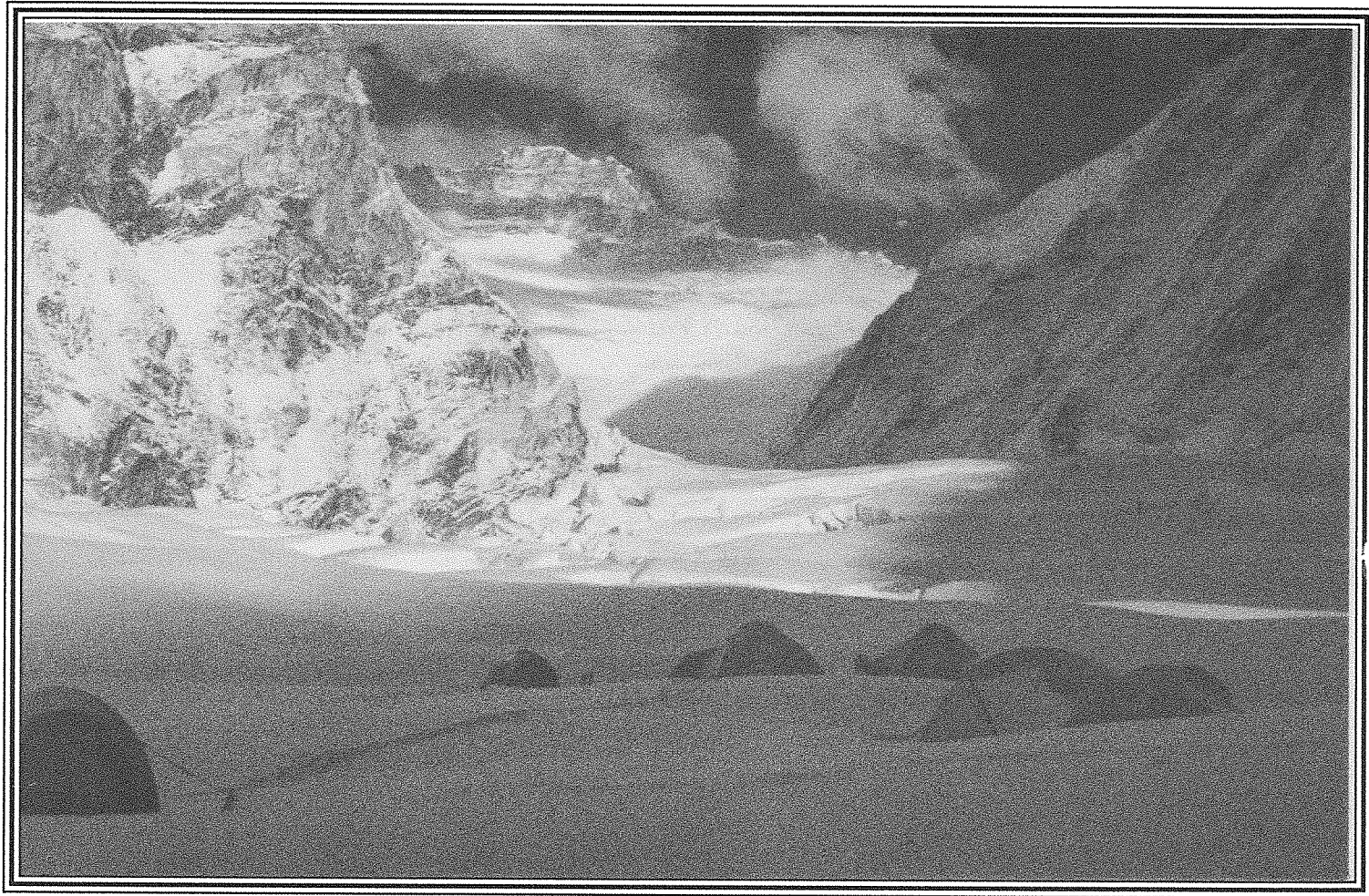


THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

***BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL***  
***2001***



MOUNTAIN PRINT WINNER

Camp 1 above Khumbu Icefall, Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse behind.

Photo: Don Morton

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BUSHWHACKER EDITORS:

Rob MacDonald  
Larry Talarico  
Anita Vaughn

Design/Layout: Viggo Holm

ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION  
2001 - 2002 EXECUTIVE

CHAIR-Tom Hall  
SECRETARY-Jules Thomson  
TREASURER-Rick Eppler  
MEMBERSHIP-Jules Thomson  
NATIONAL CLUB-Gerta Smythe  
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FRONT COVER

Mount Arrowsmith West Ridge – Peter Rothermel

BACK COVER

Mountain Activity Winner

Stephen Harng Climbing on Mt. Colonel Foster – Hinrich Schaefer



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# VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

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## NEW YEAR'S ACCIDENT ON ARROWSMITH - FAMILIARITY BREEDS COMPLACENCY

Peter Rothermel

January 1.

For the past several years we've been spending New Year's Day hiking up the Judge's Route on Arrowsmith, and every year it gets more and more popular. This year, the snow pack was at a record low of about half a meter and the forecast was for sunshine and no wind. Perfect conditions for a winter hike up this non-technical route on what is arguably the most popular mountain on Vancouver Island.

On the day of the hike the forecast was true and about thirty people were on the route with at least half of those in our group. Just as we were leaving the parking area a friend, Karen, and her ten-year-old son, Anthony, showed up. She had heard about the hike through the grape vine and, not having received the e-mail notice advising people to bring ice axe and crampons, had only ski poles. At the time, I thought with the weather being so good and with so many people on the route that it would be like walking up a staircase. I let the benign conditions and the familiarity of the terrain lull me into a sense of complacency towards Karen and Anthony's inexperience. I felt it would be safe enough if I was behind them going up and below them on the descent. It was a decision I would deeply regret by the end of the day and for a long time to come.

The ascent was as easy as walking up stairs with all the steps kicked in and the weather was warm enough to hike in a thin shirt. The summit was warm, calm and a congenial place to celebrate the new year. On the descent there was a spot where the route veered left and Karen slipped and slid straight down the snow slope and over an eight foot drop onto iced up snow. The past few weeks had seen freeze and thaw cycles that had left a hard crust on the surface of the snow and when Karen dropped onto

the crusty snow she cartwheeled onto her arm and appeared to have broken it.

Luckily, in our party was a doctor, Lynn Pepler, and she quickly immobilized Karen's arm with a splint and sling. Karen felt she was OK to hike down the rest of the mountain with some support. Don Morton tied her to a rope and three people acted as a moving belay from behind. Another person walked beside Karen and gave her an arm to balance on, and three or four people went ahead to clear the trail and stomp in firm foot steps. With this entourage we were able to move fairly smoothly and quickly. Even though the accident happened near the top of the route, we were able to make it back to the cars long before dark and Karen was quickly whisked off to the hospital in Nanaimo. It turned out that her wrist was broken and elbow was shattered. The resulting months of physiotherapy have been difficult, but will

hopefully leave her without any permanent damage. Karen sends her thanks to everyone involved in helping get her down the mountain that day.

In retrospect, what could have been done to avert this accident? Giving Karen and Anthony ice axes wouldn't have been a proper solution. They didn't have any experience with these tools and using them could have created more danger than good. An ice axe shouldn't be treated as a talisman - knowledge and practice of its use are needed to make it an effective tool.

One friend has suggested, "You can't keep people off the mountain" and "Every person is responsible for their own actions." While this may be true to some extent, I believe we owe it to each other to look out for the well being of one another. When I saw Karen and her son not properly

prepared for the hike, I should have advised them not to go. If they persisted in heading up, I should have hiked with them to the lookout and insisted they turn back at this point and then returned with them. If they then continued up, I could absolve to myself that I had done all that I should have to turn them around. Having prided

myself in the past for being a very safety conscious hiker and climber, this oversight has left me feeling awful and has served to make me resolve to be more vigilant about safety in the mountains.

Participants: Peter Rothermel and about fifteen others.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO SKI TOURING AND SNOW CAMPING

Don Cameron

January 6-7

We started out in Courtney at the Caprice theatre to sort out gear and have a good discussion on clothing, gear, skins, skis, etc. After a couple hours of reviewing equipment, we donned our battle gear (i.e. our full Gortex) and headed up to Mt. Washington.

The weather on Paradise Meadows was pretty good, cloudy but no precipitation. The snow was deep, and somewhat heavy, but reasonably good travelling. Everyone shared the effort of breaking trail through the trees and some soon learned how to get others to do all the work. After a good warm up, we stopped to learn some techniques. We learned how to get up from falls with and without full packs, standing kick turns, traversing up slopes and survival skiing down wooded slopes. It was lots of fun to watch and participate as getting up after falling downhill with a pack is tough work! Krista showed us why you should not do a standing kick turn with the uphill leg.

As we went along Andrew and Bruce compared the technical merits of AT skis versus telemarking. That is to say, Bruce's 404s kept giving us trouble and Andrew kept asking why AT was so much better than Tele. Of course, me expounding on the merits of AT Gear had nothing to do with the fact that I was using 555s. We found a nice open spot, part way into Lake Helen McKenzie, and then we discussed how to setup snow camp, snow pegs, kitchens, cooking, boiling water, toilets and sleeping. Andrew experimented with 5 foot flames from MSR stoves and finally got it working when Louise shut it off (go figure). We had a warm meal and headed to bed with hot-water bottles to help keep us nice and warm.

That evening, the weather turned to lots of heavy, wet snow, and we had to constantly clean off our tents. At

about 2 am, the snow turned to a rain, with heavy winds. We could hear all night the "whump" of snow falling off the trees in the forest. I was very wet the next day as I stayed up late in the wet snow, with a "stupid" dryloft down jacket - useless in wet snow/heavy rain.

The next morning it was drizzling and cloudy. The rain let up and we decided to take a longer way back, hit the lodge to dry out, chat about avalanche beacons and then head out again for some avi searching. We decided to ski up a clearcut bump just north of Strata mountain, next to the Lake trail. There was a race to get to the summit and find the survey marker and, since Kirsten got there first, we dubbed the mountain Mt Kirsten (how original!). John and Mike showed their prowess on the planks as we all skied traversed down the other side, practicing their standing kick turns with full packs.

Rose encouraged the group to the top of the other side of the valley by whistling Christmas tunes as Sherpa Tom selflessly carried two packs to the top. I wanted him to carry mine too, but I don't think he would have gone for it. As we headed to the lodge we were greeted by a heavy horizontal rain and skiing on margarita slush. Inside we dried off, had some food and discussed avalanche transceivers, noting particularly that it is most important to take a proper avalanche course. Then we headed out into the heavy rain and mushy snow to play with beacon searching. Of course, when I demonstrated the beacon search, my skill and experience led to me find the buried transceiver in 10 minutes, thus re-enforcing the need for a proper avalanche course. The rest of the group did quite a bit better. Even though the weather was terrible, it was a lot of fun.

Participants: Rose, Tom, Kirsten, Louise, Andrew, Krista, Mike, Bruce and John.

## HAPUSH - GESUNDHEIT!

Peter Rothermel  
March 10-11

Tak had said, "If the weather's good we'll camp at the base of Mt. Abel and go up its north face gully and ridge. If the weather's bad we'll ski to the A-frame cabin and go up Mt Hapush the next day."

Saturday by 10:30 found us at the Mt. Cain ski lodge parking lot with gray skies and the occasional snow flake spiraling down. The weather wasn't too great, yet it wasn't crappy either...it was so-so...sort of the way I felt, so we opted for Hapush. Fairley's "Climbing & Hiking" calls this mountain a "class 3," so knowing his rating, it would probably turn out to be a class 4.

We skied up past tastefully built cabins looking warm and cozy and people with friendly demeanors, until we were finally in a sort of forested meadows area.

Tak had warned me that this cabin was lacking in amenities, so I had no expectations and my expectations were fully met. It was an A-frame standing about eight feet at its peak...actually it was about double in size and volume as a pup tent, with four bunks and a wood stove. Here we dumped our gear and went off to ski the rest of the day.

We skinned up slope towards a bowl, west of the downhill ski slopes, divided from by a long ridge. We finally reached a steepness where I realized I'd be walking down if I went up any farther. We watched a couple of groups of skiers and boarders, that had come over the ridge from the top of the ski lift, swoosh down the bowl's slopes gracefully. Tak went up further while I waited and after a bit, he, too, gracefully swooshed down. As he passed I followed and stumbled and crashed my way down to where he was waiting at the top of a gentle rise above the cabin.

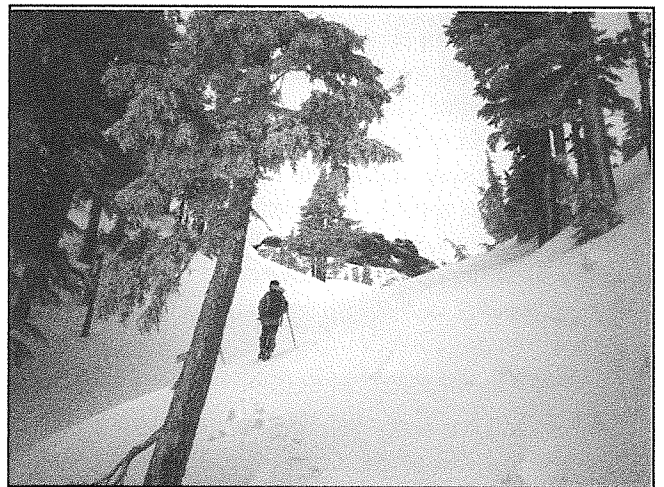
This slope was originally cleared as a downhill run but was abandoned because it wasn't steep enough...perfect for me! Tak said, "Bend your knees, lean forward a bit and stop sticking your butt out." Down I skied with the knowledge that I looked as ridiculous as I felt, but managed to execute a turn or two before I went down in a puff of powder. Down at the cabin I stripped off my lunch pack and any clothes that weren't needed and spent the rest of the time before dinner, skinning up and skiing down the slope. I even managed to link a few turns before the inevitable spill.

That evening we had a nice dinner and a scotch in our cozy cabin while Tak, with a bit of found wood, started a fire. The stove smoked like crazy, but it didn't matter as the smoke found its way out via the numerous holes in the structure. I don't think the cabin warmed up much, if at all. The warmth was psychological, but felt good and I slept well despite my throat feeling scratchy...damn cold!

The next morning came early and found us up, fed and hiking uphill through the forest by 7:30. I was still feeling a little reluctant and wondered if I was experiencing one of impending doom. Like maybe there was going to be an avalanche or rock fall and my sixth sense was ringing the alarm bells...or maybe I was just being a lazy sod.

Up through a small bowl and through a notch in the ridge and we got sight of the peak. Below us was a fair sized bowl and above its slopes was a huge pile of rock. There was a long couloir leading up to the right and a band of snow cutting across the rock face indicating a ledge of sorts. As we crossed the bowl, Tak told me it was beautiful in the summer, with tarns at the bottom and wildflowers all around.

The couloir wasn't as steep as it looked from the other side, but it was scoured by old avalanche debris and its surface was hard and icy in places. Once on the slope we didn't have a chance to crampon up till we reached a nook near the top. I just had to remind myself that there was excellent runout and to quit sniveling...relatively that is...my nose was still runny.



Tak at the Col - Hapush in Background  
Rothermel

Photo Peter

Connecting from the top of the couloir to the band of snow looked difficult from below and more difficult up close, but it wasn't. Below a rock rib it went fine and there we were on the ledge almost walking level at times. We came to a big wind-hollowed bivvy site large enough for a tent and a wide snow filled crack near it, leading up. Tak wasn't sure if this crack was it or if it was further. Judging the length of how long the ledge looked from across the way and how far we'd traveled, I thought maybe we needed to go farther. The crack looked steep and sort of dead ending to me, so we looked around the corner, but Tak thought no, and that the crack must be the way.

"Come on you sissy, get moving," I said to myself and Tak said, "If you get to where you think you'll need a rope, we'll turn back." That sounded like a good plan to me, since we didn't bring a rope or gear anyhow. Up the snow I went, with the rock closing in near enough to touch and when I did put my hand on it, all my trepidation melted away. It was nice rock with in-cuts and nubbins and coarse textured. Good old terra-firma...a place for every hand and foot...with the surface of Gods five o'clock shadow.

It didn't last long enough as far as I was concerned and

too soon I was at the top and instead of dead ending, it led to a ridge and it was blowing a gale and a half and the ice crystals stung my eyes, but It felt good...I'd shaken the feeling. Tak came up and said, "This is it," and along the ridge we went, first to a false summit, then down and up to the true summit. We took a couple of photos, shook hands and then skedaddled back down to the bivvy site to get out of the wind and have lunch.

The trip down and back to the cabin went quickly and unfortunately we were socked in by clouds. In the morning and on the way up, we got cameo views of some peaks, but I longed for some good clear weather as I'm sure the mountain ranges in that neighborhood must be spectacular.

In my mind's eye, the Mt. Cain Ski Park is the way a ski area should be. The lodge is a simple and funky log structure, with the smells of homemade cooking hanging in the air. There's no glitz or hype, just down-home comfort. The cabins are small and tasteful, with no running water or electricity. The road is one-way up in the morning and one-way down in the afternoon. The people are real and friendly. Just the way a ski hill should be.

## GREEN MOUNTAIN REVISITED

Gerta Smythe

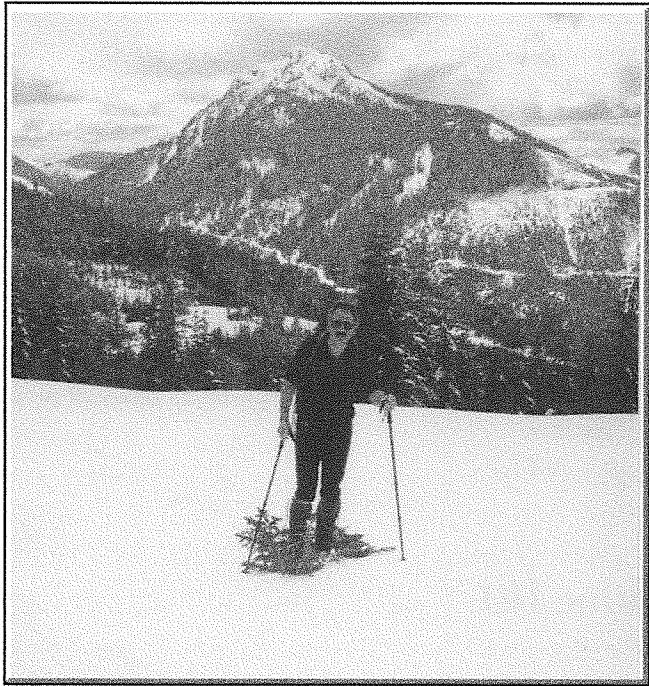
April 7

When we came to Victoria in the early 1970's, Green Mountain was an established ski area. The logging road was plowed and there were heaps of snow as soon as you left the highway. The last steep section was impassable for most cars, but willing trucks and 4-wheelers always gave you a precarious ride to the top. There was a friendly atmosphere at the day lodge and at the T-bar; until you were being pushed uphill on the lift, and some daring skiers used the moving passengers as slalom gates. One Easter Sunday our oldest son broke his leg and the ski patrol, not much older than the victim, showed much compassion and expertise in rendering first aide.

The ski hill has long since shut down and the lodge has disappeared. Some say it burned down. Once, I tried to find Green mountain in the summer and was amazed at all these logging roads misleading me in all directions, when

I had only remembered the one road which had been plowed! Well, since then I've joined the Alpine Club and 2 years ago Claire proposed to celebrate my December Birthday at Green Mountain. It was snowing lightly when we left our car and we followed one logging road for quite some time to the left. We then thought we should find one that would lead us to the right, and finally decided that it was getting quite windy on these winding roads. We burrowed down and partied in the middle of the road!

A year and a half later, Claire has done her homework:



Rick Eppler on Snowshoes Photo L. Borgerson

with her finger on the map, she navigated our driver unerringly until we reached the snow. As we were getting ready to ski, we realized that some of us did not think this trip enough of a challenge. Judith had forgotten her skins; it was amazing how well she coped with little bits of Velcro bands and 2 pieces of wood under her bindings. Not so fortunate was Rick, who tried to tie branches onto his crampons, which were meant to help him on Mt. Arrowsmith. But he gave up on that cloud-shrouded mountain to join his wife and friends on this club trip. Oh boy - did he struggle! I would have long given up and

found a sunny spot to read or knit or play my recorder.

It was a lovely, mostly sunny day. Claire had postponed this trip by a week to assure fine weather. Freshly fallen snow covered the surrounding peaks and sparkled like so many diamonds. Suddenly the little mountains looked quite impressive and we were given the scenic tour around the mountain. This is quite a popular concept in other countries: like the tour de Mt. Blanc; we were doing the tour de Mt. Vert. Finally there was the old Snowbird Cabin, all boarded up now - but what an idyllic spot! Then into the land of small trees, looking like statues and sparkling in the sun. Onto a wide flat top that soon became a lounging spot until a big fat cloud hid the sun and threatened with hail.

Back down at the skis, we waited long enough to regain visibility and off we were on remarkably good slopes, through wide open meadows following the impressive styles of Viggo and Derek, both masters of their differing techniques. All good things must come to an end. Our's was a deactivated logging road, giving us much grief with interrupted skiing and brushes with alders until we gave up on skiing and all started walking to - aha, the road we had skied up on! What fun to realize that we had not missed the connection, even though the skiing was punctuated by bare spots that were not there in the morning.

Oh yes! We did make it through the gate by patiently waiting for some time. On the way home everyone stopped at the Juniper Cafe for a most enjoyable meal.

*Participants:* Claire Ebendinger (leader) Larry Borgensen, Judith and Viggo Holm, Catrin Brown and Rick Eppler, Katherine Brandt-Wells and Derek Wells, Terry ? and Gerta Smythe

## MOUNT DE COSMOS - A RUMOUR OF ROCK CLIMBS

Lindsay Elms

May 5

Plan A - Mt. Ashwood: the weather forecast didn't look too good so Plan B: it was a long drive for Sandy from Victoria and still the weather didn't look good. That was Friday night. Saturday morning looked okay so I decided on Plan C: Mt. Butler near the Nanaimo Lakes. Sandy wanted to wait for better

weather. As I got near the lakes the weather didn't look too good up towards Mt. Butler so I went to Plan D: Mt. DeCosmos - I hadn't been up that and besides there were no clouds.

Just a few days previous I had received some slides from Pat & Elizabeth Guilbride, who had been up DeCosmos

back in the 60's, which showed some interesting gendarmes somewhere on the mountain. Joe Bajan didn't know anything about them and neither did Sandy and all Fairley's book said was: "There are some good cliffs, just below the summit, which offer some fine 1 – 2 pitch climbs." My curiosity was piqued so I thought I might have a look for them.

I checked out a few logging roads before I found one that went around to the northeast side of the mountain and gradually kept climbing. After fourteen kilometres I arrived at the snowline, parked and put on my pack. Although I couldn't see the summit, I knew it couldn't be too far away. I followed the logging roads through the snow for another hour to their end and from there I could see what looked like a rock tower to the east of what I

hoped was the summit. I decided to go to the summit first and then drop down the ridge to the rock band. After another half an hour I was standing next to the Repeater Tower on the summit. A hot drink and a bite to eat then off I went down towards the rock tower. Sure enough, I came across a few small one-pitch towers that appeared to be sitting on some sort of fault line. I climbed a couple of them but left the more difficult one for another time when I'd come in with a rope.

Later when I arrived home, I looked at Pat's slide but it was obvious that none of the towers I found were the one in the photo. I hoped to go back in that summer for another look but I guess it is going to have to be next summer.

## SNOW SCHOOL 101

Don Terlson  
May 6

When it comes to snow, I guess you could say I'm a rookie. I dabble at downhill skiing, but the only hiking in the snow I've done is to crawl back up the hill to collect a ski that decided not to follow me.

I want to climb a mountain. Nothing too major, but a mountain none the less. Mt. Rainier has sparked my interest. I've done a fair amount of hiking in my day, but there's lots of snow on that mountain and I don't have a clue how to begin to prepare for it. Luckily, my buddy Rick Johnson is a bloomin' encyclopedia when it comes to mountaineering. I picked his brain and he talked me into taking a snow course he was instructing. I jumped at the chance.

With a background in triathlons, and having completed several Ironman competitions in recent years, I wasn't concerned about my physical condition. I should be able to handle a leisurely hike in the snow. There is a catch. Although I am physically fit, I do have a paralyzed left arm. Rick wasn't really sure how I was going to handle an ice axe, but he was sure we could figure out something.

Our day began with a 3-hour drive, including the winding gravel logging road to the snow line. Our two guides, Rick Johnson and Sandy Briggs, escorted 10 of us on our hike up the hill. It was amazing how quickly the scenery changed from the lush green of the valley to the winter wonderland of the hill tops. The climb was quite steep so

we would pause to rest and regroup every 20 minutes or so. (Glad I packed lots of food and drink - I think I'm going to need it.) During these rest breaks, Rick and Sandy took advantage of the few minutes to go over the "goods and bads" of some of the equipment we are carrying and wearing. I never realized there were so many varying types of ice axes. Long ones, short ones, wide ones, and all having a specific purpose on differing types of terrain. And it's even important which hand you carry the axe in. Being a one-armed climber, we noted, was my first big disadvantage. I'll just have to be extra careful when planting my feet.



School time in the snow.

Photo S. Briggs

I tend to be a person who learns from watching others. Going up steep grades, the group ahead of me were carving wonderful "steps" in the ever deepening snow by plowing their toes into the hill. With the ice axe pushed deep into the snow, it's amazing how much support it gives. What a wonderful tool this is.

After a couple of hours, we come to a clearing with lots of snow up a steep grade - our destination for the day. Falling while climbing on slippery, snowy slopes happens. We're human after all. We screw up! But that doesn't mean we have to die. The ice axe is a tool designed to help prevent a slide off of a mountain slope. Up this steep grade, we're about to learn how to be friends with the ice axe. When used properly, it can be your best friend.

We're all standing on the ledge of the grade. It's covered in snow, and there are no trees to maneuver around, so very safe for us rookie mountaineers. Sandy shows us again how to hold the ice axe. He's going to demonstrate how to stop when falling down a slope. Feet first and on his back, he throws himself down the hill. Turning his body over, feet wide, bum up to dig the toes in, left hand on the ice axe handle down by his side, right hand on the pick up close to his chest and firmly dug into the snow, he stops part way down the hill. That doesn't look so hard.

It's my turn. I look over the edge, take a couple deep breaths, and over I go. I can't hold the ice axe in my left hand so with the pick firmly gripped in my right hand, I tuck the handle into my right arm pit not sure if it will work but I'm going to try. I roll to my left, and dig the axe into the snow. Don't forget the feet. Bum up, feet wide, I slow to a stop. Did it! Now let's do it again. Up the hill I did it over and over. Piece of cake. My modified ice axe hold is going to work.

"You don't always fall feet downward and on your back," Rick said, "so now let's see ya go down head first, and on your back." So much for it being a piece of cake. These

maneuvers were much more difficult, but I did manage to stop before getting to the bottom of the hill. It'll take practice, but I think it'll come. Up and down this hill, the group was having a blast. Although we were there to learn how to use a valuable mountaineering tool, we were also acting like a bunch of kids playing in the snow. Who said school can't be fun? With confidence in our new found talents, Rick and Sandy figured we were prepared to take a climb to a nearby peak. Awesome! Let's go mountain climbing! So, up Mt. Cokely we went.

It's not a big mountain, and certainly not that technical. It is windy and snowing above the tree line. I really feel like we are on an adventure. Up the hill we go. It is quite steep in parts. At least it seems steep to this rookie. Digging my plastic hiking boots into the snow, one step at a time, I slowly ascend the peak. I'm surprised how much effort it takes to do the climb. Climbing in snow is much more exhausting than climbing on a mountain trail.

We reach the top. What a great feeling! I've climbed peaks before, but always in summer conditions with solid footing. I've never attempted a climb through deep snow like this. Before we started the climb, I thought we were starting an adventure. It truly was an adventure I'll treasure for a long time.

Descending Mt. Cokely, I have a silly satisfied grin on my face. What a great day this was. A wonderful start to a lifetime of new adventures. The end of Snow School 101, and one step closer to Mt. Rainier. I can hardly wait until the next semester.

Participants: Sandy Briggs and Rick Johnson (instructors) plus a cast of thousands?

## STEVENS PEAK - THE LAST SKI TRIP

John Damaschke

May 13-15

Stevens Peak (1511 m) is about 4 km south of Mt. Bate and had caught Sandy's 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 for what we considered perhaps the "last ski trip of the season." From the road we saw the objective glistening in its late spring snow cover. The peak looked beautiful but distant. It was a typical



Northern Island approach, the last 1.5 kilometres of driving interrupted by stops to clear the deteriorating road, followed by a debate, "should we stop here or drive on?" and "The road might be better around the corner." Finally, the stops became more frequent and it wasn't worth getting back in the car between exits to clean the road - time to park and start skiing, or, hiking in this case.

