



THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

2000



Rob Macdonald on the NW ridge of Mt. Whympere in April, 2000.
Sandy Briggs

Table of Contents

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

MT. COLONEL FOSTER MAIN SUMMIT	5	Peter Rothermel
STILL WET BEHIND THE EARS	8	Michael Dillistone
MT. HAL	10	Lindsay Elms
STEVENS PEAK	11	Sandy Briggs
PATERNAL PAIR PONDER PARENTHOOD ON SEPTIMUS	11	Angelicco Lopez
ARROWSMITH 2000	14	Peter Rothermel
TSITIKA MOUNTAIN	14	Lindsay Elms
RAMBLING WITH RUDY	15	Peter Rothermel
THE REAL QUEEN PEAK	21	Mike Hubbard
ALBERT EDWARD SKI TRIP	21	Pat O'Brien
CAT'S EARS PEAK	22	Lindsay Elms
PETE'S ROUTE - ARROWSMITH LOST GULLEY	23	Peter Rothermel
MT. ELLIOT	24	Lindsay Elms
BARAD-DÛR AND THE STONE TROLLS	25	Sandy Briggs
MT. JULIET - SHOVELGATE GULLY	26	Lindsay Elms

COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

AMISKWI YO-YO AT ITS BEST!	28	Susan Allen
IDEA 2000 ON MT. MATIER	29	David Panofsky & Katherine Brandt-Wells
TETRAHEDRON PROVINCIAL PARK SKI TRIP	31	Paul Herbert
MT. CARR TRIP REPORT	32	Don Cameron
MT. JIMMY JIMMY AND MT. PHILLIPS	33	John Pratt
CHILLIWACK LAKE - A PERFECT WEEKEND	34	Jules Thomson
ELLERSLIE LAKE	35	Albert Hestler
ALIENS ON MOUNT WOOLLEY	35	Doug Hurrell

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

MT. OLYMPUS	38	Mike Hubbard
COLORADO, CRESTONE & KICKED OUT	39	Rob Macdonald
MT. CONSTANCE	40	John Pratt
MT. SHUKSAN	41	Charles Turner
WE MET AT THE CROSSROADS	41	Katherine Brandt-Wells
A MAY BAKER	44	Leslie Gordon
U.S.A. SOUTHWEST	45	Gil Parker
MT. SHASTA - SOLO 2	46	John Pratt
BAKER ON BAKER	47	a personal account

DISTANT OBJECTIVES

LOS VOLCANS DE MEXICO	50	Tom Carter
THE UPS AND DOWNS OF KANGCHENJUNGA	51	Doug Synnot
SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY	52	Tak Ogasawara
BAFFIN 2000 PHOTO ESSAY	54	Claire Ebendinger
MONT BLANC	55	Katherine Brandt-Wells
SUNDAY - MONDAY ON MONDAY - TUESDAY	58	Russ Moir

THE ISLAND BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL
PUBLISHED ANNUALLY BY THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

DESIGN & LAYOUT by Michael Kuzyk

COMPILED & EDITED by Rob Macdonald & Larry Talarico

ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION
2000-2001 EXECUTIVE

CHAIR - Tom Hall
SECRETARY - Richard Keltie
TREASURER - Rick Eppler
MEMBERSHIP - Jules Thomson
NATIONAL CLUB - Gerta Smythe
TRIP SCHEDULE - Catrin Brown
FMCBC - Russ Moir

BUSHWHACKER EDITORS

Viggo Holm
Michael Kuzyk
Rob Macdonald
Larry Talarico

EQUIPMENT MANAGER - Greg Gordon
LIBRARIAN - Judith Holm

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Barbara Baker
Su Castle
Don Morton
Derek Wells

FRONT COVER

Tak Ogasawara on the northeast peak of Mt. Colonel Foster, Landslide Lake and Mt. Elkhorn in the distance.
Peter Rothermel

BACK COVER

Camp in June Valley, Baffin Island - Claire Ebendinger



ISSN 0822-9473

COPYRIGHT 2001 ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

Mt. COLONEL FOSTER—MAIN SUMMIT FIVE TIMES LUCKY

Peter Rothermel

The plan for this summit bid was hatched the previous year during an aborted attempt on Mt. Rosseau, due to bad weather. Tak turned to me and casually asked, "Do you want to climb Mt. Colonel Foster with me next May?" and I thought, "This guy hardly knows me. Is he serious? If he only knew how often I've failed to make summits... sure", I said.

May came around and the trip was called off due to avalanche hazard. We then rescheduled for the first week in July... should be warm & dry then.

The main summit of Colonel Foster has a reputation as a hard nut to crack and while I'd been to its southeast summit a couple of times, that's a hike compared to doing the main summits. Am I up to it?... Could I do it?... Was I biting off more than I could chew?... Would I freeze up on some exposed spot, to the disgust of my partners?

On June 30th Tak Ogawara, Dean Williams, Tom Carter and myself met at the Elk River trail head and started off on our nine hour approach with heavy packs. The weather was somewhat unsettled, with the summits shrouded in cloud, yet it looked as if it might lift.

There's a well known saying, "You don't know a mountain until you rub your nose on it"... Well, on this trip, I guess

we had our noses rubbed in it!

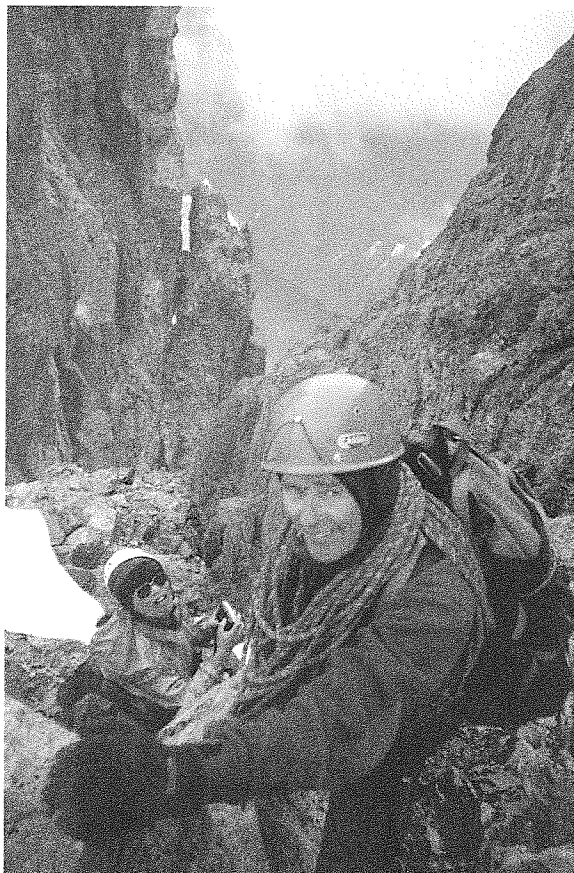
That evening we made camp on the shoulder above Landslide Lake, at the base of the 1946 landslide still very evident today. Sort of makes one brood on when and where the next big one will happen.

The next morning, (July 1st) we awoke at five for an early start and soon found ourselves cramponing up the crunchy thirty five degree snow slope in the couloir between the North Tower and the North West summit. There was a bergschrund, but it was mostly filled in, yet required a fifteen foot move up vertical névé. Past this the slope steepened to about forty five degrees and the wind started to pick up a bit.

According to Doug Goodman's excellent route description, we were looking for a rock ledge to exit, yet we had spent so much time searching, we were way behind schedule. Dean turned back here due to a previous foot injury that was beginning to bother him and the rest of us decided that although we

wouldn't make the summit that day, we would at least go as far as we could and do a recy trip for another try later.

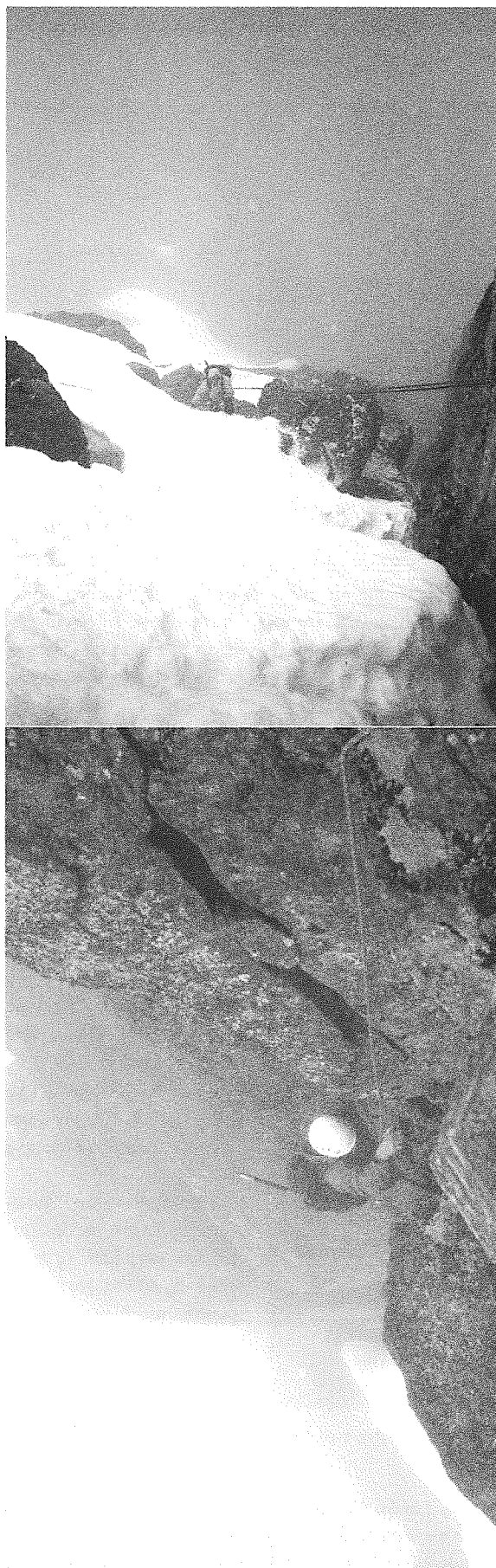
Tak led up a short pitch of low fifth class and then we scuttled along a ledge to an up sloping ramp, that Tom led. We decided to put in protection on this ramp, not because



Tak and Tom on the bivy ledge with Landslide Lake in the background. Photograph: Peter Rothermel.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS



Top: Tom rappelling in the July snowstorm. Photograph: Peter Rothermel.
Bottom: Peter on a mid-5th class pitch in August. Photograph: Tak Ogasawara.

of the difficulty, but because of the exposure. At the top of this ramp we found the 'bivy ledge', big enough for a bus. Next up another snow filled couloir and, 'What's this?... It's snowing?... So much for that weak front!' Sure enough we were celebrating Canada Day with a snow storm. Then Tak led on to another pitch, up an angled sort of crack with an outward leaning wall conspiring to throw you off balance out and off. At the top we were near the summit of the North West peak and about time to turn back. Tak & Tom decided to take a look around the next corner and I opted to sit and eat and get warm. I knew all they'd see was white, since the snow had accumulated to about an inch and a half and wasn't showing any sign of abating. This was Tak's fourth try at this mountain and his high point.

When we went down, all our hand and foot holds were covered in slippery snow, so were forced to do five rappels during which everything became all iced up, but my new three season tent held up to it. The only way to describe morning is, "When hell freezes over." It was blowing a frigid thirty miles an hour or more, everything was frozen solid and the mountain had us in a total rout. We hurriedly packed up and headed down. Once out of the wind and on the sunny south facing snow slope, we were boiling hot and peeling off layers. Talk about extremes!

Down at Iceberg Lake, Tak looked up at the summits above and shouted at the top of his lungs, "I hate this mountain!... Mountain I hate you!", but the way he would longingly gaze at the peaks was more in obsessed rapture than hate. And another nine hours hike out and a promise to try for the summit another time... September?... next year?

Tak had a trip planned on the Alpine Club schedule to Mt. Rosseau, for the first week in August that nobody, except me, had signed up for, so Tak said "Let's do Colonel Foster instead. We'll bring bivy bags and go light" (or maybe he was just tired of sharing a tent with my snoring and farts). So on August 4th we found ourselves on the shoulder once again (after another nine hour hike and my pack still didn't feel any lighter).

Tom had business commitments and Dean couldn't make it due to a broken collar bone (he's had a rough year), so it was just Tak and me. This was to be Tak's fifth try at summiting this mountain and his last on the Alpine Club's "Island Qualifier" list of peaks. The next morning we got an early start on rock, with warm clear skies. I had a bounce in my step that I hadn't felt for a couple of decades. The Gods were smiling on us at last, the stars were finally aligned and I almost broke out into a song, until I realized I can't sing.

Then onto snow and when we arrived at the bergschrund, it was big and black and had a raging river at the bottom, judging by the sound. Luckily there was a tongue of snow licking at the rock on the right and we snuck across (more about that tongue of snow later). The rock was loose and slimy, so we belly crawled up to the upper snow field and put our crampons on. I was planning on using every pointy thing in my arsenal to keep me from being sucked into that black hole of a bergschrund.

After what seemed a long time on snow we found another easy bridge onto the warm dry rock. I led the first low fifth

class pitch, in fact Tak let me lead all the roped pitches that day... hey... wait a minute! It was all the same up as last time, except for the weather, and we were at our previous high point by 9:00 instead of noon. It was cooking hot in the sun without a hint of breeze, but luckily we found a bit of snow to augment our dwindling water supply. Soon we were into new territory and traversed around, just under the north west summit and got a view of the next peak. The main summit? No, it was the north east peak and we would have to traverse up and over it to get sight of the main summit. Down we dropped into one of the loosest rottenest gullies I've ever been in and crumbled our way down to the col between the NW and N.E. Summits. Here we found a huge chock stone wedged in the notch of the col. Underneath was a hole or portal that led to a view of Landslide Lake framed in rock.

A scramble up a series of ramps and ledges brought us to a large detached block with a chock stone that we squeezed under and then followed up fairly easy slopes to a tilted slab leading to the NE Summit. This slab wasn't long or steep, yet was exposed enough that my hands and feet felt like cat claws screeching across a tilted chalk board. There we were on our next summit and there was plenty of room and lots of snow to slake our thirsts, so we stopped for lunch and had a fine view of the next peak... the main summit. It was so comfortable in the warm

sun, and we were so well fed, that we fell asleep. After our nap it was time to head for the top. The main summit's not a pretty picture. It much resembles an armor plated dinosaur and has all the allure of petting a porcupine, but it was ours.

We headed for a gendarme or minor summit along a narrow cat walk. You could look down to the left, three thousand feet to Iceberg Lake and right to a tarn filled valley almost as far down. After about three or four bold steps, gravity and wisdom took effect and I dropped to all fours and crept across. Then down the loosest rottenest gully I've ever been in. Each and every pebble looked like it was the key stone holding the entire mountain together. We tiptoed down and I think we even whispered so as to not create any vibration. At the col between the northeast and main summits we turned up for our final leg.

Onward and upward we went, over some slabs, then up a series of ledges. I was up a couple of moves at one spot and the only hand hold above seemed loose, so I backed down and opted out to lead it roped. Good thing, because, when I

got back up, the hold came off in my hand. Then Tak scrambled ahead and I heard him whooping and hollering. Either he was falling off or he had found something good. Yep, he was on the summit alright.

We had a second lunch (adrenalin makes me hungry), while we read through the summit register. I had brought a new tube and waterproof book, but they weren't needed as Doug Goodman had put a good one up there a couple of years ago. We were the only party in the register for 2000, to date, and Lindsay Elms & Peter Ravensbergen and Chad Rigby & Chris Lawrence were the only entries for 1999. The few years before that, in the book, saw only two or three ascents a year. Pretty quiet for the island's premier mountain One can appreciate the audacious climbs of the first to explore this mountain. My hat's off to Walsh, Perry, Bajan and the other first ascenders and route finders.

Finally time to leave. We did a rappel to get down to the chock stone flake and another to reach the divide between the Main and NE Summits. Then up that grotty slope full of rubble, sort of like walking up the down escalator. On the northeast peak we stopped for another food break and to melt some snow to slake our parched throats. A couple of rappels brought us down to the chock stone col, then up the next gully full of choss.

Instead of traversing around the northwest peak, we went over it and did a long rappel over loose rock to get to our previous trip's

high point. Down climbing the steep snow was probably the grippiest move of the whole day (so far). All I could think of was the bergschrund and the churning maelstrom at the bottom. If you fell into that gaping maw, you'd probably just disappear and wouldn't melt out until the next millennium. With those cheery thoughts running around inside my head I planted my ice axe and crampons extra firmly into the slope. It took forever to get down to the rock next to the bergschrund.

On the rock we set up a rappel on an iffy horn and rappelled down the loose stuff we had belly crawled up on our ascent. We found a previous party's cruddy old sling on an even worse horn the size of a pimple. Unless you pulled down on it, the sling would pop off. The tongue of snow we had snuck across, on our way up, was melted away from the rock and was too far to jump, so there was no choice. We would have to go down the steep slimy moat and use the iffy sling and horn, as there was nothing better and we were out of webbing. I tossed the rope and one strand wrapped itself around the tongue of snow. I tried pulling gently, but it



Tak on the NE peak with Elkhorn in the distance. Photo: Peter Rothermel.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

was stuck. I tried yanking hard and it just dug in deeper and wouldn't budge (temper, temper). There was no choice but to see if we could rappel down far enough to reach the shallow end of the moat, then both get a downward purchase on the rope to force it free. Down I went and halfway was stuck!... No more rope... Too steep and slimy to down climb... Rappel on a single strand?... What if the stuck rope slipped?... Prussic back up to Tak?... then what? Leaning against the wet rock in my thin shirt, I'm soaked to the skin... It's getting dark... Damn, what an awful way to end a beautiful day... with an epic.?. One more frustrated yank on the rope... and it came free! After we rapped down Tak said, "Well, I guess we had to have some excitement on the climb."

Down at the moat's shallow end we got out our head lamps and crampons. Shivering, I put a fleece and rain shell over my wet shirt. On with gloves and over the top. Yikes! Another bergschrund! We had to traverse across, only four or five feet above it. God, how I hate those holes! Finally we were down on easy ground and walked back to camp with the dark sky filled with stars and a sliver of moon above.

Sixteen and a half hours return... a long day... but it feels good. Warm breeze, food, hot tea... even the mosquitoes aren't bothering us. The Gods are positively beaming. That night I slept deep with my face bare to the stars and to the sunrise the next morning. We ate a leisurely breakfast and packed up slowly, then headed down the snow slope, then bushwhacked to Iceberg Lake. I didn't mention the bushwhack before? It's nasty, but don't take my word for it, go there and see it for yourself!

Down at the lake Tak looked up at the mountain and hollered, "We got you f_ _ _er!" Then a long hike out with many naps along the way. While we walk, we talk about spending a couple of weeks in the Waddington range next summer and I start thinking... am I up to it?... can I do it?... Am I biting off more than I can chew?... Will I freeze up on some exposed spot, to the disgust of my partners?

The bottom line... we had extraordinary weather, on an outstanding mountain, and I had an excellent partner.

Participants: Tak Ogasawara, Dean Williams, Tom Carter, Peter Rothermel

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

STILL WET BEHIND THE EARS

Michael Dillistone

The scheduled weekend approached with the promise of bright sunshine and blue skies. So we decided to move the trip to the next weekend. The weather didn't suit our stated objective: to see just how wet we could get (or how dry we could stay). Yes, this was the great DWR (durable water resistance) challenge, disguised as a trip to north face of Cats Ears Peak. The basic concept was to take four intrepid bushwhackers, with well-used Gore-Tex jackets, treat two of the jackets with spray-on DWR products, one with a wash-in product and leave one jacket with nothing at all (as a baseline) and thrash through the bush in rain and snow for an undetermined period. Simple enough.

The next weekend the weather looked promising. Rain splattered the windshield on the drive up to Port Alberni. A feeling of anticipation was building in the pit of my stomach. Before I could have second thoughts we put on our gear and began the trudge up the logging road. So far so good. The rain was beading on my jacket. We checked to see if the local prospector was in residence but found no one at home. He probably had enough sense to be in a bar in Port Alberni. The rain continued to come down steadily. Phase one, the logging road, came to an end. All the participants reported satisfactory results.

The second phase was the start of the bushwhacking. Onward and upward. Crashing and thrashing through the second growth. At some point during this phase, I started to get wet. Not just from sweating but a feeling that water was seeping around my shoulders and down my back. By the time we stopped for lunch we were wringing out our hats and gloves. Now this is what it's all about. Up into the old growth, climbing, postholing. Greg and Selena alternated the lead (where do they get the stamina?). Somewhere along

the way the droplets of water gradually changed into white flakes. Falling silently onto our jackets, melting, seeping. The water didn't seem to beading on my jacket any longer.

Visibility was limited above tree line but we seemed to be right on route. Out from the cover of trees the fresh snow and avalanche debris didn't slow our progress or dampen our spirits. The top layer of snow on some of the slopes on the way up looked like small round Styrofoam balls on top of an icy compact layer. The snow continued to fall. Hmmm. Time to look for a place to set up the tents. We traversed across a slope and climbed to a spot between two avalanche chutes and shoveled out a tent platform.

What followed can best be called the tent pole incidents:

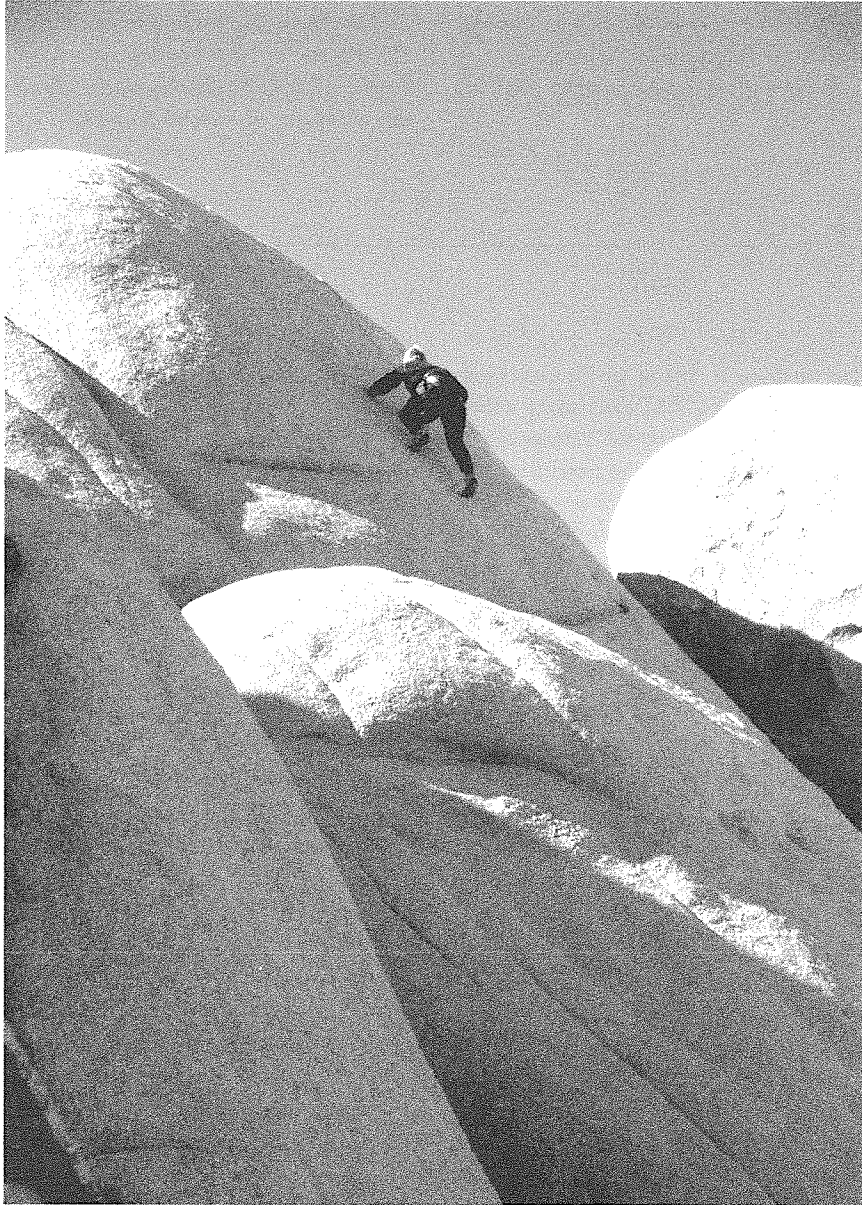
Greg: "Where are the tent poles?" Selena: "What tent poles? I thought you had them!"

Greg: "No, I gave them to you to carry." Selena: "No you didn't."

Greg: "I thought I did. Check your pack." Selena: "I'm sure you didn't. Oh here they are."

The snow continued to fall and we all breathed a sigh of relief. Then Ang and I started to set up our tent. I turned my back for a moment and heard Ang gasp. I turned around just in time to see one of our tent poles shooting down the slopes from whence we came. OOPs. We looked at each other and Ang elected to go and look for it. Thankfully it was retrieved in true heroic fashion and we settled into our pleasant abodes and changed into dry clothes. Phase two had proved the undoing of the DWR. We were wet.

Snow continued to fall through the night. By morning there was a foot of fresh snow. When we were shoveling the tents out I asked if any one else had felt a rumbling in the night and heard what sounded like a group of Harley Dav-



VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY WINNER

Julie Henderson climbing at Joshua Tree.
Rick Eppler

idsons driving by. Nope. Guess it was something I ate. Wait there it is again! Coming from the area that appears to be our route! We stopped shoveling and exchanged knowing glances. Avalanche. I guess we won't be summiting this time. We put on our jackets, now thoroughly DWR bereft and packed up. On the way down we took our time digging test pits and testing the slopes. The snow was still falling. Selena led the way, wallowing from group of trees to group of trees. Some of the avalanche chutes on the way down looked like a bulldozer had sheared everything off in its path (must have been the Hell's Angels driving those Harleys). Back through the old growth, down to the logging road. Somewhere along the way the snow changed to rain and I stopped checking my jacket.

Back at the vehicle we dumped our sodden clothes in big garbage bags. Just as we were changing into dry clothes the heavens really opened up as if to say "you foolish mortals can't hope to stay dry". Then I had moment of insight. One of those moments of clear thought or vision that comes out of the blue. Maybe we were missing the point. Maybe this wasn't about getting wet or trying to stay dry. Maybe this was about friendship and having fun with other people who love doing crazy things too. I wanted to take my clothes off and dance around in the joy of the moment. But I didn't.

Thanks to Greg Gordon for organizing and leading the trip and to Mademoiselle Selena Swets and Monsieur Angelico Lopez for sharing in this adventure. Maybe we are all still a little "wet behind the ears."

MT. HAL

Lindsay Elms

May 25

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

"It's got to be just up there—it can't be too far away. I just wish we could see something!" Val was looking with a do-we/don't—we look in her eyes from the bottom of the last snow slope of what should lead to the summit of Mt. Hal. "Well it is going to have to wait until next week or you're going to miss your 3 pm appointment." I said. We turned around and skied back through the basins and then down the East Ridge to the end of the logging road where my truck was parked. As we drove back to Courtenay we glanced over our shoulders back up to the Beaufort Range and saw that the cloud level had dropped considerably and they looked dark and ominous.

Located at the southern end of the Beaufort Range, Mt. Hal was the only peak I hadn't been up. Twice in the last couple of weeks I went up Mt. Joan (Hal's sister) which is just to the north of her brother, but on both of those occasions I never saw anything because of poor visibility. Was I ever going to have clear weather at this end of the range?

The following Wednesday evening I phoned Val to see if she wanted to go back up Hal. Friday was out of the question, however, she did have Thursday free again until 3 pm and this time she said she could leave an hour earlier.

The next morning Val arrived at 7:30 am and we drove back up the logging roads in beautiful weather. From the end of the road we put our skis on and skied back up through the clear-cuts and onto the East Ridge. This time the snow was firm from the cool temperatures the last two nights. The edges of our skis bit into the snow like a knife in butter and the skins gripped well and didn't ball-up from wet snow like last week.

We worked our way up the ridge to the edge of the upper basins and this time we could see the summit of Mt. Hal. It was so close to where we had stopped last week, but we consoled ourselves with the fact that this week we had the extra time and the weather was cooperative.

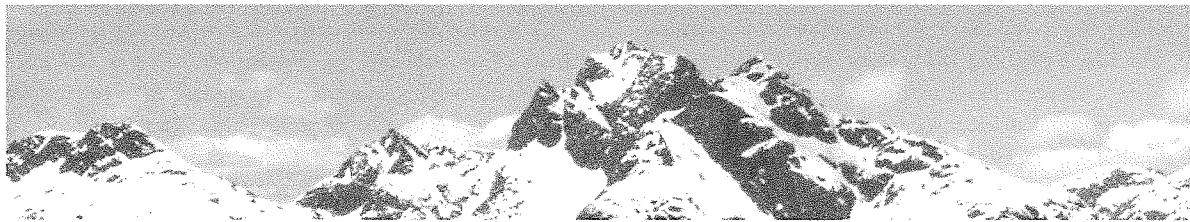
We skied through the basin and across to our previous highpoint. Fifteen minutes later we were on top looking through the summit register and it was only 10:50. It had

taken us two and a quarter hours to ski up. We noted that we were the first on the summit for a couple of years and the few ascents that had been made were from logging roads high on the Port Alberni side. One ascent (at least they called it an ascent) was by helicopter.

