

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

# *ISLAND BUSHWHACKER*

*2004*



**MOUNTAIN SCENERY WINNER**  
**MULVEY BASIN, VALHALLA PROVINCIAL PARK**  
**PHOTO: DOUG HURRELL**

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# VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

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## KAYAK TO CLIMB ON MT TUAM

Rick Hudson  
April 04

We met in Deep Cove at 9:30, on a picture-perfect Sunday morning. Blue skies, calm seas and a short 40 minute paddle took us across to the south shore of Salt Spring Island, where we beached the kayaks and walked up the southern flank of Mt Tuam. After 20 minutes we broke out of the arbutus and fir forest, and the panoramic views just improved as we slowly gained height up the long grass meadow.

A perfect spring day. At the top we sheltered from a cool breeze, when who should appear over the horizon but Jules Thomson and Gerta Smythe, who had chosen to take the 9 am ferry across to Fulford Harbour, and then ridden their bikes to the end of the road before walking up.

After a lazy hour of lunching, we descended in short order down the knee-shaking slope. At sea level by 2 pm, the afternoon calm was marred by a light chop on Satellite Channel, but nothing serious, and we made it back to Deep Cove in 40 minutes.



*Looking down Saanich Inlet from the top of Mt Tuam,  
Saanich Peninsula on the left, the Malahat and Mill Bay on the right  
Photo Rick Hudson*

*Participants:* Cedric Zala, Jutta Gutberlet, Evan Loveless, Deborah Lowe, Judith & Viggo Holm, Phee & Rick Hudson.



## CAT'S EARS - WEST RIDGE INTEGRALE

Sandy Briggs  
April 9-11

After our return from Cat's Ears I commented to Hinrich that, were it not for the seven-hour bushwhacking approach, the complete (intégrale) west ridge would be an Island classic. He replied that perhaps it is an Island classic *because* of the seven-hour bushwhack.

I had wanted to try this route ever since I first looked along it in April 1997. But that trip was turned back by deep snow and a shortage of time, so we gave ourselves to watching such things as comet Hale-Bopp and the peculiar New Zealand sport of cornice jumping.

It took me a few years to get another attempt together, but when it happened it was with a perfect crew (well, except for one or two notable absences), and we had perfect weather again.

A short way up the Cat's Ears creek road we plunged into the second growth, such as it is. I chose a devious line through the worst of the alder, nettles, devil's club and cross-piled logs – a route notable for the long intervals during which my feet were quite invisible. Paul and Darren, canny lads that they are, rejected this route immediately and fared rather better only 50 m to the right, amongst actual trees. By the time Hinrich and Julie and I had caught up to them I had sufficiently regained my presence of mind to claim that by my having selected a particularly engaging bit of greenery at the outset, any bushwhacking likely to arise later would appear mellow by comparison and would therefore not generate any negative commentary, which is, naturally, much harder to bear when one is tired.

Once the ridge proper was gained, and with it the old-growth forest, the course was southwest and upward, by-passing various bluffs on the left, until we reached the open bump at 3801ft (1155m), where we camped. While Cat's Ears itself is deceptively unprepossessing from this angle it cannot be said that one's eye is starved for stimulation, with the jagged Mackenzie Range jutting skyward to the south, while the Maitland Range teams up with it to frame Kennedy Lake, Long Beach, and the great Pacific Ocean.

The following morning was fine and warm – actually a bit too warm for an Easter weekend. (No wonder the glaciers are all disappearing so quickly.) We romped along the initial broad and undulating parts of the ridge, eventually caching our snowshoes at the base of the first real steepness, where we also donned crampons. For much of the remainder of the route we moved in roped teams, or at least had the rope at the ready, belaying the occasional exposed parts here or there and paying attention to the

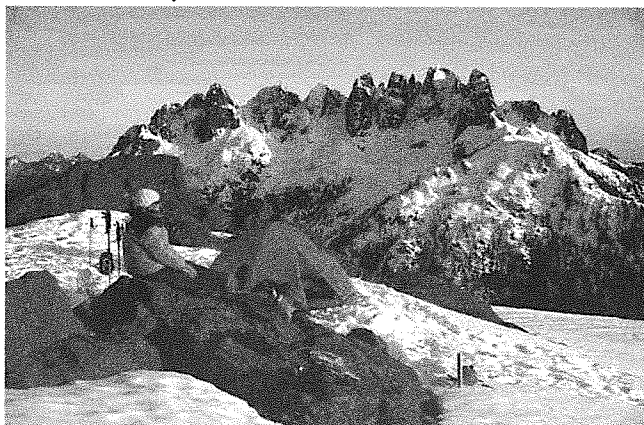
possibility of an avalanche. The snow was in great condition, firm enough for us to profit from the crampons yet soft enough for secure ice-axe belays. This year, all the major cornices had already dropped off by Easter.

From the first high summit we did a short rappel over a rock step. After that a narrow arête led to a short bushy gully that led down easily and dropped one near a left-sloping triangular face. After that the route was a wonderful snowy catwalk in the sky, characterized by impressive exposure and little difficulty. What a delight! Just before the final summit we had to avoid a rock step by descending to the right and traversing on steep terrain to a broad gully that led almost to the base of the summit pitch. This final rock climb was low fifth-class and posed no problems, so that we soon found ourselves on the top, where we lingered for the usual rituals.

I feel I need to emphasize that the twists and turns, the ups and downs of this very indirect route are outrageously fun – so much so that I will venture to comment that he (or she) who has climbed Cat's Ears from the north, gaining the ridge only near the summit, has cheated himself (or herself) of significant pleasure. I think I can also reasonably assert that the scenery to which your aesthetic sensibilities are subjected at every moment for hour upon hour is to be matched in only a few other Island locales, among which must be counted Rugged Mountain, Lime-stone Cap, and the peaks along the east side of the Elk River valley.

We rappelled the rock pitch and enjoyed the luxury of romping back along the route in the opposite direction. The rock step to the west summit was easily climbed, and there we took a long rest in the late afternoon sun, lest the day's magic come to an end too soon.

*The party:* Sandy Briggs, Julie Deslippe, (in photo below), Paul Rydeen, Hinrich Schaefer, Darren Wilman.



# MT. ALBERT EDWARD — WHAT, ME SKI?

Peter Rothermel  
April 9-11

Often I feel like the skiing equivalent of Alfred E. Newman, the cover character from Mad Magazine, doing my bungling turns and ending up head first in a snow drift, while others go schussing by. Getting a late start and taking up back country skiing three years ago at the ripe age of fifty, I knew I was in for a long learning curve, but sometimes it seems like I'll never get there. The adage about teaching old dogs new tricks is pretty much right on. Years ago when I stood on that uncertain threshold of "to buy or not to buy the gear", I pussy footed around with buying one item as I could afford it. Then I realized I had to, in my dearly departed mother's words, "crap or get off the pot". So I went to my loan shark uncle and asked him about a loan. Uncle Visa said, "Sure, as much as you want, just pay me a bit of interest." So there I was decked out in gear worth more than the vehicle I was driving, but could I ski? My learning curve seems to parallel that of Pluto's orbit, but by and by I could eventually turn where I wanted to and stop about where I wanted to. Still I'm far from feeling total confidence in my control, especially in the trees.

So when Rudy asked me if I wanted to go on a three day ski trip he and Russ had cooked up for Mt. Albert Edward, I balked and said no and mumbled something about always getting blisters on my first day and begged off. Skiing Albert Edward has been a dream of mine, even before I took up skiing. It is THE classic ski tour on the Island. The mountain couldn't have been created better for ski touring. It has a bit of everything. So I was in a dilemma of wanting to go, but not sure I was up to the task. With even the wishy-washy weather forecasters promising absolutely perfect weather for the entire weekend, I suddenly had to change my mind and boldly said, "I'll go", figuring if I got crippled by my usual blisters, I'd laze around camp while the others summited and schussed.

Good Friday saw six of us heading out across Paradise Meadows just after lunch and an hour or so later crossing the, luckily, still solidly frozen Lake Helen Mackenzie and by about 4:30 setting up camp near Circlet Lake and no blisters, yet.

After a 12 hour slumber, we were up and heading out of camp by 8:00, with the temperature warm enough

for t-shirts and shorts, as soon as we got moving, yet we found the snow hard and good for skinning up. After a bit of route discombobulation, which can happen when you have so many trip leaders on one trip, we gained the open ridges between Jutland Mtn. and Albert Edward. Here we found snowmobile tracks from several machines gaining illegal entrance into Strathcona Park and evidence of further flagrant degradation to this oldest of our Provincial Parks.

Out on the lower open ridges, leading towards Albert Edward's wide long eastern slopes the sun was blistering hot and we were panting and sucking up water at a fast rate. Then onto Albert Edward's final, long plod, looking forever far away, leaden feet shuffling one after the other and finally on the summit with a dozen other people in a variety of winter travel gear: heavy alpine touring skis, Telemark gear, light touring gear, cross country skis, snowshoes and even a snowboard. We met up with Joe & Adam Bajan, Paul Walton and Oscar (?) and daughter doing it as a day trip and Mike Winstone and his son Aaron, spending four days in the area, a diverse group, to be sure.

I peeled my skins off and self-consciously skied down the slopes before the watchful eyes of my audience, to be first down, so as to be in a good position for photographing them as they carved their way down. I got in some good turns as the slope is as wide and long as Vancouver's airport runway, except that it's tilted. I only fell twice and the dozen times I had practiced on the lift assisted hills this winter/spring and all the back country day trips to Mt. Cokely were finally paying off. Wow, I was fulfilling a long time dream.

On some of the north ridge between Albert Edward and Jutland, I booted down some of the steeper, more exposed terrain (Suicide Gulch) and down through much of the forest I hiked or traversed long cuts on my skis, with skins and ski crampons on. I've become the butt of the joke, of how I put my skins on backwards for my descent. Ha ha, laugh you fools with a branch sticking out of your foreheads (Brooke).

We arrived back at camp within an hour of each other and toasted our successful day with Brooke's Benedictine & Brandy and my Bushmills Irish Whiskey. What a fine

day: tired, then well fed and another 12 hour slumber.

I awoke to a killer back ache that could have been due to a lot of tense muscled, uptight skiing or from getting about 6 hours more of sleep a night than I'm use to. Once into my rigid pack and an hour under my skis, I was in my rhythm and the miles melted away and we found ourselves back at our vehicles by noon.

Thanks to Russ and Rudy for putting it together and helping me realize a long time dream and to Rick, Brooke and Ron for their fine companionship.

What me ski? You bet'ya.



