wildlife was abundant around the camp, but we managed to have a pleasant rest in the breeze near the water.

In the morning we continued part way up the trail toward Fish Lakes, but opted to take a shortcut to the north, soon after we reached the meadows. We avoided a long stretch of horse-trail to the lakes and Pipestone pass. A steep, easy-going gully led us down to the Pipestone valley and back on

The Clearwater River. Photo: Claire Ebendinger.

the trail to the pass. The flowers were in full bloom everywhere, the views were awesome, the weather pleasant... What a gift! On the grassy slopes, at the pass, we noticed a herd of mountain sheep; we watched them graze as they kept an eye on us. We continued to Clearwater pass and set up camp by a little lake where fresh caribou tracks were left on the muddy shore. A couple of mountain goats peered down from the upper ridge on Devon mountain, and disappeared. There was no one else around; we were aware that a great number of animals use the Siffleur valley as a corridor and kept our eyes open for them. We hung our food bags from the top of a large overhanging rock and settled for the night.

Before sunrise I heard noises in the distance. I walked up to the pass and listened to the eerie call of coyotes in the valley. I didn't see them as I searched through the binoculars, but I spotted a grizzly running in the meadows and to clump of trees. I hadn't hiked much in grizzly domain and was a bit nervous about that during our trip as we often saw fresh signs and were making loud noises much of the time, especially in forested and bushy areas. The cans of bear spray hanging on our belts were only slightly reassuring to me. Brian had hiked often in bear country and was much more at ease; I listened to his stories with great interest.

From Clearwater pass we hiked along the Clearwater creek trail and looked for the perfect campsite Brian knew of. There it was: a grassy patch, spotted with dainty gentians, loons calling in the crystal-clear air, and the soft evening light on the ridges reflecting in the still water. After dinner I tried a few loon notes on the recorder, and they responded, calling back again and again. This was a truly magical place.

Day 3 brought us to the outflow of Martin lake where we did our first fording across a knee-deep, gently flowing, cold

river. The probing sticks helped. This area was new to Brian so we did some route finding, which was quite easy in this semi-open terrain. Following Martin creek upstream we found a nice camp site by the 2ND Martin lake, at the 6600 ft elevation. Russ and Brian set up a high food cache between two trees, and we enjoyed another pleasant evening in a beautiful and wild setting.



Russ and Brian. Photo: Claire Ebendinger.

colored, or smoothed out. From the top we were able to speculate on the route to follow, and looking at the clouds moving in, wished for a clear day to cross the Willingdon glacier. Again, we woke up to perfect sunshine. The route went fairly well: a few maneuvers on an exposed rock over the lake, a bushwhack up the side of a roaring waterfall, another fording of a rushing creek, and a scramble up to the glacier. As it was not too



Camp at Second Lake. Photo: Claire Ebendinger.

in the day was a bit unnerving for me, but we saw no sign of the animal.

Day 6: we headed north on the Siffleur river trail, crossing areas where caribou had trampled over muddy meadows and around a salt lick. The nearby campsite would have been the perfect place to observe them from, but we chose to go on,

The following day we opted for a day trip up to the ridge north of the lake (10400 ft). The views were very Rockies-like: high cliffs showing layers of rock formations, waterfalls flowing steeply out of the glacier's mouth, creeks carving meandering beds. I wished I had a better knowledge of geology as I tried to understand how the rock can be so varied and strikingly

steep we managed to walk over gravel covered ice, and by late afternoon we reached the south end of the glacier. It was too late to attempt an ascent of Mt. Willingdon. An easy gully brought us down to the Clearwater trail where we had a short rest before heading to the Clearwater pass, where we had camped before and had left some food hanging on the big rock. Seeing fresh bear diggings so late

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after a brief chat with a group of French hikers who had stopped there. We decided to quit for the day at the intersection of the Siffleur and Dolomite creeks, and avoided camping at Isabella lake which we were told was already occupied. It was strange being back in "human land;" like the wild animals we were avoiding human contact. The sun greeted us again in the morning, and the hike along Dolomite creek trail was easy going, with a couple more fords and close-up views of the peaks along the way. Our last chance to camp before Dolomite pass was on a small grassy spot above the creek; we didn't want to end up in a windy funnel further up and settled for this view spot.

The next day we made our way to the pass slowly, relishing the last feeling of the wild, the quiet beauty of the mountains, the warmth of the sun and the invigorating breeze. My feelings of lingering up there were stronger than the anticipation of a shower and nice meal. After a surprise treat of cake and goodies donated by a compassionate hiker, Russ and Brian rushed off down the trail. I mozied on, starrng at Dolomite peak and possible routes up, stopped for the last scenic photos, covered up for the unexpected shower (the first rain on the trip!), chatted with hikers, and sat quietly to admire Crowfoot Mountain and Bow lake on the other side of the highway... Life is Good!

## AVALANCHE SAFETY A DEVIL'S ADVOCATE STIRS THE POT

Sandy Briggs

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Avalanches scare me! Fortunately (for me) I have not yet been buried in one. This may be attributed to experience, knowledge, luck, the fact that I don't get out much in the winter, and the fact that I almost never ski in the interior, (and consequently have no knowledge of a substance called deep powder snow). The relative importance of these five factors is open to debate, but likely the last three are right up there. I have taken a couple of avalanche safety courses, but I am admittedly somewhat complacent and unpractised in the use of avalanche transceivers and in some other avalanche safety procedures. With that as an introduction I hope you will manage to remain seated and calm while I pull your chain a little on this subject.

I am interested in risk and its evaluation. It is perhaps worth re-naming the separation of real risk from perceived risk as the separation of real safety from perceived safety. We also need a sense of perspective. There are, on average, about 10-12 avalanche fatalities in Canada per year, of which about half are back-country skiers. Driving to and from our outings almost certainly is more dangerous.

However, my first problem with avalanche transceivers is not about risk, it is about their cost. They are hideously overpriced, currently fetching a dollar figure about equivalent to the value of my (admittedly 'low-end') car. Yet I cannot help but wonder whether they contain less than twenty dollars worth of parts. The cult of avalanche safety keeps us buying them unquestioningly (yes, I own one), but I keep hoping that someday somebody will break the price bubble with the truth.

Before I get to my second and more important complaint I'd like to offer a 'creative' interpretation of some numbers from the web site of the Canadian Avalanche Association. According to the Trends and Patterns in Avalanche Accidents pages, our chances of surviving an avalanche are about 86%. Put another way, our chances of dying if we get caught in an avalanche are about 14%. One data set suggests that about one third of avalanche deaths are caused by trauma rather than

asphyxiation, so our chances of being killed by asphyxiation in an avalanche, if we are caught, are only about two thirds of 14%, which is 10% or less. It is these cases that, it seems to me, are the proper focus of transceiver usage. In one data set spanning 12 years it was found that the proportion of completely buried persons found alive by the use of transceivers was 42%, the others being found by other means. A little bit of 'interpretation' now has us down to this, namely that an avalanche transceiver is going to be of real value in only about 42% of the cases in which people are caught in avalanches.

Another data analysis (Avalanche News #42) tells us that there were 73 people either killed or completely buried by avalanches in Canada between 1986 and 1993. Thirteen percent of the 32 victims without transceivers survived, while 32% of the 41 victims with transceivers survived. There is a lot of information missing here, and those killed by trauma have not been factored out, but by these data it looks as though wearing a transceiver increases our survival chances by only about 20%.