We had an early lunch and enjoyed the warmth of the sun while looking down on Port Alberni and the Alberni Inlet, across to Mt. Klitsa and then around to Nine Peaks, Big Interior, Septimus and Rosseau and finally the Cliffe and Comox Glaciers. Unfortunately, Val had to be back in Courtenay for 3 pm so it was back into the skis and out to the truck.

The Beaufort Range is a great alternative to Paradise Meadows and Forbidden Plateau/Mt. Beecher for spring skiing and most of the peaks have easy access. Mount Hal is accessed from the lights at the Cook Road/Island Highway intersection. After turning off the highway take a sharp left and follow the gravel road to a fork. Take the lower road (not the Chef Main) and follow it back towards Rosewall Creek. There are two bridges that cross Rosewall Creek. Just before the second bridge, the road on the right heads up towards the trail to Mt. Joan and Mt. Curran. To get to Mt. Hal cross the second bridge and follow the road (which heads to Horne Lake) for about another 1.5 kilometres. A road on the right (with a gate) ascends to about the 1,000 metre level, however, it looks like they are getting ready to continue logging in the area so hiking in the area in summer may be problematic.

Participants: Val O'Neill and Lindsay Elms.



STEVENS PEAK

Sandy Briggs

May 13–15

Stevens Peak (1511 m) is about 4 km south of Mt. Bate and had caught my eye as a possible exploratory ski trip during several visits to the area. We approached from the Head Bay (Tahsis) road via east Canton main, from which the objective, glistening in its late spring snow cover, looked beautiful but distant. After at least five hours of hiking, including most of the logging road and some bush, we arrived at a snow terrace at 720 m on the lower east ridge. We set off a bit late (after 8 am) the next morning. Our efforts of the previous day were rewarded with jaw-dropping views in which the southern aspect of Mt. Bate figured prominently. The story is long, but I will make it short. John, on snowshoes and very fit, pressed on and achieved the summit. The rest of us, long past our 'soft' turn-around time, satisfied ourselves with the views from the approach ridge. Unfortunately, during the descent and within 200 m of the tents, John slipped and badly broke his ankle. Hinrich and Julie went out that evening for help, and the helicopter evacuation took place early Monday morning.

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Melanie Cottet-Puinel, John Damaschke, Julie Deslippe, Hinrich Schaefer, Peter Sutherland, James Taylor.



VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

Top: Mt. Bate from the South ridge of Stevens Pk. Above: Returning from ski trip to Stevens Pk. Photographs by Sandy Briggs.

PATERNAL PAIR PONDER PARENTHOOD ON SEPTIMUS

Angelicco Lopez

July 1–3

Retreat was not an option. If Mike backed off this crux, the consequences would morph from being merely injurious to borderline absurdity. Despite the risk, Mike pressed on using a mix of bold thrusts and ballet-like movements to negotiate the exposed, knife-edge precipice that imposed the final, seemingly insurmountable obstacle to success. Did he make it?

YES—was the answer! His wife Caroline would grant us permission to use the car for the entire long weekend! In rug-rat rich families like Mike's and mine, often the toughest barrier for gaining the summit, is gaining the family vehicle for a period greater than one day. Tense and protracted arbitration resulted in Penny's (my wife's) cooperation and the birth of a workable solution that gave both

families access to a vehicle for the duration of our proposed expedition. All this just to get out the door! Just one of the many joys of the family mountaineer-wannabe! We would not trade it away, however. Not even for an MEC shopping spree!

The typically variable Strathcona weather was our next worry with the forecast calling for clearing skies with occasional showers. Or was it showers with occasional clearing? Visions of our March 2000 Cat's Ears trip flashed before our eyes. That trip swiftly degenerated into the ideal venue for continuous DWR testing and analysis where all the test products failed equally miserably. There were also more disturbing flashbacks of our Wedge Mountain trip with Russ last May where an overnight storm produced a sodden, pan-

cake-flat tent containing a pair of inadvertent snorkelers.

The Island Highway made short work of that tiresome drive to Campbell River getting us there in about three hours causing us to reconsider our stance against the concretization of the island. With the early arrival, we were able to do a quick recy of Crest Creek Crag and found a wealth of fine climbs and another potential club climbing trip screaming to be done. Hopefully Selena can be convinced to lead this trip and show us the way to all the secret buttresses and cracks that she finessed during the Y2K Heathen's Week. We spent a comfy night at the Ralph River Campground disturbed only by the Park Police trying to get cash off of us. Who could have known? Everyone takes debit cards now, don't they? Lucky for us Mike had a stash of parking meter coins to get us out of that one.

We started off the next day, Canada Day, by singing O Canada at sunrise in both official languages. It was surprising how unpatriotic car campers can be at that time of day. Then it was off to the Price Creek Trail and the start of approach hell. The first 8 or 9 km to the log crossing is always such a joy, simply a three-hour walk in beautiful old growth on a nicely cleared and moderately graded trail. Even the continuous "occasional" shower did not dampen our enthusiasm. We had also met up with a foraging bear early on the trail that encouraged us to sing quite loudly to keep all but the truly tone deaf wildlife at bay.

After a quick lunch at the log crossing, we played connect the logs as the usual log crossing was a splintered mess. I had always wondered why tight-rope walkers never wore heavy packs during their high-wire acts. Now I know. The problem with such an easy start to the approach to Cream Lake is that it lulls you into a false sense of confidence in your ability to easily complete the remaining 2 or 3 km to the base of Septimus. Then reality sets in. I know many of our club brothers and sisters routinely stroll up to Cream Lake with minimal difficulty, but I am also sure that they would be stripped of their hiking Gold Medals if the steroid cops ever got a whiff of their liquid waste products.

This part of the trail was more than a challenge to me and many thanks to Mike for slowing his usual breakneck pace to accommodate my little short tiny steps. It was a humility-inducing three hours of mother nature hitting below the belt from the log crossing to Cream Lake. The snow pack started just after the route crossed over Cream Creek and was a welcome change from the roots, rocks, mud, and crap of the lower route. As usual there was bit of route finding after crossing the slide area as the ribbons had disappeared. The trick is to stay to the right (west) as far as it is safe to do so and you should not get forced to climb higher than you really need to. It was clear that the group of three that we had caught up to, just a few hundred meters ahead of us, got sucked in to the "it must be just over this rise" syndrome. Mike had been about 50 meters ahead of me at this point, as he had tired of my incessant whining, and was about to follow the group ahead when I urged him to walk to the right a bit and check out the view. A frozen Cream Lake lay about 20 meters below us. We both looked up to the group ahead of us and saw the last person crest over the rise.

A wonderfully short stroll over Cream Lake with Septimus to our left and Big Interior Mountain in the foreground affirmed why we subjected ourselves to such sweet torture. We finally saw the group ahead of us as we finished setting up camp under the Big Leaning Rock. They came off the ridge about 200 meters above the lake where they were forced to descend to the icefield. They continued on up to the Septimus shoulder while Mike and I marveled at their immense strength and creative route-finding abilities. While under the Rock, we prayed to the god of plate tectonics to delay the Big One, at least until we had left its shadow. Mike decided to check out bouldering routes on this monolith as I opted to check out the inside of my eyelids. The rain was on and off, mostly on, during the approach and this trend continued while in camp and caused us some distress as we took our full bellies to our sleeping bags.

We both woke at 6:00 am the next day wondering what the weather was like, but neither of us with the guts to peek out the door to see what the weather gods had in store for us. Finally, Mike's bladder forced the issue and out he went. In his typically understated way, Mike said it looked OK. I rushed outside not trusting his assessment and was greeted with a cold crisp day with clear blue skies and the X-gully inviting us up her confines. Woo hoo!

Full of oats and granola, we crunched up the icefield to get to the base of the X-gully. We were soon in crampons and felt that reassuring bite of their teeth into the firm morning snow as we made our way up the gully. It seemed that we had met the X-gully at her best as there were no 'schrunds or gaps that tended to open up later in the season. The slope was relatively moderate with only two short steep sections that coaxed some adrenaline to flow. After about two hours we reached the top of the gully and were met with a bird's eye view of the spectacular hanging glacier on the mountain's northeast flank as it crept off to the edge of the world and into the Price Creek valley. This was a thoroughly satisfying snow climb with great views, great challenges, but with no great need to place any protection.

Part two of the climb, a glacier traverse, began with an easy 30 meter descent onto the hanging glacier from the top of the X-gully. We roped up, more for the mountain gear photo-op than for the fracture lines and crevasses that were visible (and invisible). The route saw us contour around near the top of the glacier to gain the northeast ridge of Septimus (west peak). This route pleased our eyes with Flower Ridge and Buttle Lake to our extreme left; the Red Pillar and the group of Comox Glacier peaks to our left; and the many jagged peaks of Septimus to our right.

It was a short jump from the glacier to the rock ridge that would eventually bring us to the summit. In typical island fashion, rotten rock was everywhere and we both paused to adjust the fit of our helmets prior to climbing this minefield of rock missiles. Although we climbed gingerly and very close together, it was difficult for the bottom guy, me, to not feel like Indiana Jones from the constant projectile avoidance. The route was composed partly of a crumbly, but heavily pocketed red rock and partly of a solid, gritty, grey rock that provided sheer climbing bliss. There were only a couple of very short technical bits with the majority of the

route being a scramble spiced with occasional exposure.

The summit was an uninspiring high point at the end of a gentle slope. However, it was nondescript only until you looked over the south edge. The world abruptly fell away as we saw glimpses of Love Lake almost a kilometer below the summit. Teetering on the brink of oblivion was a piano-sized summit block with an unconfirmed solid connection to Septimus itself. Mike and I took our summit shots beside and not on top of this accident waiting to happen and was awed by the courage of those who built the little cairn atop this rock.

We found the summit register and congratulated each other on our ascent being the first in the Y2K era. It was not until the pictures were developed that I discovered Mike's Millennium Mistake. Probably suffering from the effects of HACE (Heavyset Aging Canadian Eccentric), he registered our climb as July 2nd 1999! Should the next Septimus summiteers find the register, please fix Mike's muck-up and initial the correction on our behalf.

The clear weather we enjoyed on the way to the summit disappeared under many thick clouds and our view was relegated to my virtual rendering of what could be seen if only it was clear. A summer snowstorm then started in earnest. We looked at each other and down at the descent route and pictured it as a snowy, wet mess. We quickly decided to get off the ridge before there was enough snow for a snowball fight and quickly descended. As luck would have it, just as we were roping up again to get on the glacier, the skies cleared and brilliant sunshine bathed the summit. We briefly considered going up again but saw that the approaching clouds would probably have us yo-yoing up and down and so we reluctantly continued the retreat.

It was an unexceptional descent that degenerated into being downright tedious when we got on the X-gully. A combination of slushy snow and questionable run out forced us into a monotonous two-hour ass first walk down the gully. Mike rolled the dice near the end of the slope and had a short glissade when the moats ceased to be scary. Supper and sleep under the rock soon followed.

The plan for the next day was to climb or at least have a look at the route up the south side to the Rousseau summit. We had a pleasant walk up the icefield to the Septimus shoulder but saw little as the clouds stayed low. The west buttress route did loom tantalizingly to the left of the shoulder. Mike and I made a pact to try this route as soon as we have enough skill and grow the required globes. We arrived at the fully socked col and decided to stay put and see if the clouds would clear. First we sat and relaxed and then

stretched out for some horizontal rest. Soon all our plans were gone with the wind as we committed fully to some extreme napping. We awoke about two hours later and decided that we had pushed ourselves enough and should really head back to camp for some real quality sleep.

So down we went with our raingear on, ready for the mother of all butt slides. I led off, using the classic "squeeze the cheeks" technique and started on a downward slide longer than my Nortel stock plunge. The consistency of the snow, gentle slope, and my peerless posterior positioning let me slide on and on and on... I finally had to bail out nearly at the bottom of the icefield fearing I had lost some major organs to shrinkage or worse. Mike flashed by seconds later, oblivious to the numbness. That combination of speed and cold left us both shaken and stirred.

We spotted the group that had gone up to the col the previous day just behind us. They confided that they had made camp at the shoulder and then had gone down to Love

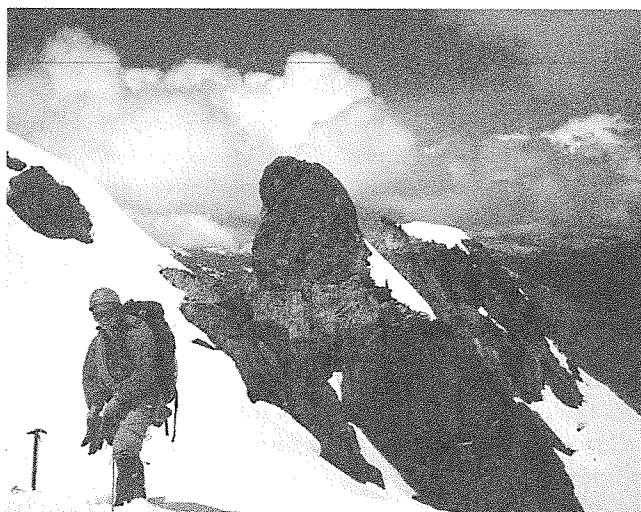
Lake for a look at Della Falls. The group was now on their way home. We headed stiffly back to our nylon home for a well deserved mug of Bailey's-laced hot chocolate and a serving of Mike's flaming hot oriental soup. The next day we made our own way down the Price Creek Trail and back to the real world.

All in all, it was an outstanding outing. The company was exceptional, although the lack of other takers for our trip caused us to question our self-

worth. The route is highly recommended. Its unique mix of a purgatory-like approach, sweet snow gully, spectacular glacier, and semi-technical rock makes this a Vancouver Island, climbing "must-do". Should BC Parks ever fix the Bedwell Trail, the unpleasantness should be reduced such that even mere mortals can achieve success. We also imposed a moderate pace that allowed me countless opportunities to employ my "quantity over quality" photography technique. It was a welcome change to the painfully brisk club trips that just hammer the body and miss the value of Aesop's tortoise tale. Although the weather was variable, it was superb when it needed to be (climbing the mountain) and inclement when it did not matter (approach, retreat, and camp life).

Many thanks to Sandy B., John D., Greg G. and everyone else I obsessively pestered to get full beta on the route. Even greater thanks go to Mike's support team of Caroline, Catherine, Ian and Alistair; and my own base camp staff of Penny, Elisha, Elena, Ally, and Angelica. Thanks for giving us the space to achieve our peak and the warmth that keeps our hearts close to home.

Participants: Mike Dillistone and Ang Lopez



High on Septimus. Photograph: Angelicco Lopez.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

ARROWSMITH 2000

Peter Rothermel
January 1

Jules Thompson was planning on leading a trip somewhere for the first day of the new century. I suggested Arrowsmith as it's already become a New Year's tradition as the "Katzenjammer Climb" (katzenjammer is an old world term meaning a migraine-type hangover).

Also on hand were three veterans of katzenjammer hikes, Russ Moir, Rudy Brugger and Chris Odgers. Russ got the katzenjammer award this year since some of us at least went to bed the night before. Pat & Murrough O'Brien, Selena Swets and Barb Baker rounded out the rest of the party. The previous week on Christmas day I had run into a weird temperature inversion and found it warmer on the summit than at sea level. It had been sunny T-shirt weather on top while looking down on a blanket of fog covering all of civilization while all the mountain tops stood out in crystal clear conditions.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

For the first day of the century, the weather was a bit more unsettled, yet the clouds were breaking up in a north-west wind. Up we trudged following the boot steps of two other parties. There was a new dusting of snow, but not enough to obliterate the prints from the week before. In the twenty years of snow surveys the Ministry of Environment has conducted on Cokely's slopes, last year was a record breaker for the most snow. This year may break that record for the snow!

Once up where the trees thinned we had a stunning view of the mountains of Strathcona while boiling clouds covered everything else. It was as if God's computer hadn't been adjusted, and when the year ticked over it became 1900 instead of 2000.

Further up we ran into two young guys on their way down, and they told us it was windy and ten below zero on the summit. Then up onto the open slopes and time to crampon up. The old steps kicked in were icy and the exposed rock was rimed up, but for the most part it was like going up a stair case.

Up near the summit we ran into Christine Rivers and Dean Williams, a couple I hike with a lot. Dean was a little disappointed he wasn't the first to summit this century, and

Christine was learning how to tear holes in her gaiters with new Christmas crampons.

On top it truly was cold and windy, so we stayed only long enough to pen in our names and comments in the summit register. By my reckoning there are a record breaking 512 signatures in the register for the year 1999. My personal best for '99 was spending 52 days in the alpine, with 34 of them spent on the Arrowsmith massif and twenty of those being summit days. If it sounds like I'm bragging... I am! I figure that's pretty good for a guy pushing fifty.

Back down a ways our party regrouped with Dean and Christine in a sunny, protected hollow for a New Year's celebration. Selena came down wearing frost feathers in her hair that resembled an angel's halo. I passed around a concoction of hot chocolate, coffee, Bailey's and Irish whiskey that Chris was especially fond of. If ever you want to get him on a hike, one whiff of this brew and he'll follow you anywhere! Everybody passed around left over Xmas sweets and treats. And the conversational subject for the New Year? Outhouse stories! Pat had a good one of a guy that got his privates bit by a wolverine while sitting on a biffy and Russ told of the park ranger that had a cougar paw reach out of the crapper just as he was about to sit down. Outhouse humor, well you had to be there. I set off two rockets to round out the festivities. Figuring three wouldn't be such a good idea since it's the international distress signal, and as much as a helicopter ride would be fun, I don't think search and rescue would have been too impressed.

It was a wonderful way to ring in the new millennium, but what does Y2K stand for? Every mountaineer worth their salt knows the riddle. It's code for that age old question—Yhy to Klimb? While some may answer "because it's there" and others may say "because we're mad", my reason: because it's fun!

Participants: Peter Rothermel, Jules Thompson, Russ Moir, Rudy Brugger, Chris Odgers, Pat & Murrough O'Brien, Selena Swets and Barb Baker.

TSITIKA MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms
June 3

At the lower end of the Tsitika River is another of those New Provincial Parks that keeps popping up within the 12% of the island that is to be set aside for protection. Robson Bight Provincial Park encompasses the shallow gravel bay at the mouth of the Tsitika River that is popular with the whale watching charters to view the Orcas. However, the southern edge of the park is bordered on its southwest corner by Tsitika Mountain, the highest peak in the

Franklin Range, and its southeast corner by Mt. Derby.

Tsitika Mountain is another of those peaks that I hadn't heard of anyone climbing in recent years. A friend and I had attempted it back in August '96 but a dirty black cloud scared us off. This time the weather was looking good as Pete and I drove up late Friday evening. After a two and a half hour drive we were pitching the tent in the middle of a parking area at the end of the road near the confluence of

the Tsitika River and Catherine Creek.

The next morning we were up at 4:30 am and voila it was light out—you've got to love these long spring days. After a light breakfast we drove up the Catherine Main a short distance and parked. This time we could see relatively new heli-logging slash on the other side of the creek. We would have to climb through this to get onto Tsitika's East Ridge and the route I had previously attempted. With only minor grumbling we climbed over the slash-pile beside the road and descended to the creek. Fortunately there were logs across the creek to save us from getting wet feet. Once on the other side we angled up through the slash to the old growth forest. Although the terrain was steep, it was quite open and we gained height quickly. Higher up we found lots of flagging tape hanging from the trees and printed on the tape we noted that it said "Falling Boundary," so we knew that very soon this too would probably be heli-logged and left as clear-cut blocks. Obviously we weren't in the park yet!

The route up was fairly well defined and there were only a few small bluffs that we had to circumvent. After three hours we were on the edge of the sub-alpine and in the snow. On the mountain's northern slopes were big open snow basins that looked easy, however, Pete and I chose to

go up a snow gully that brought us out below the East Face. Another steep narrow gully angled us slightly around to the north of the summit block. We crossed a soft snow slope to a notch in the rock and climbed up it to the summit, arriving at 10 am.

A well constructed two metre high rock cairn graced the summit, but there was no summit register. This cairn was build back in 1931 by the Topographical Surveyors and was used as a Triangulation Station as the cairn could be easily seen from other surrounding mountains.

Although it was only mid-morning, we had no qualms about calling it lunchtime. We sat up there enjoying the usual wonderful views from another North Island summit and planned further trips into the area.

The descent was straight forward and relatively uneventful. We had been pushing the descent and at times the bush would try it best to ambush us and trip us up, but when we arrived at the flagging tape we knew that we would be safe as we had passed the "Falling Boundary". We were back at the truck at 1 pm and since there was no need to rush back to Courtenay, we were able to take our time and look at the other mountains along the way.

Participants: Peter Ravensberger and Lindsay Elms.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

RAMBLING WITH RUDY OR BUSHWHACKING WITH BRUGGER

Peter Rothermel

The first time I heard about Rudy was a folklorish rumor about this Swiss guy that would walk down the Nose, with his hands in his pockets, while eating apples. It never occurred to me to question just how one could eat apples with their hands in their pockets, let alone walk down that steep arête. Yet, this description of Rudy isn't too far off the mark, as he's become a sort of living, walking legend to many and I don't mind contributing to this perception with a collage of stories from this past year. Well, you've already read of the New Year's climb (see Arrowsmith 2000) so onward.

THE BRUGGER VARIATION March 5

Russ hatched the idea to celebrate a Rudy Brugger sixtieth birthday bash on Arrowsmith, while on the New Year's Day hike. The theme was to be apples. As local lore has it, Rudy hikes with only apples in his pockets for sustenance. A large group of us made our way to the Judges Route in several vehicles and debated which route we would take to the summit. Rudy wanted the Snow Gully Route, yet some folks didn't have crampons, so we divided up the group into two. Half to go up Judges and the other half heading for the Snow Gully.

As we headed up, the snow conditions became worse, with a hard crust that would almost support your weight,



Rudy Brugger's 60th birthday on the summit of Mt. Arrowsmith. Photograph: Sandy Briggs.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

then you'd break through to thigh deep fluff. It was awful post-holing, but Rudy took the lead early on and stayed in front, breaking trail, the whole day!

When we reached the lower cirque, at three o'clock, everybody was fagged out, even though Rudy was doing all the work. Rudy said, "Let's take a short cut up that first gully." I spoke up, "It won't go. It's a drop off on the other side." Rudy replied, "Sure it will, I've been there before." And sure enough it went just fine up a 35° slope and through the "Gun sights" notch at the top and then we were in sight of the Judges Route. After dropping down a bit and traversing a short way we came to the main avalanche chute on the west slope. The snow was stable, so we kicked steps up and came out near the top of the NW Snow Gully. We then scampered up to a windy chilly summit to meet the Judges group and celebrate Rudy's birthday.

Apples were the theme and everybody gave Rudy apple jam, apple sauce, apple leather, dried apples, fresh apples, etc. We couldn't keep the candles lit on the apple cake, but managed to sing an off key round of "happy birthday". A fun day with this "Man of the Mountains" and from that day on, the gully in the first cirque on the Snow Gully Route has been known as The Brugger Variation.

MT. KLITSA-NE RIDGE

June 18

Russ called one evening and asked me if I'd like to try a new route on Mt. Klitsa and by the way had I heard of the avalanche a group had been caught in on the mountain?!

An Alpine Club group had been caught in a big slide in the Great Couloir a week earlier and by some miracle none were seriously hurt or worse, yet all had been very shaken up. Rudy was at the top of the gully that day and witnessed the near disaster unfold, so wanted to go back up the mountain. I suppose it was sort of "getting back on the horse after you've fallen off" need.

A large group of us hiked up the trail and turned up towards the NE ridge before we came to the Great Couloir and it soon was evident that Russ' route should be named "Russ' Root" as we found ourselves pulling on branches and roots to get up. We gained the minor Couloir to the east of the great one and after a last bit of "bush belay" found ourselves upon the ridge. This turned into a beautiful broad undulating upwards shoulder. I was keeping an eye on Claire, as she was positively bubbling over with

excitement at being up in the alpine, and I was afraid she might explode from happiness.

We then took a sharp left steeply up the North ridge and kicked steps up this final slope, then onto the summit in broken clouds. The weather was calm so we all sat around and swapped stories, but the conversation kept drifting back to the previous week's near disaster.

We headed down glissading and bum sliding our way to the Great Couloir. When we got to the top, it looked very steep, indeed! After a bit of hesitation everybody started sliding down, barely stopping for two thousand feet of descent. The enormity of the avalanche could be appreciated by the size of the gully and the amount of debris. Along the way someone found a jacket lost the week before, but nothing was seen of a lost ice axe. I don't know if the folks caught in the avalanche have "exorcised their demons". That's their story and I'd like to hear it. I can say "Russ's Root" is a fine route.

THE NOSE

July 16

Rudy had advertised a hike up Arrowsmith via the Nose in the Alpine Club and the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club trips schedules. I had asked him if he wanted help belaying people up and got an affirmative. About a week before the hike I got a call from Rudy, "Are you going to still help me with your rope on the Nose?... Yes?... Good!... because I think we got about twelve going and I don't think I can do it by myself". I suggested we have two experienced people at each stance, one to belay and one to take care of knots. The day of the hike I showed up at the rendez-

vous and did a head count... thirty five people! Somebody had put the trip on the internet and a bunch of folks showed up from Vancouver. "Oh well, we'll see". The weather was fine and the hike up to the nose was great. Claire was her usual effusive self and my twelve year old nephew, Bjorn, was talking her ear off. When we got to the Nose,

Rudy took the lower belay and I took the upper with Rory Ford to do knots for me. Everything went smoothly for awhile until we got a bottle neck at the base of my station. Some people weren't using Rudy's belay and were climbing up to his stance sans rope, so Rory lowered his rope and started belaying also. When all had made it to Rudy, he too came up and all three of us were belaying. Quite a few people that day were novice to this climbing and rope work.



Selena Swets on the North ridge of Mt. Klitsa. Photograph: Tom Carter.

What a win for them and their sense of accomplishment and fulfillment was infectious.

After a leisurely stay on the summit, most of the group headed down the Judges Route and a few of us went back down the Nose to do a car shuffle. At the top of the upper belay station was, (what I thought was), Rory's rope. As I thought we were the last off the summit, I said, "Rory must have gone down Judges and forgotten his rope," so we took it down with us.

When we got a couple of bumps away, we heard someone faintly calling from the top of the Nose, "You took our rope!!" We looked at each other and a chill ran through us. Claire sprinted back along the bumps to holler to the unfortunate climbers. As it was, two went down the Judges and the other down climbed the Nose to retrieve their rope. Cory was a fast hiker and caught up to us in no time at all. He was also a big strapping lad and figuring he wouldn't hit a woman, I blamed the whole thing on Claire. The rope belonged to Reg Stranton, a name I've seen often in the summit register, so my next time up Arrowsmith I wrote an apology in the register and offered to buy them a beer. (Any good chicken would do the same!)

A few weeks later I got a call from Reg. He said they got rid of the rope. The week following our Nose escapade, he was doing a rock route on Arrowsmith and a very large (man sized) rock came down and chopped the rope. Badly shaken, but not hurt, they figured the rope was bad luck and retired it. The Nose will probably become a yearly event in the club's trip schedule as it proved to be fun and a big win for many first timers.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE DAY

August 12

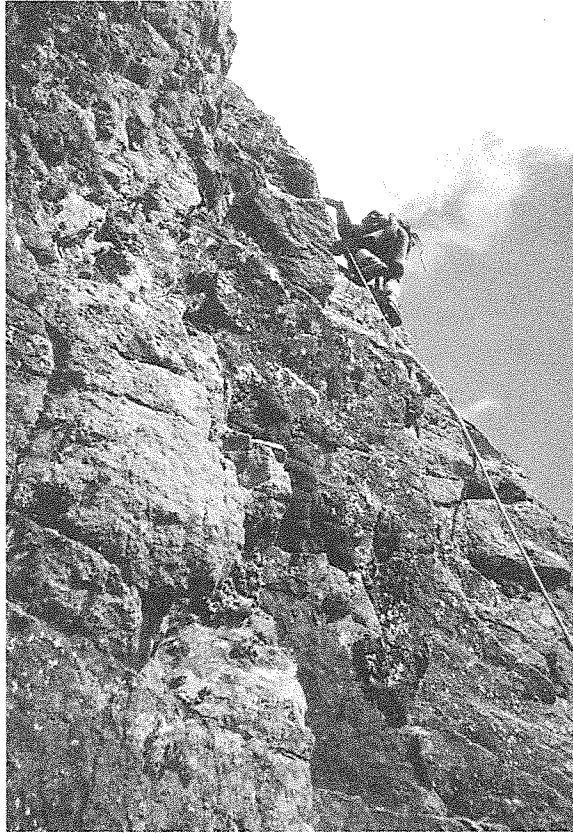
The Alpine Club, Alberni Valley Outdoor Club, Thursday Hikers of Nanaimo and Tuesday Walkers of Port Alberni got together to do a day of trail maintenance on the Saddle Route on Mt. Arrowsmith. The Thursday Hikers had called me the previous week and said most of their members were "older" and thought trail work was for younger people, but would come and do what they could to help. Help?... what an understatement!! Our average ages were closer to sixty than fifty, with me being second youngest next to Rory. And the older folks... could they work!