*Scalawags on the summit: Ron Lepine, Peter Roethermel, Brooke George, Russ Moir, Rick Johnson and Rudy Brugger*

## MAQUILLA PEAK AND UNNAMED PEAK

**Tak Ogasawara**

**May 22-24 and October 2-3**

Looking to the south from Croman Junction at North Island Highway in Nimpkish Valley, you can see two quite distinguished peaks in the horizon. The right is Maquilla Peak and the left is Unnamed Peak. Maquilla Peak is often climbed from the south side, but not often approached from the north side. I have not heard that anybody climbed Unnamed Peak previously from the either side. Therefore, I had wanted to climb those two peaks for a long time, but I did not have a chance to try it till this year, 2004.

Round one: Maquilla Peak

After our lunch at Campbell River we headed out to the trail head at the north side of the peak. We reached the trail head after two hours. We parked our cars at the logging road and crossed the logging slash. Then we hiked up the snow slope to the ridge above. We made a couple dicey moves, and then we went up to the wide snow basin after one and half hour climb. We reached the planned camp site where we could see the entire north side of the peak. After I inspected the terrain, I realized that we were not able to make it to Unnamed Peak. So we decided to go up only Maquilla Peak this time.

After a good night sleep at the comfortable camp

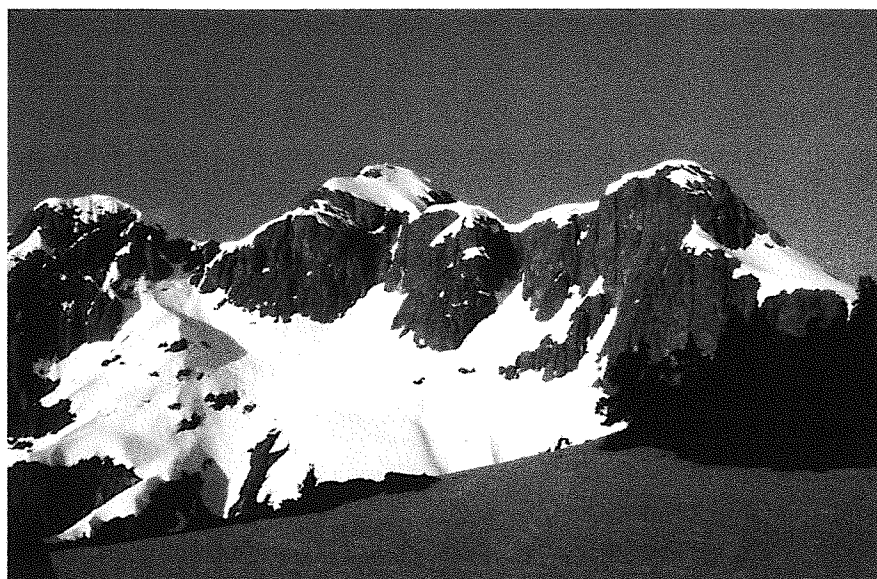
site, we followed the ridge for about five minutes and crossed the steep side slope to the saddle that divides the main ridge and the ridge where we camped. From there we went down the wide snow basin almost to the bottom. Then we climbed back up to the saddle on the main west ridge, crossed the snow slope to the south ridge, and then hiked up the mountain's south slope to the top.

We reached the top around 1:00 pm. After we enjoyed the warm sun at the top, we trekked down in the same way we came up. We spent one more night at the same camp site and next morning we went down an easy snow slope that we found the day before. It took us one and half hours to the logging road where our cars were.

Round two: The Unnamed Peak. This was an unfinished business from the previous trip to the Nimpkish Valley in May. We assembled at Campbell River as usual, and then drove up to the trail head. We camped at the logging road where a creek was crossing and then hiked up along this creek to access to the peak. The creek was dried up at the crossing but we found good water a little way up the stream.

I estimated that it would take from three to four hours to reach the summit from there. We followed a big elk

trail beside the creek to a slide gully which came down from our planned route of the north ridge. The gully was very loose, slimy and long - about 1600' elevation gain. When we reached the north ridge, it was already past noon. We ate lunch there, and then followed the ridge toward the top. It was a nice ridge walk till we encountered the two gaps. We easily negotiated the first one, but we found serious rock climbing to overcome the second one. The problem was that we had first to rappel down to the bottom and then climb up again. The face was about 20 m high, but it was slightly overhanging and there was only one crack in it.



*Maquilla from ridge camp.*

*Photo: Peter Rothermel*

In order to climb up this crack, we needed a bit of protection gear which we didn't have with us. We discussed the situation and everyone thought that it was too risky to try this without any protection. After we discussed other possibilities, we decided to give up the ascent and backtracked down the ridge and the loose gully. The gully was so loose that every step we dislodged small stones and big rocks. We swore a lot and much to our relief we got down to the bottom safely. We got back to our car just

as darkness set in.

After this trip, Peter and I went back to the south side of this peak in November to look for a route up. We were not able to find any, but it looks much easier than the north side.

*Participants:* Peter Rothermel, Don Morton, Mike Hubbard, Tony Vaughn, a Vancouver resident (sorry I forgot your name), Tak Ogasawara, Rick Eppler (Unnamed Peak)

## NAHMINT TRIPS

**Barb Baker**

**June 5, 12, September 26**

On a dreary Saturday morning, June 5, with worsening weather in the forecast, I was surprised when my co-leader, Rudy, optimistically and unilaterally, called for a "Go" to Nahmint. This peak is fairly remote, rarely traveled and one that Rudy had declared he would not attempt in poor conditions. Obviously these grey and threatening conditions did not qualify as poor.

We navigated out to the head of Nahmint Valley, crossed the two welcome bridges (their removal by road building crews has been promised) and negotiated Spur 700. This water-barred spur was fairly short and not too damaging, but that is not to say it was a comfortable ride - more like bucking than riding. The trailhead and route up through dense rainforest underbrush had been flagged during several previous trips. After the standard 2-hour

thrash up a steep, thick, slippery and treacherous slope, we came out onto the open north ridge with snow deepening underfoot and weather thickening above. Tim D, a new member wearing glasses, must have had even less visibility. Nevertheless, he followed Rudy and Brooke into the gloom without complaint and I brought up the rear also not voicing any reservations.

After climbing for some time and knowing we needed to traverse the cirque, we started across and down what should have been a long traverse of the north-facing bowl. Out of this we would go up to a col and from there, heading east, ascend the summit. Some of us had done just that a year earlier on a shimmering clear day. Now, the going was very much steeper than I recalled, and there was almost no visibility although I could see along the line of climbers. Harry, a novice at snow travel, was going very

well with Rudy and Brooke instructing. We carried on past a few little treetops, which I did not remember, suddenly coming on a steep snow gully trending to the west, which was also odd but seemed to be the only way to proceed. The gully brought us out onto a bench from where Charles took the lead, climbing steeply east onto a peak and announcing that we had arrived! Rudy called back to me very pleased and excited "we are here!" But I had been watching the time, and we were an hour early. Having no visibility, there were no landmarks and on investigation, there appeared to be nothing higher. By the time I got to the top, everyone was exhilarated about being on the peak so I, too, became convinced.

The cold and wind were insistent so we headed off the peak in somewhat improved visibility, going west down into a low saddle, up to another small peak thinking this to be the false summit – all as we would expect the contours to be coming off the main summit. I got a troubling brief view of a wide bowl, much too shallow and in the wrong place, but shrugged it off. Our trip back was very wet and cold but we descended the ridge, picked up the "up" tracks and, eventually, arrived home early.

Next day, the sun shone brilliantly but a cooling e-mail arrived from Tim saying that he had checked his GPS (who knew?), which he fired up at our highest point the day before, and it appears we were never on the main summit! Chagrined and embarrassed, I attempt to prove him wrong suggesting that his machine was faulty or his batteries cold. We can't have been that far off! He sent me the contour map on which he has plotted our route. It's undeniable. Feeling the need to share the responsibility, I sent off the evidence to Rudy and Brooke. They were no happier than I was to learn that we had been off the mark but had convinced ourselves otherwise.

Next weekend, in even worse weather, Rudy and Brooke accompanied by Rick Eppler set out again to prove that they could do it right. The guys stayed on the north ridge to the false summit, turned east and made the real summit by Braille, duly satisfied that they had been exonerated. There being no hope of any visibility through which to gain some perspective on our error, I stayed home warm and dry.

Mid September, the access road to my Triple Peak trip was blocked and seeing my own opportunity to sort out this route and to show it off to others, I suggested Nahmint as an alternative. The group was enthusiastic. September 26<sup>th</sup> morning was clear, good vehicles, the

bridges still in-situ ...altogether a promising start for another attempt on the "well-guarded" Nahmint. Tim, although he could not join us, had sent his coordinates which Tony loaded into his GPS. These could take us back to the false summit if necessary but the day was so clear that the GPS was only jokingly called upon to confirm our route. The long bushwhack finally opened onto the north ridge, so different from the June trip. That trip was a monotone of white and grey with ghostly figures trudging off into the gloom – this trip was sunshine on alpine shrubs, ochre and rust-coloured rocks, and beckoning blue skies. Gaining elevation, we headed up and south with the false summit rising above us. Once onto the shoulder, I looked across the broad bowl which drains steeply into a beautiful long falls which drop to the valley floor. Nahmint's main summit stands higher and obviously to the east. Working our way down and across, we negotiated some fairly greasy steep sections with a few lasting snow patches in the north shade. During this stage, I tried to imagine our earlier trip. In this steep small cirque under the false summit with no visibility, we had made an error that I still could not understand. Instead of traversing the bowl, we must have traversed the lower peak, changing direction and mistaking the summits.

Lunch having been suggested, we gained an idyllic saddle, warm and sheltered with views of the lovely Beverley Lake fairly filling a large bench on the southern side and a ridge running west to 5040. Replenished, Russ took the lead up onto another bench. Over to the left, then catching a long diagonal, he and Rick brought us out onto the spacious top of Nahmint's main summit at 1568m. Views from here are spectacular.

In the best of good humour, we returned down to the col and up onto the false summit from which Beverley Lake lies deep blue and inviting. Resisting, we turned right (north) heading home on the very blocky long ridge, taking in the afternoon sun. After the hours of down-thrash and logging roads, we arrived on the outskirts of Port Alberni just as a huge moon rose over Arrowsmith. Great finish to great trip!

Is there a moral? Trust the GPS!

*Participants: 1st trip-* Barb Baker, Rudy Brugger, Tim Deutcher, Christine Fordham, Doug Hurrell, Brooke George, Harry Schwartz, Charles Turner; *2nd trip-* Rudy Brugger, Rick Eppler, Brooke George; *3rd trip-* Barb Baker, Rick Eppler, Mike Hubbard, Russ Moir, Dale Nicol, Jules Thomson, Tony Vaughn

## A VISIT TO THE PRINCE OF WALES RANGE

Tony Vaughn

June 7-10 and September 3-6

The Prince of Wales range on Vancouver Island extends from McCreight Lake in the south to Sayward Village in the north and borders Johnstone Strait to the east. This range consists of Mts. Kitchener, Roberts, Milner, H'ksun plus several unnamed peaks. The highest of these peaks at 5481 feet is H'ksun, overlooking the village of Sayward and home of the endurance race known as the Kusum klimb.