Admittedly, about 75% of recreational avalanche victims (i.e. deaths) in a larger different sample were not wearing transceivers. Also, the numbers would probably improve a bit if all wearers of transceivers were proficient users. But when the situation is viewed in the (skewed?) light of the above paragraphs one can hardly wonder at or even condemn the low usage of these devices.

On the Canadian Avalanche Association web site, on the pages called "Accidents Factors," under the heading of "Safety Measures," there appears the following true statement: "Other safety measures such as wearing transceivers or removing ski-pole straps tend to reduce the consequences of being caught." Unfortunately it seems to me that there are many winter recreationists who have confused the real purpose of avalanche transceivers (as a modest search and rescue advantage in a small percentage of avalanche incidents), with a false purpose, namely as a way to reduce the likelihood of being caught in an avalanche. This is my second big issue with transceivers. It seems obvious, but I think it needs saying (again). Wearing a

transceiver does NOT decrease your chances of being caught in an avalanche. In fact if you think it does—that is, if you would go somewhere with a transceiver that you would not go without one—then it actually increases your chances of becoming an avalanche victim. Let me rephrase that. If you would ski or climb somewhere while wearing an avalanche transceiver that you wouldn't go if you were not wearing one then you are stupid (unless, I guess, your policy is to never go out without one. Think carefully about this.)

My argument is, then, that transceivers confer only a modest search and rescue advantage in a small percentage of avalanche incidents, and it is therefore not irresponsible for informed parties to go into the snowy mountains without these devices. This conclusion will be unacceptable, perhaps reasonably, to commercial operators and to most clubs, but if this heretical article fosters a discussion that leads to a more realistic understanding of risk, then we will all be the better off.

As a final point (actually there is another one, but I'll spare you), I'd like to comment on avalanche probes. Again we are talking about a device that will not reduce your chances of get-

ting caught in an avalanche. It is a single-use pound of metal that costs about half the exhaust-system replacement that my car could use right now. Moreover, as the CAA web site shows, only about 10% of avalanche victims completely buried alive are found by this method, fewer than are found either by surface clues or by last seen point. Put another way, your powers of observation alone weigh nothing and are worth about 2.5 times as much as an avalanche probe for locating a buried victim alive. Again it is scarcely to be wondered at that so few people choose to carry a probe.

So, if this devil's advocate has to come up with a conclusion it is this. Let's learn to understand risk better. Let's get a sense of perspective about what's really important, and let's concentrate more on safe travel. (I hope I never have to eat these words.)

*Footnotes—*

1. It is not stated whether all victims in the data set were actually wearing transceivers, perhaps unlikely.
2. This is 42% of 10%.

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BEST PRINT WINNER

A promise of sunshine.

Gerta Smythe

# SOUTH OF THE BORDER

## HIGH ADVENTURE ON RAINIER

Jules Thomson

July 30–August 1

SOUTH  
OF THE  
BORDER

The call of Rainier—an incredibly beautiful mountain. The three mountaineers, Jules Thomson, Selena Swets, and Kaj Jakobsen set off early Friday morning bound for Tsawassen to meet the fourth, Scott Pierce arriving from Saturna Island. Off we drove through the border crossing (where do all these people come from) down PAST Seattle and on a roundabout route to the NE of Rainier. When we finally arrived at the ranger hut Friday afternoon we were informed that the Sherman route was full for at least the next three days, and could we wait a few days? Such was the situation even though I, the intrepid leader Jules, had phoned the ranger the previous day telling him that we were coming down from Canada and would there be a problem getting on this route. Probably not, he assured me—guess again Bub! Anyway as the four of us were all standing around the ranger hut with sorrowful, begging eyes, a wild-haired mountain man—actually a ranger—suggested the Kautz route and Camp Hazard with ice fall above. Scott, Selena and Kaj's eyes lit up simultaneously, while my wild imagination envisioned waist deep snows, tumbling, crumbling ice blocks, a remote area and no one else in sight. So we unanimously agreed to go for the Kautz glacier route with only a rough idea of the route, but with lots of enthusiasm.

Having arrived at Paradise meadows, the start-off point, we pulled out cook stoves and ate dinner in the parking lot, while a gorgeous silvery gray fox with black legs begged for food. Then once night fell, we skulked off into the darkness to find an unauthorized camp spot for the night, bumping into many other climbers starting up the long trudge to Camp Muir. The moon that night was a huge gigantic orange ball that dominated the horizon and had us oohing and awing to such a wonder. Then after much deliberation and referring to the topo, going up a bit and then going back down a bit we settled on a comfy snow covered ridge. The next day, with incredible blue sky, we could of course see the track in the snow which showed us the route. After a brief “—ahhh—who has the vehicle keys, I thought you had them—no I'm sure I gave them back to you” discussion and almost partial backtracking, we roped up and wove our way through the first set of crevasses. At around 6000 feet there was a rocky outcrop

where we cleared out tent spots and a large holding barrel for the mandatory blue bags, pooper-scoopers and, people. Much to my surprise and relief there wasn't a ton of snow—this was actually quite civilized. Probably wouldn't appeal to those on the wild side of things. Anyway we continued on up the grunt in the baking hot sun to another rest spot and eventually on to a spot just over 9000 ft. Here again in an outcrop of rubble we found incredibly cleared level tent spots, beautiful mauve wildflowers, wasps, and a cheeky rust coloured mountain bird begging for food. It was at this elevation and actually slightly below that my now infamous stomach rebelled at the lack of acclimatization. I immediately declared this as a most suitable base camp for the final approach providing we all got up at midnight. Well, around 3:00 AM the camp stirred, and finally three mountaineers left around 4:30 or 5:00 AM—my stomach and I declined to continue. On they forged upward!

Meanwhile back in misery city, I am sleeping, boiling water from our waterfall just above, sleeping, throwing up, boiling water, and calculating the intrepid three's return to camp. After all they did have the rope, my ice axe, the vehicle keys—I was really counting on them returning. As it turned out, there were 12 other people on the mountain that day—I talked with many and enquired about my group. Well, some of the descending climbers had met people from Colorado, some had met two people, but I was still envisioning three and everyone assured me that of course they would eventually show up.

At 10:00 PM, everyone is off the mountain, except me, and three mysterious, gone for hours, climbers. As I lay on my back looking up at the tent ceiling I contemplated all those wild thoughts that whirl through your mind when you find yourself in a situation like this. Are they really OK? Can I get off this mountain by myself circumventing the lower crevasses sans ice axe—ahh, yes I was sure I could. Would I be going for help in the first light? I was hoping not. And about that transportation. The vehicle keys I certainly did not have. Then I heard a voice high above me and knew that that was my people. I stuck my head and headlamp out of the tent to show them the way. Fuwff.

As the story goes, Scott waited 4 hrs, just above 12,000 ft. as the other two did the summit. He had a snooze and hunkered

down out of sight and wind to keep warm. The climb through the icefall had been exhilarating according to Selena, who said that she just had to trust her ice axe and her crampons. However, the night was very warm and on the way down Selena kept falling into crevasses, so the guys slithered over on their stomachs behind her which kept the pace slow, but kept bodies out of crevasses. After some grub at base camp we all settled in around midnight hoping for an early start in the morning. For myself most of the remaining hours were spent not in the tent, such was the effect that the elevation was having on me with revenge. But the incredible sunset that I saw Saturday night with my friend the rust coloured mountain bird was so breathtaking that the rest didn't really seem to matter.