Scampering around as agile as mountain goats, a couple of... ahem... mature ladies worked away while telling youth jokes. (How many kids does it take to turn a light bulb?) The Saddle Route splits into two on its lower portion and half of us took one side, flagging in blue and the other half took the other trail, flagging in red. I went with the blues and Rudy went with the reds, so I didn't see their work until a few days later. Rudy true to form did some incredible stone work, in the meadows above the "rock steps", to curb erosion.

This is the same guy, at last year's trail maintenance day, that ran half way down the mountain to get a chainsaw, then ran back up with it!

Trail maintenance days are fun and rewarding. The work's not hard and the company's great and it is becoming necessary to keep erosion in check on popular routes. A more important reason for doing this work, on Arrowsmith, is to show the Regional District of Nanaimo that we can take care of our mountain and if they continue towards their goal of making the area a park, it won't cost much in upkeep. If we take care of our mountain, then we get to decide how it's done and not some bureaucrat that might want to make the trails "pretty" with boardwalks and bridges.

Next year I'll be calling on you to help.



Rudy leading. Photograph: Peter Rothermel.

RUDY'S ROUTE

August 27

Rudy had been telling me about this route that he found up to the South Summit of Arrowsmith. He described it as one of, or maybe the most aesthetic routes on the massif. I chalked it up to one always thinking their route is the best... boy was I wrong! I believe this will prove to be the classic summer route on Arrowsmith in due time.

We started at the end of the third spur (P32) up pass main, dropping down into an awful gully full of loose rock and second growth. You might say this is the crux of the trip and thank Christ to get it over and done with at the beginning. At one point Rudy mentioned something about often getting lost and I started wondering what I was getting myself into, but I guess that's how he finds these wonderful places.

Once past the mess we traversed across a broad slope of first growth, following under some cliff bands, until we reached a gully choked with avalanche debris. We then followed up the left side of the gully until we reached a large

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS



MOUNTAIN SCENERY WINNER

Baker Lake, Banff National Park.
Sandy Briggs

sort of chock stone and Rudy said, "Now I know where I am". We crossed the gully here and started scrambling up skirting bluffs, from ledge to ledge.

Soon we came to a steep spot with a few difficult moves and Rudy must have noticed the hairs standing up on the back of my neck because he asked, "Do you want the rope?"... "Sure", I said, "Do you want a belay?"... "Nope" he replied and climbed up towing a rope for me. It was only about a 10m pitch, yet was exposed and I was glad for the belay. The scramble continued interspersed by two more low 5th pitches of a half rope and a full ropes length respectively, also led unbelayed by Rudy, leading to a treed ledge and the last 25m roped pitch. Here we pounded in a bolt for me to belay Rudy's lead from and he put another bolt in for protection on his way up. Better climbers may dispute my claim, but I say this pitch had a couple of 5.9 moves. Wearing hiking boots, I knew I was coming off any minute, yet somehow squeaked past by the skin of my teeth. How Rudy did it on such poor protection is a marvel. And then he went on to give a compliment to me, saying, "Well, you're a climber." After gaining another wide ledge and taking a much needed break, we continued up about 200m of very exposed, stiff 4th class. This is where I really earned my gray hairs. Falling was not an option!

This last ended at a ledge just short of the South Summit and then a traverse to the main summit. After signing in the register we dropped down the Judges and, before we reached the spur, angled left through the first growth, finally emerging at our truck.

We've talked of going back and spending a few days to pin or bolt the poor protection on the route, so it can be led by mere mortals. One thing's for sure... Rudy's Route is destined to become the classic summer route on Arrowsmith!

POGO PEAK & THE NW RIDGE

September 10

This summit has another local name, "Tit Mountain", since it resembles a woman's breast at a distance, complete with a rock nipple at the top. Up close it's real brushy and doesn't resemble any tit I've ever seen... except maybe that sasquatch, but that's another story.

This hike was cosponsored by the Alpine Club and the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club, to be led by Rudy. A dozen or so of us started a bit late because someone was mixed up in their directions. (How was I to know which Taylor River Bridge it was... there must be ten bridges crossing that river.)

Well, brushy it is! Even the lower first growth portion is a real root grabbing experience at best and a total thrash when passing through the slide alder. Since only the top "nipple" is rock, most of the day was spent bushwhacking.

When we emerged from the tree line, we could just catch a glimpse of what was up ahead through ever changing clouds. The rock was mostly solid and would be fun on a sunny summer day, but today it was dampish and tended to be somewhat slippery in places.

Rudy, being guide par excellence, stayed near the rear watching out for his charges, while several of us scampered

up to the summit. The clouds would occasionally part for a moment to give us a cameo view of Steamboat Mountain or a peek at this gorgeous ridge running off to the north west. Rudy had brought up a new register and a beautiful brass tube he had made. While reading the old register, we noted that some parties summited via the NW ridge and took only three hours. As the route we came up took five hours, this ridge started looking better and better (and we should have known better).

Some of our party stayed below, not liking the wet rock, so Rudy was committed to heading back the standard route. Four of us decided to take the ridge down. Between us we had a couple of head lamps, topo map, a compass, extra food fire starter and all had rain gear, so were prepared for the worst (been there, done that). As we parted, Rudy said, "You'll do fine... I have complete faith in you." I wish I could say I felt the same.

The hike down the ridge was wonderful, open, and the rock was solid and gritty with limestone dikes running through it. In fact the ridge was so nice, we decided to stick to it even though the flagging turned down a gully. The ridge turned into forested meadows, then slide alder and bluffs, then bluffs and slide alder, then slide alder and bluffs (get the picture?). We were following a compass bearing but kept turning away from the sounds of waterfalls (steep & wet)... on our right... then our left. Finally realizing we were hemmed in between twin waterfalls. We found a flat spot to breach the falls defenses and soon found ourselves breaking out into logging slash right at the bridge we aimed the compass at. All in all, it took us another five hours to get back down to the trucks, but we had a first hand look at the ridge and if we can find that three hour access point, it'll become the route of choice.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

MT. MORIARTY

TEACH OLD DOGS NEW TRICKS ?

November 12

Ten of us met under cloudy skies to hike up Moriarty from Labor Day Lake. The central island mountains had just recently received a dusting of new snow, yet the weather was dry and cold. Up we went through first growth forest and where there was a bit of snow covering the wet roots, it made for slippery footing.

Once up past the big trees and on the shoulder we took a break. I was telling Judy about a book I'd recently picked up in a second hand store for our section's archive, a first addition of "Freedom of the Hills", and how it was pre-Gore-Tex and Vibram. The conversation took a turn to, "What's the oldest piece of gear you have with you?" Viggo and Sandy held up their wood handled ice axes and I swear Sandy's looked almost copper age. Someone else had a pair of crampons that the points were almost worn off to the point of nonexistent. I noted Sandy's coat that had "Everest 34" embroidered on it and asked, "Is that the year you got the coat?" Then someone made the remark about Rudy's orange canvas jacket, "You've been wearing that since I first met you and the zipper's never worked!" Judy said to Viggo, "I'm still wearing that wool shirt of yours that I shrunk when

I washed it years ago." and I thought, maybe a little too out loud, "Shrunk on purpose?" Derek's rad pants might not have dated back to the days of cotton, but I'll bet they're more patches than pants! Then Claire asked, "Who has Gerta's knitted mittens?" Jules and a half a dozen folks held up their toasty mitts. (Please note, Gerta, I don't have a pair.) After much joking and poking of ribs, we resumed our hike.

Up onto Moriarty's undulating summit ridge and the foot deep snow was powdery, but my feet were warm. Near the top we stopped for lunch out of the wind and I took a poll on everybody's age. It turned out that our average ages worked out to be 48.5 years and it was only that low because we had a couple of "kids" in their thirties along (Katherine & Rory). If you add up all the years of experience, it equates to 485 years, or in other words, nearly a half a millennium! Even if you subtract teen and younger years (when it's debatable whether or not anything you learn, you retain) it totals to 295 years or nearly three centuries of knowledge.

So why was it, when we headed down and reached the steep forest and its slushy, slippery roots we kept on descending in a jerky manner, resembling zombies in a grade "B" horror movie? Finally some of those hundreds of years worth of knowledge kicked in and Rudy said, "To hell with this, I'm putting on my crampons!" Well what do you know?... you can teach old dogs new tricks... and it was a whole lot easier hiking down the slimy trail.

Note: last names were omitted since it's not considered proper etiquette to reveal a lady or gentleman's age.

COKELY SKI TRIP

WHAT, ME SKI?

December 23

I gave Rudy a jingle and asked him if he wanted to do anything the next weekend... was there enough snow to climb Mt. McQuillan?... would the roads be clear enough? He replied, "Maybe we just climb Arrowsmith... maybe we need skis to get up the road." So I thought, "Maybe we'll get stuck at the Cameron River bridge and have to ski up the road to access the Judges Route."

Tom Carter and I met Rudy at the hump and we jumped into his truck. The road was fairly clear and I was thinking, "Maybe I won't have to use those borrowed skis after all," since I'm not really a skier. Here, let me repeat that... I'm not a skier!

We passed the Judges and I asked, "Where to?" and Rudy said something about a gully. Then we passed the spot for the Snow Gully Route and further, passed the Saddle Route and finally arrived at the gate to the Regional Ski Park. "OK, now I'm confused, where are we headed?" To which Rudy replied, "Up Cokely." So I let him know, "I'm not a skier... let me repeat, I'm not a skier!" To which Rudy further replied, "You just follow us... you'll be OK."

We put our skins on and started uphill. In case you're less ski-literate than me, skins are these strips of fur, on the bottom of your skis, with the nap running towards the rear, that grab the snow and allow you to walk uphill. They were invented by a fellow named Ragnor Shaggy pants, in

Norway, about 1000 ad. He noticed that while bum sliding down slopes that he could go faster head first and that he could do a handy self arrest by spinning around feet first. Since then skins have seen little improvement in the last 1000 years.

Going up was fine, but I couldn't this nagging thought out of my head... "what goes up must come down." Every year when the snow flies I say, "This is the year I learn, or crash and burn!" And every year I go out once and make a complete fool of myself, then give up till the next year when my memories are fuzzed over a bit. I guess my learning curve is long and broad, like Pluto's elliptical orbit.

Rudy and Tom would patiently wait up for me as I thrashed and sweated my way up, until we reached a shoulder above the ski park. They went on up the steep slope to Cokely's summit while I waited and had a hot chocolate. A short time later Rory Ford came along following our tracks and headed up after Tom and Rudy. As they came swishing down, I captured their exploits on film.

After we had lunch, it was time to carve some long turns, down the broad slopes of the ski park... After my twelfth crash, I figured the thirteenth might be "broke bone" unlucky, so I unstrapped my skis and walked down the last part of the hill. It was faster at any rate. Down at the boarded up lodge we stopped for a break and to yak with some other folks that were up skiing also. Just think... a year ago the ski developer, "Bully Bilton" would have probably been yelling at us to get off "his" slopes. Now it seems the hill is once again a public park.

Then down the road we skied... me out of control, locked into icy wheel ruts until... "whoa"... whoosh... womph... another bum plant, while the others sped ahead. I was thinking about how Rudy would probably never want to take me skiing again, what with me slowing everybody down, but every time I'd come around a corner, there he'd be patiently waiting with words of encouragement. Still I couldn't help but think what a drag I must be, but down at the truck he said to me, "I hope we didn't turn you off skiing today." Well, isn't that just like Rudy?!

Finis

In conclusion, I guess you might say Rudy's become a bit of a mentor to me... he's a good leader... he leads but you don't feel led... he's solid on rock, careful and sure... at home on snow... he lends a hand when needed and puts his back into his work... best of all, he's just a great guy to hike with.

How much a mentor you ask?... Let's just say I'm up to three apples a day!

THE REAL QUEEN PEAK

Mike Hubbard

November 4-5

A hardy bunch of enthusiasts were eagerly preparing for another Briggs' epic—buying extra headlamp batteries, mentally running over techniques for rappelling in the dark and plastic bagging everything—when word came from Sandy that the weather forecast was lousy, there was wet snow in Strathcona and it was Plan B, Mt. Whympier by the north west ridge. Remembering a not so distant winter trip to the same destination with the same leader and what seemed like a cast of thousands, many of the preparations were left in place but the drive to Sayward was off as was the heavy overnight pack.

Leaving Victoria at 5:30 am in two vehicles we met Charles Turner at the Chemainus logging road gate at 7:00 am and, after Sandy had managed to persuade the gatekeeper to let us have a key, we headed up the valley with the luxury of an open-ended exit time. After driving to the gate at the col between El Capitan and Whympier and placing a vehicle at the bottom of C29 for our anticipated descent by the south east ridge, we headed into the bush in cold blustery weather which was threatening snow. Luck was with us and as we emerged at the high point of our previous winter attempt the sun was periodically warming the rocky ridge and there was just the slightest touch of light snow, enough to make the heather and brush appear to be covered in white flowers. Crux's which Sandy warned were 5.2's turned out to be dry and unexposed and by noon we were on top of the ridge proceeding towards the summit. After a leisurely

lunch with blue sky and sun Sandy led us out onto a somewhat delicate, but fortunately well treed, ledge on the south face which is well marked by orange flagging and which avoids the necessity of rappelling down a cliff to the last notch before the summit. As we scrambled the remaining few hundred occasionally exposed feet another Briggs-ism was added to the English language with several warnings

of "here's another DNP" which had nothing to do with the up coming election but meant "do not plummet"!

From the summit there were magnificent views all around, even Nanaimo looking almost Athenian in the Fall sun. Gusts of wind with new forming cloud made exotic "Glories" and an eagle, rising in the thermals almost verti-

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS



Sandy Briggs-Glory and Brocken Spectre from the summit of Mt. Whympier.

cally, sped past on some distant errand. A steep but relatively easy though ill-defined trail led us back down the south east ridge to some fine timber which unfortunately appears to be prepared for logging and by dusk we were at our earlier placed vehicle.

A good day in the hills was rounded off by an excellent meal at a Chinese restaurant in Chemainus before the party split up to north and south. Another Briggs' Classic, well and calmly led on one of the best days of the Fall—and this time we didn't even use a headlamp!

Participants: Sandy Briggs (leader), Katherine Brandt, Derek Wells, Catrin Brown, George Urban, Charles Turner, Sylvia Moser, and Mike Hubbard (reporter).

ALBERT EDWARD SKI TRIP

Pat O'Brien

April 1-2

Glorious spring sunshine, soft corn snow, and unsurpassed summit views. Even blisters couldn't ruin this trip! We enjoyed a friendly group of "golden oldies" and some new and energetic young club members on their first ever ski-mountaineering trip. Who ever thought that the slow-traverse-awkward-ass-plant-turn-Queen would have the opportunity to show someone how to survive skiing down

a mountain? Home by one a.m., just in time to change our clocks for an extra early rise Monday morning. Thanks Sandy for a great weekend! Don's great photos of this trip can be seen on his website.

Participants: Greg Gordon, Don Cameron, Trudy Rey, Yvonne Huneck, Catrin Brown, Pat and Murrough O'Brien, Frank and Kim Reinhart, Carrie Farr, Rick Hudson, & trip leader, Sandy Briggs.

CAT'S EARS PEAK

Lindsay Elms
April 8

On a cloudless Friday evening Charles, Bernard and I drove over and met Martin and Brian at the pullout beside Cat's Ears Creek and the logging road on Highway 4 between Port Alberni and Tofino. It's not the most glamorous bivy site but since we didn't have a suitable vehicle with us for getting any further up the logging road it would have to do. After a nightcap we switched the lights off and put the cat out for the night.

Saturday morning I woke up to the spiritual hum of an MSR stove purring away on either side of me: one had a pot of coffee on its way to the boil and the other a billy of tea, and as luck would have it my mug was lying next to my sleeping bag. I could have continued laying there and just stretched my arm out in either direction to get it filled with which ever was my pleasure, but I thought there is no point in staying in my cat box of a bag any longer. There was a mountain to be climbed!

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

After licking my bowl clean and then scratching around in the kitty litter I was ready to join the others hiking up the logging road. At this point I began experiencing a sense of *deja vu* as I recollected twice walking up this road. The first time was in August '95 when a few of us attempted Triple Peak, but unfortunately we soon discovered this was not the best way into the mountain and we failed to get to grips with the peak. The second time was in April '97 with an Alpine Club trip into the Cat's Ears. After climbing through the blow-down we emerged onto the West Ridge late in the day but sat up to watch the comet Hale-Bopp trailing across the heavens. The next day we managed to get to the West Peak but with time running short and we had to put our tail between our legs and return home "ear-less".

I wasn't going to let two failures get the better of me! This time I had all the route beta, the weather was purr-fect and we were all psyched to reach the top. This cat was in the bag!

After hiking up the valley about 2.5 kilometres we reached a point where the road crossed to the other side of the river. We didn't need to follow it any further so we began working our way up the creek-bed while trying to keep dry feet. It wasn't long before a couple of us decided to get wet (we had running shoes on) and walked up the creek itself, but the others were determined to keep their paws dry. The creek soon gave way to devil's club and young slide alder, but since it had only just recently lost its winter snow covering the bush wasn't too bad for climbing through. The spikes were relatively short and soft but they still dug in when we unexpectedly grabbed hold of a bush for balance. We soon learned not to follow too close to the person in front of us.

To the west of the main avalanche chute we entered the trees and soon picked up the flagging probably from the Eppler/Macdonald/et al. ascent back in the '80's. The steep timbered slope was relatively open and we gained height steadily. As the trees became smaller the depth of the snow became deeper covering most of the windfall and thick bush

that we knew had been the curse of the earlier ascents. It had the reputation of being the Mother-of-All-Island-Bushwhacks! After breaking out into the subalpine we could see the Cat's Ears up and off to our left taunting us like it was a game of cat and mouse.

At the top of the chute we climbed over the old avalanche debris to the bottom of a smaller gully. At the top of the gully it looked as though it would deke-off to the right and into small basins west of the West Summit. We post-holed our way up into the gully but half way up the snow became firm enough for crampons so we strapped them on and cruised into the upper basins and onto the West Ridge. Here we couldn't help but take a look at the nearby Mackenzie Range and comment on how rugged and spectacular they looked. This section of the ridge was familiar to me as we climbed up and over to the West Summit.

From the West Summit we pulled the rope out for 1 pitch as we descended down the ridge to the east. After the rope was put away we climbed around a huge block on the south side and then back up onto the ridge crest. We then continued over several bumps until we arrived at the base of the summit rock. Here we had a late lunch while deciding on how to attack the summit.

Martin took the cat by the scruff of the neck and clawed his way up towards the summit making it look easy as he climbed smoothly over the rock while being belayed from below. Overhead a tweety bird flitted about on the summit and I swore I heard him say: "I tawt I taw a pudgy tat a sneaking up on me!" A minute later Martin appeared on the summit and tweety took off screaming: "I did, I did see a nasty pudgy tat!" Martin, in his sartorial eloquence, called down: "A' right, this is the cat's ass!"

The rest of us roped up and climbed to the summit where we got to enjoy the incredible views surrounding us. In the cairn we found Doug Goodman's water logged note from July 7, 1997 when he climbed it and the two Ears solo.

We rappelled back down off the summit and got ready to descend the snow slopes down the north face. We didn't want to climb back along the West Ridge as it would be time consuming.

The snow was reasonably steep with a soft layer about 15 cm thick laying over a solid base. We each took our own lines down but the sloughing snow couldn't make up its mind which way to go and inevitably chose the nearest person to aim for. Various modes of descent were performed, but we all had to execute a self arrest at some point. We arrived back down in the lower basins and traversed across to our earlier ascent route at the bottom of the gully. By now the snow was soft and it felt like we were stepping into a huge bowl of vanilla ice-cream as we plunged thigh deep into it. My suspicion about the snow being ice-cream was confirmed when I saw someone eating it!

Down we descended pussy-footing gingerly through the

snow-covered windfall area until we entered the forest. Here the small saplings took a beating as we used their supple branches as hand lines to assist our speedy descent back down to the river.

It was just after 7 pm when we arrived back at the vehicles, 13 hours after we had left them. We all changed out of our wet boots and sweaty clothes into some clean apparel and drove home again under a cloudless evening sky.

With weather like we had I was beginning to forget about wanting to move south to Mexico. The memory of those grey sunless days and wet winter months are soon forgotten just the way the promise never to run another marathon are lapsed from consciousness. Reaching the summit of Cat's Ear Peak on a day like we had was just the cat's whiskers.

Participants: Lindsay Elms, Charles Turner, Martin Scaia, Bernard Zirkl and Brian Carter.

PETE'S ROUTE

ARROWSMITH LOST GULLY

Peter Rothermel

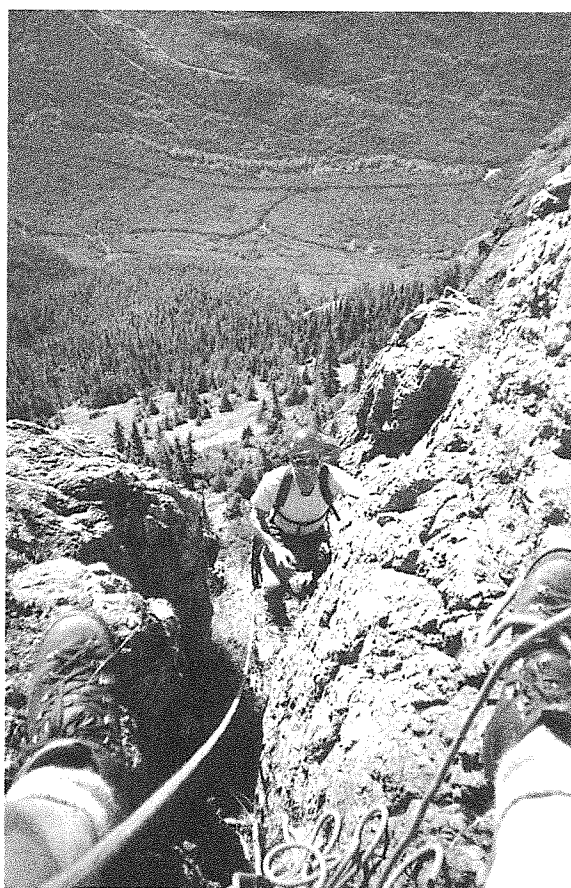
September 23

Peter had been eyeing this head wall for a couple of years and had even done a couple of recy trips to its base this year. Peter thought to himself, "The weather's good and holding... no more excuses... now's the time!"

September 23rd found Peter Koughan and Peter Rothermel hiking up the route leading towards the Lost Gully. Three idiots were hiking behind them, insisting they were on the Judges Route and "had been there hundreds of times." There was nothing Peter could say to dissuade them. As they hiked on faster to lose them, Peter said, "Crazy people make me start questioning my own sanity... I mean could this maybe really be the Judges?... know what I mean?"

Once they broke out into the open alpine and had a look at what they were up against, Peter started giving Peter looks like maybe he was crazy! After hiking up acres of meadows they reached the base of the cliffs and stopped for lunch and a game plan. "What about that dihedral with a corner crack or that giant flake to its left or the slot on the right?" Peter said.

They started up a weakness angling towards the right, third classing with a few fourth class moves until they reached an area of ledges. Peter took a break, while Peter traversed left to get a better look at the big cracks. When Peter returned he said to Peter, "They're big off-width cracks and too much for me today. Let's see where that cut to the right goes."



Peter belaying Peter. Photograph: Peter Rothermel.

There was a difficult move to start with, so Peter put in a belay behind an iffy flake while Peter led, putting in a cam to protect the move. After an easy ramp, Peter came to a squeeze chimney and worked his way up. About half way up he started feeling vulnerable, found a good stance and pounded in a piton. This piece was more for psychological security than real protection, since it bottomed out and might have been a bit wobbly. So if you ever find your self on this route and you weight the piton and it fails, blame Peter. At the top of the chimney Peter put a sling around a horn, continued up till the rope was almost run out, anchored to a chock stone and belayed Peter up.

Here they found a nice grassy ledge and took a break and looked for a way up. Peter said, "I think we're even with the top of the krumholtz step and the bottom of the upper

Lost Gully, which means we have a long ways to go." They decided on a line to take that seemed to have a few spots to put in pro. As there was nothing good to belay from, Peter drilled a hole and put in a bolt and hanger.

If you're familiar with Arrowsmith rock, you know there's little or no natural protection. Most of the rock is rotten, but now and then you'll come across some of that reddish-orange chunky solid stuff with a 60 grit texture. Peter calls it, "d'heavenly up-chuck." It's as though, on the third day, God didn't chew well enough and vomited up this stuff of solidly bonded lumps of hard rock. Very nice rock, but far

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

and few between, so if you're planning a committed climb on this mountain, be prepared to pound in some protection.

Peter led up the pitch of about 40m of mid 5th, putting in three tri-cams and slinging three horns along the way, to another bomber ledge Peter anchored off on a horn and belayed Peter up. "Nice lead!", Peter said to Peter. While still on belay, Peter traversed to the right to reconnoiter a route. While it looked feasible, he wanted to have a look at the ledge's left hand aspect, as he thought it just might lead around the summit, as an aerial photo suggested. Peter untied and headed off along the ledge. After about fifteen minutes Peter heard Peter holler, It's a go!... a walk off!...

comes out just above the top of Rudy's Route!" It might have been fun to add that other pitch to the route, but as time was running on, they decided to exit via a long traverse on the narrow sloping ledge.

After a bit of scrambling they were on the top of the South Summit, (Peter was first), where they shook hands and congratulated each other on a day well done. Peter said, "I have a thing about routes with goofy names, so let's give it a really cool name."... so they decided to call it... .Pete's Route!

Guess who it's named after.

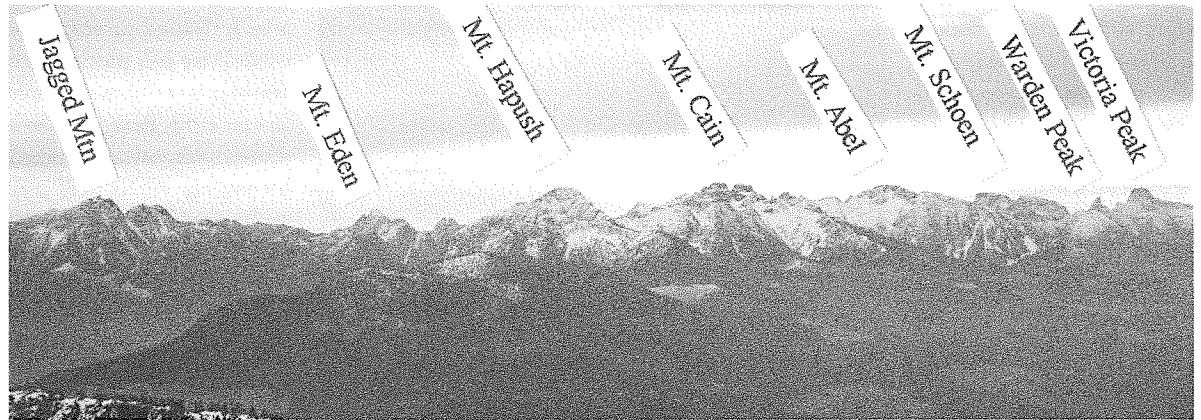
Participants: Peter Koughan, Peter Rothermel

MT. ELLIOT

Lindsay Elms

November 11

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS



View of the peaks to the south of Mt. Elliot. Photograph: Lindsay Elms.

A high pressure system was located over the island spreading some unusually cold, clear and dry weather for November so I decided that I should take advantage of it and get into the hills again. Phoning up the stalwart Charles Turner to see if he also wanted to get out I got an immediate reply of yes. When I told him I was interested in Mt. Elliot (1,584m) and that I didn't know anything about it, he just said in his calm way it sounds fine to him. Unfortunately a couple of others were unable to get out at such short notice. We arranged to meet the next morning at Tim Horton's at 4:30 am.