The trip started with a fashion show - who had the brightest approach clothes? These days, the MEC hiking gear is just not good enough any more to impress your fellow hikers. Indeed, everybody in the group had brought something special, ranging from as simple as rainbow suspenders, a glow in the dark hat or a variety of Hawaiian shirts, to a fancy approach dress.

Then we hiked for more than two hours carrying the skis up the logging road - "Where is the snow?" - until we ended up in a clearcut, from which point the bush-bashing started, and still no snow. Did I mention already it was a Northern Island trip? After a total of about five hours of carrying the skis, we arrived at a snow terrace at 720 m on the lower East Ridge. During this time, I had been carrying my snowshoes in my backpack, trying to bite my tongue so as not to make too many comments as I walked a bit and then watched my fellow hikers dragging and pulling their skis through the bush. Oddly enough, I was thinking to myself "be quiet, you never know when you'll need your buddies." Just before setting up the camp, some people got bold enough to put their skis on - nobody can say we didn't ski the first day!

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. I was feeling pretty fit, even making my own track (as the only snowshoer), so I ended up getting ahead of the skiers. I decided the final slope would likely not avalanche, and so I soon got to the summit. The rest of the group, long past the 'soft' turn-around time, satisfied themselves with the views from the approach ridge where everybody stopped and rested till I had returned. Together, everybody descended along the ridge back towards the tents. About 200m before base camp was a tiny rock step which required taking the skis off. I went down and started walking back towards camp while everybody else was busy with their skis. I noticed that being under the trees now, the snow was getting harder. I recall thinking "I could slip - should I get out my ice axe here?" but decided "Nah - if I do slip I'll just land on my bum and get back up." Well, without worries I went on, and indeed I slipped. I slid, like many times before, but it was a moderate slope, so I still wasn't worried. I saw a tree and reached out with my foot and after sliding for only 1 1/2 - 2m came to a stop. I still

cannot believe what that little slip did to my ankle. I don't remember the breaking sound, but I do remember that I hurt. I wanted to curl up in reflex, but my foot didn't want to follow the pull of my leg. I grabbed my boot to move my foot together with the leg. What went through my head was an experience hard to share: feeling the loose parts in my ankle, I knew I wouldn't get down the steep bushwhack on my own, nor would carrying me out be an option. Still, I felt that I would be OK. Mostly I was embarrassed at this point that it was me to whom it had happened. After all, I had taken snowshoes along because I felt so much safer on them. Through my head went the trip I had planned in a few days time, and my plans for the next weekend. Little idea did I have about how much of an impact it would have on my life. I remember yelling for help. I remember how my mind seemed under control and OK, but my body seemed confused and helpless, trying out all different kinds of responses to deal with it, but none of them seemed to resolve what had happened. I found myself crying one minute, laughing the next, shivering and then sweating, telling jokes, begging for help.

Nobody was sure if my situation was going to improve or get worse, so after wrapping me in extra clothes from 6 fellow hikers and splinting my foot with an ice axe, the team effort to get me the last couple hundred metres to camp started. We left the boot on for support. We tried several systems. In the end piggybacking seemed to work best. I put a ski pole under my knees, grabbing the ends with my hands which were reaching over Sandy's shoulders. It got easier when I came out of shock. In hindsight, it might have been easier to wait a bit longer at the scene of the accident. Also, it proved very helpful to tie a loop from underneath my boot to the knee to prevent weight of the boot pulling on the foot. While Sandy carried me down, the others carried extra gear, broke trail, and supported from the sides and the back. There are never too many people even for a simple rescue. This happened at about 5 pm, Sunday evening. The original plan, to return to Victoria (late) that night, was abandoned. Instead Hinrich and Julie went out that evening for help.

At first light the helicopter arrived. The moment I heard the helicopter, I started crying. When the paramedic arrived, I could barely see him; my eyes were full of tears. Again, I was carried to the meadow where the helicopter could land. They flew me to Gold River, and drove me from there by ambulance to Campbell River. That afternoon I was operated on. I learned that I had also torn a ligament, and had quite some soft tissue damage. I spent the summer living on the couch. August 15, after 3 months, I got rid of the cast and started learning to walk



again. Now, after 8 months, I'm still recovering. I can walk without a limp most of the time. I can walk on easy trails, and just went snowshoeing on a road for the first time. I would like to try my first backpacking trip soon. Often since then, I wondered how I could have hurt myself so badly in such a small incident. I thought of it as a freak accident, that it happened because I must have hit the tree at an odd angle, or happened to be turning the wrong way. The idea that I didn't know how to prevent things like this from happening again bugged me for a long time. I know that I have slid down slopes worse than that without feeling at risk of hurting myself. Indeed I had stopped just before it happened to evaluate the

situation - and had made the wrong decision. I forgot to correctly consider that I was on snowshoes which give me better traction, but also provide more leverage. In the end, I was very lucky to be in such good hands as I was. Thanks everyone who got me out of there and supported me afterwards! What I would like to learn from this is not only to base decisions on past experience, but to try and be more aware of all changes whether they seem significant or not.

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

## KLITSA OVER AND OVER

Catrin Brown

May 20, 2001

I had no idea it was going to affect me like that. Our dawn start from the car camp at trailhead had set us up for a gentle morning hike through the old growth forest and the chance to enjoy the plentiful signs of spring underfoot. After crossing the snow-clogged creek, we reached the bottom of the gully. But the sight of that 2000 foot line of snow struck my gaze like a grenade. Unbidden, vivid strands of memory connected me back to the same place a year ago. Suddenly I was reduced to an incoherent, sobbing wreck. I felt as if I was no longer in the present enjoying a quiet day's climbing with Rick, but was again on Klitsa in May 2000...

It is a damp Sunday morning with low cloud and all the rivers running high after very heavy rain yesterday. The cornices to the left of the gully are shrouded in mist and everywhere there are deep snow runnels amongst the avalanche debris at the bottom. But we are a cheerful gang and feel no dampening of spirits. After all, this gully is familiar territory to many of us, and we are in for a good climb. So onwards and upwards through the gully we plod, our positions swapping with the ebb and flow of conversation and of energy for breaking trail. It's about 11.00 o'clock and I've just checked the altimeter - 4300 feet. A quick snack would be nice. Then a chance glance to the left and I see it coming. Though it looks benign - a little chute of snow off high rocks above - something moves me to scream "avalanche" and run. The others all react. Some run to the right and into the path it will

take. Others brace. Some run to safety. But bodies are in the air now, tumbling, turning, instantly and silently swept away. And we who are left are held. Held in time.

For an instant I believe this is not real, I am watching events in somebody else's world. Yet eye contact with those left scattered and clinging roots me in the moment. On each side of me the snow rushes past in two menacing torrents, like a lumpy river it flows, relentlessly gathering momentum and force. It moves, we freeze. It hisses, we are silent. We wait. Together but alone. All we can see is one abandoned ice axe in the carnage of snow below.

Time has no meaning, but at some time the torrent of snow does abate. And when we move, it is spontaneously as a team, each somehow instinctively knowing their part. Quickly we establish that Tony, Yvonne and James are missing. Don volunteers to continue up to tell Henning, who being in the lead has topped out of the gully and is unaware of what befell (so to speak). Gil helps Anita across the apex of snow on which she is stranded. Rudi, Rob and I ford the angry path of the snow river, and lunge downwards, our bodies following our thoughts. Far, far below a small figure is visible, mercifully standing. As we stumble towards him we realize it is James, who has somehow freed himself from his runnel's path. He has hurt his knee but is wonderfully intact. But the other

two? He has no idea. I look at my watch. 11.09. How long have they already been gone? Where do we start to dig? Then James points below him over a lip to a fresh chute, scooped out like a luge run in the snow. Frantically down we go, lunge-stepping and stumbling, following the chute wherever it will lead. "How far can a person go?", Rudi wonders aloud. Farther still.

And then we see them. At first two dots so small they could be rocks, yet they are moving. Moving upward! Through voice contact we establish that they are OK and assure them that all of us are accounted for. Yes Tony, Anita is fine. You do not need to climb back up! Yvonne is cold, having lost her jacket, gloves and axe, but is basically uninjured. When I reach Tony at the bottom, I am shocked by the sight of his bloody face and the ear which looks rearranged on his head. Yet he is wearing the biggest of grins. Apparently he was convinced through his ordeal that we were all gone. "I thought I was the lucky one" he explains.

But it's not over. As we are hugging and regrouping in safety, a second large avalanche comes crashing down the same chute, and we know that Don and Henning are still up there. It is only when they appear together out of the mist that we can truly take stock of the

events of the morning and indulge our enormous sense of relief and gratitude...

Rick quietly soothed me, and prevailed upon me to continue with our climb. I did not want to move. My body reluctantly and gingerly followed him up the gully, but in my heart I was doing the climb a year ago with the other nine. The snow was hard and crunchy and I believe we donned crampons to ease our progress. Rick's record shows that we topped out of the gully at 1:30, and I vaguely remember a quiet summit lunch and time spent identifying peaks in the Mackenzies. But only a small part of me was there. Anxieties about the descent ahead and images of uncontrolled falling dominated my mind. Cautiously I down-climbed, following the steps that Rick had kicked in the gully headwall, and slowly found that I was starting to trust the snow again. Now, as unheralded as they had come, the strands of memory vanished and released me back into the present - reveling in our day. And what a fun descent it was, as we swooshed right down the gully. I was again at peace with the mountain. Today was my birthday, and like all anniversaries a chance to celebrate, to look backward in gratitude and forward in expectation. Klitsa had given me an opportunity to do all three.

*Participants:* Rick Eppler, Catrin Brown

## AVALANCHE ON MT KLITSA: ON THE SIDE OF THE SLIDE

Tony Vaughn  
May 28, 2001

As we were silently plodding along early on the morning of May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001, my mind wandered back to the same day one year ago. Then we were climbing a snow-filled gully on Mt Klitsa. Today it is a snow-filled gully on King's Peak. Like today, the upper part of the mountain was shrouded in mist and it had been raining. Today we turned around early and went home. Last year we continued upwards to be caught in an avalanche. It was an experience none of those involved is likely to forget. Three days later I was on a plane travelling to Britain with this recent experience fresh in my mind. I wrote down the feelings I experienced as I was carried 1500 ft down the side of Mount Klitsa...

I see dirty white snow sliding off a rock bluff above me on the left, a line of dirty granular snow floating towards me, getting wider as it gets nearer, I hear

Catrin's cry of "avalanche!" - I'm burying my ice-axe into the snow then flying with dirty brown snow all around me. I feel the shock at the power that lifts and throws me down amongst this churning mass of downward hurtling snow. I have no recollection of noise other than my own voice in my head saying "Oh fuck, oh God!" There must have been the noise of snow moving very fast down the runnel in which I was trapped but I don't recollect it. I see the black figure of another body on my right amidst the snow. It appears to be flying, moving very fast. All around me I see churning blocks of dirty snow. Black cliffs flash past on my left, no sight of the sky or the world outside my churning maelstrom of dirty snow. I feel only pain as every time I am lifted up and slammed back down - pain in my lower back. I have the feeling of terrific speed and being tossed

uncontrollably, I am unable to get off my back as my pack is gripped tightly by the snow. I am bent over backwards tasting blood in my mouth, my lips cut and bleeding, realizing I am about to die, expecting every second to collide with rock and have my life snuffed out. I have feelings of suffocation as my mouth fills with snow. The fall seems to go on forever, I am travelling at an unbelievable speed being tossed about without control in this mass of dirty granular snow which completely envelopes me. My hands instinctively keep sweeping snow away from my face. Suddenly, everything stops. I lie still then am hit yet again by another wave of snow and once more I am amongst this flying mass of churning snow. "Oh God, not more." Again everything stops. I am on top of the snow. In panic, I struggle to free myself from its grip and get clear of any further avalanche. I feel immense relief at being alive, then

I panic, trying to climb back up the gully, believing everyone else is buried higher up. I feel frustration as I try to climb back up but my legs keep going into cramps, I can't walk, only crawl. Suddenly intense relief as I see figures coming down from above and find out that everyone is safe.

As we descended the lower section of the gully I remember being afraid every time I heard the hissing sound of sliding snow, my mind screaming "not again," then finally feeling a great relief at being clear of the gully.

*Participants:* James Adams, Rob Adams, Rudi Brugger, Don Cameron, Henning Faust, Yvonne Huneck, Gil Parker, Anita van Ginkel, Tony Vaughn, Rick Eppler, Catrin Brown

## THE NOOTKA TRAIL -7 WOMEN IN 7 DAYS

Anita Vaughn  
June, 2001

One of the Wednesday women's hikes, my 63 year old friend Gerta mentioned that she was planning a trip to the Nootka Trail in June and asked if I would like to come along as one of the junior members. I am only 55 after all. Margaret Brown (a youthful 58) was the other Victoria Alpine Club member, and, lucky me, my tent mate and dinner cooking companion. Gerta invited her friend Daphne, a nurse from Halifax (the baby of the group at 40) and three friends from Duncan who would travel up, tent and cook together: Maria, 65, a retired accountant, Val 65 going on 18, a still working nurse, and Susan, 42 (the other baby), a hospital dietician. We figured that among all of us we had the bases covered. Gerta is a retired nurse, Margaret a mostly retired doctor whose first aid kit consists of duct tape and safety pins, and I am a retired high school counsellor, basically the most useless of the lot. Pre trip Margaret came by to check out my food. She figured I had way too much and recommended I organize what I would need by the day. Thoroughly chastened, I counted out my 8 almonds, 4 cranberries, and two jujubes per day, packaged my seven breakfasts, seven lunches and 4 dinners (we were cooking dinners together) and proudly weighed in at 5 lbs for my week's rations. From the sublime to the ridiculous as it turned out. Susan's snack

pack of 3 kilos of trail mix, 's'mores' fixings for the entire group and a bottle (glass yet!) of sambuca weighed more than double my whole food allowance. Fortunately everyone was generous and shared.

Day 1, June 4. The Victoria contingent plus Daphne met at Gerta's at around 9ish. We set off in cool but sunny weather for Duncan to meet the others. We arrived at our destination of Nootka Air, 15 km past Gold River at about 4 pm in the drizzling rain. The pilot and his wife looked somewhat askance at our aging motley crew as we weighed in and changed into shorts and wading shoes for our landing in Louie Bay. The flight cost was reasonable at \$79.95 per person. The pilot flew us out to the coast past Bligh Island, then up the coast of Nootka so we could see what we were getting ourselves into. He was very helpful and informative and kept pointing out places where it would be possible to land and pick us up if we ran into any trouble. Hmmm. After a 45 minute flight we landed in Louie Bay in the rain, and unloaded our packs assembly line style. Ankle deep in water I was impressed by the huge coral pink starfish and purple sea anemones. We had a fairly strenuous hike through the 'jungle', arriving about 45 minutes later at Third (or First depending on whom you asked) beach. It is a beautiful white sand beach with a creek running into it and lots of places to

camp. We set up camp in the drizzle, hauled water, and cooked up our dinners. Thankfully Susan had brought a decent rope along so we were able to hang our food out of bear reach.

Day 2. We awoke to a sunny day and decided to hike north to Ferrer Point, leaving our camp set up. We first had a 'bible' reading (an itinerary typed up by an acquaintance of Gerta, the Nootka Trail pamphlet, the topo map of the area, and the tide table) to sort out when best to cross the narrow channel. We went up the inlet a short distance and fortunately found an old road which we followed out to the coast again. The headlands at the mouth of the inlet were impassable. We saw spectacular wildflowers, red paintbrush, patches of shooting star, and striking clumps of yellow cinquefoil nestled in amongst the black rocks. We came across parts of an old shipwreck, scrambled up and down rocks, sunbathed, lunched, and generally had a wonderful day. We made it back to camp around 5 and everyone (even me) went into the surf for a dip. It was to be my first and last swim. We agreed to get up at 7 to try and catch low tide to get around the headland. The prospect of lurching through the jungle 'trail' with our packs on had little appeal.

Day 3. It rained overnight. We had breakfast, packed up our wet tents and left a little late at 9:30. The tide had already turned and, as Margaret and I made it to the headland, we saw there was no time to waste. We hollered at the others and madly scrambled over the rocks and through tidal pools. Daphne had decided to try and make it around wading and suddenly found herself swimming with her pack. A scary experience. Our goal was Calvin Falls Beach, some 5-6 km south. Passing along Skuna Beach we came across our first bear. He was up behind the logs so Margaret bravely lead us all past him singing and clanging bear bells. We arrived at Calvin Creek and met a group of surfers, the only other people we encountered on the trail. We crossed the river below the falls, very beautiful, like a mini Niagara, and Gerta found a campsite in the woods behind the beach. There was plenty of room and it was sheltered from the elements. It was a bit dark and buggy though, so we had our dinner out on the logs overlooking the sea. Daphne, our Goddess of Fire, built a campfire with some help from her minions and we had happy hour and a sing-song. Rain overnight.

Day 4. Our rest day! Serendipity, the weather was absolutely gorgeous for the whole day for the first and last time. Nary a single squall. We swam in the ocean (personal company excepted) bathed under the waterfall, did laundry, and generally played and frolicked. After dinner we had the best campfire yet. We sang songs,

harmonized, and Val and Gerta played lovely German lieder on their recorders. We packed it in around 10 as we were all a little nervous about the next day's expedition to Beano Creek and making it across at low enough tide. Pat and Murrough O'Brien had been washed out there four years previously after torrential rain, and we had no wish to follow suit.

Day 5. We packed up camp in the early morning drizzle. We set off down the beach at about 9 and after about ½ an hour came to our first real challenge. A flimsy looking rope hung down a steep and slimy rock scramble, the bottom section had no visible foot or hand holds. It looked daunting, especially with 40lbs strapped to our backs. Nimble Gerta went up first, then encouraged the rest of us up one by one. A most trepidatious experience. After a short jungle crash, bash and smash, we came out on the coast again. The tide was low and we either slogged it along pebbly sinky beach terrain, or slipped and slithered on the rocks on 10 different kinds of kelp. The rain set in and we covered up with ponchos and garbage bags (great pack covers when tied correctly Margaret style). At Bajo Point we met the full force of the howling wind and retreated into the old longhouse site to recover. We pressed on after a fairly short break out into the rain and wind as we were anxious to reach Beano Creek. We arrived there about 2:30 and Margaret and I found a small channel near the mouth of the river that was close to being washed out by the tide. A tall cabin beckoned welcomingly from the other side. Boots off, screeching to the others, we made a mad dash across the creek. The cabin was open, unoccupied, had a woodstove, and lots of firewood. A notice welcomed travellers so needless to say we moved right in, lit a fire, changed into dry gear, had hot drinks and kicked back. After a lovely evening, Margaret and I went off to the comparative luxury of our tent. We left the loft, ladder and mice in the cabin to the other five.

Day 6. Rain overnight, then it cleared early in the morning. We were up again at 7. Just as we were leaving (oh timing!) a boatload of people arrived and headed up toward the cabin with a full complement of gear. We spent the morning clambering through the forest then scrambling along pocket beaches. Our goal was to reach a campsite just past MacQuinna Point. We arrived in a bit of a squall at a beach approximately 3 km south of Beano Creek and sheltered in an overhanging cave in heavenly dryness while the squall passed by. We had a 'bible' reading and checked out where we were on the topo map. Margaret recommended we stay put, there was a bit of a waterfall creating a natural shower, lots of good sheltered tentsites, and plenty of time

remaining to us to cover the last 4 or so kilometres to Friendly Cove. It turned out to be the perfect campsite (as usual, Margaret was definitely campsite selection queen), and we made camp.

Day 7. We were up and out by 9 to round the headland at low tide en route to our last campsite! We wanted a beach with running water as close as we could find to the lagoon. According to the bible this beach did indeed exist about 1 1/2 km north of the lagoon. We did the combination jungle bash and beach crash all around MacQuinna Point following the fairly extensive and lengthy headlands. Stunning views! It was as well we'd camped where we had yesterday, it would have been a long haul. Just past MacQuinna Point we went down to the beach that would have been our campsite and met our 2<sup>nd</sup> bear. We stayed on the other side of the creek and headed up to the rocks at the north end where we sat and ate our lunch at leisure. Our bear disappeared off into the woods, and we carried on along the trail. At about 2 pm we dipped down to a beach which met all our requirements and made camp. A few of us headed to the lagoon at high tide to do a reccie for potential morning crossings. There were a couple of tricky rope sections overland, easy enough with no packs, but probably not much fun with a full load on. The lagoon appeared to be easily crossable at low tide. We had a big campfire after dinner (we could actually see Friendly Cove) and reluctantly went off to our tents for the last time.

Day 8. 7 am rise and shine, we used up our last breakfast rations, broke camp, sigh, then navigated our way around the headlands. Fortunately the tide was well out and we did not have to hang from ropes with our packs. That was a relief. We made it to the lagoon in twenty minutes and chose our crossings. We could see Friendly Cove clearly now, just a beach slog through sinky pebbles, and one more headland. As we neared Friendly Cove at around 11 am, a young First Nations man came to meet us to tell us our scheduled trip with the water taxi for 12pm had been postponed until 3 pm.

We decided to radio Nootka Air from his house (Nootka Island has a permanent population of 3) to ask them to come pick us up. They agreed and we still had some time to check out the church which was truly amazing: beautiful stained glass windows depicting the signing of the Nootka Treaty by Captain George Vancouver and Captain Bodega y Quadra in 1794, and stunning carved totems. Astonishing to think that Britain and Spain had almost gone to war 300 years previously over Nootka Island. Nootka Air picked us up right on time at 12 noon and sped us back to Gold River in 15 minutes. Their daily fly-overs with flashing lights and wing dips when they spotted us had certainly given us a feeling of security, and we almost felt like we were greeting family. The return trip of \$49.58 per person we found very reasonable. The pilot and his wife confessed upon our return and Maria's questioning, that they hadn't believed we'd make it!

We headed up to the Ridge restaurant in Gold River (a must see and do) upon the recommendation of my husband Tony, and had a wonderful lunch. We had drinks on the balcony then got chased inside for lunch by the rains. The service, food, and view were great. A perfect re-entry into the real world.

It was truly the trip of a lifetime. Everyone brought her own strengths to the venture and we complemented one another extremely well. Gerta was our intrepid leader and encouragement, Val our inspiration as she jogged her youthful body up and down the beach, Daphne our fire queen, Maria the sensible thoughtful problem-solver, Margaret – campsite queen and navigator, Susan the amazon of heavy pack fame, and me, woodsplitter and pebble beach trail breaker. Yup, I'd do it all over again in a heartbeat.

Participants: Gerta Smythe: organiser, Margaret Brown, Anita Vaughn, Val Trapler, Maria Fernau, Susan Jura, and Daphne Kessel

## MT. MCQUILLAN – NO-SEE-UM SUMMIT

Peter Rothermel

June 10 and 16&17

This little known mountain's unpopularity can be blamed on the difficulty of reaching it and not for lack of alpine beauty, as I found out during a

couple of June trips. Access to this mountain comes and goes with the whim of logging roads being upgraded or deactivated and the area has a long history of mining

activity. I'd been interested in Mt. McQuillan for some time and a Rambler trip was scheduled for June 10th to go up the South Ridge. About ten of us met and drove past Port Alberni on the Bamfield road, then left on Thistle Mine Rd, right on to Museum Creek Main and up a couple of left forks and up P100. This last bit is steep and full of water bars deep enough to swallow a tank. Even in high slung 4-wheel drive trucks, we were scraping bottom.

From the end of the road we bashed through a bit of bush and, in no time at all, reached the South Ridge. The weather went from cruddy to crappy to worse as we were alternately pelted by rain, hail or snow in the gusting wind. In poor visibility we were hiking up a long undulating ridge and could just make out the next section of ridge ahead and always a bit higher. The hike along this ridge went on for several hours until we reached a prominent rise with a green repeater station on it. In the stormy weather, thinking we reached the summit, we took a late lunch in an open maintenance shed, then turned and hiked back to the trucks. We all agreed that the ridge would be a pleasant hike in good weather and would probably make a fantastic ski trip if only the road access wasn't so long and rough.

My next trip to Mt McQuillan was with a group of folks from the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club on June 16th & 17th on its north side through an area called King Solomon Basin. The 16th was to be a trail maintenance day and the 17th to climb to the summit. We met in Port Alberni and drove down Bamfield Road, then a short distance up Cameron Main and onto China Creek Main. There's a locked gate that the Outdoor Club keeps a key for and is part and parcel of the on going hassles with access into the back country. Due to some new logging in the area, the road in is in pretty good shape until the very end where one needs a high slung truck. But even if you parked where a car could go no further, it would only add a half hour or so to your day each way.

We had a small creek to cross that was cold on the bare toes and then onto old alder overgrown road bed. I'm guessing the valley bottom was logged in the seventies and our first task was to clear a path through the alder jungle. I gather that this was a popular hiking destination even before logging roads made their way in. Back in the 1920's there was quite a bit of mining activity in the area and I heard some of the group talking about how nice the hike used to be through the first growth forest on the old miners trail. After the logging finished, the roads were deactivated and access was almost impossible until the recent upsurge of logging and road up grading in the area. Now here we were chopping an alder bear tunnel out and boy was it awful! The no-see-ums were the worst I've ever experienced... it was hot... and for what?... a repeater



King Solomon's Basin approach to Mt. McQuillan Photo P. Rothermel

station summit? Well, I'll tell you, I was wrong. Hours later, once we broke through the alder thicket we emerged into King Solomon's Basin and a huge alpine valley it is! The miner's pack animal trail gently switch-backs up the left side of the basin carpeted in wildflowers and this part of the trail was a joy to work on, with just a bit of dead fall and salmonberry to clear and the higher we got, the better the views became. Where the tree line abruptly stopped at a rubblely slope of a large rock avalanche, we turned back to work our way back down. While I scratched the no-see-um welts on the back of my neck I perused the route above. The view up was of huge rock bluffs and a long snow-filled couloir leading to a col and steep ridge on the left heading some where towards the summit, but that would have to wait until tomorrow... now it was time to head home.

The next day we got an early start and after wading the creek the alder bear path seemed to take only minutes instead of hours to travel and we were at the basin in no time at all. Up the easy switchbacks and all that trail maintenance paid off for the speed we made it up to the snow filled couloir. We kicked steps almost to the col and just before we reached it, we turned left onto the ledges above the rock bluffs, then up a tongue of snow and onto the west ridge. The climbing was a mix of snow and rock, a bit exposed, with the odd stunted tree sticking up. One

spot where the snow was a bit thin over the rock, it was hard to get a purchase with hands and feet. As a few were nervous about this move, I suggested to Rudy, who was above, to toss down a rope and belay people up. His response was, "It's OK - if you fall, the trees will catch you." To this day, every time Rudy's name is brought up, Denise says,

"It's OK, the trees will catch you" and chuckles about the situation.

Pretty soon we were on the summit and guess what?... no green repeater station. It took me a while but I finally spotted it a couple of humps away to the south. On that first trip we were about a kilometer or two short and a

hundred or so meters lower than the real summit. In all the cruddy weather, I guess we just no-see-um-ed our summit.

McQuillan is a beautiful mountain with a pleasant approach and I think it will become at least a yearly destination for me. The only fly in the ointment being those damn no-see-ums... it took a month for the welts on the back of my neck to finally disappear.

*Participants:* Peter Rothermel and a group from the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club.

## RAMBLER PEAK – WEST BUTTRESS

Tak Ogasawara

July 13th

On August 2000 I finally made it to the summit of Colonel Foster, my last of the Island Qualifiers. From that summit I looked around for my next target. To the north-west there were the big Coast Mountains across Georgia Strait but they seemed a little too far for a mere weekend mountaineer. Then I looked to the north-east where I saw the perfect mountain for a weekend outing - Rambler Peak, showing all of its west buttress.

And so, almost a year later six of us hiked up the Elk River trail and camped at the edge of the forest on a gravel bar. We slept quite well that night and morning came very quickly. At 6 am we left the campsite and hiked into the upper Elk River Valley. After a couple of hours we arrived at a small lake about 300 m below the Elk River Pass where we could look up at the west buttress route.

The route went between two waterfalls; we scrambled up the first rock step to the snowfield above, then onto a slanting ramp where we put on our climbing gear. From there we followed a series of rock steps and gullies that were mostly 4th class with occasional low 5th class moves. We continued for a couple of hours until we came to quite a large terrace that separated the lower and the upper face. Above the terrace there was a big block in our way. We took a long rest and then, on closer examination, we

found perfect ledges to the right and a gully to the top of the block. From there the summit of Rambler was quite near.

We scrambled up the gully to the final rock step, and after a few mid 5th class moves we arrived on top just after noon. For two hours we enjoyed the view and had a good nap under the sun. The weather started to change once we started our descent, with clouds showing up on the summits of Elkhorn and Colonel Foster. We rapped the first rock step and then scrambled down the gully very cautiously so as not to kick rocks onto those below us.

