

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

BUSHWHACKER ANNUAL

2002



MOUNTAIN SCENERY WINNER

ACONCAGUA

PHOTO: CHARLES TURNER

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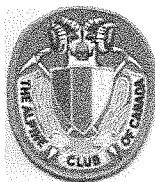
FRONT COVER

Mountain Activity Winner

Martin Davis climbing on the gendarme on the Kain route on Bugaboo Spire – Marcello Laca

BACK COVER

Rick Johnson on Castle Towers – Rob Macdonald



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VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

MT KLITSA NORTH RIDGE

Barb Baker

April 28

On a dreary morning, we headed out to the old trail up Mt. Klitsa with Russ Moir again leading the North Ridge route. Clouds lifted as we drove out past Sproat Lake and over lovely Taylor River (this bridge is threatened for removal). Sun is always a joy and an inspiration at the start of a climb. Getting up the old logging road takes perseverance because of the many alders sweeping across, but after this stretch, the entire climb is magical. The lower trail wanders up along Snowy Creek (water license application by micro power company) through dappled old growth forest to emerge in brilliant sunshine on the flanks of the big open bowl into which the main winter snow gully empties. Here we took pause to remember the avalanche of 2000 and to check the cornice buildup above the gully. The pitch and length of that narrow gully makes one realize the good fortune of people that day.

A creek empties from the north as well so the first fun task is to cross to the snow gullies on the so called North Ridge (east to me). Unlike our trip of 2000, no one fell in and our first choice of gully was the correct one. Straight up on snow in shade, easy cramponing to the notch coming out on the ridge into sunshine.

After a snack break, we headed right, out of the trees, onto the ridge with views of Nahmint and neighboring peaks. This is a long open pristine approach, looking up to sky for some time, before the peak of Klitsa finally appears. Several bumps lead up to join the usual ridge, a left, then right turn onto the narrow summit ridge for lunch and views. These go all around, out to Adder and 5040, the Mackenzies, West Coast, Nahmint, McQuillan, Arrowsmith, Beauforts and into Strathcona. Impressive!

The summit and another huge snow slope face the wind, so the stop was brief and descent a bit icy. John joked about my whining, while everyone headed off, going hell bent for

the rapid descent down the winter gully, scene of aforementioned avalanche. Return into the bowl was accomplished in short order and with great hilarity. What happens to mature people when they find a bum glissade? They turn into kids! But with sea level and the end of the day approaching, we leave play behind. My drive companions shared with me some fittingly majestic music as we drove back into the gloom of the Alberni Valley. An unforgettable day in the sun and snow on Klitsa again!

Participants: Barb Baker, Denise Hook, Joseph Hall, Rick Johnson, Russ Moir, Peter Rothermel, John Pratt.



Mt. Klitsa North West Ridge: Russ Moir, John Pratt
& Rick Johnson

Photo: Peter Rothermel

ALEXANDRA PEAK

Lindsay Elms

May 11

After I picked Pete up in Courtenay, we started discussing the weather and the mountains (what else do you discuss when going climbing?) but before we got too far I asked him if he knew whether we accessed the Oyster River off the Inland Island Highway or still via York Road off the old highway. Pete seemed to recall an overpass somewhere so we decided to follow the York Road exit. For future reference - don't go that way! It's now a no-through road so we drove up towards Campbell River then came back down the new highway to the lights at Cranberry Road. This is now the turnoff to access the Oyster River Main and it follows the old logging road into the gate and security guard. Unfortunately we didn't know what time the gate opened, so, giving TimberWest the benefit of the doubt, we chose the reasonable hour of 7:00 am as their start time. With the little hiccup in roads we arrived at the gate at 7:10 to find they opened at 6:30 and then closed at 6:00 pm. Plenty of time as we thought we would be able to drive all the way to Pearl Lake where the route up Alexandra Peak begins.

We were soon to experience another hiccup in our calculations. Some fallen trees were down across the road at km 22. No problem we thought, it's only a couple of kilometres to the trailhead so at 7:45, with running shoes on and boots in our packs, we began hiking up the road. Just over an hour later and a little beyond km 28 we found the flagging that indicated the start of the route. Some more calculations: It was now 9:00 am, so if we take 4 hours to get to the top that will be 1:00 pm, 3 hours down so that will be 4:00, just over an hour to hike down the road, change and then drive down to the gate - we should be able to make it by 6 pm. That doesn't give us much time to smell the roses. We decided to go for it anyway!

We scrambled down to the river and then picked up the flagged route on the other side of the log crossing. It was obvious that someone had been up the route last summer as there was some relatively new orange flagging in the trees, however, seeing the old yellow flagging that was still hanging in many places was hard to distinguish as it looked just like Old Man's Beard. The route - I'm not going to call it a trail as there was hardly any sign on the ground of passage - gradually climbed up through bluffs and across

beautiful rock benches that in a few weeks would be blooming with alpine flowers.

It was a gorgeous day, not a cloud in the sky and a hot spring sun was beating down on the southern exposure that we were climbing. We found the route without too much problem and reveled in its directness: there was no beating around the bush on this climb. With every step we gained a foot in elevation.

After about an hour and a half we decided that it would be discretionary to put our boots on as the snow under the trees was getting steeper and harder and our running shoes were struggling to make a solid purchase. We were making good time and recalculated our schedule to arrive on the summit at 12:30. Once in the upper basins, we found the snow soft in places but on the wide open slopes the snow was more consolidated and by taking turns in the lead we were able to make good headway. Finally at 12:15 we arrived at the summit of Alexandra Peak with, if our calculations were right, some time to spare. We sat down and had our lunch surrounded by the incredibly beautiful mountains of Vancouver Island. On days like this we couldn't help but wonder why anyone would need to leave the island climbing (except for the junkies who thrive on the nausea of altitude or enjoy giving BC Ferries some of their hard-earned cash). No, I have to admit it is nice to occasionally leave the island but we are fortunate in what we have.

After half an hour on top we began the descent and checked out the register in the cairn on the summit of the Thumb. However, it was frozen in-situ and we were unable to sign-in. We cut some time off as we took a few short cuts through the basins but eventually linked up with the flagged route in the trees. In several places we had to stop and look around for the flagging as it had been hung by those on their way up the mountain and not on their way down. However, it didn't cause us to waste too much time and by 2:50 we were back on the road.

There was no need to rush those 6.5 km back down the road but once you get in a rhythm it's hard to break stride. Finally, we passed through the gate at 4:45 pm with just over an hour to spare. Both Pete and I enjoy pacing ourselves in the mountains; however, it wasn't pleasant having the

anxiety of knowing we had to be back at the gate by a certain time or we'd be locked in. With the longer daylight hours we could easily have spent more time exploring the mountain and by arriving back at the car at 9 or 9:30 would have meant that we had a full day in the hills. However, we are thankful that we were able to have access to this area. With the right of entry through private forest land, it is easy for the timber company to say "No Entry" or to make spur-of-the-moment trips difficult because of the need to obtain a key ahead of time.

TimberWest does a great job of maintaining the road and

having the guard at the gate gives some confidence in vehicle security as everyone must sign in before accessing the area. Apart from a few gripes it was a great climb and, as with any trip, we did notice other 'must-do' routes on the surrounding mountains and have stored that info away for future reference.

Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms

Postscript: Alexandra Peak is named after Alexandra, the Princess of Wales and wife of Albert Edward, later King Edward VII.

MT. MITCHELL – NORTH GULLY

Lindsay Elms

May 26

Two weeks after climbing Alexandra Peak, Pete and I were back up the Oyster River about to check out one of the routes we had been eyeing-up. We were hoping that we wouldn't have to walk the six and a half kilometres of the road to Pearl Lake and fortunately we were in luck as someone had been in and chain-sawed through the logs that had blocked the road. This time Mt. Mitchell was our goal.

I knew from talking with Brian Ross that there was a route up Mt. Mitchell from half way around Pearl Lake. This route began at the bottom of a large rock-slide and then angled up to the Northwest Ridge which circumvented a large rock band that spanned the northern aspect of the mountain. Another route went up the North Ridge from just before the end of the Oyster River Main road near the outlet of Pearl Lake. We had seen a thin couloir of snow just to the west of the North Ridge that cut a narrow swath through the rock band. The lower 200m from the road had already melted out but the upper 360m leading to the alpine looked to be one uninterrupted, sinuous passage of snow whose angle we couldn't judge from across the valley.

Pete and I left the vehicle at 8 am and began climbing the steep forested North Ridge. However, we gradually angled to the right to emerge into the couloir just below a 40m waterfall. Not wanting an early morning shower, we climbed around the cascade and then entered the couloir. There appeared to be plenty of snow filling the breach but we couldn't see up around the corner through the narrowing rock band. The couloir tapered down to 3m, and at its



North Gully on Mt. Mitchell

Photo: Lindsay Elms

widest was not much more than 7m until it topped out 360m later. The rock walls towered above us on both sides giving us a feeling of insignificance.

After exiting the gully we found the clouds had come in and visibility was poor. Not deterred by a little white-out, we decided to keep going. The snow had softened and there was a feeling of moisture in the air but we judged that it would wait until we were off the mountain. On the first summit we pulled the map and compass out and took a bearing. Although it wasn't far away we couldn't see the ridge heading down off this summit and across to the main

summit. Remembering that a compass doesn't lie we followed the bearing and sure enough we found where we wanted to go.

Three hours after leaving the car we arrived on the main summit. Inside the cairn we found the summit register. However, upon opening it we found the note pad wet (no plastic bag) and that it had only been signed once by a solo climber last year. We had a quick lunch then turned and headed back down to the car, beating the rain that arrived as we drove down the Island Highway back to Courtenay.

Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms

MOUNT NORA AND ADAM

Lindsay Elms

June 1–2

I know it sounds repetitious but I've been wanting to climb Mount Nora for a while; however, I've just never got around to it. There is always something else to climb, but that was about to change! Friday afternoon after work I was looking through my maps trying to decide which peak to go for this weekend when I came upon the Schoen Lake map with several peaks that I hadn't climbed. It had been a couple of years since I was last in the area and I thought that Mount Nora would make for an interesting climb. The weather was looking good and conditions at this time of the year were great. I phoned up a friend and left a note as to where I was going and when I would be back and then put the few things together that I would need.

Saturday morning my alarm went off at 4 am and I was away by 4:30. At 6:30 I pulled into the parking area at the Nisnak Lake Trailhead at km 22 on the Upper Adams Main. A few minutes were required to get things packed and then I headed into the bush behind the parking area. On the map there was an obvious ridge (West Ridge) that climbed towards a subsidiary summit and then onto the main summit. I knew that it would possibly be shorter climbing up from the south, but I remembered seeing a large old burn area on the mountain when on Mount Kokummi several years ago. The prospect of climbing through small saplings was less appealing than the old growth forest from the west.

After about a half hour of uphill scrambling I came across old flagging which at first surprised me but then I realized there are a few active people living on the northern end of

the island that get out and climb some of these lesser known peaks. Another hour of steep bush and then at 1,200m the ridge angled back and I finally caught a few glimpses of the summit.

By now I was above the fog inversion that had restricted the views and was looking across at the dramatic North Face of Victoria Peak and the Sutton Range. To the southwest was Mount Adam and Watchtower Peak, while to the west and northwest stood Mount Schoen and Abel, Mount Cain's twin summits and Mount Hapush and Eden. The list of northern Vancouver Island mountains goes on, all of them becoming more familiar to me as I slowly plug-away at climbing them.

After two and a half hours I was on a saddle between the subsidiary and the main summit. The snow was in perfect conditions for cramponing but looking across at the mountain's North Face I could see a large crown-wall where a big slab avalanche had broken away fairly recently. The West Ridge steepened and climbed above the slab avalanche and around towards the summit. Just before 11 o'clock I was on top. I pulled my camera out and finished off a roll of film on the surrounding mountains. There were still a few peaks around that I hadn't climbed so I studied their features looking for the best access. Just across the valley I saw an obvious snow gully that angled up from the valley floor of the Adam's River to the North Ridge just shy of the summit of Mount Adam. The weather and mountain conditions were just too good to not get out and take advantage of tomorrow.



Mt. Nora North Face

Photo: Lindsay Elms

Sunday morning was similar to Saturday morning's routine only this time instead of parking at km 22, I drove to the end of the Upper Adam Main to km 28 and parked. I climbed down through the slash for a few minutes then crossed the Adam River on a fallen tree. It was cool in the old growth at this time of the morning and I knew one sure-fire-way of warming up and that was to pick up the pace. I followed the opened bush beside the river for fifteen minutes then accessed the snow filled gully systems that I had looked at the day before.

The bottom run-out of the gully was a jumble of old avalanche debris so I stayed on the side beside the trees until I was above the accumulation area. For the next hour and fifty minutes I ascended the low angled gullies until I emerged

on the crest of the North Ridge. It was another incredible day with not a cloud in the sky. Conditions were perfect and it felt great to be exploring another mountain on my own. The north island has so much to offer for someone interested in discovering new routes and climbing rarely ascended peaks. In all the years I've spent on the north island peaks only once have I come across others and then they were on another peak about a kilometre away and we just waved and yodeled at them. With the myriad of logging roads, there is access to the base of almost any mountain. It's just a matter of deciphering the road system.

From the ridge I wandered along the crest by-passing a couple of tricky spots and eventually arrived on the summit twenty minutes later. I saw no sign of anyone having been up recently, the last known ascent that I knew of was Chris Barner back in May 1976 when he climbed the North Ridge from the Col between Adam and Schoen. I sat up on the summit and enjoyed the solitude of the mountains, my mind wandering back to the ascent of some of the other island peaks and the beauty that surrounds us. Eventually I had to tear myself away and begin the descent. The gully had softened considerably but it was all down hill and in less than an hour I was crossing the log over the river and about to climb through the slash to my vehicle.

Participant: Lindsay Elms



Gully System on Mt Adam

Photo: Lindsay Elms

TRIPLE PEAK PLUS A TRIO OF TRIP LEADERS EQUALS THREE TIMES THE FUN

Peter Rothermel

June 15–16

Russ Moir planned this trip to Triple Peak and as none of us had ever summited this one, all were eager. On board were three of the Alpine Club's most experienced trip leaders, Tak Ogasawara, Charles Turner and, of course, Russ. Only Charles had been to the mountain before and described that trip as "bush bashing in the fog for six hours, just to find ourselves back where we started." The rest of our group was rounded out with John Young, Christine Fordham, Joseph Hall and myself.

We drove up to the end of Marion Main, a very deactivated logging road, and camped for the night to get an early start. That evening the skies were clear and the view of Triple Peak was stunning as we pondered our next day's route. We could see some snowed-up ledges, up out of the valley, trending to the left and seeming to lead to the large snowfield

at the base of the middle peak.

The next morning the valley below us was filled with ground fog, but we felt the promise of it lifting as we slipped under its blanket and down into the valley. The fog never did lift that day... it just thickened.

We found bits of flagging leading down, across a creek and up. Tak figured to the right a bit, Charles figured straight up and Russ thought left. Hmm... this could get interesting! Our intended route was described to us as leftish and from what we saw the previous day, that seemed true, but how far up before heading left?

First we tried heading up to the right and it just kept getting steeper, so back we went the way we came from. At one point, Charles said, "I think this is the wrong spot, because

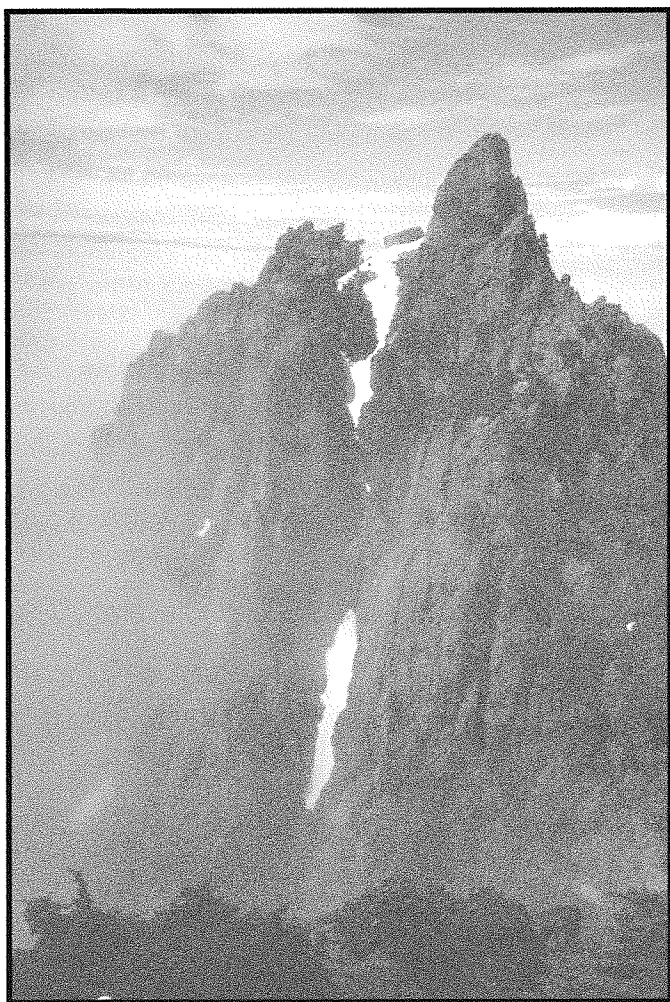
I recognize it." We came to a sort of brushy bench and followed it for a bit, then turned up (maybe a bit too soon). The ground got steeper and we were all getting thwacked in the face repeatedly by branches. On our left, there was a steep-walled couloir going straight as an arrow, up at about 35 degrees. This was described as the "Gulch" and we were to cross it at some point.

Up we went sweating away, getting steeper, until we found



Triple Peak 3 Leaders: Charles, Tak & Russ

Photo: Peter Rothermel



Triple Peak; Middle Finger Photo: Peter Rothermel

ourselves bluffed out, so back down again. I was sweating and swearing heavily, using the “F” word liberally, as the roots grabbed and the brush whacked. I was thinking, maybe I should tone my language down a bit, but listening to the others, heard the “F” word repeated a few more times and realized everybody must be enjoying the thrash as much as myself.

After we dropped down some, Russ figured we should cross the Gulch. We found a spot that seemed to have the shortest drop and I set up an anchor and rappelled down to the snow. Think about that!... how many times have you rappelled climbing UP a mountain? Kind of oxymoronish, ain't it? Once we were all down from our rappel, up the gulch we went until we could easily gain the rock on the other side and continued up weaving our way through and under the crooked branches of stunted ancient trees. I swear I thought I heard one tree chuckle as it grabbed my axe point and flipped me as neatly as any judo black belt could.

Soon we were onto a snow covered shelf, traversing under a

great rock headwall and finally away from that nasty bush. We continued until we reached a waterfall and stopped for a break. The outflow from the falls was covered with snow and we'd have to cross this bridge to continue. Poking along carefully we found our way across and started up slope. The fog thickened, or it was following us upwards, and Russ took a compass bearing towards the mountain.

I took the lead for a while, kicking steps in the snow and fell into that trance-like rhythm where one may be doing a repetitive task, yet have their mind wander off to daydream about something else.... doing two completely unrelated thoughts at one time while being focused on both mindsets at the same moment. Kind of an enlightened state, or sort of like those lizards that can move both eyes independently and see two images at once.

Kick, kick, plant axe, kick, kick, plant axe... seeing the small things, like a spider far out of its element, all the while the step never waivers.... at least that's how it goes for me.

Then when ever someone else takes the lead on snow, I follow kicking right, left, right, left, left.... LEFT? Why is it whenever I'm following there's the odd step missing, or two same feet in a row, or steps evenly spaced apart and then one huge stretch to the next one, like some kind of bizarre game of alpine hop-scotch.

I know it must seem insanely paranoid, but I couldn't help wondering whether or not this was some kind of conspiracy towards me. As if everyone I had ever hiked with was in on this great “two left feet” joke and me being the eternal butt of it all. I kept glancing sideways at my hiking mates, yet could never detect a hint of collusion.

When it was my turn at the lead again, I purposefully laid down a couple of lefts, a long stretch and a few extra high steps. Nobody seemed to notice or said anything, but I thought I saw a couple of smirks and the group seemed to act chummier towards me, more as an equal... as if “now you get it!” Then again, maybe they were just glad to be up in the alpine and out of the bushwhack.

Soon we emerged from the mists at the upper snowfield, traversed under the middle tower and stopped at the base of the main summit tower for lunch. While eating we looked for our best route. At first it all seemed to be fifth class climbing, but soon after the break, and over a snow filled bergschrund, we found a weakness in a corner with just a few fourth class moves involving a bit of belay work. The mists would come and go, sometimes a view and sometimes all a fog. A sudden rent in the clouds and the middle summit would appear, looking frightening, then the next second would disappear. A scramble on heather, with an exposed

move or two and soon I was on top.

Charles went back to the exposed step to show the others the way and each, in turn, came up. On the summit we basked under the sun, in doldrum conditions. A few neighboring peaks were sticking their snouts above the blanket of fog, as if sniffing the air for fair weather to come.

Heading down, we set up anchors and rappelled two spots. At the lower rappel, above the bergschrund, I was just about to lean back and giving my set-up one last check, realized that one side of my ropes wasn't through my belay device! I suppose my back-up prussic would have stopped my fall, but if it hadn't??

Down we continued, through the cloud-cloaked snowfields and the route finding was easy, following our old boot prints.

Tak gravitated towards the rear as I've noticed he often does on trips put on by others. Without showing any concern, he's keeping an eye out, making sure nobody is getting too far behind.

We regrouped at the falls, where we took our morning break. Then, after crossing the Gulch, one more rap down rain soaked brush, a bit more bushwhack with a few more cuss words, through the stream and we were back to the trucks.

What with Russ' route finding, Charles' help on the steep spots and Tak's looking after the rear, all three showed their fine leadership qualities... and not a single real disagreement among them all! Who would have figured?

Participants: Tak Ogasawara, Charles Turner, Russ Moir, John Young, Christine Fordham, Joseph Hall and Peter Rothermel

THE REAL QUEEN PEAK

Lindsay Elms
June 22

The REAL Queen Peak: mix up your water bottles and bush with royal tea" or "Join a creaking consort to move a pawn Queen 1." That's how Sandy Briggs has advertised his ACC trips to this peak over the last few years but unfortunately he has always had to go to plan B because of the weather. I experienced a similar problem (but only once) last weekend when Elaine Kerr and I turned back while on the mountain's North Ridge. A week later I was determined to reach its summit.

After turning up the White River Main at Sayward, Peter Ravensbergen and I drove to just past km 28 and turned left on the Stewart Main, crossed the White River, then a little farther on we turned right onto the ST-1. About 0.5 km later we again turned right onto an unmarked road and continued along that for 1.7 km to the ST-1L. Another right turn and we followed that to the end of the road at about 900m. There were no cross-ditches and the road was in good shape as the logging company had been active on the slopes last year and by the looks of things would be back for the rest of the logs soon.

At 7:20 am, Pete and I started up through ten minutes worth of fresh logging slash before we entered the old growth heading up to the North Ridge of Queen Peak. All the while we couldn't help averting our gaze across the valley to the

west at the dramatic towers of Victoria and Warden Peak. The view from this angle has to be the most striking aspect of the two peaks from any direction, which says something considering it looks dramatic from any of the other directions. We didn't let the views slow us up and after forty minutes we were at the first hump on the ridge. A steep vegetated gully split the rock wall giving us what appeared to be the only access to the rest of the ridge. At the top we found that we then had to search for a breach in the rock wall on the other side. Again a steep-angled vegetated gully brought us into the next saddle on the ridge. Over the top of the next hump we again found another short, steep bluff but found a good route down the crumbly rock to its base. These small rock steps had surprised me (although I shouldn't have been) as the contours on the map didn't indicate any steep, bluffly terrain. From what we could see of the rest of the ridge it looked straightforward. However, we continued climbing with no expectations.

After a short distance we exited the trees and stood at the base of the final ridge leading up towards the summit. We could see a couple of little rock steps and an easy passage around them but now we were looking at racing the weather. To the northwest we could see these dirty, black rain-clouds rapidly moving towards us. It didn't take us too long to get

to the subsidiary summit and from there we made a quick ascent to the main summit. We took a few photos, explored around for sign of other ascents and then turned tail as we wanted to get back down into the trees past the rock that would get slick when wet.

The drizzle took the courtesy of waiting until we reached

the vehicle but with the views of Victoria and Warden totally obscured we knew that some real rain was on its way. Pete and I had had a brush with royalty and felt honored at reaching the summit of another north island peak. That's one more down, ... to go!

Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms

MT HALL

Russ Moir

June 24

Lying about 4km SE of Triple Peak in the Mackenzies, Mt Hall apparently remained the *last* of the main Macs to be trodden on. With the opening up of Toquart Mainline beyond Toquart Lake access to the basin below Hall has become less of a challenge in recent years. Seen from Triple Peak, the mountain shows a large snowfield/rock ridge in profile; seen from distant Klitsa the distinctive summit notch helps identify the peak, left of Triple.

Rumours of possible routes and interested parties abounded, but when a group of ACC members (Rick Johnson, Martin Davis, Valerio Farioni and Russ Moir) headed up the Toquart road in June '01, they were *groping in the dark*. From a road camp on Toquart Main to a clear-cut in the basin W of the peak was a pleasant early-morning stroll, except for the three icy stream crossings to negotiate, where bridges had been pulled. The valley is quite majestic, it has a feeling of splendid isolation, being cut off from the world by the rugged outline of the Macs.

Getting across the logging slash was a rude awakening. An aim was made towards some enticing flagging over the creek and there a corporate decision was made to blast up the bluffy bush to where we *thought* the peak would be (we didn't know much!). The chosen path was *challenging* but it did bring us eventually onto a pleasant, open ridge and then a snow basin which we crossed to get to the base of a cloud-wrapped crag. We dropped down onto a second snowfield and set off around the crag's base, only to be halted by exposed slabs. A retreat to an obvious snow gully brought us out onto the W. ridge. Through the clouds we could see a big, inviting S. ridge leading towards "a summit" (but the real thing??)

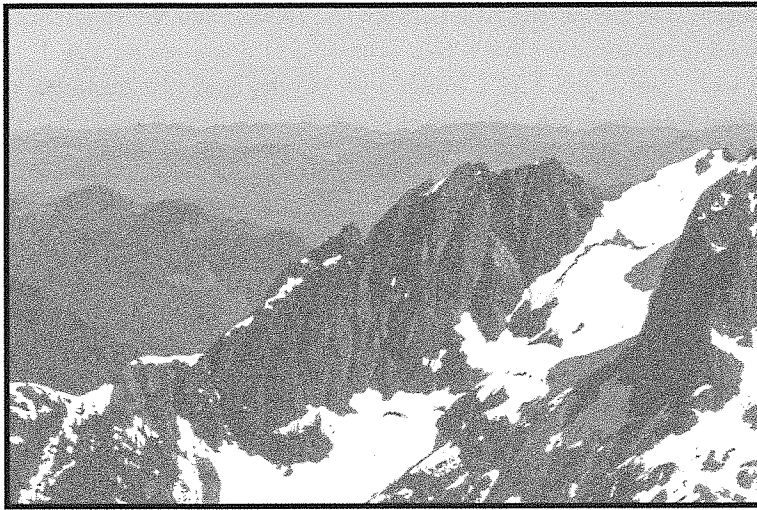
While Martin and Valerio chin-wagged on a rocky col, Rick and I scrambled up slabby rock towards the goal.... only to be stopped dead by...*space, the final frontier*. We'd reached the W side of Hall's prominent notch. We couldn't see how deep or difficult a rappel would be, so having spied out the lines on the opposite ridge (a classy alpine rib) we beat a retreat.