Leaving Courtenay, Charles and I headed up the Island Highway towards Woss. However, just past the Hoomak Lake Rest Area we turned right onto a small logging road and then left onto the Nimpkish North Road which headed back in the direction of Woss. After a short distance we crossed Lukwa Creek and turned right onto the Elliot Lake Main and followed that in towards Claude Elliot Lake Provincial Park. Just where the road made a sharp left turn we crossed Lukwa Creek and again veered to the right onto a logging road that said it had been de-activated. After a couple of kilometres it was fairly obvious that this road was far from being de-activated; in fact it appeared as if they had just finished re-activating it. We had no idea how far

we would be able to get on the road so we just followed our nose. The road kept going and going and going as it gradually gained elevation coming to a halt around 1100m. We couldn't believe that we were able to drive so high: this was going to make for a much shorter day than we anticipated and a lot less bushwhacking, however, I was a little unsure exactly where the mountain was because I couldn't tell where we were on the map but I knew it had to be above us somewhere. It is one of those mountains that remains hidden until you get to the alpine (I had seen the mountain briefly from the Highway on other trips).

From the end of the road the forest looked open and dry: the vegetation was thin and the small shrubs had all lost their leaves. This was to make for fast travel to the alpine. After an hour we were on a ridge immediately to the north of the main summit and we were able to pin point our exact location. From here we had to descend 120m of frozen heather and one steep little gully and then traverse around under the West face of the mountain to the slightly less steep route up from the south. A fresh dusting of snow covered the ground and the several small boulder fields that we had to cross looked like potential ankle-busting terrain. We cautiously made our way over the boulders and began climbing up to the South Ridge. One hundred metres of

steep snow and tree covered rock bluffs brought us out onto the summit at 9:55 am.

A two foot high rock cairn indicated that we weren't the first to visit the summit. We pulled the maps out and looked at the various logging roads in the adjacent valleys and planned future trips into the Bonanza Range. An early

lunch and then we descended reaching the vehicle just after noon. Another obscure North Island peak ticked off the list.

Participants: Charles Turner and Lindsay Elms

BARAD-DÛR AND THE STONE TROLLS

Sandy Briggs

July 20

Lindsay phoned me on a Wednesday in mid-July and asked whether I would like to join him Thursday (!) for a day-trip to the collection of summits along the divide SE of Pinder Peak. These include the informally named Stone Trolls (1468 m and 1478 m) and Barad-dûr (1504 m), as well as Mook Pk. (1521 m). Now the Island is not famous for terrain conducive to the concatenation of summits, so I was at once both amused to learn that Lindsay, like me, is occasionally given to attacks of megalomania, and sobered by the knowledge that he is one of the few people actually capable of such an ambitious enchainment. Besides, he had climbed the Stone Trolls a couple of years before and knew the approach.

The first recorded ascent of the Stone Trolls and Barad-dûr was by Markus, Rolf, and Heather Kellerhals in August of 1981. From a camp at about 1070 m near the south col of Pinder Pk. they scrambled these summits, naming the latter after the Dark Tower in the Lord of the Rings trilogy. About Mook Pk. I can tell you only that it appeared in snow-dusted splendor on an Island real estate calendar a few years ago.

I drove to Courtenay on Wednesday evening, and Lindsay and I soon set off again to a car-bivy near the Mt. Cain turn-off. Heat (inside the sleeping bags) and no-sees-ums (outside the sleeping bags) conspired to minimize the amount of restful sleep actually obtained.

In the morning we drove to a high logging road spur at about 700 m on the SE side of Apollo creek. We ascended quickly through a narrow band of logging slash to a semi-open ridge. This levels off somewhat at about 940 m, and a narrow forested ridge leads eastward against the side of the mountain. Traversing gently upward along the bottom of a cliff band we reached a small stream. We followed up this and were led, with a little scrambling, to an open alpine

basin above. We were on the summit of the first troll in two hours from the truck. The day was calm, sunny and warm, with a few picturesque clouds boiling about for photographic effect. On the second (higher) Troll we found Lindsay's earlier note and added to it.

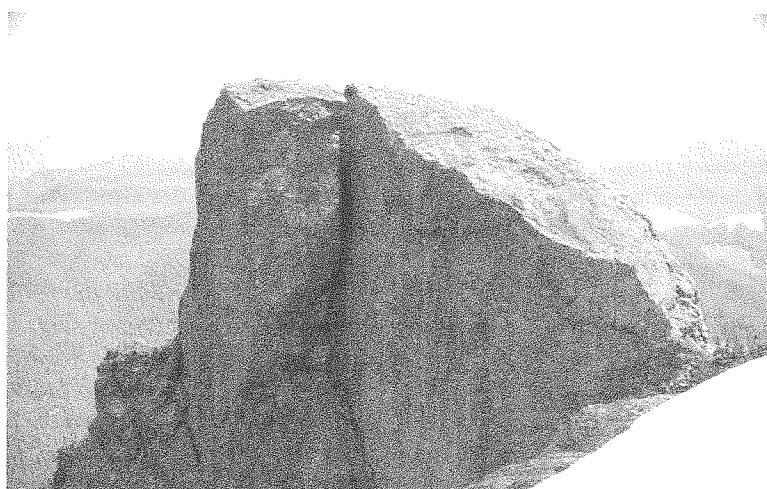
I have found on a couple of occasions (Mt. Logan, Mt. Juliet) that it is good to do trips with Lindsay when he is

a little bit ill. That way I have a better chance of keeping up with him. As I recall he was having a sort of 'off day' today too, so that, except for places where his extra abilities at technical scrambling paid off, we stayed together all the time.

The ridge down toward Barad-dûr went well except for the last 100 m,

in which was concealed a very nasty little cliff. After some effort, Lindsay discovered a feasible way down and we eventually reached the col for a short rest. The ascent of Barad-dûr was straightforward, some of it on firm steep snow. Well, 'straightforward' is not quite accurate. There is an outer summit, somewhat resembling a miniature Half-Dome, which to my eye looked a little higher, though I'm not sure Lindsay would agree on this. Our ascent of this outer summit involved a few low fifth-class moves with some exposure. We hung out on Barad-dûr for nearly an hour enjoying the superb weather and the great north-Island scenery. By mutual agreement Mook Pk. was left for another day. It was separated from us by a very deep saddle (for which we had little energy) and possibly a little rock-climbing (for which we had no gear).

We returned in the direction of the Trolls, this time completely avoiding the nasty cliff by following a small stream gully on the left (SW) side of the ridge. However, it seemed we could not avoid having to traverse essentially over the top of the first Troll again. Our descent from the creek was less clever and more bushy than had been our ascent, but we



The outer (true) summit of Barad-dûr (4938 ft). Photo: Sandy Briggs.

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

arrived uneventfully at the truck at about 6 pm having had a splendid day in the mountains.

We ate dinner at the pub in Woss and chatted briefly with the owner (son of George Lepore who did the first known ascent of Rugged Mountain). I spent the night at

Lindsay's and returned to Victoria the next morning, thus dragging our 'day-trip' a little into its third day.

Participants: Lindsay Elms, Sandy Briggs

MT. JULIET-SHOVELGATE GULLY

Lindsay Elms

February 20

VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

On a skiing/climbing trip in winter, there is nothing like climbing into a down-filled sleeping bag with 7-10 centimetres of loft to keep you warm in the evening. A light-weight, compressible synthetic bag just doesn't do it: it lacks that all important comfort factor conducive to a good night's sleep. And, as we all know, a good night's sleep staves off that tired grumpy feeling that can make the next days climb a bitch both for you and your climbing partner.

It was just after 8 pm, Sandy and I had finished dinner and were ready to escape from the evening chill that was beginning to permeate the tent once the stove was shut down. As I crawled into my bag I began squirming with ecstasy at the sensuous feeling of being tickled by thousands of downy goose feathers all over my body. I pulled the hood up around my head and drifted off into the land of nod. Not even Sandy's erratic staccato snoring could disturb the heavenly bliss I was experiencing! It's great to experience one of life's simple pleasures while in the mountains!

Sandy drove up from Victoria Saturday morning and we had a leisurely lunch before leaving Courtenay just after 1 pm. We drove up through Sayward to the Rooney Lake Main which crosses the highway via an overpass just north of Rooney Lake. We managed to drive 4.5 km up the recently ploughed logging road to where the Owens Lake Main joins. Here we donned packs and skis and started up the snowed-under O.L.M.. Over the first 3 kilometres we climbed 300 m and then once we reached Owen Lake the valley leveled out. It appeared as though the lake had been formed by a massive landslide some time ago as huge boulders were strewn around the lakes exit.

We continued skiing around the lake, passing meadows that looked like they would be worth visiting in the late spring when the flowers would be blooming, and then up the valley for another 4 km. Here we dropped down off the road and through the clear-cut to the river. We found a sheltered spot out of the wind and erected the tent. Above us to the west was Mt. Romeo and to the east Mt. Juliet with the big snow-filled gully that descended from the summit ridge. I had looked at this route last year while climbing Mt. Romeo and Eden although at the time it was summer and the gully was free of snow but it certainly looked the easiest approach to the mountain.

Sunday morning didn't see us moving around too early but our morning routine was performed quickly and efficiently. The comfort of my down sleeping bag had done its job and I was feeling well rested. It had warmed up a bit during the night and after we had another look at the gully

we decided to leave the ski's behind. With a minimum of gear we crossed the creek and climbed into the wide fan at the bottom of the gully. The snow was in perfect conditions: it was firm and crunchy and we didn't need our crampons. We zig-zagged up through the exposed tops of the slide alder that were buried by the winter snow pack. Further up the gully it began to narrow but sufficient snow covered the bluffs and we continued to climb through. There had been a little avalanche activity but there was no sign of it being very recent: it was well consolidated and had a fresh covering of light snow.

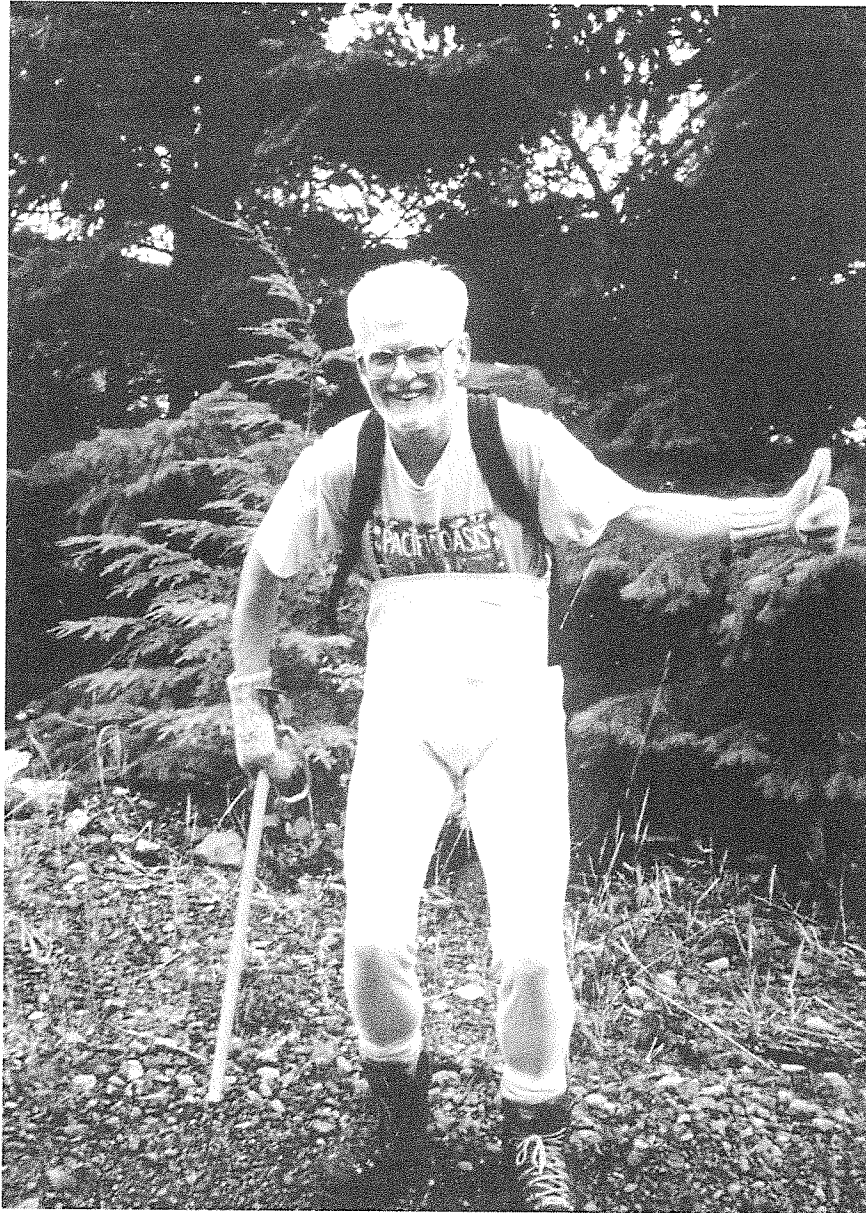
The gully again opened up and our boots began punching through the crust. Sandy was in great shape and was happy being out in front. I was still recovering from a cold so there was no argument when Sandy said that he didn't mind trail-breaking. You could say I was following in Sandy's footsteps!

As we approached the summit ridge we looked around the surrounding mountains and saw a fast approaching front moving in over Mt. Schoen. Ten minutes later the mountain was gone from our view. The summit of Mt. Juliet was not far away and the snow was hard-packed as we exited the gully and entered the alpine. Fifteen minutes later we were standing on the summit. It had taken us just 2 hours to reach the summit from our tent. The surrounding mountains were rapidly disappearing into the greyness of the approaching front but we could pick out some of the familiar summits. It was trying to snow and a cold wind was whipping across the summit. We decided not to linger too long: we shook hands congratulating ourselves on our first new summit for the millennium and took a couple of quick photos. Two minutes later we were retracing our tracks and beating a retreat back down the gully.

Our descent was quick and the tent was reached in half an hour. There was no need to hang around so we packed up camp and climbed back up onto the logging road. We wanted to beat a hasty retreat and avoid being caught in the rain and snow that we were sure was going to soon catch us. Fortunately the front came to a halt and spared us a miserable trip back to the car.

I decided to call this route the Shovelgate Gully after the recent Human Resources Minister Jane Stewart's "billion-dollar boondoggle" and we believe this might even be the first new route put up on Vancouver Island for the new millennium.

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Lindsay Elms



VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAINS

MOUNTAIN HUMOUR WINNER

*John Clarke ready to climb Mt. Arrowsmith.
Claire Ebendinger*

COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES



Unloading the helicopter. Photograph: Susan Allen.

AMISKWI YO-YO AT ITS BEST!

Susan Allen
February 20-27

For amazing ski conditions, breathtaking vistas and fabulous accommodations, Amiskwi Lodge cannot be beaten! This was definitely the opinion of the ACC-Vancouver Island Section skiers last February. Before we left civilization, we received a detailed safety lecture from Doug, our Bell 407 helicopter pilot. He had gray hair, which in my opinion was a good sign. I assumed it was from lots of experience, not terrifying flights. Doug explained carefully the hazards of carrying skis upright to the copter and we managed to load the copter in a most efficient manner. Since this was my first fly-in trip, I had the opportunity to sit in the bubble. It was wonderful! As we flew down the Blaebury Valley and up and over Amiskwi pass, Doug presented a running commentary of the outstanding features of the area.

The lodge is situated just above Amiskwi pass at an elevation of 6900 ft (2104 m). It is located at tree line with wide-open vistas above and excellent tree skiing below.

By noon, the entire group had arrived at the lodge. It was a beautiful clear sunny day. We ate quickly and headed up Crystal Ridge. The snow was dry and fluffy. At the top of the ridge the views of the Mummy group, Des Poilus and Arête peaks were exceptional. We found a pleasantly steep slope and every one (but one debutant telemarker) yo-yoed all the way back to the lodge. The debutant decided to admire the sunset while returning by a less exciting route.

That night we enjoyed the amenities of the lodge, a restored two-story log building. The main floor consisted of a large drying room/workshop, which accommodated all of our gear easily, a huge open combined kitchen/dining room and sunroom with fantastic views. The kitchen was well equipped with a propane stove, oven, fridge and quality cookware. A delightful sitting area, with a wood stove, was in the kitchen/dining room. We ate at a huge handmade wooden table that was comfortable for all.

A deluxe wood-fired sauna was located just steps from

the main lodge. It was an ideal way to spend an hour after enjoying the slopes and the fluffy snow just beckoned us to make snow angels!

The next day we rose to fog. We decided to review our safety skills, climbed up a slope and created a Rutchbloc and Rutchkeil. Managed to work up to Step 6 & 7 before anything moved. The snow pack was solid! No worries for us. Snow conditions were superb for the whole trip. The snow was dry, light, powdery and without crust.

Throughout the week, we discovered some particularly interesting and scenic routes close to the lodge. The different ridges led to large bowls with wide-open slopes. Skiing through the trees to the valley bottom was a treat and lots of fun. The "Burn" was a remarkable slope by the headwaters of the Amiskwi River. It was an ideal angle, exciting and varied. Overall, Amiskwi presented wonderful snow conditions with diverse terrain. There were steep and exhilarating slopes for the experts and less angled slopes for those who wished to develop their skills.

The food was suburb! A fully catered lodge would not have exceeded our standards. Each morning, we enjoyed hot cereal with nuts and dried fruit. Each evening, we appreciated fine gourmet fare. Appetizers ranged from smoked salmon, sausage rolls, shrimps, pate, cheese, sausage and crackers. Main dishes included a whole stuffed salmon (Tim and Doug), curried chicken and fragrant rice, chicken stew, lasagna, baked chicken and chili. Dessert was varied and included cakes of all sorts fresh from the oven, fresh berries from Judith's garden, Annie's Cake, and a mixed fruit cobbler with maple syrup and rum sauce (Paul and Geoff).

The final evening, our resident songwriter, Gerta Smythe, created a song which we all enjoyed and sung. It is to be sung to the tune of the Austrian "Nuisance" song and following each verse there is a reframe of "Holla-da-oi-dio-Holla-da-no.

*We came to Amiskwi to ski and have fun,
We found lots of powder, but not so much sun!
Gerhardt has planned this trip from the start,
We praise him and thank him with all our heart!
Judith and Viggo, a most favourite pair,
They skied and they worked, did more than their share!
It's always great fun, when Doug joins the pack,
He sets an incredible vertical track!
The first one to rise, so long before light,*



Top: Lodge as from the helicopter during landing. Bottom: Gerta and Gerhardt on the slopes. Photographs: Susan Allen.

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES

*Was Paul, clanging, banging: The coffee was just right!
So many great tales there, told by this group,
The best was Geoff's lizard, which shook the tent hoop.
We spent a whole week, with fun and great joys,
Some wonderful skiing with Tim, Andrew, Brad (the boys!)
I, too, did my share; our meal was just fine,
My partner was Graham, who kept me in wine.
We are sitting and waiting, the cleaning is done,
And hope, with the chopper, will come the sun!*

As the chopper arrived and was loaded, the group concluded that this was the most luxurious and comfortable fly-in trip they had ever enjoyed!

Participants: Gerhardt Lepp (coordinator), Andrew Lunny, Brad Bennett, Doug Hurrell, Gerta Smythe, Geoff Bennet Graham Bennett, Judith Holm, Paul Clements, Susan Allen, Tim Strange, Viggo Holm

IDEA 2000 ON MT. MATIER

David Panofsky & Katherine Brandt-Wells
July 20-23

A ferry ride from Victoria and a 4-hour drive north of Vancouver, past Squamish and the small logging/ranching town of Pemberton, brought us to a trailhead at the Joffre Peaks Alpine Recreation Area. We were there to make an attempt on Mount Matier (2770 m, 9100 ft), the highest summit in the Joffre Group, in south-western British Columbia's vast Coast Mountains. We had met each

other for the first time (and our spouses, Derek and Pat) at the excellent IDAA international conference in Vancouver a few days earlier. Now, just the diabetics were off on an adventure.

We had but a glimpse of Matier from the car on the way up the bumpy logging road and I marveled at how remote, steep, icy, and beautiful it looked and thought to myself

"WOW! We are going to climb THAT!?!?!" We readied our packs, checked blood sugar, set our temporary basal rates on our insulin pumps, snacked some, slapped at mosquitoes and flies, and were off.

Cerise Creek starts at the terminus of the Anniversary Glacier. Hiking up the creek valley, following a few random blazes, brought us into thicker, incredibly buggy and painfully scratchy terrain. The blazes led to a former crossing point on Cerise Creek. There was a faded and frayed (former?) safety line strung up between a few trees high above a slippery log, fully submerged at our end, beneath a number of feet of the roaring creek. There was no way we were going to make it across here and we decided to find a more appropriate crossing upstream, where we rationalized the creek would be mellower. Thick willows, sharp and pointy conifers, hidden holes and streams, dead fall—I asked Katherine whether this was a typical approach. She assured me that yes, it was about average. A half-hour later, Katherine conceded that it could be slightly above average. Thank goodness.

An hour or more of fighting with the flora brought us to a log jam in the creek and we were able to step log to log, in a circuitous, hopping path, to the other side of the creek. We moved up a wonderfully clear slope and found a well-worn trail that led to a low-angle talus slope, along an old terminal moraine of the Anniversary Glacier, and to "Keith's Hut". Katherine had been here early in the year on skis and knew we could find good camping nearby. It was almost 8 pm and the bugs were feasting on us. The hut was empty and provided us with a refuge from the insects. We decided to postpone camping for a day... this was to be home and we moved in. Once we had run inside the hut and slammed the door shut, we gazed out of the Plexiglas window, figuring out the best line up the Anniversary Glacier to Mount Matier, which was now in alpenglow.

We awoke to a perfect, cloudless morning. The route we chose up Mount Matier was via the north-east ridge and began with following a lateral moraine (beginning at 1600 m) to its end and traversing small talus slopes to gain the base of a snow couloir. This couloir was approximately 100 m long and approached 40 degrees at its steepest. From the top of the couloir we traversed easy snow and spotted some movement. It was two adult Dall sheep with two young. The sheep were no doubt thinking EXACTLY what I was thinking: "why on earth are you up here?!"

We continued our traverse on snow, roped up, and gained the Anniversary Glacier, following the most logical line across the least crevassed and easiest terrain to the col (2000 m) between Mt. Matier and Joffre Peak. We stopped for a short break and while admiring the views, suddenly saw a tiny hummingbird zip by, making its way over the pass! From the col, we traversed steeper slopes on Matier, crossed more crevassed terrain, and reached the final steep snow section which was about 100 m in length and about 50 degrees steep. This last section of steep snow was tiring, but felt reasonably secure. The softening snow provided use with good steps straight up, until we reached the final corniced ridge. There were footprints too close to the edge of the cornice for my comfort level, and I chose a line which stayed lower

and closer to easy rock which led to a 100 m-long wide, easy, rocky ridge all the way to the summit (2770 m).

The weather continued to be perfect and we had lunch (tasty burritos from the previous night) and stayed on the summit for more than an hour and a half, which did not even seem excessive. Having a rather low blood sugar upon reaching the summit, I gave in to Katherine's offer to try some chocolate-covered Kendal mint cake to treat my hypo... it was so good! This was the best thing I'd tried yet! The view from the summit was breathtaking—huge corniced ridges, enormous glaciers and dramatic icefalls, long snowy arêtes, steep rock and towering gendarmes—and we saw nobody the entire day. We descended the same way we climbed. I expected the snow to turn ugly by late in the day, but it stayed in reasonable condition. We moved comfortably all day without crampons. 10 hours round trip from the hut.

That night, around 8 pm, two more people arrived at the hut, glad to escape from the hungry mosquitoes outside. At that moment Katherine and I were both sharing a chocolate bar as a finale to our filling pasta dinner. First, I took two squares of chocolate, unclipped the pump and pressed a "Beep! Beep!" for an insulin bolus and then Katherine took two squares of chocolate, unclipped her pump and did a "Beep! Beep!" Neither of us could keep a straight face after that, thinking that these two strangers must have been thinking we were a little odd, both eating chocolate and beeping! Luckily, the female turned out to be a nurse and understood our eccentricities.

The following day, the weather turned. We had planned for another climb in the area, but felt lucky to have succeeded with our primary objective. We left the hut and Katherine suggested an alternate way out. We followed a well-used path—a very different way than from the brutal approach a few days earlier. After only an hour of easy walking, we arrived at an unfamiliar car park, followed a logging road across Cerise Creek, and discovered our car. Very cheeky indeed, Katherine! It turned out that we had taken the winter ski route in instead of the summer route on Thursday, by mistake (so claims Katherine)!

An IDEA 2000-esque dinner and camping that night in light rain north of Vancouver, a 3:15 am wake up, and an early drive towards the Vancouver airport for a plane ride home to Wisconsin, USA. With some time to spare, we decided on the 24-hour "Naam" veggie restaurant in Vancouver for a needed cup of coffee and nice breakfast. Katherine dropped me at the airport and I hugged her goodbye and waved goodbye to British Columbia's wonderful mountains. What a way to meet a new friend and IDEA 2000 colleague—going to the wilderness, climbing, and having a great time! Thanks Katherine.

TETRAHEDRON PROVINCIAL PARK SKI TRIP

AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Paul Herbert

March 26 – April 1

Four from Victoria and two from NanOOSE Bay met on a cold but clear morning at the Nanaimo ferry, transferred to the Langdale ferry at Horseshoe Bay and motored up through the steep, dense hemlock, fir and yellow cedar forests above Sechelt on the Sunshine Coast.

For someone visiting, as I was, from Australia this was a delightful way to travel to a ski destination. A scene of busy waterway traffic, some with white sails almost mimicking the white peaks rising sheer out of the calm Straits of Georgia, is a far cry from the inland, gently rising pastures and eucalypt forest on the approaches to our limited ski fields.

After wedging our cars into the snow covered, small car park space we skied off, packs bulging with a week's food, meeting weekend parties skiing out. One of the advantages, we hoped, of a Sunday start was the likelihood of getting a place in one of the park's cabins. Sure enough after 2 1/2 hours of mostly gentle uphill skiing we reached the well set up Edwards cabin completely empty. Its efficient wood stove facilitated both snow melting for water and a cozy atmosphere for several marathon, after-dinner sing-songs. Just as well the hut was empty except for us!

All four rustic cabins in the park are maintained by the Tetrahedron Ski Club (and what a sterling job they do) but available to the public on a first come first served basis.

The area abounds in snow covered lakes so it is no surprise to find that the area is a water catchment for the Sunshine Coast region with camping restricted to the area around the cabins.

After a couple of overcast days the skies cleared to reveal not only innumerable lakes but also many sparkling peaks that adopted magical tints in the early evening sunsets. What a gem of a park right on Vancouver's doorstep. I hope it doesn't get loved to death!

Well marked trails invited exploratory trips in several directions including steeply up to Mt. Steele hut on the deliciously skiable flanks of 1650m Mt. Steele itself. After

adorning the slopes with some rather professional telemarks we stood back to admire our handiwork and tried to ignore the professional 'sitzmarks' punctuating some of the steeper sections!

Looming over a high shoulder of Mt. Steele, the startling appearance of the stark pyramid of Tetrahedron Peak (1737m) is imprinted on the memory of this writer coming, as he does, from a geologically ancient and relatively flat continent. (Australia does, though, have its share of spectacular

crag and ravines, many in World Heritage listed parks that are popular bushwalking and climbing destinations.)

Another highlight of the trip was a day's tour to McNair Hut situated on the saddle between Chapman and McNair Lakes. In summer the views from the windows to both lakes must be picture postcard stuff but since we could ski right over the roof on 2m thick snow the interior was dark and viewless. Not so the exterior, though, where the clear sky and warm sun were causing snow to fall from the trees with sounds like echoing cannon fire.

The elegant, narrow white 'rockets' closely adorning the slopes of the Tetrahedron Park make, perhaps the greatest contrast with Australian alpine regions which are clothed with round-headed and often multi-stemmed snow gums. Both make infinitely variable sensual snow

sculptures that make cruising through on skis an ethereal experience. Snow gums tend to collect more rime and icicles than snow on their branches and the smooth trunks are often scarlet or deep olive green which contrast spectacularly with the white snow and clear blue skies.

Another sculptural quality in common is the chef's hat worn by the boulders in the creek flowing out of Chapman Lake. The taller 'hats' there, though, reflect the much greater snow depths than in Australia.

The relatively shallow snow and undulating slopes in Australia have meant that only one death from avalanche has been recorded. So it was an interesting learning experi-



George and Paul on way to Mt. Steele. Photograph: Albert Hestler.

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES

ence to witness the precautions which the trip's joint organizers took to ensure avalanche safety. Fortunately conditions were relatively stable, but no one was taking any chances.

Our ski out, for the most part, gently downhill or over level lakes, with markedly lighter packs was pleasant and it was satisfying to look back up from the ferry at the peaks

and think that only a couple of hours before we had been up among them.

Participants: Jack Fisher (co-leader), Albert Hestler (co-leader), Paul Herbert (reporter from Canberra), George Smekal, Perry Therrien, Jules Thomson

MT. CARR TRIP REPORT

Don Cameron

April 21-23

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES

I am quite new to mountaineering. Although I have had a few years of downhill skiing, this is my first season of backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering. It seems as though I had always found some excuse to avoid trying ski mountaineering, but mostly I think it was plain old fear. Also, I don't mind hiking in bad weather, but I usually draw the line at deep snow. It is just too much work for so little gained. So after many years of restricting myself to short summer climbing in the alpine, I came to realize that I am missing a lot of great peaks by not skiing. A quick look at the VI ACC schedule confirmed my suspicions.