After three or four more raps and long scramble down we arrived at the bottom of the buttress beside the small lake. By this time the weather had changed considerably and I felt raindrops, so we hurried down the trail to our campsite. We got to the campsite at about 8 pm where three of us decided to hike out that night. Along the trail we met four Heathens coming up, hoping to climb the west buttress the next day. Farther along the gravel-flat campsite, we ran into Mike Preston who was camping there with his family. After short rest we hiked out in the dark, arriving at the parking lot by midnight. It had been a long, tiring day but I felt good having achieved the goal I set myself at the top of Colonel Foster a year earlier.



## FIRST, AND HOPEFULLY, NOT LAST THE ARROWSMITH NOSE

Ang Lopez

July 15

It was my first time. I had convinced myself that I was ready. My partner was experienced, thoroughly knowledgeable and knew me well. This should be easy. But now it was wet and slippery in all the wrong places. I was ill at ease and nothing felt right. Could I go through with it?

Yes, I did. I finally led a club trip. It was simply a small step up Arrowsmith's "Nose," but it was a giant rookie leap for me. Thankfully, Mike's help and a keen group of climbers made this minor rite of passage an easy one.

The weather was heavily overcast on that July 15<sup>th</sup> day and it was clear that the day would not be at all clear. The group naturally split off into two factions with Mike leading the express lane group (the bunnies) made up of Jules, Geoff, Barb, and Richard. I trailed in the rear of the pedestrian group (the hard shells) made up of John, Peter, Tara, and Fred. It was an uneventful slog up to the saddle where the bunnies nearly got hypothermic waiting for the hard shells.

The snow was spotty on the way to the bumps and the rain increased to sprinkler intensity. Sadly, Peter felt the weather more than the rest of us and decided to return to the vehicles. Heroically, John sacrificed a summit chance and provided Peter with an escort down. The remaining climbers continued to the last bump where we lunched

across from the "Nose" and assessed the sanity of continuing upward. The rain had softened to merely an incessant mist. I guess that was reason enough to continue.

I have climbed the "Nose" several times in less than ideal conditions, but looking up at the wet, snotty rock elicited genuine prayer. Jules' and Geoff's assertively expert ascent jolted me out of my indecision and up we went. Despite the moisture, the rock was reassuringly grippy and permitted the remaining wet heads to get to the top. A quick snack and requisite hero shots quickly gave way to thoughts of a hurried descent. Most of the bunnies decided to go down by the Judge's Route while the hard shells practiced a wet rappel down the Nose.

Everyone returned without incident and brought back stories of zero views but great company. Congratulations and adulations to the first time Arrowsmith summitteers, Fred, Tara and Richard, who braved the hazards and followed me blindly to the top. Thanks to all who came along and shared my wet, but sweet, first time.

*Participants:* Barb Baker, Geoff Bennett, Mike Dillistone, John Lindsay, Tara Mants, Richard Matthews, Fred Mulleda, Jules Thomson, and Peter Wiebe

## RUGGED MOUNTAIN – WHO'S BEST?

Peter Rothermel

July 29-31

Bob Schroeder, Tom Carter, Dean Williams and I had been talking about this mountain for a while and the trip jelled at the end of July. Dean couldn't make it because of a wrecked knee. Like last year, the mountain gods have conspired with the deities of broken bones to keep him out of the alpine. We really missed him. After a long high period of clear weather it turned to unsettled just before our departure with a 50% chance of showers with sunny periods. Isn't

that sort of like saying "We don't know if it's going to rain, but we're covering our asses."

I won't go into the details of the drive in but on the way we had periods of 100% showers, yet the highway north of Campbell River was dry and the dirt was bone dry when we parked off Nomash Main. You can't drive up Nomash 20 very far due to a rock slide and since there's no signage, that's the way to know you're on track. The alders are jungle thick in places and there's lots of bear



poop to step in. Our sources (ACC web site) told us to "hike to a left turn switchback and head up and not right towards the sound of Nathan Creek," which we did. After a while we came to another left switchback and a right with some blue flagging. Here we dropped our packs to reconnoiter the route. I went up left to the end of the road and Tom the right. "Left ends on the backbone of the ridge and is close to the first growth," I said. "Right drops into a washed out gully with good water coming off a rock face, but seems to end at a rock slide," said Tom. I had a look further down right but the alders got so thick I figured nobody ever went down there. If I'd gone another thirty feet or so, I would have found the standard approach into the hanging valley. I know now because that's the way we came out.

We opted for the left way and, at the end of the road, dove into the second growth and swam our way upwards through the thick greenery. Once into the first growth on the spine of this broad ridge we found, in my opinion, a better route than the "standard route." We followed bits of old weathered flagging all the way up to a knoll just peeking above the tree line with good water, level sleeping spots and clouded views of our intended summit. We could also see about where the North Col was and where we were supposed to camp after "about five hours hiking." Bob, Tom and I have all passed the half-century mark and were already over five hours into this and so made our second "wrong" (right) decision to make our base camp and go no further that night.

After we spread out our bivvy bags, strung up a small kitchen tarp and Tom had whipped up a fine dinner, the clouds finally lifted and we got our first complete view of the morrows objective...big, spiky, exposed! While I sipped a Bushmills I thought to myself, "If we don't make the summit because of weather or because it's too much for us, I'm just happy and feel complete to be here with my good friends up in the alpine"...and that wasn't just the whiskey talking.

The next morning, with crystal clear skies, we got up at 5:00 and were hiking by 6:00...a good alpine start for old bones. We dropped down to a divide, up through bluffy forest, then across open scree/snow slopes with katabatic winds swirling down from above, and scrambled up limestone outcroppings to the North Col by about 8:30. Our knoll camp was comfortable and the thought of packing all our gear up to the col to save a few hours on summit day made us realize we'd made the right decision. Coming back down that with a ton on your back would have been awful.

We trod up the upper part of the glacier to a prominent bergschrund that we thought we might get over and up

snow slopes to shortcut and avoid a couple of bumps on the East Ridge Route. There was a Swiss-cheesy snow bridge at one spot and nothing else, so it was a no-go. In retrospect we should have been roped up for the glacier and bergschrund part, especially after viewing, from up the ridge, our tracks going over a thin looking snow bridge that we hadn't noticed when we were on it. After realizing there were no shortcuts, we resolved to hike around to access the East Ridge. All the surrounding mountains wore cloaks of clouds with just their heads poking through, while we were on the only peak completely unencumbered of mists under a circle of dazzling sun.

Once we got onto rock we found ourselves going up this fin of a ridge and I was thinking about how exposed it was, looking hundreds of feet down towards the glacier. When I reached the top and looked down the other side it gave new meaning to the word "exposure." My heart stopped when it hit the roof of my mouth and I think I heard an audible twang from my sphincter, as I peered thousands of feet straight down to the hanging valley. We shuffled and crawled along this fin down to a notch and traversed to the safety of a gully with a shelf in it. If you ever do this Standard Route, go up the fin and don't shortcut the East Ridge. I think it's the best part of the whole climb.



Tom Carter humping the Fin

Photo, P. Rothermel

At this point we found ourselves at the base of a nice fist width crack and decided to break out the climbing gear. After our lessons on Victoria Peak (BW 99) we dumped our unnecessary gear (crampons & such) and consolidated our three packs into two. That way the guy doing the lead

could climb without the weight of a pack and there'd be no third bag to haul.

We had brought two 60 meter, 8.1 mm double ropes and a small rack of nuts, a few tri-cams and a couple of camming units. This worked out well as the two ropes weighed a little more than one single rated rope, their weight could be carried between two of us and, if needed, would allow for a full 60 meter rappel. The rack weighed just a bit more than one rope so the load was divided nicely three ways while hiking.

I should say here that we agreed long before that we'd rope up on 4th class rock and I feel better leading mid-5th than going unroped on 4th. Bob and Tom let me do all our leads and I thank them for that. Even if my lead might be a better climber's scramble, being on the sharp end of the rope makes all my senses more open and my whole being is focused on what's at hand. Light and color seem more vibrant, the texture of the rock seems to stand out more dimensional, sound seems crisper, tastes and smells seem amplified. Truth is as clear as a bell - you can't white-lie to yourself about how well a piece of gear is placed when you're far above it and a fall could be disastrous. But best of all I didn't have to carry a pack.

So I found myself halfway up this crack that was too wide to take any of my pro, but I still felt better for the rope. At least I'd come to a painful stop after maybe ten or fifteen meters, instead of rag-dolling down the rock face and disappearing into the bergschrund forever. Well, I did manage to finally fit in a nut and shortly after lasso a horn. At the top of the crack I traversed over to a long heathery ledge putting another sling over a horn on the way. Near the end of the ledge I stuffed three pieces into a crack, anchored myself in and belayed Bob & Tom up. From here we scrambled up an easy but exposed slab to another ledge. Next pitch I found some cracks to put some gear into and then I was near the top of the next bump with my butt hanging out over the abyss. There was only one crack I could find and when I stuck my fingers into it and flexed them, one side made a sickening grinding sound as the rock moved a bit. No choice but to run it out along the thin crest till I could sling a horn and further set up a belay on another horn at the top of the bump. "Is this a joke?", I said out loud to myself. On my belay horn there was slung a piece of 1/4 inch yellow poly line. The ultraviolet light had bleached it almost white and when I pulled on it, the rope disintegrated. But who in there right mind would trust it, even if it was new? It must have been put there in jest.

Here on the top of this bump we held a little pow-wow. Below was about 25 meters of angled slab made up of, in Sandy Briggs' words, "foamed reddish rock struck with

crystals that's surprisingly solid," but we weren't sure we could make it back up if we rappelled down. I opted to rap down looking for gear placements and if I didn't think I could climb it, I'd prussic back up and we'd go home. Sometimes things just look harder from a different angle and such was the case here. The rock is so grippy it's like Velcro, with your hands and feet being the loopy stuff and the rock being the hooky stuff. You could slide a sling over its surface and it would probably stick. Not a lot of gear placements but what was there was bomb proof. So down we rappelled and scrambled up the loose scree of the next slope along side a bank of snow that was handy to self belay with our ice axes. At the base of a prominent gendarme, that I think was what George Lapore (first ascensionist) called "The Donkey's Back," we zigged up half on rock and half on snow, then zagged to the right in a protective moat. When the rock got too steep we climbed out onto the snow slope and kicked steps up to the final ridge. Here we stopped for a break and to drop our ice axes and any weight we didn't need for the last thrust upward.

After traversing past a bit of ledge we were into an easy chimney. The closeness of the rock felt good after all the exposure we'd gone through. And then there we were among the loose blocks that make up Rugged's summit by about 12:30. A good earthquake would probably lower it by a hundred feet or so and I was praying to Vulcan or Pele or whom ever to stay calm.

The tales we heard of creatures inhabiting the summit cairn are true! We opened up the register tube and, leaping lizards!, we were confronted by a snarling beast with bulging, beady eyes and sharp looking teeth. It appears that it eats bullets as we found a 30-30 cartridge in the tube that the beast hadn't had a chance to eat yet. As well, according to the register, it occasionally snacks on Heathens. The register dated back many years and told the stories of Sandy Briggs' and Rick Johnson's bold ascents up the South West Face, Katie Holm and Lindsay Elm's fast one day ascents and others doing traverses of several summits, Guido Lapore following in his father's footsteps...all fine alpinists who's feats on this mountain made our efforts pale by comparison. This was the finest summit read I've ever had and I hope, when the register's full, it won't just disappear like so many do. It deserves to be kept safe and honored at Judy Holm's Alpine Club Archives.

On the descent we down climbed to the Donkey's Back, retrieved our gear and plunged stepped down the snow slope to the top of the moat and rappelled down past the gendarme, then down climbed the loose scree slope to the base of the "foamed reddish rock" slab. Tom put in an anchor and belayed my lead. The rock was so good I

didn't really need to be tied in. It sort of resembled fried bacon shot through with sugar crystals - it was so good. I know it sounds like some dumb cliché, but everything clicked and I felt an intimacy with the rock like caressing a familiar lover, it just felt right. I had three or four good placements for pro, with just a bit of run out at a bulge near the top. At the top of this hump we put in another rappel and another at the top of the exposed slab and a last rappel at the top of the crack. At the bottom we retrieved the last of our gear and traversed over to the Fin.

We all balked at the Fin and searched around for an alternative route or descent rap station, but found naught. Up and over we went for another shot of adrenaline, then down-climbed to the glacier and plunged stepped and glissaded our way back to the North Col by about 5:30.

Back at base by about 7:30 and were we glad we camped so low...not as far to hike out the next day. The clouds descended and the open window of sun we had all day

disappeared like a book snapping shut. Bushmills, dinner and another Bushmills and the tenseness in ones grip and tightness in the muscles begins to loosen...so does the tongue and the talk is relaxed and easy. The next morning we packed up slowly and had a long breakfast, but still were hiking early by 8:30. We found flagging leading towards the hanging valley and, after some debate, decided to follow it. It was pretty steep and I, for one, wouldn't want to go up it with a full pack, yet it is a faster way down. I think our ridge up is easier although maybe a bit longer. We were down to our truck by about 12:00.

Other people may have climbed this mountain in faster time or by harder more technical routes or in worse weather, yet, in the words of the late Alex Lowe, "The best mountaineer in the world is the one having the most fun". On that trip I felt pretty much a "best mountaineer".

*Participants:* Bob Schroeder, Tom Carter and Peter Rothermel

## A BEAUTIFUL DAY ON THE GOLDEN HINDE

Katherine Brandt-Wells and Derek Wells

End of July

The Golden Hinde, being the highest peak on Vancouver Island, was a tempting summit for us peak baggers. With only five days to spare at the end of July, three of us - Doug Beecroft (ACC Toronto Section Member), Katherine Brandt-Wells (ACC VI Section Member) and Derek Wells (ACC VI Section Member) - decided just to hope for good weather. We figured that since the whole trip had been completed in less than 24 hours, we had a reasonable chance for success. After two long, misty days of backpacking in along Phillips Ridge, thrashing through brush down to Schjelderup Lake and then up around Mt. Burman we arrived at the base of the Hinde. We hadn't yet seen the Golden Hinde emerge from behind the grey clouds but while backpacking in we had noticed the occasional fresh boot print in the mud. By analyzing the boot prints, we figured that at least two other people were ahead of us...and probably not very far ahead! Sure enough, as we backpacked along the open ridge leading down to Burman Lake, we spotted a brightly coloured tent pitched several hundred metres up the route to the Golden Hinde! That night we camped down at the east end of the lake and wondered whether the other climbers had spotted us



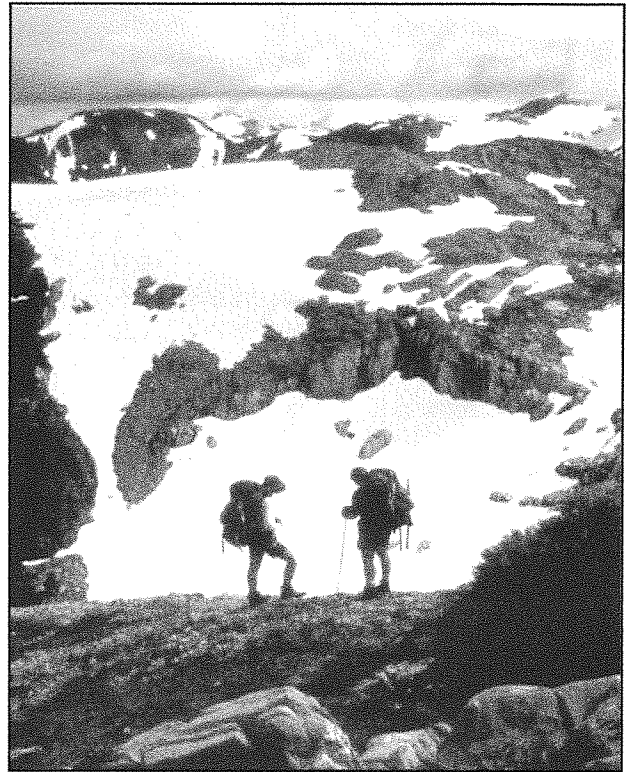
K. Brandt-Wells climbing the Golden Hinde  
Derek Wells

Photo

through binoculars, approaching along the ridge!

Beautiful weather greeted us on the morning of summit day. "How had we timed this so well?" we wondered. Starting out at 8 am, we thrashed through some vegetation above Burman Lake but soon broke through to the alpine zone and were free of sharp branches, eroding mud and the odd hungry mosquito. At first we thought there was no sign of the other party's tent so we assumed that they had already headed on their way. However, after not too long we came across their tent set up on one of the few somewhat-flat areas of rock. Hmmm. It looked like it had to be a group of at least three judging by the size of the tent...and it looked as if they had already headed up to tackle the summit of the Golden Hinde that day...we were probably going to meet at some point! The Golden Hinde soon came fully into view along with a panorama of many other mountains throughout Strathcona Provincial Park. We spotted the other climbing party halfway up the scree and could hear them shouting to each other...hmmm...there was at least one man in the group...but that was all we could tell. We stopped at the small semi-frozen glacial lake, drank our fill of water, ate a few snacks to absorb the liquid and topped-up our bottles with the glacial water. Soon we were heading on up the scree slopes, zigzagging back and forth and crossing a few large patches of snow.

As the minutes passed, we appeared to be catching up with the other party that was busy roping up to cross a steep snow gully. Suddenly a voice could be heard saying "Hi Derek!"...and a few minutes later "Hi Katherine!" We stared in disbelief and curiosity and there beside us were Larry, Harry and Terry from the Victoria Section! We all had a good laugh for the next few minutes, a bit stunned that here we were all deep within Strathcona Provincial Park, we knew one another and we were all attempting the Golden Hinde on the very same day! The three of us decided to attempt the summit via a slightly different route from the other team and so we all bid farewell until we would hopefully rendezvous at the summit. We continued up loose scree, traversed across a steep snow slope then up a scree slope with alpine flowers poking through wherever some soil had managed to be retained. The scenery around us was spectacular with many snowy mountains, deep valleys and lots of flowering pink mountain-heather nearby but the clouds were starting to build up and obscure some of the distant views. We considered our route options and chose to head up a steep snow-filled 45 -50 degree gully with a sizeable run-off. Once off the snow we continued over to the right and



Katherine & Derek backpacking out from the Golden Hinde.

Photo, Doug Beecroft

scrambled on up to the summit, arriving at around 1 pm. We spent an hour at the summit getting occasional views down below of other mountain ranges through the thin wispy cloud but Mt Waddington remained masked in the distance. It wasn't long before we heard some other voices and sure enough, the "Larry, Harry and Terry team" joined us to celebrate being up on the Golden Hinde! We all had a good lunch, a few boots were removed for temporary airing out and we took summit photos of each other's team. It wasn't long before we had to start heading back down. Since we were planning on being back in Victoria at an earlier date, we were asked to make one special phone call, however! The request was "Can you make a phone call and say that Larry, Harry and Terry all miss Claire-ry?!"

On the two-day backpack out, the weather changed rapidly to misty, wet drizzle with very few views and we even found ourselves going astray, following errant rock cairns at one point. We couldn't help but think how lucky we had been to summit on the one clear day of our trip!

*Participants:* Doug Beecroft, Katherine Brandt-Wells, and Derek Wells

## EL DIA DE EL PIVETO

Lindsay Elms  
August 11

After four and a half hours we were finally on the map (the Buttle Lake map anyway.) We had just walked up the last patch of snow spanning the canyon of the East Branch of the Elk River into the upper basin where beautiful alpine tarns were reflecting the early morning light. Twenty minutes later we had skirted the tarns and scrambled across the scree slopes and were standing on Elk Pass: it was only 8:50 am.

When Pete and I left the ERT trailhead at 4 am with the aid of headlamps, the skies above were still starry and cloudless, just the way they had been for the last several mornings. The meteorological weather forecasters were predicting another faultless day. Without the encumbrance of climbing boots, my running shoes felt like slippers and our light daypacks felt like - light packs! We were taking advantage of the still long, warm summer days to get out and climb a mountain that had been on our 'to do' list. Our destination was a peak off the beaten path called El Piveto.

Situated two peaks to the east of Elk Pass, the peak had often caught my eye during the Westmin to Elk River trip, however, that extra day required to climb El Piveto had never been available. Finally, I decided to do it as a day climb after Pete phoned about wanting to get out for a climb. In his younger days, Pete was known for fast day-climbs in the lower mainland and across the border into Washington. However, family responsibilities had limited the number of excursions into the mountains and age was creeping up on him. Fortunately, Pete had the same outlook on his age as me: it is just another number.

From Elk Pass we scrambled up onto the south shoulder of Rambler and then angled down towards the pass heading into Cervus Creek. In my running shoes I had some trouble gripping on the heather and some of the harder scree slopes and Pete would draw away from me. However, once we started going uphill I soon caught up with him as he complained about sucking air. The climb up onto Mt. Cervus (the local name for the peak between Rambler and El Piveto) was relatively short and sweet (or I should say sweaty) and we were on the summit by 11

am. We then had a short descent to the next pass and the final climb to El Piveto. Although it was a hot day, we had a slight, refreshing breeze that brought with it a freshness of purpose. To the south the Golden Hinde and the Behinde towered not too far away, and to the west and north Rambler and the impressive East Face of Elkhorn and Elkhorn South dominated the view. Below, the pristine Cervus Creek languished under old growth Western Hemlock and Douglas Fir trees, home to a large herd of Roosevelt Elk.

We avoided the snow slopes on the climb up to El Piveto as much as we could and stuck to the rock and scree. In general the rock was of the usual poor Vancouver Island quality. However, in places the rock improved and became quite pleasant. At 12:15 pm we arrived at the summit and noticed a canister buried in the rock cairn.

I knew that it hadn't seen too many ascents: Pat and Elizabeth Guilbride, John and Doreen Cowlin, Syd Watts, Bob Tustin, Mike Walsh and Ray Paine made the first ascent on August 3, 1966, and then Sandy Briggs, Wendy Richardson and Don Berryman had climbed it in 1989, Phil Stone some time in the mid 90's and, finally, Brian Ross and Charles Turner in 1997. All of them had sensibly climbed El Piveto as a day trip from Elk Pass.

After delving into the canister we found Sandy had carried the register up there with Wendy and Don and we noted that there had been four other ascents between theirs and Charles and Brian's in '97. We signed in and sat up there, admiring the views for another twenty minutes before we dragged our feet into action.

We arrived back at Elk Pass a little before 3:30 pm and from there it was pretty much all down hill. The snow clogging the Elk River through the canyon had softened up and I found that my running shoes gave me lots of glide while glissading, but I tended to have trouble coming to a stop without edges. Once back on the ERT all we had to do was pound off the kilometres until we reached the trailhead. By 8 pm, both of us were pleased to get off our feet and into the seat of the car for the drive home.

Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms

## ELKHORN MOUNTAIN - BUTTERFLIES

Peter Rothermel  
August 11-13

The trip started out looking like it was going to be perfect...the weather was shaping up to be sun, sun & more sun, my girlfriend's mother would take care of her kids for three days, so she could go...yesss!...and then at the last hour Rick Eppler, the trip leader, had to bail out due to job-related worries. I got Rick's short list of participants and got on the phone to try and get this trip back on track. The upshot was, in addition to Denise Hook & myself, Charles Turner and Graham Maddocks were still in too, so the trip was a go! We talked about our intended route and decided on one that would have our camp up high on day one, day two summit bid and day three hike out, via the northwest ridge. The first to summit this mountain was a group of Alpine Club of Canada members led by Arthur O. Wheeler, taking about the same amount of time as we planned, by about the same route we intended... but eighty nine years earlier on August 21, 1912.

Saturday found the four of us hiking up the Elk River Trail by about 10:30 in hot August weather, with the bees buzzing and the butterflies fluttering. A short distance up, the main trail drops down to a dry gravel part of the river bed and we turned off here to cross the river and begin our adventure. There was an old cedar tree fallen across the river and one by one we shuffled over. Crossing streams on bouncy logs that get more and more knottier and thinner, as I get more and more committed to the task, gives me the heebie-jeebies. The two-foot wide log seemed to narrow to a tightrope's width and bounce and sway wildly...the ankle deep stream below rushed by at a dizzying rate and I was sure I'd be swept under a log-jam if I fell. This was the crux of the trip for me and as far as log crossings go, I'd give it a 5.10c rating, considering how fast my heart was pumping after I made it across....and then there was one more to cross over a smaller stream, yet only 5.6 ish.

Once on the east side of the river we found the trail steep, yet worn and well flagged. The route led along to the right of and within earshot of a creek for quite a ways, then veered up away from the sound of the water and eventually brought us to a flat area forested in large old growth timber. Past this spot the route went over to the right, or south, side of the ridge into thinning trees, with the occasional view of mountains across the valley. After about seven hours of hiking from the car, we reached an

open bouldery area and to an alpine setting full of rock shelves and tarns where we set up camp with a view of our objective in the distance. The bugs were bad... dinner was bad... Denise thought she was getting sick... I figured she was just having butterflies about the next day's climb and not a stomach problem due to my cooking.

The next morning was clear and calm, with just the sounds of the waterfalls down in the valley below... maybe a bit too conducive for sleeping in and we didn't get our start until after 8:00. Our first obstacle was a large intimidating knob that we could view from our beds and maybe that's what made us dawdle in camp for so long. When we reached the bump, the route swung to the right and traversed around and back up onto the ridge, where it was an easy hike upwards to the base of the mountain.

Charles had been up this mountain 14 years earlier as his first A.C.C. Island Qualifier and has since gone on to climb all but a few of the approximately forty mountains on Vancouver Island over 6000 feet. Up until this point the route wasn't familiar to him, as his first trip was up a slightly different route, but once on the mountain proper, he was on familiar ground. At the base of the mountain we traversed right below the southwest face on scree slopes pocked with clumps of wildflowers, until we reached a gully and turned up. After a short way along, Charles and I started fourth class climbing, tending to the right until we reached a chimney with a chock stone at its upper end. I went above to put in a belay for Denise and Graham, while Charles stayed mid-way to relay the rope lower and shift packs along, as the chimney was a bit tight. Once above, we regrouped and scrambled up to a patch of snow and continued up with a hand and foot to the rock and an ice axe and boot in the snow, following to the right of a small buttress.

The route continued up a gully chock-a-block full of rotten loose rock. We were trying to stay close together, so any stray rocks couldn't build up enough momentum to do too much harm, but it was so loose I decided to go ahead and put in another belay. I was around the corner when I heard the unmistakable 'boink' of rock on plastic. Denise had gotten beaned on the helmet with a softball sized rock... no harm though... she was just surprised. Past this rubble the scramble onto the ridge became easier, yet still crumbly and by 12:45 we had reached the summit. Earlier in the year this might be a safer scramble



with all the loose rock safely asleep under a cloak of snow.

The top looks as though it's made up of large shards of black obsidian, although it's not. What kind of rock it is, is beyond my ken. We were treated to a stunning view of Colonel Foster and Rambler, El Piveto and the Golden Hinde, as a pair of butterflies fluttered around us in a frenzy of mating activity. Off in the hazy distance were Victoria and Warden Peaks and countless others I couldn't identify or wasn't familiar with... more's the reason to explore them in the future.



Denise Hook on Elk Horn Summit.

Photo: P. Rothermel

The summit register was a wad of papers that were mostly illegible, so we replaced it with a new tube and a waterproof notebook. The only item we left was an aluminum plate with the inscription, "Mike Walsh, Island Mountain Ramblers, 1966." The rest we brought down to be preserved in plastic laminate (improves legibility) and sent off to the Alpine Club archives (Judy Holm, Victoria), where registers are available for the public to view or photocopy.

After more than an hour's rest in the sun, we started thinking about our return, but... "Is that voices I hear?"... and sure enough, a young couple crested the ridge. They'd started from the parking lot this same day and were doing Elkhorn as a day trip! After a few minutes they took off and were gone in a clatter of sliding rock a puff of dust. We followed at a much slower pace and did the descent in, I believe, six rappels.

At the bottom of the gully where it meets the scree traverse, I turned back in time to see a large, flat, two foot diameter rock break loose above Denise and hollered a

warning to her. She was just below an overhang and ducked under. The rock came down with just enough momentum to slowly flop end over end and finally came to a stop right above her.

After that last bit of excitement we were on easy slopes after several rest stops along the ridge descent, we were back home in camp again. It was a perfect evening, was fine and the only "flies in the ointment" were the black flies and mosquitoes that were voraciously enjoying a dinner of us. The last day we slept in and had a lazy breakfast, packed up and headed down. Once to the Elk River, we all stripped down and jumped in to cool off and get clean and... "Wait a minute, don't I recognize that butterfly sitting on that log?"... and another fine adventure ended.