The next morning I tore down the tent, packed my bag and was ready it seemed, a tad too soon. Eager to get lower I scrambled down some rocks and soon felt much better— instant relief. The rest of the group soon caught up and we roped for the snow. Leading down through the now mushy

crevasses near the beginning of the trail didn't seem to take long. Soon we were back in the meadows having witnessed some territorial skirmishes between a couple of tough marmots. The alpine meadow and its rampant wild flowers were hard to believe—so were the tourists with their short shorts, wide smiles, and light packs, while we looked like shaggy bears, probably with much the same scent too.

Back to Victoria through a sea of traffic—I still haven't figured out where all those people and cars on 1–5 come from! Next time I am travelling that freeway at night just to see if it will be less congested.

Well, it was quite the trip and although at base camp I questioned my sanity, all is quickly forgotten and I can't wait to get back. Rainier can certainly become a passion.

*Participants: Jules Thompson, Selena Swets, Kaj Jakobsen and Scott Pierce*

## PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

Albert Hestler

August 28–September 3

Many people wonder what to do once they are retired and the daily routine of going to work has come to an end. It's nice, therefore, to have one or more hobbies. For a long time I had planned to do some serious long-distance hiking, once this golden age of never-ending freedom had arrived. And having hiked several sections of the Appalachian Trail in my younger years, the Pacific Crest Trail seemed a worthy objective for this later stage in my life. What I hadn't counted on, of course, is that the old body isn't quite as fit as it used to be, and certain physical disabilities put limitations on one's capabilities—and dreams.

I was, therefore, more than pleased when I read in the trip schedule that Judy Holm was going to lead a trip on the Pacific Crest Trail from Manning Park to Rainy Pass. The reasons were twofold:

Firstly, I knew from reading maps and trip descriptions that this northernmost section of the trail is relatively benign in terms of 'ups and downs'. As a matter of fact, the trail only fluctuates between a low of 4280 ft. and high of 7126 ft. and, according to my reckoning, didn't exceed 3000 ft. maximum per day or 11,000 ft. cumulative over its entire length of 112 km. Also, the gradient never exceeds 10% and is suitable for horses, i.e. there are no steps or ladders.

Secondly, I have travelled with Judy and Viggo before and knew from personal experience that we would be able to strike a workable compromise between the relative speed of the grey-beards in their sixties and the gung-ho types in their twenties. It was arranged that everybody had to wait for the whole group of five to gather whenever there was a junction in the trail, or every two hours. This worked very well and allowed me to travel at my own comfortable, albeit slow, pace and catch up with the group every so often throughout the day.

The trip itself went without any mishaps, though did have some unexpected turns. We started the trip at Rainy Pass for logistic reasons: there is no public transportation along the North Cascades Highway, which makes it less convenient as a finishing point, yet there are two daily buses from Manning Park to Vancouver. Katy Holm kindly drove us to the trail-head, then returned to Vancouver and parked the van there for pickup upon our return. (Thanks, Katy.) Then we hiked the same afternoon to a campsite just below Cutthroat Pass. The next day set the pattern for the rest of the trip, i.e. up at 6:00 o'clock, away at 8:00, and camp anywhere between 4:00 and 6:00 o'clock. We averaged about 18–20 km a day. The choice of daily campsites was very much determined by the weather.

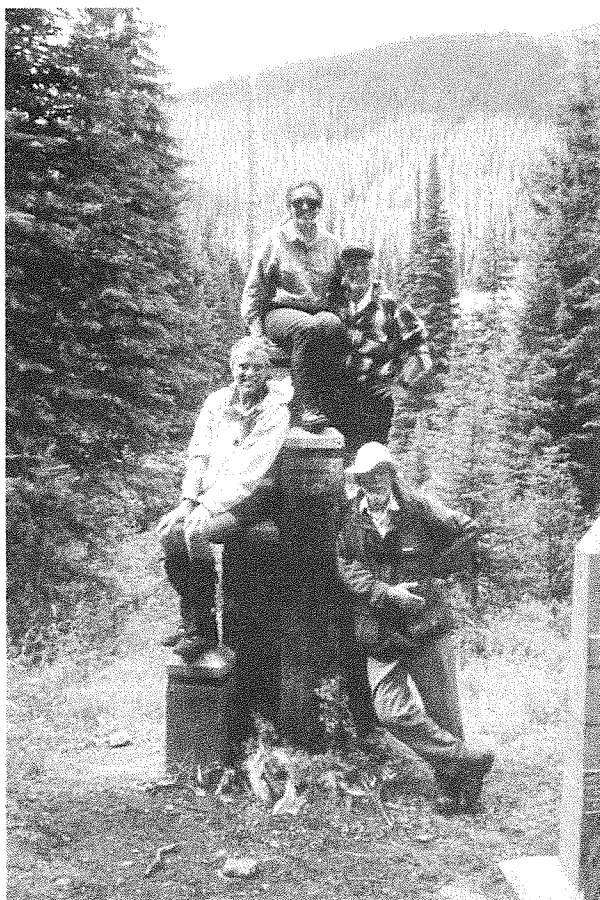
The second day from Cutthroat Pass to Brush Creek was sunny and beautiful. However, on the third day up to Glacier Pass, it began to snow—and continued to snow for the rest of the day. There is a road leading from the highway to a ranger station at Harts Pass and then to an abandoned fire lookout on Slate Peak. As this is the last point at which the trip could be aborted we decided to push on to Harts Pass. By the time we arrived, there were about 4–6" of snow on the ground. Two men in a station wagon, who happened to be at the pass at the same time, offered us a lift down to Mazama on the highway. We declined, but a young couple (whom we had met on the trail before) accepted their offer. We decided to defer any final decision until the next day, but were certainly glad about the available facilities and the possible escape route if one should be needed.

Fortunately, it had stopped snowing by next morning. Blue patches in the sky looked promising and we therefore decided to continue our trek. The trail was still discernible, though hard going. About 2 hours later we were very relieved to meet

SOUTH  
OF THE  
BORDER



SOUTH  
OF THE  
BORDER



At the U.S./Canadian border on the Pacific Crest Trail.  
Photo; Albert Hestler.

*Participants: Judy Holm (leader), Viggo Holm, Albert Hestler, Dale Nicoll, Jeannine Buckley.*

two young men travelling in the opposite direction which meant that the trail was passable all the way. The weather improved as the day progressed—so did the views. As a matter of fact, the snow made the scenery look more dramatic and very alpine. The weather only affected our plans in that we didn't camp high on the ridges as originally planned, but low in the trees, e.g. at Holman Pass (day 4) and Hopkins Pass (day 5) respectively. Still, the temperatures at night dropped to below freezing—and that in August.

Jeannine, who had some work to do before returning to school after the Labour Day weekend, decided to leave us on the afternoon of day 5 (Wednesday) and push on alone to cover the remaining 26 km to Manning Park and catch the bus by 11:00 o'clock the next morning (which she did). This left only four of us at Hopkins Lake, a very beautiful setting. Once we had reached the U.S./Canadian border on day 6 (Thursday), Dale decided to go for the 5:00 o'clock bus later that day. So Judy, Viggo and I spent a relaxing last night on the campsite below Mount Frosty in Manning Park. On Friday we casually hiked out to the Lodge and had a leisurely breakfast there before taking the bus to Vancouver, picking up the van and returning to Victoria.