Far below us we could see a logging show and a *road* out, so we dropped down through a lovely open, wooded hillside onto... the *worst logging slash you ever saw* (definitely!!). It was a heli-operation and the *road* out was non-existent. I won't describe the grind across the balanced logs and the thorny descent down the ravine, out to the *real* road leading to the mainline. Any apt description would be *blue pencilled*.

Now that we'd met up with Hall we promised to be back soon.

Rick and I had an aborted foray in May this year in rainy weather, so we seemed to have a saga developing. Happily an opportunity appeared in June, when Sandy and Hinrich were able to join us for a "serious" attempt. From the road camp, the furthest access for normal vehicles (4x4's could go to the first pulled bridge saving 20mins walk), we set off before 5am on a fine, inviting morning. Two hours later we'd crossed the logged area and met up again with the friendly markers across the creek. On the way in we'd decided that, as this was our third attempt, we'd go for the "easy option" and try a snow ramp on the N slopes that we'd spied from the notch last year.

Instead of rubbing our noses against the steep bluff of our last trip, Rick found a partial game trail along the ravine



Mt. Hall from Triple Peak

Photo: Sandy Briggs

which we were sure would lead us around to the snow basin. It proved to be far easier than the steep root-wallow and after 2 hours we came out onto a large open aspect of the N side of the peak. The extensive slope, broken in places by steep slabs, gave us a clear view of Mt Hall. It looked "do-able", we could see a "summit" ahead, to the left of the big notch.

Going over the snow was a joy after the root-route below. Hinrich led up, showing his duck snow step. My legs don't twist well, my steps below had been straight into the slope; my tendons began to scream. Following behind Hinrich, his steps reminded me of so many Charlie Chaplin movies I'd laughed through, so I tried hard to hold back, but failed. Sorry Hinrich, no complaints, we enjoyed your energy.

Several connecting snow ramps led up to a broad slab band up which we scrambled onto the upper slopes beneath the infamous notch. We saw just how close we'd got to the summit last year, only two raps down to the final col. But no cigars.

We kicked on up the steeper final pitches to a narrow col between two crags. Which one was the summit? The easier left (E) one caught our fancy, so after a relatively easy rock plod through thickening mist we reached...a *top*. All the other points which appeared through the cloud were below

us, we'd obviously reached the summit. A scrappy piece of paper, a pencil and baggy were found from our packs and a brief note made. There were no signs of previous visitors, so a small cairn with Hinrich's twig sculpture is our evidence of attendance.

Oh Happy Band Of Pilgrims, we munched lunch together in a sheltered hollow, thankful for the chance to be together on a lovely, though fogged-in crag. None of the views over the Broken Islands nor over to the other Mackenzies which we had last year, were there to add to our pleasures. We did however see that our alternate route over the S rib would be a classy approach to the summit. It butts up directly to the top and looked open as far down into the mist as we could see. Only the lower access was a mystery. That's for another day.

The descent down the big snow slope was fast and smooth. By going further around to our right, we had continuous snow until the wooded ravine beckoned us into its clutches again. Eleven hours after setting out we plodded the last few steps to the cars, a satisfied gang intent on a quick retreat to Alberni, for FOOD!

For the record, here's a brief route idea.

At the end of the logging road enter the woods at the right edge of the cut block close to the prominent waterfall and you should pick up a game trail that parallels this creek on its right side, going well up into this valley. Some *light bush (sic)*. The route stays within a 100 metres of the creek and has a few red flags which we placed. Eventually, reach a prominent deep gorge coming from the right. Cross here (some flags) and proceed further up this valley to meadows (some bush) and up to the base of a prominent broad snowfield which is open to the summit. Fairly obvious snow bands lead left across and under slabs below the West ridge and take you to upper snowfield proper. Boot up the snowfield onto a narrow col then across the rocky summit, which is middle-left. Reverse the route to come out.

Get an early start and allow 11-13 hours round trip.

Rick Johnson, Sandy Briggs, Hinrich Schaeffer, Russ Moir

MT SEPTIMUS ON CANADA DAY

Don Morton

July 1

Tak Ogasawara had volunteered to lead a Club trip over the Canada Day weekend to follow the Horseshoe up Price Creek and back over Flower Ridge in Strathcona Park. Mike Hubbard and I had planned to join him leaving Victoria early on the Saturday morning. However atrocious weather on Friday and a wet forecast caused us to cancel the trip that night. Neither Mike nor I wanted to repeat our soggy attempt on Glacier Peak three weeks before.

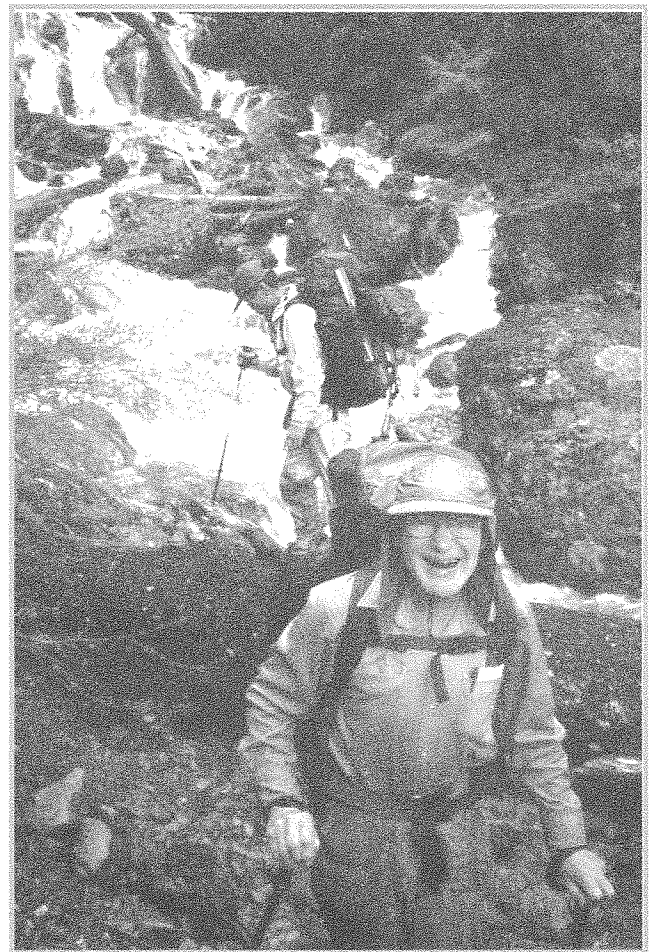
However about 6 am on Saturday Tak telephoned us to say that the weather was improving in Campbell River, but by then Mike had promised Sylvia a morning cycle ride so that we did not leave Victoria until 11 am. We met Tak in Campbell River about 3 pm. and drove to Buttle Lake. We left Mike's car at the base of Flower Ridge and continued south in Tak's van to the parking area a short distance up Price Creek. It was 4:45 pm. when we started up the trail through the wet brush along the west side of the creek. Four hours later we pitched our tent at the pleasant campsite beside the crossing.

Early on Sunday we crossed the creek on logs and started up the steep, slippery hillside past a spectacular waterfall on the stream draining Cream Lake. Farther up snow fields covered parts of the trail, easing the climbing but complicating the route finding. At the top of one snow patch we missed the trail and had to struggle through the thickest possible alder growing out of the hillside. Tak lost his glasses there, but fortunately he was able to use Mike's spare pair.

We reached Cream Lake in four hours and watched the sunny weather turn to rain. We decided to camp rather than continue on the Horseshoe route. However Mike's air mattress had a leak so that he wanted grass rather than the snow which surrounded the lake. After some searching he found a patch of low bushes with only a mild slope where we pitched the tent and rested protected from the rain.

When we checked the weather at 4 am on Monday we found that the sky was clear, but we had insufficient time left for the Horseshoe around Flower Ridge, so that we decided to climb Mt. Septimus. With Tak showing us the route, we left our tent about 6:30, hiked half way around Cream Lake, and climbed a long, steep snow gulley. The snow was very

hard, forcing us to use the picks of our axes as we ascended on our crampons. Over the col we descended to the glacier in sunlight, roped together, climbed over a couple of crevasses, and reached a rock rib, where a thin cover of snow helped us up the steepest part. Then a section of very loose rock and a steep upper snow field brought us to the summit rocks and an easy walk to the top, all in 3 1/2 hours from our camp. Three Canadians, one from Japan, one from Britain, and one born in Ontario, celebrated July 1 in the sun on this 1950-m peak. This was the first time on Septimus for both Mike and myself and the register indicated that it had not been climbed for nearly two years.



Don & Tak crossing Price Cr.

Photo: M. Hubbard



Mike on the top of Mt. Septimus

Photo: Don Morton

We returned to our camp, again using our axe picks to descend the couloir, and packed our gear. Rather than follow the slippery path down to Price Creek we decided to leave via the well traveled route past Bedwell Lake. Our hike to the west up to the shoulder above Cream Lake was in sun, but beyond we had fog and rain. On descending to a small frozen lake we were surprised to find a tent. Inside were a man with a badly sprained ankle and his companion. Day hikers ahead of us had helped them into the tent and had gone out to alert the rescue authorities. The weather did not appear promising for a helicopter evacuation so that we gave them fuel, pain-killing pills, and some chocolate. Later that evening with slightly better weather a helicopter came

and departed overhead so that the rescue appears to have been possible.

We passed a crowded campsite at Bedwell Lake in the rain climbed to the overlook and continued down to the road, arriving about 9 pm. We had completed a Horseshoe, but on the opposite side of Price Creek so that both vehicles were far away. Mike and I were very grateful to Tak, who hiked an extra hour to retrieve his van. When we reached Campbell River at midnight and had some food and drinks at a gas station convenience store, Mike was wide awake so that he continued driving to Victoria. We arrived at 4 am as the sky was brightening, just 24 hours after waking for our climb.

CROSS STRATHCONA PARK 2002

Chris Wille
Early July

Dazzling sunshine, white, pristine, snow-clad peaks in all directions. That was the view that greeted the climbers as they summited the lofty heights of Rambler Mountain in early July 1995. Rambler showcased many of the highest peaks on the Island, and the boys were duly impressed. While enjoying the awesome summit viewpoint, their eyes were naturally drawn by some unseen force to the majestic 'Golden Hinde', highest peak on Vancouver Island. "Did you know that the guides at Strathcona Park Lodge consider it a rite of passage to go "Cross Park" from Westmin Mines to Elk River trail head in 24 hours?" Joe asked Chris casually. "Impossible" thought Chris as he surveyed much of the route from his high vantage point. "Why would anyone want to do that?" The distance, the tremendous vertical gain and loss, no matter what route was chosen! Amazing - anyone who can do that route in that time is simply amazing!

In May of 2002, events beyond their control spun all of their plans into chaos. Erik Wille, star member of the 'A team,' suffered a fatal fall. Utterly devastated, Chris, Frank and Joe grieved and eulogized their irreplaceable comrade. "Erik would have wanted us to keep climbing and enjoying life as much as he did," said Chris. So that's what we vowed to do. I'm so grateful for the 30+ trips we shared together!

Fast forward to August 2002. Joe Taylor leaves a message on Chris' answering machine. "Hey, how about that cross park trip? I'm free on the 9th and 10th, Frank's in, let's go for it!" How could I say no to that? Hastily, final arrangements were made, bags packed, and suddenly, we were cruising up Island, bound for another adventure. Due to our late start out of Victoria, we pulled into the Westmin Mines parking lot at 9:40 pm. Great, I thought, try and grab a couple hours sleep, then go for a 24 hour + hike. I just seemed to have nodded off when Joe was shaking me, "come on Chris, it's 12 o'clock, let's go!"

Luckily, the stars were shining brightly as we tackled the first of the 78 switchbacks heading up to Arnica Lake. Twenty minutes into the switchback trail, and suddenly, no trail. Several big trees had fallen since we had been up last year. Just another roadblock on our journey, I thought. Within 15 minutes, we had found the trail and were on our

way. Arnica Lake, in 2 1/2 hours, things seemed to be going OK. Then, an hour past the lake, no more stars. The cloudbank closed in. This particular part of the ridge is easy to negotiate in daylight on a clear day, but in the dark and low cloud, even my normally excellent route finding skills were being taxed to the breaking point.

"I don't like it! Let's turn back while we still can!" said Frank. "Let's hang out till it gets light and then see how it goes," said Joe. "I think we can carefully forge ahead, and hope that it clears up later," said Chris. And that's just what we did. Unfortunately, we had gotten so turned around it took about 2 1/2 hours before Chris realized they were heading back to Arnica Lake, 180° opposite of the way we were supposed to be going. Back up the ridge we went, hoping that the weather would clear as forecast. By this time, the night was receding. The dim early morning light made navigation easier. Distant peaks came into view and then, as if the curtain closed, the low cloud again blocked all visibility.

Chris recalled previous trips he was on where the low cloud that blanketed the ridge tops at night was pushed down into the valleys by morning. True to form, the boys witnessed this very weather phenomenon happening. Yes! Phillips Ridge suddenly was clear, bathed in soft light of dawn's glow. I knew then that things would go OK, and we stood a good chance of completing the task at hand. Like a giant beacon, the Golden Hinde shone proudly in the distance. "This one's for you, Erik" I thought as we cruised along.

It had been a cold night, and there was fresh ice on the snow-melt ponds. We had to be cautious on the snowfields we crossed, as they were iced solid. I'm sure we looked quite amusing in our runners, just like being on the ice in a skating rink with runners on. The force field pull of the Golden Hinde was very strong. We passed very close by it on the Mt. Burman ridge and it was all we could do to keep going down our route to the outflow of Burman Lake. We wanted to climb the Hinde again, but we were on a different mission this time. After 12 hours of non-stop travel, we enjoyed a refreshing dip in Burman Lake. Route finding was key on our journey from Burman Lake to the start of the long ridge. This route is not flagged, and there was little evidence of

human passage. "Pristine country, just the way we like it," thought Chris. Progress was slow but steady, and eventually the team-mates gained the ridge. The fortress-like buttresses of the Behinde became the new focal point. "Gotta climb that one some day," said Frank.

Up and down, up and down went the undulating ridge. Eventually the 'A team' passed by Mt. DeVoe, and scaled yet another ridge that would take them to a small pristine lake (unnamed) with Mt. El Piveto reflecting in its still waters. Then it was up the 'zipper', a narrow creek passage that goes up to the plateau below Elk River Pass.

Squish Squash, Squish Squash, as our soaked feet traversed the muskeg-like plateau. Clouds of voracious bugs feasted on us. "Too bad," said Joe, "this plateau looks so nice and inviting from a distance." Then, finally, up and over Elk River pass we went. Nine pm, 20 ½ hours in. Darkness was now quickly descending upon us. Donning our trusty headlamps, we slowly descended the ice fields, which lead up to Elk River pass. Fatigue was taking its toll, and our pace slowed to a crawl as we negotiated our way down the rough, ankle biting, rocky terrain. Finally, we located the side trail which heads into the timber and on towards Elk River. As our sleep-deprived minds quickly figured out, it appeared that this trail has not been maintained at all for the past several years. In our extremely tired state, it was



Joe Taylor and Chris Wille

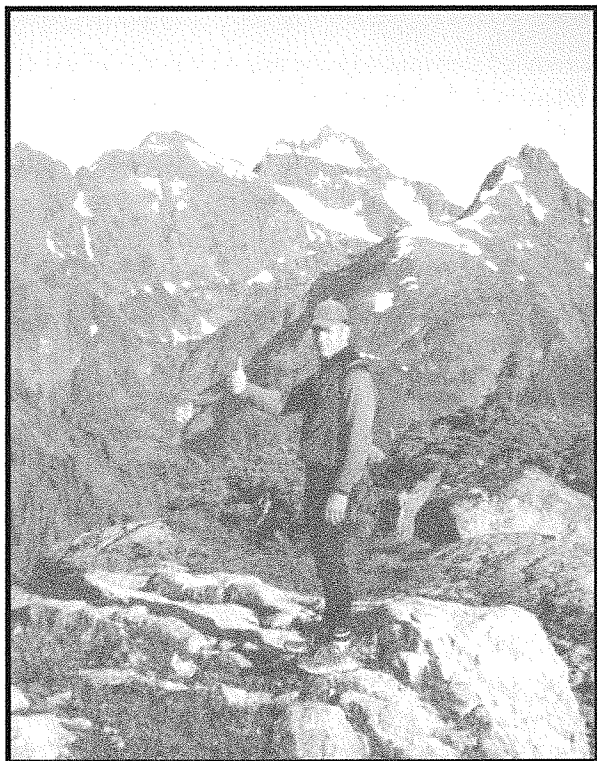
Photo: Frank Wille

overwhelmingly difficult to follow, so I plunked myself down on a small heather slope, and we tried to catch a bit of sleep and rest.

A mere hour later we were all awakened by uncontrolled shivering. It was so cold we were starting to get hypothermic! Unusual for August, I thought, as we gathered wood for a fire. "Never bivy next to a snow field!" Frank said through clattering teeth. The fire warmed us and allowed us some time to dry out our soaked gear. As Frank was searching for firewood in the dark, he stumbled upon a cairn, which marked the elusive trail's re-entry into the forest.

Warmed by the fire and refreshed by a short nap, I proposed we slowly head off down the trail, and see if we could continue on to hike out via the Elk River trail. The side trail to Elk River pass was extremely overgrown and one of the hardest trails I have ever tried to negotiate in the dark. Finally, we emerged down at the forest that marks the beginning of the start of the real trail. Much to my shock and disbelief, our passage was yet again blocked by a huge slide that had pushed an immense swath of trees around like match sticks. Slowly, carefully we made our way through. Then another overgrown section of trail, and finally, we were at the Elk River bridge.

We put ourselves on autopilot and headed off down the trail. Joe showed his true strength and spirit on the way out. In total contrast to the previous day, he was leading our journey out. Progress was quick and efficient and he even ran some sections. "Hope I'm that fit when I'm his age," thought Chris. Not bad for a 48-year old!



Frank Wille

Photo: Chris Wille

Two and a half hours from the Elk River Bridge and we were out! Mission accomplished! 30 ½ hours point to point, 20 ½ hours Westmin Mines to Elk Pass. Not as fast as hoped, but we had overcome through teamwork, many, many obstacles. I was proud of our team! Very fatigued but overjoyed, we drove to Patti Joe's in Campbell River for a

celebratory meal, and then headed home.

Congratulations, and well done, to two of the best teammates anyone could ever ask for! Thanks for letting me be part of it! It was the "Trip of a Lifetime!"

Participants: Chris and Frank Wille and Joe Taylor

ARROWSMITH - THE NOSE ROUTE

Don Cameron

July 14

The Nose" on Vancouver Island is legendary. It's talked about all the time with burgeoning island mountaineers. Questions like "did you use a rope?", "did you go solo?", "is it exposed?" often come to mind and it is the popular topic of conversation when talking about Mt. Arrowsmith.

Well, Selena, Mike and Ang, took the bull by the nose and offered a trip geared to us "wet behind the ears" alpine climbers. Mt. Arrowsmith's "the nose" for beginners was the trip for me and five other climbers. It was a really nice day, with warming sun mixed with cloud and some fog to keep us nice and cool while we climbed. The travel up to the col and over the beginnings of the bumps was great - some snow but mostly a beautiful alpine trail with many alpine flowers. The rock on the bumps was excellent - dry and really grippy. Many of us tried our scrambling skills off the main route and were rewarded with some nice rock scrambles. To me, this was just a ton of fun: good rock, some challenges and not too exposed. Also, as I am used to the Rocky Mountain's portable handholds, this grippy rock was a refreshing use of my new alpine boots.

As many of you may know, the bumps get more and more exposed as you get closer to the summit. This was actually nice, because it gave me a good chance to get used to the climb. No ominous wall in front of me, just gentle rock, sweetly saying "come up here."

Selena, Mike and Ang were just plain ol' fun leaders, Selena led the climb while Ang picked up the stragglers. It felt very comfortable being with those guys - experienced and safe leaders. Our progression along the bumps was enjoyable and uneventful. As we got to the last of the bumps we harnessed up in preparation for climbing the infamous

"nose." We then scrambled down off the last bump and waited at the col at the base of the nose. Selena stopped and asked if we wanted a rope for the nose. I did not hesitate and immediately responded with "yeah sure, it's my first time, so I'll take one just to make sure." So off she went. ..well, Selena scrambled on ahead and the rest of us, not really knowing we were actually on the nose, scrambled right up after her - just like little ducklings following their mom. Little did we realize we were actually climbing the nose. By the time we got up to the first belay station, we bumped into Selena who was busy setting up the anchor and rope for us -hmm, well there was a little surprise for her! I suppose one factor which made the climb easier was that the clouds were nicely obscuring the real exposure.

From this first anchor, Selena remarked how great we were by making it up, and asked if we wanted a rope for the second, easier, pitch. Once again, my "conservative" nature replied "oh yes, of course." So off she went again to the next belay, and then once again, we didn't wait for the rope and started to scramble right after her. Quack, quack.

So all around it was a great experience. We all had our concerns about being roped up on the nose, initially most of us wanted a rope, but in the end, we all climbed - safely - up the nose. We were all very happy with ourselves. And Selena got in some good practice setting anchors and carrying a rope.

Thanks to Selena, Mike and Ang. These "beginner" trips are wonderful and I really enjoy taking them, as I expect I will be a beginner all my life.

Participants: Selena Swets, Mike Dillistone, Ang Lopez, Don Cameron

MT ASHWOOD... AND/OR BONANZA PEAK, SOMETIMES IT JUST DON'T PAN OUT

Peter Rothermel

July 27–28

Last September Tak had invited me up island for a climb on Mt Ashwood and maybe Bonanza Peak, a couple of summits in the Bonanza Range. Where's that you wonder?... so did I. Recently, I had heard that the Bonanza Range was suggested as a possibility for an Alpine Club hut site and, after casting over a map of Vancouver Island, I found that it was near Woss. So my curiosity was already piqued about this area, even before Tak's invite.

So Tak calls me up and says, "We'll do it as a two day trip, just a scramble, no rope needed. We'll climb Ashwood first day and maybe Bonanza the next." I replied, "OK, your place, what time?... NOON?? ...Isn't that kind of late?" ... "No?" ... "OK".

Our date, being a few weeks away, gave me an opportunity to try to find out a little information about this area. I got out a topo map and found Mt Ashwood pretty quickly, but no Bonanza Peak. Through the BC survey department, I discovered that the Bonanza Range was labeled on Jackson's 1931 survey and that Mt Ashwood was named after a prospector in 1933. I then consulted Fairley's "Climbing & Hiking" guide book and, eureka!, found a reference to Mt. Ashwood. "Highest peak in the Bonanza Range... class 4" ... FOURTH CLASS?? Yet, still no Bonanza Peak reference.

Now, keep in mind, Tak has a pretty thick accent and also my hearing's pretty poor, so I started doubting what I heard during our phone conversation and called him back... "Are you sure we don't need a rope? It says 4th class in the book and I'll want the rope for that. And are you sure you don't want to meet before noon?" Well, Tak smoothed my feathers, but I got him to compromise and move the meeting time in

Campbell River to ten o'clock.

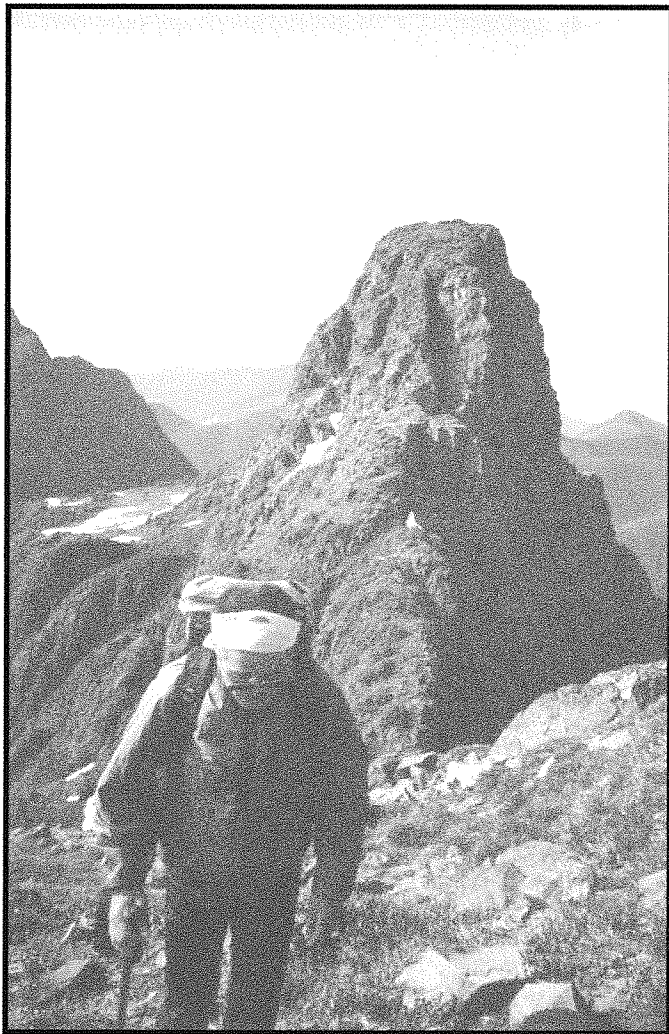
So, here we were to meet in Campbell River at Tak's place and have a three hour drive to where we turn off the highway, drive up a logging road, then bushwhack up to the alpine, make camp AND climb a class 4 mountain! Note to self: Bring extra batteries for headlamp.

On July 27th we left Campbell River at about 11:00 and drove up island for about three hours. We then took a right onto the logging road opposite the Woss turnoff and followed Gold Creek 17 to its end. Hefting our packs, we headed up through the slash, staying left of a creek and trending left below cliff bands. After a couple of hours bushwhacking, we emerged onto a lovely alpine plateau and made our camp beside a large tarn at the foot of the mountain.

As there was no snow (that we could see), we decided to leave our useless heavy burden of crampons and ice axes behind in camp and started trudging up a wide couloir. This gully was filled with rubble that had crumbled off the mountain, and I was hoping it was finished sloughing rock for the time being as I tightened the chin strap on my helmet. We were hop, skip and jumping from stone to stone when one boulder, about half the size of a VW bug, moved about a foot with a grating clunk and threw me a bit off balance. It reminded me of a time ago, when hiking by myself, a shifting boulder pinched my leg between it and another and it took me about ten minutes to spring the trap and get the beast off, so I moved a bit more gingerly. The smaller rock and scree had a strangely, melodic quality to it and would sometimes clink with a musically, tonal ring. I'd never heard anything quite like that before.