My interest in this area was sparked after an abortive trip to Warden Peak last year. Driven away by torrential rain, the alternative was Mt. Kitchener. Being further east we hoped for better weather and also the tale of a trail to the summit was appealing, even if the weather was still bad. Unfortunately the better weather wasn't and the trail proved elusive. So we went home.

This year, on June 7, after a soggy Sunday traverse of El Capitan, Larry Talarico and I headed up to the Prince of Wales in great sunny weather. We were armed with directions for finding Kitchener's elusive trail and also the wreck of a WW2 plane, which had crashed on its flanks in 1945.

The first day was spent driving up island and around the west side of the Big Tree Creek valley, getting our bearings and generally looking the area over from across the valley. We ended the day on the east side of the valley, having found what we thought was the start of the Mr. Kitchener trail, and here we camped for the night.

The next morning we followed flagging into the bush. It didn't take long before we come across a large tree labelled "wild life tree". Here the flagging ended. Obviously this was not the trail to Mr. Kitchener, so we were back to square one, which meant driving up and down logging roads, some of which must have changed over the years making our directions somewhat obsolete. Fortunately the weather was still sunny and clear and by noon we stumbled upon flagging at the end of one of many roads, which this time continued on through logging slash till it reached an excellent trail that led up the S.E. ridge to the summit. The directions for the plane wreck were right on, but there was too much snow and the wreckage was



*Johnstone Strait with the Coast Mountains beyond.*

*Photo: Tony Vaughn*

buried. We hiked up to the top of a second bump and had a late lunch while watching a cruise ship sailing through the Johnstone Strait before heading down the trail to camp. Wednesday morning dawned with low cloud and no visibility. At 8:30 am we wandered off down the road from camp in hopes of finding a route up the south ridge of Mt. Roberts without a bushwhack. No such luck, so it was into dense, wet, 8 foot high bush for two hours, following game trails where possible until we broke out onto a higher road, which had not been visible from camp due to the mist. It was just a short hike through slash to reach old growth forest making for good easier travel. By now the clouds had lifted and the day turned into another fine sunny one. We traversed the east side of the south ridge on mostly wet snow. Then on reaching the east ridge we followed it up to the summit. The return trip was uneventful except, of course, for the return bushwhack to camp. At least the bush was now dry.

Our last morning was spent exploring Bill's Trail on Mt. H'ksun from Sayward, going up as far as Keta rock at 4050 feet. It was wet and misty at that elevation and we needed to get back to Victoria, so we turned round and went home.

My second foray took place in early September. Mike



Hubbard and I were aiming for Mts H'ksum and Milner at the north end of the range. A late start from town had us camping at a quarry near Stowe Creek in the dark and hoping we were on the right road. The following morning in low cloud and drizzle we continued along this road for about 8 km until it was blocked by large boulders and sign identifying Bill's Trail. Obviously we had picked the right road.

As the weather wasn't too good, we opted to climb H'ksum that day and Milner the next hoping the weather would improve. We left the vehicle and followed the trail to the end of the road and into the forest. Just before the saddle at GR975803 we left the main trail and followed flagging to a creek, which we followed up a short way, then up a steep heather gully to its top which opened out into a large boulder field. Unsure of our route from here we traversed left about half way down the boulder field and up through some brush, following what we kept imagining were boot tracks. Eventually we reached a rock filled gully on our left that appeared to end up on the ridge. We climbed up this gully to its outlet and did indeed find ourselves on the ridge. Being lunch time we decided to stop before searching for the summit. Just then the clouds drifted away revealing just above us, and a couple of hundred feet away, the summit cairn. Being so close we decided to lunch there. On the route down we followed the ridge and came down into the area known as the crater via an easier gully. The crater is a fascinating place, filled with huge boulders and surrounded by rocky crags. By now the clouds had drifted away and we were having a beautiful day. There had been lots of bear sign on the trail, but no sightings until we came with sight of our vehicle. There, checking it out, was a large black bear. By the time we reached the vehicle he or she had moved

on, but behind us, ambling up the road in the opposite direction was another bear. The bears had no interest in us and were just out for supper and a stroll in the cool of the evening.

The following day dawned sunny and hot. This was our Mt. Milner day. We left following directions from the guide book: "Follow the old road into the east fork of Stowe Creek and from the end of the road continue south east to a col at GR0177". Sounds dead easy, but the first problem was there was no old road, or any road for that matter. After four hours of thrashing, bashing, swearing (lots) and crawling (why don't bears walk upright so we can follow their trails without having to crawl?) through dense bush, we climbed up to a rocky bluff to the north for a look around. What we found was not encouraging. We had got about half way along the valley. It was time to abandon this route and find a better one. We scrambled up to the ridge and naturally found the going much better. Although we didn't have sufficient time that day, we concluded that travelling along the ridge would probably be the best way to go. The trick would be to find a reasonable bush free route up to the ridge. We had no luck though in finding an easy route back down from the ridge. It was crash and thrash for the rest of the day.

That evening we scoped out a route that looked feasible and next morning before heading home we tried it out. Though it took a couple of hours of steep scrambling, we found that by traversing up through an old burn area, we could reach the ridge with minimal bushwhacking, although we were still about 4 km from the mountain. Next year we'll give it a try.

*Participants: June- Larry Talarico, Tony Vaughn*

*September- Mike Hubbard, Tony Vaughn*

## KING'S PEAK, NORTH RIDGE

Reinhard Illner

June 19-20

This trip is one of the few island objectives which has all of the following desirable features: an easy drive, good and safe parking, a very good access trail (at least to the waterfall), spectacular scenery, a beautiful, aesthetic and non-trivial line of ascent, fantastic views from the top, and an easy and fast descent. All of the above applied on our picture-book hot weekend; a howling rain-or snowstorm would certainly make a difference.

We met in Campbell River for an early lunch and

soon continued to the trailhead, where all were ready for the hike at around 2 pm. The first half of the trail is just spectacularly easy - well graded, with switchbacks, steps and no bush. It was hot but we were mostly shaded by old-growth, and bubbling creeks and cooling waterfalls invited us to rest at regular intervals. After the "big" waterfall the trail becomes a steep route, but by then we were keen and warmed up, and we proceeded at good speed. The only tricky part was the crossing of the swollen creek

just below the avalanche gully; intrepid George pioneered a good route over a log jam, and soon we found ourselves traversing avalanche remnants into the big basin where base camp is conveniently located just below the steep gully leading up to the glacier. We found beautiful camping conditions in a growth of old trees where there was dry and flat ground, surrounded by deep spring snow. The evening offered incredible light on the high north faces of King's and Queen's Peak, good food, tea, some of George's scotch and - you guessed it - my cigars. Not to mention the memorable conversation involving spoonerisms and other English artefacts which emerge whenever Sandy and John get together. It must be witnessed to be believed.

The next morning we started early, as we were a large party and had a big agenda for the day. Crampons and good conditions helped us to make short work of the gully, and soon we rested on the lower, gentle part of the King's glacier. From here Sandy and Jean took the easy way up the glacier, as Jean had no climbing experience and wasn't ready to tackle the north ridge. The rest of us headed left and soon gained the ridge at a prominent low notch. I now know that this was a mistake: one can take a ramp farther right and ascend directly to a wide ledge higher up on the "bump", thereby saving some exposed rock-climbing we had to do from the notch. It was easy but hard to belay, and it cost us time. We moved in two parties of three. Soon we reached the mentioned ledge, where one moves a little farther east (to the other side of the ridge), climbs another pitch, and - voila - things get easier. From a beautiful, grassy balcony we climbed a final steep snow slope to the top of the "bump" and found ourselves looking at the impressive upper part of the ridge.

The traverse of the bump involves a rappel (or descent) into an exposed notch and one short move up the other side. We had been told that this was one of the more technical spots of the climb, but it really wasn't much (we had by that time become used to the exposure), and on the other side of the notch we packed up the ropes. The upper part of the ridge is steep and exposed but never more than fourth class, and we moved slowly, steadily and carefully until we emerged on the sun-drenched summit plateau, suddenly overwhelmed by the spectacular appearance of Elkhorn and the Golden

Hinde, and of Sandy and Jean, who had come up from the south. We spent more than an hour on the summit (do I have to mention the scotch and cigars?), reluctant to leave. When we descended, it was on the easy regular trail, and then on our behinds down the glacier, until the softened gully required a little more caution. A little after eight in the evening we all sat in the pub in Campbell River, celebrating a most wonderful trip.



*King's Peak Gully*

*Photo: Reinhard Illner*

*Participants:* Sandy Briggs, Jean Cameron, Jutta Gutberlet, Gordon Nienaber, John Pratt, Sarah Reznikoff, George Urban and Reinhard Illner (trip leader and reporter)

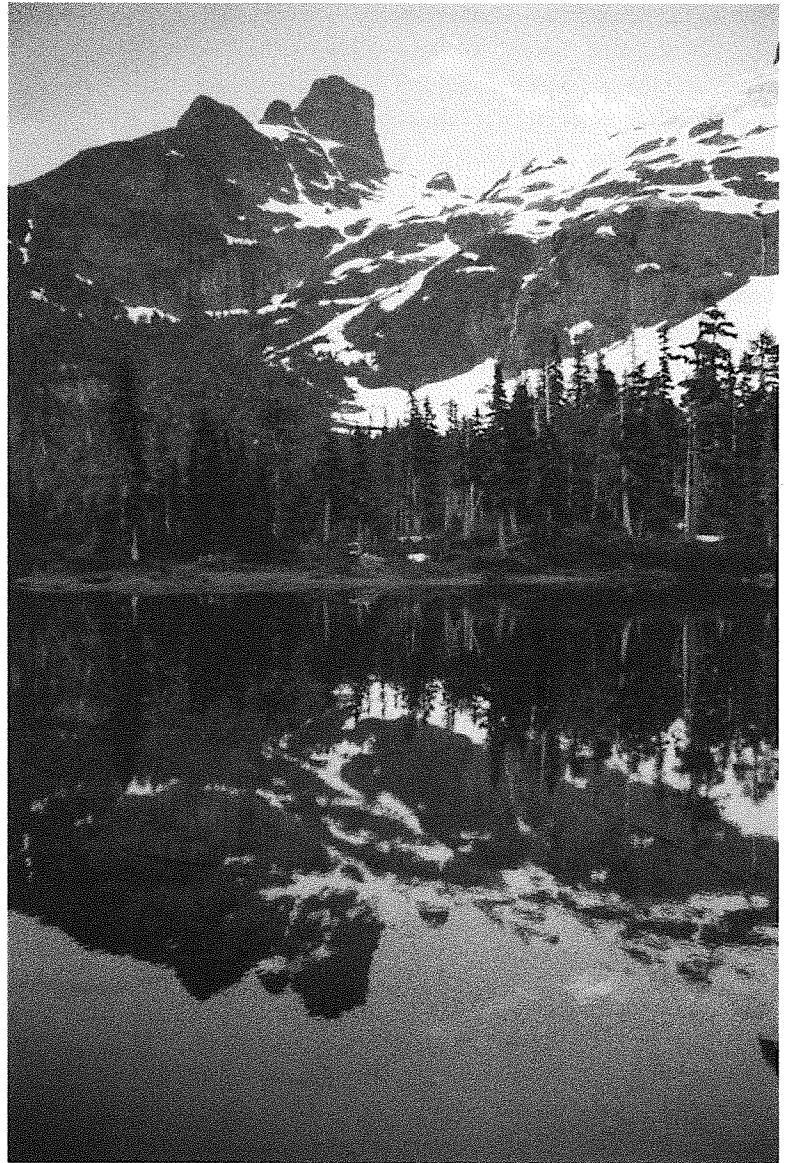
## WARDEN PEAK — KEEP COOL, DO NOT FREEZE