All in all, it was a wonderful seven days in the mountains, an enjoyable hike and great company. We met many interesting people, e.g. one young man in running shoes who had come all the way from the Mexican border in 108 days, averaging 40 km a day, and carrying a small pack of such light weight that it defies comprehension. We had packs that weighed in at 40–45 lbs for the pros (and heavier for the others) and felt that we had a reasonable load for our week-long trip. Ah well, there is always somebody who can do it better, or faster, or lighter—but, do they enjoy it any more? I certainly enjoyed it and I feel good for having done it. And that, after all, is what counts.



# DISTANT OBJECTIVES

## BAFFIN ISLAND 1999

Sandy Briggs



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Mt. Asgard from the upper Owl River valley. Photo: Sandy Briggs.

I still remember exactly how I first heard about Auyuittuq National Park. Not long after the park had been established (1972) I saw a television special about it. The image that stuck in my mind was one of unbelievably high sea cliffs on the Cumberland Peninsula as seen from a plane flying the coast of Davis Strait. I wanted to go there! Soon I applied for a summer job in the new arctic park by writing directly to the then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. The polite reply was that the seasonal jobs were offered to local residents. And so, for a few years, the arctic slipped to the back of my mind, chemistry came to the fore, and mountaineering was still for me a thing not yet dreamed of. It is with something like wonder then, that I look back 27 years and find that I have been fortunate enough to make about ten arctic trips, includ-

ing three to Baffin Island.

My first trip to Baffin Island was in 1978 when my climbing friend Derek and I set off with more gear than skill and more dreams than determination to climb a couple of the amazing peaks of the Pangnirtung Pass (now Akshayuk Pass) region then being made famous by such visitors as Doug Scott and James Bond. Finding ourselves intimidated by reality, we climbed only one minor peak and otherwise contented ourselves with hiking the valley and its glaciers. My 1999 visit to Baffin Island was, by contrast, mercifully free of such climbing ambitions (and the attendant heavy equipment). Martin Carver and I had hatched a plot during the winter to go off north for a trek, and along our merry planning way we were joined by two others, Njeri Graham, a long-time friend of

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Martin's who works as a wildlife biologist in western Ontario, and Mary Gillis, a nurse from Nanaimo whom Martin had met through a mutual friend. In the end, Mary was perhaps the bravest of us all, willing to set off to the arctic for three weeks with three near-total strangers, leaving her husband and kids for the first time.

Many things stand out about last summer's trip, but first in chronology is the wonderful welcome we received from friends Mary Poterala and Kate Darling and their colleagues at the nursing station in Pangnirtung. They threw a big pot-luck feast, gave us acres of floor to sleep and sort gear on, and entertained us with many stories and much helpful information. The second feature of this trip that distinguishes it from many of my other arctic trips was the amount of time we spent in villages or otherwise more-or-less around local people. This was very interesting and enriching.

With our nurse friends we hired an outfitter and went to visit the Kekerten Territorial Historic Park in Cumberland Sound, a two and a half hour boat ride away. This was the site of Scottish and American whaling stations in the middle of the 19th century. From its observation hill we had stunning views of a wide expanse of the ice-speckled sound.

The following day a second outfitter delivered us to the head of South Pangnirtung Fiord to start our trek. We carried food for about 18 days, and adding to that the fact that some of us had not been overly rigorous about the proposed maximum 1.5 lb food per person per day rule, we could barely stagger away from the shore with our heavy loads. Luckily the terrain was flat and we had to go only a few short kilometers before a good site offered itself as camp 1.

For me the trip provided a chance to relax (in a way) and to see anew terrain I had visited 21 years before (and to discover how inaccurately I had remembered some of it). It was also a chance to get to know my new friends Njeri and Mary, and to share with them and Martin the wonder of this spectacular place.

With lots of time and a flexible agenda we did day-hikes and side-trips as we pleased, and on several occasions spent more than one night at the same camp. While some might rate a nagging concern about bears as the greatest difficulty, the more pressing day-to-day real difficulty is the creek-crossings. Whether leg-chilling fords like Rundle creek or the 'can't afford to slip here' boulder hopping of the Windy Lake outlet, these obstacles deserve full care and attention. Many times we

were thankful for our walking sticks/ski poles and many times we linked arms for stability in the opaque silty cold runoff from the numerous glaciers.

While Akshayuk Pass cannot be promoted as a haven of wildlife we did nevertheless see a fair variety, more than I expected. We saw arctic hare, Canada geese, a weasel, my first ever lemmings, also buntings, loons, ptarmigan, oldsquaw ducks, a raptor or two, and even some fox tracks. Our timing was perfect for the flowers this year. It seemed everything was in full bloom and we saw many species including the common willow-herb, poppies and avens, but also drooping saxifrage, bladder campion, arctic dandelion, arctic sunflower, cinquefoil and numerous others. Very colourful!

At Summit Lake we had intended to linger for a side trip up the Caribou Glacier but the weather didn't co-operate. Instead we were blasted from 3 AM to 10 AM by a serious wind-storm that severely challenged Martin's tent and appeared to force rain directly through the slightly uv-deteriorated fly-sheet of mine. Njeri eventually rolled up her sleeping bag,

stuffed it into a garbage bag, and sat in the tent with her rain-jacket on, while I lay there trying to pretend that such a thing couldn't happen to my tent. I was in denial for sure.

Later the next day at a creek crossing near the Turner Glacier we were overtaken by a senior German gentleman named Hans. He proved a friendly and determined adventurer and we camped beside him for two

nights and had a hike together on the glacier. Hans had found out in Pangnirtung that he could not buy alcohol for his stove. His solution was to buy rubbing alcohol instead (it's 30% water!) and he did his whole trek with this slow and cold-burning fuel mixture. Amazing!

Mt Asgard shyly hid her head in the clouds as we approached within a couple of kilometers of her base along the relatively snow-free Turner glacier. That mountain! What a stunning pillar (two actually)! It is hard to suppress the desire to go back yet again one day to have a try at climbing it.

Sunshine blessed our perhaps daring, maybe marginal, ford of Rundle creek late the following afternoon. We would have waited but for the fact that we wanted to socialize with friends waving to us from the other shore. This we did, and hot tea and good stories were shared all round.

With the weather slightly grey and damp, and with fitter legs and lighter packs, we cruised longer distances on our way to the mouth of the Owl river. The valley became wider



Martin, Njeri, Mary and Sandy on the Turner Glacier with Mt. Asgard in background. Photo: Sandy Briggs.

and more vegetated, the terrain less rocky, with more squishy tundra to exercise our thigh muscles on. We arrived happily at the final shelter at the fiord edge on the afternoon of our 16TH day in the park. Expecting our boat pick-up at 10 AM the next morning, we thought only of food and sleep, not of being organized or packed. However, by 11 PM a light appeared down the fiord, and by midnight we were being asked to hop aboard for the cruise to Qikiqtarjuaq (formerly Broughton Island). Well, it's the Arctic. Anything can happen! We assembled our gear in the deep twilight and shook the cobwebs from our heads to enjoy a truly spectacular ride past granite wall after granite wall, past waterfall after waterfall. Later we motored into thick fog, and eventually were deposited at a fishing camp to pitch our tent and have a sleep.