As per usual, when the ACC national course brochure came out, I retired to my comfy couch and ogled and dreamed of all the wonderful peaks I could try. Then I saw the course for me: Intro to Ski Mountaineering in the Wapta Ice Fields. OK, here was my chance—I had to take this course. I had to learn to get out in the snow and ski up mountains.

I went and bought all my gear (which is a ton of fun in itself), and practiced weekend after weekend up at Forbidden Plateau during the late fall. By the time February came around, I was nervous, but ready for the Rockies. The course turned out to be great, with lots of varied skill levels and very patient instructors. I finished that course with a new level of confidence in my skiing abilities.

Then the real world set in.

By the time the Mt. Carr trip came around, I had a couple of ski trips with the club: San Juan Ridge with Gerhard and Mt. Albert Edward with Sandy, which turned out to be a lot of work. I was learning quickly, but still had a long way to go and lots of reservations. A recurring thought of trying to kick turn with a full pack then falling face first down a 45 degree slope and stuffing myself into a tree well, kept me pretty nervous. Without such nice and welcoming people such as Catrin, Claire, Sandy and Gerhard, my apprehensions about ski mountaineering would be thwarted.

The Mt. Carr trip seemed to start out doomed from the start. Rick, who was to be our guide, was unable to make the trip. So before we even got started it was looking like it would not be a peak bagger weekend, but maybe just a tour in Garibaldi. Luckily Catrin managed to convince Claire to lead our group. Now that I know Claire a little bit, I imagine that it was pretty easy convincing, as Claire's enthusiasm seems boundless.

The weather for the trip was looking really crummy. At

one point we were just going to cancel Mt. Carr and ski into the Elfin hut. But by the time we got over to the North Shore, Claire saw the cloud cover and with her positive attitude declared we were going to Mt. Carr.

On the way up, synchronicity was in full force. At the turn off to the parking lot, we stopped to wait for the cars to re-group. As I sat in my nice warm truck I heard a shriek, poked my head out side, and saw Claire hugging Greg. Claire had not seen Greg for a long time and she was very happy to see him. Greg and Selena were going up to Joffre, the only two on their trip, and we had just managed to run into them. Weird.

With lots of peer pressure, we convinced them to come with us, which was a very good thing: Greg had lots of energy that weekend.

The hike and ski up the Garibaldi switchbacks was in mild wet rain and snow. The rest of the evening was spent in the shelter, as the snow outside was wet, threatening to make the weekend miserable. Selena braved the wet snow and bivied outside "just for the experience". I preferred the experience of a dry tent, although she did look cute in the morning buried in all that fresh snow.

Saturday morning greeted us with fast moving cloud cover and lots of sucker holes. That was good enough for Claire—the trip was on—we were going up Mt. Carr. The ski up was a lot of work. I learned how hard it really is to ski up with my skins loaded with snow. I was bagged and kept praying for a really lousy weather so we could just ski down and rest. Much to my surprise, my prayer came true. We got socked in. However, my prayer was only for the weather and did not include the "ski down and rest part" because everyone just kept on going. We were all following the bulldozer Greg. His Duracell's were fully charged and he just kept going.

Greg's effort breaking trail to the top was amazing. He just kept on going. Later that evening I overheard Claire thanking him for all his effort. Greg, with a wry smile on his face, humbly replied "No thanks required, I did it for selfish reasons. I wanted to be the first to the top". Now that I know Greg a little bit—I really don't believe him.

I am surprised and rewarded with how much enthusiasm and energy the club has. In conditions that I thought were impossible, they just took it as a normal situation and worked with it. The group just kept on going. When we finally reached the last ascent and people started ripping off their skis to boot up, I welcomed the change. My enthusi-

asm had rekindled with full force as I watched everyone kick step up the final steep slope. I was very happy to rip off the boards and start kicking my way to the top.

The summit was very windy and cold. We spent just a few minutes up there taking a ton of pictures (most of mine included my hand over the lens) and scribbling in the summit register. There is something special about reaching the summit, more than just the climb and the accomplishment. Somehow I feel a little bit closer to everyone with the effort we put in together to reach the top. It is a real nice feeling.

The ski down was fabulous. Although we were socked in up top, little patches of clear sky would peak through and we would blast down the slope, everyone having their chance at showing their stuff. Michael and Sylvia really showed their finesse carving up the hill, while Charles and Greg did them one better by showing how elegant one could be twisting and crashing. I had my fair share of bombs but, with a little deep powder advice from Sylvia, I managed to get in some good turns.

The next morning the Easter bunny greeted us. Little chocolate eggs were everywhere, with most of the group finding them in their boots, bags and clothing. On all my future trips, I think I will adopt this ACC tradition of chocolate for breakfast. Catrin says it is the best way to start off the day.

I have heard phrases like "climbing would be fun if you took the climbing out of it" or "the fun of mountaineering is when it is over", and I sort of agree—but not completely. There is something intangible yet special about the hard work, challenging the doubts in my head, and working as a team to reach the summit. It really is a good, soulful feeling realizing my mountaineering dreams. And without the club, I would still be down at 500m, booting around, looking at the peaks, wondering what it is like.

Thanks to Claire, Catrin, Greg and Charles.

Participants: Catrin Brown (organizer), Claire Ebendinger (guide), Greg Gordon (worker bee), Selena Swets, Charles Turner, Mike Hubbard, Sylvia Moser, Derek Wells, Katherine Brandt, Kevin Mazur, Don Cameron

MT. JIMMY—JIMMY AND MT. PHILLIPS

John Pratt

August 22–26

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES

By accident rather than by design, the three of us climbed two mountains to do either of which it is usual to park one's car by a mine: in the case of Mr. Phillips it is of course the (unfortunately) still-very-active Westmin Mine whereas with Jimmy-Jimmy, it is the apparently deserted Ashlu Mine.

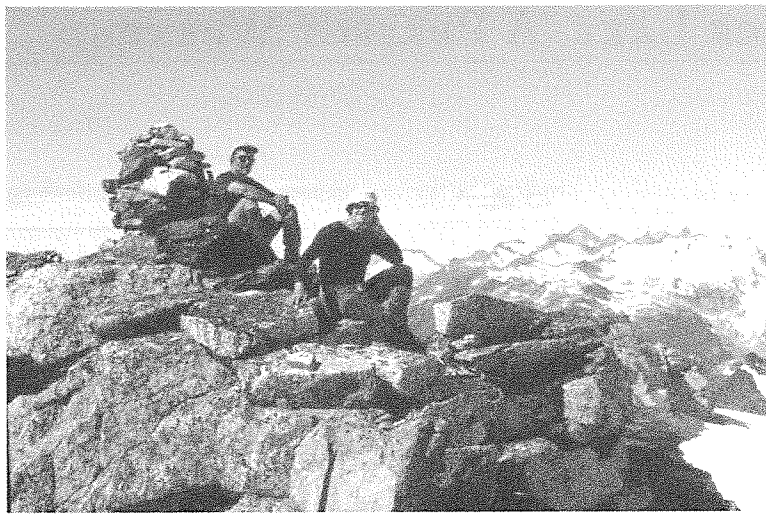
At about 3 pm on the hot, clear afternoon of 22 August, we parked George's van—the only one of our cars really capable of handling the rough road up the Ashlu R. Valley—at the heavy iron gate that barred its further progress. We continued on foot, passing abandoned shacks and rusting equipment (why can't these people be made to clean up their mess?), heading toward the divide between Coin and Marten Creeks. The former was most interesting as just above where the road crosses it, the white water is forced through a "cannon-hole"—that is, a sort of natural stone bridge spans the creek; the whole area is wreathed in a fine "scotch mist" and luxuriant moss carpets the ground.

The road, easy walking up to this point (and somewhat beyond) rapidly degenerated into a dreadful tangle of alder and became very hard to follow as it switchbacked up the divide. This used to be a popular ski day-trip, but the condition of the road and the horrendous overgrown logging-slash beyond make such a trip pretty nearly impractical now. Eventually, the road simply disappears and the map makes its last contact with reality.

By now, it was 6:00 pm and we wisely decided to

camp—at a rare open spot—by the side of Coin Creek, but up at about the 1000m level: there was simply too much chance of ending up immersed, without a supply of water, in an inhospitable tangle of brush as darkness fell, a less-than-enticing proposition. I spent a little of the remaining daylight, while the others cooked up dinner, on a reconnaissance trip to sample the bush, which indeed was every bit as horrible as it looked.

The next morning, we launched our uphill assault against



George Urban and John Pratt on the summit of Mt. Jimmy Jimmy.
Photograph: Sandy Briggs.

this murderous tangle, but after two hours' total-body-workout we succeeded in reaching the mature trees and from then on, the going was much easier and due to lack of careful planning on my part, became quite enjoyable. We broke out into the alpine at about 1600m and re-pitched the tent in a delightful spot just beyond a small knoll on the ridge. Here, we took a well-earned rest and ditched excess gear in the tent before setting off again. Beyond the tent was a steep moraine and we trudged up the spine of this to a point at which we could easily access the long, wide impressive glacier, that kind of gently-rising superhighway so noticeably absent from the Island scene.

We trudged up and up, the summit always seeming to be hidden by yet another rise in the glacier. Eventually, we came to the last bit where the snow steepened into a craggy, broken rock-ridge. The summit was quickly located: it turned out to have a sizeable cairn adorning it and an enormous-well, big enough-drop-off on the other side. We spent an hour on this wonderful, airy perch. It had a view to match and it would be quicker to list the peaks we couldn't see, although it was the nearby peaks of the Tantalus Range--Pelion, Ossa and of course Mr. T. himself--which stole the scene. A good celebratory belt of George's scotch and we began the descent, arriving back at camp in almost no time at all. We spent the evening enduring the insects (very bad here) before cooking up a victors' supper and turning in for the night.

As we approached Gold River en route for the Mt. Bate area it began to rain; the mountain-tops were cloaked in a depressing mist. What to do? we thought as we sipped bad

coffee at the nearby gas-station. Obviously, our intended target of Gratton ("Pyramid") was not--under these conditions--a wise one and Sandy accordingly suggested Mt. Phillips, which none of us had ever done. The peak had just sat there, vaguely on everyone's list but always being overlooked in favour of other objectives. But not this time.

As soon as we drove back out of Gold River, the weather improved from awful to poor and after parking at the Westminster Mine we slogged up the trail to Arnica Lake. Beyond the lake, we were temporarily turned around on the broad, heavily-treed, misty and confusing ridge, but by and by found a poorly-marked trail leading more or less where we wanted to go. That evening, we had a camp up on the ridge at about 1400m and after supper, we did a couple of "recies" to see how far ahead we could follow the route. This turned out to be profitable as it enabled us to make good time on the first kilometer or so the next morning by which time the weather had distinctly, if very temporarily, improved. We had no real difficulty in following the ridge and route-finding became easier as the ridge became narrower. In the end, we were staring end-on at the final pyramid of Mt. Phillips. Apart from having to lose about 100m, there were no further difficulties and we scrambled onto the summit 10:20 am. A pleasant feature of this climb was the lovely display of alpine flowers so absent from the mainland area we had been in a few days before. On top of Mt. Phillips there was a small cairn, which I considerably enlarged. We spent about 3/4 of an hour up there before commencing our descent.

Participants: George Urban, Sandy Briggs and John Pratt

CHILLIWACK LAKE--A PERFECT WEEKEND

Jules Thomson
September 2000

We had picked the perfect weekend--endless blue sky and warm sunshine that lifted our spirits and enveloped us in a summer aura. Our stoic leader Catrin Brown insisted on leading our group even though she had suffered a nasty ankle injury weeks before on Baffin Island. Still, she contended that she would just not fully explain, to her physiotherapist, exactly what she had been up to this weekend except to admit being out for a wee bit of a hike.

Traveling through Chilliwack, the boomtown, and along gravel roads we arrived at Chilliwack Lake which was not our destination. Not the least bit discouraged we backtracked and finally found our trailhead (see Catrin & Rick for exact directions). The trail was lovely with ferns and foliage and a few "which way now" turnoffs. Delightful bridges led our way across numerous creek crossings up to a lovely lake (the name escapes me) where we settled in for the night. The night air was so mellow and warm that Catrin and Charles both bivied and said it was the balmiest night that they had ever experienced--at least Catrin said that. The next day we set off on our grunt up to the col where Mt. Webb and MacDonald beckoned us on. Some of the group wanted, basically, a hike up MacDonald, while Don Morton

and Jules decided on a rope climb up the east side of what we thought would get us up MacDonald. The views were breathtaking, exquisite, and I could have almost reached out and touched Mt. Baker. Don and Jules managed to get blocked at the top of a gully so they had to belay over downward sloped slabs of wet rock in retreat. Don did the body belay technique, while Jules placed some protection and slithered down the wet slabs. Don commented that we had done an epic climb, while asking me if I had never down-climbed. I replied that "yes, I had, but not on downward slanted wet slabs of rock." Jules and Don raced back to the col to meet up with the rest of the group who were preparing to descend. Don would have preferred, at that point, to leave also, but Jules talked him into dropping the packs and racing up Webb for a quick look see. Jules talked endlessly of famous climbers, Kurt Diemberger, Messner, Mallory, trying to impress this world traveled climber with her knowledge and also make the scramble seem a bit shorter.

Pat O'Brien charmed us with her delightful storytelling keeping us all spellbound by her fascinating tales. And Charles kept us entertained with his repertoire of flatulency timed, so it seemed, to fill any lull in the conversation. Don

Morton had brought his vintage steep-sided tent to try out in preparation for Aconcagua in the following January. Everyone was quite polite about this amazing tent and how well preserved it was. But Don, being the astute character that he is, did pick up on our amused appraisal of his tent as he suddenly blurted out "sooo, you don't like my tent." Ah, Don, it really is a very nice orange tent! The rest of the trip

(of what I remember) was uneventful, as it seems that we got Charles back in time to link up with his ferry. In all it was a great trip. Thanks Catrin.

Participants: I hope that I haven't forgotten anyone: Catrin Brown (leader), Charles Turner, Don Morton, Tony Vaughn, Pat & Murren O'Brien and me.

ELLERSLIE LAKE

Albert Hestler

July 15-27

Trust Jack to turn a trip that is basically a kayaking venture into a mountain-climbing expedition. He and Graham Bennett had explored a route up to Spears Lake (above Ellerslie Lake) during an earlier trip in 1994. This time he wanted to reach the snow-covered ridges over 3000' beyond Spears. To improve our chances of success, we brought along ice axes, harnesses and a rope.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't exactly favourable for mountain climbing. After we had scrambled in the bush for about four hours, we found our way barred by the steep canyon walls and fast flowing water of a creek not marked on the map. Also, noticing that the early morning mist had simply metamorphosed into low hanging clouds, we decided that a retreat was the better part of valour.

There was still Lake Ellerslie to be explored. We had reached this jewel of a lake after two days paddling (53 km north from Bella Bella) and a one-half mile portage. All together we spent six days on its shores, under conditions which could be described as being decidedly mixed. The lake is a sacred place to the Heiltsuk people—there are over 50 pictographs on rock faces along the lake's shore: there are culturally modified trees, and somewhere there is a cave which shows evidence of human habitation in ancient times.

Especially memorable was the day when we paddled to the top end of the lake, known as The Pocket. It was raining softly, so the rock walls were glistening and water was



Ellerslie Lake. Photograph: Albert Hestler.

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES

coming down everywhere, from tiny trickles to roaring falls. The clouds were hanging low and obscuring the mountain tops. We all felt that this was a special and self-contained world, truly primeval, and very mystical. It inspired me to write the following:

A ribbon of water winding between walls of towering rocks and brooding trees, a highway to somewhere—or nowhere.

A gentle soft rain falling from a ceiling of low hanging clouds shrouding the mountains, which we know to be there, in mystery.

Myriads of waterfalls cascading down like curtains around us add voice as we enter nature's inner sanctum—a holy place.

Participants: Jack Fisher, Albert Hestler, Perry Therrien.

ALIENS ON MOUNT WOOLLEY

Doug Hurrell

August 1-3

We hiked into the Lloyd Mackay hut in early August with some hopes of climbing Mt. Alberta. Although these dreams did not come true this story is not a sad one. This was my third summer trip to the Rockies with Rudy, always a highlight of my year. Rob Macdonald added

strength and experience to the party, as well as badly needed intellectual qualities.

We started off in mid afternoon by wading the many braided channels of the Sunwapta River right beside the highway a few miles north of the Columbia Icefields visitor

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES



BEST PRINT WINNER

Valhalla Provincial Park, September 2000.
Chris Sheppard

center. The trail then follows the south side of Wooley Creek through sub-alpine forest and then rough moraines. We bivouacked amongst the last of the trees in a pretty spot beside the creek. Rudy was attacked by rats during the night while Rob and I slept peacefully.

The trail then leads to a cirque at the headwaters of the creek surrounded by ten and eleven thousand foot glacier clad peaks. In order to cross into the adjacent Habel Creek drainage one has to surmount the infamous Wooley Shoulder—one of the most notorious scree slopes in the Rockies. From the bottom it didn't look too bad but by the time I reached the top at an elevation of 8700' I was well behind my companions and very tired.

This area boasts two of the most difficult climbs in the Rockies—the 5000 foot North Face of Twins Tower and the North face of Mount Alberta. It is also home one of the most out-

standing achievements of the early days of Canadian mountaineering—the first ascent of Mount Alberta. This was climbed 75 years ago by two Swiss guides leading a Swiss amateur and a large group of intrepid Japanese. The party spent two nights on the mountain and left an ice axe on the summit (at one time rumoured to be made of silver) to mark their conquest.

The view from the summit of the shoulder is truly awe inspiring to any mountaineer. The great face of the North Twin, capped with the huge ice cliffs of the Columbia Ice Field is a few miles to the south east and the forbidding mass of Mount Alberta blocks the view to the west. After taking this in we hiked down a gentle slope over easy scree and glaciers to the hut at 8100'. It is very small but bright, neat and well equipped with excellent views of the east face of Mount Alberta. The Japanese couloir which is supposed to be a challenging 5.7 rock climb was choked with late season snow in its upper reaches and a water fall ran out the

bottom. It didn't look safe or even feasible so we decided to try to climb the 11,300 foot Mt. Wooley by a steep glacier which runs down its south face.

After enjoying a leisurely breakfast the next morning we donned crampons and then roped up to cross the glacier to gain the foot of the couloir. Three hours after leaving the hut we reached the top of our route, and then walked up the broad and gentle west ridge through light mist to the summit. There we found an ice axe so strange looking that it could only have been left by aliens. These visitors from another galaxy were obviously aware of the history

of the locale and wanted to honour the tradition that had been initiated by the Japanese.

After a short rest we strolled back down the ridge past the top of our route for some distance and turned left to descend the upper scree slopes of the south face until we reached the first of the cliffs. The scree extended right to

COAST
MOUNTAINS
& THE
ROCKIES



Mt. Alberta. Photograph: Doug Hurrell.

the top of the cliff and it didn't look too good for rappel anchors. Our ingenious Swiss guide, however, soon had us all set up with a small diameter sling snugged into a little nick in the top of a very dubious looking down sloping horn. When everyone was safely off rappel Rudy gave the doubled rope a small flick of the wrist and down came the sling which he then used for the second rappel! The second and third anchors were much more solid and we were soon roped up again and walking across the glacier down to the hut.

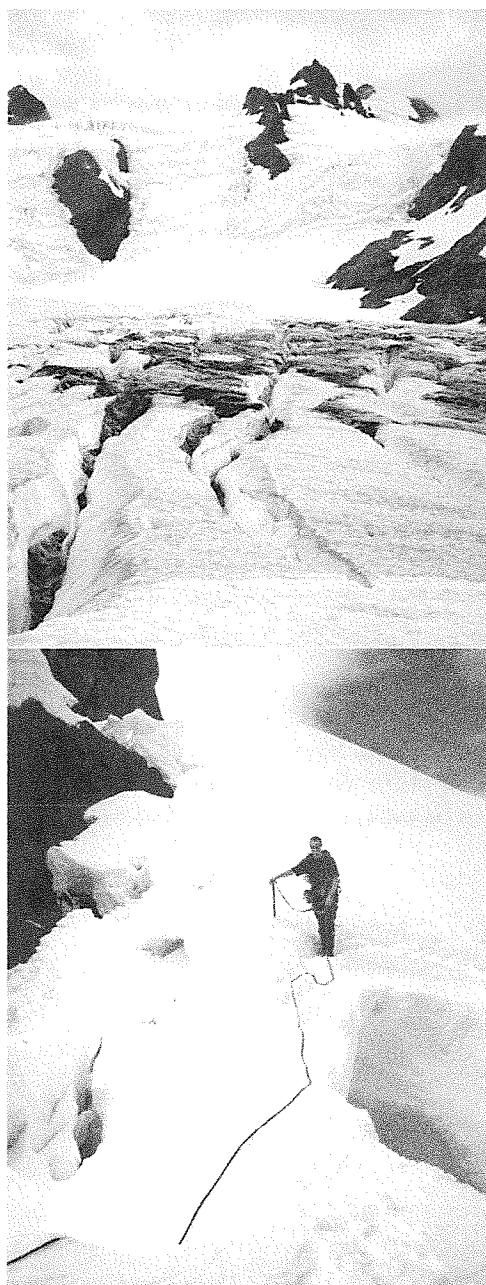
The next day we hiked out to the Sunwapta River under clear skies, taking lots of time to enjoy the scenery. On the trail we met a young German-Canadian ACC member from the Edmonton section. After I told him about our rappel adventures on Mount Wooley he remarked, "Yes—Bernese Oberlanders are well known for being parsimonious."

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

MT. OLYMPUS

Mike Hubbard
September 2-4

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER



As Rick Hudson, our scheduled leader, had been delayed by Aeroflot returning from an expedition to Kazakhstan and was understandably mountained out, those of us who were psyched up for this classic decided to go it alone despite a poor weather forecast. For once the first Coho was not expecting a capacity loading and we were able to drive on without placing vehicles the night before. Packs were shouldered and permits bought by 11.15 am at the trailhead at 573ft.(future trekkers note that they only accept U.S. cash) and somehow by 6.30 pm we were at the Elk Lake campsite 15 miles and 2630 vertical feet up the Hoh. The magnificence of the rain forest was somewhat tempered by the weight of our packs—that is except for Don's as he is a master of minimalist travel. However it was dry and the weather looked promising.

Leaving camp at first light, we were roping up at the Blue Glacier at 5100ft.by 10.30 am and soon crossed the bare ice of the lower glacier. From there on it was snow plodding up the Snow Dome followed by a little interesting crevasse navigation through the pass at 7200ft.heading towards Middle Peak before going on up the south east side of the ridge. We were on the glacier almost all the way to the False Summit which was your reporter's previous highest point and which he was determined to beat. Despite the fact that it was 2.30 pm we decided to push on as the weather was still reasonably good; we dropped down to the saddle between the False Summit and the West Peak and with some slithering and sliding climbed almost to the top of the steep snow before crossing a narrow snow bridge to the rock. Here we negotiated unroped an upwards traversing ledge across the east face until we came to the crux—a short but exposed lead of some 20ft.—which would have defeated us if it had not been for several of Don's "friends" somehow secreted in his light pack together with his consummate skill in leading it. He then belayed the rest of us up and by 4:00 pm we were on the summit in lightly falling snow.

A careful descent took us some time but we were off the glacier and unroping around sunset in beautiful light which illuminated the surrounding ridges. It is amazing that such rugged and magnificent alpine territory exists so close to Victoria. If only the access were easier! With the aid of headlamps we were back in camp at 9.50 pm some 15 hours after leaving it. Apart from my falling off the trail in the dark and having to be helped out from under my pack, an inci-

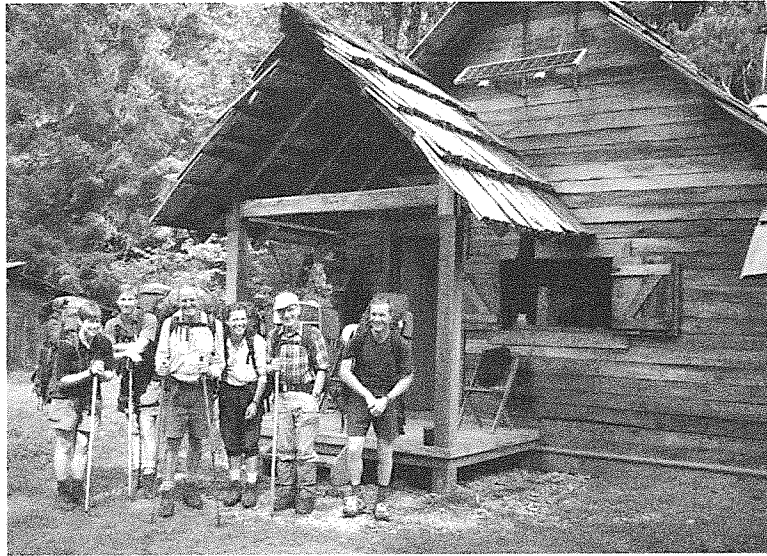
Top: The Blue Glacier on Mt. Olympus. Bottom: Mike Teachman negotiating the crevasses. Photographs: Sylvia Moser.

dent free and successful climb in unexpectedly good conditions.

Monday's trek out down the Hoh seemed endless but finally the appearance of deodorized and perfumed day hikers signaled the approach of the end and by 7.00 pm we were sipping cervezas at our favourite Mexican restaurant, now renamed "Casa Vallarta", at 1299 156th Av. NE. in Port Angeles.

A great and memorable trip with special thanks to Don without whom we would not have made the summit.

Participants: Mike Hubbard (last minute coordinator and reporter), Sylvia Moser, Katherine Brandt, Derek Wells, Mike Teachman and Don Morton.



The party at the Hoh Ranger Station on the way out. Photograph: Sylvia Moser.

COLORADO, CRESTONE & KICKED OUT

Rob Macdonald

September 20 or so

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

For our holiday, Julie and I planned to mix rivers, mountains and history in the desert spanning the "Four Corners" region of United States southwest. According to plan, we canoed down the Green River for an unforgettable 7 days, camping on sand bars, exploring canyons, spotting old Anasazi Ruins and, one night, watching hundreds of bats swooping and turning. Spectacular! But, I still had part of my mind set on those 14,000ers of Colorado, so after we got dragged out at the Colorado River confluence, we headed east to the Sangre de Cristo mountains at the southern limit of Colorado—or the Sangres as the locals call them.

Crestone Basin sports several peaks, but it was really Crestone and the Needle that I had dreamed of (check your 50 crowded climbs). Our book suggested that the 4WD road to the parking lot at the trailhead was one of the worst ones in Colorado—we were daunted, but surely that's why we got this Mazda Pickup 4X with oversize tires anyway! We achieved the parking lot: the car did fine but I was a wreck. A couple of hours hike up the trail got us to a camp spot below Crestone and Humbolt in a spectacular dry glacial valley with several small lakes. Weather—well, it was pretty near perfect.

The next day we thought we'd reconnoiter things and see how well the trail guide matched reality by hiking up Humbolt (a 14,000'er of Class 2 difficulty). A front was passing through that day, as it turned out, and we fought winds over 100 km/h. They were so strong that I got blown over on the summit plateau and, later, as we switchbacked down, my glasses were literally ripped off my face and, luckily, lodged in some squat willows a few feet away. The small lakes below Crestone were, by this time, churned into serious whitecaps and the water was being lifted bodily out of them. Added to this rather disconcerting "Jet Stream weather" was the fact that a solo hiker, reported as missing on the register board,

was found—or, at least, his body was, and a party came in to retrieve the remains.

So, we tented down for a second night after removing the large boulders we'd placed to keep the tent from blowing away while we climbed Humbolt. All night the winds buffeted us and a series of four thunderstorms passed over each more violent than the last. We got snow, hail, rain—you name it. The final storm woke us up at about 2 am with an incredible series of crashes. To estimate the closeness and direction of the storm I lay there looking up at the tent ceiling prepared to count time from flash to thunder. The next flash was so bright it blinded me—Julie, completely burrowed in her winter bag with a black nylon cover, said she could see the forks in the lightning through the bag and the tent! I couldn't see anything, nor did I make it to "one thousand" before the thunder came. Well, imagination is a wonderful thing—except at times like this. I said to Julie "tomorrow we are either going up or going down." Dawn came not too soon and was the most awesome crimson I've ever seen. The fog behind the tent turned a blood red that made one think of Stephen King. Yes, we left—but not until I looked around for the smoldering remains of the tree that surely must have been hit by lightning. I had images of us stranded, our car at 11,000' in snow, eating the tires before the porcupines got to them.

Despite our drubbing, I believe I'll go back. It's a beautiful place and if the weather demurs, there's always the desert.