## GOLDEN HINDE SPEED RECORD - 2001

Chris Wille  
August 12, 2001

**It's** 3:45 am, a time when most sensible people would be sleeping. You, on the other hand, are alternately marveling at the cosmic spectacle of the "Perseids Meteor Shower" over head, while trying to stay on the correct route along Phillips Ridge, in the dark. Three hours, twenty-five minutes into a 24-hour hike. A hike that

hopefully, will take us on an out and back non stop adventure from Westmin Bolieau Mines, at the southern end of Buttle Lake, to the Golden Hinde, and back the same day. The Golden Hinde, Vancouver Island's tallest peak (7219') is normally climbed as a 3-5 day backpacking trip from Western Mines. One of the more inaccessible peaks on the island, the Golden Hinde is located in the

center of Strathcona Park. To compress this 3-5 day trip into one day, one has to take many factors into account; be physically fit, carry minimal weight/gear, know exactly where one is going, have a long day (daylight) period to work with, and wait until the majority of the route is free of snow (July/August). It also helps if the individual or group works well together, goes about the same speed, and enjoys the alternating pain and euphoria that comes with pushing the body for 24 hours straight. Why would anyone want to do that?

The simple answer is because you can. Because it is possible. Because it is what has been described as "The ultimate fitness challenge on Vancouver Island."

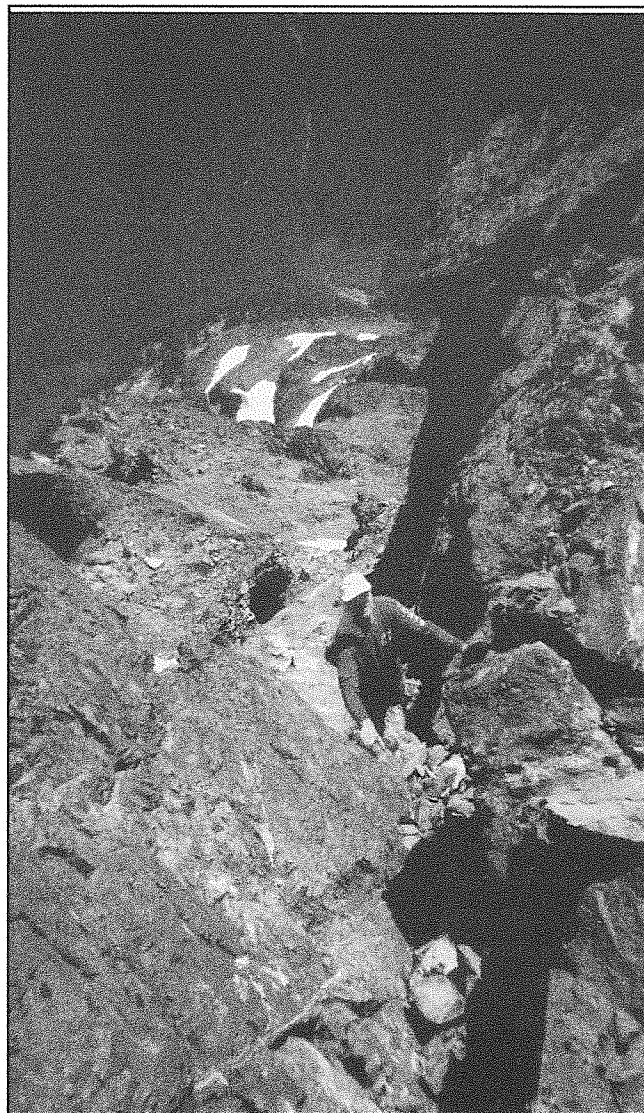
Within three days of each other this year (August 8 and August 12) two separate groups, unaware of each other's efforts, put themselves to the test. Here is their story.

Veteran Golden Hinde climber, Randy Davies had been up the 'Hinde twice in the summer of 2000. He knew the route well, and was wondering if a sub 24-hour trip was possible. His planning was done carefully, and in late July - early August, he watched the weather patterns carefully, waiting for the all-important ridge of high pressure. He and his climbing partner, Mark Mieras, drove up to the Westmin parking lot from Nanaimo, donned their gear and were on their way shortly after 12:00 midnight on Wednesday, August the 8<sup>th</sup>. With the emphasis on quick, short breaks, Randy and Mark were on the summit of the Golden Hinde by 1 am, a 10-hour, mainly non-stop push. "We were so pumped," exclaimed Randy. During their return trip, the fatigued but happy climbers suffered through nothing more than mild chaffing. "We made our return trip back in good time" said Randy. "So good, in fact, we wanted to make it back to our car without using head lamps." Amazingly the duo went from Arnica Lake, down to Westmin /Boliden Mines in 40 minutes, and then drove back to Nanaimo! Randy and Mark's time, round trip to the summit of the Golden Hinde and back to the parking lot at Westmin Mines, 20 hours, 44 minutes a new, unofficial record!!!

Completely unaware of Randy and Mark's awesome success, I too had been seriously planning and training for a 24-hour Golden Hinde attempt since January of this year. At Christmas time I was going through some trip write-ups from old Island Bushwhackers, and came upon Lindsay Elms' story entitled "Golden Hinde Speed Record."

When I first read this story two years ago, I was very interested and amazed that someone would undertake such and arduous trip, and pack it in a 24-hour time span. I also thought Lindsay was nuts! However two years later,

I thought, Why Not? Why not give it a shot? Like Randy Davies, I too had some experience on the Golden Hinde, having been to the mountain four times, and stood on top three times. My teammates were picked carefully, and



Chris Wille Climbing The Golden Hinde.  
Photo, Frank Wille

through a series of long training runs, we gradually built up our stamina and endurance. These day trips started with running the Gowland range, up and over Mt. Finlayson, over to Mt. McDonald, Mt. Braden, and then to Sooke via Ragged Mountain, Redflag Mountain and finally Mt. Manuel Quimper. From there, we progressed to a day run of the Kludak trail along the San Juan ridge, which runs above Jordan River and on to Pt. Renfrew. Our final preparation hike was a repeat of a classic day run from Mt Washington/ Forbidden Plateau to Butte Lake,



via, Mt Albert Edward. Each of these trips went very well, and my team mates, brother Frank Wille, and my nephew Erik Wille, worked well together. All was set for the August long weekend. Unfortunately, like Randy, we delayed our trip a week because of poor weather. On Saturday August the 12<sup>th</sup>, all systems were go, and we began our journey at 12:20 am. Although there was little moonlight, our headlamps provided plenty of light to negotiate the first part of the route in the dark. We were totally in awe of the night sky. The Milky Way was crystal clear, and the frequent shooting stars were almost a distraction as I was trying to find the route along Phillips Ridge. We later learned that we chose the night the annual Perseids meteor shower was at its peak! As the night sky spectacle wound down, it was replaced by an equally impressive predawn sky. We stowed our headlamps and stared at all the beautiful peaks around us, in every direction. The Golden Hinde towered above all others. We carried forth along Phillips Ridge, all the while thinking, "Gee that sure looks a long way away! Are we really going to be able to run there, climb it and be back and out in 24 hours?"

Our progress was sure and steady. We followed the route Lindsay Elms described, dropping off Phillips Ridge at its lowest point and headed for Carter Lake and Schielderup Lake. We traversed these lakes on the west side, as is shown in the Hiking Trails III book. From Schielderup Lake, a steep side route connects to the north ridge of Mt Burman, which we follow down to Burman Lake. It was 9 am. By 11:20 we were on the summit, ecstatic at having arrived on schedule.

Our euphoria was short lived when we read Randy Davies description of his 24-hour attempt, and the fact that his team had arrived at the summit over an hour faster than us. I was amazed that two separate teams had both attempted a sub 24-hour summit attempt, and executed their trips within three days of each other!

On our return trip, we stopped at Burman Lake for a quick refreshing swim, and retraced our steps on the way

out. The alpenglow that proceeded the awesome sunset was definitely the highlight of the evening. Our team did need to don headlamps on the way down the '72 switchbacks trail' down to Westmin/Boliden mines. We felt we made good time on this stretch, although we did not run it.

Frank, Erik and I were happy to exit the trail and get back to our truck in an official clocking of 22 hours 20 minutes. We had achieved our goal of a sub 24-hour trip and beat Lindsay's time of 23 hours, 48 minutes by one hour and 20 minutes.

To the best of my knowledge, Randy Davies and his teammate, Mark Mieras currently own the unofficial Golden Hinde speed record: 20 hours 44 minutes. A blistering pace, to be sure! Neither team did it for glory, or to set a record. They did it because it was a challenge, because it is possible, and because they wanted to push the boundaries of conventional day hikes and see how their bodies and minds would perform in a 24-hour endurance challenge. Both teams feel there were a number of things they could have done to go faster. Randy believes a sub 20 hour 'Hinde trip is possible! At this time, however, both teams are happy with the fact they achieved their goal.

Speed hiking is certainly not for everyone. Conventional multi-day back packing trips are often the way to go. But for some, speed hiking represents a newer trend, like the lightweight alpine style ascents of Himalayan Peaks, popularized by Reinhold Messner as an option to the big, cumbersome full-scale expedition.

Author's note!! Do not attempt this route unless you have good general hiking and climbing skills, and are familiar with the terrain (it's easy to get side tracked), go only if the weather is very good, and wait until the snow pack has melted along Phillips Ridge. It is also critical to have stamina. I suggest warm up trips like we did with perhaps a 'Great Walk,' Marathon, or several triathlons thrown in for good measure.

## COMOX GLACIER

Joseph Hall  
August 24-26

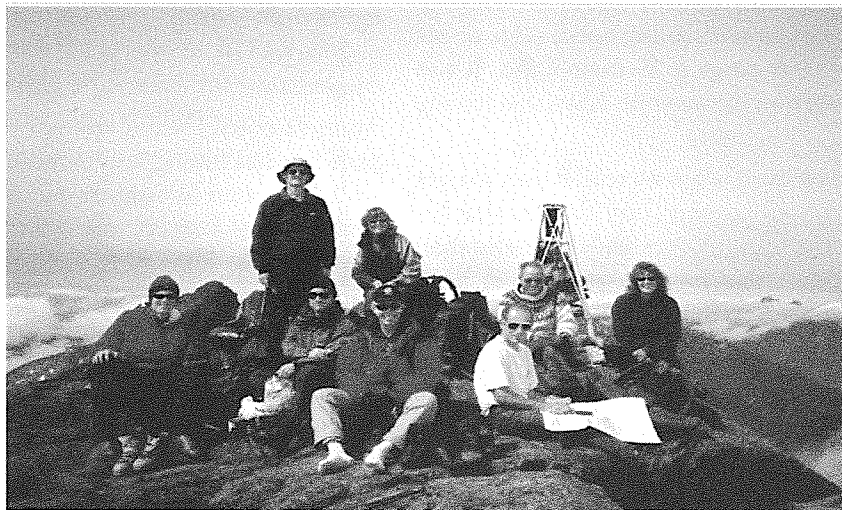
“Oh yeah, that’s a good challenging climb for you,” my dad said. That was early July, and being the good son, I listened. Almost two months later, my mom signed the release form. That wasn’t exactly the best way to start off the trip because everyone else could sign the release form except for me. It turned out I was the only one still in school. The next youngest was Mike Teachman, who had finished high school years ago. Mike Hubbard, who was our trip organizer/leader, has spent more time in the mountains than I’ve been alive. This was my first overnight ACC trip so I was pumped. We picked up Markus (an Austrian hiker) walking along the side of the road heading towards Mt. Albert Edward.

After half an hour of walking from where our cars were left, the ten of us had a snack at the trailhead. From there it was five hours of following Mike up a pretty descent trail, only passing over one log as a bridge. From there, the trail gained a lot of altitude because one has to get to the ridge. Passing over rocks, roots and under trees made things a little harder. The fact that it had rained all day and was still raining didn’t make it any easier to walk over the wet rocks. Once we hit the ridge we walked another forty-five minutes to a suitable camping spot because we were running out of time. Our goal was to get to Frog Pond, where it is best to sleep. We

found that we would have had to climb down a very steep, wet trail with our packs, so we felt it best to camp above that. We were fogged in and couldn’t see a thing, but Sylvia Moser kept her optimism up, saying, “we’re going to wake up and it’s going to be clear, I just know it.” I’ll admit, I doubted her. There were six tents in total that night, until Tim Strange came up by himself. That took our number to eleven.

Sure enough, the next morning we were greeted by blue skies and a little wind. Sylvia’s optimism paid off. We started off in the morning with a view of mountains all around. Things were wet, but luckily there was a rope previously placed on the first steep part start to the trail. Of course the rope was tied to a root so putting all our weight on the rope wasn’t recommended. Going down some parts of the trail took a while because our numbers were so large, but you don’t need to rush up the mountain, there’s enough time to go leisurely. The group scrambled up and down three or four small ridges where steep rock was so wet that climbing on all fours was needed. At this time bugs were coming out in force, so everyone was putting on bug repellent. The group followed the trail around the side of Black Cat Mountain, where we had a snack and got eaten alive by mosquitoes. The views from surrounding ranges got better and better as we approached the glacier. As the group progressed, Markus took advantage of the time and took many pictures with his camera. Once again, there were sections where scrambling on all fours was necessary. Once we hit

the south summit, the walk along the flat glacier took an hour. Tim and Mike used their wands on the snow so we didn’t wander off course on the way back. Soon enough we were eating lunch on the top of Comox Glacier enjoying the views of mountains in Port Alberni, upper Strathcona, and the coastal



Lunch on Comox Glacier Summit.

Photo Sylvia Moser

ranges.

The group of us finally set off on our journey back to camp along the glacier. Mt. Argus, the Red Pillar and Mt. Harmston are three peaks right near by and looked excellent for day trips if you plan to sleep on the glacier. We eventually caught up to Kent and Penny, who had a head start on everyone. They’d taken a wrong turn, which is easy to do around Black Cat Mountain because the trail

is a little hard to follow in spots. We followed the trail back to camp and arrived at dinnertime. The trip took a day. But the group's pace was leisurely.

The next morning we carefully crawled down the steep trail, which was still fairly wet and muddy. Tim and Hank left half an hour early to get a head start down the

trail. We made our way back to the cars in four hours.

*Participants:* Mike Hubbard (Leader), Catrin Brown, Sylvia Moser, Mike Teachman, Kent Anders, Penny Bannister, Markus Ruhsam, Tim Strange, Hank Higginson and Joseph Hall

## MT. COLONEL FOSTER TRAVERSE AND ENJOY THE BLUEBERRIES

Steven Harnig

Having climbed the NE Buttress of Slesse Mountain and then avoided a mini epic during descending a month earlier, Joachim, Hinrich, and I drooled over our next mountaineering objective before school and work got busy: Elkhorn, the Colonel, or Victoria...? It was Wednesday night when we finally made up our mind that a visit to the Colonel would provide the most fun. We consulted with the island-mountain-encyclopaedia, Sandy Briggs, for some valuable info that night and fortunately were able to arrange a casual meeting on Thursday.

Since I was not at the later part of the meeting, I let Joachim and Hinrich decide on what route we should take. These guys are definitely feeling confident ... I got the details of our little plan Friday afternoon on the road. We would climb Scott Flavelle and Perry Beckham's 1977 North Buttress (NB) route on the North Tower, and then do the entire traverse from north to south while bagging all 5 of the Colonel's summits along the way. Has anyone been to Mt. Colonel Foster before? When did I agree to all this craziness?

Having been stormed out of the Elk River Valley four times, I must admit that I was not terribly enthusiastic about this trip at the beginning. What made it worse is that not once, during the four times that I was there, have I seen a worthy hump. It was either the surrounding mountains or me getting drowned in the cumulus clouds. (Despite the history, I don't think any of us checked the weather forecast prior to our trip. I guess there is nothing wrong with taking a chance with the weather once in a while.) Also, the Elk River Trail...it's so long and "mono-scenery". It didn't matter how un-stimulating the trail was in the end, however. We hiked to our base camp Friday night, Upper Gravel Pit, with our headlamps.

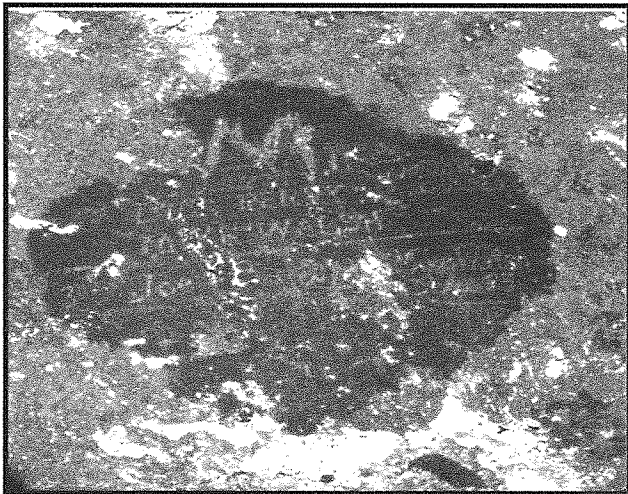
We left base camp as soon as we could see the trail Saturday morning. It took us about 45 minutes to get to

Landslide Lake. At last, a mountain in this valley shows its face to me. And what a face it is! Rising more than 1000 meters above Iceberg Lake, the East Face of the Colonel is truly a spectacular and intimidating sight. After the photo-ops, we proceeded to Iceberg Lake via an obvious trail east of Landslide Lake. Half an hour later on the lateral moraine just north of Iceberg Lake, we entered steep and bushy terrain. Since blueberry shrubs dominated the slope, it was hard to decide whether they were friends or foes. Like most summer mountaineering trips, the presence of mosquitoes kept us itchy and moving. Under the blazing sun, we slowly climbed up a super loose and dusty gully to gain the ridge proper. By noon we were at the base of the North Buttress.

Since we were unfamiliar with the property and quality of the rock, we were a bit nervous at the first pitch. However, uncertainty quickly disappeared. The rock looks very smooth at first glance, but one touch reveals that the surface is actually very sharp thus making it superb for climbing. As a whole, the NB route is nicely featured, easily protected, and mostly pretty solid. The original ascent climbed 6 pitches to the false summit. We did it in 7 pitches due to rope drag and some very close calls with big loose rocks. Another two short pitches over very loose terrain took us up to a BIG slanting platform at around 8:00 pm. One could easily park 5 cars on it. Of course this is an obvious place for the night. Oh...let's unofficially call it the Dance Platform... Wait...didn't somebody mention that the 1946 earthquake caused the last major landslide in the massive unstable rocks on the North Tower.

Everyone was eager to shake off the morning chill the next day (I wanted to get off the platform in case of an earthquake). So we skipped breakfast and got moving quickly. The summit of the North Tower was quickly and easily gained from the bivvy platform and from there we could see two of our next 5 objectives, the Northwest

Summit (NWS) and the Northeast Summit (NES). The faces and ridges of these summits are so steep and wildly exposed that I thought I had bent my glasses frame during sleep. A short pleasant ridge walk took us to the south end of the tower. From here we rappelled down to a very steep snow gully between the North Tower and NWS. This is where Sandy mentioned "Space: The Final Frontier" in his route description. Yes, one wrong move around here and space would be my final destination. Too lazy to take out my instep crampons, I relied only on my ice axe and struggled through the icy slope. Next time, I would put on my crampons. Scrambling up to the NWS was fairly tame; however, we had to deal with loose rocks and many steep and easy class 5 climbing. Fortunately, these sections were not long enough for us to justify using a rope and placing some pro. Besides, there weren't many good places to put something in anyway.



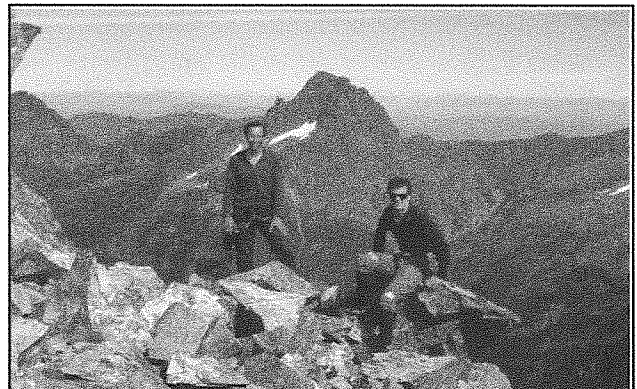
Photo, Steven Harn

We down-climbed a super steep and loose gully from the NWS to gain the next col. More scrambling up and short climbing was encountered, but this time steeper. We found old and new slings along the way to the NES ridge. It was quite entertaining at one point to realize that we were soloing up what other people had rappelled off! NES was reached around 11:45am and breakfast could no longer be delayed. For anthropological interest: we found the historical summit register carved out on a patch of lichen by Mike Walsh on the NES.

While I was taking photos of the surrounding valleys, Hinrich and Joachim had gone ahead and negotiated a crazy little section between the NES and the main summit. Not knowing where they had traversed safely, I found myself negotiating a short 3-meter rotten face that overhangs ever slightly. This would normally be not TOO big of a deal; however, positioned straight above a steep, exposed, and smooth gully that seems to run the

entire length of the East face of the Colonel compounded the problem manifold. Dick Culbert's description of the gullies on this mountain is no exaggeration, "Vertical bowling alleys." I was scared and unwilling to proceed without a rope. I yelled out to my partners asking for hints as to where they had traversed. Joachim yelled back and said that I was going in the right direction (judging from the direction of my voice, thanks a lot...). So I proceed with the traverse. Quickly, 5.8 started to feel like 5.10... As I started to question my own climbing ability, the thoughts of hand holds and foot holds breaking and slipping off the rock ran wildly through my head. "So this is how I am going to fall and die..." Trying to convince myself that a 5.8 is still a 5.8 no matter where it's located, I slowly and methodically pulled through the "crux" while questioning my own sanity and reasons for doing this. Once I rejoined the group, I said to Hinrich and Joachim, "What's with that retarded piece of shit!" Hinrich and Joachim looked at me with puzzled faces and asked me what's wrong nonchalantly. Why didn't we use a rope there? I don't know, but I wish I did.

In hindsight, Hinrich and Joachim probably stayed a little bit further to the west side of the mountain, thus avoiding the exposure. Or maybe they are better climbers than I am...hit the gym... After that little entertainment, the Colonel was still throwing tricky bits at us. However, none were as serious and steep as the "crux". The main summit of Colonel Foster was gained shortly after we got on the summit ridge. More food and the best part-writing our story into the summit register.



Hinrich & Joachim on Colonel Foster main summit.  
Photo, Steven Harn

Since Sandy didn't give us any words of wisdom for the following part, we were on our own for the rest of the traverse. From the main summit, slightly tricky route finding and two rappels took us to the steep snow slope of the Snow Band Route. The exposure of the two permanent snowfields was spectacular and adrenaline pumping. I was being stubborn again; keeping my instep

crampons in the sack instead of on my feet, I crawled and slipped my way across the snow slope to easier ground (or snow). Next time, I'll put them on... Luckily we did not have any trouble negotiating the slippery and steep snow slopes. However, getting across the moat and back on to the ridge proved to be another stressful event. We first examined the east side (snow slope side) of the Corporal and found black hole moat, no go. Then we turned around and climbed a 5-meter wall to access the West side of the Corporal. It was absolutely rotten and dead vertical if not overhanging. The exposure sickened me; I could see the scree slopes straight down below! To my amazement, Hinrich said "I'll go check it out," and proceeded with the airy and hair-raising traverse. I was getting quite nervous watching Hinrich and the prospect of myself free soloing around the East side of this damn Corporal Gendarme. "Hinrich, let's just give the damn moat another try," I said. Noticing the rock was getting looser as the rock face became even more exposed, Hinrich wisely turned around and we carefully analyzed the East side this time. With some luck, we found a line of weakness, a 5.7 crack on the south side of the Corporal and an acceptable jumping distance across the moat. Four hours (way too long) after we had left the main summit, we were finally back on the proper ridge.

A really rotten 5.6 crack was first negotiated from the col between Southwest Summit and the Corporal to gain the summit ridge of SWS. From the Southwest Summit, we



Photo, Steven Harnag

were very happy to see our last objective, Southeast Summit. One short rappel brought us to a wild "cat walk" between the two south summits. Joachim and I crawled ungracefully over the cat walk while Hinrich "balanced" and stumbled his way across.

The last summit of Colonel Foster was gained easily from the cat walk. After Joachim scribbled something in the SE summit register, we quickly moved on since it was 6:00pm already. We had a number of gullies to choose from for our descent, but none of them looked very pleasing. We found and followed some cairns to the east and down-climbed a grassy and loose rock-filled gully. Near the bottom, we did a full rope-length rappel, much, much more fun than down climbing. Racing against the setting sun, we ran towards an obvious snowfield on scree slopes. Shortly after a fast and bumpy bum glissade on the icy hard snow, we were forced back onto steep rock slope due to melt holes and crevasses. However, we were blessed with fresh water on the rock. Having endured two days of dry throat, we each drank about two litres of water. We found a slanted site a little ways down for our "unplanned" bivvy around 7:30 pm. Although we called this an unplanned bivvy, I am sure we were all very aware of the possibility right from the start.

Knowing that we have less ground to cover, we slept in until 8:00am on our last day and continued our descent on empty stomachs. I had finished my four bagels the day before and the others had finished their "food" as well. Down-climbing when we should have rappelled, we quickly reached another scree slope that led us back to Iceberg Lake. It could be the hunger, but the blueberries along the way back to base camp tasted especially sweet. Back at base camp, we cooked a pot of Teriyaki rice and cream of chicken to ease the hunger pain a little. Strange mixture but I guess anything tastes good at this point. The 8 km hike out of the Elk River Valley was as mundane as I expected and more. The only highlights that kept me from insanity were the interesting fungi along the way. Humm...tasty... I guess Hinrich and Joachim didn't mind the little stroll in the woods. A little over 2 long, agonizing hours from base camp, we were back at the parking lot. Gina's...here we come! (If you don't already know, Gina's is a damn good Mexican restaurant located in downtown Nanaimo.)

Participants: Hinrich Schaefer, Joachim Stadel, and Steven Harnag



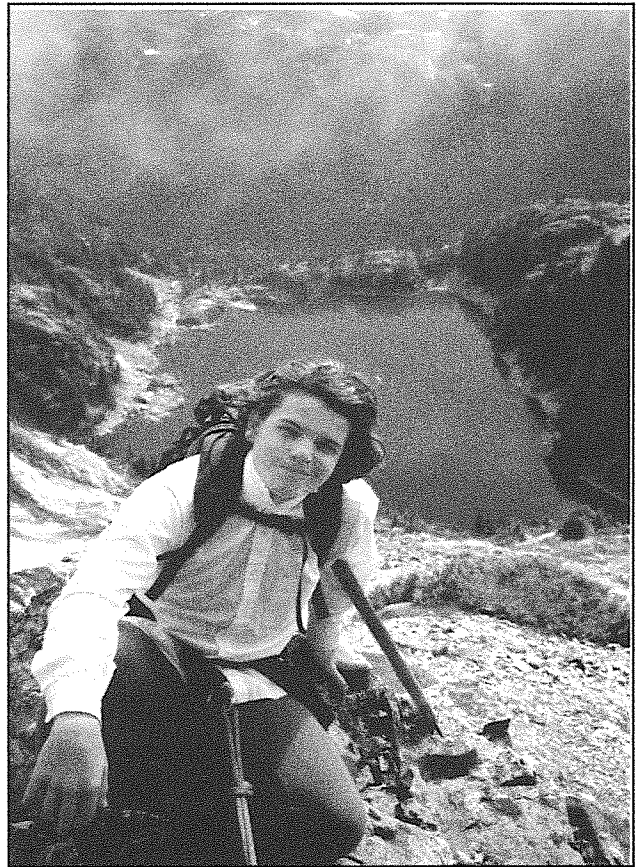
## A JEWEL OF A PARK - STRATHCONA

Jules Thomson  
August 2001

Myles and I left Victoria, for Strathcona Park and Bedwell Lake, on a bright Thursday morning - arriving at the trailhead around 5:30 pm in low cloud, light rain and fading light. We geared up, excelling in contortionists antics inside the tracker, trying to stay dry before we launched ourselves into the evening forest. We reached Bedwell Lake in the darkness, discovering that we had the entire campsite to ourselves; relishing in our choice of encampment for the night.

The next morning, lovely low cloud hung over Bedwell giving a surreal element to our visual vista. Our aim was to scout out the route to the base of Tom Taylor. The foliage was soaked in the night rain and after a false start we back-tracked to find a faint track that led to the outfall of Bedwell lake. Having maneuvered our way across the outfall, with one wet boot, we honed our skills on route finding through wet bush, slippery slopes, and magnificent views to the base of Tom Taylor around 2:00 pm. The boggy meadow had a pristine sense of it, with Elk prints plunked deep in the soft mud around the edges of the lake edging up against the mountain. We opted to tackle the mountain another day and headed back to camp.