## SLOWLY ASCENDING CIRCLES

Tom Carter

Night birds drift unseen through the mists of Kathmandu. Their phantasmal cries float by—shadows of sound. The dogs of the city skulk away to dark holes—howling malevolence, howling hunger, fading to hollow echoes in the alley. An oil lamp on the roof above silhouettes a woman in morning puja. Murmuring, she casts rice and marigold petals to the sky. With vermilion paste she daubs a fresh tika mark on her forehead. Her soft sounding of a small brass bell heralds the impending dawn.

We sit on our backpacks in the courtyard, checking our watches, waiting impatiently for Nima and our porters Purba, Harka and Kalle; they are late. I am responsible for the management of our trip and I'm irritated by this threat to our delicate schedule. At first light, there is no point in waiting any longer. "It's too late now," I say to the group, "I don't know what has happened, but we might as well go back to bed, our bus has already left the station." Dejected, they begin dragging their packs and duffels back into the guest lodge.

With a loud clang the courtyard gate slams open, and in wobbles Nima, my Sherpa guide, followed by two smiling and much more sober cohorts. "Good morning sah, is time we go chito-chito, quickly this way!" He slurs a request to his friends to take our bags. Overloaded, but grinning widely, they shuffle off towards the street. "I don't get it Nima, it's too late to leave now, the bus to Pokhara has gone! And where are the porters?" Taking my hand to steady himself, he laughs toxically: "Porters on Pokhara bus Tom-sah!" "Oh great! So where are WE going today?" I'm distressed at being angry with my old friend. "Tom-sah," he staggers in with milk-red eyes "Is no problem, I have idea, I know. All group you coming now!"

Warily, we follow his unsteady strides out the lane. At his urging we cram ourselves into three waiting tempo-taxis. Tempos are three-wheeled motorcycles. Enclosed with black bug-like canopies, they are notorious for their instability, excess exhaust and maniacal behaviour in narrow congested streets. A scramble of body parts and baggage, with Nima's

The next morning (which is to say 'in a few hours') it was sunny but still too foggy to set off for Qikiqtarjuaq, and there was also a lot of drifting sea ice in the bay. The outfitters checked their nets and came up with about sixty arctic char, which they later cleaned on the beach. Late in the afternoon we set off among the ice floes in brilliant sunshine to watch the scenery go by while we ate a huge meal of fresh char—easily one of the most spectacular and enjoyable boat rides of my life!

We spent about two days in the village, enjoyed great hospitality, bought local carvings, enjoyed more char, and met some great people. There is not space here to tell all the stories. You will have to go and make your own. But beware! You may find that the Arctic bug, once caught, will affect you for the rest of your life.

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Mera Peak (6,460 m), Khumbu, Nepal. Photo: Tom Carter.

friends bowing their farewell, we jerk, rattle and roar off, horns bleating, into the maze of Kathmandu.

Fog enshrouded market-goers appear spectre-like, laden with yokes of cauliflower and carrors. Many push bicycles stacked with baskets of chickens, bells jingling. Bidi-smoking butchers flay steaming carcasses of buffalo—hunks of meat piled high on the street. Impaled on spikes, goat heads grin

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demonically. Sari-clad women carry brass water pots on their shoulders. Dogs and pigs and sacred cows inter-mingle, eating garbage and excrement. From under shawls and scarves, from dim alcoves and latticed windows, the eyes, wide and dark, peer and question through the mist as we pass. "Who are you? Where are you going?" Unsettled,, I whisper: "I don't know, I really don't know."

Nima's head hangs back over the seat. The murky whites of his eyes roll about with the tempo's erratic sway. His mouth agape, he is moaning. I can hear distant kirtan singing and the ghostly blare of a conch shell. We must be passing beneath Swayambunath, the ancient hill-top Buddhist temple, where Sakyamuni is said to have taught, where the monkeys still swing in the trees.

Breaking out of the alleyways, our drivers open throttle on the ring road, the wide open thoroughfare encircling the city. All the crazily festooned trucks from India, all the packed buses with people hanging out of the doors and overwhelming the rooftops, the bullock carts, the rickshaws, droves of sheep and doko-basketed porters, impossibly burdened bicycles, the myriad smoking tempos. All this tremendous flow of humanity swarms with us; weaving and squeezing, two lanes swelling to eight, passing on all sides, the adrenaline taste of sure collisions avoided. A river of chaos, choking in thick black clouds of exhaust. The sun, a molten iron ingot, rises in fog behind leafless branches of trees, charcoal bones of dawn.

Amid the raucous din of horns screaming, in gridlock at the intersection with the only highway to India, I sit listening to Nima, moaning. Leaning closer I hear his moan is actually an OM: OM MANI PADME HUM. He is moaning his mantra: OM, the Jewel is here. HERE is the heart of the lotus, HERE in this moment-NOW!



Monks rising in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photo: Tom Carter.

Across the road on the roof of our Pokhara bus, Purba, Harka and Kalle, our missing porters, are waving wildly.

Two weeks later we have climbed into the dry desert glacier crispness north of the Himalaya. All around soar icy giants. Prayer flags snap in the wind. Sand, rock, ice and blue-black sky, everything is scraped bare to the essentials. Walking past the prayer wheels in Manang I spin the cylinders of brass as I usually do, going through the motions. But strangely now I find myself voicing clear and simple wishes.

That Nima and Ram Kumari, his pregnant wife, be healthy, I spin. That their baby be healthy, I spin again. That our group stay healthy, that we safely cross Thorung La pass, I spin and spin once more. That everyone be happy, I rapidly spin a whole section. I feel open and vulnerable in this high altitude. Something is cracking.

Nima comes walking past the wall spinning this wheel and that and stops by me bracing into the wind. "Nima, what do you ask for when you spin the wheels?"

"For good luck tom-sah."

"What is good luck Nima?" I ask.

He says: "I see Ram Kumari, she is healthy. I see my baby, he is healthy. I see group is all in good health, and crossing pass. I see my duty done. If this comes to be, that is good luck. If not: "Kegarne, "what can I do?"

"And you don't worry?" I ask.

"Never!" he laughs, "What comes to be is not just up to me."

We stand in wind and sun in the snow mountains. Far above, two golden eagles climb, in slowly ascending circles.



Prayer flags before Ama Dablam (6,900 m) and Kangtega (6,800 m) in the high Khumbu Valley of Nepal. Photo: Tom Carter.

# TARA-TREK TO THE EDGE

## COPPER CANYON (BARRANCA DEL COBRE, MEXICO)

Gil Parker

Compared to the Grand Canyon, the Barranca del Cobre, Mexico's Copper Canyon in Chihuahua province is little known, its few tourists touch only its peripheries. At the Ranger Office in Arizona's Grand Canyon Village there is a year long trail schedule and a clutch of hopefuls lolling about, waiting for no-shows to free up a space. The town of Creel is the focus of the Copper Canyon region, at the top of a network of not one, but four, river gorges. In Creel, there is no queue.