Soon, around the corner, we reached snow and I was wishing for that damned ice axe I'd left in camp. Going up wasn't so bad, but I knew going down might be a bit grippy. Tak is very comfortable on snow slopes and will saunter up with just a ski pole on angles that have me reaching for my axe and crampons. Looking up, I could see that we were coming to the end of this draw and would soon be on the western ridge and I figured that was where the 4th class stuff began. Onto heathery rocky slopes, with the odd easy step, rarely even needing both hands and then, all of a sudden, we were on the summit of Mt Ashwood, just like that! A very easy scramble indeed!

To our northwestward, immediately close by was the haystack profile of Bonanza Peak, a truly beautiful peak if I ever did see one. Tak assured me that Mt. Ashwood is the official name of the summit we were on and that the seemingly higher Bonanza Peak was a colloquial name and not



Tak on Mt. Ashwood; Bonanza Peak behind. Photo: P. Rothermel

recognized officially. I deduced that the information given in Bruce Fairley's guide was from someone who had summited the higher peak, assumed it was Ashwood and mis-marked it on the topo. They then correctly stated their summit was 4th class, but ascribed it to the wrong mountain. Elementary, my dear Watson!

We lolled on the heathery summit of Ashwood picking out possible routes up Bonanza. On this crystal clear day, we struck golden rays of sunshine. We were treated to the closest view of the Waddington Range I'd ever had, to the north. We could also easily pick out Mts. Hapush, Cain and Schoen to our east; Warden and Victoria Peaks to the south east; Rugged Mtn. and the Haite Range to the south. It put the north island mountains into a different perspective for me, as my previous trips up in that neighborhood were fraught with mists and clouds, allowing only cameo views at best.

After a while, a gentle zephyr lulled us to nap and after a half hour or so, we awoke feeling yawny and stretchy. Descending was easy, especially knowing the ground we covered wasn't difficult. Although the snow slopes were a bit grippy without the axe and with boulders at the run out, it wasn't as bad as I had made it out to be in my mind. We were down to our camp in no time at all and were making dinner as the weather started to turn, with clouds descending and drizzle beginning.

In the morning, we awoke in a fog and after breakfast packed up our gear. Then we went off on a reccy trip towards Bonanza, realizing we wouldn't probably get very far in the limited visibility. As it was, the dewy heather was like hiking on ice and we soon headed back for home.

We may not have struck it rich on Bonanza Peak, but we staked a claim on Ashwood and had another notch in our belt of experiences in the mountains... and another reason to return.

Participants: Peter Rothermel and Tak Ogasawara

MT. JOAN AND THE SQUAREHEAD

Tony Vaughn
August 25

The approach into the Beaufort Range was made from the Horne Lake forest service road, via Horne Lake. After meeting at the Horne Lake turnoff on the Island Highway at 9 am, we proceeded north up the forest service road for about 21 km, then turned left up a steep rough road which rapidly deteriorated into four-wheel drive condition, with deep, narrow water bars every 200' or so. As one of the party mentioned, Mt Joan's best defense is the approach road – it is certainly the crux of the whole trip. One vehicle had its tail pipe flattened twice which had to be opened up again with the help of Rick's rock hammer. After 3 km of bumping and grinding up the road, we parked and started the hike up the logging road to a sign which indicated left to Mt Joan, and right to Mt Curran. Thanks to CDMC there was a marked trail most of the way up to the alpine through forest, past small tarns and open meadows to a wide gully. We followed the gully up to the col between Mt. Joan and Squarehead, some of us clambering up the rocks at the

side of the gully, others up the gully itself.

Following a break at the col where we ate our lunch and the mosquitoes ate us, we climbed to the summit of Mt. Joan along a broad rock and heather ridge. Unfortunately, the clouds were low that day so our views were limited, a pity as the views are quite spectacular. The mosquitoes did not encourage an extended stay on the summit, so after a short stay on top we returned to the col and hiked up to the summit of Squarehead making this a two-summit day.

We were back at the cars by 6 pm and by 7 pm we were washing the sweat off in Horne Lake, the dust out of our throats with beer, and we finished off the day with a BBQ at the Vaughns' cabin.

Participants: Rick Eppler, Catrin Brown, Anita Vaughn, Tony Vaughn (leader), Selena Swets, Barb Baker, Charles Turner, Barbara Price, Don Morton, Mike Hubbard, Carolyn Goluza

SURVIVOR - THE RUGGED MOUNTAIN TEST

Ang Lopez
August 31–Sept 1

"Survivor", "Fear Factor", "Big Brother" – reality, adventure, and extreme TV programs have been the latest craze that has gripped all those seeking escape from the mundane world of the couch-bound. Caught in this whirlwind of vicarious thrills was Mike Dillistone, the Rugged Mountain trip leader. He thought, "what if I turned the Labour Day weekend trip up Rugged, into a Survivor weekend?"

Suddenly, the mild mannered trip leader became "El Director" Dillistone, a ruthless taskmaster with a heart of glacier ice and a braincase filled with loose chock-stones.

He concocted heinous rites of passage to test the mettle of the Rugged tribe that included Su "Grit & Granola" Castle, Ang "Not Sherpa" Lopez, Sylvia "Mountain Mama" Moser, Guy "SEAL Team" Parent, and Selena "Warrior Princess" Swets. These unsuspecting mountaineers were about to step into Mike's masochistic mania.

1. Whipped, Slapped, and Spanked: The first test involved carrying a heavy pack up an overgrown logging road choked with aggressive alder no more than 6-12 inches apart. The youthful trees were spring loaded and specifically engineered

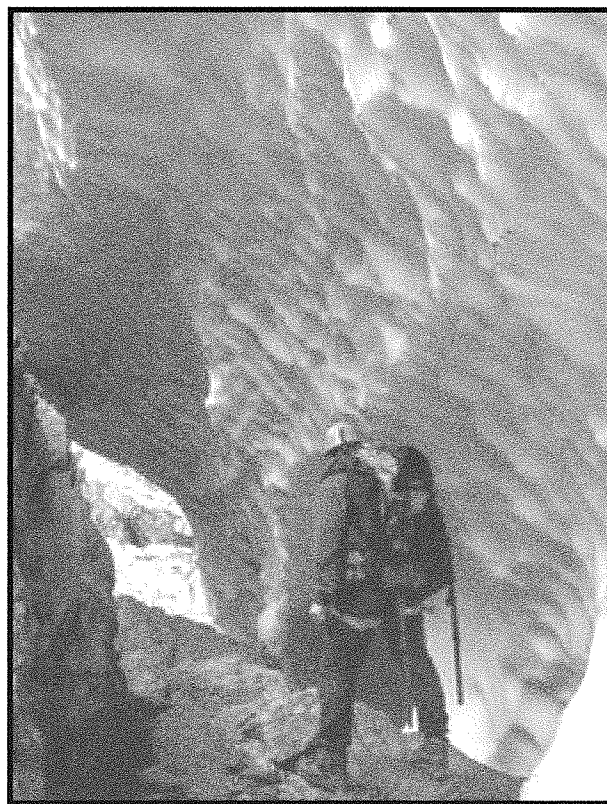
to give the Rugged Ramblers a whipping, slapping, and spanking on selected body parts as they squirmed, wriggled, and pulled themselves up the so-called road. Everyone passed this warm-up, but Ang was nearly voted off as he seemed to enjoy the whipping part a little bit too much.

2. Search for Spot: With the physical challenge past, the next phase tested vision and diligence. After surviving the spanking, the slash crossing and the wet steeps - the Haite Range Hoppers were rewarded with only bad site choices for their tents at the top of the approach ridge. The only accommodating flat spots were rapidly reverting to their tarn state from the rains. With the crew cold, wet, hungry and ready to hop in a garbage bag for shelter - sharp-eyed Su scored a spot for the big four-person tent and life was good. The group decided to keep her as well.

3. Psych: With the basic necessities taken care of, the team was ready to kick back, relax and plan tomorrow's ascent. But, "El Director" Dillistone was as cunning as he was strong and he swiftly sowed seeds of uncertainty in everyone as he swung back and forth between "it's clearing up" and "rain looks really bad." He psyched the survivor soldiers up and down to the rhythm of the raindrops. The team was ready to throw in the towel and throw the leader over the nearest cliff.

4. Terrible Talus: Despite Mike's mixed messages, the troops made it through the night and were greeted with a brilliant morning. They readied themselves for the next unknown, but surely vertical, challenge. The route led them to the base of the Nathan Creek col and a look at the talus slide and rock route that made up the next step of their challenge. Typical talus - a two-foot step up quickly slid down into a one-foot net gain. With thighs, calves, and patience slowly draining - the troops trudged upward. Near the top of the col, the route threw a bit of exposure at the Rugged-eers and Sylvia had to use her "immunity" to avoid going over the edge. Some loose rock shook her balance and her confidence - but the rest of the tribe pulled together and got her feet and her grip back on solid ground. Way to go team.

5. Rock and Icebox: The next challenge had some rock, some ice, and some very deep holes. The crossing of Rugged Glacier proved to be a walk in the park to the field-tested tribe - even the bus-swallowing crevasses served only to boost the adrenaline level higher. However, the route finding demon reared its ugly head as the glacier touched the summit ridge. The adrenaline junkies wanted to do the exposed rock route, Selena figured that a steep walk up the summer snow should do it, while Mike dimly remembered a walk up the moat. Mike's memory and dim wit thankfully won out.



Guy studies surreal rock & ice forms in the approach moat.
Photo. Ang Lopez

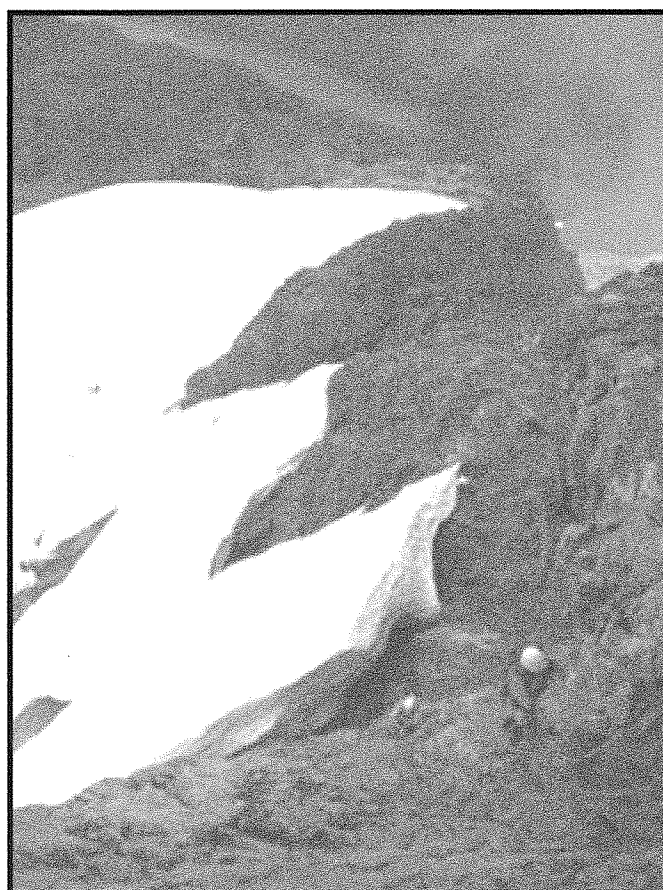
The group descended into an icebox of rock and surreal ice formations with screeching crampons. The other-worldly ambience of the wet rock and ice was exhilarating and was a worthy portal to the next challenge.

6. The Full Monty: The ice ended and the survivors were faced with the rock route that featured a minefield of loose rock missiles above and a dizzyingly direct drop to the glacier below. They had entered - the exposure zone. There would be no tribal council to throw them off - just gravity. The technical portion of the game had begun and everyone scrambled to remember the climbing knots and pro-placement procedures they learned from Su's "Climbing for Dummies" book. Two belayed pitches later, all had still survived the climbing despite some manky anchors - one anchor featured Guy wedging his hard body into a crotch-like feature to act as counterweight on a questionable horn. Luckily the Survivors remembered the basics of belaying and everyone was still game to keep going. Unfortunately, the pace of the climbing was too slow and no one would summit if the pace was not accelerated. A high-altitude council decided that Selena and Ang would continue climbing up to the agreed turn-around time. Guy and Sylvia were deeply disappointed by this decision and the requisite TV tears were shed.

7. *Make the Call:* Selena won the lead on the next pitch and led a wildly exposed 5.8 crack to a horn belay. Ang followed and further reconnaissance showed that the route demanded at least a further exposed scramble and another pitch requiring protection. With the weather darkening and time running out, Ang recommended that they turn tail and return to camp. Selena disagreed but was finally coerced with threats of future withheld belays. If there had been another two hours available, all the Survivors would have likely summited. The tribe returned to camp without incident and there was only occasional finger pointing as to whom was to blame for the failure to summit.

8. *Water Torture:* The tribe expected a simple walk back to the cars after restful night at the col. With no hope of winning the members back to his side with his dictatorial ways, Guy used his martial arts prowess to win the only spot in the tent that was boulder free and earned even deeper resentment from all. As soon as the tents were packed up, the monsoon started. This was a biblical rain that no Gore-tex could hope to stem. The return route turned into a water slide that nearly claimed Guy and Selena during separate uncontrolled gravity rides down the slopes. The water-based punishment distracted Ang into some bad judgement as he nearly pulled a recliner-sized boulder onto his person. As the tribe reached their transport, the clouds peeled back and the sun poured through. Mission accomplished – no one died.

Rugged did not let the tribe sample her summit – but with such a great bunch to share the wonderment and pain – this trip was sweet survival. Thanks, El Dillistone!



Rugged Glacier and Woss Lake form the backdrop as Sylvia inches up the East ridge belayed from below by Mike.

Photo: Ang Lopez

Participants: Mike Dillistone, Su Castle, Angelicco Lopez, Sylvia Moser, Guy Parent, Selena Swets

QUEEN PEAK, CHECKMATED... THEN, HEARING THY QUEEN-SPEAK...

Peter Rothermel

September 21–22 and October 12–13

On the 21st day, during the month of September, in the year of 1002, the fair knight, Sir Sandy, Duke of Briggs, took upon himself the task of leading a pilgrimage to a far off land of Ye Queen Peak. It is a grand mountain likened unto the shape of a horse's shoe, or a curled up dragon. We had the password to open the portal from a mountain wizard called Lindsay Elms. It is said that he has strong magic in the hills and can even change the weather.

Of this I know not, as his speed is so great that all I have observed is the dust spiralling upwards upon his passing. We were a large group of various kindred souls made up of knights, Valkyries, elves and possibly a dwarf or two. Most travelled from afar, from a poor kingdom called Victoria and others were found along the way in hamlets such as Qualicum Village or burgs like Campbell River and the Court of Nay.

Once away from these last signs of civilization we passed through the wilderness, and in places there were large swaths growth until we gained the dark forest filled with large and foreboding silent giants. There were many mushrooms, some sweet to eat and others that would destroy the liver without any warning. One mountain magician named Tak was especially knowledgeable in the lore of the fungi. "Tis said that any of these fruits that the skin peels easily from are fit for food."

Gaining the high ridge proved to be a rather difficult task. When I tried to reach the higher ground, I ran into a bad spell that would not allow me to pass and all I could do is slide back to where I started. Sir Sandy cast forth his magic cord. This was the very same silver rope that he was awarded from the Knights of the Alpine Table. Once this wonderful line was fixed, we could all pass the spellbound area, protected by a special charm called a prussic.

Past the spell, the ground became gentler and even pleasing to march upon, so much so that we were lulled into a dreamy state and were tricked into the wrong passage. Our way was ended by a precipice of which we could not see the bottom. We next backtracked to a steep ravine and slithered down the silver rope using another charm called belay device. A long way down we found we could go no farther as the ravine was endless. Back up the ridge we went and then cast about for another way, but to no avail. We could not break the spell on this mountain, even with all the powerful incantations that the Wizard Elms had given us.

Then, all a sudden, another powerfully grand event was unfolding. It was the birthing day of Sir Sandy and several

of the company brought out cake and surprises and treats and sweet meats and there was much merry making. Methinks there must have been a secret potion in the cake, because no sooner had we wiped the tears of joy from our eyes, than we started to yawn and one by one fell into a deep slumber.

When we finally awoke we realized that alpenglow time was rapidly approaching and we would have to race to make it back to safety before the night demons befell us. The gargoyles on yonder peaks were laughing and spitting at us as we made haste. We were checkmated and just escaped by the skin of our teeth. We, then and there, made a solemn pact to return and, banishing all spells, to gain the lofty crown of this Queen.

About one moon later, on the 13th day of the month of October, in the year of 1002, I returned to the battle front with Sir Sandy and a band of jolly fellows. Sir Sandy had spent his time wisely, deep in the catacombs of a castle



On Summit of Queen Peak: Tak Ogasawara, John Pratt, Jules Thomson, Selena Swets, Don Morton

Sitting: Sandy Briggs & Peter Rothermel

Photo: P. Rothermel

called Yoovick, studying topo incantations and the sleuthings of Sir Charles, The Turner, and assured us that he had found a dandy spell breaker.

This time we snuck around, in the night, to the dragon's backside where it could not see our intentions. Up through

fields of blooming fireweed we tramped and when the spell of fluff entered our noses, trying to keep us from breathing, we cast out the spell with a loud snort.

Upwards we garnered our way and onto the open ridges and at last could see our Queen and the guardians behind her, Vicky and Ward, looking large and menacing. Sir Sandy must have learned his incantations well, as we were soon at the apex of the crown and even the weather was becoming clement. As we watched, even the very ice was melting off the tarn and we could hear the Queen's whispered welcome on the foehn breeze.

Lord Morton made a few astrological observations and predictions on the future and John of Prattzelvania sang forth verses and lines from the classic works of Monty Python, while the magician, Tak, was turning different hues of purple and green after ingesting his last mushroom. I just levitated, the slightest bit, and kept my mouth shut.

Sir Sandy handed out a potion called aqua vitae and uttered the spell, "More bang for the buck!" and we all downed a shot or two. Lady Selena passed 'round chocolate and there were more sweetmeats and treats coming from Dame Jules' rucksack and soon the nodding spell was cast another time and we were all... once again... asleep! Upon awaking there was a different mood in the air, than from before.

The evil vapours were banished and there was a more

benevolent feel to the mountains. The birds did sing and even the gargoyles on the surrounding peaks were smiling down at us and the dragon just snored. The trip back to the lands we had come from was, for the most part uneventful, except when my steed went lame and we had to change its shoe. I uttered quite a few incantations and curses during the fix.

Later we found out that Sir Charles, The Turner had been searching for us, but had been hexed and could not find our party. Every turn his steed came to found him back to where he began, over and over, ad infinitum. Hence forth he is known as Sir Charles, The Turnabout.

Nay knave, do not walk unto the mounts unguarded... Bring with ye pleasant thoughts and go forth unhurried... Be ye prepared for adversity, but leave thy demons behind... Thus, thou will find the key to break the spell of thine hills.

Retinue: (Sept.21- 22): Sandy Briggs,, Tak Ogasawara, Barb Baker, Christine Fordham, Sasha Kubicek, Mike Hubbard, Don Cameron, Jules Thomson, Ian Garber, Corey Horner, Peter Rothermel; with Charles Turner as an unintentionally autonomous exploratory party.

Retinue: (Oct.12- 13): Sandy Briggs, Don Morton, John Pratt, Jules Thompson, Selena Swets, Tak Ogasawara and Peter Rothermel.

MOUNT CURRAN

September 22

Tony Vaughn

The trip to Mt. Curran followed the same format as Mt Joan (August 25), except this time we had a bigger group, glorious weather, and no mosquitoes. The views of the coast range and Mt. Waddington on one side and the peaks of Strathcona Park all the way to the Pacific on the other were spectacular. We took our time ambling along the broad ridge to Mt Curran's summit trying to identify all the peaks we could as we went. All in all, a wonderfully pleasant day was spent rambling through the

Beauforts. The trip ended the same way as the Mt. Joan trip with a swim and a barbecue at the Vaughns'.

Next year we'll do the traverse of all three peaks in one day.

Participants: Rick Eppler, Catrin Brown, Anita Vaughn, Tony Vaughn (leader), Herbert Harzan, Claire Ebendinger, Judith Holm, Viggo Holm, Ian Brown, Margaret Brown, Larry Talarico, Harriet Rueggeberg, Tod Morton, Veronica Morton, Rudiger Schulbe, Pat O'Brien, Murrough O'Brien

A HARMSTON MEMORIAL

Geoff Bennett
September 24–26

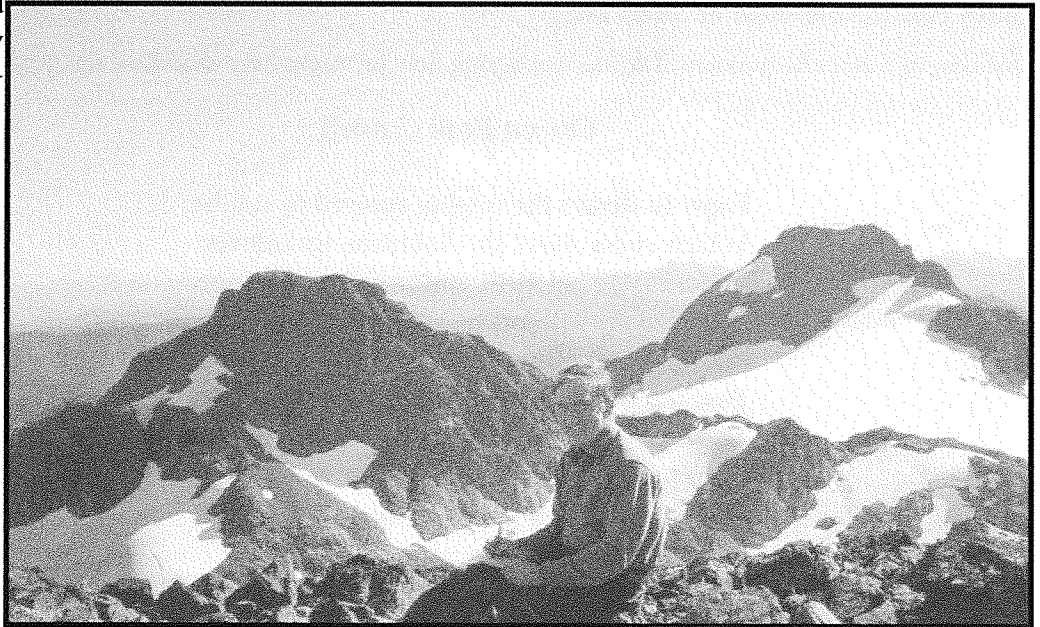
Mount Harmston is the “ugly duckling” of the nine Island Qualifiers, its place enshrined among this distinguished group only by virtue of its remoteness. At an elevation of 1982m, Harmston is merely the 18th highest mountain on Vancouver Island and it lacks any technical challenges. Undaunted, Tony Vaughn and I set out to climb it. We each had our reasons: bad weather had forced Tony to give up a previous IQ attempt; I had a secret mission.

On the evening of September 24th we parked the car by Comox Creek on South Fork Main-5, about 24 km from the dam on Comox Lake, then walked a short distance up the valley to a campsite in the trees. In perfect weather the next morning we hiked up the well-worn trail to the Comox Glacier, via Frog Ponds and the aptly-named Lone Tree Pass. After six hours on the march, we pitched our tent on a small gravel bench at the northwestern edge of the glacier – a spot that commands a panoramic view of Red Pillar and Argus to the west.

After supper we hiked up to the cairn at the north end of the Comox Glacier to catch a glimpse of Mount Harmston silhouetted against a bright red sunset. Along the way we saw something quite unusual – wolverine tracks in the snow. As we learned a few days later, wolverines are now “officially extirpated” from Vancouver Island. The tracks were very fresh and very clear – claw marks visible, five toes on each foot, big enough that we thought at first it might have been a bear – but then we realized the prints were just a few inches across and only a foot or two apart, like a dog with big five-toed feet. At that elevation on the glacier, what else could it possibly have been?

Through my brother I subsequently notified the government wolverine specialist but got no response – for fear of awkward political and funding questions perhaps?

With lighter packs the next morning we hiked in a southwesterly direction across snowfields and rocky bumps to get around the south face of Argus. Apparently it would have been quicker to reach Harmston by traversing the summit of Argus, but we weren't aware of that option at the time. Too bad – the weather was superb! After rounding the lower bluffs and slogging up a bit of scree we were treated to a fine view of Red Pillar and the Cliffe Glacier. Getting down to the glacier was interesting – a steep Class 3 chimney marked by two obvious cairns – the only “climbing” on the whole trip. The glacier had more crevasses than we expected, so we roped up and stayed in the flats near the middle. We trudged uneventfully from the south part of the glacier to the north, the two parts of which are separated by a little creek. The col between Argus and Harmston lay straight ahead, from which the rusty-red southeast ridge led directly to the summit. After an easy 45-minute jaunt through heather and boulders we stood on the rocky top.



Geoff Bennett on the summit of Mt Harmston. Argus on the left, Red Pillar on the right, Cliffe Glacier in the middle.
Photo: Tony Vaughn

The mountain was named after William Harmston, who moved to Comox from England in 1861 and married into the Cliffe family. William was the great-uncle of my father-in-law, Ted Harmston, who played rugby for the Oak Bay Wanderers, went to war in 1939, nearly died on D-Day, and returned triumphantly to Canada with an English war bride. Ted passed away in 2001 at the age of 86. I wrote an appropriate note in the summit register, retrieved a container of his ashes from my backpack, stood by the steep cliff overlooking Milla Lake, and flung his earthly remains into the sky.

In sunshine and good spirits Tony and I retraced our footsteps, arriving back at the tent in time for supper. The round trip took just over nine hours. We hiked out the next day.

After having heard the unflattering descriptions of Mount

Harmston – “a long slog... just a walk-up... don’t know why it’s an Island Qualifier” – I was surprised to discover what a good adventure it was. We were lucky to have good weather and the views were spectacular. From the summit of Harmston we could see most of the Strathcona peaks, even the ski runs on Mount Washington. The route, with all its twists and turns, ridges and valleys, glaciers and peaks, is an interesting puzzle and has much to offer. Good lungs and knees are a prerequisite but the trail is in reasonable shape and there isn’t any bushwhacking. Despite all the cairns, the country has a fine “wilderness” feel to it. We never saw another soul the whole time, just a few birds and the tracks of an evanescent wolverine fading into the sunset – a fitting memorial to the Oak Bay Wanderer. Like a life well lived, the trail is often more interesting than the final destination.

Participants: Geoff Bennett and Tony Vaughn

QUEEN PEAK

John Pratt

October 12–13

MILTON! THOU SHOULD’ST BE LIVING AT THIS HOUR ...