Peter Rothermel  
June 21-23

Warden Peak is the remnant core of an ancient volcano that has remained after the volcano's slopes have long ago eroded away, as has its bigger sister Victoria. The plug that's left more resembles one of the sandstone towers of the southwest deserts than a Pacific Northwest peak. It was first climbed July 9, 1968, by Pat Guilbride, Peter Perfect and K. Pfeiffer. Landing via float plane at Stewart Lake, they bushwhacked into and traversed over Victoria Peak, to reach and climb Warden Peak in what I think was one of the most audacious trips this Island has ever seen. The second ascent was done by Bill Perry and Franz Bislin, August 1972, and was an equal to the first ascent, in that they approached from the eastern, Consort Creek side, up a steep debris choked gully to the Vic/Ward Col, climbed Warden, then climbed Victoria Peak from the northeast, which was probably a first ascent from that side and then descended the massif via the White River side, before there were logging roads built into that end of the valley, Talk about verve.

My first foray to Warden peak was in August 2003 with Tom Carter, in perfect weather and I turned us back at the col between Victoria and Warden Peaks. On most mountain trips, I usually feel more exhilarated and more in tune the higher up I get, yet on the '03 trip, the higher we ascended the more dread I felt. I've never had premonitions, nor held much truth in the stories of them, but if I did, then the bells would have been clanging like a four alarm fire, that day. The decision to turn back could have been partly due to the perceived, dangerous scree slopes we would have had to traverse or lack of route information about the north side, but in the end I have to admit that I chickened out off the mountain because it just didn't feel right. I spent my descent deep in doubt, wondering if I was just being a sissy or wondering if there was a stronger force at play. Tom and I made a plan to return when there might be a bit of snow to bind up the scree apron.

So obsessed I became with this mountain, I went back a month later and drove around as high as I could get



*Warden reflections*

*Photo: Doug Hurrell*

on the logging roads and shot several rolls of film, to try and get a good photo to blow up of the north face route. It was a waste of good film, as the route I was interested in was in the shade and all the photos I took turned out to be black silhouettes.

I spent a lot of time that winter researching the route, yet, much like all the written route information about Warden Peak and all the people I talked to that had

summitted were also very vague and could give me no real information about the north side, other than, "How hard? I'm not sure. It was sort of blocky. I can't remember.", almost as if there was collusion among summiters to not give out information on the "Dark Side" or as if the mountain had put a silence spell on everyone. As well, even the best photos I could find from any source, showed the north face just kind of fuzzy. That's spooky.

We decided that when a strong high weather system came in June we'd just drop our work and go with the good weather. So June 21st saw us heading up Island, mid week, to pick up Doug Hurrell in Campbell River. It's a good thing that my employers understand my philosophy in life in that, "I work to exist. I don't exist to work".

The evening before, while packing and making a sandwich to take for my lunch, I noticed on the side of my spread container the instructions, "Keep Cool, do not freeze". I thought, "Now there's my mantra for the climb. Keep a cool head and don't freeze up."

The drive from my place in Qualicum to the trail head takes about three hours, turning off the highway at Sayward and driving down White River Main, then ending up WR 381 spur, parking just before a derelict, overgrown bridge. On the right is a piece of yellow flagging and very dense bush. That's the start. There's new company flagging that implies that some of this slope may soon be heli-logged. I wonder how Victoria/Warden ever escaped becoming a Provincial Park? It is surely deserving of protected status, as it is one of the finest Island Alpine destinations and is a stand alone group of peaks, separate from any other protected provincial park area.

For gear we brought two 60 meter 8mm double ropes, two pickets, a small rack of gear consisting of 4 pitons, 5 nuts, 2 tri-cams and an extra technical hammer/ice axe, which I am very glad I brought, in addition to webbing, cordalettes and slings. As well we each had our ice axes and crampons. Tom and Doug each carried a rope and I carried the hardware, which split up the load three ways nicely.

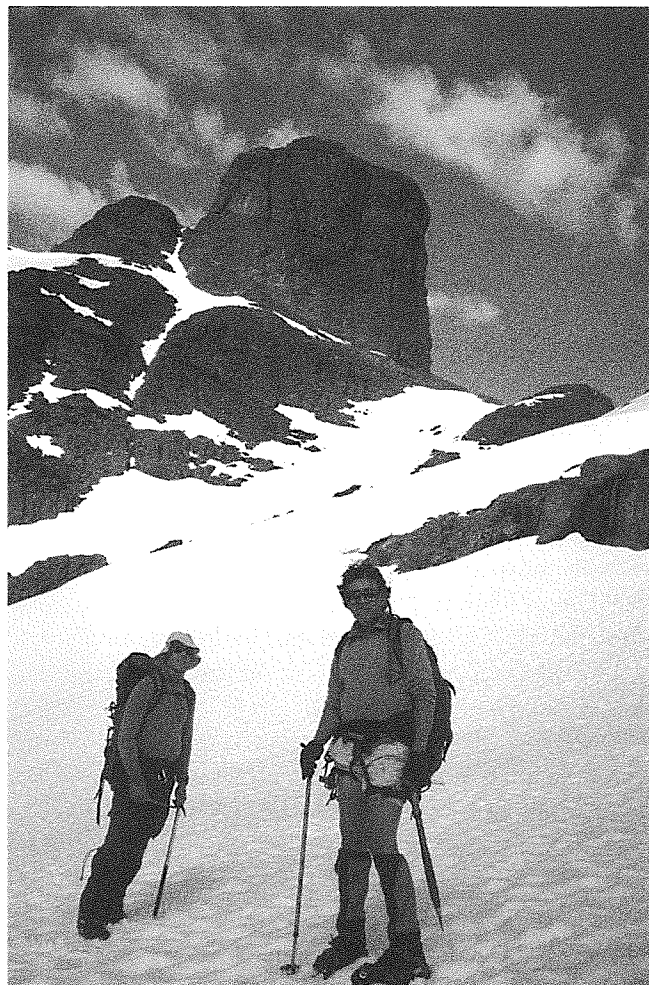
Half way up our approach, through steep forest and down sloping willow brush, I was questioning the decision to bring so much heavy hardware that we might not even need. Later I would come to love every gram of gear.

The route is steep and rough, yet well flagged all the way to a lovely little lake campsite, after about a 5 hour slog uphill. From your bed you have views of Victoria, Warden and the glacier, very intimidating views indeed.

We got an early start at 5:30 the next morning, in perfect weather and were soon heading up a long couloir. As we booted up the 35 degree snow, with the blue fissured glacier looming above us, I kept hearing, in my head, a line from a poem about water that I had recently heard,

"The moisture on your breath was once locked in a glacier. One day you will be part of a cloud" and I was hoping that my last breath wouldn't be locked under some ice fall from this glacier.

When we reached our previous high point at about 7:30, at the Victoria/Warden Col, the once feared apron looked easy and it was. My previous trepidation melted away like hoar frost in the morning sun. Past the Apron and at the bottom of the snow filled couloir leading to the



*Doug Hurrell & Tom Carter on Victoria/Warden col  
Photo: Peter Rothermel*

shoulder notch and the unknown beyond, we decided to pull out the rope, as the run out was probably five hundred meters on steep snow down to a boulder field. I led up the 35 degree slope, on a single 8mm rope, placing one picket over a 50 meter lead and made a bollard anchor on the lower lip of the bergschrund, backed up with a picket and belayed Doug and Tom up. From there Tom and I followed Doug on a hairy 4th class rock scramble to a chock stone, with an old sling on it, at the top of the couloir.

Once past the chockstone we were on the "Dark Side of the Moon", into unknown territory, never seen before,



at least by Tom and me, and Doug wasn't telling. There we stopped on a safe ledge and had our 10:00 coffee break and had a look around.

If no other person, that has summited, will tell of the "Dark Side", I will now break the code of silence. Wow. The exposure was impossibly huge. It's the kind that is so big that your eyes can't quite seem to focus on it totally and you go kind of cross eyed. I guess it's a brain rational/survival response to make you stay still and not move. When your eyes finally do tune in, you seriously question your own sanity, being in a place like this. It's not like there's a gold ring on the summit or great fame to be had.

We saw that we needed to traverse a 45 degree snow slope for only about 20 meters, yet with absolutely no runout. Doug found a solid block to wrap a sling around and set up a belay for me to lead across the traverse. If it had good run out, it would have been a cake walk. As it was there was about 1200 meters of air and tumbling below, a non survival situation. I tied into both ropes and set out. As I crossed, I dug in two snow stakes as deep as I could and thought, "One slip and the pickets will probably pull". They seemed more for psychological support than real physical support. If I slipped with both feet off, there would have been no way I could have done an axe arrest in such soft snow and would have pendulumed across the 45 degree snow face and raked over rock. I would have likely left only frayed rope ends and an arching brown streak on the snow face for my mountaineering legacy, as I crapped my pants and tumbled to my final resting place far below. I made it to the other side and slung a block and equalized it with a nut and a tri-cam in a crack and belayed Doug and Tom across. My belay area was small, so by the time Tom came across, Doug was already moving up and we followed. Doug's pretty comfortable on 4th class rock, whereas I might have pulled out the rope, but since he wasn't stopping, neither were we. The scramble up was over 60 meters in length and we saw a couple of slings off to the right side where rap anchors had been set up. Craning my neck around, looking over either shoulder gave me views of more than a kilometers potential fall, if I came unstuck. Just another small patch of snow to get over and we were on the summit, "big enough to have a soccer game" and had lunch as it was just before noon: two hours to cover less than a hundred meters of ground. Lindsay Elms once observed, "Pete, you seem to need two tries, to get up your mountains." I guess he's right, but a second try is better than none.