Most hear about Mexico's canyon because of the train. The Chihuahua al Pacifico Railroad was conceived in 1872, the roadbed built in the late thirties, but the railway was not completed until 1961. Still, it has been there a long time for us not to have noticed. Some have. They have viewed the canyons from the train which descends through the Sierra Madre Occidental over 37 major bridges and in a tortuous line through 86 tunnels. The route is puzzling because, emerging from a tunnel, one often sees the same scene from opposite sides of the train.

There are luxury trains with domed and air-conditioned coaches, bars and gourmet food, operated by South Orient Express and others. These trips often are packaged with hotel accommodation in Chihuahua, Divisadero and Los Mochis, and can include transportation from Tucson, Arizona or Mazatlan, Mexico. Sprinkled along the canyon rim in the more spectacular sections are hotels that cater to up-scale tourists, offering local entertainment, driving tours or guided hikes. Copper Canyon Lodges have hotels in Cusarare and Batopilas, the latter occupying a central city block. The Balderama chain operates several hotels including Rancho Posada and Posada Mirador at Divisadero, the best canyon overlook where the trains always stop for fifteen minutes. The railroad also carries a regular daily run from Los Mochis to Chihuahua and a second class alternative, following along about two hours behind. The latter is full of Mexicans and Tarahumaran natives from the region, a few bedraggled tourists, including Ron and me.

In Creel, we scan the "budget" hotel category in the Western Mexico Handbook, searching out a place suited to backpackers. Margarita's on the Square fits our bill perfectly. With breakfast and dinner included in the price, everyone shows up in the dining hall with the resulting mixing of nationalities. It's a test of our linguistics; I'm talking Russian to a guy on my left, Ron checks out his French on the girl on his right. I feel like a sixties' hippie among these adventurous young people.

They are hiking around the town, meeting with the Tarahumaran communities nearby, taking the mini-van tours to towns further down in the canyons, the same activities available to the high-end tourist, but with a little less comfort and paying a lot less money. till, we want to get into untravelled terrain, to meet the native people and see whether their sub-

sistence agriculture lifestyle persists, whether their reputed endurance, especially in long distance running, is a fact. (It should be, they call themselves "Raramuri", the runners.)

On a tip, we meet Arturo Gutierrez of Umarike Expediciones. Sitting in his bike rental shop in Creel he listened to our ramblings about exploring some of the remote canyons, about burro support and route-finding.

"What about just back-packing it? We would be a smaller, more flexible party," he notes. "Burros are not totally without problems, you know!"

So we do. Arturo says goodbye to his wife and little boy at the trailhead. By evening we are 15 miles out and 3,500 feet down in the Urique canyon. But the heat has got me; never have I been so defeated by the weather and the topography. Climbing out of the canyon next morning, we gain 2,000 feet or a terrible trail and make few miles, finally camping in a rancho corral wondering if we can maintain Arturo's schedule. He is fit; I'm carrying an extra 30 years.

As we make camp, a Tarahumaran man chases a burro through the corral and we leap to help him trap the little donkey. Once he throws the rope over its back the burro stops, stock-still. Still suffering from the dehydrating effects of the afternoon sun, our good fortune slowly penetrates our brains. We have just won the Copper Canyon lottery! Tordillo can carry our packs (and maybe a gallon of water) while his master, Albino, will help us find the route and the water springs. When Arturo returns from the spring he negotiates our deal with obscene haste.

This is an unexpected piece of luck. Over the next three days we meet many of Albino's relatives who help Arturo (and us) find the ancient trails around the arroyos, trails used by the natives carrying silver ore for the miners. While adding miles of walking, we save the deep descents into (and ascents out of) the gorges that the rivers have cut in this volcanic plateau.

Albino shows us that their famed endurance is not a myth. We sense his quiet and confident personality. Dark eyes gleaming, his mustache curls, showing a perfect white smile. With all of his needed gear slung from his shoulder in a plastic shopping bag he wonders about our heavy, hi-tech, and unnecessary, equipment. I guess him at 45 years old — he turns out to be 52.

In the north part of the canyons the men have adopted western dress: poly-cotton pants, plaid shirt and, for Albino, a white ball cap. But not running shoes. All Tarahumarans wear sandals made from tire treads cut square and slightly larger than the foot, held on with a single leather thong bound tightly around the ankle. The women adhere to traditional bright colored flared skirts and blouses with a kerchief tied around their long black hair. The younger ones invariably have a baby on their back, tied in a cloth sling around their

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necks. While they make no effort to avoid us, neither are they openly friendly. The men are more approachable, answering our "Kwira" (Hello) and often touching our hands lightly, palm-to-palm, their shy equivalent of shaking hands.

We feel close to these people who have been steadily pushed back into this inhospitable land. They carve rancheros out of steep hillsides, plant maize on exposed mesas and use the dry narrow ravines to herd goats, burros and sometimes a cow or two. They still migrate up and down the canyons, living at different levels to adapt to the harsh extremes of seasonal climate. We meet one venerable gent nearing the top of the plateau who tells Arturo that he is going down to the bottom tomorrow merely to "check on his orange grove."

Likely, their biggest challenge is still to come. As more foreigners visit the canyons and other Mexicans encroach on the best growing land, the Tarahumarans will find less freedom to maintain their unique culture and subsistence lifestyle. Those still in the canyons are not poor by their own standards. But, those who have moved into the towns to sell handicrafts to tourists have become the poor underbelly of Mexican society there. They will need help to adjust to our vastly different society.

Halfway to Batopilas we say goodbye to Albino and his burro who, for the first time since we met, raises his sad voice. We are touched. Now, we click off the miles along the narrowing blade of the plateau to its edge. From here we have to drop down; it feels like the "edge of the World."

These are not canyons of sedimentary layers carved linearly through a desert like the American Grand Canyon. The valleys are as deep or deeper, but there is growth nearly everywhere. On the plateau around 7,000 feet, a pine and Douglas fir forest supports an active logging industry. Near the bottom of the gorges, deciduous thorn bush and tropical botany dominates, with mainly oak trees in the transition zone. Summer rains regenerate life, but cause oppressive humidity in the bottoms. We have picked a challenging season, pre-monsoon May and June; some areas have seen no rain for months. Our water bottles still freeze at night on the plateau yet in the valley bottoms we suffer the heat, hiking in the afternoons. Next time, we will stick to the fall.

During our unexpectedly long and hot final day, we march along the "camino real" (the Royal Road of the Spanish) which is here a stone paved trail and there a combination with a stone aqueduct. It has been seven days, we are happy to end our journey in Batopilas. After a shower, we join Arturo for a celebratory beer at the Swinging Bridge Restaurant.

Many come to Batopilas in less arduous ways. Present day tours by van come from Creel and elsewhere on a road built about 1975, and Arturo will return that way tomorrow. The Spaniards arrived as early as the seventeenth century and immediately commenced silver mining, recovering chunks weighing over 400 pounds. The mining tradition proceeded under the Mexicans in the late eighteenth century and continues to this day, vastly reduced. American Alexander Shepherd established his company and refining facilities at his Hacienda San Miguel in Batopilas around 1880 and the buildings of the plant (closed in 1920) form an interesting study in brickwork.

Now on our own, Ron and I walk to Satevo to inspect the picturesque church and the village in the morning sunlight. We plan to travel only in the cool mornings while in the valley bottoms. That's the theory.