But suppose the great poet (1608-1674) had been living at this hour and suppose, moreover, he had gone along on the Queen Peak trip organized by Sandy Briggs (1953-).

One day, in a rare idle moment, I fell to wondering how he might have described the experience ...

Queen Peak Gained

Eager to depart the mighty summit to subdue
Which soars above the Tolmiean mount the
Valiant crew set forth and in Selena’s wingéd chariot
Beguiled the tedious hours in jocund discourse
Along that highway smooth, broad and inoffensive
That leads to Campbell River and at their wonted haunt
There dined before driving on through the dark night and cold
Even to a nameless spot and like so many tramps
There lay to sleep upon the stony damp
Unyielding ground beneath th’ indifferent blinking stars
Whose icy splinters spangled Heaven o’erhead.

II

Ere dawn's first roseate glow had touched
The mighty crests all were awakened by a hideous crow
Swift followed by a call that all
Elevate and luminous might be. Then each thus to his neighbor:
What bloody man is this, that doth our hard-earned shut-eye
End with strangled fowl-like screech, enow the dead to wake?
But soon the pitchy night to crisp autumnal daylight changed
In contrast stark as when th' Odgerian hell-hound with blackest coat
Against the pristine winter slopes of Landale stood.

III

And so began the climb up to the forest of tall pines
Through weeds which marked the passage of this crew
Intrepid with such clouds of seeds that discourse normal,
Puns, jokes and spoonerisms all alike were stilled.
And thus into the forest of tall trees whose
Green and endless ranks ascend the mountainside
And on a sudden give way to sights magnificent,
Unlogged and saw upon their journey Bate at noon.
For now began the glaciers, Island glaciers
Innumerable, tho' of the pocket kind for that
Indeed could many be so stored, one scarce
Enough nalgénian flasks to fill.

IV

Anon, the mighty summit hove in view
Of Queen Peak and arose a general cheer
From 'mong the Briggsian team.
Ere long, idle and slothful, this group
Disported on the sunny mountain top and
Sate at length in Akavitian stupor lay
Oblivious of the mighty Waddington and
Other noble summits, whose high Bajanian tops,
Mountains indeed of another kind, floated
Ethereal in the eastern sky above their Island
Counterparts which by comparison scarce mountains
Could be call'd.

V

At last they set themselves toward descent and
Without more ado except the tedious
Journey home arrived at last
All numb of mind and dollars spent.

Participants Regained: (Oct.12- 13): Sandy Briggs, Don Morton, John Pratt, Jules Thomson, Selena Swets, Tak Ogasawara and Peter Rothermel.

POGO PEAK

Tony Vaughn
October 20

Pogo Peak is a worthy alternative to the scheduled Sutton Peak, with less driving and a day trip into the bargain and no sleeping in a tent in the rain.

We met up at the usual Shell station at 06:00 under low cloud, so low in fact that we had to drive through it to get over the Malahat. By Nanaimo it was raining, but as Rick predicted, by Port Alberni it was again low cloud with a hint of improvement.

We turned off Highway 4 at Sutton Pass and parked shortly thereafter. It was walking from here on, so at 09:00 we left the vehicle and started down the logging road adjacent to the Kennedy River, passing a sign on the bridge warning of alder snag creation. Not knowing what had created these alder snags we proceeded anyway. Farther down the road we noticed that alders on both sides of the road had been girdled, which would allow them to die, break off and fall across the road, effectively blocking the road for all forms of traffic, both human and animal. Later inquiries informed us that this practice is done to prevent the alders from seeding in open areas and competing with other trees. However it does appear that within the next year or two this road will not be passable if all these trees come down.

After a couple of kilometres, we turned onto a branch road following cairns which soon disappeared and had us wandering aimlessly up and down the road through thick alder looking for a flagged route up the slopes. Not finding one, we took off into the bush and proceeded to bushwhack

in the general direction of Pogo's East Ridge, without any visibility. This really didn't make any difference as the bush was too high to see over anyway, so we made slow, wet progress through 8'-high bracken, devil's club and bush until we reached the trees. This made the going a little better, although the slopes were steep, wet and slippery, but there was lots of wet bush for green belays.

After 3 ½ hours of climbing up steep bushy slopes, over loose rocks and up slimy gullies, we finally broke out of the bush and into the alpine and onto exposed wet and slippery rock. It was now 2:10 pm with an estimated two more hours to the summit over steepening wet rock. If we went we wouldn't get down in daylight and even though we had blazed our route up, the chances of finding our way back through bush this thick was not very promising, and we didn't have a view anyway. So with the decision made to turn around, we relaxed and ate lunch. Naturally, having made our decision, the clouds started to lift and we got glimpses of Steamboat Mountain and across the valley to Cat's Ears and Triple peak.

The trip back down was uneventful other than slipping, falling, dodging falling rocks, and bouncing off trees. We reached the vehicle with daylight to spare, and were back in Victoria by 10:40 pm with dinner at the Westwinds in Port Alberni on the way. Thanks George, for doing all the driving.

Participants: Rick Eppler (leader), Jules Thomson, Mike Hubbard, George Urban, Tony Vaughn.

THE MOUNTAIN REVEALED

Erik Wille

July 21, 1999

July 20, 1999- the phone rang at 9:00 pm and I casually answered it. The voice on the other end asked the rhetorical question that has been asked so many times before, "Are you in or are you out?" Of course I was in, it is what I lived for.

I started to pack immediately, knowing I would need to get a good night's sleep, seeing as the pickup time was 4:00 am. As I read down the list, checking off the items I needed, I began to wonder where we were headed. Placing my pack by the front door, I quickly headed for bed; the time read 10:30 pm. Tossing and turning, I lay in bed trying to force myself to sleep, but my head raced remembering the last time Chris had called me.

The alarm rang as I lay in disbelief. How could it be time to leave already - I barely shut my eyes? Slowly dressing in sweats, I dragged myself to a window. Peering out, I saw the grey Durango glinting in the light of the street lamp.

I piled my gear into the open hatch of the vehicle and climbed in. Frank was wide awake, thank God, because he was driving. Chris was riding shotgun and greeted me with the nodding of his head. Darkness surrounded me again and the next time I awoke, we were passing through the small town of Port Alberni. Joe Taylor sat to my right gazing at the mountains that rose on either side of Sutton Pass. We must have picked Joe up at Payless Gas just outside of Victoria. Joe was an experienced climber who

always kept his head in tough situations and I felt privileged to have him along on this expedition, just in case we got into trouble.

I asked Chris, who was the leader of our group - the "A Team" - where we were going. "Cats Ears", he said with a smile. I remembered seeing the peak's defences last year from an adjacent mountain. Vertical snow fields, avalanche chutes and knife-edged ridges were all things that were going to have to be overcome, and that's not even mentioning the five hundred foot pure granite summit block.

The Durango turned off the highway on to Marion Main, an old logging road which allowed for easy access, taking us right into the centre of three big peaks. Cats Ears rose to our left, partially blocked by a subsidiary ridge from Triple



Erik, Joe and Frank on the approach to Cats Ears.

Photo: Chris Wille

Peak, the one I had the joy of climbing last year.

Frank parked the vehicle and we all jumped out. The mountain air filling our lungs was cool against the skin. "It's like being reborn," Chris said, holding his arms out to his side. It had almost been completely silent to this point, but as soon as we started to suit up into our climbing gear, everyone began to get excited.

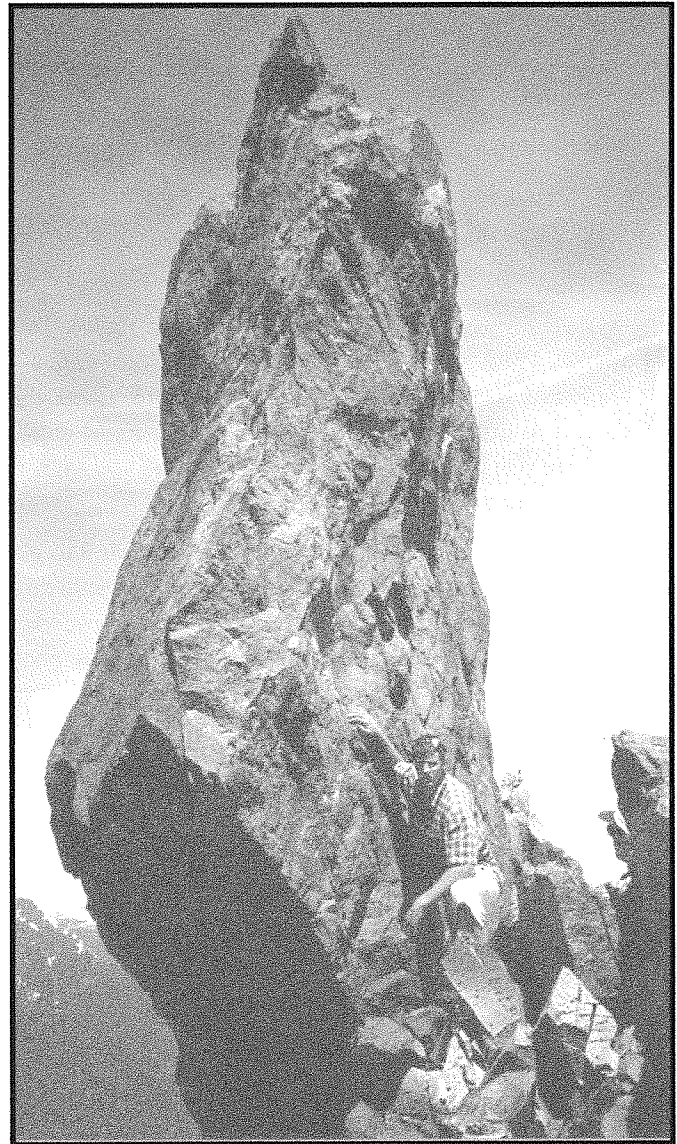
"What's the line of attack on this bad boy - we going straight through all that salmon berry?" I grinned. Anyone who has climbed in the Mackenzie Range knows first hand the horrors of salmon berry.

"No, no, the snow level's high man, we're just going to march straight through the trees 'til we gain that ridge on Triple. From there, all we have to do is traverse from that ridge onto Cats Ears west snow field. It'll be a piece of cake." Chris had it all mapped in his head. I tell ya, if you're ever looking to climb a mountain, you can't ask for a better guide.

We left the vehicle at 8:00 am in the shadows of the surrounding peaks. The trek up the ridge wasn't too bad; the high snow made climbing much easier because all the potential obstacles such as salmon berry and devil's club were buried six feet below you. The ridge itself was steep, and I thanked the slide alder as it is your best friend on an exposed bluff. Once the ridge was gained, it was a short trek along a still-frozen alpine lake before the boys and I descended into the pass which led to the western snow field. It was perfectly clear and the sun beat down on us as we stopped to lather ourselves in sunscreen. Cats Ears stood ominously in front of us, as if it dared us to climb it, knowing it would wipe us like crumbs from its face.

On the descending ridge, we passed a grove of wild mountain lilies. "Hey, I think these would look great in my front bed," Joe said as he carefully removed one of the plants and placed it into a Ziplok bag. I didn't like this at all - you're not supposed to take anything from the mountain in fear of offending the mountain gods that watch over our every move. Still I said nothing and continued on in silence.

It was only 11:30 am as we reached the top of the snow field - the firm snow made for quick travel. We stopped underneath the bluffs that riddled the mountain to discuss our next move. "Gets dicey to the right," Chris noted. "I'm not going to go right, no way." Frank had climbed the highest peaks on the island and it wasn't like him to become spooked so quickly. It was cold in the shadow cast by the cliffs, and I wasn't sure if it was the breeze or the sight of what was to come that made the goose bumps rise on my arms.



Erik Wille on Cats Ears

Photo: Chris Wille

"OK, if we go right we can gain access to the snow field directly below the summit block. It's a sure thing. Or we can go left and work our way up through the bluffs to reach the ridge, which may lead to the summit." Chris had narrowed the decisions down to two. We decided to go left and I took the lead since I was the most comfortable on the rock. My hands were numb from gripping rock not yet warmed by the sun. I loved the rock, the elevation gains were quick and I felt safe as long as I could jam my fingers into a crack. As I led, the others followed without difficulty. As the ridge was ascended, we could peer right out at the Broken Island Group off the coast. It was glorious, but I doubt many could enjoy it considering the ridge dropped away a thousand feet on the other side, making even my stomach turn.

We moved carefully along the saw blade, hoping that, beyond, it would link up with the summit. The ridge was full of spires that had to be approached very carefully in fear that the rock would fall away, taking you with it into nothingness.

"It's a bust," I called back to them as I stood at the edge of a huge cliff which separated the ridge from the adjacent summit. Chris started swear, it being too late in the day to re-plan a line of attack. We sat with smiles on our faces, enjoying the outdoors and our place in it, as we ate the food from our pack. Our bodies just craved the nutrient provided.

"How are you holding up?" I asked Frank, who had been moving very slowly on the ridge. I could see he wasn't moving with confidence and I wondered where he had lost it. "I'm all right, just a little shaky - bloody exposed," he spoke shaking his head.

"Time to roll boys, it's 4:00 pm already - don't ask me where the time went - Erik, you lead and we'll tag along behind you," Chris said as he shouldered his pack.

"This is as high as we're going to get on this rock, eh?" Joe said, pulling something out of his pack. "It's a prayer flag. I picked it up in Tibet and I'm going to leave it up here. It's supposed to provide safe travel and good luck." Joe tied the tattered flag to a rock.

As I led, I felt good. Joe was bringing up the rear and Chris was giving Frank some encouragement. I scaled a vertical piece of rock and guided Frank from above. Chris came up no problem and was about to say something to me, but a blood-curdling scream made him hold it in. Thoughts of David* ran through my head as I looked over the edge to see Joe kneeling on the rocks.

"My shoulder, it's out," Joe spoke heavily, taking deep breaths between each word. Quickly climbing down the pitch, I came to his aid. He was swearing as he took his shirt off, exposing his shoulder. It was out all right - dislocated. I'm not sure what made me do what I did next - maybe intuition or something. I took Joe's hand, raising his arm above his head and very gently twisted it to the right. There was a loud POP! as the shoulder slid back into place.

"Erik, you did it man, you did it! The pain is gone, how did you know?" Joe spoke with the emotion I thought a grown man had lost. Standing there speechless, I couldn't answer him - never have I seen a man in tears before. I guess I have that effect on people. I helped Joe up the pitch and we moved down the ridge without much effort. I always enjoy going down the snow, digging the heels of my boots into the snow, using them as skis.

What can I say? The rest of the trip was uneventful. We didn't get the summit, and to this day the peak still lingers in my mind. Giving Joe some Tylenol 3's on the way down made him entertaining, and I was quite proud of myself being able to confront a situation like that. That day earned me a rightful spot with the "A Team." Chris gave me the highest praise when he told me that.

As we left the Valley of the Chicken in the safety of the Durango, Cats Ears grimaced at us coldly. I made a promise to myself that I would return to tame that tabby.

Participants: Chris, Frank and Erik Wille and Joe Taylor

*(Editor's note - David refers to Earl Birney's classic poem of two men climbing in the Rockies)

2002 PHOTO C



**MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY
(ON FRONT COVER)
MARCELO LACA**

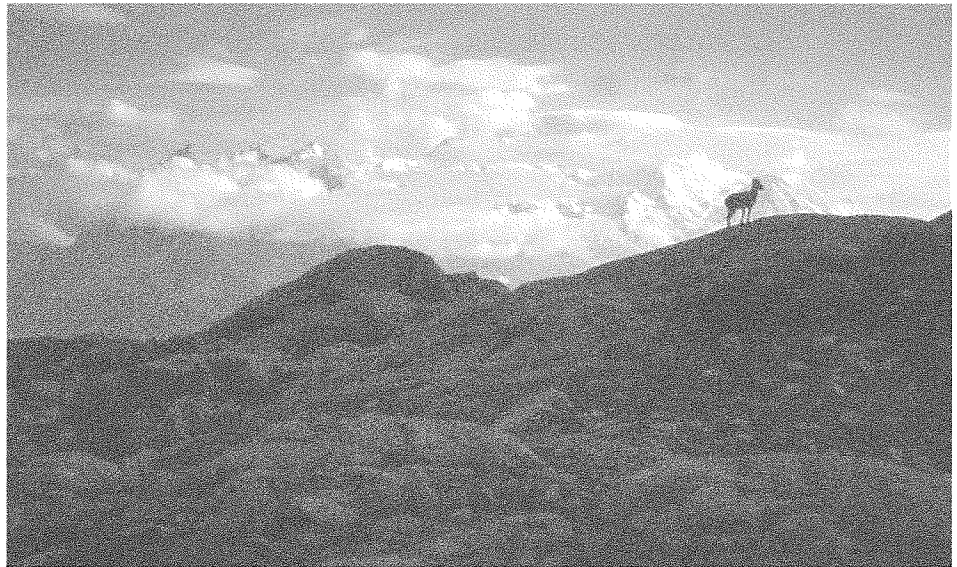
MOUNTAIN PRINT

CHRISTINE FORDHAM



V.I. MOUNTAIN SCENE HINRICH SCHAEFER

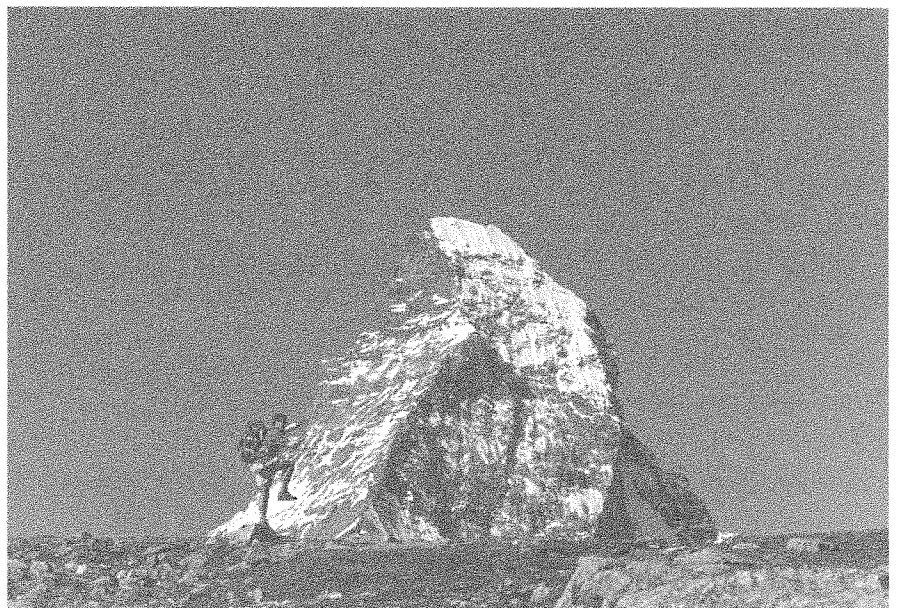
CONTEST WINNERS



NATURE

CHRIS SCHREIBER

**MOUNTAIN SCENERY
(FACING CONTENTS)
CHARLES TURNER**



MOUNTAIN HUMOUR

MARCELO LACA

COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

SOUTH CHILCOTIN TRAVERSE

Claire Ebendinger
July 8–15

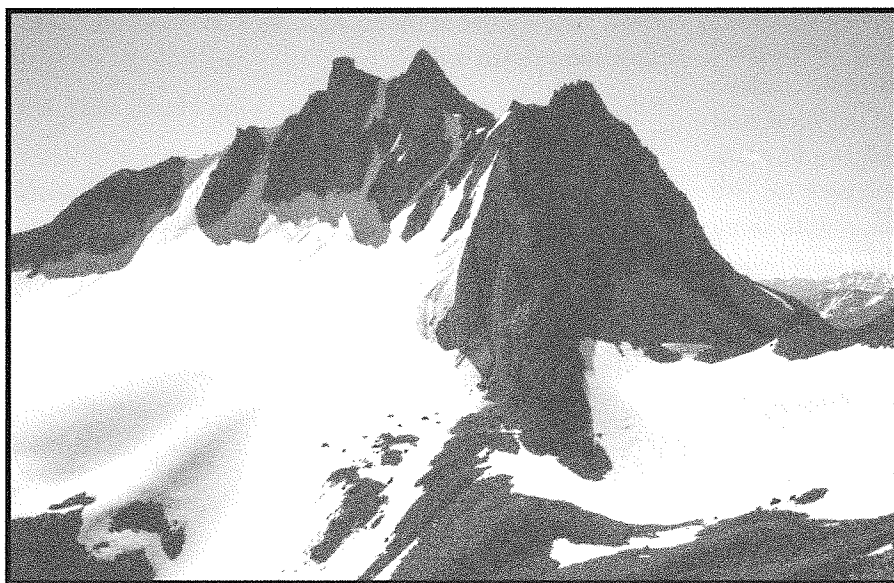
A five-hour drive from Vancouver to Goldbridge in misty weather, a sunny forecast for the week ahead, and the anticipation of a fun adventure with friends, in mountain terrain I'd heard tantalizing stories about..... I was grinning with excitement; what a great way to start week two of my summer holiday.

After a delicious Indian meal prepared by Vinit, we settled for the night at the quiet forestry campsite of the west shore of Tyaughton Lake. In the morning we met with Dale, the floatplane pilot, at the Tyaughton lodge, as pre-arranged by Vinit. Soon we were in the air, flying over smoothly shaped ridges, attractively colored with shades of brown, interrupted with long patches of snow, and lined with nuances of green at lower elevations. Dale was very friendly and keen to give us a "flight commentary," veering off route somewhat to show us the highlights of the area. Vinit, Russ and Barb had hiked there the previous summer and were identifying the summits, valleys and cols they had explored. We also had a good view of Mt. Sheba, which we were planning to climb on the way out. Within half an hour we landed on Lorna Lake, in awe as we admired the gorgeous scenery around us.

We settled for a nice spot at the north end of the lake to set up camp, and decided to spend the day exploring the nearby passes. We did a loop up Lorna pass, to Elbow pass and returned to camp along the Big Creek valley. As we saw some fresh big-bear tracks in the mud, we made sure to call out loudly when we walked through bushy sections. The evening light on the ridges created a show of golden-orange

variations on the ridges and summits. This would have been an interesting place to spend the week, but we were committed to a hike out and had no way of contacting the pilot, if needed. The next day we started our hike to Deer Pass (over Lorna Pass, along Tyaughton creek and across, and up the long, gradual trail to our destination). The dry brown ridges dotted with alpine flowers, the pine forests with big patches of blue lupines, the slopes of flowering yellow balsam, the coast mountains covered with snow in the distance, (and the pestering mosquitoes in the valley).....we had it all, wherever we looked. It was as magical as they had told me. Actually, Barb kept telling me that the flowers were much nicer the previous summer. I believe her, as many slopes were covered with leaves and wilted blossoms which would have been at their prime a week earlier.

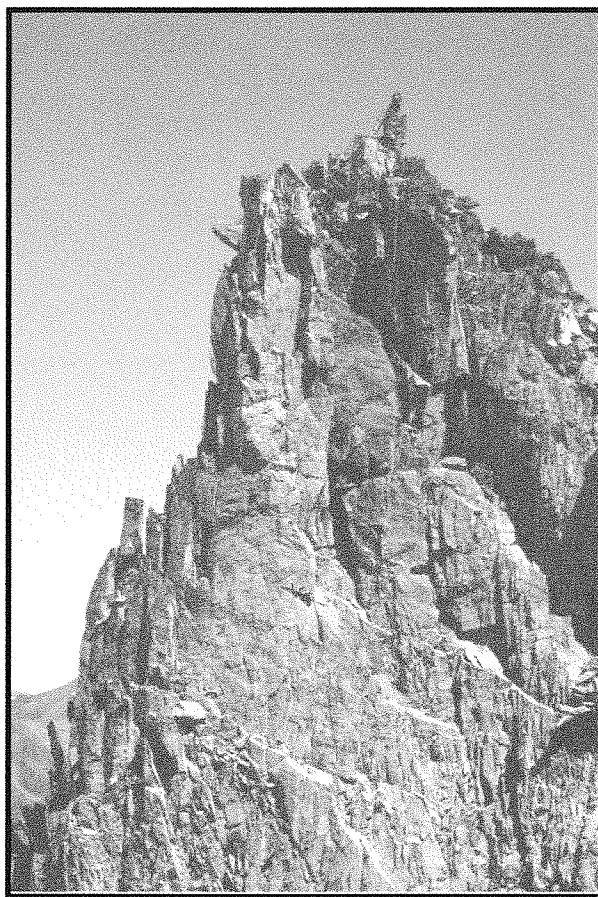
So, with bugs in mind and scenery at a premium, we opted for a camp at the pass. We had endless views of dry ridges on the east side, and snowy peaks on the west side, a big tarn for water, and a small sheltered hollow to protect us from the wind....and again, the evening light show as the sun was setting. The next morning we set off to climb Mt Sheba. Walking along side of the long ridge, we followed a faint route going south-east, and found our way through a scree gully that led us to a reasonable, not-too-loose rocky ridge. Russ' determination and our desire to get a summit was convincing enough for Vinit and Barb to keep going when the route was uncertain, and we soon found a way up the ridge, leading us to the summit.



Mt. Sheba

Photo: Claire Ebendinger

We were rewarded with great views, a relaxing lunch below the top, and a fun route back, circling the mountain on the north side on easy going snow slopes and back onto the



Russ on the summit of Mt. Sheba Photo: C. Ebendinger

ridge. While Vinit and Russ headed straight back to camp, Barb and I had fun taking photos and snoozing on the upper slopes in the sun. What a paradise! The next day we covered a fair bit of ground, heading down to Gun Creek, following the horse trail to Trigger and Hummingbird Lakes (Oh, what a refreshing swim we had!), checking out the horse camp on the way, and crossing more flower meadows. We arrived at Spruce Lake late in the day, tired but pleasantly surprised to see no one around, though we did hear voices from the lodge in the distance later on. From our lakeside campsite we watched and listened, as the loons swam by and called throughout the evening, as if they were reminding us to keep this special place close in our hearts.....not to forget when we are back

in our daily lives far away....

We had two days left and decided to head up to Windy Pass and over to Taylor Basin, with the option of climbing up Eldorado Mountain if the weather cooperated. The clouds were moving in fast, and we had a five-minute shower. On the way down from Windy Pass we had our first human/horse encounter of the week. The group of riders were a friendly bunch of tourists and local tour guides, who stopped for a brief chat. It gave us a realistic picture of what the ranchers and original explorers of this area looked like, and a reminder that the trail system in the Park* was established by them. We also met a large group of mountain bikers heading down the old mining road from Taylor Col; they were on a day trip from Tyaughton Lodge. By the time we reached the col the strong wind was chasing the clouds away, and we set up camp on a ledge overlooking south and west. We were treated to a sunset of clouds lit up with fire and lined with gold, and a windy but clear night.