After about an hour's worth of exploring for places to rap from, we found a block slung with old webbing, right above where we came up. We put in some new webbing and I tied our lines and threw both rope bags off. I being the weightiest one, went first and let me tell you, a

full 60 meter rap is LONG and on 8mm ropes, STRETCHY. There wasn't a lot of room where I landed, but I found a good stance to one side of potential rock fall and got busy setting up another anchor. I found a small horn to sling and equalized it with a piton pounded into a crack, as Doug came down and found another tiny piece of flat below me to rest on. Tom was last and he had a bit of overhang above him, so we were all shielded from the loose rock while he pulled the ropes down. At one point the rope stuck and it looked like we might have to do some fancy footwork to get it back and then it all of a sudden pulled free. Whew.

In retrospect, remembering the slings to our right on our ascent, there might be an easier rap route down to avoid much of this.

Our next rap was only about 20 meters to our snow traverse, so we just doubled one rope and I went down and reset the old station, while Tom & Doug came along. I led the traverse in reverse of before, Doug followed on a fixed line and then I belayed Tom across. After a needed break to allow our systems to settle down, we scrambled down to the chockstone tied in a sling and rappelled about 40 meters to the snow bollard station. Doug didn't especially feel good about rapping off a bollard, so he hunted around and found a block of rock to sling. When I went down, I rapped pretty much the whole 60 meters to really safe ground. Across the apron, down the col and retracing our steps back down sounds easy, but there was still poor runout and I badgered Tom and Doug more than once, to slow down, as I didn't feel safe going at their speed over the steep snow slopes.

After a bit, over all of about 12 hours, we were back at camp, loosening our joints with ibuprofen and loosening our tongues with Bushmills Irish Whiskey. Later as I was drifting off to sleep and in that "twilight zone" of half awake and half sleep, I would relive some of the more grippy sections of the day and fall, only to awake with a jerk and a jolt and then feel the womb like comfort, knowing I was fed, hydrated and realizing I was safe and snug in my sleeping bag. What a delicious feeling.

The third day we packed up and took our time heading down, yet still reached the truck after only about three and a half hours, partly due to our flagging efforts through the willow brush on our way up.

I thank Tom and Doug for being such great partners and also for letting me do the leads, allowing me to fully settle my score with this mountain.

Back at the truck, after we washed up in the glacier stream, I said "God, I'm all scratched up, bug bitten, bruised and ache all over". To which Tom replied, "Yeah, another great trip, eh. *Participants:* Tom Carter, Doug Hurrell & Peter Rothermel



**VI MOUNTAINS WINNER**  
**VIEW FROM FROG POND, COMOX GLACIER**  
**PHOTO: HINRICH SCHAEFER**



# A LONG WEEKEND ON THE GOLDEN HINDE - CLIMBING THE WEST RIDGE

Rick Hudson

July 1-4

By happy chance, Canada Day fell on a Thursday in 2004, meaning that most delinquents saw a 4-day weekend. What to do with those precious days? The obvious answer appeared to be the Golden Hinde. True, it had been summited in under 23 hours from car to car, but for us lesser mortals, four days provided enough flexibility to cater for some bad weather and lost hours of bushwhacking.

The long slow afternoon pull up to Arnica Lake in Myra Mine Provincial Park allowed Pete and me to stretch the tendons. At the top we ran into a pair of likely lads who also had the Hinde as their objective, but had just 3 days in which to do it. We felt smug. They recommended a shortcut to avoid the long loop the trail makes to the north before swinging west towards Mt Phillips and we, for once forgetting that old maxim that we didn't have time for shortcuts, decided to take their advice. An hour later, uncertain as to whether we'd saved anything, but much scratched and tired, we cut the trail and turned west along the broad ridge that makes up the undulating watershed of the Phillips drainage.

Since the original plan was to go just as far as Arnica Lake the first night, we were well satisfied with our progress when we stopped and made camp about an hour and a half west. It was Pete's birthday (24) and I had packed a can of India Pale Ale which, after cooling in a snow patch for some minutes, produced a fine end to a good day.

Some time after midnight we awoke to the sound of light rain, which increased to a heavy drumming by 4 a.m. This did not auger well, and the morning found us cloud-bound, with scotch mist soaking everything. We set off into a world both unfamiliar and confusing, following a compass bearing across broad snow patches and clumps of dwarf mountain spruce. Bumps and dips appeared out of nowhere as we approached. Along the ridge we encountered the pair who were attempting the Hinde in 3 days. They were retreating.

A map with 40m contours can hide a great deal of topography, but we made some good decisions and by 10 a.m. were on the ridge leading to Mt Phillips, with cairns in front and behind, something that had been notably absent earlier in the morning.

Heading north, the cloud lifted occasionally, and we glimpsed snow splashed slopes below, but nothing at our

own level until after noon, when the clouds began to lift and then, suddenly, there lay Schjelderup Lake below. I had spent some time earlier in the week inquiring about the best way of getting from Phillips Ridge across Schjelderup Lake to Burman Lake. Some recommended dropping down to the north end of the lake and then traversing the steep north cirque of Mt Burman. Others had suggested going between Schjelderup and its partner to the south, although the details of how we were to get down the 350m slope in either case were somewhat vague.

As it turned out, we picked a perfect line, descending three interconnecting snow slopes onto the land bridge between the two lakes in short order. (See note at the end of this article.) The sun appeared, the clouds were lifting on the Hindes to the north, and things were starting to look as though we had the world by the tail.

It's always folly to laugh at the gods, and this was no exception. A steep pull to the summit of Mt Burman, while straightforward enough, was hard going after what had already been a long day. We topped out feeling wrecked, although not without the satisfaction of looking back to see that our snow patch descent route had been much the most elegant line to have taken.

Descending the north ridge of Mt Burman, the trail dropped over steep quartzite bluffs, and at the ultimate one we found the way blocked. Although clearly cairned as the only route through the cliff band, the crack was coated in wet slime and running water. Further, the snow patch below, which earlier in the year would have offered an easy jump to safety, had melted away from the rock, leaving a gaping chasm.

Backing up, we debated on what to do. The Hinde was now so close; there was no turning back. We chose to rappel down and inspect the route, to see if a climber without a pack could get up what we currently were unwilling to climb down. After all, we might need to come back this way a day later.

This was quickly done, our 20m of 7mm rope coming in handy for just such a problem. Having confirmed we could up-climb if necessary, Pete lowered the packs, and shortly joined me on the grass terrace. Another half an hour brought us to a spot above Burman Lake where small tarns and copses of trees offered a good campsite.

The original plan had been to continue to the south

bowl of the Golden Hinde for a shorter approach on the morrow, but tired muscles voted otherwise. We pitched the tent as the clouds came and went most of the evening.

Day 3, and we awoke at 5:30 to find a world enshrouded in mist, but no wind. A hasty breakfast, and we descended the slippery trail into the slot that is at lake level, before the steep climb out on the other side. Silent thoughts wished the Park authorities would install a suspension bridge, to avoid the futility of dropping 50m into a crack, only to clamber out again.

Once across the chasm, a good path led in an hour into the bowl under the Golden Hinde's south face. The clouds had burned off the upper levels, leaving the valleys in mist. Above, a blue sky promised a perfect day. It was 7 o'clock and decision time: We could choose the standard SE Gullies route, and play it safe. The alternate was the West Ridge, which, although longer, was (according to Philip Stone's excellent *Island Alpine*) also grade 4.

We opted for the latter, and were at the foot of the ridge (1) at 8:00. The first section was easy scrambling on quartzite amid heather terraces, and went quickly. Then the first gendarme (2) appeared, with a large snow slope sweeping up from the left (north) side. To the right (south), the smooth south face dropped away, offering little that was close to Class 4. We opted to climb 10m up the spine of the gendarme, before stepping left into a metre-wide alley between the rock and snow. We emerged onto the upper, gentler-angled snow, which brought us out at a notch (3) in the west ridge.

While the notch offered no possibilities, as it opened onto the south face again, a 20m gully (4) to its left led onto a quite different aspect. True, we were on the south face, but a long and relatively wide terrace (5) ran away and up, providing an easy scramble across what would otherwise have been a serious rock wall.

After several hundred meters of progress, our way was blocked by a steep snow slope that had no comforting alley behind it. Reminding ourselves that this was, after all, "only Class 4", we realized that some 30m above us, a

red terrace offered the only alternative. The challenge was how to reach that terrace.

A white quartzite slab (6) allowed us to gain height, after one or two thin initial moves. Mind you, when you are doing un-roped thin moves, it's always best that they be at the start, rather than the finish, of a pitch. Above, a steep but easy chimney required great care not to dislodge loose rubble, and then the red terrace (7) was ours.

The Golden Hinde is a geologist's dream, with a multitude of different rock types – quartzite, basalt, gneiss, granite, limestone, even marble. The red terrace turned out to be a band of iron-rich material, and it rose at a steady angle up and across the face, making a perfect, though airy, pathway.

Half way across, at its narrowest, Pete announced he was running on empty and needed a snack. Under normal circumstances I would have opted for a somewhat less vertical site to stop, but he was adamant, so we spent a breezy



South side of the Golden Hinde showing West Ridge route

Photo: Rick Hudson

ten minutes standing against the wall, packs firmly clasped, eating and drinking, and trying hard not to look down.

Finally, we moved off again. The terrace broadened, with scrub grass and heather cover. Ahead, a spur ran up to the south summit, cutting our path. Just as we were wondering how to turn it, a white quartzite gully (8) cut back left to the West Ridge's crest. From there, a short scramble brought us to the south summit (9) itself.

Crossing a narrow snow ridge above the SE Gullies,

we reached the final 30m to the true summit (10). So it was true, the West Ridge went as a Class 4 (and in just 90 minutes). There had certainly been times along the route when we'd wondered.

On the summit, there was an unhappy lack of a summit register. A note, stuck in a rubber ducky, and dated August 2002, complained of the same problem. We, alas, had neither pen, paper nor canister. Instead, we took photos on a pristine day, with blue skies above, and all the 1500m-plus peaks standing out of a sea of cloud below. It was perfect.

Then down the SE Gullies, the snow patches steep, climbed facing in for some distance before turning round and heel-booting rapidly. Lower, the lucky find of a cairn took us down the right gully back to the basin below the south face and into familiar territory, with nothing but the awful chasm down to Burman Lake separating us from camp, which we reached at noon.

An hour to recover, and then it was time to start the long trip home. We had already ruled out going back over Mt Burman with its wet gully to climb. Instead, we opted for a traverse on snow patches under the NE flank of Burman. It was a good line, well cairned, and got us to the north end of Schjelderup Lake in short order. However, there our luck ran out. The trail leading SE up onto Phillips Ridge petered out, and we spent an hour thrashing first up, and then down through alder, before traversing an old avalanche slope on the E shoreline, to regain the strip of land between Schjelderup Lake and its unnamed southern partner.