The following morning, with an earlier start, we headed off for Mt. Rosseau. Up, up out of Bedwell Lake we climbed past Little Jimmy Lake, through meadows of yellow and glowing rose-pink blossoms of mimulus, asters, aquilegia flavescens (columbine), castilleja miniata (Indian paintbrush), and hippies on a stick (Myles' favourite). A delightful snack along the way was the plethora of blueberries with the reddish, blue, pinks of their leaves couched close to the ground. A quick bite at azure Cream Lake, and we headed off to the snowfield to the west of Septimus. I made a harness out of slings for Myles and short-rope him up the snowfield to the col. Breaking the crest of the col opened up a vista of views - a jewel of Love Lake below us, mountain peaks met the sky that swept the horizon before us. We descended the col and traversed a endless boulder/scree slope that was very loose and made the trekking tiresome. The rock was very mobile on the approach to Rosseau, and the route was exposed. I realized that we would not be down-climbing this route nor did I favour a rappel. Out came the rope again. After some exposed climbing, I circled around towards the SE



Miles Thomson above love Lake, Strathcona Park.  
Photo, Jules Thomson

of Rosseau and found an easier grassy slope approach. We were able to descend the same route, over some firm, unyielding snow patches, back to the col, past Cream, down past Jimmy and back to Bedwell by 8:30 pm as dark descended upon us. The weather goddess had favoured us with sunny skies and cool dark evenings to watch the stars by.

Thursday morning, with overcast skies, we headed back for the parking lot in light rain. The trip gave Myles an all-round experience of long days, snow travel, ice-axe use,

very exposed rock scrambling/climbing and tricky route finding with a difficult, outflow river crossing. Myles was well prepared for his mountaineering trip with classmates, in September, in the Royal Basin on the Olympic peninsula.

*Participants:* Jules and Myles Thomson.

## ELKHORN SOUTH

Lindsay Elms  
September 4

Hiking up the Elk River Trail at 6:15 am, my mind began to wander. This time I had no one to help take my mind off the trudge. Three weeks earlier when Peter Ravensbergen and I hiked up the trail to Elk Pass at 4 am, we had a lively conversation going that helped pass the time (our return trip 16 hours later was different and it was not because we had run out of mountains to talk about.) I have no idea how many times I have hiked the ERT, but for years while working at Strathcona Park Lodge, I regularly hiked the trail. It is like a repetitive job; at some point you just don't want to do it again. Don't get me wrong - it is a beautiful hike under those huge mountains, past giant old-growth trees, up to the glacier-fed Landslide Lake or through the narrow canyon to the breathtaking Elk Pass, but then every hike/bushwhack/climb is beautiful. Unfortunately, I like to see around corners for new perspectives.

Most of the climbs that I do solo begin on logging roads at the base of some remote, unheard of mountain and therefore I am able to sink my teeth into the climb immediately: there is no room to procrastinate. However, when I say remote I don't mean a mountain that is out of the way and miles from nowhere. I mean one that usually has little, if any, climbing history or route information. Not to denigrate Bruce Fairley's [A Guide to Climbing & Hiking In Southwestern British Columbia](#) but in the last two chapters that cover the North Island most of the mountains have one and a half lines dedicated to the climb. I have attempted to change that through the years by focusing my attention on climbing some of these beautiful mountains, hence my reports in the Island Bushwhacker. I know that for many recreational climbers that only get out a few times a year, these peaks are not on the "to do" list, but for some who over the years have climbed most of the well known peaks and are looking for a new adventure on the island at least they have something to refer to.

Anyway, I seem to have gotten off track a bit. So, there I was hiking up the ERT on my own contemplating, 'will I find the flagged route that I had followed 12 years earlier when I went up to the South Ridge of Elkhorn?' and 'do I really want to hike the 8 kilometres up the ERT to the

start of the climb?' Sigh! Here I was experiencing negative thoughts that rarely precede a climb. I felt like A.A. Milne's depressed donkey Eeyore! I grappled with these feelings until things such as a crash up in the forest distracted me - what was that? A bear or a cougar stalking me! A cone falling from above - that's only a squirrel stocking up his pantry for the winter! I won't even get into the shadows lurking behind the trees. By 8 am I was at the campsite on the gravel flats and looking for the log to cross the Elk River. My excitement was growing. In a few minutes my heart rate would increase as I began climbing, I would start sweating and I knew my endorphins would kick in. I was about to begin the uphill bushwhack. No going back. All of a sudden things appeared a lot rosier.

The Alder beside the river had grown up from twelve years ago and I couldn't find where the old flagged route began, so I crashed through the bosage until I entered the old growth forest. I angled slightly right towards a small creek coming down, as I remembered the flagging on the true left of the creek. Still no sign of the flagging so I didn't let myself get too worked up about it. For the next hour no technical difficulties were encountered as I gained elevation rapidly. Eventually I broke out of the bush and into the alpine and I could see the easy-angled slopes leading up towards the summit. As I got closer to the summit ridge I noticed there were three high points, but I knew that the main summit was on the first bump.

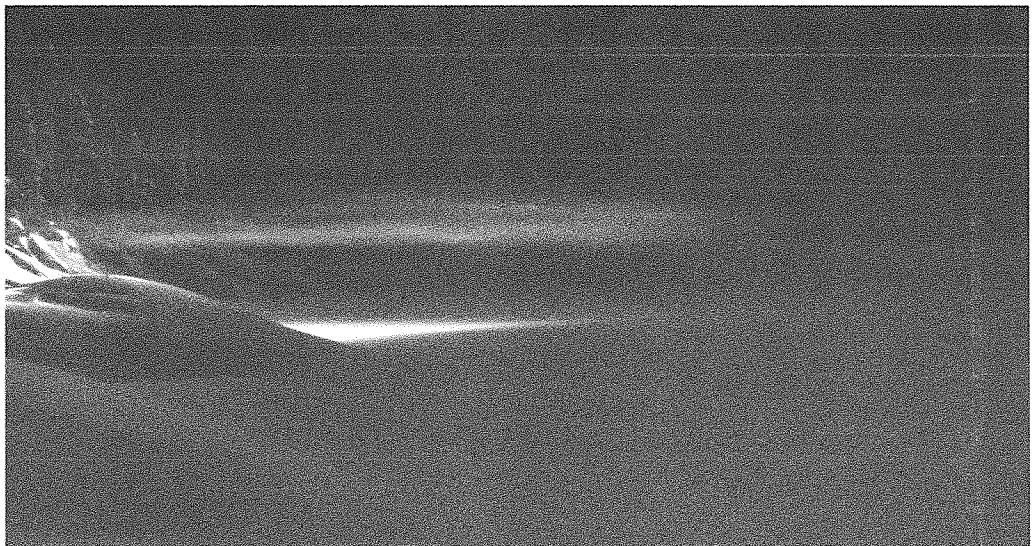
The temperature was cooler the higher I got (surprise, surprise) and there was ice smeared over some of the rocks (some of the small ponds even had a film of ice on the surface.) Most of the snow patches I was able to avoid, but for those I had to cross, I looked for the narrowest neck of snow. The snow was frozen solid and my running shoes received little purchase. A couple of times I reached down to use my finger nails as claws. Thankfully I don't chew my nails. However, I had to laugh as the thought of trying to self-arrest flashed through my mind. Just after 10:15 am I saw the summit cairn and a couple of minutes later I was standing next to it. I quickly off-loaded my pack. (Continued on p 37)

# 2001 PHOTO



**NATURE: KING PROTEA**

From Table Mountain Cape Town, South Africa: Catrin Brown



**MOUNTAIN SCENERY**

Hinrich Schaefer



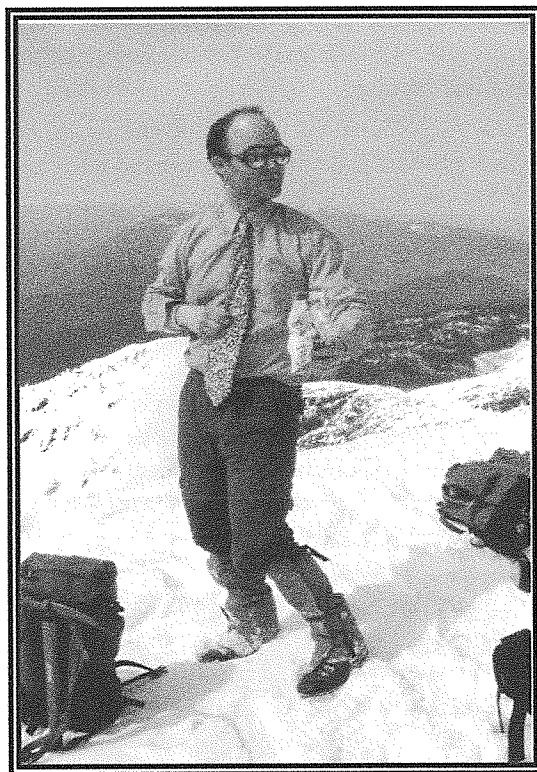
# CONTEST WINNERS

## MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY (ON BACK COVER)

Stephen Harnng climbing on Mt Colonel Foster  
Hinrich Schaefer

## MOUNTAIN PRINT (FACING TABLE OF CONTENTS)

Camp 1 above Khumbu Icefall, Everest, Lhotse  
and Nuptse behind.  
Don Morton



**MOUNTAIN HUMOUR**  
Greg Dowman on top of Landale  
Sandy Briggs



**VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE**  
Hinrich Schaefer

progression climbing has taken for me. I'm still enjoying myself out there but I feel the need to express myself this way. Over the years I have gained a lot of experience in the mountains and I feel at ease with no outside pressures. On my own I am free to do what I and delved inside for some warm clothes and something to eat: high caloric power food to help generate some heat. My body core temperature was obviously down a degree or two now that I had stopped.

I know many will think my solo speed ascents are foolish and reckless but it is just part of the natural want and I can go at the speed that I feel comfortable with. I'm not racing against anyone else and I know that my times can be, and will be broken, by younger climbers. One day I will wake up and realize that I am no longer capable of climbing at that pace and I will have to choose a more sedate tempo but, until that time arrives, I will continue to push myself to see what my body and mental state will allow me to achieve. The thrill and challenges I experience in the mountains are no different from anyone else's. I just pursue them in a different way. I recognize that what I do is risky (isn't all climbing) but I know that I have not reached my outer limits: I still have something in reserve. It is the external situations that I know I can't control; therefore, I have to make sure that when I do the solo speed climbs, weather and conditions are as perfect as they can be to minimize the danger. The mountains are always there for another day!

## TRIPLE PEAK

John Pratt 15 - 16. September

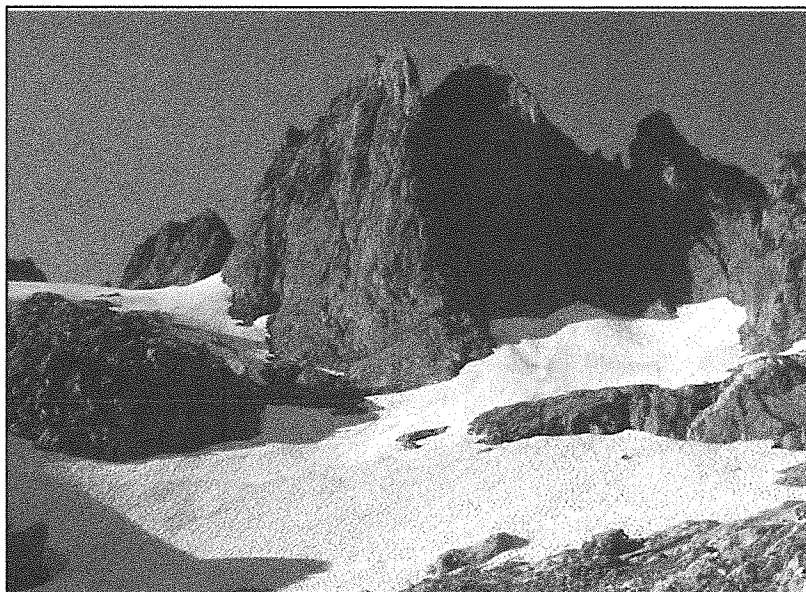
George, Jules and I set off from Victoria shortly after 6:00 am, on the morning of Saturday, 15. September and at 11:40 am parked George's van at the start of the taped route up to the lake below Triple Peak. Having been weathered off this mountain at least once before, I had a score to settle with it and the weekend weather looked perfect.

After crossing a deep, hidden gully (this feature is not shown on the maps) in the forest, we continued following the markers until we broke out of the trees into a more open area of cliffs, gullies, streams and waterfalls, the whole being liberally-patched with dense bush. This section seemed long

As usual the view from the summit was spectacular: Colonel Foster dominated the immediate horizon and to the east I peered into the pristine Cervus Creek. With most of the day left, I decided to wander across towards Elkhorn and traverse under its West Face to the normal ascent route. Although the clouds from the surrounding valleys were beginning to billow and swirl around the summits there was no sign of rain yet. I descended to the small saddle and then dropped down a scree slope to the bottom of the rock bluffs. I crossed a nasty little gash full of loose, big boulders that had obviously come from higher on the mountain. I say gash because it reminded me of a deep festering open wound. After gaining a relatively clear slope beside the gash I angled up under Elkhorn's threatening face. A short while later I emerged at the edge of the final basin that led across to the ridge that is the normal approach route. It was a beautiful traverse: no technical difficulties and straightforward route finding. Once on the ridge, I picked up the trail and followed it back down to the ERT. Just after 3:40 pm I was back at the trailhead and ready for the drive home.

My endorphins, although having peaked earlier, were still flowing through my system and I was experiencing a climber's high. I new it wouldn't last much longer, but there was nothing I could do about it. I would just have to wait until the next climb - or long run!

and tiresome but eventually - about 3 hours after leaving the van - we hauled ourselves up over the rocky, rounded



Triple Peak from Snowfield.

Photo, John Pratt

lip of the bowl holding the charming lake (1000 m level) by which we intended to camp. Our aim was to attempt the summit bright and early the next morning, so we set up the tent on a patch of heather at the outlet, went for a swim in the lake (for me 20 seconds was adequate) and, later on, did a reconnaissance up to the NW ridge to see if there was a 'backside' route to avoid the glacier approach (there isn't) since I feared that late in the year a big moat would prevent us even from getting started on the rock.

The next morning, we left camp at 7:50 am, and walked up to the 'glacier' (more a permanent snowfield), tied on our crampons and made it easily to the base of the peak. As it happened we found a reasonable way onto the rock, although there was indeed quite an undercut moat. Interestingly enough, this one easy place to cross was exactly where the climbing route begins! After some initial doubts and a couple of false starts, I left the first (crux) pitch up into a shallow, right-ascending gully, placing one or two nuts for protection. An old, blue sling suggested a belay stance, so I brought the others up and took off again to push the route a little higher. This section was more scrambling than serious climbing as there were plenty of opportunities to rest. Then the route steepened again (one more nut placement) before tending back leftward. The next belay stance was a half-dead tree lying on its side and partially rooted in the rock and earth! Again, I belayed the others up and climbed four or five meters higher to the

ridge-top. Here, a rock-and-heather slope rose steeply to the left up to the skyline. I wondered what lay beyond, out of sight. Some horrible, impassable gap, I guessed.

There was nothing to do but to find out, so I scrambled up the class 4 heather to the safety of some scrappy, dwarf pines around one of which I looped a sling, clipping the rope in behind me. Just above, a pleasant sight greeted me: no big gap - just an easy, rocky scramble (one mildly awkward move). For the last time, I belayed George and Jules up and we all walked along the ridge top and onto the summit at a few minutes before noon. Here, we spent 3/4 hour having lunch, enjoying the view, taking pictures and celebrating with some tequila which George had brought up in a small plastic bottle. The descent went easily (three rappels) and soon we were back on the snow and not much later than that back at camp packing up. The trip back down through the forest was a mild drag, but eventually it was over and done with and we reached the van at about 6 pm. We broke the long trip back home with a 'beer-and-burger' style dinner at the "Westwind" in Alberni. We reached Victoria shortly after 11:15 pm, a great trip behind us.

Notes: (a) Take crampons late in season! (b) Take a vehicle with high clearance (e.g., a Sherman or T-34 tank), as the upper half of Marion Creek road is heavily cross-ditched.

Participants: Jules Thomson, George Urban and John Pratt

## NAHMINT MOUNTAIN, WEST RIDGE,... A FIRST ASCENT ?

Peter Rothermel

September 23

**T**he first time I got a close up view of this mountain it was "love at first sight." This was about three years ago during the first of three attempts I've made on the south side of Mt.

Klitsa but that's another story looking for a finish. From the valley bottom and from branch 600, I had a dramatic view of Nahmint's north side with its avalanche chutes, long dropping French Waterfall, all dominated by its blocky summit. The mountain was named after a group of natives that lived nearby on Barclay sound.

From across the valley, on Klitsa's flanks, I could see a logging road along Nahmint's northwest side and, from my viewpoint, it looked like there was a feasible way to gain an easy ridge leading towards a bump west of the summit, and farther to a col and then to the final steep summit ridge, which I doodled onto my topo map.

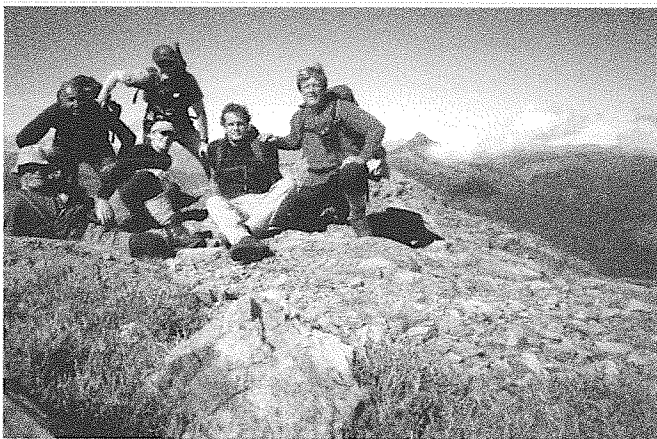
Back home, I had one of my photos blown up and traced potential routes with my finger while showing it to climbing partners, but no one seemed to become as star-struck as I was with this peak. Fairley's Guide said, "Nothing is known of its climbing history," but after asking around, I found out Sandy Briggs and Lindsay Elms had both summited it (of course), by the southeast ridge and reported horrific blow down on the approach that required much climbing up and over five-foot diameter tree trunks.

Rory Ford advertised an exploratory trip to Nahmint in the Alberni Valley Outdoors Club 2001 fall trip schedule, so I called him up and said "I'm in like Flynn." The mandate of this trip was to see where the logging roads might take us and to see how high on the ridge we could get. Summiting seemed remote enough that we talked of it in hushed tones,

so as to not upset Thor and Oden.

September 23rd, a Sunday, eight of us met in Port Alberni at 6:00 in the early morning fog and set off on the two hour drive to the start of our hike. Once in the valley and heading up Nahmint Main, we passed Branch 600 on our right heading towards Klitsa and, shortly after the 68 km sign post, took the left fork onto Branch 700. From here on, the road is heavily water barred requiring a high slung vehicle. Past the first bridge, over an unnamed creek, we took another left onto Branch 750. Then over another bridge crossing Daitl Creek going straight past a left dead end spur. At the last fork, we turned up left and continued until the road ended... good route finding Rory! We cairned and flagged all the forks for future reference and marked where we started our bushwhack. From the end of the road, look up left of the (dry) creek, at the upper apex of the slash, for a large cedar stump with a chainsaw bar sticking out at an angle, festooned with orange flagging tape - that's the start of the thrash.

We spent two and a half hours wading upwards through brush heavily laden with dew and got thoroughly soaked, while all the way along I tied orange tape to branches, like a modern day Hansel & Gretel. The open alpine and the 10:30 sun hit us at the same time, so we took a break and wrung out our socks and let the warmth of September Sol dry us out a bit. After what I thought was a too short of a break, we headed up towards the west bump and instead of going over it, we angled left and traversed around to the col on rocky shelves where I ran out of flagging tape, but the route's as plain as the nose on your face from this point.



Resting on the summit.

Photo Peter Rothermel

From the col we started up the summit ridge on brushy ledges until we reached a large, level spot and here I proclaimed lunch since it was 12:30 and I was famished. I was half way through my bagel when Rudy hefted his pack and headed up (summit fever?) and all followed with me in tow trying to gobble down an apple.

Much of the rock on this mountain is solid, compact and granite-like with plenty of excellent in-cut holds. There is a pitch or two of what looks like low fifth class rock straight up to the summit, although we took a long, right upward angled ramp of third class mixed brush and rock that led us to our summit and, thankfully, to finish our lunches and bask in the sun, all the while marveling at our good luck with end-of-September weather. The three-year-old dots on my topo pretty much marked exactly the way we had ascended.

From the summit we were rewarded with close-up views of Cat's Ears Peak, Triple Peak and Mt. Hall to the south, Fifty-Forty Peak to the west and Mt. Klitsa to the north. In the distance, the swells in the Pacific could be seen to the southwest, as well as Nine Peaks, the Septimus Range and many other Strathcona summits to the northwest. Off in the east we could see the Strait of Georgia and Mt. Arrowsmith. Down the north face, the mountain is split from summit to bottom at the Nahmint River by an approximately 45 degree couloir that appears to be 1400 meters long without a single break and Rudy's making rumblings about a winter ascent... yeah!

During our ascent we found no flagging and only two rocks piled up - a cairn or fluke of nature? The register was cracked and held a couple of rolled-up, soggy-wet note books that will require a surgeon's touch to restore and read, so we left a new tube and waterproof notebook. Were we the first party to summit via this west ridge? It doesn't matter - what's more important is that we established the preferred route for the time being. Maybe in the future a better route will be established using Beverly Lake as a camp destination, then from the lake day trips to Nahmint, Fifty-Forty Peak and an immense area of alpine ridge hikes and rock routes. Mt. Hall - to the south is a many-summit peak, with a large snowfield on its north side and spiky gendarmes guarding its flanks - and the start of a new love affair for me.

Participants: Rory Ford (organizer), Reyna Waller, Rudy Brugger, Fritz Graf, Barb Baker, Chris Youngman, Gus Attiana and Peter Rothermel.

## MOUNT WHYMPER — RAINWEAR TEST #1000 & SOMETHING

Rick Eppler

October 14

Mount Whympier, at 5056' (my maps are in feet), has the distinction of being the highest point in Canada south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. That has always held an attraction for me, sort of like Mount Washington (in the US Adirondacks) has the worst weather in the contiguous United States. The way the weather was shaping up leading into this weekend, I wasn't sure if Whympier would rival that claim too.

A 6 am start saw the 4 remnants of the original group of 11 standing at the Spencer Road Shell looking up into a dark, starry sky. After a full day of pounding rain, this filled us with guarded optimism for our day. I figured we could always catch a nice breakfast somewhere up Island and call it a day if the notoriously rainy Cowichan Valley showed its teeth and this turned out to be only a local sucker hole. Well the weather just kept improving.

Having remembered from a few previous trips in there (not recently) that a 4-wheel drive was a handy thing to have, we brought one. Because this was going to be a traverse of the peak, we brought two vehicles in order to be able to leave one at each end. Well I guess it is a testament to the recent and ongoing logging in the upper limits of this valley, but the roads were in fine 2-wheel drive shape, as we discovered later. We paid the \$2 per car fee at the entrance to the Chemainus Valley logging roads, with a simple warning from the guard that the gate closed at 7 pm and if we weren't out by then, he'd see us Monday morning.

An hour and 45 km later, we left a car on the south side of Whympier, at the bottom of Branch C29. It gives 2-wheel drive access to the SE Ridge, and our descent route. Carrying on, newly graded road got us to the gate on the divide between the Chemainus and Nanaimo watersheds. Elevation 2400' (my maps are still in feet) and 9am. The ridge above was shrouded in mist, but it wasn't raining!

Well, I'm not sure how much that mattered, because 100' up the slash (my brain's still in feet) we were all pretty soaked. I thought things would improve getting into the timber above, but the bush (and there was lots of it) - dripping in water droplets - was met at waist height by a soupy mist. Reminded me of a line from a famous movie, "Surely Herr Doctor you have no objection to a morning shower?" - Freitag. I tried to hang back, but the rest just kept hanging back farther, pretending to be in deep

conversations, and studying the mushrooms. This was not a day for the cottons, and I was glad of the modern synthetics; even so, I still wrung out the sleeves and cuffs - often.

Topping out on the first of the two 4400' bumps, a watery outline of the sun appeared above and the summit of Whympier exposed itself in dramatic fashion through a hole in the mist. We could see clear blue sky above it. Up to this point we had held on to the option of turning back if the weather didn't pan out, but the brief view of the summit eliminated those thoughts. We played briefly with the 'glories' created by the combination of sun, fog and our silhouettes.

The rest of the ridge tour was back in the mist, bumping over several more 4600-4700' lumps, with a couple of important turns done by map and compass. Between the bumps the ridge is laced with heather meadows and sub-alpine ponds. Very picturesque! A few spots were, as Sandy had so profoundly stated, DNP's (do not plummet). Eventually we broke out of the murk just below the summit block. The warmth of the 3 pm October sun was welcoming, and we ate a hasty late lunch while picking out the distant peaks that rose above the layer of cotton-like cloud.

Within a few hundred feet of dropping down the SE ridge, we plunged back into the damp, cool mist. Following the flagging down on a faint boot trail brought back 20-year-old memories of clearing and marking this route with Sandy and Rob. Amazing that it was that long ago, and still looks the same. Mountains truly are timeless. The afternoon improved, and walking the logging road down across the south side of Whympier we enjoyed the last few rays of late afternoon sunshine. I am encouraged to see the extent of the re-growth of the forest on the valley slopes after having been virtually logged off by the nineteen-seventies. The Chemainus Valley looks like it is recovering. Unfortunately, active logging is working higher on the west side of Whympier, and road construction indicates the SE slopes (including the start of the 'trail') are next. After collecting the vehicles at about 5:30 pm, we cleared the gate with 15 minutes to spare.

Participants: Pat O'Brien, Ian Rongve, Catrin Brown, Rick Eppler

# COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

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## PRIVILEGE

Judith Holm  
April 20-22

Reflecting on this year's Garibaldi Nevé Traverse trip, my main thought is that it was a privilege to be with such wonderful people. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines *privilege* as "a special benefit or honour," which is how it felt to have such good company to ski with across the Nevé.

By leaving Friday morning, we found the Elfin Hut to be about the right distance for the day's destination and only two other people were there. We were able to cross Ring Creek first thing in the morning before the sloughs and slides from sun warmed slopes began. Warm sunshine and a number of relaxed rest stops enabled the awesome views to be fully appreciated. Plan A had been to camp on the shoulder below the Tent and try to climb Garibaldi the following morning. However, elusive as Plan A's often are in the mountains, we moved to Plan B when the forecast major frontal system showed that it was arriving early. This has been a low-snow winter and there were many icefalls and crevasses that are normally covered. We were surprised to find that the snow bridge over to the Shark's Fin was gone and we had to weave through a short stretch of dramatic crevasses. Only Charles could nicely link his turns in the crusty snow down to the avalanche research huts, leading Hinrich to remark that "they don't call him Turner for nothing!"

That I felt privileged to be there was because of the people.

Quiet, supportive, unassuming, with solid competence, strength and experience in the mountains and lots of friendly humour - this was fine company. I was pleased that our friend and cabin partner, Albert, who hadn't ski mountaineered for three or four decades, could come along and see why it means a lot to Viggo and me to be part of the ACC VI section.

Participants: Charles Turner, Kaj Jakobsen, Russ Moir, Hinrich Schaefer, Albert van Citters, Viggo and Judith Holm (leaders)

*Postscript:* Fowler's *Modern English Usage* defines "privilege" as "1. *He was generally believed to be an exceptionally taciturn man, but those who were privileged with his friendship say that this was a habit assumed against the inquisitive.* An unidiomatic use, on the ANALOGY of *honoured with*. 2. A privileged person is one who enjoys some special right or immunity." Those who - like most of us - possess no special right or immunity might reasonably be described as *unprivileged*. But who are the people in between, whom we often hear referred to as the *underprivileged classes*? Those who find an emotive value in that cliché must be presumed to have some notion of the answer; the rest of us are left guessing.



## SKAHA ROCKS!!!

Mike Dillistone

April 27-30

Five intrepid local bushwackers traded wet Vancouver Island underbrush and snow for sagebrush, ticks and rattlesnakes on a 4-day road trip to Skaha Bluffs in the Okanagan Valley. There were so many climbs that trip co-leader Ang Lopez said he felt "like a kid in a candy shop." Starting early on Friday morning, after an all night drive, the Vancouver Island climbers warmed up on classic 5.7 and 5.8 sport leads and progressed over the next 3 ½ days to tick about 25 –30 climbs from, airy, exposed 5.7 and 5.8 trad leads to thin 5.10, 30 metre run-out sport leads. After sundown the climbers retreated to the hot tub at the Waterworld campsite, a virtual climbers village with

climbers from the BC, Alberta the States and beyond. Unfortunately the waterslides weren't open but there were several discussions about possible midnight sliding excursions. The hardest decision every day was "what to climb next." Trip leaders may try to organize another trip for the Fall.