We woke up to blue sky, and had a good look at the route to Eldorado before heading down to Taylor Basin. As we entered forested areas and saw many bear droppings on the way we made sure to use our whistles and loud voices. We left the packs in Taylor Cabin and found a nice route/trail up through the forest and meadows to the high ridge. We were looking at the slopes of Eldorado where Vinit remembered seeing mountain goats a few years ago. We only had to turn our heads to notice a herd of over fifty goats on the slopes across from us. We watched through the binoculars, as young kids and adults began to walk up the snow slopes; they went up

the grassy slopes as we followed them on our way to the summit. What a show !! They contoured and disappeared out of sight below the top, and we continued 'til we couldn't go any higher. We sat by a rock shelter, out of the wind, and enjoyed lunch while checking the various ridges and peaks we knew, and making plans for trips to come back to. We had a leisurely hike back down to the cabin, a walk along the old road to the parking lot, and a rest while Russ jogged back to Tyaughton Lake to get the car and pick up our tired bodies and foodless packs (thanks Russ). We did see our grizzly bear of the week as we were driving along; a cute young one who ran away when he saw the car. What a great

week!! The dinner at the Goldbridge Cafe was not choice, but it went down well.

Participants: Barb Baker, Russ Moir, Vinit Hosla, and Claire Ebendinger

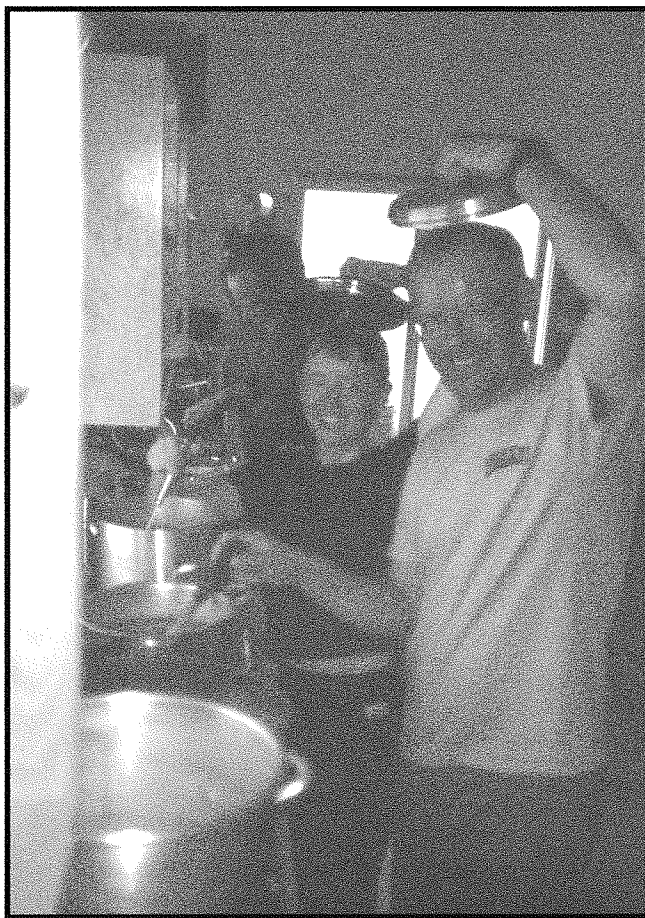
*If you have any interest in exploring the South Chilcotin Park, go soon. It is in the plans to take it out of Park status, to allow logging and mining, and to destroy some of the beautiful places we went through... the easiest ones to access, and the most visited by the public. Check the websites mentioned in Russ' E-mail recently and make your voices heard; every bit of input adds to the lobbying process.

WAPTA TRAVERSE

The Young Ones and The Old Ones
April 7-10

Wapta Poem

*An exciting story has to be told,
A traverse of the Wapta, by young and by old.
We started the trek in a great white blizzard,
Straight up moraine with large pains in the gizzard.
Our first night at Peyto was such a delight,
Fresh food and fine friends and all felt just right.
Day number two, we sat on our asses,
Peyto Hut was so bright we needed sunglasses.
Albert's dinner was truly a taste sensation,
From sea kale to sauces, each course a creation.
Day 3's nav' through whiteout, we have to confess
At first caused a row between compass and GPS;
But safely we came to the new hut at Balfour,
Where Shannon's game of Mafia caused quite an uproar.
That evening, like kings, we ate and we ate,
Another wonderful meal, ending with Christie's cheesecake.
Then with Katy, our leader, we mounted high col,
And with help from Larry, onto Scott Duncan in no time at all.
We add further that here, the outhouse is high class,
It'll blow snow and ice straight up your ass.
So tonight is our last among these fine mountain slopes,
Of sunshine tomorrow, we have very high hopes.*



Doug & Christie cooking dinner. Photo: E. Kloppers



Approaching the Olive-St. Nicholas Col Photo: E. Kloppers

This was a great trip, despite the relentless whiteout and cold temperatures. It was special in being Doug's first backcountry ski traverse with his daughter Christie, a celebration of Viggo's 70th year!, the companionship of the two generations of friends and family, and in the way everyone contributed skills and fun. We were fortunate.

We also shared Peyto Hut with three young men, two of whom were friends of Katy and Albert. At work the day after we came out, Elsabé heard the call on the Park's radio reporting that in the whiteout Neil, the third fellow, had skied through a cornice over a cliff on the east side of the Balfour High Col and had died. Because of Katy's and Elsabé's work they heard firsthand the reports and saw the photographs from the accident scene. The following is an excerpt from Elsabé's letter to the Holms:

The Wapta traverse was the trip of a lifetime for me. Spectacular, terrifying, incredible, challenging, beautiful. . . . I could not ask for a more wonderful experience.

Upon our return, I wrote to my family and friends that I felt so alive! Yet the very next day, juxtaposed with that feeling of joy and life, the news of Neil's death at the same spot on the High Col we had just crossed drove home the reality of what we had experienced. The shadow of death had reached very close. How could this happen to a guy so competent and full of life, and why not to someone far less experienced, like me? It laid bare the utter fragility of life, and the random unpredictability of everything - fate marching along without hesitation or sympathy.

Admittedly, I am still dealing with Neil's death, and I don't know why it has affected me at such a strong and personal level. Even in brief moments it seems we can build bridges and make connections with strangers. I hardly knew those guys, yet . . . I remember their encouragement and stories during dinner. . . their snoring kept me awake half the night at Peyto Hut . . . and I think of Neil cheerfully fixing up my prussik and checking my harness as we said our goodbyes and left on separate paths that morning.

In a strange way, Neil's death has also made fiercely alive our experience, through the hazards we survived. That epilogue is now inextricably linked to my memory of our trip, and makes what we accomplished seem that much more precious. My vision of the icefields is filled with tremendous awe, respect and wonder, I think partly in tribute to Neil. It comforts to catch a glimpse of that sacred mystery of life and death reflected in the magic of pictures from our journey on the Wapta icefields.

Participants: The Young Ones - Christie Hurrell, Katy Holm, Shannon MacLachlan, Elsabé Kloppers, Peter Holloway and The Old Ones - Doug Hurrell, Rudy Brugger, Albert Van Citters, Viggo and Judith Holm



Group photo by Doug Hurrell

THE TRAMP AND THE LADY

John Pratt

10–11 August

George Urban and I arrived at Harrison Hot Springs around 12:30 am due to having made a later than planned start from Victoria the previous evening (to say nothing of a horrid ferry line-up), and rather than waste time looking around for a place to put up the tent where we would not be pestered, just stretched out in the back of his van, sleeping better than one would normally expect in such circumstances. The next day was fine and we drove the 2-3 km back into the townsite where we had breakfast at the 'Executive Hotel': next time, we'll take the trouble to break out the stoves and cook up some Cream of Wheat.

Apart from one washed-out stretch, the road up to the Breakenridge area was in good shape, but that didn't prevent the van from loudly blowing its right rear tire – so, half an hour to fix that. Anon, we were on our way again and in due course reached the bridge over Snowshoe Creek, the starting-point for our successful Breakenridge trip of the previous year. We had decided to check out the valleys to the north, as Snowshoe Creek, while it 'goes', is tough and

leaves a longish overland traverse to the Cairn Needle area. The next creek to the north, Gold Creek, did not look at all nice: the little side-road ended in a tangle of bush after just 50m and the end of that valley seemed as out of reach as the far side of the moon. So, we dismissed that approach and continued our northward journey to Butter Creek, the next valley on.

Now, despite what subsequently happened, this is the route of choice, since a good road – at least for walking – leads up the valley on the north side of this west-to-east running creek. The problem is that the road is on the wrong side and this very vigorous creek cannot be easily crossed. In addition, it is guarded by some of the worst overgrown logging-slash I've ever seen. Immediately on leaving the road and stepping into this jungle, I received four hornet stings, with more to come – eleven, as it turned out, plus a few for George, but it was me they really went after. To misquote Julie Andrews, "the slash was alive with the sound of hornets;" I've never seen so many in one place at one time. To cut a long story short, we bagged our attempt on Traverse Peak and Cairn Needle and hiked back to the van

where, somewhat the worse for wear, we changed into fresh clothes, cleaned up a bit and then began the long drive back to Harrison, which we reached after dark.

The next morning was fine and clear and we stumbled, bleary-eyed, out of the back of the van before driving off to find somewhere open for breakfast over which we could discuss what might be salvaged from what to date had been something of a disaster. Thus we ended up in the Cheam Range with Lady Peak and Knight Peak as the official objectives. After a long, steep logging-road



Alpine country above Butter Creek, Harrison Lake area

Photo: John Pratt

drive, we arrived at the parking lot in the high, sub-alpine bowl between Cheam and Lady Peaks. The scramble up Lady Peak was pleasant and gave great views with a little exposed climbing to reach the topmost point. We decided against continuing on to Knight and instead descended back to the Cheam-Lady col from where we climbed Cheam Peak via a well-beaten path. Not as sporting a route as I had followed in February 1986 from Popkum (on the Trans-Canada highway), but still it was good to be up there again. We descended Cheam via the NW ridge before dropping off it down to the left and making a loop back to the parking lot.

Well, I at least came home with one new summit (George with two) albeit a fairly minor one. Perhaps the real value of this trip lies in the information we gained about the gorgeous alpine playground that lies north of Breakenridge. Once clear of the valley, the climber would feel he'd died and gone to heaven, the difference being that he'd have it all to himself and his friends. Getting up there is the difficult bit, but we think we now know how that can be done. A re-match is slated for 2003. Any takers?

Participants: George Urban and John Pratt

CASTLE TOWERS – MIXING MEMORY AND DESIRE

Rob Macdonald

August 4–9

I'd not been out much of late, and so it was with some trepidation that I shouldered my 50+ lb pack and followed Rick Johnson up the Black Tusk Trail. Two hours later, we were standing knee deep in the flowers of Taylor Meadows revived a lot by the views of Garibaldi, the Black Tusk and Tantalus. Thinking to myself that I'd cracked the fitness barrier, on we plodded toward Helm Lake, veering over toward the NW side of Panorama Ridge. The flowers were unbelievable. After gaining a lot more vertical, and no little horizontal, we slid, dragged and lumbered into Gentian Pass at about 6:30 pm – after about 9 hours on the road and maybe 6000 vertical feet. I was amazed I was still standing. The weather had been great but Gentian Pass seemed like some kind of divide, the clouds and mosquitoes descending in equal ferocity. We hunkered in our small tent, slightly wasted but happy to be where we were.

Next morning dawned somewhat clear but not so bright – the peaks were socked in and it looked a bit hopeless for any peak bagging. Instead, we angled up the ridges, looked at flowers, frost heavings and – yes, mosquitoes. Rick pointed out the chewed grass line that delineated how far marmots were willing to go in their grazing forays – the fine line between sweet new food and risk from predators, I suppose. There must be some rather long evolutionary DNA that figures out the balance between marmot speed, predator speed and grass nutrition to a short, plus or minus, few inches. Amazing the things you ponder when stuck in a tent for 24 hours without a book.

We cast a vote (I got the deciding vote, due to age) and decided we'd wait the day out – if the next day was no good, it was out to the car, otherwise up we'd go. It was good. So we trudged upward through that terrain that had excited those famous BCMC mountaineers so many years before, with breathtaking views on all sides. A scramble up a ridge, a narrow connection to the next ridge, a cross over steep, hard snow, Rick chopping occasional steps, and then onto those large granite blocks that bedeck this ridge. Rapidly, we made the ugly, exposed little drop down to a col. Then a short climb up to the summit tower which was passed to the left on large, loose, exposed blocks and we're there. I had wanted to climb this peak for many years, perhaps setting my sights on it during a distant slide show. I saw a picture of Dave Tansley and friends huddled in a small slot somewhere on this peak, and Dave had that smile I remember so well – almost apologetic for enjoying himself in a fairly miserable location into which he had lured his climbing partners. And, so, as we scrambled this ridge and its summit tower, I felt strongly the footsteps of that true mountaineer.

The next day we staggered out of Gentian Pass, chased by more mosquitoes than I've seen in my entire life. After negotiating the Helm Glacier and dawdling through the interesting volcanic terrain at its foot, we were a bit put out to read a sign down below Taylor Meadows suggesting a rampant bear was on the loose and, under no circumstances, to go the way we had come. Ignorance is bliss.

Participants: Rick Johnson and Rob Macdonald

SECTION SUMMER CAMP IN THE TONQUIN VALLEY

Paul Clements*

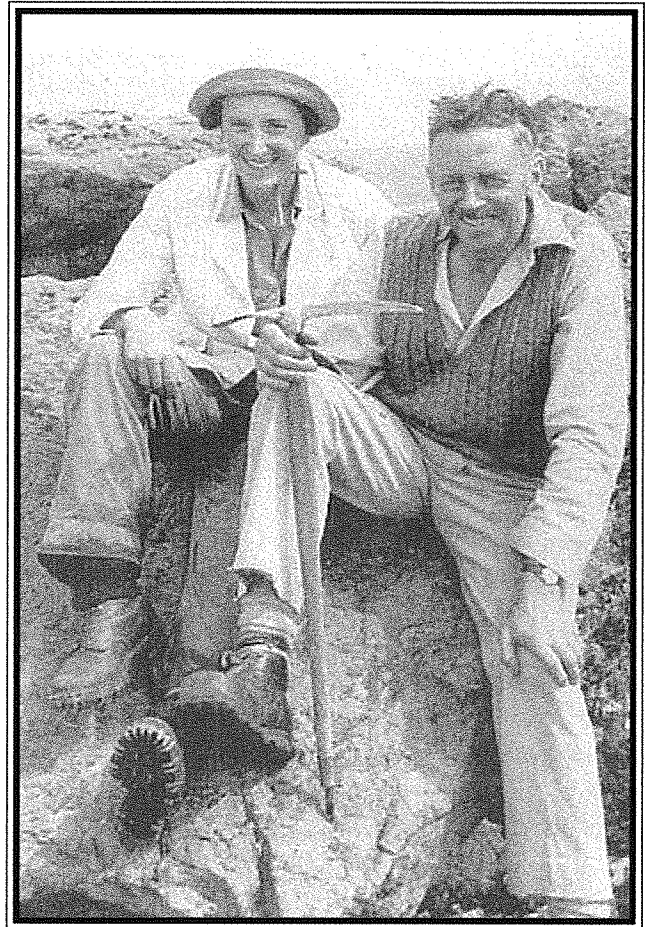
August 2–10

Historical Background. The Wates-Gibson Memorial Hut (1900m/2400'), nestled under the rugged escarpment of the Fraser-Ramparts along the Great Divide west of Jasper, AB, presented a dramatic setting to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Vancouver Island Section. The area has many historical ties to our section, notably the contributions made by Ethne and Rex Gibson, who were active members from Victoria. The hut was officially opened on July 21, 1963 by Ethne and their daughter Kathleen, in memory of Rex who died in a climbing accident in 1957.

Rex Gibson was the President of the Alpine Club of Canada from 1954-1957. Rex' climbing journal records his first climbs in Canada in 1927 in the Tonquin area (Bastion, Barbican, Postern -a first ascent, and Drawbridge). His companions were Cyril Wates, Ernie Niederer, and Helen Burns. After Ethne's death in 1997, Kathleen made plans to commemorate her mother by installing a plaque at the Wates-Gibson Hut next to that of her father. Kathleen achieved this goal during the section camp. It became part of our week of climbing to give recognition to Ethne Gibson, who shared her husband's passion for the mountains and was a climber in her own right.

On the plaque are quoted these lines from Geoffrey Winthrop Young:

*What if I live no more those kingly days?
Their might sleeps with me still.
I dream my feet upon the starry ways;
My heart rests in the hill.
I may not grudge the little left undone:
I hold the heights, I keep the dreams I won.*



Ethne and Rex Gibson on Mt Whympers, June 1949.

Bruce O'Hare, Katherine Gibson, Julie Henderson and Rob Macdonald. This 2002 camp was the second summer VI Section camp and the first with professional guide support.

2002 Vancouver Island Section Summer Camp

The first night we stayed at the Edith Cavell YH, in preparation for the 17 km trip to the Wates Gibson Hut. Each person had a gear allowance of 25 lbs, which allowed for some luxuries for the communal dinners. This would be carried on horseback to the Tonquin Valley Adventure's camp located by the Amethyst Lakes. The outfitter had advised not to package our gear into special containers as the wranglers would be re-packing everything into their own narrow boxes. They like small, soft packages, but without

The Vancouver Island Section (formerly the Victoria Section) was started in 1912 by A.O. Wheeler. While individuals attended GMC's and an attempt was made in 1974 to hold a section camp, it was not until 1987 that Rick Eppler organized the first Summer Section Camp, based at Lake Lovely Water in the Tantalus Range. It was attended by Rick, Sandy Briggs, Don Berryman, Wendy Richardson,

Ziploc bags of spaghetti sauce! However, everything arrived safely.

Saturday morning we headed out in a light dusting of snow along the trail paralleling the Astoria River. Towering above us, the summit of Edith Cavell was shrouded in clouds. Charles immediately took the lead and set a blistering pace which no one was able to match. Our average time to the hut was 5 hours (range: 4-6 hours).

Charles and Tony had the wood stove fired-up by our arrival. We quickly settled in. The hut had ample sleeping accommodations, a reasonably-sized kitchen and living area. I went down to "inspect" the outhouses only to discover that they were bare of toilet paper. After a very exhaustive search of the cabin, we came to the unsettling conclusion that there was no TP to be had - anywhere! Graham prepared a wonderful meal that evening. Regrettably, the wine was still with the wrangler, set for pickup at their camp the following day.

Sunday morning broke and the cloud level was still below the adjacent summits. The group decided that this would be a good day to stay low and let the peaks "get in condition." Fifteen of the group climbed Clitheroe, directly east of Amethyst Lake. Past the outfitter's cabins they left the trail and headed north in whiteout, navigating by compass to the SW shoulder of Clitheroe. The climb was an easy scramble over loose rocks, although slippery in the wetness. As the team summited, the clouds cleared off for a commanding view of the Ramparts.

Since the weather was not very inviting, I had decided to stay behind and explore the Surprise Point area. By 4 pm, I was alone at the prearranged meeting place at the end of Amethyst Lake waiting for the arrival a rowboat containing the provisions and equipment brought in by the wrangler. The sun was shining and the lake was shimmering in the light breezes. After an hour, I decided to hike around the end of the lake to the outfitter's camp. While the camp cook treated me to coffee and sweets, I learned that half of our gear had been flown in by helicopter the previous day. The balance, to be hauled in on horseback, was overdue by several hours. So I filled my pack with as much gear as I could carry and headed back to camp. The Clitheroe team arrived a few hours later with the balance of our provisions - with Christy also carrying her chemistry text which must have weighed 10 pounds!

With all the supplies in, we got down to the business of climbing. The peaks in the Tonquin are mostly composed of solid quartzite. From a rock quality point of view there is no comparable area in the Canadian Rockies. However,

because of the recent snowfalls, it was apparent that the rock routes on the Ramparts would not be in condition for a few more days.

Monday was a cold and miserable summer day. The Thunderbolt crew departed the hut about 7 am and headed back along the trail to Chrome Lake. At the base of a prominent ridge, we broke to the right and started to climb up through the trees on a pleasant low-angled grassy slope. After several minutes, Sylvia looked back to the group and commented on how we "coasties" must be feeling at home with all this bushwhacking. I thought to myself, "What bushwhacking? This is a pleasant hike." In under an hour, we crested the shoulder above the trees. From this point, the route to the summit was straightforward. We proceeded over two moderately angled snow fields and then along a short rock ridge to the top. After a brief, cold stop, we headed down to a more sheltered spot for lunch, and then a great boot-ski back to the bottom of the snow field. Not content with the route up, Sylvia chose a different descent, ultimately leading the group down to Chrome Lake and a traverse along the side of a muddy bog. Perhaps she felt that we would be more "at-home" in the water. All told, a relaxing but cold day in the mountains. Lisa's crevasse rescue instruction was most useful and enjoyed by all.

The weather improved on Tuesday. At about 6:30 am, a large group headed west towards Simon Pass. Sylvia and Rick led two rope teams up different routes of the glacier on the west side of Outpost Peak. Lisa led a rope with Jules, Myles and myself towards McDonnell. As we approached the top of the pass, the valley opened up to a spectacular view of McDonnell, Bennington, Memorial and Outpost. We had a bird's-eye view of both rope teams on Outpost. It was evident that the Fraser Glacier had receded significantly over the last century. It was now possible to cross over the pass without stepping on the icefield. At the toe of the glacier, we roped up and headed up towards the prominent south ridge of McDonnell.

While Myles is only 16, he was nonetheless an engaging conversationalist. In fact so engaging, before you knew what was happening, you were trapped! And so the journey up the mountain was packed with exciting non-stop conversation of special interest known only to a teenager. Myles was interrupted occasionally by Lisa asking him to "stop talking and pay attention" or "stop talking and keep a tight rope"!

From the ridge, we were able to get a commanding view of Mt. Simon. It is the highest peak in the Rampart-Fraser area and is connected via a high summit ridge with McDonnell. Given the lateness of the day coupled with an

obvious weather front bearing down on us, we decided not to carry through to Simon. So we dumped our packs and scrambled along an airy ridge to the summit of McDonnell.

That night we were entertained by lightning and thunder. On Wednesday morning, there was fresh snow up high and it was threatening to rain. Undaunted, small teams summited Simon Peak (the ridge is very narrow between McDonnell and Simon), McDonnell and Outpost (up the glacier on the west side, down the east side to the Eremite Valley) and others went to Surprise Point, each group finding the same white view. A real crevasse rescue on the Fraser Glacier added some excitement. Although roped, they were not expecting this crevasse because the slope was quite level, they were right beside moraine and they thought they were off the glacier because of all the rock debris in/on the snow. However, there was fresh snow, the path of the glacier took a strong turn at this point, and the crack was on the outside of the curve.

Thursday's beautiful sunshine was celebrated by our most successful day of climbing. The Drawbridge threesome left well before dawn (see Rick Hudson's article), two rope teams headed for Outpost, and a fourth party left for Surprise. Christy, succumbing to extreme guilt, decided to stay back and study more chemistry, and therefore was able to welcome Kathleen Gibson.

For Outpost I was partnered with Sylvia, Gerta and Myles. The weather was perfect. Working our way through a rock band, we made for the base of the west glacier. Gerta was singing Austrian mountain songs, with Sylvia competently leading the way. At the bottom of a steep snow slope, we roped up and put on crampons. We progressed for four pitches up the hard snow until we were able to move together on the rope. For the balance of the route we short-roped along a rocky ridge to the summit and the views!

Lisa, Gerta and I, with other commitments, hiked out the following day. Everyone else climbed. Geoff led a Grand Tour which circumnavigated Surprise Point Peak and at lunch they were surprised by the arrival of the Paragon team on Plan B, Memorial was won, the Eremite Valley hiked. The final night was a lot of fun. Following the "banquet", Rick and Sylvia entertained in fine style indeed, despite the guitar, with excellent renditions of Showell Styles and mainly Robert Service, and, together with the recitation of poems newly composed and others leading songs, all lingered late into the night.

My thanks to the many people who worked so hard to organise the trip, with a special thanks to Sylvia and Lisa for their competent leading, and Myles and Christy for all the

great entertainment they provided. Given the fall-like weather conditions, we nevertheless had a very active, good week of climbing.

The Tonquin may warrant a repeat visit. There are many more excellent rock and alpine objectives to meet. We saw only one other person pass by the Wates-Gibson Hut during the whole week, it was not crowded! A camp late in August would give the advantage of few mosses and perhaps drier rock. However, we were early enough for the flowers and - and some saw caribou.