From there, we knew the way up, having descended that route two days before. The bottom section (below the snow patches) however, had been steep and messy - fine for descent, but an ugly proposition for climbing. Instead, we chose the talus next to the cliffs on the left (N), which avoided the vertical forest, regaining the snow higher up without pain. Thereafter, a slow and steady plod up the couloir saw us back on the ridge, 350m above.

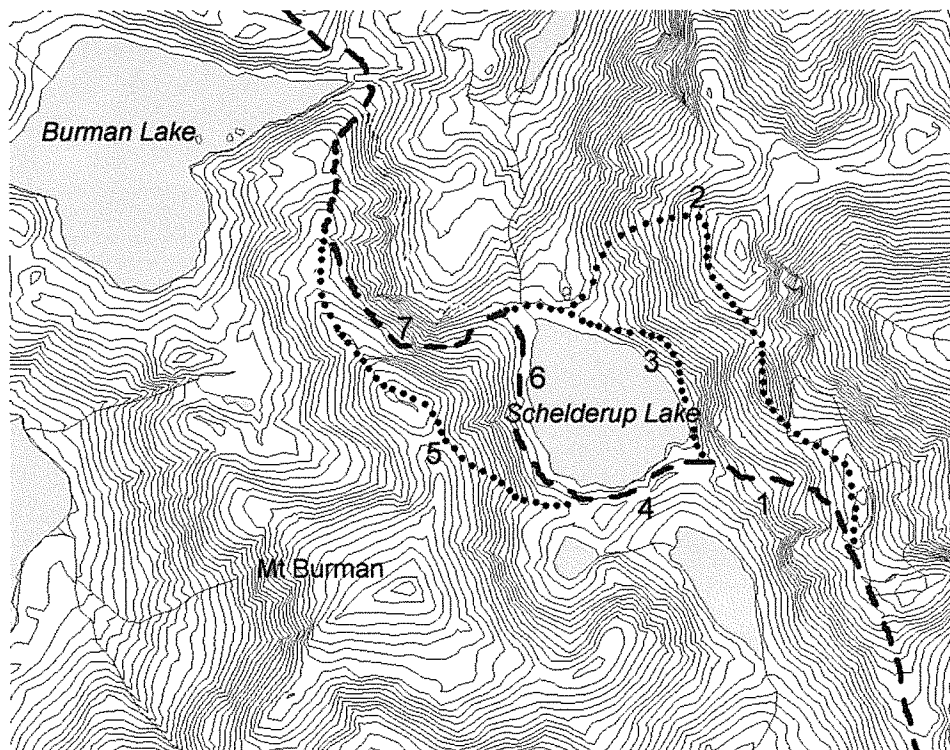
Like every other day, this had been a long one, and we'd little left to give as we hiked up and down the interminable ridge bumps. As 6 o'clock approached, I called a

halt. We made camp on a level spot and were in our sleeping bags and in the land of nod by 8:00, long before the sun had set.

Day 4, and the morning brought good weather. We packed up and headed south over more saddles and peaks, crossing Mt Phillips and turning east for Arnica Lake. The zigzags down to the car were a relief in the shade of the tall trees, and we arrived at the car park almost exactly 3 days after we'd left.

*Participants:* Peter Hudson, Rick Hudson

### Notes on access to the Golden Hinde from the south.



The approach to this mountain is by all routes long, and when I inquired about variations, there seemed to be a variety of options, with little consensus. Here are some further opinions on the approach from Myra Mine.

At the top of the zigzags it is possible to cut immediately W, rather than follow the trail round the E side of Arnica Lake (making a long, rising semi-circle on a good trail, to gain the ridge to the W). We do not recommend the shortcut, as the bush is heavy in places, and the trail poorly flagged, if at all.

When N of Phillips Ridge and trying to decide where to drop down to the valley having Schjelderup Lake, two alternates are possible. The first route drops WNW to the strip of land dividing Schjelderup from its southern neighbour. The second goes over 2 more bumps in the ridge, before dropping WSW to the N end of Schjelderup Lake.



*Looking east from Mt Burman in early July, showing the descent route from Phillips Ridge to gain the land bridge between Schjelderup Lake (out of view on left) and its unnamed neighbour (visible right). The dotted line shows the ascent route through open talus that avoids the steep forested section below the upper slopes.*

*Photo: Rick Hudson*

We recommend the first option, as it avoids climbing 2 additional bumps (not insignificant during a long day), plus the first descent route is bush-free all the way, provided you make the connections between the clearings on the descent. The upper section is alpine, and where the trees close in, keep bearing R (NW), with the lowest section being turned down a large block scree slope under the cliffs on the right (N).

At the land strip between the two lakes, there are again two options. It is possible to traverse on the E side of Schjelderup Lake, but this involves a very awkward bushwhack to get round a headland about 200m from the S end of Schjelderup Lake. Instead, we recommend cross-

ing the strip of land between the two lakes (stay on the N side, which is open), to the foot of Mt Burman.

Here, there are again 2 options. The traditional route is up Mt Burman almost to its summit, then descending the N Ridge of that mountain. This is a steep scramble up, and involves the regaining of some 350m, not something you want to do at the end of the day, and then losing it all again down the North Ridge. Better to traverse N along the W side of Schjelderup Lake and pick up the well-cairned ramp that climbs NW across the N flank of Mt Burman. NOTE: the upper slopes are smooth slabs, so this section would be very prone to avalanche in spring.

*Participants: Peter Hudson and Rick Hudson*



## MARINER MOUNTAIN — EENIE, MEENIE, MINEY, MOE.

Peter Rothermel  
July 2-4

A group of friends from Alberni were planning a trip to Mariner Mountain and as this peak had intrigued me for almost a decade, I was in like Flynn.

Before starting out on this trip, I had sleuthed out route descriptions and talked with several people that had been to this Mountain, but in the end all I had was four different stories that didn't sound like much of the same thing.

So, Friday saw us driving across the Island, destination Tofino, in the rain, and me thinking "Damn, I hate starting a trip in the rain and wet" and "How can I back out of this, without looking too wimpish?"

Later as the boat sped us towards Bedwell Sound, with windshield wipers flapping, it didn't look too promising for summiting our goal, Mariner Mountain, but we were already on the way and committed. After about a 45 minutes ride in the boat we landed at the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort wharf.

On my first trip up the Bedwell River trail, ten or so years ago, there was nothing but a bit of old logging road. Now there's a resort that caters to the very rich. They have a restaurant, spas and large canvas wall tents complete with four poster beds, Persian rugs and cast iron fireplaces from \$1,300. to \$1,500. per night per person. Yes, the decimal points are right. At any rate they were friendly towards us and appear to want to work with locals and Parks, but no discounts for poor climbers.

Another difference, from previous times, is the gravel road, instead of trail, that leads all the way to the suspension bridge and the beginning of Strathcona Park, yet it was a real time saver for getting up the river. Past the bridge we were on trail that had been roughly trimmed a bit, until the next river crossing on old overgrown bridge stringers. Past this point the trail was so wildly overgrown, that I sometimes wondered if we were still on it. This trail was more easily traveled ten years before.

We found the sparse flagging, marking the route up Nobel Creek to Mariner Mountain and stopped for lunch. Two of our group, Laurie & Lori, decided to hike towards Bedwell Lake, rather than going with us up Mariner. After our break, we found the start of the Mariner Route to be difficult to find, due to brushiness and spent over an hour casting back and forth before we were on track. We reflagged the start with blue tape.

Once past the confusion and into the first growth timber, travel on the old miners route is good, although

the trail does fade and braid a bit. We found old aluminum mining claim tags, left by Walter Guppy, a cantankerous miner, who used to prospect in the area. It steeply follows along, paralleling Nobel Creek and there are a few spots the creek can be accessed for water. Going through the blueberry bush in the upper reaches of forest, we got absolutely soaked from the dew. When the forest ended, it did so very abruptly. No transition. It just went from big trees to avalanche debris and thick slide growth. Luckily there's a dry creek bed that runs through it like a natural rough staircase. I was parched and could hear water running off the mountains all around, but couldn't access any and was wishing I had tanked up back along Nobel Creek. About four hours after leaving the Bedwell Trail, we reached our campsite in the moraine boulders below the receding avalanche snow debris. There we scratched out some level sites for our tents and had running water.

The next day we got started at about 7:30 under cloudy, but dry skies and made our way up on 35 degree rock hard snow. At the top of the gully, with a sharp hatchet faced spire looking down on us, the gully forked. The right, steeper side, is apparently the wrong way and we fortunately took the lesser looking slope to the left. This led to an old moraine with many years of old trees growing out of it, over and into another gully of easy angle, but undercut water eroded snow creating some thoughtful route finding. The upper section became a 35 degree snow slope, one more moraine to jump and then into the Col. Through the Col and dropping down about 50 meters in elevation, we then went up another snow filled couloir that ended at rock slabs that we scrambled up to reach the glacier and a small lake, just starting to melt out on its edges. Past the lake we got our first glimpse of Mariner Mountain, through rents in the clouds.

On the western most summit are prominent dykes forming a lighter colored cross, contrasting on the darker massif's background and being seen from the ocean, was used as a landmark by sailors from before written history. In fact the first anglo name for this mountain was "Holy Cross Mountain". Why it was changed to Mariner is a mystery to me, as the former name seems right, at least in my mind.

We fell into a debate of which was the true summit and from our route beta it was "left under the Cross" from one person's account and "up an easy, yet exposed ridge" from another's recollection. So combining both descrip-



*Evan Gunn on Mariner's Ridge      Photo: Peter Rothermel*

tions, I was convinced that in the fog and mists, up the left side ridge of the holy cross was the way.

Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, which one will make it go? Thank heaven there was "cool hand" Brugger to set us punters on the right course. Rudy was emphatic that the far eastern point would be the true high point, as it showed on the topo map and not from misinterpreting old reports.

So we traversed eastward, as yet one more description advised and then went up a grotty kind of 4th class dihedral on mostly good rock, but with some loose ones ready to shift at the slightest touch, then onto the ridge and time for a break and to catch our breath.

No more excuses. Onward to the summit, or first false summit, then onto an exposed ridge that is, well, perfect, good textured rock and easy scrambling, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other side of the ridge, using the top as a hand rail, sometimes traipsing along right down the middle to the next false summit. After a few more of these we really did reach the summit and would you believe it? Just below on the final summit blocks was bear crap. I kid you not. Now here we were on a peak surrounded by one of the Islands largest glaciers and several passes, much lower, between the Bedwell and Moyeha watersheds. Why on earth would a bear come way up here and over 4th class scrambling? Then there's that timeless philosophical question, "if a tree falls in the forest and nobody's there, does it make a noise?" Well, that garners up another riddle I have. When no person is near to hear, do Island bears upon summiting, yodel?