*Participants:* Selena Swets, Richard Matthews, Devan St. Dennis, Ang Lopez and Michael Dillistone.

## MOUNT BREAKENRIDGE

John Pratt

June 16 - 18

There could be no honour in a sure success, but much might be wrested from a sure defeat.

T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

Mount Breakenridge (2395 m) is described in the 'Alpine Guide' as "a heavily glaciated ridge rising E. of the top of Harrison Lake;" actually it is more like four ridges, forming a large massif that takes up a substantial fraction of the relevant topographic map, but the "heavy glaciation" is right on the mark. Because of its huge size, this massif is clearly visible from the town of Harrison Hot Springs, even though it is virtually the whole length of the lake away (it is a 60 km drive from the townsite to our start-point, the mouth of Snowshoe Creek).

The roads from the townsite and up the Big Silver River were in excellent shape. George and I drove to a turn-off near the bridge which passes over Snowshoe Creek and at 1:15 pm on June 16<sup>th</sup>, entered the bush, almost immediately finding ourselves in a swampy area. There were about 200m of this before the ground began to rise and dry out. We had decided not to follow the creek itself, but to short-cut across a spur and drop down the other side. We therefore headed due W., rose to about 600 m, lost about 100 m on the other side and came out of the trees into the light-green bush which choked the floor of the lower Snowshoe Creek valley. Crossing this

spur involves outflanking a few small bluffs and is more awkward than the map makes it appear, but from what we could see, the section of the creek which loops to the N, around the end of the spur, is quite bluffy, so it is probably a wise move to cut this section out.

We picked our way westward up the lower valley in the direction of a steep, forested headwall, the obvious 'crux' of this approach. There is no practicable way around it, so if it could not be climbed, our expedition would be over and we would merely have learned that Snowshoe Creek was not a viable approach!

Of the journey up the valley, I'll say little, except that it must rank among one of the worst bushwhacks I've ever done: take work gloves, long pants and a machete (I'm serious). There is an unusually high proportion of devil's club. Avoid the alder patches and use the few rock-slides when you can. It is a real test of will.

Eventually, we arrived the base of the headwall. Glad to be quit of the bush, we launched ourselves with full packs, at the steep, treed slope, about 45° to start. In no time, we encountered our first bluff, then our second, then our third. George and I alternated "leads," surmounting dozens of mini-cliffs, hands gripping cedars, feet dangling in the air. Wisely, I had brought along some marking tape so we could follow our route back down through the dense bush. Proper marking

here is a must: this is not the place to be wondering about which way you get back down, as there are some large drops with their edges well-concealed by the dense undergrowth. The route takes one quite near the creek as it passes through a huge, deep, gloomy gorge - an impressive and intimidating sight with its vast, overhanging walls and fallen rocks the size of small houses!



Snowshoe Creek Valley and Mt. Breakinridge.

Photo: John Pratt

At long last, the angle eased off, we topped out and dropped about 30 m into the upper valley at about 1000 m. We broke out of the trees: before us lay a flat, marshy, aldered area on the opposite side of which was another band of cliffs. It was 8:30 pm so we set up camp at the only available spot, a small open area just a few meters beyond the edge of the forest. About 30 m away was our water-supply, right where the creek exits the upper valley and pours straight through a narrow slot and over a waterfall into the big gorge: again, an intimidating sight.

The next day was mixed cloud and sun. We set off at 7:20 am, heading more or less due south toward the most promising approach to the alpine area which we could clearly see atop the cliff-band. There were more bluffs, even a small waterfall to climb through, but happily on a smaller scale than on the headwall. Eventually, we were clear of the trees and made rapid progress through the alpine area. Now, at about 1300 m, it was all snow and there were no technical difficulties that we could see. Nonetheless, it was long, very long, and it was noon by the time we came in sight of what was evidently the true peak (there are many subsidiary peaks along this E. ridge). It looked much harder than we had anticipated and the glacier was becoming quite crevassed. It was while crossing a small rock ridge on this section that George, out in front, pulled down a loose rock on his own head which was badly cut as a result. He staunched the bleeding with handfuls of snow and I placed a large 'Elastoplast' across the split skin just under the hairline and kept it fast by wrapping a bandage round his head so he looked not unlike a kamikaze pilot about to go off on his last

mission. He had managed, it seemed, "the multitudinous glacier to incarnadine, making the white one red."

After 15 minutes' recovery, he gamely decided to carry on and continue to try for the summit. After a couple of false starts, I led off again up a steep slope of mixed snow and broken rock and eventually made the last, delicate move out onto the ridge top. There, about 100 m to the south and only 20 m higher, was the summit and we arrived at 4:05 pm. There was a small cairn, but no register. The weather was poor and our views both intermittent and limited. But we'd made it. We left the summit at 4:25 as a light, granulated hail began to pour silently from the leaden sky above. We roped carefully down the 'technical' bit (time-consuming) but eventually reached our tracks on the gentle part of the glacier. These we followed back to the first trees, dropping as we did below the cloud-level. In due course, the flat hollow containing the upper valley came into view, our tent a welcoming little yellow dot at its far right edge. We reached camp at 8:32 pm, exactly 24 hours after our initial arrival there. There should have followed a victors' supper, but minutes after we reached the tent, it began to pour with rain. However, nothing could dampen our good spirits and we were more than happy to content ourselves with a hastily-brewed pot of tea.

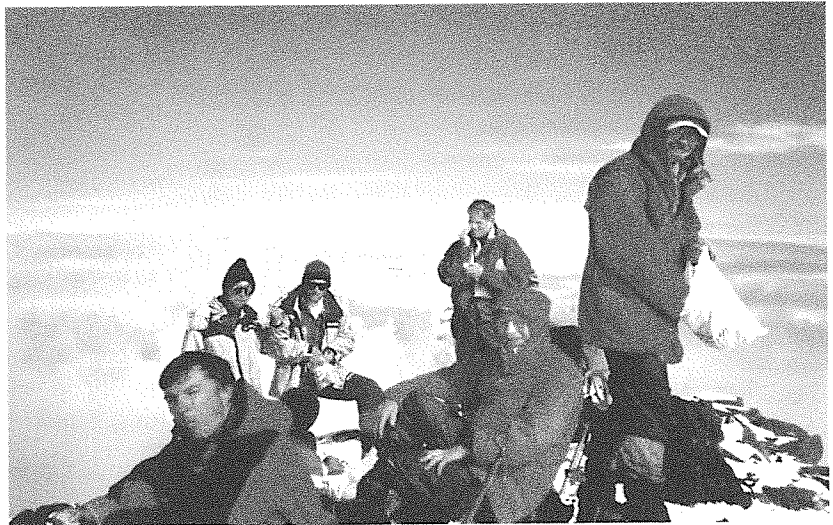
The next morning, we left camp at 9:20 am and at 3:40 pm, hot and sweaty in the now gorgeous weather, we stumbled out of the bush and onto the road. We were just meters away from the truck.

Participants: George Urban, John Pratt

## BOULDER DANCE ON COOK

Jules Thomson  
July, 2001

Another attempt, in July, for Wedge Mountain nestled above Wedgemount Lake just north of Whistler. The weather did not cooperate; with rain, snow, cloud and wind we snuggled deep into our sleeping bags and let the 3:00am wake-up call slide by. The option was, of course, Mt. Cook just above the A-frame overlooking Wedgemount Lake. We started off, route finding on a misty morning with light rain, up through the wet alpine foliage, on to the loose rock pile, Mt. Cook. As we ascended the snow fell, engulfing us in an almost complete white-out; I placed wands to guide our route in return, just in case. We decided to follow an extremely loose gully up the side of Mt. Cook. Suddenly, a massive boulder, at least a meter across, let loose. Some of our party, up ahead, were above the hurtling rock, but the majority of our group were below, directly in its path. Tom Hall made a valiant attempt to take flight by executing a backward somersault and heading down the gully head first on his stomach. All eyes focused on this massive rock speeding death towards us. I was waiting for it to bounce and then second guess which way it would veer so that I could make a last-ditch



Lunch on Mt. Cook Summit

Photo: J. Thomson

effort to get out of its way. I don't remember that the boulder even bounced - it was air-borne coming straight at us in a narrow gully with nowhere for us to go. Luckily, fate was kind that day - the boulder crashed by our scattering bodies and we collected ourselves and continued on our way. The summit of the rock pile, Mt. Cook, where every rock, every step moves, gave us spectacular views as the clouds parted and the sun warmed our souls. We were triumphant, yet again on another summit, to return another day for my nemesis—Wedge Mountain.

Participants: Jules Thomson [leader], John Pratt [co-leader], Ted Davis & Colleen, Tom Hall, Mike Hubbard, Dale Nicol, Don Morton, George Urban..

## ADVANCED YOUTH MOUNTAINEERING CAMP IN THE ROCKIES

James Adams  
July 22 to 28

I would like to give a big thanks to the Vancouver Island Section for sponsoring me to go to the Advanced Youth Mountaineering Camp in the Rockies this July, 2001. The trip sounded so great that I managed to get a friend, Chris Davis, to come

along as well. We arrived in Canmore and enthusiastically decided to walk from the bus depot to the Alpine Clubhouse. Bad idea! It takes several hours (if you get lost) and unfortunately a huge rainstorm soaked us. Chris and I booked in a day early, but we

didn't know the clubhouse doesn't sell food and there are no stores within several miles. Ordered-in pizza would have to suffice.

The next morning we ate leftover pizza and met the group and our guides, Grant Statham and Lars Andrews. We drove to Lake Louise where we climbed at the crag called Back of the Lakes. We walked along the lake with the other tourists to some great limestone cliffs, much different than what I have been climbing on around Victoria. One can almost expect a positive hold when you reach up. Most of the climbs we did were 25 meters long, much longer than what I had climbed in the past. We did climbs ranging from 5.7 to 10c's. The best part of climbing here was the huge roof, 2 pitches up, which kept the rock nice and dry even though it was raining. Our group had 5 participants, all around 17 years old. Experience ranged from two people who had only done gym climbing and had to be taught all the knots, to Chris and I who had climbed for several years.

The next day we climbed the south ridge of Mt. Lorette. The morning started at 7 am with a 30 ft river crossing. Yes, it was cold. We then hiked for 3 hours up a ridge when Josh (one of the participants) started to get asthma. In the end it got so bad that he had to be helicoptered off the mountain. Josh was dangling at the bottom of a rope and received the ride of his life. After this drama, the 4 of us continued up with Lars. The best part of the climb was a difficult slab in a cave. We crawled through a hole at the end of the slab and then traversed a vertical wall, with tons of exposure, onto a ledge. We then took an easy 5 foot wide ridge to the summit.

The following day, which included a flat tire, was spent driving to the Bugaboos. The slog up to Conrad Kain hut had rain, hail, thunder and lightning - typical of the Bugaboos.

We woke up at 3 am the next morning to climb Bugaboo Spire via the Kain route. We hiked with headlamps until we reached the snow leading up to the

col. We climbed up a moderate snow slope, and did some 4<sup>th</sup> class scrambling until we got up onto the ridge. We then put on our rock shoes and continued along the awesome ridge. Unlike island rock, the granite in the bugaboos is amazing and very trustworthy. The crux of the climb comes near the top of the mountain where one must climb up the face of the gendarme and traverse left over a tiny slab sloping off into the abyss below. Apparently, Conrad Kain had to take his boots off and do the traverse in his socks. I recommend looking down often to really feel the exposure. While on the summit, there was not a cloud in the sky. We were lowered down and were happy to put our boots back on after 3 long, numbing hours in climbing shoes.

The next morning was spent eating pancakes and driving back to Canmore. The 2<sup>nd</sup> to last day was spent climbing the Kain route on Mt. Louis following a 2:30 am wake up. Despite the horrific bugs, this is a great climb. Lars set a mad pace for 2 hours with no break to the base of the mountain. On the way I told Chris we were bound to see someone famous here and sure enough we shared part of the climb with a top ice climber, Abby Watkins. The best part of the climb was the vertical face near the top with more exposure than I've ever had. The first rope team did it in two pitches while Grant, Chris, and I managed to do it in one. After sitting on the summit with blue sky all around, we did six 50-meter rappels to reach the base.

The final day saw us at Grassi lakes in Canmore, a great sport climbing area. Most of the rock is full of small pockets, perfect for climbing. I led a bunch of climbs from 10a to 10c. The weather, which had been great all week, just started to rain on my last climb when it was time to leave. Thanks again to the Vancouver Island Section for letting me go on this fabulous trip. The laughs, the things I learned, and the scenery will give me memories for a lifetime.

*Participant:* James Adams

## CROSSOVER PEAK

John Pratt

August 7. - 9

I first 'discovered' Crossover Peak four years ago on a hiking trip up to the Pierce Lakes area, the objects of this outing being Mts. Pierce and McFarlane. The former I would suggest not bothering with but the latter is a pleasant and easy climb in a spectacular area with views which rank among the finest I have seen in the near Mainland ranges. The dominant peak of this divide is the dramatic rock-tower of Mt. Slesse (2439 m). Between McFarlane and Slesse, however, is an impressive peak of medium height which offers fantastic views and some exposed and interesting scrambling. This is Crossover Peak (2185 m).

Joachim Stadler and I took the 11 am ferry from Swartz Bay and set off up the trail (300 m down a muddy side-road off the Chilliwack River road) at 3:55 pm. The trail is in excellent shape and we reached the lower Pierce Lake just 3 hours later. We decided to try and reach the upper lake before sunset. The trail becomes a bit sketchy after the lower lake but easy enough to follow, with occasional cairns and ribbons - and a knotted rope on one steep section - there to help. The route goes up a steepish headwall to reach the alpine bowl containing the upper lake (1800 m level) and we reached this

gorgeous spot just as the sun sank below the horizon. We rapidly set up camp and I began cooking dinner and some tea, but ended up doing most of it in the half-light and the rest by headlight. It was a mistake not to have caught an earlier ferry, but it is good to time one's departure so as to do the stretch between the lower and upper lakes in the afternoon as the sun is then at one's back. It would be a mistake to camp at the lower lake and set off in the morning as the sun would then be full in one's face as one attempted to follow the route up. Also the lower lake is below tree line, the campsite is unattractive with a poor water-supply, not to mention the fact that one is a lot less likely to have company at the upper lake.

A stiff evening breeze blew through our campsite making the cooking a chore. Nonetheless, we got some hot food and tea inside us before bedding down, in the close confines of Joachim's two-person tent, at 10:30 pm.

The next morning dawned fine and we were off, probably about 8 am, picking our way round the left side of the upper lake - over a rock-slide, steep heather and eventually up to a broad, high col on the lake's SE side. As we approached Crossover along the divide, it

began to look more and more intimidating: perpendicular on the left and bloody steep on the right; also, very ragged and spikey on its crest with lots of big gaps and the summit (as ever) by no means the nearest of these spikes. However, the guide said "class 2/3" which, as this section was copied verbatim from Culbert (who soloed Table Mountain in 1959), we knew to take with a grain of salt: we'd brought along rock gear and a rope.



Crossover Peak from the North

Photo: John Pratt

By and large, we followed the crest, sometimes on the left, more often on the right, the one exception being a traverse out onto the left-hand face above a small glacier nursed in a corrie below sheer walls. As we traversed, the face got steeper and steeper and we knew we'd better try and gain the ridge top. So we got out the rope and Joachim did an excellent mid-fifth lead to get us back atop the crest. In retrospect, we should have persisted with staying on the crest in the first place: the move out onto the face was our only mistake and the only occasion where we used the rope. Once back on the ridge, our difficulties were over and ten minutes later I was staring up at a cairn on a very pointed summit which we reached at 11:55 am.

In the course of 25 years' climbing, I have reached about 200 summits. In terms of a great place to be, I have to rate Crossover's in the top ten. It was airy and exposed, yet safe and with a first-class view. Both Rainier and Mamquam were visible way off and closer by were the Border Peaks, Baker, Shuksan and, of course, Slesse right before us. To the north, the Cheam Range spread out in its entirety, to the right of the Cheams, the granite horn of Williams Peak. Across the valley, Rexford. We could

even see the Island!

After 40 minutes atop this lovely perch, we commenced our descent, rappelling the pitch we'd roped up, simply because we knew it would 'go,' although the ridge-top would be fine in all probability. Nonetheless, the scrambling is delicate and exposed on this section. Be careful!

We arrived back at camp at 3 pm or so and luxuriated the entire afternoon and evening away; Joachim dozed in the tent and I strolled about, admiring the scenery and savouring our little triumph. We could easily have made it back to the car, but we felt no necessity or desire to quit this lovely place.

The next morning, as Joachim hadn't done it, we walked up McFarlane in just 25 minutes from the tent (follow the ridge-mounted trail from the upper lake outlet), descended, packed up and got out, reaching the car at 1 pm. As usual, someone added a few kilometers to the trail while we were up on the peak, but it was all well worth it!

*Participants:* Joachim Stadler and John Pratt



# SOUTH OF THE BORDER

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## WITNESS ON MOUNT BAKER

Hinrich Schaefer

September 1 & 2, 2001

Legs are getting tired as we are descending the Coleman glacier. But my mind is filled with the views over the Cascades from the summit and the feeling of sharing that moment with James and Walter, when they made their dream come true of reaching the top of Mt. Baker.

Coming down from the saddle at the foot of Roman Wall, and before reaching the traverse below the Black Buttes, we negotiate a section with several drops and open crevasses. Suddenly I hear a swear word and from the corner of my eye I see that my next ropemate has slipped. Before I feel the jerk of the rope I see that the other end gets taut. James has gone into self-arrest and safely held the fall. We brush off the snow and the nervousness of the incident. A short but steep traverse, snow balling up under a crampon, a fall happens quickly. That's what we are roped up for. No big deal.

A few meters farther we start to realize that things may not be as simple as that. Two mountain guides coming our way (one of whom we had met higher up when he was descending with his two clients) tell us that we are right in an accident scene. A rope team of four has slipped, slid for some fifty meters down the steep section and into a crevasse. One victim is lying beside the crevasse, apparently unconscious and with blood on his face, his friend sitting next to him, a woman taking care of them both. What can we do to help? Nothing but leave them our water and continue the descent. A helicopter is supposed to arrive within ten minutes, competent people have taken charge, the best thing is to get

out of everyone's way. When we reach our camp we meet Grant. He is the fourth member of the team who had the accident. We learn that after the fall Grant climbed out of the ten meter deep crevasse, helped two of his friends, Cheryl and Dale, up and started down to get help for Glyn, the major victim. Glyn, going last, must have taken a pendulum fall when his sliding ropemates jerked him off his feet. He didn't go into the crevasse but hit its lower rim after a five meter fall. He suffered broken ribs and damage to internal organs. He was breathing at first, but when John Colvert (the AAI guide) came down to the accident scene he had to perform CPR on Glyn. After fifty minutes he was forced to give up. By comparison the others suffered only minor injuries: sprained wrists, dislocated fingers, ankle, back and leg injuries. Tracy and Jackie from our party started down the mountain to get help when Grant arrived. They asked two alpine guides and another group of climbers to go up and assist. But help reached the victim too slowly. The accident happened at 10 am. John and his clients must have come across them no later than 11:30, immediately calling help on a

cell phone. Still, the helicopter did not arrive until 3 pm. It is too big to land anywhere on the glacier, but worse, at 2700 m above sea level and in the warm afternoon sun the air does not provide enough uplift for it to hover. It was impossible to lower help or hoist up the victims. Again and again they circle, trying lower and lower down the mountain until they finally lowered a rescue member at our campsite at 1700 m.

From him we learn that Glyn has died.

Why?

I know that the question doesn't make sense. But it is in my head. Was there no chance he could have made it? Why him and not someone else in his team? Or one of us? How could this happen on a day and in a place where everything seemed simply beautiful and perfect just minutes ago? How can it be that a person who amicably greeted me the evening before will never smile again?

What did they do wrong? Which mistake led to this end? And while I am asking myself that question and discuss it with my friends I have to admit that apparently I need to put blame on someone in order to justify the risk I was taking myself that day. Maybe they did everything right. Maybe the accident was just the result of several bad circumstances for which nobody can account. Probably it could have been us just as well. Do I really assess and accept the risk I am taking in my outdoor activities or do I put it off as things that happen to other people? Are ropes and slings redundant safety gear which we use just in case, but which we won't need because we are the ones playing it safe anyway? What about my friends, who trust my judgement, my skills and reactions, can they rely on me when a foot slips, a hold breaks? What could we possibly tell Grant and Glyn, their friends and families? What could they tell us?

These questions will stay with me as will the memory of the views and the handshake on the summit. The only thing I do know is that I will

go out there again. Why? I can't tell.

*Epilogue:* Rescue personnel and gear were flown in the whole afternoon. Grant hiked out the same day and found assistance for his minor injuries. Cheryl and Dale were also brought down that day to where our camp had been (Ermine Ridge, a rocky outcrop between the foot of the Coleman glacier and Heliotrope Ridge, 1700 m elevation), one of them walked, the other was carried on a stretcher. From there they walked out the next morning. Glyn's body could not be brought off the mountain until four days later. This is not intended to give a complete and accurate summary of the events; some of the information used here is from word of mouth and from newspapers and in some cases there are conflicting reports. I would like to voice my respect for everyone involved in the rescue or recovery and to tell those affected by the accident that I sincerely feel for their loss.



The rescue helicopter on Heliotrope ridge. The accident scene is below the snowy saddle on the right skyline.

Photo: H. Schaefer

Participants: Daithi Stone, Nathalie Lefebvre (base camp managers), Jackie Dumas, Tracy Ewen, Joachim Stadel, Walter Merida, James Taylor, Hinrich Schaefer

## FIGHTOUT IN A WHITEOUT ON THE FLIGHT OUT - MT. BAKER

Martin Davis

June 2-3

Our ski trip to Mt. Baker started inauspiciously, with rain drizzling onto the dark Victoria streets. Not only was the forecast poor, but we had with us two climbers whom, had the mountain gods been looking for sport, would surely have attracted their attention. Sylvia had attempted the peak no fewer than four previous times, while it was the first time Josh had been on the mountain - and as Claire pointed out, it's pretty rare to bag the big B the first time you try it. But also on the trip was Don Morton, fresh from his expedition to Lhotse. Perhaps Mt. Baker would be considered an appropriate consolation prize...

By the time we reached Tsawassen, the clouds were parting and a welcome June sun was starting to steam the streets dry. Mt Baker, however, still hid behind a wall of grey. No matter - getting out was the important thing. Since, if you're going to get weathered off, you should find out before the pubs close, Mike Hubbard shared with us his arcane knowledge of the fastest route to Sumas. This involves driving along the world's longest undefended drainage ditch at high speed, with the occasional peculiar maneuver to avoid inconveniently placed things like border crossings. In spite of the residential nature of the road, driving this route does seem to be significantly faster than taking Highway 1. But, as we were to discover on the return journey, the trick is to find it!

After trudging up the Kulshan trail, we were able to put on our skis just at timberline. This was also the cloud line, so we skied upward with white overhead, ahead, and underfoot. After testing some different opinions about the most efficient route up the Hogsback, we made camp below the snout of the Coleman Glacier. The weather showed no sign of improvement, and by the time we turned in it was snowing lightly but steadily. We set our watches with little expectation that we would need to pay attention to the pre-dawn alarm.

Claire woke us before the alarm, and we could tell from the excitement in her voice that perhaps there would be fun to be had after all. Amazingly, the clouds had rolled away from the upper mountain, leaving only a layer of cloud in the valleys below us. By the time we set out onto the glacier, the dawn was pinking the slopes above us.



Martin Davis on the Coleman Glacier. Photo Josh Slatkoff

As we trudged upwards we caught up with some of the other parties on the mountain, including one from Victoria with several people we knew. Skiing close beneath the Black Buttes in gloriously sunny weather was spectacular, reminding me how lucky we are to have a beautiful peak like Mt. Baker almost in our backyard.

While plastic telemark boots have in general been a wonderful thing, they have compounded the long-standing problem of using crampons with telemark gear. The various knobs, bumps and grooves which seem essential to their design all compound the difficulty of fitting crampons to tele boots. Back in Victoria I'd attempted to bend an old pair of crampons to fit my boots. I was a bit worried about the snow conditions we would find on the Roman Wall, since the misshapen results were so awkward and inconvenient to attach, I'd ended up taking my

chances and leaving them in the car. Luckily, apart from a few slick spots on the ridge at the base of the Roman Wall, the snow conditions were fine for step-kicking. Even better, the good weather was holding, although we were noticing that the clouds down in the valleys seemed to be creeping higher as the day progressed.

After the long plod across the summit plateau, we congregated on the summit bump, and spent some pleasant minutes taking in the sunshine and the views. Glacier Peak and Rainier poked up through the clouds to the south of us, Shuksan stood dramatically to the east, and our very own Canadian volcano was just visible above the clouds to the north. Eventually no-one could find any more reasons to delay descending, and we reluctantly abandoned our bump and headed back down to the col. After a short pause at the col for lunch, we strapped on the boards and started searching out some good lines. The snow conditions at first were perfect, a few inches of powder over a solid base. The only catch was that we quickly disappeared into the clouds, which by this time had completely socked in the bowl of the glacier. The next couple of hours were spent fighting our way through a complete whiteout, where we often had to stop and wait to ensure that everyone remained visible. Although

the route up had seemed short and completely straightforward, unrecognizable crevasses and ice cliffs kept looming up out of the mist. There were a multitude of ski tracks to follow, all of which were presumably going to the same destination that we were. However, we had a nagging feeling that one party had ascended from a camp down in the Coleman icefall, and the worry of being lured down into that crevasse field made us constantly second-guess our location.

At last we arrived at a spot where we recognized some rock features we had passed in the morning. The knowledge that camp was not far away allowed us to relax and enjoy some fine turns down the final slope of the glacier. Quickly tossing our gear in our packs, we bagged yet more turns until we finally ran out of snow altogether. After stomping out the trail in a drizzle, we hightailed it back to the ferry. If we'd been able to locate the secret border route, we might have made the last boat to Victoria, but as it was I was treated to my first experience with the notorious 11 pm sailing to Nanaimo. I suspect there was more than one of us who was late for work the next morning!

*Participants:* Claire Ebendinger (leader), Martin Davis, Mike Hubbard, Don Morton, Sylvia Moser, Josh Slatkoff, Tim Strange

## PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

Albert Hestler  
August 6 to 16

The trip was listed in the summer schedule as follows: "150 miles from Hood to Rainier; 12 miles per day and/or carrying leader." Maybe that last comment scared a lot of people from joining because when I called, only Larry had signed up. By his own admission, Larry joined because he wanted to find out what these marathon hikes are all about, how to do them, and whether he likes them. Gil would love to hike the whole length of the PCT from the Canadian to the Mexican border, approximately 2700 miles/4300 km. By hiking

this particular section, he has substantially completed the stretch through Washington State, i.e. about 500 miles, or 1/5 of the total mileage. I joined just a few days before the starting date, largely because other plans fell through; however, I have done some stretches on the Appalachian Trail as well as the Pacific Crest Trail, so am familiar with this kind of hiking. I am very glad that I was able to come along on this, possibly the most beautiful section of the PCT in the Pacific Northwest.

When I called to join, Gil was already somewhere

on the PCT adding mileage to his impressive list. So I spoke with Larry and we agreed that it would be nice to have a vehicle at trail's end on White Pass, especially as there is no bus service along this highway. We therefore traveled in two cars, leaving Larry's car at the ski lodge, then continued to Portland where we stayed at his mother's house. Gil, after having completed his first trip, also stayed in Portland at a friend's place. We connected on Sunday by telephone and made final arrangements. For one reason or another, Gil proposed, and we all agreed, to skip the first 35 miles and instead start at a road intersection near Panther Creek Camp. It was just as well because we found out later that there was active logging in the area and the PCT had been rerouted so that many miles had to be trod on roads – a most boring and uninteresting prospect. It still left about 112 miles/180 km of trail to be hiked. Gil's friend kindly drove us to the trailhead on Monday morning.

The trail description notes that the first part goes largely through forest. As a matter of fact, we spent the first five days in the woods, with only the occasional glimpse of Mt. Hood, and later Mt. Adams, through gaps in the trees. The trail winds through the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Indian Heaven Wilderness to the Mt. Adams Wilderness, past places with such names as Huckleberry Mountain, Big Lava Bed, Blue Lake, East Crater, Mosquito Creek, etc. They all seem to have some resonance in what we saw and experienced. E.g., the huckleberries and blueberries were ripening in abundance along the trail. Larry showed a remarkable knack, almost an obsessive zeal, for gathering these tasty treats while hiking, despite the information that the Indians have a special right to these berries, according to a 1932 handshake agreement between the Forest Supervisor and Chief Willie Yallup of the Yakima Indian Nation. We also thought that the bears wouldn't think too fondly of Larry if they found out, and that the bells he carried were more likely to alert these critters that lunch was approaching. We christened him 'Huckleberry Larry'.