Here is the final tally:

4th - *Mount Clitheroe* - Sylvia, Lisa, Rick, Charles, Selena, Larry, Tony, Rob, Geoff, Judith, Christy, Herbert, Jules, Myles, Terry

5th - *Thunderbolt Peak* - Sylvia, Larry, Geoff, Terry, Graham, Herbert, Charles, Paul: *Simon Pass Crevasse Rescue Instruction* - Lisa, Rob, Christy, Selena, Jules, Tony, Rob, Judith: *Simon Pass* - Viggo, Gerta, Rick

6th - *McDonnell Peak* (10,750') - Lisa, Jules, Myles, Paul: *Outpost Peak* (9150') - Sylvia, Graham, Larry, Herbert, Christy, Charles, Selena, Rick, Geoff: *Surprise Point* - Tony, Gerta, Viggo, Terry, Rob

7th - *McDonnell/Simon Peaks* (10,899') - Charles, Selena: *McDonnell Peak* - Rick, Geoff, Sylvia, Herbert, Larry, Terry, Judith: *Surprise Point* - Graham, Gerta, Myles: *Outpost Peak - returning via Eremite Valley* - Lisa, Jules, Rob

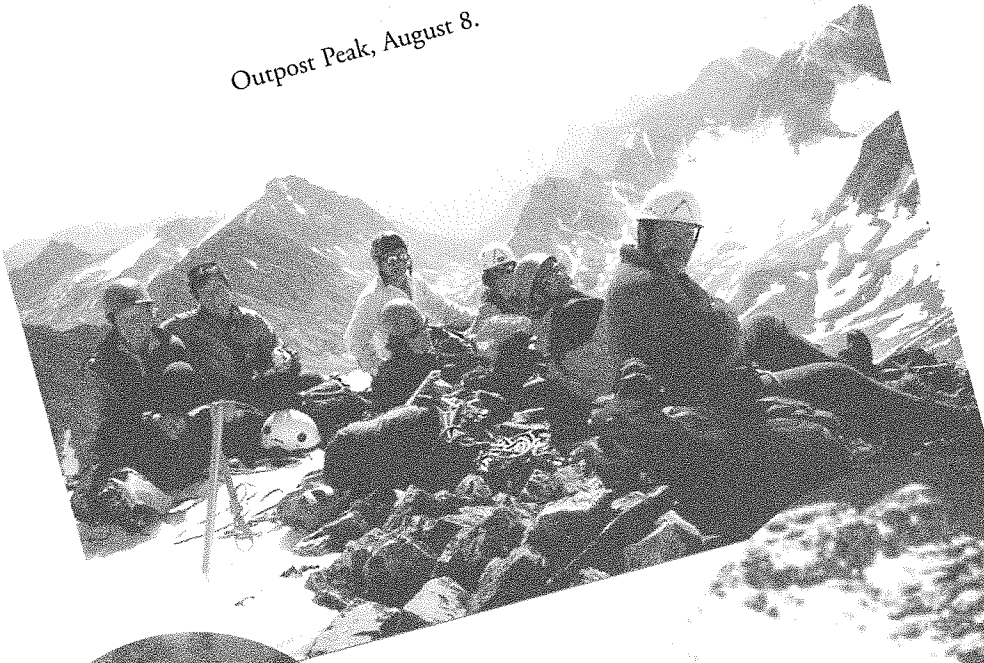
8th - *Drawbridge Peak* (8924') - Charles, Selena, Rick: *Surprise Point Loop* - Herbert, Graham, Tony, Jules, Rob, Geoff, Larry: *Outpost Peak* - Sylvia, Lisa, Myles, Gerta, Viggo, Terry, Paul, Judith

9th - *Surprise Point, Grand Tour* - Geoff, Herbert, Myles, Christy, Jules: *Surprise (plan B)* - Charles, Selena, Graham: *Memorial Peak* (9450', the SW peak of Outpost) - Sylvia, Larry, Rob: *Eremite Valley hike* - Tony, Terry, Viggo and Judith

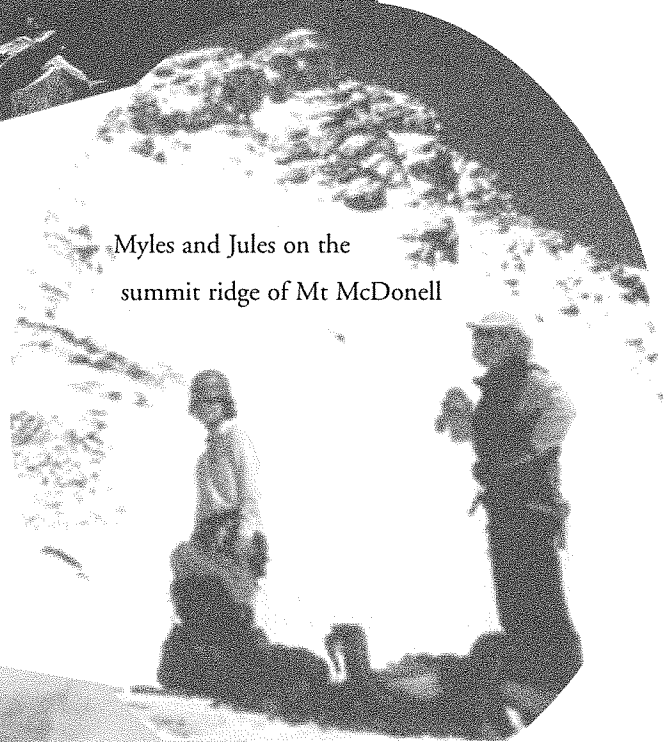
Participants: assistant leaders: Tony Vaughn (climbing coord.), Rick Hudson (maps), Charles Turner, Geoff Bennett, Jules Thomson, Paul Clements; Rob Adams, Graham Bennett, Larry Borgerson, Herbert Harzan, Christy Harzan, Viggo Holm, Selena Swets, Myles Thomson; Gerta Smythe (initiator), Terry Lunn (dinner coord.), Judith Holm (coordinator); ACMG Guide Sylvia Forest and Lisa Paulson, Assistant Guide.

*(with the addition of some climbing notes from Judith)

Outpost Peak, August 8.



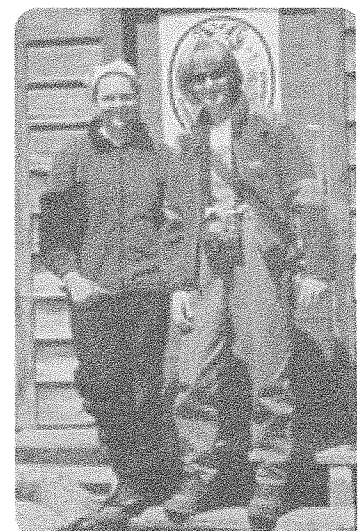
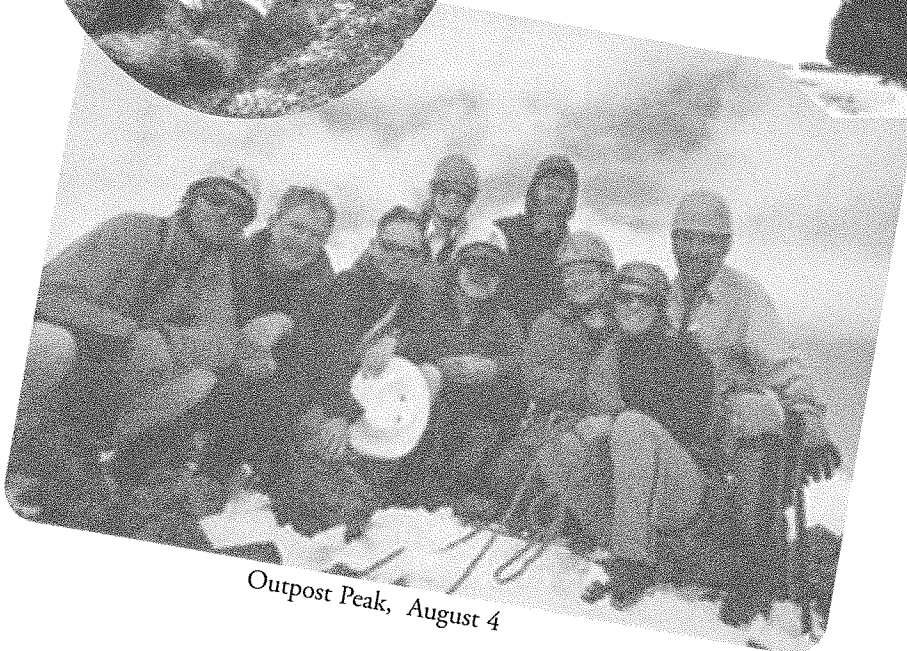
Myles and Jules on the
summit ridge of Mt McDonell



S e l e n a
a n d R o b
resting on the
way in to the
Hut.



Outpost Peak, August 4



Christy & Kathleen at the Hut

TWO HARES AND A TORTOISE

A special day in the Tonquin Valley

Summer Camp 2002

Rick Hudson

August 8: Fumbling for clothes in the dark .. shirt's inside-out again. The air, even in the hut, is cold. Through the moist windowpanes, patches of August snow lie on the forest floor under the trees.

Quick breakfast. Charles Turner (the Strong) is restless, and anxious to go. His boots are on, his pack being tugged closed. Selena Swets (the Swift) is munching muesli, ice axe in hand.

And then we're outside, where the air is cold and clean. The peaks, seen through the dark spruce, are glowing with the first touch of the sun. Goodbye Wates-Gibson Hut .. see you sometime later.

Down the path, over the creek (God, how those hares move across the ground!) and up the slow haul to the fork in the path below Surprise Point. We've been going half an hour, and despite the morning chill, we're all stripped down to the minimum. Across the flats. It's a boot-splashing swamp this year, after so much rain and snow these past few weeks.

The Tonquin Valley is not in any shape to climb right now; hence our choice for the day. With the summits snowed over, we're heading for Drawbridge Pass, the only break in that splendid line of quartzite peaks known as the Ramparts, that runs along the west side.



Amethyst Lake & the Ramparts - Drawbridge (l), Bastion, Turret, to Geike (r).
Photo: Rick Hudson

The land is open and level on the east side of the lower Amethyst Lake, and we reach the horse packer's camp just as the sun slips over the flank of Mt Clitheroe. The smell of frying bacon hangs in the air, and then we're gone, a lone dog barking after us. A glossy caribou bull looks up as we straddle the mud-churned trail, then quickly ignores us again. God, how these hares move across the ground!

At the northern tip of the upper lake the trail breaks into a braided network of hoof-squelching tracks. Three hours have passed, and the sun is warm on our backs. It's going to be a beautiful day .. only the second of the week. Run, tortoise, run; Selena and Charles are pulling away again, hopping across the ponds, leaping from tuft to tuft.

We turn west at last, crossing a stream. The slope rises. How does so much water manage to pool on an incline? Another half hour, and the ground dries to scrub grass and alpine flowers. The dwarf spruce fall back, and ahead we see the lower section of the pass .. a long snow couloir leading up to .. we're not sure.

The two hares pause at last, and we collapse on a flat rock, enjoying the sweet pleasure of being still, and eating. Bugs descend. We feed through gauze and tightly buttoned shirts. Charles is confident the snow line will go. Selena is less so. I am just grateful I'm still alive, and someone else is making the decisions.

Too quickly, we are away again. The grass ends and we are on talus that steepens. Charles is in front, kicking steps up the slope, which increases its angle imperceptibly as we gain height until, near the narrow chute at the top, where there's no way out except up or down, it's in your face. Who says snow can't lie on slopes steeper than 60°?

The upper basin opens into a wide bowl of snow and honey quartzite splashed with large pink garnets. The sky above is breathtakingly blue and magically cloud free. In front lies the last challenge, a 100m high wall of blocks and talus, the only break in the otherwise impregnable Ramparts.

The blocks aren't a problem, as we thread our way up on good handholds to the pass itself. Everything suddenly changes. From the shelter of the eastern bowl, we are hit by a freezing wind blowing from the valley below. This is the source of the mighty Fraser River, the Bennington Glacier hanging off the side of Simon (Fraser) Peak. And the view is startling .. across the valley the gigantic monoliths of Postern

noon, we are a very long way from home, and have been going hard for six hours.

The snow ridge leads onto the eastern face of the peak all right. It doesn't look *THAT* difficult. And there's still a lot of time .. it only gets dark at 9 pm .. really dark by 10 pm. And besides, the nights are pretty short.

The snow ridge goes, but the rock flank above is very loose. Everything slides. Weight is applied gently, as we wriggle, like salmon over gravel, up the wall to the ridge. Once there, the wind is strong, but the route to the top is easy, hopping across gigantic boulders and fractured blocks, skipping past snow patches. The summit itself is a splendid beacon of balancing monoliths, which Charles obligingly climbs, despite its teeter-totter appearance.

The sky has changed. To the west there are dark clouds. We descend carefully, using every trick to keep the footholds from avalanching down-slope. Finally, there's the relative safety of the snow ridge, and then we're back on the upper terrace.

It's mid-afternoon, and even the hares are tiring now. And we're a long way from the hut. Did I mention that already? A debate starts. We could retrace our steps. Safe. Predictable. A long end to a long day, around 3 sides of the Amethyst Lakes. Curiosity raises its head again. We *COULD* take a shortcut across the fourth side, between the lakes and the Ramparts. It doesn't look *THAT* difficult. I'm sure I mentioned that already.

Nothing ventured, nothing won. We descend a spectacular snow chute that drops a thigh-pounding thousand metres to the valley floor below. On the way down, we spy the problems we'll face as we head south along below the cliffs. In reality, because of the lay of the land, we fail to see much of the hidden ground that will turn a long day into a very long one.

Talus slopes and boulder fields. We hop across, pad over snow and ice basins, and climb to the next low ridge. Drop



Selena and Charles looking West from Drawbridge pass to Postern Mtn.

Photo: Rick Hudson

and Casemate Mountains block the view, smooth quartzite faces sweeping upwards in thousand metre walls .. grist for future alpinists' mills.

Here we stand on the Continental Divide. To the west, everything drains into the Pacific at the City of Vancouver. To the east, after many adventures, a drop of rain will empty into the Arctic Ocean beyond Inuvik. Such are the wonders of geography.

To the south, above the pass on which we stand, is Drawbridge Peak, an arLte of overhanging blocks that would take more time than we have to master. We choose the path of caution, and return down our route into the sheltered bowl to the east. At which point, curiosity raises its head .. what about the snow ridge on the east flank of Drawbridge Peak? We cross to the foot of it and gain height slowly. It's

into the next bowl, cross it, and up to the next one. In one such valley, a frail caribou bull regards us with a tired eye. He won't last the coming winter.

The topography seems endlessly repetitive. On our right, the rock walls of the Ramparts soar into the sky above. The clouds are licking around their tops, and the weather is turning. To our left, terminal moraines from buried glaciers block our view of the lakes.

Twilight is falling when we reach the final glacier. Ice tinkles as we stomp across, jumping the crevasses. Everything inside me aches. Yet still the hares move with such a lightness of foot. We climb the final lateral moraine, view our final gravel wall to descend, and plunge down. At last, after four hours, we are at the lake's corner. There's a clean stream, where we stop and drink and drink. It seems like forever since last we paused for a rest.

Soon we are on grass again. Back to ponds, swamps, mud and mosquitoes. It's a pleasure after that world of loose rock

and bare ice. Another half hour, and we pick up a path, just where we hoped we would. Morale soars. Soon we should be joining our track of the morning, under Surprise Point. It doesn't appear. It's almost dark now, and still it fails to materialise. We're too tired to care. Instead, we just stride in hip-grinding silence, one behind the other, shoulders raw, feet soaked.

An hour, and we realise we are indeed, on the right trail, and further ahead than we'd thought. Morale flickers momentarily. Finally, there's the familiar trail to the hut. The last half hour uphill seems to last forever. Now that we're in the home stretch, the old muscles protest, and refuse to fire on command. The Swift and the Strong vanish into the evening gloom, and I'm left alone with my thoughts, of a day wonderfully spent in the company of good friends.

And look! There's a light in the window, and the smell of dinner, kept warm for the late-comers.

Participants: Charles Turner, Selena Swets and Rick Hudson



Looking South from Drawbridge Pk. summit, Selena on left

Photo Rick Hudson

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

BLOWN AROUND ON MOUNT ADAMS

Charles Turner
May 18-20

A good weather forecast and a meeting at Tsawwassen brought the nine of us together for a ski extravaganza. Unfortunately, Dale showed up without his wallet, oops. Was misplaced on the ferry. How to smuggle him in? We could drop him on First Avenue and let him run across farmer's fields. Don suggested we put him in the ski carrier on his roof. But we decided nobody really notices him anyway so why not put him in the passenger seat. After agreeing to meet for gas across the border we were not to meet up again until Trout Lake some 6 ½ hours later. We self-registered at the Ranger Station and between us managed to come up with \$15 US each for permits.

Then the big decision - where to have dinner. Well there was only one choice so we went there. The only thing available was pizza so that's what we had. It's easy to make decisions in this town. We then drove as far as we could on the road to Cold Springs at 5,300 feet. We managed to drive to 4,300' where we were stopped by too much snow. This was about 9 pm so we camped there for the night. Up at 4 am. We were going to move our camp up the mountain to 7,000' or 8,000' and then maybe continue up to the summit. The skies were fairly clear but there was a very strong wind blowing even down here at 4,300'. After a while we met some people coming down, saying it was too windy to go anywhere once above the tree line. One fellow who bivvied at the Lunch Counter at 9,000', said he thought he was going to be blown away and the wind was moving him around all night.

We camped in the last few trees that still had some foliage on them. We tied to trees, built walls, tied every guy-rope

down and then kicked back to enjoy our surroundings. The weather was clear and sunny but the wind made it quite cold. Tim and I went on a Norm search. He was having trouble with his feet because his boots did not fit well. We found him not far below camp. We are all united again. We decided to try for the summit next day, wind or not. The wind died during the night and we were up again at 4 am and heading for the summit soon after. It was a steady climb on hard snow, the skins working well. Up to the Lunch Counter and then the headwall climbing steeply up 1,500' to Pike's Peak, the false summit. Our group abandoned skis in various places along the way, the three tele-skiers going the highest. See, we do have an advantage; strong legs. We reached a bit of a shelf where the hill steepened. Far enough. It was getting to be a long slide if our edges didn't hold. The wind was gusting very strongly at times, blowing spindrift into our faces, and we had to stop and crouch down every time the gusts came by. We met some people coming down who had only gone to the false summit and said it was too windy to continue. Well we definitely would go as far as we could. Sure the wind was blowing but we could still make headway so we kept going. Upon reaching the slopes of the summit, we were quite sheltered and even stopped for some refreshment. Then the final push to the summit. Now that was windy. I wouldn't take a step without having my axe ready to plant in case I was blown over. It was great. Don, Derek, and I spent a bit of time taking pictures and enjoying the wind. Awesome views of Rainier, Mount St. Helens, and Hood, with the Three Sisters and Jefferson in the distance.

Here comes Mike and Kevin. Kevin said he hit the wall at 10,500' and here he is almost at 12,300'. Great work. You too, Mike. That will make 8 out of the nine of us on the summit. A personal high for quite a few of them. It was worth the drive and some excellent skiing on the way down. We spent the night at the same camp with the last of us returning 13 ½ hours after starting. I came flying in over a

bump, burying my tips and doing a face plant right in front of everyone. My first fall of the day. Again we are up at 4 am the third morning in a row. I think we're getting used to it. Still a long way home, but worth every minute.

Participants: Charles Turner (leader), Tim Strange, Mike Hubbard, Derek Wells, Norm Hourigan, Randy Wacker, Dale Nichol, Don Cameron, Kevin Mazur.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS

Hinrich Schaefer
May 18–20

It is convenient to have a national holiday and long weekend every year right at your birthday. It is less convenient that a permit is required for the mountain you intend to climb for celebration of the latter. And less convenient still that by the time you find out, all weekends are booked solid. Which means that the gamble is on to get permits for a group of eight from a total of fifty permits on a first-come-first-served basis. And, of course, that day the line-ups at the border are endless. And your trip leader is not a Canadian citizen and therefore has to sign that he is not entering the United States with the intention to commit terrorist acts or spread deadly diseases. Which makes you feel much safer for the rest of the trip but holds you up in your quest for the precious permit.

By the time you reach not Alice's, but Jack's, Restaurant where the powerful papers are given out, the good news await you that supply exceeds demand and no lottery among the waiting climbers will be held. The only hardship left is to endure the jokes of Jack himself as he hands out the permits. The good thing is that beer and a bite is available right in the next room.

On our drive to the trailhead we catch a wonderful view of the volcano we came to ski up. It will be the last one we get, unless you count close-ups in a white out, but we will come to that. Coming to that means to get up and go by eight in the morning after an idyllic camp in the parking lot. The route up the mountain is fairly straightforward and not too hard until it steepens right when you ascend into the cloud.

A few wind-raked meters more and you stop, stunned by the majestic views of the crater or however much you can see of it which in our case is five metres down a fog filled hole.

This leaves the descent which must have inspired the song title "Into the Great White Open." Actually it is fun to ski into an indiscernible white depth, trusting that the grade will not suddenly change and the snow stay as good as really it shouldn't be. And it gets better coming out of the cloud on the lower slopes, dodging a few rock bands and negotiating some banks and rolls. Pity, too soon it flattens out and then it's back at the parking lot. And while you are here and have nothing better to do with the rest of your day, check out Ape Cave, which is a natural lava tunnel. Or non-lava-tunnel, maybe, for only the hardened crust is left to build wall and roof and the lava flow is gone. Either way, it is fascinating.

Then it is time to hit not just any cougar bar but THE Cougar Bar and Grille (in Cougar, WA), which features good food and energy efficient light bulbs in the heart of red neck country. Where is this world coming to?

As a last tip, always bring a judge and a youth worker on your trips. They will efficiently handle yahoos ("bring the coolers right here") joining you on your logging road side camp. Thanks to everyone for making this a great trip.

Participants: Charles Turner, Mike Hubbard, Sonja Langer, Josh Zuber, Susan Gee, Martin Davis, Peter Sutherland and Hinrich Schaefer

DROWNED ON GLACIER PEAK

Charles Turner

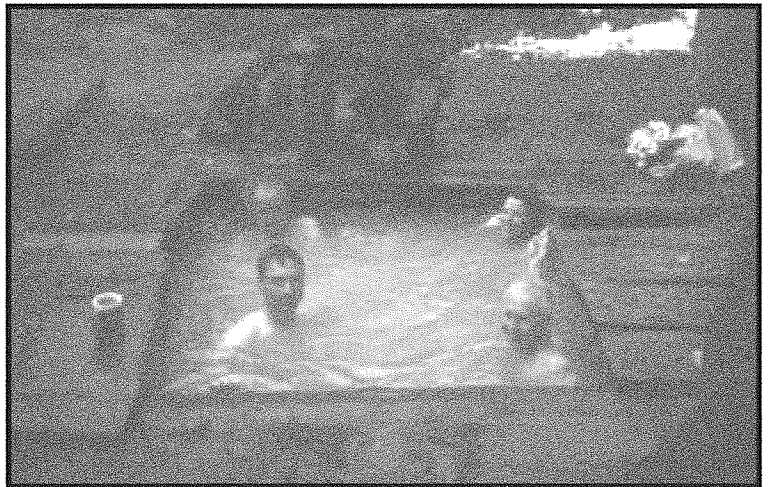
June 8–9

The weather forecast was looking good. The seven of us met at Tsawwassen and agreed to meet at the Forest Service office in Sedro Woolley where we needed to obtain parking permits. I went through the truck crossing at the border and Mike chose the Peace Arch – the truck crossing was about 10 minutes faster. We checked the weather forecast again at Sedro Woolley and it sounded good for the weekend. But alas, by the time we reached the trailhead it was starting to rain and it continued to rain as we hiked most of the 5 miles to Kennedy Hot Springs. We did finally put on skis for the last section to the hot springs.

The rain by now had turned into huge, wet snowflakes. There used to be a bridge over the river but it was there no more and, because of all the rain, the river was very high. We eventually found some logs and managed to cross using various methods. The original plan was to camp at Boulder Basin at 5,800' but the group didn't take much convincing to stay at the hot springs at only 3,200'. We were a wet, bedraggled lot. Unfortunately the hot springs were only warm and not very inviting.

We set up camp had dinner and went to bed. About 6" of heavy, wet snow fell during the night and the morning brought very light drizzle and clouds hovering just above us. Nobody was in a rush to get up and it definitely wasn't a summit day. We decided to check out the route to Boulder Basin, our original intended camp spot. We put on skis and started climbing up through the trees. After a short time we reached a relatively flat area of huge old growth fir and yellow cedar which was quite enjoyable. Quite a magical forest, very open and easy skiing. Unfortunately, heavy rain was back but not enough to dampen our spirits yet. We arrived at a junction with the Pacific Crest Trail at 3,900'. From here we had to climb steeply for 2,000'. We abandoned our skis and booted it up to just below tree line. The altimeter was reading over 6,000' but still no Boulder Basin. The snow was deep, the wind was strong, and a blizzard with whiteout conditions turned us back. Arriving back at the skis cold and wet, Russ summed it up pretty well with his comment "I'm sure I've been this wet before, but I can't remember when."

Keith and I decided we had to get in at least some downhill skiing, while the rest decided to carry their skis. Probably the wisest choice. But it was fun as long as we were quick enough to dodge the branches and trees both vertical and horizontal, though the ones laying down made good jumps. We arrived back at camp totally soaked and cold and the hot springs seemed at least worth a try. The water was about body temperature. Some of us stayed in for 2 hours, but only because it would have been even colder getting out. I finally plucked up enough courage. There I was, naked,



Mike, Sylvia, Keith & Tim enjoying the hot pool. Photo: C. Turner

shaking and turning blue when a young lady shows up and quite casually asks me how hot is the water. The next day was clear and DRY. It felt so good and we had a spectacular view of Glacier Peak. It was enough for us all to want to return but probably without skis. To quote Don, "The skis were only minimally better than carrying rocks." I weighed my pack when I got home – it was 75 pounds with the skis and I'm sure at least 10 pounds of that was water. Everyone claimed to have had a good time. (How quickly we forget the misery.)

Participants: Charles Turner (leader), Don Morton, Silvia Moser, Mike Hubbard, Russ Moir, Keith Battersby, Tim Strange (victims)

PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

Gil Parker

July

While not an Alpine Club trip, several members of our section have been making the PCT a project. So, the trip Ron Holmes and I did in July, 2002, may be of interest.

The trail, for those unfamiliar, consists of 2700 miles (4350 km) from Mexico through California, Oregon and Washington to Manning Park in Canada. It traverses the Sierras and the Cascades, running between 500 and 3000m above sea level.

The usual through-hiker is a focused individual, most often travelling alone. He will take enough time to tell you how many days he has hiked from the Mexican border, how many he estimates to Canada. The fastest to date is a park ranger, 84 days from Campo to the northern terminus at Manning Park, 32 miles (52 km) per day, average!

As I had finished Washington in a series of shorter trips, I decided to try for a bigger "bite" this summer by doing all of Oregon in one go. Ron agreed, though we both had days when we wished for an escape from mosquitoes or the boring sameness of the "Oregon desert" where pumice from volcanoes ensures that any surface water goes straight down! We completed 380 miles (612 km) in 25 days, averaging just over 15 miles (24.5 km) per day.

Our 24 km took from 7:30 am to 3:00 pm, plus or minus an hour. We stopped early because our bodies were unable to continue and still to retain the illusion of enjoyment. It's not because we ran out of daylight, we sometimes did an extra few miles in the evening.

The main attractions in Oregon are five. Crater Lake, formed by Mazama volcano is huge, the explosion thought to be 100 times St. Helens! The Sisters area is pretty, with lakes,

volcanoes and lava beds. (We climbed Middle Sister, just off route.) A day's crossing of the lava beds was "an experience." There's Mount Hood, with a welcome shower and pizza bar. Finally, Eagle Creek, running down to the Columbia is a jewel, with unexpected waterfalls, trails along cliff-sides, and for us, the last day on the trail.

Along the PCT route you can mail parcels ahead and collect them at various post offices, but still you need to carry a week or two of food and fuel. The guidebook is essential to know how much water to carry in the dry distances. My food weighed about 0.7 kg per day and I lost about 8 kg in total. My pack weight never exceeded 35 lbs. (16 kg) (The guidebook authors report that one attractive female hiker traded sex for food from rangers, a solution not readily available to aging male trekkers.)

In this mountain environment, weather is unpredictable and August blizzards occur. Adequate clothing and tents are needed to protect against the elements. Bridges probably will be washed away, leaving you to balance over a log or wade a rushing, freezing freshet.

Life consists of hiking, eating and sleeping. This means that there is a lot of time for walking meditation, providing opportunities for all kinds of insights. You also come to know just how many airline flights there are, totally unheard in the noise of the city.

Unexpectedly, the hiker often finds a spiritual rejuvenation. The PCT Guide says, "The Pacific Crest Trail paints impressions on the hiker's mind, not of a world ravaged by man, but rather of a timeless, largely forgotten world where nature still exists as it was meant to be."