Next day we start for Urique, retracting the "camino real" to Cerro Colorado, then dozing the afternoon heat away by the river. Later, in the cooler evening, we are invited to camp in a Mexican's field at Los Terreros, a comfortable 1,600 feet up the valley.

The morning is spectacular, as we cross under the cliffs of Cerro El Mazano, but the trail is long and we each use three quarts of water to reach the top of the ridge. We are navigating on map and compass, a poor substitute for a knowledgeable Tarahumaran. But we guess right and find a trail with Tara-sandal prints and, two hours down the other side, there is water from a spring in a livestock paddock. The twelve hour day shoots our theory.

Down into the Urique valley bottom by noon, we collapse under a shade tree where we entertain periodic marijuana vendors, burros trains, and colorful Tarahumaran families trekking the valley. Urique village itself is less sophisticated than Batopilas, but a welcome trail's end, with showers in our modest hotel.

In the morning the decrepit (1975 vintage) bus struggles up the steep switchback road, stopping regularly to top up the radiator and give us the chance to capture the amazing panorama below. Back on the second class train at Bahuichivo, we complete our loop to Creel by nightfall. Dinner is on the table at old Margarita's; it's a pleasant homecoming for a couple over-aged hippies.

## DRY RIVER BED

Gil Parker

Two burros and a cow  
come down to drink at Rio Urique  
in midday, parching sun over  
rocks too hot to touch.

They stay on the margins, searching  
for something growing  
some shade from the driving heat  
of Barranca del Cobre.

And the few green trees and  
the steady cactus reach deep  
for moisture  
while I lie motionless  
knowing it is a matter of hours  
till the ridges will shade me.

Then, I will breathe again  
air that cools the lungs, and  
the land (with this puny river)  
will start to ready itself  
for yet another dry day.



# PERSUS

## A HISTORIC FIRST ASCENT

Marcus Aurelius  
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A bright dawn was just breaking out in the east as the five-man team of patricians led by Marcus Aurelius began its ascent of the Persus summit. Other members of the team included Alexius Briggsus, Viggorius Holmus, Antonius Pewsus, and Larrius Talaricus. This trip had been years in the making. Five years earlier to the day, an oracle had foretold that Marcus would lead such an ascent for the glory of the Roman Empire and had called upon him to begin the preparations.

After two years of contemplation, Marcus sent messengers to the four corners of the Empire to seek out the most capable physically and mentally to join him on the endeavour. After a lengthy process of selection too complicated to describe, the above-noted team members were selected and planning began in earnest.

Then two problems arose at once. First, how to climb the steep, icy slopes of the Persus—this rugged peak on the eastern frontiers of the Empire—without some implement for halting one's slide. Second, some members of the team were determined to bring along their battle swords, though not their heavy armour, "just in case." They had spent too many years fighting the Persian armies, so maybe they were expecting to encounter them even at the summit. Marcus, the genius problem-solver, resolved both problems with one stroke: expert blacksmiths would be called in and told to bend the top seven inches of each sword perpendicular to its edge. Striking the slope, it would arrest any fall; striking any adversary, it would be as effective as ever. Other problems were also solved in due time. Expert weavers were assigned to weave fine fabrics from goat's hair to be used for building expedition tents. They would shed water and would be light. The same fabric was also used to make oblong rectangular bags with shoulder straps for carrying food and equipment. Ropes and harnesses were similarly made of goat's hair.

At nineteen thousand feet, the summit looked forbidding, but members of the team were determined to reach it that day. So far every thing had gone smoothly. An army of plebeians had carried all the provisions to the main camp at the five-thousand-foot base of the mountain. From there on, members of the team, not wishing to tarnish their image as true patricians and in order not to harm the purity of their unassisted ascent, had decided to carry up all the provisions themselves. It had not been easy, since they had not been accustomed to carrying heavy loads on their backs. And there was the altitude. Six days and three trips to the fourteen-thousand-foot advance camp had helped to acclimatize them, and now they were ready for the assault on the summit

Marcus leads the way, navigating, followed by Alexius who is famed for his unsurpassed technical expertise. He is to protect the leader in case of a fall. Viggorius, radiating cheerful-

ness and strength, makes the group feel at ease on the slope; Larrius, an expert in efficiency in his regular occupation, is to advise the team on energy-saving strategies; Antonius, the most level-headed member of the team, is to do risk assessment.

The slope is steep and covered with hard packed snow. This is fine. The team is roped up, proceeding cautiously, and the spiked leather boots are offering good traction. But then, as the team traverses from the north to the east slope in order to follow a well-defined ridge towards the summit, there is sudden ice, and the leader has stepped onto it. He shouts "ICE," and the entire team and the leader, well-disciplined legionnaires that they are, slam their swords into the slope, thus narrowly avoiding a fall. Larrius, quick in mind and never short of humour, suggests the swords be called "ice swords" from now on. Everyone agrees. Antonius, assessing the risks the leader faces walking into uncharted terrain, suggests that the leader carry two ice swords, using them to alternate for anchoring and for advancing. It is an innovative idea and takes everyone by surprise. After all, who has heard of a patrician swinging two swords riding a horse in battle? But this is no ordinary battleground and everyone soon realizes the merit of the idea. And, fortunately, there are extra ice swords in the packs.

The team is now on the summit ridge and a brilliant sun is shining in a clear sky. A terrible cold wind is blowing though and Marcus notes a tiny patch of dark cloud on the horizon. He frowns, but keeps his thoughts to himself, not wishing to discourage anyone. The summit is still four thousand vertical feet ahead when the team encounters a wall of ice some eighty feet high. After they scout around, something of a chimney is located and Alexius, the team's expert in technical climbing, is asked to ascend the chimney and belay everyone else. This he does cautiously and meticulously and the team honours him by calling the wall "the Alexius Step."

It has taken some time to belay everyone up and the team is now feeling a little low on energy. Viggorius cheerfully suggests having lunch and explains that they are just low on fuel. It is wise counsel and everyone sits down for a feast of smoked fish, heavy dark bread and Greek dates for quick energy. In no time the team is on the move again, pushing ahead full speed, since by now the patch of dark cloud has become larger and is moving in the direction of the summit.

By four in the afternoon the team has reached the base of the summit and encounters a vertical wall of ice. No chimneys to climb through this time, and the southern exposure is no better. An emergency council is called by the leader and a collective decision is made to traverse the summit on the north side since, as Alexius has pointed out, it is colder on the north side and the ice slope rough and stable. It offers good traction, though everyone should use two ice swords as a precaution. The traverse is executed beautifully and the team reaches the

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west side of the summit from where a moderate icy ridge leads directly to the top.

There is jubilation at the summit. National anthems of nearly every constituent nation of the Roman Empire are sung and congratulations exchanged. The sun is still shining, and the plains of Babylonia and Asia Minor can be seen in the distance. No one wants to leave, but Marcus, mindful of the dark clouds which threaten to envelop the sun shortly, directs the team to leave the summit at once and leads the way.


The north wall of the summit is traversed again and the team is moving with haste down the main ridge as the dark clouds envelop the sun and the wind picks up speed. And it gets much darker suddenly. Marcus, with perfect night vision (he must have been a cat in an earlier life), tells the group to follow him single-file, roped, as he retraces his steps back towards the advance base camp. Several hours later, in the dark and now howling winds, he calls out "halt." He is two feet from the sheer edge of the Alexius Step. Carefully he searches out for the chimney in the dark and, having found it, suggests the order of the ascent. Alexius will belay everyone again and Marcus, the featherweight of the group at 125 pounds,

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will descend first and secure the base. To ensure Alexius's safe descent, an ice sword is pushed deep in the hard snow pack just above the wall, anchoring the rope.