One thing we hadn't anticipated was the shortage of reliable water sources. We almost ran out of this precious liquid on the very first day and were

already considering the implications of having to make a 'dry' camp. We were therefore greatly relieved to find a small trickle of water in a gully which, according to the guidebook, has "a fairly reliable spring ... which will probably be your last water until Sheep Lake 7.0 miles farther." We certainly paid more attention to the respective references in the guidebook afterwards. This first day also set the pattern for most of the following days; i.e., Gil and Larry would usually be ahead while I plodded behind at a somewhat slower pace. However, we would always 'take five' every hour which allowed me to catch up and assured everybody that we were still together on the right trail. By the time I arrived at the above-mentioned spring that first night, Gil and Larry had already picked a bare patch of ground to erect our tents. I remember remarking rather facetiously that, no doubt, there would be a proper campground half-a-mile down the trail. Guess what! We found a campground, with table and bench, after hiking only five minutes the next morning. This taught us another lesson; namely that where there is water there is usually a place to camp. It never failed for the remainder of the trip.

Gil's main concern seemed to be the weight of the packs we carried – and rightly so. It seems generally agreed by serious long-distance hikers that the base weight of one's pack should not exceed 25 lbs. Added to this load would be fuel and food (weighing 1 to 1.5 lbs per day, but diminishing as the trip progresses) plus a daily ration of water. As we had planned to be away for 12 days, a pack of 40 lbs seemed reasonable (and definitely more enjoyable!); however, the packs of Larry and myself weighed in at 50+ lbs, which was a bit of a grunt at first, though thankfully shrank to around 30 lbs at the trip's end. But 'Lightweight Gil' also introduced a few concepts which could be considered excessive; e.g., he measured the days' anticipated consumption of water in 'cups'. I took particular exception to his observation that my heritage ice axe, an old-fashioned model with wooden shaft, was a bit heavy (I used it as a walking stick while hiking, but I lent it to him when climbing Mt. Adams). I say, good man, there is such a thing as tradition – and that extends to concepts as well as

food and gear. One doesn't just discard an old friend (like my trusty ice axe) for a younger, sleeker and lighter model!

Speaking of food - there is, of course, always a discussion about what to bring, partly because of dietary requirements, partly because of space limitations in the pack, and partly because of the weight. While I have already conceded (see above) that weight is an important factor in these long-distance hikes, I don't believe in additionally subjecting my stomach to an unfamiliar change in diet. I recall the sage words of the guides of my youth that the time when one climbs mountains is not the time to experiment with food. In other words,

if the old body is used to sandwiches, sandwiches it shall get. Accordingly I carried three loaves of regular rye bread, not pumpernickel, which surprisingly lasted nine days (though by that time it was getting a bit moldy around the edges). After that it was Ryvita crackers, with variations of honey, beef jerky and fake cheese slices (made from Soya oil). For supper it was rice, powdered soup and pepperoni. By journey's end, Gil and Larry were heartily sick of their rehydrated mush which served for breakfast, lunch

and supper, and they greedily eyed my conventional goodies. It's amazing how living in the wilderness, even for a few days, makes one appreciate the simple things in life such as food which requires biting and chewing. I put it down to jealousy that they dubbed me the 'Sandwich Kid'.

No sooner had we started hiking when we met a couple who inquired if we were the "Three Amigos". Who? As it turned out, they were referring to three friends who had been on the trail since April, starting at the Mexican border. There is such a thing as the 'trail grapevine' and

accordingly everybody passes on information, including who is on the trail, whether ahead or behind. Most through-hikers are lone wolves, not always social, definitely very determined; it is rare, indeed, to find two hikers together; almost unheard of to find three. The rigours of travelling together for months on end puts tremendous stress on friendships, even relationships, and many do break up as a result. When the "Three Amigos" finally overtook us at the end of the second day on Blue Lake, we found them to be a congenial bunch of guys in their late twenties, sporting big bushy beards and wearing colourful Caribbean shirts. They had all



Albert & Larry near Mt. Adams. Photo: Gil Parker

gone to school together, but remained friends, though they were living in different places now. They were friendly and easy-going and didn't mind spending some time talking with us. They added one very important element to the never-ending subject of why people 'do' this trail: above all, it should be fun. They were all in favour of carrying bagels instead of gorp, and interrupting the trip now and then for a few beer. Maybe it was this attitude which held them together. Good for them! It certainly provided food for thought and discussion.



On the fifth day we finally emerged above the tree line in the alpine meadows of Mt. Adams. It was agreed that I would stay in 'base camp' at the junction of the Pacific Crest Trail and the 'Round the Mountain Trail' while Gil and Larry climbed Mt. Adams itself. Larry has written a separate account of this venture below. I enjoyed a rest day during which I undertook a short excursion to Looking Glass Lake. The alpine meadows were at their glorious best, with carpets of wildflowers everywhere. It was a pleasure to be there, to simply 'be', without having to cover a predetermined distance or reaching a certain goal. It's the ideal setting for recharging the rundown batteries and rejuvenating one's spirit. I spent two nights by myself, then Gil and Larry returned in time for breakfast on Sunday, the seventh day.

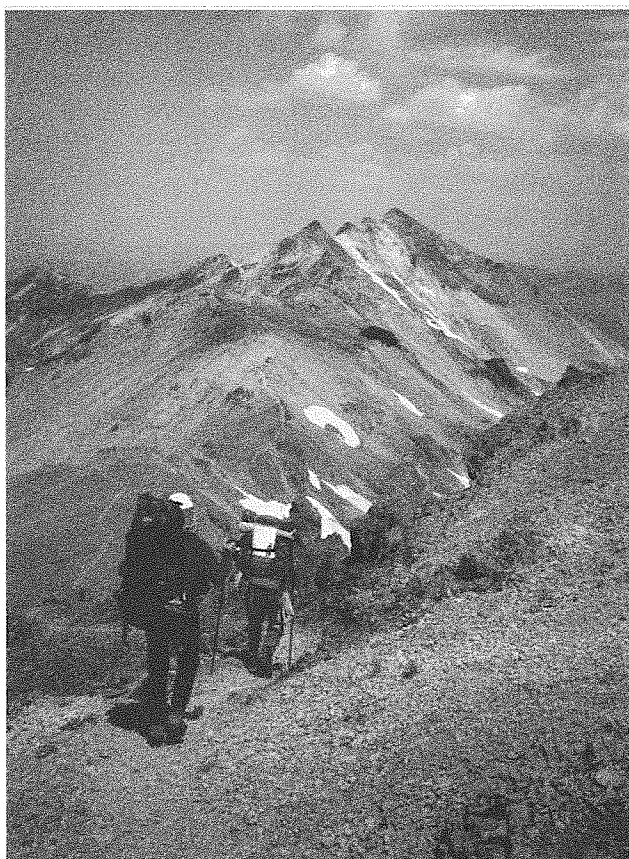
We contoured around Mt. Adams staying pretty well at the 6000' level. Excitement was provided by various river crossings, jumping over rocks or balancing on logs. The water level would rise and fall depending on the time of day. Some of the smaller streams dried up completely during the day, then started again late afternoon when the sun had melted the glaciers above. We camped at Killen Creek, a wonderful setting in an alpine meadow, with a lake nearby where we swam. In the evening we watched the sunset, the pink clouds reflected in the lake and Mt. Rainier silhouetted against the evening sky.

The next day we dropped down into the trees again. We ignored a sign which proclaimed 'detour' because somebody had added the notation 'not necessary for hikers'. The reason became soon obvious when we approached the Muddy Fork and realized that the bridge was no longer there. We contemplated the situation, whether to take the boots off and wade across or to chance a crossing over a series of unstable looking logs and pieces of 2x4's. I opted for the log crossing because of some reasons which don't seem very relevant in hindsight: I didn't have any sandals (definitely recommended!) and didn't fancy the thought of re-plastering x number of toes with moleskin. But it worked. By the time Gil and Larry had taken their packs off to retrieve their sandals, I was already on the other side. So they followed suit. A lone through-hiker whom we met the next day mentioned that he had to cross the river late in the afternoon and had difficulties because by then the water was

actually flowing over the logs. We continued and a short while later had lunch at the Lava Springs which was purported to have the best drinking water on the whole PCT between Mexico and Canada. It certainly was refreshing. After overnight camping on the shores of the seventh of "eight stagnant ponds" we skirted on high ridges around Walupt Lake to a high camp on Sheep Lake, already within the Goat Rocks Wilderness.

The next day, the 10<sup>th</sup> of our trip, was for me the most scenic and interesting section of the whole trip, largely because of its alpine character. One guidebook describes this area as follows: "Walk a rock garden between heaven and earth on a narrow, 7000' ridge dividing Eastern and Western Washington." The guide further heightens the anticipation by stating: "The trail follows the ridge ... The tread can be seen - blasted out of cliffs, gouged in scree slopes; in some places the crest of the ridge has actually been leveled off to give walking room. The next two miles are mostly above 7000', the highest Washington section of the Crest Trail and also the most dangerous. Meeting a horse party is bad business, because the horses cannot be turned around and thus hikers must backtrack to a safe turnout. Snowstorms can be expected in any month. Don't attempt this section in poor weather." Well, it certainly sounded promising - and we weren't disappointed.

The trail first climbs up to Cispus Pass (6460'), then drops down to a waterfall (5930'), and back up again across Snowgrass Flat with its beautiful alpine meadows to a rocky ridge (7080') just below Old Snowy Mountain. However, being on the South side of the Goat Rocks, there is very little snow to be seen. On the other side of the ridge, though, Packwood Glacier and other snowfields more aptly justify the mountain's name. The glacier crossing wasn't difficult, but the scree slopes above and below seemed very unstable.



Gil and Larry in Goat Rocks Wilderness.  
Photo: Albert Hestler

After reaching the ridge on the opposite side of Old Snowy, the trail indeed follows along the crest with airy views down either side; it passes around Egg Butte, then descends in a series of bumps over Coyote Ridge to Elk Pass. From

there it is pretty much 2500' straight down to Lutz Lake. Though not the longest in miles (12.5) this was the longest day in hours (9-3/4) and we were mighty glad when we could finally drop our packs. Though certain voices claim that it was my penchant for picture taking which accounted for the long day, I am more inclined to think that the scenery and the trail itself invited, nay necessitated, the many stops. It was simply a glorious day – and there aren't too many like it! The eleventh and last day was a straight-forward day of hiking over Tieton Pass and Hogback Ridge to White Pass on Highway 12 – 2000' up and 2700' down, or 12 miles in 7 hours. It was nice to have our car ready for the drive back to Portland, though it is a bit of a shock to step from 11 days in the wilderness to the rat race of driving on the I-5. What else is there to say? Statistics like total distance, miles per day, or days of sunshine are pretty immaterial in the end – it is the experience which lingers. The quiet of the forests; the gurgling of streams; the alpine meadows with their profusion in colour, their scent and the buzzing of insects; the layers of mountain ridges fading into the distance, punctuated by the stark cones of volcanoes like Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, St. Helen's, Mt. Rainier – we are indeed blessed having this opportunity at our doorsteps.

*Participants:* Gil Parker (leader), Larry Talarico , Albert Hestler

## SIDE TRIP TO MT ADAMS

Larry Talarico  
August 11

On Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, we turned East onto the 'Round the Mountain Trail' leaving Albert Hestler at the junction of the Pacific Crest Trail. From there we proceeded 6 miles to our base camp at the head of the Cold Springs access via Trout Lake. We camped by an almost non-existent stream at 3 pm only to find it in full rush by 4 pm, running with the glacier melt of that day. It was an early start due to very high daily temperatures, with

headlamps at 4 am up the South Climb Trail (Suksdorf Ridge) and on to the Lunch Counter. The trail up was used by donkey teams years ago to pack down sulfur from the top of the mountain. There must have been 50 tents up, and over the day 200 people on the mountain. We used crampons where possible and found ourselves outpacing people using the rock routes. Vertical gain of 6000 ft was accomplished in 6.75 hours. Gil's day was made when one of the young folks packing a

snowboard arriving behind us asked "Hey man, do you mind me asking just how old you are?" Gil's reply elicited a "Wow man!" We also beat them down the hill by quick glissading, and arrived back in camp by 3 pm. With the intense full sun all day we found it better to stay put that night, although

we had not brought much food, and to head back to the PCT junction the next day, meeting up with Albert. It was great to have done it and even greater for the young folk's respect.

*Participants:* Gil Parker, Larry Talarico

# DISTANT OBJECTIVES (ASIA, SOUTH AMERICA)

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## GETTING FLEECEED BY A HEADLESS SHEEP AND OTHER TRAVEL TALES

Rick Hudson

August, 2001

For reasons that are too complicated to explain here, I went to Kazakhstan last summer. You should have been there. No, really. You don't know where Kazakhstan is? Go look it up on the map, same as I did. I could tell you all about an amazing mountain festival ... the First International Khan Tengri (7,010m) Festival, to be exact ... which I attended. But I won't. Even though this is a mountaineering magazine.

Instead, I'm going to tell you about something much more interesting. But, before I do that, it might be an idea to clear up one or two minor details. Kazakhstan, for instance, used to be part of the old USSR. It's big. I mean, really, really big. As big as western Europe. And has barely 17 million people in the entire place. That's about the population of London on a weekend. The reason for this dearth of people becomes pretty obvious when you fly over the country. The landscape is bleak. Like the Sahara, but with the interesting bits missing.

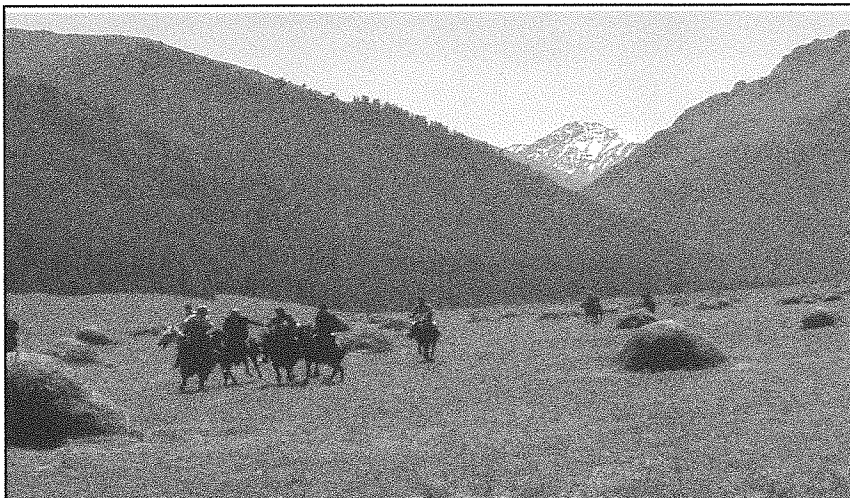
I should have guessed this when I met three Calgary oil men getting onto the plane in Frankfurt. I knew right away they were from Alberta. There was something about the Bow Valley ball caps and Flames jackets that made me suspect they were from 'back home,' or near enough to call home.

They were stunned to learn I was heading to scenic Kazakhstan for a holiday.

"A holiday?" One asked, incredulously. "No one goes there for a holiday!"

I nearly panicked and faked a twisted ankle climbing onto the Airbus. Instead I bluffed. "I'm going," I said more confidently than I felt, "to participate in a mountain festival. And watch a game of *kokpar*."

I knew right away I'd got 'em. No one knew what *kokpar* was, and none of them wanted to admit it.



In a meadow flanked by 4,000m peaks, a game of *kokpar* provides entertainment for Camp Akkol. Photo: Rick Hudson

If you don't understand why they didn't ask me, you must be female. Not asking questions is a 'guy thing.' Like starting wars. It's that Venus and Mars deal all over again. But I digress. As it turned out, I had a great time in Kazakhstan, but that's not the point. What I'm going to tell you

about is *kokpar*, because I know you want to hear what it is, and like them, you have no idea either.

It's a traditional Kazakh game, played on horseback (the Kazakhs are great horsemen). Two opposing teams of indefinite number line up at either end of a large meadow. You sense immediately it's going to be exciting. There are no helmets, no protective pads, no gloves. And everyone carries a whip.

At an agreed moment (there's also no referee), both teams charge towards the centre of the field, where a headless sheep lies on the ground. At full gallop, the two groups converge, split, break, turn, and they're off! Someone has the sheep and is heading down field! It's Ahmed Kareavich! He has possession .. he's swerving to the left .. but two of the opposition have caught up with him. One is whipping his horse ... one is whipping him! Now Andrey Andreyavich has the sheep .. there's a ruck ... both teams are surging around ... the sheep is on the ground ... but Rhinat Molkov has it.. no, Terson Aeev has stolen it in a breakaway up the field ...

If you're still having trouble imagining *kokpar*, then imagine a really ugly NHL game, where the bench-clearing brawl lasts 20 minutes each way. Replace the hockey sticks with whips. Make the puck weigh 35 kilos, and have it shaggy. Strike out all rules of normal engagement.

I think you're getting the hang of *kokpar*.

This is not a game for sissies. Players hit the grass and are over-ridden on a regular basis. A riderless horse bolts up and down the meadow, following the pack of swirling players, and adding a 'free agent' element to the play. Every now and then someone manages to get a good grip on the sheep (which usually means losing his grip on the reins) and surges down or up field, protected from the opposition by a cadre of his team mates. Since there are no uniforms, it's not always clear who is doing what, or to whom. The sheep is freshly killed, and bloody ... *basi zhok yeski* (sheep with no head) in Kazakh.

On the sidelines, there's furious betting on the individual players, the moves, the game, the sheep. Money flies. Who knows? I don't speak Kazakhi too well, but at one stage I'm 500 tenges up, then 2,500 down. The action's terrific, both on and off the field.

Forty minutes later, it's over. Amid loud cries and much back-slapping, everyone retires to a *yurt* to drink vodka and recap the play-by-play. I'm the equivalent of 45 cents down, but I should complain ... it looks like the American Ambassador is over a dollar out.

But, what's money at a time like this? I wish you could have been there.

## TREKKING IN THE TIEN SHAN OF CENTRAL ASIA

Rick Hudson

August, 2001

The great mountain ranges of Central Asia merge so imperceptibly into one another that it is difficult for the ordinary traveler not to regard them as one stupendous mass extending from the middle basin of the Yangtse-kiang in the east to the Hindu Kush and even beyond into Persia - a continuous stretch of three thousand miles. '*Upon that mountain*', Eric Shipton 1943.

Ever since I read those lines as a boy, I have wanted to venture into that magical region. Imagine a range over 5,000 km long, and in places over 1,000 km wide. And all of it closed politically to western climbers! Of course, there were other mountains, and other places, but always, at the back of my mind, lay the awareness of that massive line of peaks and glaciers and lonely valleys, remote and alluring, like some Shangri La, waiting for the day when I could follow in the steps of Tilman, Shipton, Fleming, Abruzzi and

Merzbacher. Marco Polo had walked within sight of them. Tamerlane had swept all before him along their slopes. Ghengis Khan, crossing a lonely pass, had commanded every man to place a stone at the divide, before proceeding. On his return, he ordered every man to take away a stone. By counting those left, he knew how many warriors he had lost.

Part of this magnificent range is the Tien Shan (meaning 'Celestial Mountains' in Chinese), stretching a paltry 2,800 km from Mongolia in the east, to the Pamirs in the west. Within that span, two 7,000m peaks thrust their heads above the others. Pik Pobeda (Victory Peak) is the higher, at 7,439m, although the honour of being the tallest summit was only established during a 1943 survey. Prior to that, the more impressive Khan Tengri ('Lord of the Spirits'), at 7,010m was considered the highest summit. Visible from many angles on the steppes, Khan Tengri is a mountain's mountain - a perfect pyramid of rose-coloured limestone, surrounded by awesome glaciers and icefields.

From an outsider's point of view, the Tien Shan is so complex and overwhelming that it is difficult to know where to start. It places the potential visitor in the same quandary as when first visiting the Himalayas or Rockies. Add the complication that the language of commerce in Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan is Russian, which the average visitor can neither read nor understand, and your challenge is complete.

The simplest method of making a reconnaissance is to use a tour company. We chose AsiaTour for a variety of reasons, not the least being the name of its owner. Rhinat Khaibullin is probably Kazakhstan's most famous mountaineer. Now 40, in earlier years he has led expeditions and opened new routes on peaks in the Pamirs and Himalayas (including a 30-day new direct on the South Face of Lhotse in 1990). The company understands western climbers and their needs, and has the added benefit of a fleet of vehicles and helicopters, plus three strategically placed base camps (more of which later).

My son Peter (20) and I chose to start with an



The Tien Shen foothills provide spectacular hiking at the 2,000 – 3,000m level, amid trackless flower – filled alpine country. Photo: Rick Hudson

acclimatization trek, prior to going to Khan Tengri. The so-called 'foothills' vary from 2,500m to 3,500m, with a few passes somewhat higher. We felt this would provide good training, prior to flying to the permanent base camp on the north arm of the Inulchuk Glacier (4,200m). That glacier, incidentally, is the longest in the Tien Shan, stretching over 65 km. Its immense length prevented the early German mountaineer Gottfried Merzbacher from even reaching the foot of Khan Tengri in 1902, during what was likely the first serious attempt to climb the peak. He did, however, get close. "Tien-Shan," he wrote in his diary, "is no place for mountaineering entertainment." It was only in 1931 that the Ukrainian alpinist M. Pogrebetskiy succeeded from the south arm of the glacier, using what has become the classic route today.

A 4WD van dropped our guide, cook and the two of us at the roadhead in the Tekes Valley, in SE Kazakhstan, in early August. There, we met our packer with two horses. After suitable juggling, we crossed the fast flowing river on horseback. Thereafter the animals were relegated to equipment carrying, and we proceeded with day packs only, on foot. During the first day we saw a number of *chaban* (local Kazakh herders) and a sprinkling of *yurts* (circular felt tents used for summer camping). Then the clusters of spruce dropped behind. Dwarf juniper and alpine meadows stretched ahead. For the next week we were not to see another person.

The daily ritual was to wake early, and eat well. Leaving the pack horses to follow, we would set out on anything from a 6 to 10 hour day of walking. The valleys were broad and gentle, reminding me of



the Scottish Cairngorms or the Rockies' foothills. The entire region was carpeted in a brilliant display of alpine flowers, so that at times we waded through flora thigh-deep, grateful we had no allergies.

The weather was mostly clear (July & August are reported to be the best trekking months). However, one night we experienced a spectacular electric storm that had been brewing all afternoon, and broke at dusk. Flashes of lightning, followed by pounding thunder claps made us all too aware of our exposed position on the tree-free upper slopes of a valley, at 2,800m. After a while, I grew tired of counting the delay between flash and thunder, and calculating the storm's approach. But when it was less than 2 km away, the heavens opened, and the thunder was mercifully drowned out by the roar of rain on the tautly pitched tents. Later that night we emerged under a clear sky to discover it had not been rain, but hail, that had caused the deafening cacophony! Five centimetres of freshly fallen stones lay, like snow, in the moonlight.

On the fourth day we crossed a pass and saw for the first time, to the south, the snow-covered pyramid of Khan Tengri, standing against a cloud-tossed sky. Although over 40 km away, its huge north face dropped steeply from the summit, disappearing below an intervening ridge. It was an impressive introduction to the range's major attraction, and we looked forward to flying into the camp under that face a day or two later.

This might be a good place to mention the anomaly surrounding Khan Tengri's height. It is variously reported as being 6,995m, and elsewhere as 7,010m. There is a temptation to believe that some promoter must be 'pushing' the official height to get the mountain into the 7,000 metre club, where its status as a peak might be greater (viz: the Fletschhorn near Saas Fe, which was 3993m, and was 'improved' to over 4,000m in order to attract a very substantial number of climbers who were on the '4,000m circuit'). Not so. The lower height is the surveyed altitude of the rock beacon, the 7,010m height is the summit cornice.

Arriving at AsiaTour's base camp at Akkol, set in rolling green meadows, we enjoyed the luxury of a hot shower, a mess hall with staff serving three large meals a day, and infinite amounts of Russian tea. There was also the chance to fly in a big ex-military helicopter. This makes a daily trip (weather permitting) between Akkol and the company's North and South Inulchuk Base Camps.

The flight was memorable for many reasons, not the least because of a happy absence of seatbelts, and windows that opened, allowing climbers to hang out, photograph passing peaks, and discuss potential lines up faces! North Inulchuk Glacier (4,200m) was a different world: a land of snow, and that huge North Face of Khan Tengri brooding just 2 km away across the ice.

The peak's standard north route follows a narrow, steep ridge up a lesser peak (Chapaev) to 5,800m, before descending 300m to a saddle, where it joins the classic route from the South Inulchuk Glacier. There are two semi-flat spots on the lower ridge that will accommodate a number of tents. Higher up, the saddle (5,500m) provides a third camp. Most parties choose to put a fourth camp at about 6,400m before making a summit bid. At the start of every climbing season, AsiaTour's guides fix ropes up most of the steeper sections. In this way, the peak, although technically difficult and high, can be tackled by intermediate climbers seeking a challenging (but not logistically demanding) summit.

It is therefore a popular venue. In the 2000 season, 53 professional climbers and 227 amateurs attempted the peak, with 79 reaching the top. There was one fatality. By comparison, Pobeda Peak (7,439m) remained unclimbed. The standard route up Pobeda (from the South Inulchuk Base Camp) involves an exposed high altitude traverse that is sensitive to snow conditions and high winds from the east.

Khan Tengri's appeal, combined with the start of the First Khan Tengri International Mountaineering Festival, meant there was an eclectic collection of climbers present, from over 30 nations, with a babble of languages in the mess tent at night.

A number of festival 'events' had been planned: the great alpinist Vladimir Karataev (47) hoped to paraglide from the summit, but due to high winds, was forced to jump from Camp Two (5,600m). A strong team of Kazakh climbers led by Denis Urubko (27) scaled the North Face in eight days, with a new direct variation on the upper section. Remarkably, a hot air



balloon was inflated on the glacier, but fickle winds limited its use. Further, weather instability caused the cancellation of both the Slovenian team's plan to ski from the summit (led by Iztok Tomazin), and Russia's Valery Babanov's solo ascent of the North Face.

The grand finale of the mountain festival did take place, however. Building on the tradition of a remarkable race from the South Inulchuk Glacier to the summit in 1993, organized by the Kyrgystan Sports Federation, and won by the late Alex Lowe (USA), a new challenge had been proposed. Under the aegis of the Kazakhstan Central Sports Club of the Army and sponsored by AsiaTour, seven competitors started at 6:30 am on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, to race from Base Camp (4,200m) over Peak Chapaev (5,800m) to the Saddle (5,500m) and the summit of Khan Tengri (7,010m). And back.

From the comfort of Base Camp we watched as the figures moved, ant-like, up the fixed ropes before disappearing beyond Chapaev. Later, a large powder avalanche swept the North Face. Although not a danger to the climbers on the ridge, it stressed the difficulty and danger caused by the 15 cm of new snow that had fallen overnight.

As the last slanting rays of the sun lit the glacier, Almaty-based local climber Denis Urubko crossed the finish line near the Camp in the incredible time of 12:21. He carried two ski poles and a fannypack, and wore a lightweight jacket, tights and borrowed boots. The second man came in three hours later, and the third contestant another two hours after that. The remaining competitors found shelter where they could at various camps on the mountain.

North faces of Khan Tengri (7,010m) on the left, Peak Chapaev (5,800m) on the right. The standard route (used by the competitors) runs directly from the photographer up the ridge to of Chapaev (2 camps), and then follows near the skyline (2 more camps) to Khan Tengri's summit. Glacier Base Camp is just visible in the foreground, and was twice hit by powder avalanches off Khan Tengri's north face.

Photo: Rick Hudson

There were further celebrations at Akkol Base Camp some days later. In the warmth of green grass and spruce trees, local girls sang traditional songs accompanied on two stringed lutes, there was more paragliding and hot air ballooning, and copious quantities of vodka drunk in traditional style. But the crowning event had to be a game of *kokpar*, in which two teams of mounted riders battled for possession of a headless sheep. This is not a sport for the squeamish. It makes the NHL look pretty tame.

*Travelling to Kazakhstan.* Kazakhstan is huge -- about the size of Western Europe, but with less than 17 million inhabitants. It came under the sphere of influence of the Russian czars in the 1850s, and later the USSR after 1917. It gained independence in 1991 and is today a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Although its economy has declined steadily in recent years, it lacks the uncertainty, crime and fundamentalist undercurrents of its southerly neighbours. To enter the country, visitors need a 'visa invitation' from a host association (such as AsiaTour), after which a visa may be bought at the Kazakhstan embassy in Washington or Toronto (the latter is cheaper). AsiaTour has a useful website at [www.asiatour.com](http://www.asiatour.com). There are numerous airlines serving Almaty (airport symbol ALA), the starting point for the Tien Shan. They include BA, KLM, Lufthansa, Aeroflot, China Air and others.