MT. CONSTANCE

John Pratt
July 22–23

“**T**he weather on Constance is variable”: so went a well-worn mathematical pun of Sandy’s (or mine—I forget who is responsible for that one), and indeed as we drove up the Dosewallips R. road to the start of the Lake Constance trail, the rain slashed viciously against the windshield of Martin’s van, giving a very inauspicious start to the trip. In fact, we had been promised an improvement in the weather for the next day, so we trusted to luck and got in line for the “Coho” ferry to Port Angeles.

We made a start on the actual trail on the late afternoon/early evening and in fact ended up at the lake in the dark (having lost the trail on a couple of occasions). An attempt to get around the lake to the approved camp-site on the far shore was frustrated by the poor quality of the trail and the fact that in the trees, amid the boulders and in the dark, we were as good as blind. I recall forcefully insisting that if we proposed to get any sleep at all that night, we should stop this nonsense forthwith and camp—albeit illegally—at the lake outlet, which we duly did.

The next morning, actually, didn’t look too good, but seeing as we’d gone to the time, effort and expense to get this far, we soldiered on around the lake, where we re-pitched the tent and threw into it all gear not needed for the peak, and so on up the rocky, north-tending valley. The “Climbers’ Guide to the Olympics” tells prospective Constance summiteers to look out for a large gully with an overhanging rock at its entrance. The right side of the valley was festooned with gullies most of which had sizeable overhanging rocks at their entrances, but one must have appeared a little more likely than the others, for we followed it up and after a 400m scramble emerged onto the ridge-top where we had a well-earned break. There was still a good deal of cloud but the sun was making valiant efforts, not wholly unsuccessful, to break through and we could certainly feel its heat through the thin veil of mist.

Tending northward over various snowfields and scree-slopes, we climbed another gully, crossed a rocky ridge and eventually came to a rather interesting “finger traverse” under

a cliff of pillow lava: one supported about half one’s weight on one’s feet (on a sloping, slabby rock) and the other half by one’s arms. The traverse is about 15m from end to end. It is not difficult, but an unroped slip would cost one dearly, so we protected it, leaving the rope in place for the descent, trusting we would have no further need of it before the summit. As it turned out, we did not and in due course the impressive summit tower came into view. The south side of

this is most dramatic, looking as though it were the result of a huge blow with some giant cleaver, but with a spectacular, vertical crack up the middle, splitting it from top to bottom. This tower is passed on the right (E.) side and scrambled up (class 3–4) from the N. I have to say that this summit is one of the most captivating I have ever been on and the trip was straight out of the top drawer. After a slow and unproductive summer in the mountains, this made up for a lot!

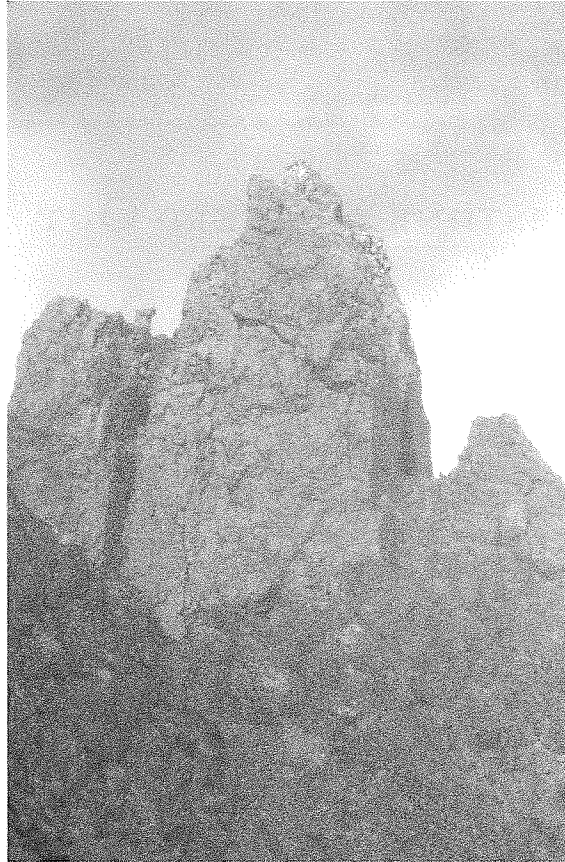
That evening, following the long and wearying descent, we had the pleasure of being the overnight guests of Sandy’s uncle and aunt in Sequim. They made us feel wonderfully welcome and seemed genuinely interested in our exploits. We all had a lively conversation conducted in a vibrant and cosmopolitan mix of languages: Canadian, American and English. There

was peach cobbler for dessert and above all, a hot shower (which they would probably have insisted on us all having anyway) and a soft bed.

A day or so later, I was sorting out my pack and a very heavy object fell out onto the patio. It was a beautiful geological specimen of about 6kg thoughtfully placed in my pack—while my back was turned—up at Lake Constance by Chris. It was good I discovered this after I’d had a good night’s sleep and the sun was shining, after I’d had my morning coffee and my wonted sunny disposition had once more kicked in as it now adorns my kitchen window-sill, instead of the crown of his head.

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Chris Odgers, Martin Davies, John Pratt

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER



Summit tower of Mt. Constance, Olympic Mountains. Photo: Sandy Briggs.

MT. SHUKSAN

Charles Turner

June 3-4

A perfect weather forecast and we're off to Mt. Shuksan to do some spring skiing. Life doesn't get much better. We left Friday afternoon—Tim and I from the north and the rest from Victoria. We met up in Tsawassen and picked up two strange looking women with skis (Claire and Judy). It took us 5 hours with a stop for dinner. Mike found a really homey steak house that came with a free map of our mountain.

Don't forget permits. One for parking at the trail head, another for camping in the back country. These are available from Sedro-Woolley Park and Forest Information centre (360-856-5700).

We camped at the trail head for the night. We were all sleeping soundly when these came a vehicle full of young people looking for hot springs. A rude awakening in the middle of the night.

Up at 5:30 am the next morning. We packed up and moved our camp to ridge at 4,800 feet. Fantastic views of Mt. Baker and watching the crater puffing away. We dumped our gear and continued on upwards heading N.E. towards the Notch which is the gateway to the Sulphide glacier. We were soon on the glacier after a slightly tense traverse under a rock band on a steep avalanche-prone slope. We plodded on upwards. Glad to have skis on after watching a couple of people struggling through the snow very slowly and painfully.

Mt. Shuksan pyramid getting slowly closer. A rather daunting sight. It looked very steep and foreboding. As we

got closer however, it started to look more friendly. We reached a high point of 8700 feet—400 feet short of the top. It was very tempting to go further, but after watching all the ice melting up above and crashing down the gully that we would be going up, we lost our enthusiasm. There had been cornices breaking off all day due to the warm day. So this was not the time for the summit.

I had a pleasant surprise, behind my back Judy had put a 50 in the snow with M&M's and Claire added the sparklers. A celebration of my birthday. I told them it should have been a 40 in the snow. But it was great anyway, thanks guys.

The ski back down was awesome—3900 feet of untracked powder slopes to ski. Julie soon got the hang of Telemarking and was doing great. Back at camp by 8:30 pm. A long day but a great one. One more surprise—a birthday cake and a round of Happy Birthday with a few jokes about old age thrown in.

Next morning ho hum, another beautiful day in paradise. The ski out was good. The snow became a little softer as we got lower. We dropped down a little early so had our customary bushwhack to the trail. Finishing up with a very refreshing dip in Baker lake.

Participants: Charles Turner (leader), Heinrich ?, Judy Holm, Julie ?, Claire Ebendinger, Tim Strange, Mike Hubbard.

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

WE MET AT THE CROSSROADS HALFWAY UP MOUNT RAINIER!

Katherine Brandt-Wells

August 3-7

Derek and I drove out from Victoria to Mount Rainier National Park that Thursday afternoon; being the start of a busy long weekend, it took us longer than usual—a total of eight hours—from leaving Victoria, catching the ferry to the mainland, to driving to the national park. We were quite exhausted by the time we arrived so crashed for the night in the bushes near the "climbers' parking lot" at White River Campground in Mount Rainier National Park, hoping the park ranger wouldn't find us!

We had found IDEA 2000 (International Diabetic Expedition to Aconcagua 2000) member Chris Meloche's "extremely beat up and rusted out gray, 1988 Toyota pick-up truck" (his own description!) with a Colorado license plate in the parking lot with a note he'd left for us on the windshield saying "We have 1 permit for all 4 of us. See you at Winthrop Alpine Zone." This whole trip was quite spontaneous which made it rather fun! Chris, another Type 1 dia-

betic, and I had "met on the internet" earlier that summer through IDEA 2000 but so far we had only communicated through email. Here we were, meeting up sort-of-halfway between Colorado (USA) and Victoria (Canada)! Luckily, Chris and his friend Eric Rutz had already completed the registration forms and paid for the Mt. Rainier climbing permits for us which meant that Derek and I didn't get prevented from doing the trip due to registration being full (which would have been quite likely).

Friday, August 4, 2000

The next morning we set off from White River Campground (at 1341 m/ 4400') and hiked up past Glacier Basin Campground. The sky was an intense blue and the trail was dry and dusty... quite a change from the wet, always-muddy trails so typical on the west coast! The forest had a great sweet smell and there were lots of purple lupines out

in bloom. After lunch we continued up the Inter Glacier, on up a section of the Emmons Glacier to Camp Schurmann, and then up to the Alpine Zone (at about 3109 m/ 10 200'), just up from Emmons Flats. This took us about eight hours and we were starting to feel the altitude a little at this point (in our breathing). On the way up the glacier we had met hoards of people. There was one large group of women going up. At one point, I stopped and asked one of them who they were and she explained that there were 35 of them and that they were celebrating the centennial of the first female ascent of Mt. Rainier (from back in 1890). They were a rather large group; I later found out that a group of 35 was not officially allowed but that they had managed to sneak around the rules by registering their group at several different ranger stations. All the camping spots were taken at Camp Schurmann (mostly by their group) so that is why we had to camp higher up, in the Alpine Zone. Nevertheless, this gave us a head start up Mt. Rainier!

It was fun arriving at the Alpine Zone above Camp Schurmann and meeting Chris and his friend Eric halfway up the mountain. We had spotted a number of tents up above, perched on different ledges on the glacier, and headed up, trying to guess which ones they were! We found them quite easily since they both had bivy sacks and no tent. The moment that we arrived at our "campsite" the sun was just setting behind the mountain so it suddenly got very cold. We were trying to be friendly and talkative to Chris and Eric while pulling out dry, warm clothes, shivering and changing in front of them. They were really welcoming though. It was well worth being the last ones to arrive... Chris started boiling us some water and offered us tea while Eric started digging out and flattening a site for us to put up our tent! I'd never had this kind of treatment before!

My only problem at this point, was that I suddenly started to feel a bit nauseated... and I thought "Oh no! Don't tell me I'm going to be sick again." My blood sugars had actually been really good all day (between 3.4 and 7.2 mmol/L (61 and 130 mg/dl)) except for around one hour after starting in the morning when I had been up at 13.7 mmol/L (247 mg/dl) so it was definitely not ketoacidosis. I had drunk about 2 L of water throughout the day. I felt bad not being able to be more sociable to Chris and Eric but I had to do something since I was not feeling good at all. I convinced Derek to please put up the tent as soon as possible, so that I could lie down. I felt too sick to help him put up the tent. I quickly mixed up a packet of rehydration salts with some water, sipped it and as soon as the tent was up I got in and lay down but tried to still be somewhat talkative to Eric and Chris. Soon after that Eric and Chris actually wanted to get into their bivy sacks and get some sleep since they were planning on getting up at midnight to climb Mt. Rainier that next morning. I stayed in the tent, drank some water and actually started to feel better after an hour so managed to eat supper as well. I slept really well that night and we had decided to spend the next day resting to acclimatize. We heard Chris and Eric take off around 2.30 am.

Saturday, August 5, 2000

Derek and I slept in till around 8 am, then got up at a lei-

surely pace and waited for Eric and Chris to reappear from up on Mt. Rainier. We had heard quite a few climbing parties take off between 11:30 pm and 3 am and many passed our "campsite" again on the way back down that morning. Some had turned back early. It was a beautiful, hot day, with a completely clear blue sky. The views must have been great from the summit despite the valley being socked in with cloud down below. It was good to take a day off and rest up for the next day when we would be climbing Mt. Rainier.

Chris and Eric managed to get back to our campsite by 11:30 am and they had made it to the top! But even though they live in Colorado, at a pretty high elevation, they said they had still felt the altitude and they were a bit pooped! They were both quite happy to lie in their sleeping bags for a bit and rest up. Chris appeared to not be feeling 100% and to be feeling a bit nauseated. Another pair of climbers followed a little while later and Chris offered them some of his water which they seemed to just be gazing at... apparently they had only taken 1 L of water up to the top of Mt. Rainier between the two of them! Eric wanted to get going and to be heading back down to White River Campground in the next hour or two but it didn't quite work out that way. This was our only chance to really talk and over the next five hours we got to know each other a bit while Chris and Eric rested, packed up and ate some food. By 4:15 pm they were ready to head out and Derek and I decided to have an early supper and early night to bed... to get up at midnight to climb Mt. Rainier. Just before Chris and Eric headed down we got a few photographs and slides taken of us, the two IDEA 2000 insulin pumpers, holding an IDEA-2000 prayer flag... at our "Mt. Rainier crossroads."

Sunday, August 6—Monday, August 7, 2000

We had been in the tent in our sleeping bags since 7 pm but I tossed and turned, unable to get to sleep. I had an aeroplane eye cover over my eyes since it was still so light outside but it didn't seem to help. I had too many things on my mind. The day hadn't been exhausting enough for me! By around 11 pm, I finally managed to drift off to sleep but only half an hour later we heard voices shouting outside our tent. It was the first climbing team, starting to head up Mt. Rainier... they had no consideration for those in their tents, trying to get some sleep. I called out and asked them to please be quiet. They briefly apologized but immediately went on shouting at each other... they were already deciding to turn back and give up on Mt. Rainier since someone was having problems. This was the first of one of many teams of the 35 women climbing Mt. Rainier. We had hoped to start off before them but were obviously out of luck. So much for getting much sleep... I guess this was going to be it. I was feeling a little nauseated so tested my blood and I was 13.6 mmol/L (245 mg/dl) so took 2 units of insulin. I wasn't sure if it was due to lack of sleep, high blood sugar or the altitude. Hopefully it was just due to my high blood sugar.

Half an hour later, at midnight, we started to get up and get all our gear on and packed up. The stars were all shining and we could see the lights from Seattle glittering in the distance. More and more noisy parties were heading up the glacier, passing by our tent. This felt like such a contrast to

me, to most of the mountains that I climb, that are quiet, wild and desolate. I really felt robbed of being in the wilderness... this moment was supposed to be an opportunity for me to feel connected to the wild, the glacier... but all I felt was annoyed at these numerous women who were constantly shouting out to each other asking each other if they were okay, telling each other to be prepared for this or that. Derek and I usually manage to be quite quiet when roped up and not disturb the serenity. I suppose we know each other on the rope and tend to be roped up closer together than these teams were.

Just before leaving, I reduced my insulin pump basal rate to 0.4 units/hour for the next 12 hours (not needing to compensate for my dawn phenomenon which usually requires 1.5 units/hour from 4 am till 8 am), had a small breakfast snack (about 30 g carbohydrate) and took a small bolus of 1.2 units of insulin (at my reduced bolus of 0.4 units/10 g carb.). We started shortly after 1 am and by then nearly all the other teams had passed us. I was quite relieved at that, to not be right in the middle. It was suddenly quite quiet again. Unfortunately this didn't last for long. Up the beaten tracks and around the side of the mountain, and we started to approach some of the other teams of climbers. I found the tracks extremely steep and my calves were not yet warmed up so they were burning. I zigzagged back and forth across the glacier a bit rather than sticking to the flagged route, to lessen the slope my calves were going up, and enjoyed having to observe the glacier for crevasses and choose my own route rather than follow the set tracks. I couldn't stray off the path too much though since there seemed to be quite a few open crevasses and the path really did take the optimal route. It was also still pitch black. Some of the other climbing teams were stumped as to why we were going via a different route and were confused as to which way they should go!

After an hour, at 2 am, we stopped for a quick water break and I tested my blood and it was 6.4 mmol/L (115 mg/dl). We continued on up the glacier at a good pace (most of the time avoiding the beaten tracks) so that we could go at our own steady pace and not be restricted by other teams. We took another break around 3:30 am and decided that we had better eat a snack since neither of us had consumed much at that point. My blood test showed that I was 6.6 mmol/L (119 mg/dl) so I was very pleased. I seemed to have found the correct basal rate for this level of activity since my blood sugar levels were very steady. I ate about 20 g of carbohydrate and took 0.8 units of insulin for it. At this point up the glacier, there seemed to be quite a few bottlenecks forming. As we were waiting for another team to go, one man informed me that we were now about halfway (around 3734 m/ 12,250'), according to his altimeter. Another female, immediately ahead of me, told me that at this point she was already feeling extremely nauseated since she had forgotten to bring her medication with her on this trip up Mt. Rainier. I was getting quite cold, standing still, waiting for others to move... it was frustrating! We managed to get moving again and get going at a good steady pace. We were approaching the bergschrund, which we had to cross under and then traverse back over (to the south-

west I believe). Up until now we had been going at a really good steady pace and had overtaken many of the other teams. However, the altitude suddenly started to affect me. My breathing was getting harder. We just kept on going but my pace was slowing down. Everyone else's pace appeared to be slowing down too though so I felt okay about that.

We continued on up at a reduced pace but by 6 am, I was not feeling good at all... I had only eaten about 55 g carbohydrate and drunk about 0.5 L water over the past 5 hours. I was feeling the lack of oxygen in my head and had to really slow down my pace and take lots of rest breaks... every 50 steps or so! I ended up needing to suddenly go to the washroom (my body seemed to be trying to eliminate anything unnecessary). The sun had just risen over the horizon at that point so there wasn't much privacy on the glacier! It was beautiful but it was hard to appreciate the scenery while not feeling 100%. We continued on and took another rest-break at 7 am but as soon I had swallowed some water I ended up getting worse... I was sick (vomited the little food and fluid that I had in my stomach)... but funnily, after that I seemed to feel a lot better. Derek and I discussed what we should do at this point: turn around and go back down or continue on to the top? We were so close to the summit of Mt. Rainier (only one or two hours to go!). I knew that I would feel guilty if I stopped Derek from reaching the summit and if I didn't at least try to go on. We decided to give it a try. If I deteriorated we would turn back. I still felt the lack of oxygen in my brain but we continued on very slowly, but that was the best I could do! Since we live at sea level, it wasn't surprising that we felt the altitude.

Surprisingly, I was fine for the rest of the climb except for feeling slightly lightheaded. The only other problem was that I was really lacking in sleep since I had only had about one hour of sleep that night. At several points, as I rested between my 50 steps and bent over to get more oxygen-blood flow to my head, I started to fall asleep!!! Only when Derek called out to me did I suddenly realize that I had been drifting off! It was funny but could have been quite dangerous. Having overtaken a good number of the teams climbing up Mt. Rainier, we ended up being overtaken by them over those last two hours and being one of the last teams to reach the top! We made it to the top by 9:15 am.

Derek and I dumped our packs on the scree and continued to walk up the final section to the official summit. Lots of people were up there and we spent a few minutes on the summit, looking across at Mount Baker to the north and Mount Adams to the south. The surrounding valleys were socked in with cloud. It felt so good to just sit down and rest!

I was really happy with my blood sugar control at the start of the climb of Mt. Rainier but my blood sugar levels had risen to around 11 mmol/L (200 mg/dl) since 3:30 am. Perhaps I actually do need to compensate for my "dawn phenomenon" when doing "dawn alpine starts". However, there are so many other factors to consider and many other possible causes for the rise in my blood sugar (e.g., dehydration, altitude sickness, nausea, perhaps slightly frozen insulin in the pump catheter, incorrect blood glucose readings on the blood glucose meter).

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

Soon we were heading on back down the mountain. Being full daylight, we could see many more crevasses than we had seen while coming up. The snow had also softened up a fair amount. One of my crampons broke not far from the summit so that was an interesting challenge. Not having any spare nut or bolts with us, we managed to improvise by using a piece of string to tie the crampon together!

We managed to get back down to our "campsite" at the Alpine Zone in about four hours. It was another hot, radiant day and we were happy to be wearing our heat-reflective, white tops. Back at the Alpine Zone, we were quite glad that we didn't need to get all the way to the bottom of Mount Rainier until the next day; we spent the rest of that day resting in the tent, enjoying being lazy! The next day

was an average backpack out, down the glacier and down through the dusty valley. We left the Alpine Zone early enough that we avoided coming down the glacier at the hottest time of the day.

In summary: we did make it up to the top of Mt. Rainier; there were no technical challenges other than crossing some crevasses; I was quite happy with my blood sugar control but amazed at how much the readings varied between the three different blood glucose meters I brought along; I believe I experienced some altitude sickness so may have benefited from having an extra day to acclimatize; and we are looking forward to visiting Mt. Rainier again in the future and doing a different, more challenging route!

A MAY BAKER

Leslie Gordon

May 7

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

We were 6, a splinter group from the club-scheduled ski trip to Mt. Baker via Deming Glacier. Our route was from the Glacier village side, up to the Coleman Icefield. Registering at the ranger station, we found out that no one had signed in for the previous week. The weather report indicated electrical storms and just enough promising conditions to carry us up the road. Despite 4 wheel drives and our best pushing efforts, we got stuck in fresh, wet snow 3/4 of the way to the trailhead. Skis donned and packs loaded, we made our way up the road and through a pristine forest, till dusk forced us to make camp in the woods, a little short of our alpine destination.

On Saturday morning, an early start had us poised on a rise looking over a vast expanse of virgin snow towards Mt. Baker.

We hovered there Amidst untrammeled slopes So silent. We stood on the edge For some time contemplating.

Then up we went, marking a route towards the Col. Judith and Wayne were the leads on our 2 ropes and the hard work of breaking a deep trail was in progressively shorter shifts. By 2:30 pm we stopped 250m below the Col and could see specks of people well below us and faintly hear recognizable greetings. Lunch and a snooze curled up on our packs, strung like huskies on a dogsled. The weather socked in, the wind picked up and the specks were disappearing. We agreed with the decision to ski back down.

We met the other Victoria party whose change of plans

brought them in our wake. One of them, vaguely familiar to us, was sporting a fluorescent orange ball cap, long black ponytail and shaded glasses. Who was this man? And then Claire commented on the sound effects emitting from my backpack. A shoulder check identified my ice axe humming a disturbing tune. Not a good time to parley and find out who the electric cool-aide guy was.

Warm drinks were most welcome at the camp of

Claire and her party, but whispered innuendoes from 2 sources warned us that all was not well at our camp. And upon our return we surveyed our domain and found our tents in disarray, sleeping bags from one tent exchanged to another and all items in a great jumble. Now who could be such a trickster?

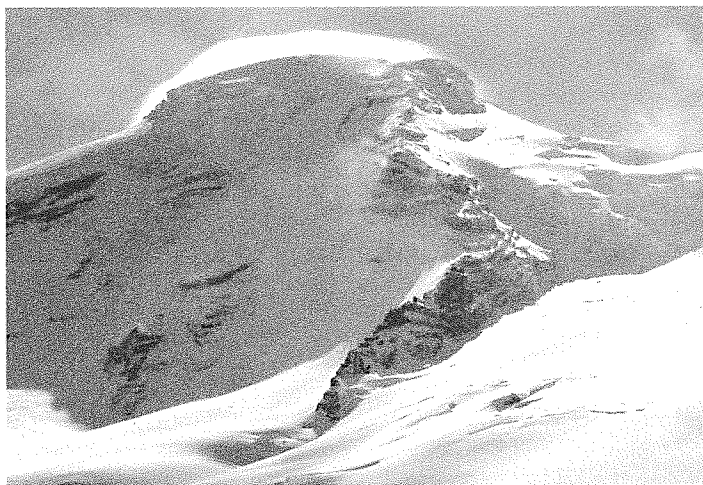
Once back to our vehicles, Judith posted a WANTED notice,

to warn future skiers that there was someone at large suspected of bagging a few tricks.

After crossing from Sumas to Cultus Lake we made a small detour and followed 0 Avenue, a pastoral drive along the Canada US border to Douglas/Blaine. The narrow patch of grass with the occasional marker was such a contrast to the guarded formality of the border crossing.

And no, there were no further sightings of the questionable character haunting Baker's slopes.


Participants: Judith Holm, Bruce Kennedy, Kevin Mazur, Al Mazur (Calgary), Wayne McCulloch (Calgary), Leslie Gordon.




Mt. Baker in May. Photograph: Kevin Masur.

U.S.A. SOUTHWEST


Gil Parker

 Ron Holmes and I just returned from three weeks in the USA southwest. I think it is fair to say that this region is the most spectacular from a geographical point of view of any region that I have visited, perhaps excluding Kamchatka peninsula of the Russian Far East. But the variety exceeds even that. Our tour hit all the high spots... Yosemite Valley with all the big wall granite faces and waterfalls, Death Valley in California (low spots, too), Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde, Chaco Culture and finally De-Na-Zin Wilderness. No wonder I had to rest for two days when I returned!

Most of it was driving—we had customized our Mazda van with a level floor and rugs for sleeping. All we had to do was transfer our voluminous gear from the back to the two remaining passenger seats so that we could find room to sleep. And having all our hiking gear and our car-camping gear (with some overlaps) made this transfer difficult. No bathroom or cooking facilities. Most days it was OK to cook outside... but missing a shower for 'days' caused some concern!

 First we flashed down to Portland, where we stayed a night with Gil's friends. Then on to Yosemite. Driving one day and by the next morning were on a climb of Yosemite Falls trail. The Sunnyside campground, made famous by rebellious climbers in the '60s, was just as rowdy now, with Chinese-American teenagers learning how to drink beer all night. I had somewhat less sympathy for them than for climbers. Our rapid climb and descent overstressed my knees, so we did easy walks the next day, to the North American Wall on El Capitan to watch four or five groups struggling their way up vertical (or overhanging) granite, then a walk to another falls, my knee giving me real problems.

With a storm coming in, we said a prayer for the climbers on the wall and drove south to Bakersfield and east to Tehachapi. There we slept in a parking lot while the wind rocked the van all night. Not far away, on a ridge exposed to the full gale, hundreds of windmills thrashed about, generating electricity, I hope.

 Next afternoon, entering Death Valley, we found a high campground and hiked for a couple of hours to a small peak at about 3,000 metres for a limitless view of the valley, its variegated colours evident even from that distance. Descending in snow and then rain, we camped in another gale, a remnant of the storm from the coast. In the morning we drove over a pass and down, down, down even to minus 280 feet elevation (85 metres below sea level) and a fascinating landscape of sand dunes and stratified rocks. Even a bit of history was evident, of the first settlers who tried this route to reach California and suffered the results—one died, giving the name to the valley. Then, later there were 20 mule teams that hauled 'borax' in huge wagons for 265 kilometres to the railhead. My sister, Elaine, had always told me about the beauty of this land and now I know what she was talking about.

Finally, we followed a lead from Ron's previous trip to

Tecopa, where a free hot springs and a campsite allowed even more than a hot shower! Our main objective for hiking was the Grand Canyon, a venue that we had explored (for only 3 days, about 11 years ago) and wanted to revisit. So we drove through Las Vegas as quickly as possible (avoiding the gambling joints and big name shows in favour of a laundromat), then into a traffic jam at the Hoover Dam before escaping to the desert south and east. (There are just too many Americans, and foreign tourists like us, with nothing to do but tour ancient river dams.) That night we camped above the Canyon, Ron's tea freezing solid in his cup overnight.

After a day of organizing gear and doing a light hike, (my knees having recovered) we were ready to descend the Canyon next morning from Grandview. As it is a National Park, you have to prearrange where you will camp each night. Our mileage for each day was modest—Ron had previously hurt his own knees going down several thousand feet (maybe 1000 metres) with a loaded backpack. So, day 1 was 5 miles, 2 was 5 miles, then 10, 10, 1, 1, and 1 for the climb out. Two easy days before the climb out.

Our schedule was to start early, sometimes 5 am, and be finished hiking by noon at the latest. One day the temperature was 108 F (42 C) in the sun, and about 95 F under the rock where I lay! Impossible to hike after noon in the bottom, yet on top we had experienced freezing nights. The terrain was incredible, the strata layered in predictable patterns, then below us it turned to igneous rock, fractured and twisted, down to the Colorado River a further 1000 feet down. Our hiking trails were always along the Tapeats Sandstone, a uniform layer that was just above vertical cliffs. In some places it was close to the edge, but usually very easy, very safe.