We lunched on the summit and had cameo views of the surrounding mountains and the Pacific, through rents in the cloud cover. As is my habit, I brought up a new summit tube and waterproof register. The old tube had only one entry from the previous month and nothing else. I send any full or damaged registers to the Vancouver Island Section of the Alpine Club archives in Victoria, to Judy Holm. More often than not, I come across empty tubes. So where does all the old stuff go? After our break we headed down retracing our old steps without any hitches, except some hesitation at down climbing the slabs and were back in our camp after an eleven hour summit day, to a welcome rest and dinner.

The following day we packed up and scooted down, so as to meet our Bedwell Trail friends for lunch and made it down an hour early. As well the hike back to the resort wharf went fast and we had a couple of hours to wait for our return boat ride. From our high camp to the dock took about five hours.

I'm noting these times, as I'm wanting to do a return trip in clear weather for the awesome views someday. The sun was out as we arrived in Tofino and off we went to find an eatery. Alas, even Tofino has changed. It's chic and expensive now, so we had designer burgers, but the beer was still good.

*Participants:* Rudy Brugger, Stephanie Grover, Robert Gunn, Evan Gunn, Lori and Laurie Money and Peter Rothermel.



## LONG CLIMBING DAYS UP ISLAND

Torge Schuemann  
July 3-4

Here we are untying our shoe laces although our Mt. Grattan hike has just begun. What is going on?

It is Saturday morning and late last night the three of us were driving up island from Victoria to the Heathens' annual Camp at Crest Creek. A short night and a semi alpine start were followed by approx. 2h of "drive-in", including some logging roads. We had laced up our shoes, put on our gaiters, and shouldered our packs, just to undo all that again, right here, after a couple minutes, where we would have to cross some icy waters. Whatever.

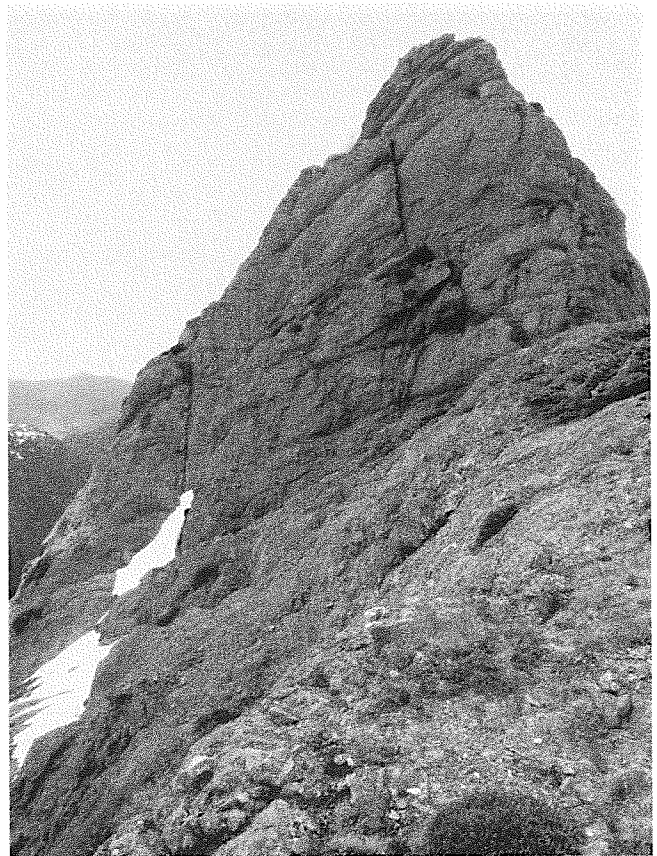


*Sandy demonstrating Island bushwhacking.  
Photo: Torge Schuemann*

Cold Kneipp baths are supposed to be good for you!

Whether that is true for bushwhacking remains questionable, although at least one third of our party is known island-wide to enjoy himself tremendously doing so (see trailbreaker in photo 1). We were vaguely guided through

the tall bushes by another creek, which we were following upstream. Relieved to have finally found the trail, a steep scree slope appeared ahead of us, which required full attention to our footwork. Before we could enjoy the beautiful Shangri-La Basin we left the tree line behind us and were challenged by some slippery footing and playing tug of war with chopstick size alder branches. Once in the Shangri-La Basin, the high peaks surrounding us in combination with the vastness of the snow covered basin, felt very humbling. We sat on the biggest rock outcrop to enjoy the scenery and satisfy our hunger.



*The east ridge of Mt. Grattan, climbed in three 50m pitches.  
Photo: Torge Schuemann*

Our hike continued with a steep snowfield leading to the East Ridge: our objective. We soaked in the great view of Peter Lake with Mt Alava behind it and the clouds moving in quickly.

The actual rock climb comprised non-gear-taking but nice rough basalt, climbed in rock shoes. As hardly any protection could be placed no rope drag was encountered on any of the three 50m pitches. From the last belay a short scramble led us to the top, which now even bears a register, thanks to Sandy.

The weather had been friendly with us until the rock climb began, but the fog obscured a great deal of our view from the summit. For the way down it paid off that we had carried a set of double ropes, as we could get away with three rappels.

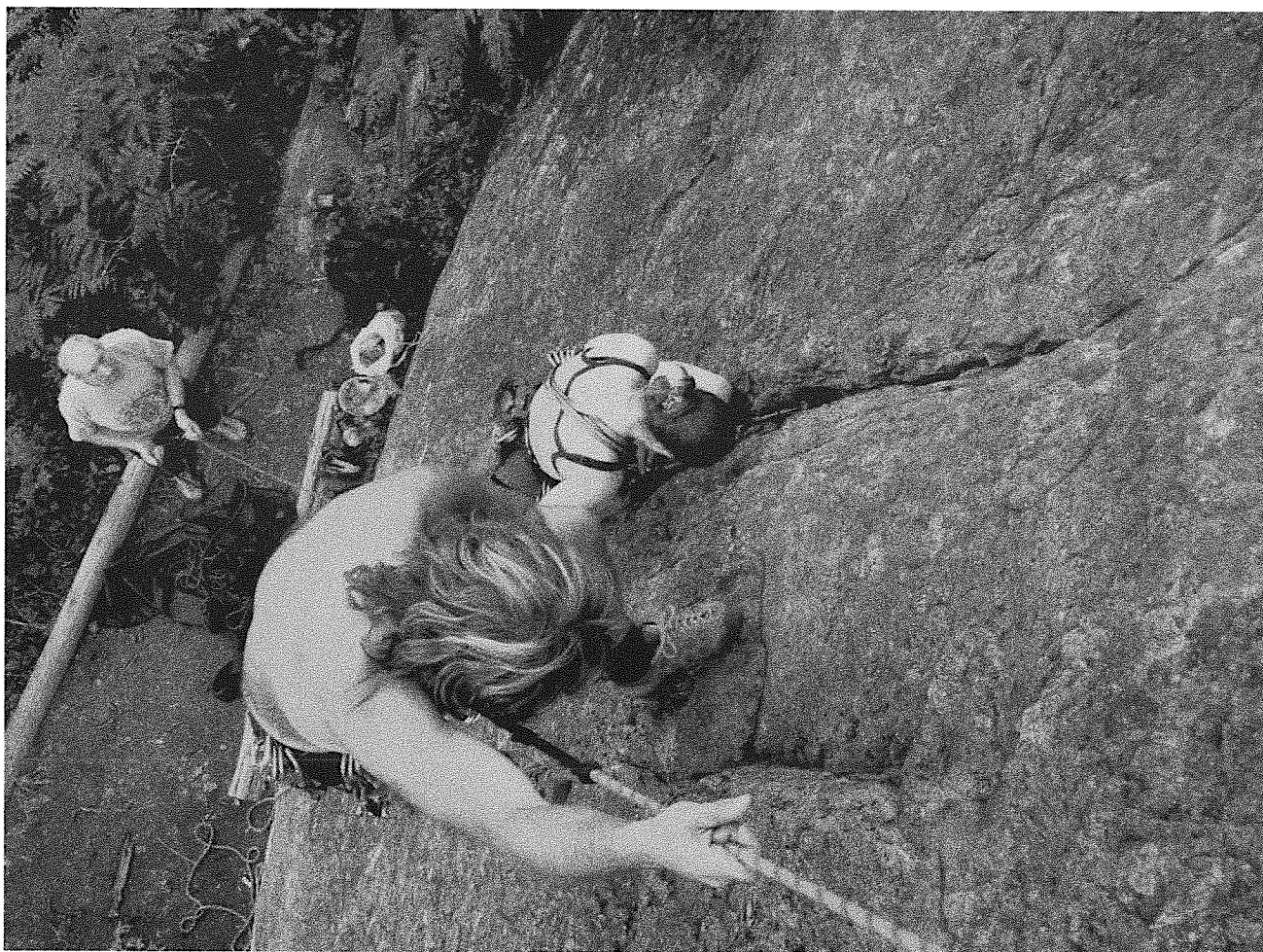
The hike back to the car was equally exciting as we were racing with the sun to see who would get down first. Despite the sun setting late due to the proximity to the solstice, we lost the race and we were confronted by some

severe bushwhack in the dusk. There was still a victory to be had: No headlamps required!

The most exciting part of the weekend was, that it wasn't over yet; we still had a full sunny day left to climb at Crest Creek with the Heathens. We enjoyed a leisurely day of cragging at their annual camp. Jackie was exceptionally excited as Chris Barner, from the Heathens, taught her the basics of trad. climbing (with an equal amount of lead falling lessons!).

During the drive back to Victoria, we were all smiles; very excited with our long hike and relaxed cragging, all in the company of great friends.

*Participants:* Jackie Dumas, Sandy Briggs,  
Torge Schuemann



*A trad climbing lesson for Jackie at Crest Creek. Chris Barner observes while Sandy belays.*

*Photo: Torge Schuemann*

# MOUNT KITCHENER'S PLANE CRASH

By Lindsay Elms  
July 11

It all begins with a rumour something like this: "Someone once told me there was a plane that had crashed onto the slopes of the mountain somewhere but I can't remember who told me or where I heard it." And then a few days later you hear something about it again. It could be from a book or magazine you are browsing through or overheard in a supermarket between others talking but all of a sudden your interest is piqued. You decide to look into it for yourself. You ask around but no one seems to know anything about it so you go back to the mountain and snoop around hoping you'll come across it yourself. Unfortunately, the mountain is big and there are so many places a plane could have crashed that it is like looking for the proverbial needle-in-a-haystack. Was it near the summit or lower down on the slopes and on which aspect did it crash? You keep thinking that you'll see the broken tops of the trees where it plummeted through the forest or if it hit in the alpine you think the debris would be obvious to see.