## TREKKING AND CLIMBING IN THE KHUMBU

Don Morton

Following a successful ascent of Aconcagua in January 2001 and the start of my retirement, I looked for further climbing opportunities.

I responded to an ad in the *American Alpine Journal*, paid \$7250 U. S. and joined the International Lhotse Expedition led by Gary Pfisterer. However, at my age of 67 at the time, this low-budget expedition to climb this 8516 m peak without Sherpas or bottled oxygen turned out to be a little too ambitious for me. Nevertheless, it was a wonderful opportunity to follow the classic Nepal route on Everest and learn how such peaks are climbed nowadays.

Our expedition consisted of eleven members - seven from the United States, two from Ecuador, one from Britain and myself from Canada. We gathered in Kathmandu at the end of March. The Nepalese capital is a fascinating combination of narrow streets, Hindu and Buddhist shrines, open-air markets, automatic bank machines and internet cafes. Much climbing gear, new and used, and a wide variety of expedition food except freeze-dry meals are available in the Kathmandu shops.

We met our local agent, Murari Sharma, who took us to the office of Tourism Administration to collect our climbing permit. For an 8000 m peak, the Nepalese government charges \$10 000 U. S. for a team of 7 or fewer climbers and \$1500 for each additional one up to a maximum of 12 (Mt. Everest is a special case with a fee of \$50 000 for the first 7, \$10 000 for addition members with the same limit of 12, and a surcharge of \$20 000 for the normal route on the south-east ridge). Each expedition also must include a liaison officer from the Nepalese army or civil service and pay him \$1200 U. S. for equipment, \$300 for travel and \$6 per day. The only time we saw our officer was at the Tourism office.

Normally Khumbu climbers fly from Kathmandu directly to Lukla. However, in the spring of 2001 we had to switch at Phaplu from a Dehaviland Twin Otter to a helicopter because the Lukla airstrip was being paved. The Canadian-built Otter has proven itself for many years in the rugged Nepalese geography. At one time on April 2 there were four

on the ground at Phaplu bringing in climbers and trekkers.

The next morning we began the six-day trek to the Everest base camp, stopping each night at one of the many lodges enroute for meals and beds. Using the comfortable inexpensive facilities along this well-traveled route was preferable to unpacking our tents and cooking gear each night. Prices ranged from 50 to 250 rupees for a bed and 400 to 1000 for two meals, increasing as we climbed higher because everything had to be carried in (\$1.00 Cdn = 44 Rs). Many parties just trekking to the Base Camp or heading for a trekking peak did have Sherpas and porters to pitch tents and prepare meals. However, it is equally feasible to for a trekker to travel very lightly on the popular routes with only a summer-weight sleeping bag, some warm clothing and a ski pole.

Our first day from Lukla took us 350 m down to the Dudh Koshi river, back and forth across sturdy suspension bridges, into Sagarmatha National Park at Monju, where soldiers checked our permit, and up the steep trail to Namche Bazar around 3450 m. This market town, built on a steep hillside, is the largest in the Khumbu and has internet access. There was much new construction here and elsewhere in the valley by skilled stone masons to meet the needs of all the travelers.

High above the Dudh Koshi on the second day, we had our first view of spectacular Ama Dablam (6814 m) and beyond to the south face of Lhotse and Everest with its snow plume. We descended 200 m to cross the river at Phunki Drenga before climbing to the famous Tengboche Monastery at 3860 m. It has been completely rebuilt since a fire in 1989. To the south were the ice-covered Thamserku (6818 m) and Kang Tega (6783 m). We continued through a rhododendron forest beside the tributary Imja Drengka river to stay the night at Dewoche.

On the third day we trekked through Pangboche to Pheriche at 4280 m, where there is a high-altitude medical clinic which provides advice on acclimatization. The next morning Gary and the 33 yaks carrying our gear passed us on their way to Base Camp. Many of our team chose to spend a

second night at Pheriche while I continued to Duglha at 4600 m at the lower end of the debris-covered Khumbu Glacier. I hiked along the west side on the fifth day through Lobuche to the last village of Gorak Shep at 5170 m. From here many trekkers hike up to Kalapathar at 5545 m, a shoulder on Pumori (7165 m), for a view of Everest (8860 m) and Nuptse (7864 m). I preferred to go directly to Base Camp on the sixth morning and was pleased to have almost as good a view from the moraine just before descending to the glacier.

The Everest base camp is spread over a broad area around 5400 m on the north side of the Khumbu Glacier where it makes a sharp turn from flowing north west to south west. There were more than a hundred small tents and many larger ones pitched on the rock-covered ice and prayer flags above them strung from high poles. Many expeditions were well equipped with folding tables and chairs, generators for electric lights and internet links, and the kitchen sink. Our team did have chairs, but our table was simpler, consisting of three-metre square

plywood sheets resting on a rock platform and we depended on candles and a kerosene lantern for light. Boiling the drinking water was essential, but the camp was clean because each team had to burn or carry out all waste or lose a substantial deposit. Our cook Sange and his helper Pemba produced excellent meals with food purchased in Kathmandu or Namche. For the higher camps Gary issued each climber with his share of the mountain food, much of which had come from the United States.

The Khumbu icefall began only 10 minutes above our camp. Since so many groups needed a dependable route, each one contributed about \$260 U. S. per climber to pay a team of Sherpa "Icefall Doctors" to install fixed ropes and ladders and maintain the route while the whole mass flows down about a metre a day. The 10-mm ropes were secured to ice screws about every 50 m. With a running carabiner on the rope where a ladder crossed crevasses and other dangerous places, or a jumar on a vertical section, it was easy to travel solo through the icefall. I found my first couple of trips there rather fun, but gradually we all began to think more about the risks. It was disturbing to see large ice blocks on top of a section of fixed rope which had been part of the route a day or so earlier. The ropes beside the ladders provided no lateral support as one tried to bridge a crampon over adjacent rungs. Balance was particularly critical where two or three of the two-metre ladders were lashed together. I counted 26 ladders to Camp I at 6000 m and four more on the route to Camp II at 6400 m. Altogether there were 13 multiple ones.

On April 30, during my fourth climb through the icefall, I was surprised to meet a large team of Sherpas evacuating a body. Later I learned that it was Babu Chiri, a very famous Sherpa, who was leading a party on Everest.



Khumbu Ice Fall

Photo: Don Morton

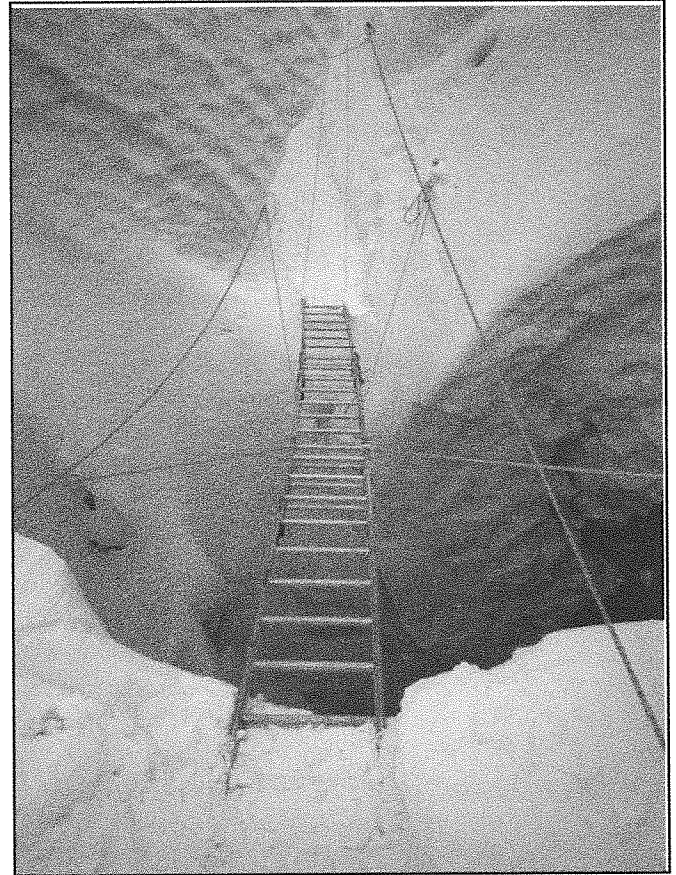
In previous years he had climbed the mountain 10 times, had once spent 21 hours on the summit without supplemental oxygen, and another time had set the record by climbing there from Base Camp in 16 hours and 56 minutes. Late the previous afternoon he had fallen into a unsuspected crevasse close to his tent at Camp II, presumably while taking photos from various locations.

Above Camp II the route on the Lhotse face is the same for the two peaks to Camp III around 7300 m. From there the Everest climbers bear left beside the Geneva Spur to their Camp IV on the South Col about 7900 m. The normal route on Lhotse continues to a Camp IV at a similar altitude on the face and then through the rocks by a narrow snow gully to the summit. The climbing teams are responsible for fixing the ropes on these sections. The usual practice on such high mountains is to spend most of the time acclimatizing by resting, eating and drinking at Base Camp or sometimes Camp II with quick trips to the higher camps to carry loads and develop the route. Thus it was convenient to leave a sleeping bag and down clothing at Camp II and have duplicates at the Base.

I reached Camp II on April 20 and again on May 2, but unlike many of the younger climbers, never had the energy to go all the way from Base to Camp II in one day. On my second visit I climbed to the top of the Western Cwm about 6650 m on two successive days. This was a spectacular place surrounded by Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse. However, at my age I was moving slower than my team mates so that I found that I was travelling alone most of the time. Since I wanted to be certain to have enough residual strength to bring myself safely back to Base Camp, I concluded that the Western Cwm was a sensible limit for me on Lhotse. I reached Camp I in an afternoon snowstorm, spent the night there, and descended the icefall the next day as snow continued falling.

During the first three weeks of May four other members of our expedition, as well as myself, trekked back to Lukla. A break in a period of stormy weather permitted Jay Sieger and 19-year-old Tom Moores to climb to Camp IV for a summit attempt. The next morning, May 21, Jay was

unwell and descended to Camp III and the next day continued to Base with the help of Tony Tonsing. Tom climbed to the summit with a Polish team. However on the descent his crampons balled with snow causing him to fall 100 m down the Lhotse face before self arresting. Fortunately Simon Moro from Italy was able to bring him to Camp IV for the night. Sherpas helped him to Camp II the next day and Gary guided him down the icefall the third day. A helicopter carried him to Kathmandu and an



Ladder in Kumbu Ice Fall

Photo Don Morton

air ambulance to Bangkok for treatment of respiratory problems and serious frostbite.

I was disappointed not to go higher on Lhotse, but it was a marvelous experience for me in a magnificent part of the world.



## ACONCAGUA 2001

Tony Vaughn  
January

My first sight of our mountain, the highest peak in the Americas at 22,841', was as we were coming in to land at Santiago airport, Tuesday morning January 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 am. Aconcagua was silhouetted against the skyline to the east, standing out above the other mountains.

After a day in Santiago, we traveled by colectivo (a minivan) to Mendoza, leaving behind the fertile valleys of Central Chile. We followed the abandoned trans-Andean railway up huge switchbacks that snaked up the mountainside and carried us ever higher into the desert country of the high Andes. At the Chile/Argentina border, a tip for customs and immigration ensured us a speedy clearance. After travelling through a broad, windswept valley, we reached the beautiful tree-lined streets of Mendoza. Here we purchased food and fuel (benzina blanca) and our climbing permit - \$US 160.

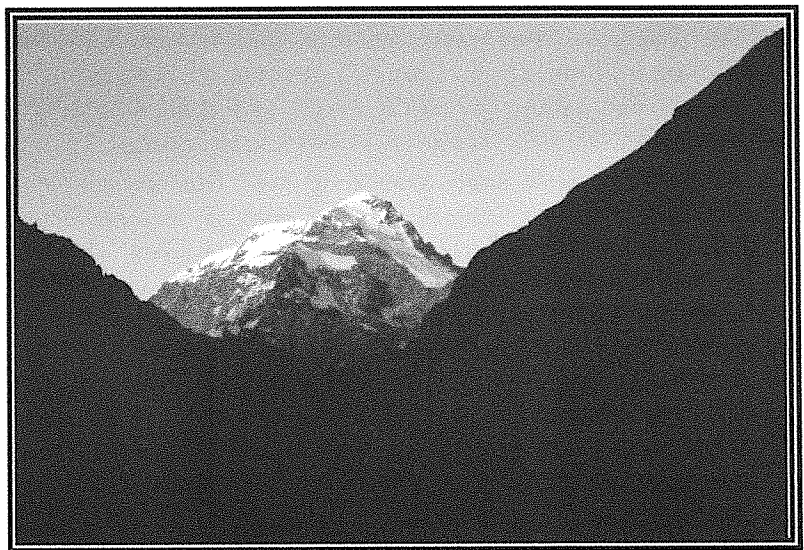
From Mendoza we traveled with all our gear up to the ski village of Penitentes at 8200' where we spent two days. We started our acclimatization with a hike up to the ridge behind the hotel. At 10,300' it was lower than Mt Baker, but still pretty tiring, particularly the rock scramble to reach the cairn on top of the ridge. The following day we visited Cristo Redentor, a large statue of Christ built in 1904 to commemorate the signing of the border treaty between Chile and Argentina by Edward VII in 1902. The statue is adjacent to the old road which runs through la Cumbre pass at 12,500'. This road is no longer in use since the tunnel was built lower down. On the way back we visited the impressive natural bridge at Puente del Inca and paid our respects at the Andinista Cemetery. That evening we sorted and packed our gear in 30 kg duffles in preparation for the start of the 45 km trek into base camp the next day. The total weight of gear for the 6 of us was 216 kg. Thank God for mules!

We left the trailhead at just after 11 am arriving at our first camp at Las Lenas at

about 4 pm in a rain squall. We had already been overtaken by the mule train carrying all our gear. We registered here with the park rangers and were given our garbage bags. There would be a \$US100 fine if these bags were not returned filled with our garbage. Coming into this, our first camp, we saw the second of the several medical evacuations we would see. This was a very sick looking guy being taken out on the back of a mule. The first was back in Penitentes, a helicopter evacuation from Base Camp, a result of respiratory infection. We were woken during the night by a large rock fall from the cliffs across the river. It was well worth the disturbance because the sky was fantastic, crammed full of millions of stars.

Our second day of hiking through a broad stony valley following the Vacas River brought us after 6 hours to Casa Piedra, at 10,500'. It is located at the end of the Relinchos Valley up which we had to make our way the following day to reach Base Camp at Plaza Argentina. The view up the valley to Aconcagua was superb with the mountain standing out huge and clear at its end.

The next morning Rick left us to make his way back to Penitentes while the rest of us crossed the river on mules to start the final hike into Base Camp. We slowly worked our way up the valley, crossing back and forth across the river (one crossing resulted



Aconcagua from the Relinches Valley. Photo: T Vaughn



in me losing a hiking pole and almost getting a good soaking), until we reached a high hanging valley. Aconcagua was getting gradually closer, the sparse spiky vegetation giving way to rock and gravel. We had a wonderful surprise and met Katherine Brandt-Wells and other members of the IDEA 2000 party who were on their way out after a successful climb of the mountain via the False Polish Glacier route. They all looked extremely happy to be heading back to civilization. At long last we arrived at Plaza Argentina, 4200 m., and the moraine on which Base Camp is situated: a dry barren rock-strewn moraine dotted with colourful tents.

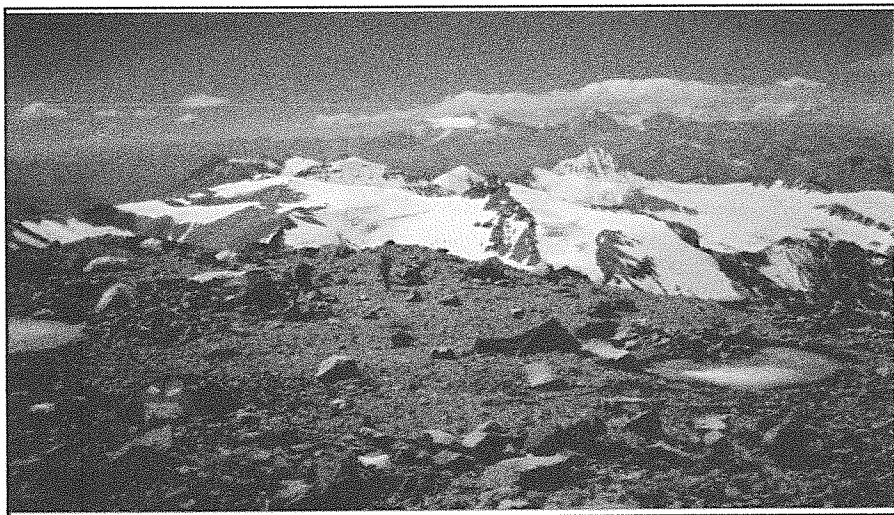
The following was a rest day which was spent sorting gear and hiking up the trail toward camp1, to get a little acclimatization. The next day we took another acclimatization hike up to a col at 17,000', although I didn't go all the way as I was coughing a lot and generally feeling weak. Healthwise we were mostly doing okay though I had an irritating cough as a result of a cold picked up on the plane, and Charles was suffering from headaches. Sylvia, Mike, and Don were feeling fine. When we were at base camp, a helicopter came almost every day to evacuate injured or ill climbers. They now have a doctor at base camp during peak season.

The next day marked the 12<sup>th</sup> of our trip and the 6<sup>th</sup> since we had left the trailhead. It was also the day that we started moving gear up the mountain. We had decided not to go for the Polish Glacier route, and instead to do the False Polish. The only route that was in shape and being done was the 'Polish Direct'. We didn't feel up to the 50 - 60 degree ice on this route so we decided to leave our technical gear at Base Camp and just carry up ice axes and crampons. After sorting the food and gear we'd need for the next 8 days, we slogged up the scree slopes for our first carry to Camp 1 at 16,400', gasping into camp at 3:30 pm. It was hard work at this altitude, particularly on the steep scree below Camp 1 where one was constantly sliding back with each forward step. It gets bitterly cold here as soon as the sun goes down. The

weather up to now had been sunny and warm most days but the constant wind had kept the temperature tolerable, though it also made it extremely dry. Most days it clouded up around 4 pm. It was Mike's birthday today so we had fruit cake to celebrate after we got back to Base Camp.

We moved up to Camp 1 the next day, this time passing through the penitentes, except Don who chose to fight the scree slopes again. It was still hard work but at least one step forward got you a step higher instead of slipping back half the step. We had our last fresh fruit for lunch. It got very windy just as we got our tents up, and without the sun's warmth it was painfully cold. We got into our sleeping bags early that night and left the dinner dishes for the next day after the sun came up. It blew hard all night and we didn't get much sleep.

Day 14 we took a rest day spent variously hiking, reading, writing and resting - whatever we felt up to. Day 15 we did a carry up to Camp 2 at the foot of the Polish Glacier. This is a big elevation gain for this altitude - 16,400 to 19,200ft. It took us 5 ½ hours to get up, you don't go fast up here, and 1 hour back down to Camp 1 slipping and sliding on the scree. Camp 2 is a bleak and desolate place and being on the rubble-covered toe of the glacier, many of the tent sites are half filled with meltwater or ice. Fantastic views from here though, as it is above



Aconcagua Camp 2

Photo: Tony Vaughn

most of the other surrounding mountains and the evening lightning displays in the east are quite spectacular.

The following day we moved up to Camp 2 leaving behind extra food and fuel at Camp 1, trying to reduce our load to the bare minimum. It didn't go any faster, still 5 ½ hours gasping all the way, the wind blowing relentlessly. None of us was eating very much as it's hard to get solid food down the throat. Liquids go down best. The next day was a rest day at Camp 2, spent in the usual way.

Summit day, day 19, the 13<sup>th</sup> day since leaving the trailhead. Up at 3 am and out into a bitterly cold early morning. I was having trouble breathing, particularly in the wind, so decided to go no higher. The others left just after 4 am but soon returned having been unable to find a route through the ice field in the dark. They left again at first light, no success today. One by one they returned having run out of time, the last one getting back at 7:45 pm. Mike and Sylvia had made it to within 500 ft of the summit. It was a quiet meal and into the sleeping bags. Charles, Mike and Don decided they would make another attempt on the summit the following day. Sylvia and I would go down to base camp taking with us all the spare gear.

The summit group left the next morning at 4:30 am, another bitterly cold morning. Sylvia and I left at 2 pm after a leisurely morning packing. An hour before we left, Charles came back into camp. He had made it to just under 22,000 ft before turning around. Being too tired to go back down he decided to rest at Camp 2, and wait for the other two who were still going up.

After an uneventful trip we arrived back at Base Camp. We felt wonderful, lots of energy, great appetite, and finally a full night's sleep. Next day Sylvia and I went back up to Camp 1 with empty packs to meet the others and help carry down the rest of the gear we'd left there. It was quite late by the time the others got down to Camp 1, very tired after a long epic-filled summit day but both Don and Mike had made it. Our trip was a success, "two

out of six to the summit ain't bad." Talking to other parties, it seems like a 30% success rate on this side of the mountain is the going rate. We headed back down to the relative safety of base camp.

The following day we packed our gear for the mules



Don Morton on the Summit of Aconcagua

Photo: Don Morton

to haul everything back to the trailhead. We decided to get out in two days instead of the three it took us to get in. It was a long haul to Pampa de Lenas, crossing the Relinchos Creek three times with difficulty because it was much higher than normal, though the Rio Vacas which we had crossed on mules coming in, was easily crossed on foot. The last night on the trail resulted in a bivouac at Pampa de Lenas which we reached at 9 pm in the dark. The mule train had not left our gear here; they'd gone right through to the trailhead, so it was potato soup and beer in the Concession tent, and sleeping on the concrete floor in the Park Ranger's hut. We had coffee with the Park Ranger in the morning and were out to the trailhead by 1:30 pm. What a wonderful feeling after cleaning off 16 days dirt and grime to finally relax and gorge ourselves on food and drink and sleep in a comfortable bed..



Team 2001: Don Morton, Sylvia Moser, Tony Vaughn. Mike Hubbard, Charles Turner , and Rick Eppler.

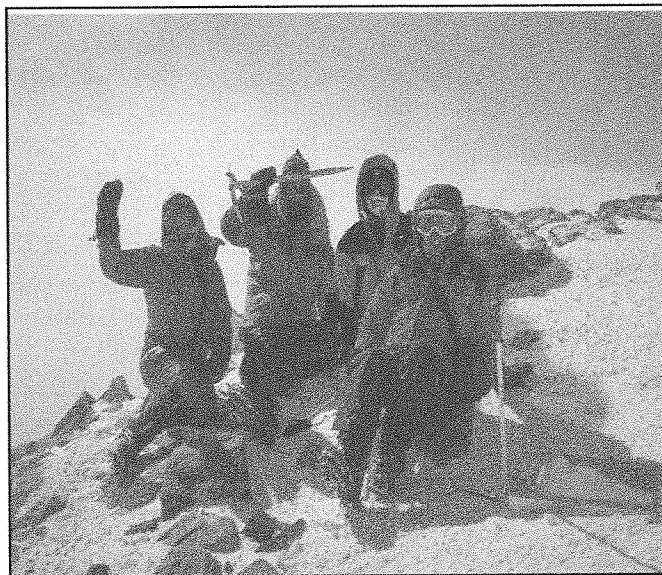
#### ADDENDUM

For those of us who did not summit there would always be questions. So, Sylvia Moser, Charles Turner and I, accompanied this time by Selena Swets, left again on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002, filled with hope of success this time. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002, after a long hard struggle with the mountain, we stood by the cross on the highest point in the Americas

Team 2002; Tony Vaughn, Charles Turner, Sylvia Moser, and Selena Swets, successfully reached the



Tony Vaughn after the summit. Photo: Charles Turner



summit of Aconcagua

## DIABETIC CLIMBERS BAG ACONCAGUA

David Panofsky

Jan 12

The 19-member IDEA 2000 team successfully placed seven diabetic climbers, including Katharine Brandt-Wells of the Vancouver Island Section of the ACC, on the summit of the Western Hemisphere's highest peak, Cerro Aconcagua (6959 m) on January 12, 2001.

The international expedition, which was made up of members from six different countries, began assembling in Mendoza, Argentina on December 26, 2000. Dr. Jordi Admetlla, IDEA 2000 lead physician and researcher from Catalunya-Spain and member of the Barcelona-based Institut d'Estudis de Medicina de Muntanya, spent the next three days pleading with Argentine customs authorities to release a cargo shipment of medical supplies and first-aid kits for the expedition held up in customs.

On December 30, 2000, the entire expedition, transporting more than 1300 kg of supplies with the help of pack mules, began a 3-day trek towards base camp. New Year's Eve was celebrated at Casa de Piedra, a campsite located at the confluence of the Vacas and Relinchos rivers. On January 1, 2001 the expedition reached base camp at Plaza Argentina at 13,700 feet (4200 m). On January 4, 2001 summit team members made a first carry to Camp 1 (5000 metres) and spent a windy night at Camp 1 on January 6. Camp 2 (5900 metres) was reached on January 7, yet not established until January 11 due to poor weather.

The summit was reached on January 12, 2001 in the early afternoon after more than ten hours of climbing above Camp 2 in sub-zero degree Fahrenheit conditions with strong winds by ten out of eleven expedition members via the Falso de los Polacos route. Diabetic mountaineers Doug Bursnall (Wales), Lisa Seaman (USA), Marco Peruffo (Italy), Vittorio Casiraghi (Italy), Chris Meloche (USA), Katherine Brandt-Wells (Canada), and Emilio Valés (Spain) reached the summit. David Panofsky (USA) turned back 600 feet from the summit due to factors unrelated to his diabetes. Also reaching the summit were the non-diabetics Jordi Admetlla (Spain, expedition doctor), Greg Ritchie (USA, videographer), and Bob Manwell

(USA, public affairs manager).

Diabetic climbers Peruffo, Seaman, Casiraghi, and Panofsky rested January 13, 2001 at Camp 2 while other successful summit members made their way to base camp with extremely heavy loads after moving gear from Camps 1 and 2. On January 14, 2001 the four who remained at Camp 2 departed at 4 am for the Polish Glacier and formed two rope teams. The four were poised for reaching the summit via the Polish Direct route, until a radio call from the climbers alerted base camp that weather was deteriorating, and conditions were dangerous to continue. The four made a hasty descent to their tents at Camp 2 for a cold and snowy night. Panofsky, Seaman, Casiraghi and Peruffo returned the following day to base camp. The entire expedition permanently left base camp on January 16, 2001.

Part of expedition members' daily routine throughout the expedition - beginning and ending in Mendoza - was recording data for the research effort coordinated by Dr. Admetlla. Each expedition member recorded in their "Jordi Journal" - as the members fondly referred to their log book - insulin usage, carbohydrate intake, atmospheric pressure, heart rate, blood oxygen saturation, exercise, and more.

Dr. Admetlla will be analyzing these thousands of data over the upcoming months in addition to performing controlled studies in the laboratory conditions (hypobaric chambers simulating low atmospheric pressures) in Barcelona hoping to answer a basic question: do insulin needs for diabetics at altitude increase, decrease, or remain constant? One preliminary finding from the expedition, was the need to account for slower digestion at altitude (which has been documented in the literature for non-diabetics), requiring insulin doses to be stretched out over a number of hours after eating, particularly at evening meals.

Throughout the expedition, the diabetic members were successfully able to adjust blood glucose levels, through frequent blood glucose monitoring, and the ability to delivery insulin in extreme conditions.

Three of the successful summit members who also used insulin infusion pumps, wore custom bags close to their bodies bags designed and produced by Panofsky to keep pumps, monitors, and insulin warm. Keeping supplies unfrozen and readily available was key to the group's success to monitoring and adjusting blood glucose levels.

In keeping with IDEA 2000's philanthropic goals, at the end of the expedition all of the remaining first aid supplies, extra diabetes supplies, and food were donated to local organizations and charities. These donations are in addition to the funds raised by IDEA 2000 – nearly \$80,000 US to date - which will be distributed in 2001 to Insulin For Life, the Declaration of the Americas on Diabetes, and the International Diabetes Federation's South and Central American Region – all doing important work to supply insulin, blood glucose monitoring supplies and education to needy diabetics in Latin America. All expedition expenses were paid by expedition members and with the 2000 LifeScan Athletic Achievement Award received by Panofsky in July of 2000. The expedition was fortunate to receive from a number of generous donors and sponsors – individual airline tickets as well as expedition gear, food,

diabetes supplies, and more.

The expedition made the deliberate choice months prior to departure to not use the services of professional guides to assist with logistics and climbing decisions. The fact that this was all our expedition and our full responsibility did put a large burden on us in terms of organizing food and logistics for the entire group, but this was something we were able to do as a team and this gave us strength. More information can be found on the web at [www.idea2000.org](http://www.idea2000.org).

Abstracted from an expedition summary by David Panofsky



IDEA 2000 Team on the Summit of Aconcagua January 2001