No sooner has the team cleared the Step than a horrific blizzard hits the slope. The whiteout obliterates all clues to the route. Even Marcus is at a loss how to proceed. There is a long silence as the leader contemplates his choices. Then the booming voice of the oracle is heard at a distance in front, penetrating the earth and the sky: "You have fulfilled my prophesy, my sons; now follow my voice to safety." As if made of one body, the team moves at once in the direction of the voice, and continues moving for another three hours, descending. Suddenly there is no blizzard anymore; none has reached this lower altitude. Some time passes and, then, Marcus points his hand forward in the dark and addresses the team: "Do you see that darker spot a hundred feet ahead? That is our advance camp."

*Editor's Note: Marcus Aurelius lives in Victoria, Canada, in his new reincarnation as Alan Danesh.*



## IN MEMORY OF DAVE TANSLEY

We would like to thank the ACC members of the Vancouver Island Section for the many kind messages and condolences extended to us after Dave's death. We were also deeply touched by the number of people who came to his service. Apparently there were close to two hundred people. This is not a very easy time for us, but knowing that people care is comforting.

Three Christmases ago Dave gave me a book of Tagore's poetry. A friend pointed out the following:

*Death is not extinguishing the light  
but merely putting out the lamp  
because the dawn has come.*


Yours sincerely,

Cynthia, Caroline, Rowena Tansley and Shih Chin Yeh.



## AROUND THE NEXT CORNER CLIMBER DAVE TANSLEY

We were climbing on skis and skins, the first day of our back-country week near the Lillooet Ice Cap. Dave was headed across the plateau, peering in vain up into the cloud cover. Most of our party was above him, angling for Dolphin Peak. Our calls to Dave he ignored, until finally we heard his plaintive answer, "I just want to see what's around this corner." The incident from April '92, was recalled by Murrrough O'Brien, one of our 'group of seven' on the trip and it grasps the essence of Dave Tansley. Unfortunately, low cloud ceilings prevented the helicopter from flying our party onto the Ice Cap, and thus, from attempting the full traverse. More than the rest of us, Dave, as leader, really wanted to make the whole Lillooet traverse.



On November 18, 1999, Victoria climber, David John Tansley died of a heart arrhythmia. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia, who was our newsletter editor, even before it was called the "Bushwhacker," and by daughters, Rowena and Caroline. Rowena attended an ACC Youth Camp in the Rockies, supported by our Section. Caroline has become an expert musician, performing on the French horn on several occasions. Jacqueline, from Taiwan, has lived with the Tansleys for two years and, as one of the family, deeply shared their loss. Dave

was only 55, but he had a tremendous impact on our Section and on those of us who were his close friends.

Dave was a structural engineer who emigrated from Britain in 1969, working for Sir William Halcrow in Vancouver. Four years later he joined Willis, Cunliffe Tait & Co. (now Delcan) and we worked together there for 5 years. He was well known in the design and construction industry in Victoria. An engineer builds many monuments in his professional life; the pedestrian bridge over Douglas Street, carrying the Galloping Goose Trail, will always be "Dave's bridge" for me. At the time of his death, he was a partner in the consulting firm, Graeme & Murray, where he had worked as a structural engineer since 1986.

Dave was a member of the YM/YWCA and ran or swam daily at noon. A regular entrant in the early Basil Parker "hill-and-dale" cross country races, he graduated to the Sri Chinmoy triathlon where his swimming ability was an advantage.

His long reach and powerful arm strength also served me well in the mountains as he led steep rock pitches on Mount Slesse near Chilliwack. On Mount Colonel Foster in Strathcona Park, we climbed the long snow and rock route to the south summit. We had started late; this was the beginning of

Dave's reputation for epic trips and late returns. We arrived back at our camp on the gravel flats about 7 PM. With no flash-light, we walked through the dark night, feeling the trail with our feet, out the Elk River Valley to the car. Four hours on the Island Highway brought us to Victoria at 4 am, but we showed up, on time, in the office next morning. Not much work was done on that Monday.

With Paul Erickson, we climbed Mount Garibaldi near Squamish in a long 20 hour push from Victoria. On Brohm Ridge, we reached Warren Glacier, then tried to circumvent the bergschrund on the north ridge, unsuccessfully. Dave was almost blown off the rocks, but finally gave it up. Paul noticed a snow bridge that solved our problem, but it was very late to be still going up! It was a surreal scene on the summit at 9:30 AM with red skies over the Island and Mount Tantalus snagging clouds. Then, we plunge-stepped down the glacier in a blizzard following winds, across endless snowfields through the pitch black of a lunar eclipse to our tent, where we flopped, totally beat at 1 AM. It was an experience to ruin, or to solidify, any friendship! I guess you know what it did for ours.

In the Mount Waddington region with Rick Eppler and Charles Rowley, we climbed three peaks off the Tellot Glacier. But Dave tried, unsuccessfully, to convince us also to climb Tellot Spire, with its exposed granite slabs hanging over a long, vertical drop to the Cataract Glacier. We allowed him Tellot Peak as a consolation.

The experiences that I shared with Dave were similar to those of many other members of our Section. He was consistently a leader; every year he had several trips on the schedule. As Gerta Smythe wrote in 1992, "A Dave Tansley trip! ..... His trips are always great adventures. Sure enough, Mt. Tricouni was just that."

The ski week in the Adamants north of Rogers Pass whetted his appetite for back-country skiing. Every year, Dave

planned a week-long ski trip deep into the wilderness: the Pemberton Ice Cap, the Spearhead Traverse behind Blackcomb and the Manatee Range near the Lillooet Ice Cap, where he had "just wanted to see around the next corner."

While he was focused on reaching the climbing objective at hand, Dave was, nevertheless, a safe and reliable climber. John Pratt remembers their exploration of Mount Robie Reid and the complex and difficult route to Mount Judge Howay. Dave and John later climbed Judge Howay on a challenging line. Dave credited Kris Holm, with a brilliant crux lead, done in stocking feet. "Dave had all those qualities you'd want in a mountaineer," remembers John, "tough, a great 'goer', imperturbable, safe and cautious."

Dave was not just a "peak bagger." With his daughters, Rowena and Caroline, he led a trek from Bedwell Sound on the Island's outer coast up the Bedwell to Buttle Lake. This trip and others that he made with "the girls" were the stories he told to me while we walked Sunday mornings in the Sooke Hills. We all extend our sympathy and support to Cynthia, Rowena, Caroline and Jacqueline.

*"...life's tests are subtle, and sudden.  
A different quality is needed to learn its lessons.  
Can we climb the route we see,  
avoid bergschrund, crag and tumbling serac  
with trusted partners to share the rope  
and a summit well defined?"*

—from "Last Ascent", Gil Parker

The Alpine Club is receiving donations in Dave's memory to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, earmarked "Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt." Mail to Alpine Club, c/o 3449 Blue Sky Place, Victoria, v9c 3N5 or direct to wcwc at 507 - 620 View Street, Victoria, v8w 1J8.