Participants: Ron Holmes and Gil Parker

MT RAINIER, DISAPPOINTMENT CLEAVER ROUTE

Don Cameron

July 28

I have been planning to revisit Rainier since Bill and I first attempted it a couple of years ago. I remembered the fantastic views, the huge crevasses and the huge effort each step took. My buddy François wanted to head up Rainier and I quickly got on board. Mike Hubbard also expressed keen interest as did my buddy Matt. I put up a notice on the ACC mailing list and we picked up Mike Teachman, Gerhardt Lepp and Dale Nichol. Unfortunately François had to back out because of knee problems, but we managed to pick up Matt's buddy Sean. This was a great group of people - all of whom I have gone on trips with and really enjoy their company. We did our slog up to Camp Muir, each of us attempting to pass the rope to the next person. It was uneventful, sunny and warm. It is amazing the number of tourists that hike up to Camp Muir in runners, pumps and other "outdoor" gear.

Our evening at Muir was very windy - which was a reflection of things to come. A stove busted so we had to share, but we had lots of fuel so things were still OK. We camped that night at Muir, got up late the next day for the easy climb up to Ingraham flats. It was on the way to Ingraham that Mike Hubbard almost got nailed by a football-sized rock coming off the side of the cleaver. This was more shades of things to come.

At Ingraham we did some great crevasse rescue practice, really analyzing how the systems are put together. We started confusing ourselves a bit, but eventually got things worked out. Mike also brought a fluke, so we had a great time trying to blow apart snow anchors. We packed it in early to try and get some sleep before our midnight start. The wind was howling all night, making the sleep quite restless. Some of us got no sleep at all. Up at midnight, the wind was still howling, but it was clear, cold and the full moon was lighting

our way. We decided that as long as the wind was not knocking us over, we would continue to climb.

The big problem with the US mountains is the sheer number of climbers. Rainier especially. This route typically sees 100 climbers a day! Just imagine trying to pass a rope team at 12,000 feet, just to have them pass you at your next rest.

One of the major hazards was rock fall from other climbers. And this was very serious on the Disappointment Cleaver. At 2 am, with howling winds, all you hear is a muffled shout of rock, then you look up, and through the darkness you can just make out this football sized rock come screaming right towards you. Thank God I jumped in the right direction.

The climb up Rainier is just plain old hard work. Snaking around huge crevasses and jumping the small ones. Each step getting harder and slower than the last. By the last thousand feet I was in the "one step at a time" mode, constantly looking up, hoping that my altimeter was wrong and the summit lay just ahead, over the next rise.

At the crater rim, we crossed the crater and up the far last ridge to the summit. The sun was now up, keeping us warm, yet the wind still did not relent. Cresting the final ridge, we were met with winds that almost took us off our feet. We "dashed" (if that's what you can call it) to the summit, grabbed a few photos, then made our way back to a sunny, sheltered spot. A little note about drugs. At 10,000 feet, I get huge headaches and cannot sleep during the night. So this trip, I took Diamox. It didn't help me climb faster or stronger, but I did not get any headaches and was able to sleep a lot easier.

Participants: Don Cameron, Mike Hubbard, Mike Teachman, Gerhardt Lepp, Dale Nichol, Sean and Matt?

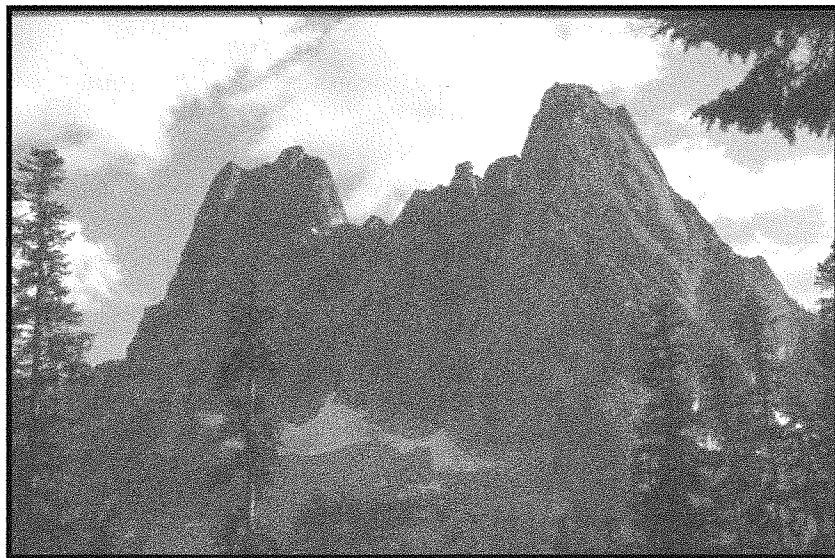
WASHINGTON WEEK: LIBERTY BELL, CONCORD TOWER, GLACIER PEAK AND MT. CONSTANCE

Reinhard Illner

August 18-26

In spite of the title this is not a political article. It just so happens that south and east of Victoria, in the Cascade and Olympic Mountains on the other side of the international border, there are some attractive mountains with rather patriotic names. In principle most of these can be done as extended weekend trips, but one would always be rushing against ferry schedules, lineups at the border, and individual fatigue. Yet these peaks are not far off – on clear days Glacier Peak is visible from Victoria, and Mt. Constance is just hidden behind the front range of the Olympics as seen from the Dallas Road Waterfront.

In the third week of August 2002 Ian Brown and I set out for a week to visit as many of these objectives as we could. With solid, stable weather and perfect conditions we succeeded beyond our expectations and climbed four peaks. When we returned eight days later we were utterly exhausted from climbing every day.



Liberty Bell

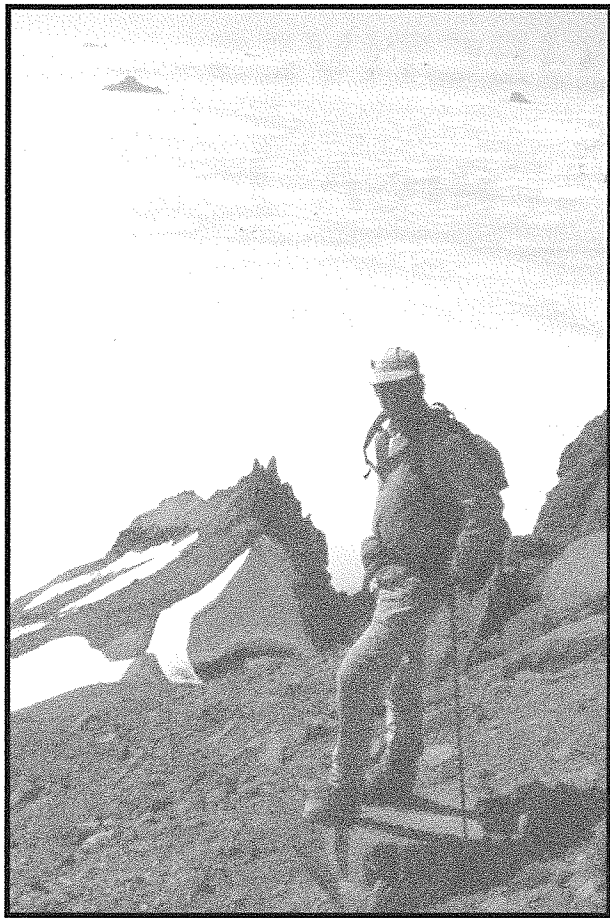
Photo: Reinhard Illner

We began, on Monday, August 18, by climbing the standard Beckey route on Liberty Bell. After a comfortable night of car camping just below Washington Pass one hikes up on a good, gentle trail to the gully behind the rather impressive rock spire that does, from the right angle, indeed look like a

bell. Approach is via a steep and loose, but easy gully towards the cold and windy notch between “the Bell” and its neighbor, Concord Tower. From the notch it’s four pitches of rock-climbing to 5.7, with a few beautiful moves known as “the finger traverse,” an exposed layback and a short 5.7 friction face. After overcoming the initial jitters and climbing out of the forbidding notch it was nothing but joy. The rock could not be more solid or offer better friction, and we had the peak to ourselves. After a leisurely lunch break on the scenic summit, some down climbing and two long rappels brought us back to the notch at 2 pm, far too early to quit. Fortunately, the north face of Concord tower starts right there, so we decided to try the first pitch of that and see what would happen. Well, this climb turned out to be even more enjoyable than Liberty Bell! From across the gully the face had looked terribly steep and difficult, but once we were on it we found good sites to place protection and rock which seemed to be made for rock-climbing: Face climbing on big granite flakes, cracks perfect for jamming, exposed friction slabs and airy ridges. After three fantastic pitches of face and crack climbing, we found ourselves on the narrow summit, soaking up the afternoon sun. Three quick rappels brought us down to the notch, and by the later afternoon we had hiked back to the car.

We spent the next three days hiking up Glacier Peak, one of the highest mountains in the Cascades; a dormant volcano, it sits southeast of Mt. Baker and commands prominent views of the entire Cascade Range. The problem with this peak is the long hike in – it is a 7-mile walk (on an excellent trail) to the Kennedy Hot Springs, and from there one ascends over another 4 or so miles through magnificent old growth forest to a place called “Boulder Camp.”

It took us six or seven hours in the afternoon of the 19th to do this, and we walked all the while under a thin but persistent cloud cover. At the camp we found ourselves in a persistent mist and felt rather pessimistic about the climb, expecting to get lost on the glaciers. What a pleasant surprise



Ian on the summit of Glacier Peak Photo: R. Illner

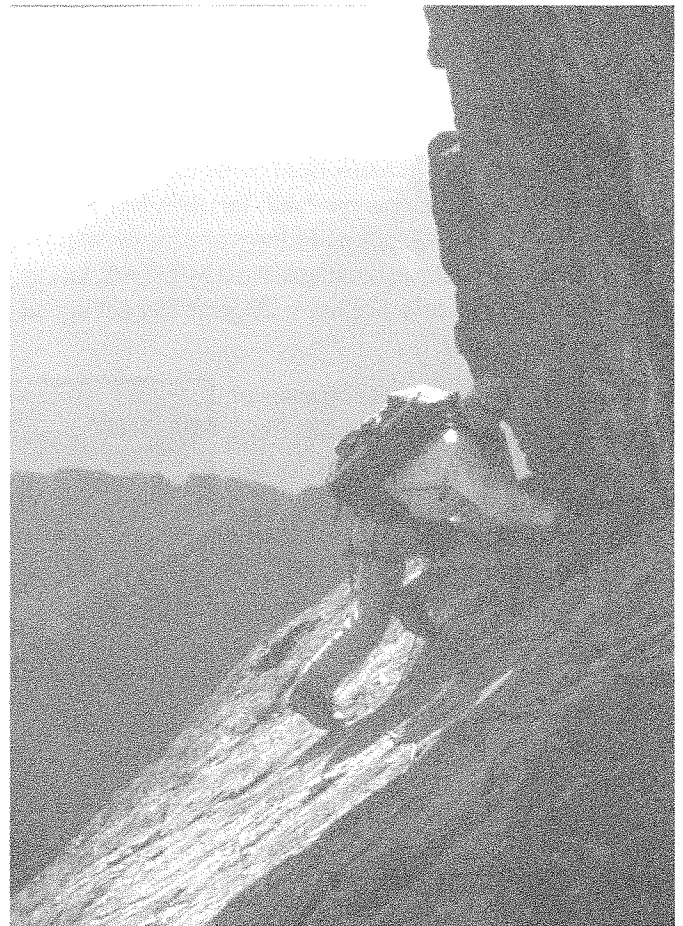
early next day, when we broke through the clouds at about 7,000' into a brilliant late summer day. From there it was just a high but easy glacier and ridge walk; we never needed the rope or any kind of other precaution. Sitting on the 3168 m summit with plenty of time at our disposal, we felt literally on top of the world. We ate, Ian took a summit power nap, and then I brought out my notorious cigars (a bit of a challenge at altitude, but I fared well). The Cascade peaks sat like islands out of a fairy tale in an endless sea of silver clouds, and the only signs of civilization were the jet contrails high above us. We did not meet anybody on the peak until the next day, when, on the way out, we soaked our aching limbs in the Kennedy Hot Springs.

It was now Thursday. We left the Cascades and traveled through the Seattle suburban rush hour traffic, using a commuter ferry, a floating bridge and miles of Washington State highways, to the Olympic Mountains on the other side of Puget Sound. Friday saw us hike up the Dosewallips Valley and the very steep route towards Lake Constance. This was the first place where we shared the location with one other party, two climbers from Bremerton.

We were tired but felt very strong. The next morning we climbed up to the south ridge of Mt. Constance. It is a long, rock-fall-threatened gravel slog until one reaches the high notch where the climbing gets a bit technical. Up there, we followed the route near the ridgeline, including another exposed finger traverse (technically quite easy, but really airy). The final highlight of this ascent is inevitably the arrival at and climb of the spectacular summit tower, which looks forbidding as one approaches it, but has a pleasant and easily climbable weakness on its northwest ridge.

The whole trip had gone without a hitch. After a second night at Lake Constance we returned to the Dosewallips River and the car. As planned, Margaret and Claire arrived about a hour later, having completed a long ridge traverse of the Northeastern Olympics. We made the 5:30 ferry ride on the Coho and were back home for dinner.

Participants: Ian Brown, Reinhard Illner



Ian climbing on Mt. Constance Photo: R. Illner

DISTANT OBJECTIVES (ASIA & AFRICA)

BACK TO THE CAUCASUS

Gil Parker

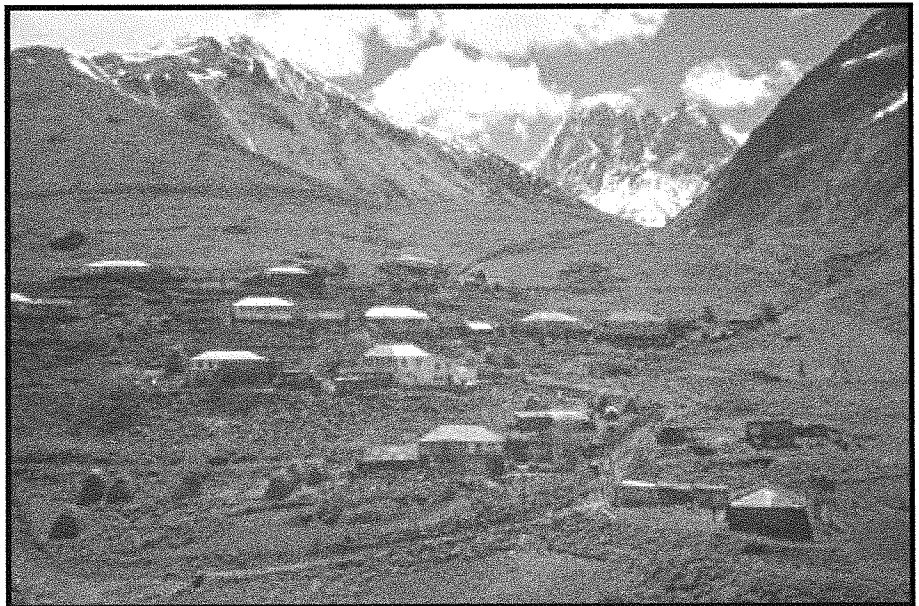
June

In June, 2002, five ACC members and two guests visited Georgia, meeting again our climbing friends of the Caucasus. Lado Gurchiani, head of the Georgian Mountaineering Federation, was our host. In 1990, he had been our guide to Mounts Kazbek and Elbrus and his home province of Svaneti. This time he was assisted by his son, Levan, his nephew, Koba, and Sopho, a 20 year female speed-climbing competitor.

Our troupe, as “ancient ex-climbers,” did not climb important peaks this time, but we did explore the Khdae Valley beneath 4,000 m high Gori Peak on the Russian border, using horses to carry the weighty and voluminous food. The valley meadows of pasque flower and multi-coloured primrose delighted us, with bowing heads of yellow fritillaria, grape hyacinth and gentian. At the top of the valley, we hoped to reach the 2100m high village of Djuta and the soaring summits of Chowkie massif. But the snow on the high, level pass was too deep for horses, so we hiked back down. Larry Talarico and Sopho, in the lead, met several Georgian soldiers armed with AK47s. We were only a kilometre from the border where tensions about Russian military intrusions are focused. The next day, Valerie,

Lado’s neighbor and our driver, drove us (the easy way) around the range to the Djuta side.

Much of the tension with Russia arises from their assistance to the breakaway Georgian province of Abkhazia. Georgians see the Russian military presence as assisting secession of that Moslem region. Russia insists it is simply mediating a peace.



Djuta village with the Chowkie massif above.

Photo: Gil Parker

Two days later, we approached the Chechnyan frontier where invasion concern is even higher. We were stalled at a 2800m pass where snow still choked the winding, narrow road. Setting up a tent camp, we hiked the ranges around the pass, gaining enticing views towards Shatili, the lands harbouring so much conflict.

We spent about ten days in the mountains, peaks easily as striking as the Rockies and often higher. Villages perch in narrow gorges as high as potatoes will grow. The culture of sheep-raising means that everyone is adept at making unique wool garments and at cooking their wonderful cheese pizzas, *hatchipuri*.

During the remaining time we toured the wine country of the eastern plateau bordered by the mountains. The history of Georgia is long and varied, being adjacent to the Silk Road and subject to many invasions from Persia,

Turkey and Russia. The churches (Orthodox from the 5th Century) are still the focus of domestic historic interest. For us, the acappella singing and the unique quickstep dancing were even more exciting. But, after two civil wars since 1990 and secession from the USSR, the Georgian economy collapsed and is only now showing signs of recovery.

We traveled by train down to the Black Sea. (We touched both the borders of Turkey and Azerbaijan during our stay.) In Batumi, we swam among the jellyfish and visited the markets, tea plantations and, of course, the climbing cliffs that Lado uses for climbing competitions.

Participants: Albert Hestler, Larry Talarico, Sherry Kirkvold, Bill Feyrer from Victoria, Herb Kariel and Elisabeth Feuerhelm from Calgary.

KILIMANJARO

John Pratt
July 15–21

Wretched man! What food
Will he convey up thither, to sustain
Himself and his rash army, where thin air
Above the clouds will pine his entrails gross,
And famish him of breath, if not of bread?

Milton, Paradise Lost, XII, 75-79

It may as well be said that the crux of Kilimanjaro is the long and tiring trip halfway around the globe to get there. And then, of course, there are the seemingly endless preparations: passports to renew, visas to obtain, a string of vaccinations to undergo, custody of the cat to arrange and God knows what else. But at least that was all done, I thought, as I lay slumped in my seat, tired, unhealthy and spaced-out from the endless hours of stale air, cramped seating, no exercise and airline catering. Down below, in the late, cloudy afternoon, as the sun set, a featureless, sandy waste – probably somewhere in the Sudan – rolled slowly by. Then, I suppose, I must have dozed off for a bit, for I gave a slight start as the aircraft began to lose altitude: outside

it was night. After what seemed like an age, I was walking across the Kilimanjaro International Airport, the terminal building being the only source of light in the surrounding blackness. No hot, humid, tropical feel, no burnt smell of Africa – it could have been anywhere. Formalities were mercifully swift and not 15 minutes after disembarking I (thankfully along with all my luggage!) was in a taxi speeding the 48 km along a perfectly good road (but on the left hand side) to the Mountain Inn, just a couple of kilometers on the far side of Moshi, the nearest town to the mountain. Soon, I was parting the mosquito-net canopy above my bed and at last was able to savour the delight of resting fully stretched out, alone and in a dark and silent room.

After a couple of days to acclimatize to the country itself and make a day-long visit to the Arusha game-park, I was at last getting to do what I had single-mindedly come to do: climb to the summit of the tallest peak in Africa and to hell with people who make snarky remarks about peak-bagging (I have suffered this unjust slur three times: after my 43rd, 71st and 108th peaks).

Once aboard our fully-laden minibuses it was only about an hour's drive through the lower rain-forest and banana shambas to the Machame Park Gate at 1800m where we met our guides and porters. The official kerfuffle was as short as these things ever are and at 11:30 am or so we set off up the somewhat muddy but wide and well-traveled path through the rain-forest. For a while, it was not too different from hiking up through the trees at home: not much to see and about four hours of it before suddenly breaking out into the open and above the clouds – here, at 3000m. Now, in the pleasant sunny, late afternoon, I had my first clear look at the snow-capped cone of Kibo, the volcano's main peak – it looked a long way off! The ultra-fit, ultra-tough porters had from the very beginning stormed on ahead, despite carrying appalling loads, and had both set up camp and cooked the evening meal by the time we lesser mortals had arrived at Machame Camp. Here, we spent our first night and began our acclimatization. At this altitude (and in fact for all of the trip save for the dreadful summit push), it was merely warm by day and by night could hardly be called more than chilly.

As good, solid and plentiful as the evening meals were, the breakfasts were pretty squalid affairs, usually inflicted around 7 am, in other words, just after dawn and after that we would begin the day's hiking which would usually last into the middle of the afternoon. The exercise was hardly strenuous, but one had to be careful not to overexert oneself: as on all very high mountains the danger is not so much being unfit – no ACC member would ever be guilty of that – but rather in being fit enough to gain altitude faster than the body can acclimate. Nevertheless, it involved some effort on my part to hold back and not race ahead.

The second camp was Shira, at 3850m, a pleasant place on the open moorland where the fascinating vegetation had not yet given way to the high, oxygen-starved desert above. Here, I had my only injury of the trip when I blundered into a rather sharp and unforgiving bush while making a trip to the outhouse. Thus I now sport a faint, likely

permanent, 12 cm scar on my left shin as a memento of my third continental summit!

The following day, we moved to Barranco Camp; this is the most scenic part of the route as it passes close under the walls of Kibo and finishes in a spectacular location beneath the Western Breach. Acclimatization was aided by the fact that although the route climbs to 4530m (by the Lava Tower), it ends up at 3950m, only about 100m higher than Shira. As usual, we hiked for about six hours, including a generous lunch-break at the Lava Tower. That evening, I sat happily sipping tea outside my tent as the walls of the Western Breach turned an agreeable orange in the light of the setting sun. So far, not the slightest problem with altitude, although over-eating had left me with a severe heartburn (which, on the other hand, meant that I was not suffering from altitude-induced loss of appetite!).



Kilimanjaro from the Karanga Valley (Machame route) Photo: John Pratt

The next day's walking was a little harder. We had to cross a deep valley (Karanga) – where we actually were able to rest over a delicious cooked lunch – and make our way up to the Barafu (the word means 'ice' or 'hail') Camp at 4700m from which we were to mount our summit push. Immediately after leaving Barranco, one has to ascend the 'Barranco Wall', an appellation which somewhat overstates the case, it being no more than a 100m-high scramble. The bulk of the walk was over vast stretches of high desert in a gently-ascending traverse with a final, steepish uphill section to the campsite. Not long after our arrival at this bleak and faintly disagreeable place, the mists rolled in. We were fed a quick meal and at 5 pm or so, everyone was ensconced in their sleeping-bags resting up for the summit push due to

begin at midnight. I felt like a soldier in the trenches of 1916 waiting for the whistle to blow before 'going over the top', even though I realized the chances of survival were somewhat higher in my case. At 11 pm, we arose in the darkness and made our way slowly up the mess tent for hot tea and biscuits. Inside, the anxious faces crouched around the kerosene lamp, sipping at their steaming mugs in the now-freezing night reminded me of a scene out of Dante – then, more cheerfully as our Head Guide came around with encouraging words to all, of those magnificent passages in 'Henry V' where he psyches up his out-numbered troops before Agincourt. At midnight, we turned on our headlamps and stepped out into the darkness.

Now, the next six hours weren't at all nice. An hour after starting, two of our number became violently ill, one indeed so badly that he had to turn back right away, the other reduced to the point where she was barely able to drive herself on (she actually gave up on the crater-rim, only 35 minutes and 120 vertical meters beneath the summit, unable to give any more). There were clouds, no moon and a freezing wind which coated everything – us, our packs and the rocks around – with ice. We trudged on, each person's universe shrunk to a pool of light at his feet and the rhythmically-moving feet of the person in front. We hardly ever stopped, lest we froze – it was simpler just to keep crunching up the scree for endless hour after endless hour. Above and below, little string-beads of light: other parties. Eventually – if that is a strong enough word – we reached the crater rim at Stella Point (5700m). Here, we sheltered in the lee of a faceless rock and our guide unexpectedly, delightfully, produced a thermos of hot tea along with plastic mugs for everyone. This raised our spirits enormously; also, it was

slowly lightening. Now I knew I'd make it. I was damned cold, but otherwise felt fine. The gradient now slackened off and in the cold, misty dawn, we picked our way along the crater rim until there at last, blighted as it was by a crowd of about twenty people, was a wonderful sight: those boards on which is written: CONGRATULATIONS. YOU ARE NOW AT UHURU PEAK, TANZANIA, 5895 MAMSL (meters above mean sea level), etc., etc. Familiar as I was with the countless photographs of them, it was yet strange to see them actually there before me. We spent about 20 minutes on the summit, took our own photographs and slowly commenced the descent. As many before me had done, I marveled at the bizarre ice-cliffs around the crater-rim and for the first time in the day felt happy: I had the summit, the scenery was amazing and I felt nothing whatever on account of the altitude: Himalayas, here I come! The day now warmed up pretty well to T-shirt level as I crunched my way back down the 1200m of scree to Barafu. For the first time, I was actually seeing what we had ground up in the dark. No wonder they make you climb it at night: if most people saw what they had to hike up, they'd probably quit on the spot! Actually, the scree itself is not at all bad by our standards – pretty average stuff, better if anything.

Back at Barafu, we were given the skimpiest of breakfasts and were informed we had to leave straight away: the guides were anxious to get back to their homes and families and I'd done what I'd come here to do. As we sat on the rocks in the sunshine sipping our last cup of tea and watching the porters collapse the tents, I thought to myself "Ha! Kilimanjaro? I could do that before breakfast!"

Two days later, I was back at the airport.

DANCING WITH THE YETI - FIVE WEEKS WITH GEORGE SMEKAL

Tom Carter

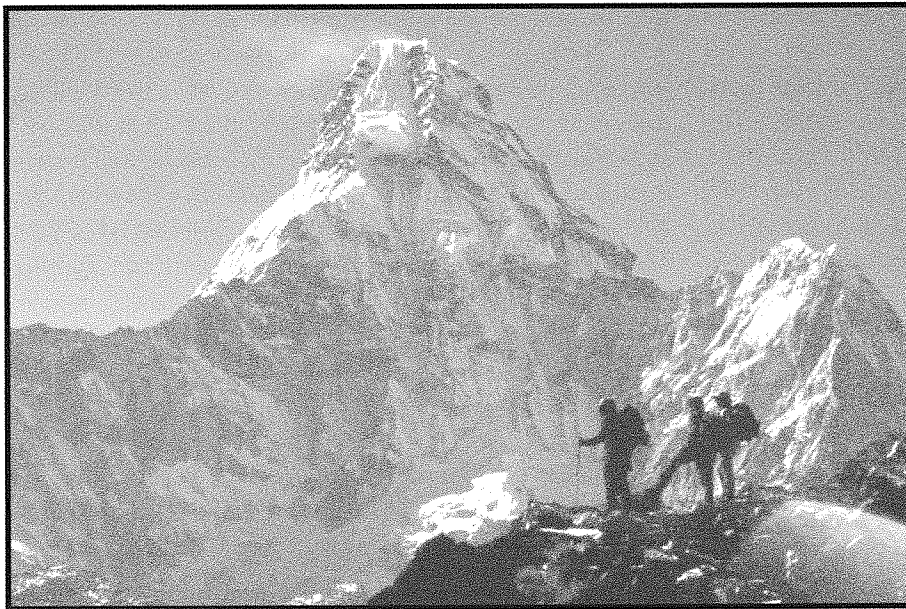
January to March

The afternoon light was golden as we set up camp in Surke. Two more days of walking would find us in Namche amongst the high peaks. Our duties done, Nima and I went shopping. Now shopping in Sherpa-land is often a social occasion. Sure enough a glass of rakshi was soon pressed upon us, and the no-refusal-allowed second, and the only-to-be-polite third. The Sherpanis tittered and

chirped, hiding their giggles behind fingers. I sat dreamy and bemused by the open fire watching shafts of light play in the smoke.