Very boring! For the first days we liked the long rests in the afternoon, but after a few days, we ran out of books to read (and to write!) and the scenery was always the same. The problem was that we could not legally change our schedule of camps. Finally, at Monument camp, a very interesting sub-canyon, we dumped our loads and went down to the Colorado as a day trip, and camped back up at Monument that night. We saw and talked to some rafters, who were running the river on various craft, small and large, through the rapids, much to our delight and their apparent terror. Loud screams at every big wave. But, with the huge size of some of these rafts (especially the commercial ones) we doubted that the thrill would last much beyond the first or second rapids. And they were taking 20 odd days to get from Glen Canyon Dam down to Lake Meade behind the Hoover.

Our most taxing day was the climb from Monument out to the rim, several miles horizontally, plus 3400 feet vertically up. (1040 metres) We did it in four hours, the last hour climbing 1600 feet vertical (almost 500 metres), by this time with lighter packs of about 30 pounds. Showers at the campground very welcome!

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

Driving on east, we visited Mesa Verde and Chaco Culture, two ancient pueblo sites over three days. These valleys, near the Four Corners and located in Colorado and New Mexico states, were inhabited by an aboriginal agriculture-based society of 1000 to 2000 people between 500 and 1200 AD. First they used pit houses covered with poles and mud, then in 1000 AD they built sophisticated stone structures, on the valley floor or under projecting sandstone shelves. Many questions arise about how they could feed such large numbers of residents, why they changed their housing style, and finally, why they abandoned them in favour of the vast

plains about 1100 AD. Perhaps drought, perhaps the spectacular 'super-nova' in 1054 that appeared like a second sun for several days, followed by Haley's Comet in 1066. It would have been enough to make me move underground!

Walking the De-Na-Zin wilderness badlands in New Mexico, we both decided that we had been away long enough. Perhaps the badlands looked too much like eastern Alberta. More likely we had seen more than we could digest. We turned the car north, stopping only for another hot springs in Ouray after driving over two 10,000 foot passes in Colorado. From there, we were home in a day and a half!

MT. SHASTA-SOLO 2

John Pratt

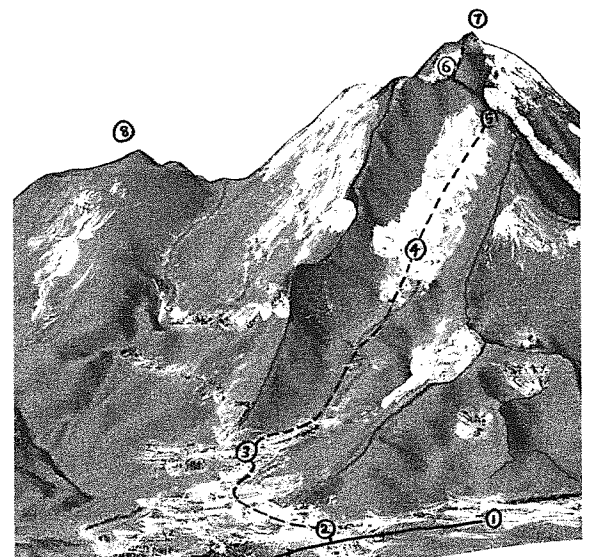
August 3

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

One day, long ago, on a flight back from San Francisco I think it was, I saw, out of the right hand side of the 'plane, a beautiful ice-cream-cone of a peak-obviously Mt. Shasta-and my desire to climb it dated from that instant. However, it was a long way from my normal stamping-ground and being enthusiastic about neither long-distance driving nor paying exorbitant air fares, the matter naturally lapsed under the pressure of more local objectives. In fact, it was only at the end of this July past that I began actively to plan the trip. Tired of being unable to get anyone to go anywhere and frustrated with so much blue skies and sunshine going to waste, I decided to solo the peak. Its height of 4316m would make it easily the tallest peak I'd ever climbed alone but since it is not technically difficult and virtually without crevasses, at least by the "Avalanche Gulch"-i.e., standard-route, I reckoned it to be well within my capabilities and to involve an acceptably low risk. Thus the sunny afternoon of 1 August saw me boarding the Greyhound bus in Vancouver for the long trip down to northern California.

Now although this is a mountaineering article, the mode of transportation is of prime importance in this case since psychologically, it formed the crux of the whole ascent. A more mind-numbing experience is harder to comprehend: it is the automotive equivalent of the Bataan Death-March. A direct drive, non-stop, would have been bearable but as any mathematician will tell you, between any two distinct points, A and B, there are an infinite number of other points and Greyhound makes sure to stop at them all. The bus stations are invariably located in the grubbiest parts of the towns concerned and hanging around them are people who-how shall I put this?-are unlikely to be members of the Union Club

Thus it was that when I finally alighted in the main street of Mt. Shasta town at 9:30 on the (already hot) morning of 2 August, I was not wholly sure of what quadrant of the galaxy I was in and yet I knew I had to find something called a "Ranger Station." Fortunately, I recognized Sol, a medium-aged, main-sequence G2-type star with a spectrum dominated by singly-ionized metals and from then on, of course, it was easy to narrow things down. The bureaucratic hoops (and inevitable cash-grab) were rapidly done with and I



Schematic of Mt. Shasta: 1) Everitt Memorial Highway; 2) Bunny Flat trailhead; 3) "Horse Camp"; 4) Lake Helen; 5) Red Banks; 6) "Misery Hill"; 7) Summit, 4316 m; 8) Shastina (side peak).

shortly found myself at the base of the Everitt Memorial Highway attempting to hitch a lift (technically against the law within 'city' limits) up to the trailhead, a place called Bunny Flat (no comment. It is their name, not mine). Anon, I was picked up by a very pleasant lady, very knowledgeable about the area, who went out of her way to deposit me at the start of the trail. I did quite well on the way up, as of course the conversation was conducted totally in American.

I began the actual climb at 1:20 pm; it was certainly over 30°C and my pack was very heavy. It was, however, a fairly short walk to "Horse Camp", an agreeable spot with a spacious mountain but and a lovely fresh-water spring. From here, the trail, easy to follow because of the great amount of traffic, winds inexorably onward and upward to the usual camping-spot, a place called Lake Helen at about 3100m. Actually, there is no lake at all: it is merely a depression in the slope which would hold a lake if all the snow round were to melt. I arrived there at 5:00 pm after 3h 40min (including a couple of rest-stops on the trail).

Owing to the crowds, the Parks Branch (or whatever

they call themselves) has a "pack out your waste" policy—and "waste" includes human waste. As it should, since water quality is compromised enough as it is. Probably, that's how Lake Helen got its name: some climber, after falling sick from drinking contaminated water, asked "was this the lake that launched a thousand shits?" Be that as it may, it's a good place to stop as there are ample level spots—protected by rough stone walls—for camping and it helps one adjust to the altitude and rest up before the customary early-morning start. I got going at around 5:10 the next morning and climbed in the dark for half an hour before the dawn came. The route goes up the centre of the wide "Avalanche Gulch" and the snow is hard and icy late in the season—crampons advised! The Rangers will urge that you make a very early start because of (a) rockfall and (b) the likelihood of thunder and lightning in the afternoon and that you should be off the summit by noon. In fact, my observation was that—at least for fast and competent climbers—a daylight start is quite adequate and the Gulch, though certainly subject to some rockfall, is no more than a thousand similar places we have all been in on other occasions. As for the weather, the day is either fine or it is not: the whole of the following day was to see the upper mountain draped in a spectacular lenticular cloud-cap and I would not have wanted to be up there at any time of that day!

At the top of the gulch, one passes through—or around, depending on conditions—the so-called "Red Banks", queer, contorted gullies of orange-red lava which glow agreeably in the early morning sun. Beyond that, one heads left along the ridge-top to a switchbacked trail (on rock for me: the snow

had stopped) leading to the upper mountain, the so-called "Misery Hill." Actually, I was feeling anything but miserable. Barely noticing the altitude, I had easily outstripped all the parties I had started with that morning and certainly had the top 600m of the peak completely to myself. The wind blew stiffly, but I kept going, essentially non-stop, reaching the summit at 8:50 am. The final bit is a rock spike, easily scrambled up from the left. There is a heavy metal box containing a summit register in which I entered my name and affiliation. The wind blew fiercely up there and it was necessary to remain crouched low in order to avoid a quick trip down to what would probably have been the wrong valley. Thus I remained only 15 minutes on top and commenced my descent just after 9:00. I reached the tent at 11:10 am and spent a leisurely hour or so resting, cooking up some lunch, collapsing the tent and packing. The descent back to the trailhead went amazingly quickly and I dropped my heavy pack gratefully on the blacktop at 2:40 pm, giving a total round-trip time of 25h 20min. That afternoon, I checked into a motel in town as I badly needed to freshen up as well as catch up on a good deal of missed sleep. That evening, I suffered my only defeat of the trip, at the hands of a large pizza. I made the mistake of asking them to put anchovies on it, in lieu of olives, which I dislike. Well, they put so many on it, the anchovy must now be an endangered species! To assuage the resulting thirst, I had to drink enough water to float the Bismarck.

Well, that's about it. There remained only one thing: The journey back by Greyhound. Need I say more?

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

BAKER ON BAKER

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

September

Many others have climbed Mt. Baker and certainly described its details well. My first climb (maybe the last) was introverted and subjective, stunningly new and arduous. We left the parking lot late on a warm overcast September day. Crossing the glacial outflows, robust after the heat, was an exacting scramble in the dark and travel by the tiny light of a headlamp, a new experience for me. I'd certainly heard many jokes about it from more seasoned club members. My fitness for the job was obviously inadequate and I laboured up through the black guided by Russ's light and encouragement. When had he promised to get me to the summit of this longed for mountain? New Year's Day on Arrowsmith? We settled in to sleep just as a huge moon rose from the other side of the great shoulder of Baker, now close over us and illuminated like day. Early climbers murmur preparations and clank off under the moonlight.

At daybreak we start out onto the Coleman Glacier. I'm in the middle of Russ's rope with Shannon at the end, my first real roped travel. The ascent leads up to the Black Butte Ridge, rather threatening but the day is bright and promising, snow and ice dazzling. We are taken up early when a party we have been following run into an



Barbara Baker and Shannon Finnegan. Photograph: Russ Moir.

SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

impassable crevasse. A short distance back, there is a low new snow bridge, crossable. As I lunge forward with my axe, the weight-bearing foot slips into nowhere but no problem, really. Saved by the rope. A brilliant sun is shining. What an ideal day! Only when we stop for a snack, I realize my appetite for food is gone & I wish I'd searched for my hat. Going up the Roman wall, certainly not beyond my skills, I'm feeling continual nausea & weakness. Russ and Shannon are slowed to a crawl but amazingly patient and encouraging. The beauty in every turn of the climb is astounding! Russ takes a photo of every scene I admire. What a guy! Our other teams call out encouragement even though I am now very labile and weepy.

At the stop on the rocks above the Wall, Tom holds out a beautiful half tomato from his own garden. Food has never looked so appealing & welcome. Now we are close to the highest elevation, which we make in a short time, but the snowfield over to the summit looks distorted miles away. Taking advice to drop my pack, I continue light and manage to join everyone now stretched out on the top. Hugs & cheers! The summit of Mt. Baker! Unbelievable! Unforgettable! On Mt. Sherman, 1000 feet lower, active fumaroles are exhausting sulphurous fumes. Mt. Shuksan stands above the clouds. Glaciers stretch down, the white is blinding. It's a heavenly day, but I feel lousy and restless.

Larry has extra water to offer me for which I am grateful. Every few hundred feet of descent brings improvement. Back below the col I can finally enjoy the icescapes, thrill at the scenery, and enjoy my wonderful companions. Normal again.

Diagnosis? Who knows? The combination of heat, dehydration, elevation, and poor acclimatization certainly gave my trip an unforgettable flavor.



Russ Moir on the Coleman Glacier. Photograph: Barb Baker.

In the heat of the afternoon, the crevasses are a bit tricky to negotiate. Shannon leads, probing ahead. Looking down to the campsite are dozens(?) of tents, colour on the bare rock. Within meters of camp, Russ falls laughing, on his back, still tied into the rope. This is end-of-day hijinks but another group uses

the moment to instruct "That's how NOT to self arrest." Even funnier.

At camp, lovely flowers that had gone unnoticed, surround us... yellow mimulus, pink penstemon. Brooks babble. Other parties arriving. Alpenglow on Baker. Guys cooking dinner on Devon's trusty stove. Chocolate blueberries for desert. All is well.

Participants: Russ Moir, Larry Borgerson, Tom Carter, Shannon Finnegan, Mike Teachman, Bruce Kennedy, Larry Talarico, Devon St. Denis & unidentified lone climber from Williams Lake.



SOUTH OF
THE BORDER

MOUNTAIN NATURE WINNER

Mountain goat on Mt. Angeles.
Greg Gordon

DISTANT OBJECTIVES

LOS VOLCANS DE MEXICO

Tom Carter
February 15-29

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

Even though we came like conquistadors with grand and noble quests, our first steps into the harsh, bright and polluted bowl of Mexico City were somewhat timid. We Canadians are polite conquerors. On the Pyramid of the Sun at the ruins of Teotihuacan we all sensed palpably this culture's intense relationship with the land. Obviously the glaciated summits on the valley's rim were the abodes of the gods, gods who often belched with fire and fury. In constant vigil by the reclining body of his beloved Iztacihautl, Popocatepetl's torch is erupting once again.

Our goal was to climb over Iztacihautl's body to her frozen breast. There we could taste the thin air of 5286 metres, and in the east see El Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltepetl, the "Star mountain" as the Aztecs called it. Being the third tallest mountain in North America, its 5700 metre summit was our ultimate goal.

The group went to La Malinche, a smaller volcano nearby to acclimatize. Having made two previous visits to Los Volcans I chose to go directly to Ixta and acclimatize by climbing slowly up from the valley floor. I have found the missile-launch taxi rides to 4000 m. propel my heart, lungs and mind into a paralyzing panic. Until well adjusted, I'll start from the bottom.

The drawback of my alternative was a thirty kilo pack to haul from San Raphael, up through the pine forests to the little lakes below Ixta's northern shoulder. The load was brutal. Feeling more of a fool than a conqueror I clawed my way up. At the first lake I realized in a wobbly daze I had driven myself up to 3500 m, the same height as Namche

Bazaar! Way too high.

In the space of two hours I was forced, gasping, to take cover from a thunder storm, here where it never rains! Then went over hard on an ankle, running in unlaced boots to catch a photo of lightning. The last plague was vomiting up my Alpen-Aire supper! A sleepless night for a fat-pulsed fool.

Two days later, traversing below the "breast", I could look down over a sea of clouds and felt much stronger. This pursuit requires that you listen closely to your body.

Rounding the ridge the Ayaloco Glacier hung from the "belly" high above. I dropped my pack gratefully and scrambled up the moraine to the snout. It looked good, less steep than it had from below. The ice was spiked with "nieve penitentes" and spackled with evening colours shafting through broken cloud. The whole trip had been worth it just to have



Iztacihautl from Amecameca (village) 5286 m. Photograph: Tom Carter.

been there at that moment.

It was a cold and crystal clear morning. Snaking up through the "penitentes" I watched the moon sink into a pink bed of clouds below. Cresting La Barriga, the "belly", the world opened up. There was "Popo" smoking, and there piercing the cloud was Citlaltepetl. I panted my along the summit ridge as it twisted through the sky. There was just enough challenge to keep the bemused and light-headed sharply focused.

Late the next day I flopped down on the road. The grasslands had stretched further than I had expected. Cliff bands kept forcing the detours upward. This was camp. From here at La Joya, the roadhead, it was twenty-five kilometers of

dust to Amecameca the town below.

According to their itinerary the group intended to arrive that evening and sure enough, shortly before sundown, five of them pulled up in a VW taxi van. In a quick exchange I learned that three members had returned ill to Canada. The five were planning a one am departure and bedded down early.

Being able at last to sleep at 4000 m, I arose to full sun and the group long gone on their summit attempt. The Las Rodillas route was a very long day from the "feet" to the "breast" and back, with an elevation gain of 1300 m. I scanned the mountain, knowing I'd never see them, and wishing them well turned to my dusty road. It lead finally to a lift from a farmer, town, enchilladas, cerveza and great satisfaction.

Meeting the group next morning in the street I heard their stories. The climb had been an endurance test, uncomfortable for some, but all had summited and were keen to move on to Citla-tepetl. I thought they had done extremely well considering the length of their route.

An easy succession of buses led to Tlachichuca, the sleepy little town that sits on the plain below the mountain. After a night in the Reyes family's factory bunkhouse we road in their rebuilt vintage Power Wagon fifteen hundred metres up a tortuous road to Piedra Grande, the climbers' hut at 4230 m.

It was a bleak barren place beyond vegetation and we were soon heading up the trail to the foot of the glacier for an afternoon reconnaissance. Four of us decided to leave by two am for the summit. The alpine start was to give us a greater chance of being down before clouds obscured the

mountain. I love the procession of headlamps, each person in their own bubble of light. It seems easier to focus on keeping a pace and being unable to see ahead or behind, the approach always passes quickly. Quiet motion in the cold of night. At the ice we put on crampons. The glacier had retreated considerably since my last visit. Looking up, the mountain's silhouette against the stars made it look within reach. I knew that two hours later it would seem no nearer. The moon sailed clear of the mountain. Coming out of shadow the icefields were revealed in their enormity. We had become spread out and were tiny specks in a great space.



Summit of Iztacihautl looking towards Popocatepetl 5452 m. Photograph: Tom Carter.

We were actually a long way up the cone before the lightening of the sky began. My meditation on the mountain was to watch the light grow ever so slightly, shifting in hue and tone, the cloud layer below blending it with moonlight. Much further down through cloud holes, the lights of towns shone like alternate galaxies. Immense silence. And then the sun exploded. The

mountain's shadow stretched out a hundred kilometers over the clouds. Pink filled the world then tangerine. Climbing became steadily harder. The resting and watching became more frequent. Vapour clouds from deep panting floated about. Lungs like bellows, legs like lead but going on. The crater rim ever so slowly approached. The day had come...

Yes we got to the top and got back home safely to our familiars routines, but it is right there I want to stop, right there in those moments where just simply being is completely enough... and to come back and know it!!

Vaya con dios, hasta la vista.

Participants: Pat & Murrrough O'Brien, Rick Eppler, Mike Hubbard, Sylvia Moser, Anita & Tony Vaughn, Charles Turner, Tom Carter

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF KANGCHENJUNGA

Doug Synnot

When I signed up for this 24 day trek to Kangchenjunga, I knew there would be a lot of ups, I just never figured there would be as many downs.

We flew into a very hot Biratnagar, in south-east Nepal, and then drove for about six hours to the trailhead at Basantapur, a bustling ramshackle town of sleeping dogs and dark little shops, tended by tranquil Limpo mamas, who would dearly have liked to flog me a carpet.

We launched forth, my brother from Scotland, myself, and two friends from Vancouver, accompanied by Nima, our

trusty Sirdar, and a whole whack of porters. We needed a lot of porters apparently, because it is difficult to get re-supplied en-route, and it is very remote, the further North you go.

Well, I knew from Stan Armstrong's book that it would be hot and sweaty in the flat lands, but honestly, I thought I was in Vietnam, -paddy fields, bamboo, 90 degree heat, and mosquitoes. -I remember thinking, "I must be crazy humping all this cold weather gear in this! Did I get off at the wrong airport."

Not to worry Doug, sure enough, after swanning around in the Tamur Kosi valley, through gorgeous rhododendron forests, and vast terraced hillsides for a week or so, we got to Ghunsa, a Tibetan winter settlement. This was the official office location of the Kangchenjunga Protection Area Project. The official there was supposed to be liaison officer for all climbs on Kangchenjunga. As I knew there were a couple of climbs going on, I asked him why he wasn't up there liaising. Whereupon he told me if I wasn't a good boy he'd confiscate my video camera. Well that's not strictly true, but he did tell me he worked for Indian TV, and had used just about every movie camera known to man.

We shot up the Ghunsa Khola valley, into the high country, going up and down some colossal ridges. After a few days of this, my knee-caps refused to speak to me (not to mention my traveling companions).

Eventually we got to Pang Pema, the site of the Kangchenjunga North Base Camp. We lucked out on the weather all the way, and were rewarded with the most fabulous views of the Kangchenjunga Massif and the many surrounding peaks. We had a few discussions about what was what, with Nepali names and English names getting somewhat mixed up.

Kangchenjunga is such a forbidding whopper, that even when you're there, you think, "But how do you get on to it?"

We met a UK Combined Services Team coming at Kangchenjunga from both the North side (the "B" team apparently) and the South side (The "A" team). I knew, when I saw these boys in shorts, as the thermometer dropped like a rocket, and the snow started falling, that I was supremely glad that they were going up, and I was going down.

We also ran into Chris Bonnington, the climbing legend, on his way up to some peaks north-west of Lhonak. He really is a very nice unassuming guy.

The mountains in the Kangchenjunga area are truly magnificent to behold, and well worth a look. My personal favorite was the Big Chang-Chang Himal, or Wedge Peak, (because it looks like an upturned shovel). The area sees very few westerners, giving some of that magnificent solitude that Douglas Freshfield must have seen when he first laid Western eyes on the Behemoth in his circumnavigation at the turn of the century, with Vittorio Sella, from the Indian side.

Now did I tell you I got treated by a shaman?... that's another story.

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY JAPANESE ALPS REVISITED

Tak Ogasawara

During October to November I went back to Japan to see my father. Between visiting families and friends I squeezed in a three-day trip to the Hodaka Range in the Japanese Alps. Since moving to Canada in 1971, I have only gone back to Japan three times but never had the chance to revisit the Japanese Alps.

The Japanese Alps, Hodaka Range is special for Japanese mountaineers as a training place for Himalayan climbing. I was no exception; I trained there in the summer and winter dreaming of climbing the big Himalayan mountains someday. The place might have changed in my eyes but I wanted to go and look up at the rock face to the ridge and renew my old dreams once again.

For that reason, on this trip I wanted to do everything exactly the same way I used to do: take the midnight train from Osaka city, where I used to live, to the foot of mountain then hike and climb for three days then take the mid-

night train to back Osaka.

The train reached Matsumoto early in the morning where I transferred to the local train to Shimajima where I again transferred to a bus to a sanctuary called Kamikouchi (Inner

High Land) at the base of the Hodaka Range. The bus went up along the river passing several hydro dams, tunnels and hot springs that nestled at the river bank. At one place I saw steam coming out from the side of the bank that reminded me that this place is a very active volcanic area. I reached Kamikouchi at 6:30 am still dark and the weather was not that

good; rain fell quite heavily and clouds covered the mountains so I decided to hike the loop trail along the Azusa Gawa (Azusa River) until the rain ceased. Five minutes from the bus stop I crossed a very famous bridge over the Azusa Gawa Called Kastupabashi (Kastupa is a legendary creature who looks like a human but with a shell on its back and head, and lives in the water; bashi means bridge).



In fair weather, from this bridge you can see the high mountains in front of you. It is one of the most popular landscapes in Japan just like seeing Mt. Victoria from Lake Louise.

Kamikouchi is a beautiful place especially this time of the year. The trees and shrubs are at the peak of changing colour to yellow, red and orange. I walked beside the Azusa Gawa toward Miyoujin Ike (Miyoujin Pond). I often stopped to take pictures and listen to the sound of the river. It was so peaceful and quiet. At the Miyoujin Ike there were small shrines beside the Ike at which we used to pray for safe trip before we went up the mountain. After a few minutes of rest I back-tracked halfway toward the bus stop where the trail branched out to Dakezawa Cirques. The trail went up beside the creek under a heavy canopy of trees; after two hours on the trail, it opened up and I saw a red-roofed hut above. This is where I planned to stay the night. I reached the hut at 2 pm and had a lot of time to dry my wet clothes. There were 4 people staying in the hut that night, most of them my age, so we

exchanged old stories about the mountains. The next morning the hut owner woke us up at 6 am and breakfast was already on the table. After breakfast I went outside to check out the weather; it was still rainy but it was much brighter than yesterday. Two people decided to go down but despite the bad weather I decided

to go up because trail was good and the next hut was not that far away.

After a two-hour hike up the trail in the frozen rain I reached a small plateau on the ridge crest where trail separated into two; one went up to Maehodakadake and the main trail followed the ridge crest toward Okuhodakadake. The last hour the weather improved and now there was sunshine and warmth. I scrambled up to Maehodaka; 30 minutes later I was on the top and saw heart of the Japanese Alps in front of me. It was nice to see those mountains once again; I spent almost one hour there remembering mountains' names and the climbing memories. I climbed down to the ridge crest to the main trail and over the third highest mountain in Japan, Okuhodakadake. This peak has a small shrine on the top like so many mountains in Japan.

From the top I saw a red roofed hut below at the saddle. I got there at 2 pm and decided to stay the night but as it was still early, I went up the next peak where I could look down at Taki Dani (Fall Canyon), one of the major rock climbing

areas of Japan. The night in the hut was very quiet with only seven people staying that night. During the high summer season this hut can accommodate up to 500 guests at night. I sat in the library and read books, listened to music and watched the sun going down the horizon, it was a beautiful sunset.

Next morning it was cold but fine weather. I left the hut at 7 am, hiked down to Karasawa Cirques then Yokoo. Along the trail I stopped frequently and looked up at Biyobuiwa (Wall-Like Rock) and the East face of Maehodakadake that I climbed quite often. This place is like a Japanese version of a big wall climbing area. At Yokoo, the trail joined the main Kamikouchi Valley. I hiked down along the Azusa Gawa towards the main Kamikouchi area, passing through the Tokuzawaen (base camp area for winter climbs) and at the Miyoujin Ike I decided to go up the historic Tokugou Touge (Tokugou Pass) trail to go back to Shimajima instead of taking the bus to go back there.

After a two-hour hike I reached Tokugou Touge. At

the Touge there was a small, very old hut where I ordered lunch and, while waiting, visited a small open place beside the hut where you could look down to Azusa Gawa meandering through the narrow Kamikouchi Valley. Above the valley I could see the entire east face of Maehodaka. Before the bus road opened up in 1930, this was the only

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES



trail to get into Kamikouchi and the east side of Hodaka Mountains. I stayed there for half an hour and one last time I looked up to Hodaka to say "good-bye" and "see you". From the Touge, the trail meandered down side of the mountain then along the creek. I reached the Futamata (junction) that was the end of the trail and the start of the wide hydro access road at 4:30 pm. Halfway down the access road at the hydro station, night caught up with me and I stumbled down the dark road to Shimajima. I got there at 6:30 pm; it had taken me four and a half hours from the Touge. During that time I did not see or hear anything except the sound of the creek and the crunching sounds of my steps on the fallen leaves. The last four days in the mountains I spent hiking, looking up at the rock walls and ridges I used climb. I enjoyed every minute of it.

At Shimajima, I went to a local hot-spring bath house to clean up and change into clean clothes. Then I took the midnight train to get back to Osaka early in the next morning.

BAFFIN 2000

Claire Ebendinger

For many years Sandy has been following his call to the North, exploring with John Dunn and friends, then delighting us with wonderful slide shows and fascinating stories of their adventures. No wonder "The Land That Never Melts" has become a dream destination for some of us... We were going to discover a new kind of wilderness, terrain with no bushwhack (yaaaah!), the midnight sun (no need to end the day by headlamp), one of a kind wildlife (especially mosquitoes that are sooooo slow), people with shine in their eyes and welcoming smiles, tantalizing rock faces that reach for the sky, leg-numbing creek crossings (can I rock-hop this one?), soggy muskeg mazes, glaciers pouring down in the valleys, endless snow-covered ridges, icebergs floating in the fjords, a language

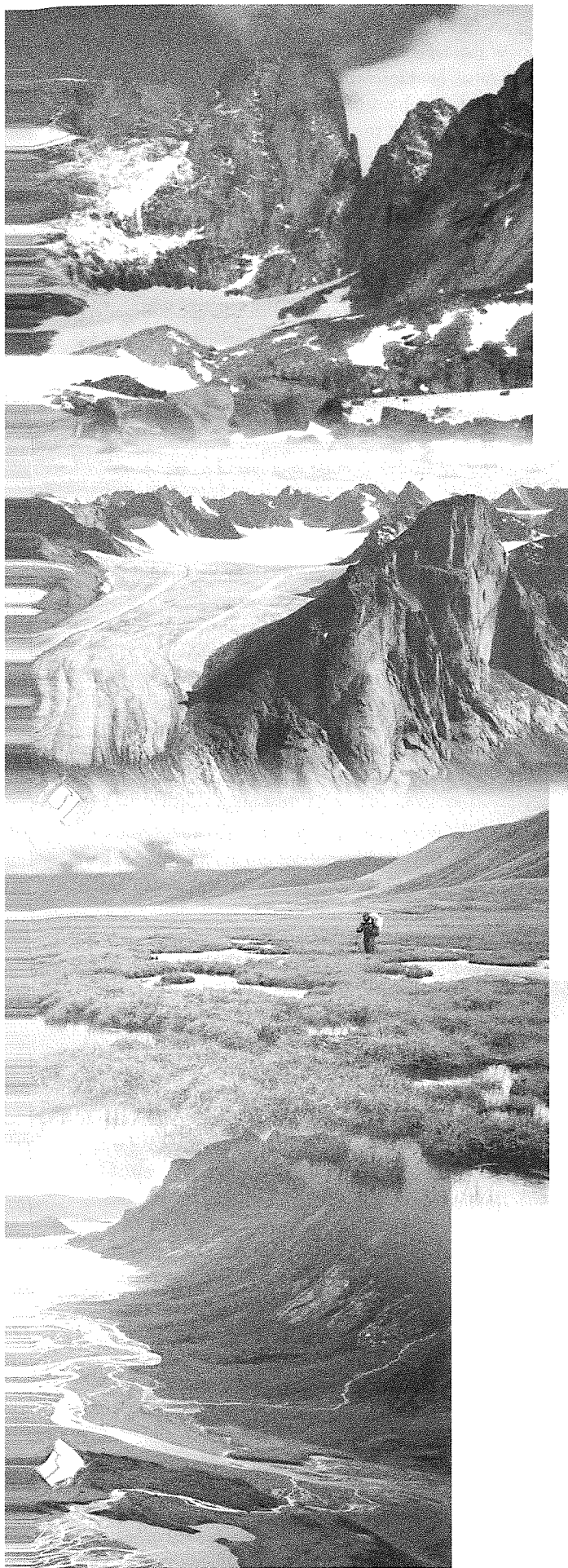
that sounds so melodic and ancient, a place that is best explored at a slow pace...