The door burst open and in walked George.

"There you are! You left me behind. Little girl, put some more in the pot, I like it warm, what is your name? You two



George and friends with Ama Dablam behind.

Photo: Tom Carter.

I had been concerned that George, or “Chorch” as the crew call him, would find his “old” Nepal spoiled and would lament the changes. But he was much too absorbed in engaging everyone he met in play and regaling the rest of the group. He had been concerned that he would slow the group down and have trouble at altitude. The truth was, most days he strode ahead with Shauna, our thirty-year-old Viking tree planter from Terrace. He spent more than three weeks at over thirty-five hundred metres, half of it over forty-five and climbed once to fifty-three and twice to fifty-six hundred metres.

“It’s only one step at a time,” he’d say, encouraging the others. He was very moved at these high points, and luxuriated in the astonishing spectacle.

should have told me,.....ah I like this rakshi.”

He sipped his drink staring into the fire.

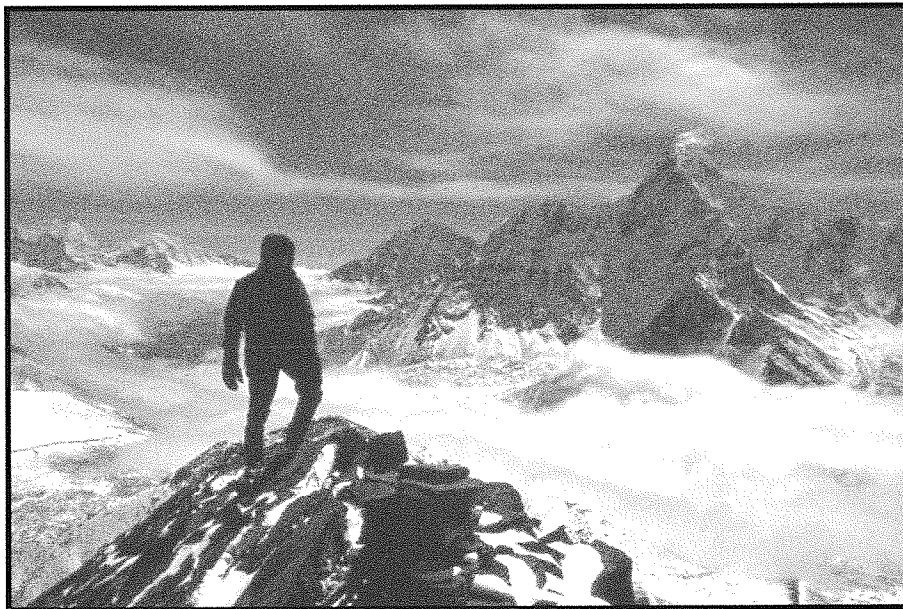
“You know I came to Nepal twenty-five years ago and now I see that nothing important has changed, the people, their laughter, their fires and their stories. Yes, there are the big mountains, but this is what I like best, this is what I come for, this is Nepal, and little girl, tell your mother she has the most beautiful eyes!”

George easily won my “healthiest of the year award,” being the only one I walked with this winter who didn’t succumb to any of the myriad possible afflictions.

After years of requests for school pens, sweets and balloons from trail-side children, the post “Chorch” request will be for tennis balls. In village after village he gave them away. We regularly watched missed catches plummet down the terraced mountainside with a horde of urchins bounding down after the treasured ball.

One of his many innovations was disposable clothing. He had brought a collection of Sally-Ann clothing. When dirty he would simply throw them out or give them away! He adopted several of the porters and gave them his warm clothing when he no longer needed it. He made fast friends with these guys whose work he appreciated so much.

An enormous morale raiser was his innocent flirtation with the women of the group, as well as the Sherpanis of the Khumbu. His courtship banter and compliments poured out daily to coy laughter and blushes. One evening at Mong La with full stomachs, the group was languishing in new altitude. The challenge was to stay awake till eight o’clock when you were “allowed” to crawl



George on the top of Chukung Ri.

Photo: Tom Carter.

off to your bag. George was bouncing around playing with the children of the lodge and trying, unsuccessfully, to get us involved. He blasted us: "You are so boring, you are the most boring people I have ever met!" It didn't work. We were all in our bags within fifteen minutes feeling no guilt, we just couldn't keep up with him.

On the last night of our journey we were back in Kathmandu at Nima's for a goodbye party. I was out on the porch looking out over the lights of the city, somewhat sad that this trip

and my time with these people was coming to an end. I went back in and there was George dancing on the table with a lampshade on his head. The Sherpas were howling on the floor. George sang out: "After living for seventy years every extra day is a bonus!" When the group had left for the airport Nima said that they were a "loffing group and that "Chorch" was a "loffing" man. Wherever you are now George I hope that you are "loffing". I hope you are giving it out as freely as you gave it to all of us. It was the very best of gifts.

THE ORIENT, NEPAL AND LIMPING THE LANGTANG

Peter Roethermel
March

Climbing above my last piece of protection, I took a double arm length of rope and with the slack, reached it high with my right hand. Before I could clip the anchor, my left hand peeled off the smooth slickened limestone and I was falling. My left foot folded onto the ledge with a sickening thunk, sounding like a chunk of firewood wrapped in a soggy blanket whacking the rock. This was the last climb of the last day of our stay at Riley Beach in Southern Thailand. I had taken a lead fall of about twenty feet and my foot hit a small six inch nubbin before the ropes slack was taken up. Pain shot up my leg and I hesitated looking down for a few seconds, not wishing to see if there was blood or bone sticking out. When I did glance down, I was relieved to see no gore, but was alarmed to see that my ankle, in such a short time, had swollen up like a balloon. I was so angry with myself, I said aloud, "Now I've done it...I just f____ed my trip to Nepal!" Bob lowered me to the ground and I was further relieved that, although painful, I could stand on the injured foot and almost put full weight on it. I belayed Bob on top rope to retrieve our gear, then limped off to the bar to get some ice for my ankle and a stiff drink for my bad mood.

A few days later found me sitting in another bar in Kathmandu, Nepal, nursing another drink, while showing Tom Carter my black and blue, throbbing foot. His prognosis was, "You'll probably be spending the next month sitting around Kathmandu."

The idea for this trip was Tom's. He would have a month

off between treks he was leading in Nepal and suggested to Bob Schroeder and me that we should fly over and try climbing a peak called Naya Kanga in the Langtang Valley area. Bob and Tom had made several trips to Nepal together and Tom had spent many more months in the country, leading his treks. I, never having been there, realized this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to hike and climb with two best friends as guides, who knew "the lay of the land." I was quite surprised when the bank manager said yes to my frivolous plan and a loan and wished me a bon voyage.

So here I was in Kathmandu with a screwed-up ankle, but since I could still get around with a cane, I decided to give the trip a try. I could always turn around if the pain got too bad after a few days and there was a place about halfway along the trek, at the beginning of the Langtang Valley, that I could bail out and hike a day to a bus route leading back to Kathmandu.

While Tom and Bob took care of porters, peak permits and such, I took on the task of rounding up what climbing gear we hadn't brought from home – two hundred metres of fixed line, snow pickets, accessory cord, etc.. Thamel, the section of Kathmandu where our hotel was, has dozens of climbing and trekking gear shops full of second-hand gear and willing to dicker. Being the consummate gear head, I was in second heaven. I now have a nice collection of several sizes and styles of titanium pitons.

On, March 10th, Bob, Tom and I took mini-busses to the outskirts of town with Nimbi, our Sirdar, Yule, the cook

and four porters, Krishna, Raju, Porba and Gaylo where we began our trek at Sundraijal. Kathmandu is nestled in a great crater and we first had to hike up and over the rim. I had been e-mailing my girlfriend, Denise, from all the places we had visited so far, but now we were away from phone lines and were incommunicado until we returned to Kathmandu. I started a daily journal, recording observations and tips for a, someday, return trip and wrote it as a long letter to Denise. I won't repeat all twenty five pages here, but I will include some of it in parenthesis, such as:

"Arrived at Chisapani by 2:30, called it a day and made camp outside a lodge. Dinner's traditional dhal-bhat, rice and vegs with thin lentil soup poured over it. Good simple fare, good for hiking and good for my stomach and the case of squits I have. Tom wants to eat the same as the porters, dhal bhat twice a day...keep it simple... I agree somewhat. Got some photos of a couple of men ripping planks from cants with a pit saw, a way of making lumber that disappeared in the west almost two hundred years ago. In stark contrast they're sawing in the shadow of a guest lodge boasting running water and hot showers provided by solar heaters and electricity produced by a wind generator and solar panels... medieval times meet the 21st century."



Old man with his Doko descending to the Langtang Valley

Photo: P. Rothermel

Past the rim, we were hiking along ridges and rhodo forest, sometimes losing a bit of elevation but mostly gaining it. The downhill bits really pained my foot and the uphill hiking started giving Bob blisters on his heels.

March 12th - *"Hiking along we see red, white and pink rhodos. We pass women carrying huge bundles of fodder. One is a*



Carpenter with his tools, upper Langtang valley.

Photo P. Pothermel

child about the size and age of Mica (Denise's eight year old daughter) with a huge load. We also pass men carrying 8x8 beams, 15ft long and sometimes have to duck under them. The hill people are poor... very poor by our standards. Yet they have family, they have community, they, typically, mate for life, several generations of family live together... they take care of their young and old... they have, relatively, clean air and water... they know their jobs... they belong! In some ways they are far richer than our wildest dreams."

We went through our first pass of about 3300m and stopped at Kyuola Bhanjang for a rest and a milk tea.

March 14th - *"The crows here are larger than ours and have more raven-like beaks and some have a marked blue sheen to them. Like ours, they're very curious about humans... especially the "English". It's as if they're thinking "English... they have food dripping from their pockets." As much as I click and cluck my tongue or make doinking noises at them, they won't answer, but they come very close looking questioningly. I guess they just can't speak Canadian crow."*

The porters and cook carried loads of about 100 lbs. in conical baskets called dokos with tump lines across their foreheads. Tom, Bob, Nyima and I carried backpacks of about 30 lbs.

"Typically we hike for 2 ½ hours in the morning until about 11:00, take a two hour lunch break, then hike another 2 ½ hours to dinner and evening camp."

By the 15th we had reached the Laurebina pass at 4600m and I was wiped out by the altitude, moving slow and on the 700m elevation loss to Laurebinyak, I rolled on my bad ankle twice. The next morning I was seeing double and my eyes were all puffed up from water retention. We kept

dropping until we were back in the tropics at the beginning of the Langtang Valley and at about 2000m all my altitude symptoms cleared up.

"Of any place we've been so far, the Langtang is by far the most beautiful area I've seen." It was very pleasant to be hiking in the gorge along side the river and the climate was like summer. *"We had lunch in Lama Hotel and afterwards we hiked another 2 ½ hours up to Ghora Tabela. Along the way we saw lemur monkeys, but they were too far away for my camera. It's strange to be hiking one day in an area that never has frosts and the next day or so be in an area that has snow year round, then just as quick be back in the tropics."*

By the 17th we were half way up the valley. *"I passed a carpenter along the way. He had his box of tools and a couple of frame saws tied to the outside... one filed for crosscut and the other for ripping. He's heading up my way, so I'm hoping to run into him again and maybe get a peek inside his box."* And later, *"The carpenter I met on the trail just came in and I got Nyima to help me with the language translation. It turns out that the guy I thought was the carpenter is just the guy that carries the box of tools. The carpenter is a guy with club feet and has another guy to carry him. So I got to look into the insides of his box and discussed their use and compared them to other nationality's tool use. When Nyima translated to them that I'm a carpenter, they all had a big laugh. I imagine that they just couldn't believe that a rich man like me could be a low life carpenter."*

March 18th - *"After lunch we hiked another 2 ½ hrs to the base camp village of Kyanjing Gumpa. In the last two days we've gone from almost tropical terraced fields, to old forest, to yak grazing on barren hillsides... always getting colder as we go up."*

March 19th - *"Rest day for Bob and me here at about 4000m. Tom is on a day hike up 'Donkey' peak. The water retention's back and my eyes are all puffy, but my vision isn't double, although reading print is a bit blurred. My ankle is really swollen... I didn't twist it yesterday and it doesn't hurt any more than usual, so I guess it's water retention. My chest and head are still gummed up. These kinds of fluid build-ups aren't a good sign and if they don't abate, I won't be going much higher... time will tell."*

March 20th - *"I had breathing problems last night. Every 15 or 20 min I'd wake up panting like I wasn't getting enough oxygen, then I'd drift off breathing easily and 15 or 20 min later it would start all over again... all night long. In retrospect I think it was Cheynes-Stokes syndrome, where for some reason a person unconsciously holds their breath while sleeping, then pants to catch up. This morning I'm all puffy and feel like*

crap. Went up a peak past the 'Donkey' called Kyanjin Ri, at 4873m for an altitude gain of about 1000m... my high point of the trip...or ever for that matter. Easy trail much like the Judges, but with altitudelatitude. Got some great photos and got a great big headache that a Tylenol 3 just barely takes the edge off. It's made me decide that I'm not going any higher up this trip and that I'm out of the bid for Naya Kanga and Yala Peak."

Along with headaches, water retention, double vision and maybe Cheynes-Stokes Syndrome, brought on by the altitude, I was also having very strange dreams that left me feeling weird even after waking. Here I am suffering at a lower altitude than Everest Base Camp. I can only guess that it's from living a whole lifetime at sea level, that this minor altitude would affect me so much.

Tom and one of the Sherpas spent a day reconnoitering Naya Kanga, but found the snow conditions impossible, with a friable crust over sugary powder.

March 21st - *"Tom and Bob decided to head up Yala Peak today... base camp today and summit tomorrow. So they took all the porters and I walked partway with them, then veered*



Crow on prayer flags atop Kyanjin Ri, 4873m my high point.
Photo: P. Rothermel

off, up the valley for about a three hour hike. I had pangs of doubt about not going with them, but as I hiked those feelings melted away. Once past Kyanjing Gompa there's nothing but yak pasture and tumble-down huts. It's eerie to be in a village bustling with people, hike over a rise and it's as desolate as Mars. I hadn't brought a wind breaker or food & water, so I turned back after about an hour and a half. Luckily I got back just as it started to rain and then snow a bit. About a half hour later Bob stumbled in... he hit the altitude wall as well as his blisters came back with a vengeance. Tom, Nyima, the porters and the whole Japanese entourage are spending the night at Yala base. We usually have clear mornings and cloudy afternoons, so if tomorrow morning's nice, I'm going on a long hike up the valley...with gear this time."

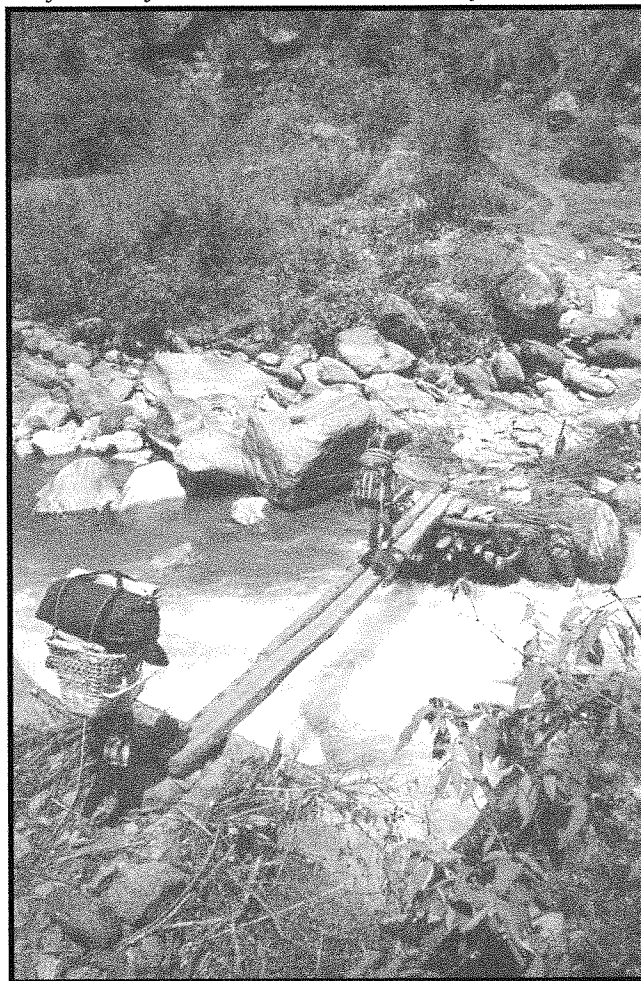
March 22nd - "After breakfast I went on about a 9 hr hike up the valley. It just gets better and better the further up valley you go and I was still a half a days hike from the end where the glaciers begin. I passed a couple of yak herder settlements, but nobody home this time of year, just lots of yaks about. From the last settlement of Kyanjing Gompha you could do a couple of days backpacking trip up valley to the base camp for Morimoto Peak. I met a few people that had camped up that way and they all had good things to say about the trip. You could easily fill up a couple of weeks trekking and exploring this valley. The last half hour's hike, it snowed heavy and wet...I pulled in covered in white, a real contrast to the T-shirt weather I had for most of the day. Back at the lodge, I'm bushed and have a bit of a headache. I guess I'm still not acclimating fully to 4000m. A Tylenol and a tea wlrum will fix that."

It was nice to be back at the cozy lodge: "The dining area in this lodge is on the second floor with a wood heater in the middle and benches and tables all around. All four sides are windows and the ceiling is a pyramid vault of wood and the floor is wood planks too. At night it's cozy with the fire on and with everybody, guests and porters all gathered around. In the morning the heater's not on and I'm glad for my down coat. The sun streams in the windows and the view is a ring of snow-capped mountains."

Tom pulled in about ten minutes after me: "Tom made it up Yala Peak yesterday with the Japanese entourage and came down in the snow storm about the same time as I rolled in. Today's a rest day for everybody, including the cook & porters that I'm sure are tired of hauling gear up the mountain side and sleeping up in the cold. Since Bob and I can't climb and Naya Kanga's not in shape, we're pretty-much finished here and we'll probably head down tomorrow. If nothing else, I've learned I don't function well over 4500m and don't sleep well over 4000m and would need more time to acclimate if I were to go higher."

Heading down was much like going up, but much faster:

March 25th - "It's amazing how a drop in elevation can effect your sleep. Going from 4000m down to 2500m and I slept like a baby... up early and off with lots of energy. By 9:00 were in Bamboo having a hot lemon and it's a cool sunny morning. Last night it rained cats and dogs and all the hilltops are dusted in snow. Good thing we left Kanjing yesterday... they may have got a couple of feet and it would have been hard getting down the trail. Stopping in Domen for lunch... truly in the tropics, bamboo, cactus, banana palm. Took a short cut across a rickety bridge across the gorge that is sometimes all fallen in. Good now and it saved a bunch of uphill and downhill hiking on the other side of the river. Arrived in Syabru Besi early afternoon... one minute I was hiking in wilderness, then over the next rise and I was downtown and at the road head... a busy place. We're staying in a three-story hotel on a street lined with hotels. The street's the happening place and we have a ring side seat on the patio sipping a beer... kids playing soccer, young men and women looking to be noticed by each other, old men back from the forest with dokos loaded with firewood, women



Porba and Tom Carter crossing rickety bridge in the Lower Langtang Valley.

Photo: P. Rothermel

back from the fields carrying hoes and vegetables, school kids in uniform, boys rolling their hoops, trucks full of yellow hatted men returning from somewhere and always the national bird... the chicken strutting along and crowing."

Later we all got together for a night on the town: "Nyima took us out for a pre-dinner drink for something called tong-ba. It's a ½ liter container filled with fermented millet and you pour boiling water over it and let it set for a while... then you sip it up with a crimped aluminum tube for a straw. It sort of resembles sake but with a bit sour aftertaste. When sucked dry, you fill the cup again with boiling water, let set and drink. You can redo the water in the millet mash up to maybe four times. My first encounter with tong-ba... but not my last. The shops traditionally only have a few tables and don't serve anything else except for some spicy fried meat bits. They're sort of like an alcoholic opium den."

From all the stories I've been told about the buses in Nepal, I feel a bit of trepidation: "Tomorrow we catch the morning bus for a fourteen-hour ride to Kathmandu. Bob says, on a scare factor of ten, it rates as a 9.5... and only Lima, Peru is worse."

March 26th - "On the bus... real cramped. A tip to remember, traveling uphill sit on the right and traveling down sit on the left. That way you get the maximum exposure to the 3000m plunges outside your window. There's a woman sitting in front of me that's suffering from motion sickness. Every time she sticks her head out her window, I have to close mine to avoid "sprayback" and every time so far it's been a false alarm. After she closes her window, I can open mine... and it's hot out. A minute later she opens hers and I close mine and ad infinitum. God, I wish she'd just puke and get it over with! Maybe if I

offered her a pickled herring sandwich with mustard and ketchup... The further down we go, the faster we go, as the roads get better... but they're not that much better and the ride seems rougher and dustier and the speeds more breakneck. A quick lunch stop, then another army check point and then we're onto paved road... sort of. I think the bus' wheel base is wider than the pavement... so we still seem to be riding on dirt. Past emerald green rice paddies and barren fields of rust red soil in the flat valley bottom that look more like India, then up through terraces of golden ripening grain. The bus climbs back out of a giant bowl of a valley. As we go up, we see a change in vegetation opposite from what we saw dropping down into the valley. Over the rim and a quick descent into the Kathmandu Valley... Thamel... Sidhartha Hotel... shower... change..."

Once back in Kathmandu, Tom got busy with his clients for his next trek and Bob and I went out sight seeing and temple hopping. A friend voiced concern that I must be bummed out from not reaching my summit, so I wrote: "We're back from the Langtang and it was a wonderful trip. None of us made it up Naya Kanga due to deep sugary snow. Tom got up Yala Peak with a Japanese team. Due to my sprained ankle and Bob's double heel blisters, we just did the trek part, although I did make it up a small peak, Kyan Jinri (4873m), also called "Donkey Peak", I guess because any ass can make it up! The summit is not the icing on the cake and if you miss it you've only missed a very small part of the whole. My trip to Nepal... the cake was the land we trekked over,... the icing was the wonderful sweet people that inhabit the area,... the candle is the solid and liquid religious beliefs of these adaptable people... and the flame is the intangible peak that's there one minute and gone the next... and doesn't really matter at any rate."

Namaste, Peter

POETRY

DUNCAN'S TREKKING

Edna McLeod

Along a pathway through the trees
Passing lakes and swatting bees
Freshest air and waters clear
Fish jumping aside drinking deer
The trail seems to never end
Just around another bend
The pathway starts an inclination
The feeling is a great sensation
Beads of sweat upon your brow
Muscle pain is starting now
Passing time changes the mood
A hunger sets but not for food
A clearing views the final goal
Gripping hard the assisting pole
A remaining step this challenge beat
No simple task to make this feat
Atop the mountain way up high
Fingertips can touch the sky
The summit met your destination
Relief is now the prime sensation
Under the stars you gaze to the moon
Cooling breeze with morning soon
No hesitation for the long trek back
Boots are on and loaded pack
Standing alone taking one last look
Filed away in your mind's picture book
With another day comes another peak

IN MEMORIAM

IN MEMORY OF ERIK WILLE, 1982 - 2002

Chris Wille
June 16, 2002

Erik's Celebration of Life
Hi! For those of you who don't know me, I'm Chris Wille, one of Erik's uncles. Erik often spoke of his many buddies and friends. I was always amazed and a little envious at how many friends he had. With Erik's love of life and outgoing personality, it's easy to see why he was so popular.

My relationship with Erik started in 1995. Erik was just 13 then. I had been planning a climbing trip to a remote peak named Mt. Septimus in Strathcona Park. My brother Frank, my long time climbing partner, had invited Erik on this trip with us. Oh no, I thought, not that stuck up pudgy little brat with the big ego! I was in for a big pleasant surprise. Erik didn't quite make it to the summit that trip. He loved being in the mountains, and had proven himself to be a tireless hiker, and very good company.

From then on, he was always invited on our trips. He never complained and although I did my best, he never quit or slowed us down. By age 15, we considered him a fullfledged member of our "A Team" climbing team. We saw Erik as an equal team member, and treated him as an adult. He added a new, youthful zest to our team and our climbs. We no sooner finished one trip that we were planning our next one. He ate it up. He loved it. He was in his element.

Erik worked at the shop on Saturdays, so when the weather was just right, I would ask him. "So are you in, or are you out?" He didn't know where we were going, but that unique smile would come over his face. "I'm in! I'm in!" Erik was always "in".

In 1998, we had a potentially dangerous situation on the summit of a remote peak, when one of our teammates took an awkward fall and dislocated his shoulder. Erik quickly down-climbed the cliff and personally reset the shoulder back in the socket. Much to everyone's relief, we were able to continue the climb and have a safe return home. "How did you know what to do?" I asked. "Saw it in a movie once" he said.

We climbed many peaks in the time we shared together. Erik was a gifted rock climber, and there have been a few peaks that I would not have gotten to the top of if Erik had not free climbed a particularly difficult section, and thrown a rope down for me

Always up for different types of challenges, Erik, my brother Mike, with his wife Mary Kay, and I, did the Great Walk together in 2000. Great time, strong, great team. From there we progressed to running from Mt. Washington to Butte Lake in a day, and in 2001, we ran from Western Mines to the top of the Golden Hinde (the highest peak on Vancouver Island) and back in 22 hours 40 minutes.

Erik loved a challenge.

This story of Erik's captures all the good things we shared in the mountains together. In the mountains he was a wise, gifted climber. At 16, a strapping young lad full of strength and the power of youth, we considered him an equal in every way. The stories I have written this year were trips done in his memory. There is no doubt he would have wanted us to continue climbing. God must have needed a heck of a good mountaineering guide in heaven! God speed Erik, rest well until we meet again.

Thank you for the 30+ trips we shared together. Your climbing partner, and "A-TEAM mate",
Chris Wille

P.S. we summited Cats' Ears in 2000