The plan soon evolved. I wanted to see for myself and live it in my heart. Catrin, Rick, Ian, Margaret and I were going to do the traverse of Auyuittuq National Park. We planned to do it in the opposite direction that Sandy's group had chosen, in order to keep the wind in our back. Unfortunately a foot injury changed Ian & Margaret's plan and they opted for a less challenging route, from Pangnirtung to Summit lake (half way), and back, as Judy, Viggo and Russ were doing, 2 weeks earlier. Rather than write a trip report similar to Sandy's (Bushwhacker 1999), I thought a photo report might be more interesting, with photos from each of our groups that were in Nunavut in July and August.

DISTANT OBJECTIVES

Clockwise from top: Southeast wall of Mt. Asgard (Judith Holm), Mt. Thor and Fork Beard Glacier (Claire Ebendinger), soggy muskeg maze (Claire Ebendinger), the Weasel Valley and Pangnirtung Fjord (Catrin Brown), leg-numbing river crossing (Rick Eppler), Mt. Asgard from Turner Glacier (Claire Ebendinger). Center: Arctic dryad, *Dryas integrifolia* (Judith Holm). Background: Breidablik and Thor (Russ Moir).





MONT BLANC

CHAMONIX, FRANCE

Katherine Brandt-Wells

June 14-18

Back in June, Derek and I had the pleasure of spending 2½ weeks in the ChamoniX area of France. Being the shoulder season, the area was not inundated with tourists but most of the téléphérique and télécabine ski lifts were not operating so access to the mountains was a little more restrictive (i.e., one had to start hiking up all the way from the river valley).

Our main objective was to climb Mont Blanc (4807 m/ 15,771') via the most practical route under the current conditions. As we discovered, it was still very early in the climbing season and most ascents were by ski via the Grand Mulets Route. The recent snow fall on Mont Blanc had not yet solidified but we were told that in about 10 days time the conditions would probably be suitable to climb Mont Blanc by foot via the Aiguille du Goûter Route (PD).

To acclimatize, wait for the snow to solidify and also get a feel for the local terrain, we chose to start with a 4-day trip into the Aiguille du Tour region of the Mont Blanc Massif. We climbed both l'Aiguille du Généri (3265 m/ 10,712') and l'Aiguille du Tour Sud (3542 m/ 11,621') over those few days and each involved traversing the glacier then a short scramble to reach the summit.

Later that week we also managed to climb Mont Blanc du Tacul (4248 m/ 13,937') and take advantage of the téléphérique cable car up to l'Aiguille du Midi. This gives one a 2812 m/ 9226' elevation gain in only 16 minutes. Mont Blanc du Tacul was a day trip involving about 1030 m/ 3379' in elevation gain. The aim was to cross the glacier, do the peak, then get back to the tram station before 4:15 pm when the last cable car would leave l'Aiguille du Midi station. Well, we made it up to the summit of Mont Blanc du Tacul and back to the station with only 10 minutes to spare! Our adrenaline had definitely kicked in over that last half-hour and when I tested my blood sugar at the end of the day, back down in ChamoniX, it was up at 20.7 mmol/L (373 mg/dl)!

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

Day 1 (Saturday, June 14, 2000):

We had given ourselves five days to climb Mont Blanc and, as it turned out, that was just enough time. Since none of the local ski gondolas or summer trains were working yet we had to climb the entire mountain by foot. We started backpacking up the mountain from the ski village of Les Houches (at an elevation of about 950 m/ 3117') that next Saturday afternoon. It was overcast but hot and muggy and one could tell that it was soon going to rain. The mountain scene was typical of the Alps with colourful flower boxes decorating the ski chalets and off-key cowbells ringing in the distance. The snow had only recently melted so the alpine meadow flowers were only just starting to come out in bloom. As forecasted, the clouds darkened as we headed towards Bellevue, the top of the local ski resort, and pouring

rain, thunder and lightening broke by 5 pm. At this point we were above the treeline but very few mountains were visible. We trudged on up through the damp rain and mist hanging ahead of us. We camped that night beside Le Nid d'Aigle tramway station (2372 m/ 7782') and felt lucky that we could get away with camping here at this time of the year. This is where people usually start the climb of Mont Blanc if following the Goûter route, after taking the local ski lift and tramway.

Day 2 (Sunday, June 15, 2000):

That next morning we followed the trail, which zigzagged up into the misty mountains, over a moraine. We met an American from Iowa when we stopped for a break at the rundown Baraque Forestières des Rognes (hut). The man was turning back from attempting Mont Blanc since he had a headache due to the altitude. My plastic hip belt buckle had broken the previous day and he kindly insisted that he and I should exchange hip belt buckles and gave me his unbroken one! As we continued on up the steep talus slopes onto a ridge, we met many other people turning back from attempting Mont Blanc. They felt that the Grand Couloir was too icy. I started to feel intrigued... what was crossing this couloir going to be like? I also started to feel the altitude and felt a little nauseated; chocolate didn't taste good to me at all at that point.

We soon arrived at a small plateau and stopped to eat a good lunch of Rochefort cheese and dark rye bread on the rocks outside the Club Alpin Français (CAF) Refuge de Tête Rousse at 3167 m/ 10,390'. We spoke to two French men from the next valley and agreed to join up with them for the remainder of the day. After lunch we all roped up and crossed the Tête Rousse Glacier to a rock rib that runs immediately to the left of the Grand Couloir. About 100 m up the rib we arrived at the popular location for crossing the couloir. At this point there was a fixed rope, across the couloir, that all the teams of people were attaching themselves to. There was a rather long "traffic jam" as a result of this and we ended up waiting for at least 45 minutes to take our turn crossing the couloir. I was concerned that my blood sugar level would start to rise due to this sudden lack of activity. There was some loose rock-fall coming down the couloir and Derek and I both wore our climbing helmets. No one else had a helmet. We decided that it would be best to cross the couloir rapidly. Derek hooked onto the fixed rope and I followed, roped up, across the couloir in his tracks. From our impression, the fixed rope was making the crossing more dangerous! The two French men who we had joined up with did not manage to gather enough confidence to cross the couloir and also turned around at that point. Derek and I continued on.

The scramble up the rocky ridge between the two couloirs to the Refuge de l'Aiguille du Goûter was fun but a bit slippery in places. The rope and steel cables that are bolted into the mountainside provided us with some protection to hook into but we were constantly on the lookout for loose rock fall from somewhat careless people up ahead of us. We were glad to have brought our helmets along with us. At the end of the day we arrived at the CAF Refuge de l'Aiguille

du Goûter (mountain hut) which is located at the north summit of the Aiguille du Goûter at 3817 m/ 12,523'. We collapsed for an hour inside the warm, humid, crowded hut. Derek cooked us a hard earned supper and managed to convince the CAF staff to give us some free water (melted snow). We also decided to buy ourselves each a crème caramel dessert as a treat... mmm! It tasted so good!

Apparently, it is illegal to camp outside of the campsites in Chamonix; people are warned that if they leave a tent up in the mountains, the "mountaineering police" will come, pack it up and take it away. Still being the low season, we were told that we could still get away with camping however, so after supper we set up our tent on the glacier, not far from the mountain hut. We had opted to remain independent of the CAF hut system but all the locals thought we were a bit crazy to camp up on the glacier. I think they believed we would eventually retreat to the refuge. We were both quite exhausted having hauled all our camping and mountaineering gear up from 950 m/ 3117' to 3817 m/ 12,523' (a total of almost 3000 m/ 9842') over the last two days so decided to take a rest day the following day. Our plan was to continue on up and climb the final 991 m/ 3251' to the summit of Mont Blanc on Tuesday (day 4).

Day 3 (Monday, June 16, 2000):

We both had a really good sound sleep that night and were quite glad to have not had to share a CAF hut dorm with numerous other climbers rising at dawn. Early that next morning (around 3 am) we heard several groups of people stomping past our tent in the hardened crusty snow. However, while eating breakfast later that morning we watched nearly every single group return from an unsuccessful attempt up Mont Blanc... one group had made it as far as the Dôme du Goûter but the wind had picked up and they had retreated. We were glad to have opted for a rest day. One group of climbers from Spain returned a few hours later and they had actually made it to the summit of Mont Blanc but had seen nothing they said... it had been total white-out. They appeared to be the only ones who had made it that day.

We looked up at the Dôme du Goûter and blowing snow was curling over the top of the mountain. It was windy enough down at our tent so I couldn't imagine what the forces were like higher up, let alone on top of Mont Blanc. The wind was whirling around and at times made amusing patterns in the snow... flakes of snow were getting blown around and they looked like little birds flying up and then falling back onto the warm, crusty snow. We drank a lot of fluids all day and tried to just sleep and rest in preparation to climb Mont Blanc the next day. We watched a helicopter drop off some food supplies just near the refuge. Later that evening an emergency helicopter was hovering around; it appeared to be searching for some missing climber(s).

Day 4 (Tuesday, June 17, 2000):

We attempted Mont Blanc early that next morning (Tuesday, 5 am), but the clouds were still racing over the mountains and it was total white-out not far from the Refuge de l'Aiguille du Goûter. Only one other party (two

French men) was attempting to climb Mont Blanc via the Goûter route that day and they were about an hour ahead of us. About two hours after we had started out they appeared out of the mist from up above us... they were giving up and turning back. We continued on for a short while then decided that it was crazy for us to attempt Mont Blanc under these conditions. We retreated back to the tent, discouraged, and spent another day resting in the tent, trying to decide what to do... we were running out of time and food and tomorrow would be day 5. After considering all of our options (e.g., to return to Chamonix that day, attempt Mont Blanc later that same day, etc.) we decided to go for Mont Blanc one more time, on Wednesday, that next day. We decided to persevere and still attempt Mont Blanc since it was our last possible day! Since our flight from Frankfurt, Germany back to Canada was leaving early on Friday morning we would have to get all the way back down to Chamonix that very same day.

Throughout the rest of Tuesday, our second rest day, the sun kept on appearing then disappearing behind the clouds. At one moment the severe heat from the sun would be baking the tent and then a few minutes later we would be in total white-out-in the clouds-unable to see much at all and the tent would cool right down. Later on the weather turned rather ugly, snowing and hailing.

I was also glad that we had retreated from attempting the summit that day since I was running into problems with my insulin. When we had started out at 5 am my blood sugar had been inexplicably high-up at 14.6 mmol/L (263 mg/dl)-but it had fallen down to 10.7 mmol/L (193 mg/dl) after three hours of climbing. Over the next few hours, while we rested in the tent, I kept on trying to get my blood sugar level down through several insulin boluses. Despite taking lots of insulin, my blood sugar levels continued to rise to 17.9 mmol/L (322 mg/dl). I had already changed my insulin infusion pump site and inserted a new infusion set but it didn't appear to have made any difference. Only when I switched to a new bottle of insulin and changed my pump infusion site once again did my blood sugar level start to come down. The old bottle of insulin was almost empty and appeared to have "gone bad". I had now been traveling for five weeks and for most of the time the insulin had not been refrigerated. I was glad that I had many extra insulin and infusion pump supplies with me. By 4:30 pm my blood sugar level had fallen to 8.6 mmol/L (155 mg/dl) but I had not eaten anything since 7 am and I was feeling extremely hungry. We were starting to run short on food and neither of us felt like eating any of the remaining meals we had available, so we decided to treat ourselves to supper in the refuge. We had to wait until 7:30 pm for them to cook us a meal but the eggs that they served me, fried deeply in butter, tasted SO good to me... I think that my body was in great need of more fat at that point. Most of our meals had been relatively high in carbohydrate but low in fat.

Day 5 (Wednesday, June 18, 2000):

So, on day 5, we rose at 2 am and, once again, started the climb. There appeared to be a total of about 12 people

attempting to climb Mont Blanc from the Goûter hut that morning. Since Derek and I were quite well acclimatized by then, we managed to go at a much faster pace than most people. We headed up the broad snow ridge to the Dôme du Goûter (4304 m/ 14,121') and crossed the summit, however, the visibility started to deteriorate and the clouds soon closed in on us.

About half an hour later, three French climbers and two Danes also arrived and we decided to stick together as a group for safety reasons. Over the next hour we traversed the glacier and, with a bit of compass orienteering, managed to find the Refuge Bivouac Vallot standing on a rock (at 4362 m/ 14,311'). Derek and I had only taken about one break over the past 4 ½ hours so we all decided to go into the Vallot Hut for a break. I had been warned, however, that this was "only an emergency hut and you usually find people there being green in their faces" and to avoid it at all costs! The two Danes were not feeling good at all at this point and wrapped themselves up in some of the hut's blankets, not saying much. The three French people took out what looked like a thermos of steaming coffee and a luxurious lunch (it was still only around 7 am however)... chunky bread with lettuce and a tasty filling. My mouth watered as I watched them and wished we had brought along more food on this five-day trip. I had to be content with eating dried fruit and plain water that I tried to swish down my throat. One of the French men took pity on me and actually gave me a sesame snap of his, which was a treat for me at that point!

Time was passing on and the two Danes and the French couple were not looking very enthusiastic at the idea of continuing. Derek and I expressed our wish to keep moving and get warm again; the third French man decided to join us and his two friends would wait in the Vallot Hut until he returned. They stated that they were not fit to climb Mont Blanc. The two Danes were starting to suffer from bad headaches, which was not surprising since they had only come up from Chamonix the day before. Other climbers were starting to arrive at the Vallot Hut by ski via the Grand Mulets Route; this was another good reason for us to start moving again!

The three of us roped up and followed the tracks of a French couple who were ahead of us, up the steepening glacier. We climbed a narrowing ridge up into the cloud, up towards the summit of Mont Blanc. About an hour later, as we crossed two snowy ridge humps known as Les Bosses, the clouds decided to break for a few minutes and rewarded us with a panoramic view of the valley of Chamonix down below. Another sharp snow ridge followed and we crossed a few more bumps. Our pace really slowed down at this point, as a result of the high altitude, but after many short pauses and some perseverance we made it to the top of Mont Blanc! It was 9 am (it had taken us seven hours including one long break) and only one other couple had made it up to the summit so far that day. Looking down below we could see about 15 more individuals trudging up the final ridge to the summit of Mont Blanc. The clouds had closed in on us again so we were not rewarded with any views; the mist circled around us, sticking to us and frosting up our clothing. After taking a few photographs and exchanging a few hugs,

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

the three of us decided to start heading back down again. The snow would soon be softening up. Derek and I also had to get all the way back down to the valley of Chamonix (from 4807 m/ 15,771' all the way down to 900 m/ 2953'!) that very same day. Our flight from Frankfurt back to Canada was leaving in less than 48 hours!

Derek and I managed to get back down to our tent near the Refuge de l'Aiguille du Goûter (at 3817 m/ 12,523') by around midday. It had warmed up considerably so there was a bit of deep snow plodding and some snow sticking to our crampons towards the end. We decided to take a short rest before packing everything up to head back down into the valley. My blood sugar control had been reasonably good so far that day and I had not had any problems with my insulin. We needed to hydrate ourselves badly so we melted some snow for herbal tea. Since I didn't have any appetite for herbal tea, I decided to try a cold drink of water mixed with some fructose orange drink crystals that we had bought down in Chamonix. I found out that that was a major mistake, however, when I tested my blood sugar level an hour later. My blood sugar had shot up and was very high since the fructose had been absorbed extremely fast.

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

By 2 pm we had packed everything up and started heading down the west face of l'Aiguille du Goûter; we were feeling a bit tired having been up for 12 hours already and took our time heading down the slippery rocky ridge. We had hardly any food left and we really hadn't eaten very much yet that day. I was feeling rather worn out (mentally) and ended up crying at one point... all I felt like doing was lying down in a comfortable, soft clean bed and going to sleep... but we had to keep going and get out that day. After several hours we crossed back over the Grand Couloir, roped up together but not to the high cable rope. A few minutes later I ended up slipping (I was getting tired) and sliding down a section of the gully. I was glad that there was no one else in that

area at that moment, for safety reasons. We arrived at the Refuge de Tête Rousse around 6 pm and decided to treat ourselves to another dinner (and some beer!) at the refuge. Once again, the only vegetarian meal available was fried eggs but they still tasted very good to me and we both felt a bit refreshed after some food.

For the remainder of that day we just had to keep on going. Our legs started to ache carrying our heavily weighted packs and the trail appeared to be never-ending. We headed down the forested side of the mountain and many hours later arrived in the quiet ski village of Les Houches. It was just after 11 pm; we trudged on to the train station and found out that we had missed the last train back to Chamonix. Exhausted, we considered taking a taxi back to the campground in Chamonix but had no change to make a telephone call. We decided to head back into the village of Les Houches and were lucky to find one auberge that was still open so we decided to "splurge" and treat ourselves to one night in a hotel. It was now midnight; I think we really deserved it! We had now been up for almost 24 hours and here we were back down in the valley. That was my longest day in the mountains yet... thank goodness for the insulin pump! Without it I couldn't have managed my diabetes with the same level of control, survived with such limited amounts of food or continued on doing exercise for so many hours. That night we both slept really well and didn't even wake up when a local cat decided to sleep on the same bed with us for the night! We awoke to a beautiful day and a beautiful view of the mountains out of our bedroom window. We were so happy to have succeeded in climbing Mont Blanc... but looking up at the summit, it still appeared to be well covered by cloud. Now we had to get to Frankfurt to catch our flight in less than 24 hours—there wasn't time to rest very long!

SUNDAY—MONDAY ON MONDAY—TUESDAY

HOW GOOD KARMA CAN REPLACE BAD IN A SHORT TIME

Russ Moir

The journey had taken on a life of its own. There was a distinct feeling that all I had to do was get up in the morning and events would just flow. That's why I was a bit pissed off as I stomped up the big hill out of Jiri without my trusty trek pole, noticing its absence by the growing stiffness in my ankle. On top of that there were the violent reactions of my stomach to the dahl bat I'd eaten at the grotty bus halt on the interminable ride out from Kathmandu the day before. For the first time in a month my spirits were wilting.

For the past few weeks I'd been traveling through Nepal, mainly the Langtang Himal, with a fine, gregarious and caring group of people, who had all helped to make my first visit to Nepal a beautiful experience. Now I was "on my own", apart from my new friend Yula, who was accompanying me on a visit to his homeland of Khumbu, the focus of

many dreams for such a long time. The day before we'd left Kathmandu at 6a.m. on the local "stop-at-all-bends" bus. For the next 12 hours I'd sat with my knees in my chest on a funky bench seat, alongside chickens (live) in bags, bundles of vegetables, sacks of rice and a HORDE of seated, standing and rooftop passengers, all on a ramshackle Tata bus traveling on the road up through the hills to Jiri, the trail-head for the Solu Khumbu region. By the time we reached Jiri it was dark, I was rigid and sore and too tired to check that I'd got all my gear off. In the early dawn I woke up with a jolt. My stomach was in revolt for the only time in 2 months and I knew I'd left my pole jammed under my bus seat. A moonlit walk to the bus park at the end of the road, in the midst of the crazy Jiri bazaar, was fruitless. Although I "knew" that the two bus wallahs (guys who bang and whistle to tell the bus driver how much road he hasn't got above

bottomless pits) had some shifty knowledge about my pole, I got no help. It had protected my tender right ankle for a month, and now I had to trek over the big passes to the Khumbu and then to wander through the mountains for another two weeks. I was becoming doubtful of my plans and feeling frustrated that my adventure was in danger.

By the second day I was tired from fluid loss, no food and from protecting my ankle. But slowly events again took hold of the journey. At the night's rest stop a lovely old Sherpa couple ministered to my gut ache with a natural kindness. Sonam came out of his kitchen and with a sly wink and smile said, "I have sure old Sherpa cure, Yak cheese". Now that's an Oxymoron if ever there was one, it's a big Sherpa in-joke. To see the humour you've got to have the Nak to know your Yaks, so to speak. Anyhow, it or something worked, and my bush visits grew less frequent as the day wore on.

Leaving Sonam's house I was confronted with the 6500ft. slog over the Lamjura La, so by the time we reached the summit flags, my ankle was giving me concern. On the steep rocky descent my heart was telling me clearly not to be disappointed if the Khumbu trek had to be curtailed.

I'd stopped to take a quick shot of two lovely Sherpa women busily pounding tsampa meal with an enormous pestle into a large bowl. This meal is their traditional staple and I was excited because it signaled the upcoming time I'd be spending in Sherpa-land. Intent on the adult scene, I was surprised by the small voice from below, which said in halting English, "Do you want a walking stick?" I couldn't believe my ears. A small, bright-eyed boy stood in front of me, hands behind his back. I quickly managed to say that YES, I was interested and nervously he produced from his back a beautifully sculpted branch. I say a branch, because the traditional Nepalese stick is a forked branch with one fork cut off to produce a bent-handle effect, just like the modern techno-poles we Westerners pay big bucks for.

My hand reached for the handle and the fork just molded itself around my fist. I stubbed it to the floor and the handle was at the exact height of my missing pole... I could hardly believe my luck, and when the price was settled at 22 Rupees (45cents!!) I was able to amble off down the hill feeling so much fresher and lighter that the day's finish to Junbesi was a blur of floating over hill trails and through pleasant, tidy villages. Things were looking up.

That evening, entering Junbesi, my first lodge choices had been turned down by Yula, who insisted that "Ang Rita's

is good place". When we found Ang Rita's home I wasn't thrilled. It was a mite run down and drab, the kitchen-dining room was smoky and Ang Rita himself gave the impression that his life wasn't wrapped up in looking after guests. Being late November, I was the only Western visitor, but his interest was in sitting by the earthen cook stove, sipping butter tea.

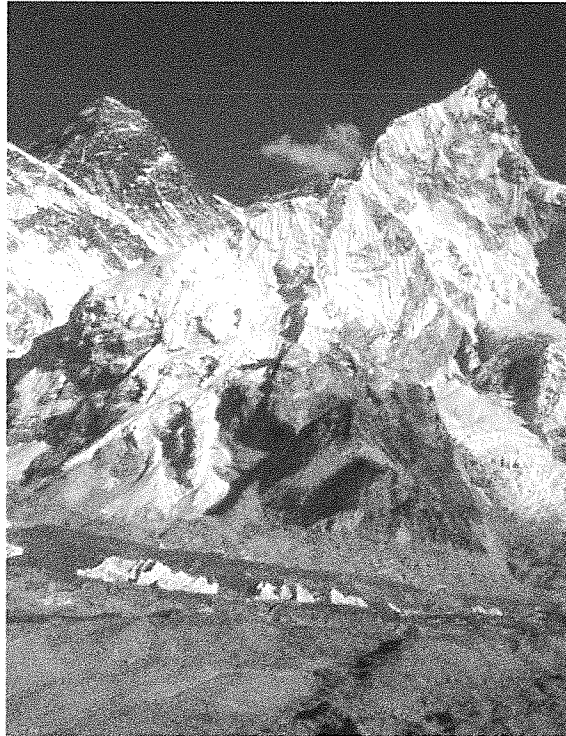
As the night closed, my mind settled into the idea of an early sleep, to combat the plunging temperature. My interest however was perked when an obviously organised and intelligent young man entered with a large box, brim full of what appeared to be packets of drugs. This impression came from the intense manner in which he opened each package, read the instructions and then consulted a long, hand-written letter that came with the box. I'd been in other villages where supplies of donated medications were distributed to impoverished villagers by some person with a semblance of outside education and I made some guesses about this young, well-groomed man.

After watching his moves for a while, and seeing him bustle about getting the supper going, I decided to

check if my intuition was right. With a huge, beaming smile, accompanied by him shutting his eyes tight (a feature that re-occurred every few minutes) he introduced himself as Nima Dawa, the younger son of Ang Rita. Through the evening's long conversation, I found out that he virtually ran the lodge, cleaned and cooked for his parents, taught Math at the nearby regional Sherpa high school, ran a voluntary charitable pharmacy, studied Buddhist philosophy at the village gompa (monastery), worked to collect clothing and supplies for poor children from distant, isolated villages who had to live in school AND donated chunks of his meager salary to help some kids get into school in the first place. I was blown away by this remarkable young man. His cooking was great too!

It seemed he himself had struggled to get an education, his parents having few resources, even though Ang Rita had worked on many Everest expeditions at some personal health costs. Nima, with high talent, had won Himalayan Foundation scholarships to take him through a university degree, which could have led him to some high-powered career in the capital. He'd chosen to return to his isolated homeland and to dedicate himself to improving the lives of his fellow Sherpas.

We conversed about our mutual "careers". In a past life I'd been involved in the same vocation, not nearly so focused,



Ang Rita's workplace. The big 'E' and Nuptse in good conditions.
Photograph: Russ Moir.

DISTANT
OBJECTIVES

and had been a small cog in a scheme to get much needed school supplies into the Khumbu. By the close of the day we'd established a strong rapport, but I was still amazed next morning, when Nima showed the energy to suggest a visit to his gumpa before he started school at 10am. He'd been busy since 6am making butter tea, breakfast for some local porters and sweeping out the dust laden floors. His enthusiasm won out over my jaded look at the frozen fields outside.

We walked through the awakening village to a large, squat building at the top of a long flight of stone steps. I'd been in other gompas and this one only seemed different in its charming exterior painting and fine wall carvings. Inside the gate the courtyard was surrounded by drab, balconied cells, where visiting monks spend their time in lonely meditations. It was only when Nima and the sleepy caretaker had opened the heavy, inner doors that the beauty and mystique of this fine and very old traditional gumpa shone through. For the next hour, Nima showed me detail by detail the intriguing story behind the different parts of the gumpa. The main floor was dominated by a huge, imposing Buddha figure, which watched over every movement in the place, you couldn't avoid the eyes. Though the only light was from two upstairs windows, the shafts of sunlight shone down on a stunning collection of bright silk hangings brass gongs, cymbals and sacred dishes.

During the first few moments I'd lost sight of Nima and the caretaker, but then located them on the floor beneath me. They were prostrated in the dust, immersed in their low-chanted prayers. I felt privileged to be able to view such an obviously cared for shrine in the hands of a devout and knowledgeable guide. I came away infused with a sense of joy and gratitude with my own life.

I can't say it was a consequence but from here on in my Khumbu journey went into sensory overload. By the time I reached Namche Bazaar, the spiritual start to the high Khumbu, three days later, the skies quickly cleared and for the next twelve days there wasn't a cloud to hide any of the awesome peaks, ridges and icy faces that make up the Everest area picture. Around every bend my eyeballs rolled at the views that I'd only read or dreamed about for so long. Thoughts that the visit would be an anti-climax after the Langtang were shredded by a constant stream of glorious scenes, under crystal blue skies. I got a little drunk with it all and can't describe in words or pictures what I really saw. When I finally dropped down to Lukla after two weeks

of dreamlike wandering I needed to pinch myself to remember that my passage hadn't all been milk and honey. But when I stashed my well used stick at the edge of the airstrip before my flight back to Kathmandu, the branch acted as a jolt to my memory, to recall the bad vibes I'd begun the journey with at Jiri. Life since then had somewhat changed.

Sunday-Monday?

I'd been in Junbesi on Monday-Tuesday? The passage of those two days was etched in my mind. But how come the mixed days?

Sherpa families traditionally name their sons from their birth day. Nima Dawa had come into the world in the middle of the night, so his confused parents had hedged their bets and called him Nima(Sunday) Dawa (Monday). Nima thought this a huge joke and laughed at the idea. So who am I to buck the trend? Every Sunday-Monday I have a special thought for my new friend, who I'm sure each day of the week is busy making his neighbourhood a better place to be.

Namaste, Nima Dawa, you're a joy to know.

DISTANT OBJECTIVES



Russ Moir tripping the light fantastic. Descending into the Langtang Valley from Laurebina Pass 4610 m. Photograph: Tom Carter.