This happened to me years ago after I had been up on Mount Kitchener in the Prince of Wales Range near Sayward. A little later I heard of someone who had been to the crash site and retrieved some souvenirs but they had since passed away but I couldn't remember who told me. I went back to the mountain a few more times via different routes and at different times of the year hoping to see something but no luck. It gnaws away at you and you keep hoping that eventually you will get something tangible to go on. Finally, last year I heard from someone who knew of someone in the Alpine Club who had been to the site. I emailed them and sure enough they had been to the crash site and were able to give me directions. My curiosity was about to be satisfied.

Val O'Neill and I hiked up the now familiar trail to the South Summit of Mount Kitchener. It wasn't a crystal clear day but the clouds were just high enough that we could see enough of the mountain to navigate around it without getting temporarily misplaced. From a small saddle between the South and Middle Summit we turned to our right and climbed up onto a subsidiary ridge running east. We went up passed a survey trig site and then followed the ridge for twenty minutes to

the very end where a bluff halted our progress. From here we back tracked 50 metres and began looking over the edge to the south. We were told that on the ridge were two obviously topped trees that the plane had hit on its low pass and then 30 metres down the wreckage would be seen.

We saw several trees with broken tops but none that I would consider were obviously broken by a low flying plane. However, we looked over the edge at each broken tree but nothing. We kept moving back along the ridge continuously peering over the edge hoping we would catch a glimpse of a shiny piece of fuselage or something. We were getting close to the point where we were going to have to drop down into the forest and traverse along hoping to accidentally come across the plane. We stopped at one last broken tree and peered over the edge. Val was to my right standing on the other side of the tree when all of a sudden she said: "There it is." I looked over but couldn't see it so I walked to the other side of the tree to where she was and sure enough now I could see it. It blew me away that we could be standing so close together but it was only visible to one of us. It really was like finding a needle-in-a-haystack. We climbed down and spent an hour sifting through the remains of the plane.

Upon returning home I went to the Comox Airforce



Valerie O'Neill examining PV2's engine. Photo: Lindsay Elms





*Remains of PV2's fuselage. Photo: Lindsay Elms*

Museum and gave them the details and photos of the plane crash site and they were able to find some details in their records of the crash. The following is from their records with a little history of the plane:

Sometime prior to 1951 a United States Navy PV2 Neptune aircraft crashed on the eastern slopes of Mount Kitchener, 20 miles southeast of Sayward (Location: 50.17.30N 125.41.30W.) There are no details on its point of departure or destination and no records from the United States about its disappearance. The wreck was located September 22, 1951 and the aircraft was found to-

tally destroyed and partly burned with the engines lying 150 yards further downhill. Ground search parties removed the bodies (six) and buried live ammunition and smashed gunsights.

The P2V Neptune did not serve in WWII, though it was designed during the war as a Navy patrol aircraft with greater range and load carrying ability than was currently available. Due to Lockheed-Vega's preoccupation with wartime production of other aircraft, the P2V project proceeded slowly until 1944, by which time the need for a new land-based patrol bomber had become urgent. The P2V Neptune carried a crew of seven, a range of electronic equipment, and a weapons-bay large enough to carry two torpedoes or twelve depth charges with protection provided by three gun turrets, each of which carried two .50 caliber machine guns. The Neptune began seeing its first operational use in March of 1947 and became the mainstay of Navy land-based patrol squadrons for 15 years, and was kept in production until April 1962.

Again this is just one of many planes that have crashed into the mountains on Vancouver Island. For some climbers, of which I am one, this creates just another lure to the mountains. It's not a morbid fascination knowing that people died in these crashes but a historical interest. It gives me a greater respect for the mountains and makes me feel how small and humble we are in their presence. The mountains hold a spiritual appeal that can enrich our lives but very quickly they can take away human life.

*Participants: Valerie O'Neill and Lindsay Elms*

## RED PILLAR, MT. HARMSTON, ARGUS MTN, AND CLIFFE GLACIER

Steve Rogers  
July 16-19

I have wanted the Red Pillar since I first saw Philip Stone's "VI Route Card" for it about 5 years ago. So, in 2002, my buddy Mike Netzel and I tried to access it via the "traditional" route which has been from the Comox Glacier via the "Comox Glacier Trail" from Comox Creek. We did get past Argus and onto the Cliffe Glacier, but weather decided for us to turn back and run! But that was close enough to know the Pillar was spectacular! Plus, standing on Cliffe Glacier felt so much more impressive than the Comox Glacier. It might be because the Cliffe Glacier is surrounded, in part, by the Red Pillar, Mt. Harmston, and Argus Mtn., each mountain special in its own right.

In 2003, Mike and I tried again. This time, however, I was not going to waste our time on the "traditional" Comox Glacier Trail. This time we would come from the south, via Oshinow Lake and the Ash River. Thanks to Sandy Briggs and Don Berryman for providing me with route info from their 1987 trek. Mike and I were delighted to find out how much better this route is than via the Comox Glacier. It is much shorter, much less physically demanding, 2-wheel drive accessible, and the road can not be gated! When we were finally at the base of the Pillar, we decided to summit the mountains farthest away, and save the Pillar for later. So we continued north to summit Harmston and Argus. But time came and went,

and we decided we had to leave the Pillar for another trip.

Now it is 2004, and in walks Russ Moir. He liked my idea of having a club trip take on all three mountains. He took the responsibility as rope leader, and I was responsible to get everyone to base camp and to the base of the Pillar. We were fortunate to have our group total eleven ACC participants. Two additional people (who were not part of this ACC sanctioned outing) followed our main group. We met at the Port Alberni Mall early July 16<sup>th</sup>. Once we organized our vehicles and such, we drove to our access point, Oshinow Lake (known locally as Deep Lake). There is more than one road system to get you to Oshinow Lake. They are all shown in "Backroad Mapbook – Vancouver Island". From Port Alberni, we took Beaver Creek Road, then Somers Road, then Link HWY. Then we took Br. 103 (not marked) over to the Ash River Rd. There is a sign that says "Elsie Lake Dam". DON'T go that way. Turn left instead. You will be on Br. 103. Then turn right on to Ash River Road which leads you to Oshinow Lake. Go up Br. 110 (not marked), and turn left on Br. 110H (not marked). Park where the road disappears because of recent slide. Drive time 90 minutes.

From here, we hiked on cut trail that ran NW above Oshinow Lake, and then beside Ash River. Eventually, the cut trail along the river ended. At this point, we started heading northerly, route finding all the way, and got onto the ridge system that leads to the south base of Red Pillar. We hung ribbon all the way from the cut trail to the Alpine. We setup base camp on the ridge at 1470m, which

is broad with endless tenting options and has lots of acceptable standing water. Great views of the Pillar, Argus, west side of the Comox Glacier, and of Ester Lake to the North. It took us 7 hours from truck to camp. I have been told that, since our trip, someone has cut a complete trail to the alpine following our ribbon. With that done, hiking time has been reduced to about 5 hours for some.

Day 2, we continued on the ridge that leads to the base of the Red Pillar. Once at the south base we traversed to the west side of the mountain and gained a bench at 1900m that provides excellent access to the Cliffe Glacier which leads to Harmston and Argus. Once at the 1900m bench, Russ and Peter led our ACC group up the West Ridge (low class 5). Selena and Sonia, instead, went up the North Buttress (5.6). Red Pillar is on the divide between east and west Vancouver Island, so the views of both coasts and of Strathcona Park are amazing. The top of the Pillar is relatively flat and very broad. We could have easily had a soccer game up there. And with a total of 13 people standing on the summit at once, we should have! We rapped down the West Ridge, and hiked back to camp. (South Ridge to summit is supposedly even less technical than the West Ridge.)

Selena's Report on Red Pillar's North Buttress: "Writing this many months later, the memory is not so fresh-hence one should always heed advice and type these things out early. Assuming an abridged form is better than nothing, here goes! Keen to climb something requiring ropes and hardware, Sonia and I decided to attempt our way up

Red Pillar via the north buttress. Armed with a 60m 8.5mm rope (to double for rapping and 5th class climbing), ice axes, rock shoes, crampons, 2 cams, 3 nuts and countless slings, we headed north down the Cliffe Glacier to the toe of the buttress while the others started up the west route. We relied on handy pics from the island climbing guide, of which the photograph of the route proved most valuable due to some questionable route choices (the described route pretty much goes straight up to the summit). From the toe of the buttress we scrambled up a short section of low 5ish



*Southwest side of the Red Pillar*

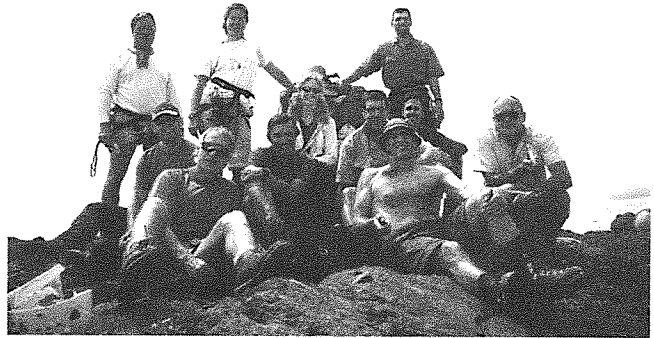
*Photo: Steven Rogers*

loose rock, then roped up for a brief short crack, ramps, gullies and a final exposed buttressy thing of maybe 5.6 to finally end up on the summit. As far as protection, there was not much but there were just short sections of fifth class climbing. Belays and pro were questionable. Unsurprisingly the most useful pro was slings. The summit was a flat surprise with some fun albeit questionable characters roaming around on it. After a period of photos and refreshment we headed down behind the others."

Day 3, Russ, Steve, Selena, Sonia, Richard, George, and Gordon summited Harmston (class 2/3) and Argus (class 3). Again, from base camp, we followed the south ridge to the base of Red Pillar, and then traversed up to the 1900m bench that put us onto the Cliffe Glacier. We then hiked on the glacier to the south-east ridge of Harmston. The group reached the summit, from which we retraced our steps back to the south-west ridge of Argus. This ridge led us to the summit of Argus. After a bit of a rest, we left the summit and 2.5 hours later we were back in base camp. (Total day 10.5 hours.) We did have time to summit Red Pillar on the way back, but as Selena said: "Doing Red Pillar, Harmston, and Argus in one day would be fun, buy why CRANK-IT?" (Note: Peter and John

headed back to town morning of Day 3, while the other 4 participants hung out around base camp.)

Day 4, we enjoyed a leisurely hike back to the trucks. We experienced excellent weather all four days. If you plan this trip, call Weyerhaeuser (West Island Timberlands) at 250.720.4200 for Ash River Rd conditions.



*Participants:* (Not in order) Russ Moir, Steve Rogers, Gordon Neinaber, George Urban, Richard Eaton, Graham Maddox, Sonia Langer, Peter Rothermel, Selena Swets, John Young, Ron Lepine. (The two followers: Robert Gunn and Evan Gunn.)

## MYSTERY ENSHROUDING CROWN MOUNTAIN

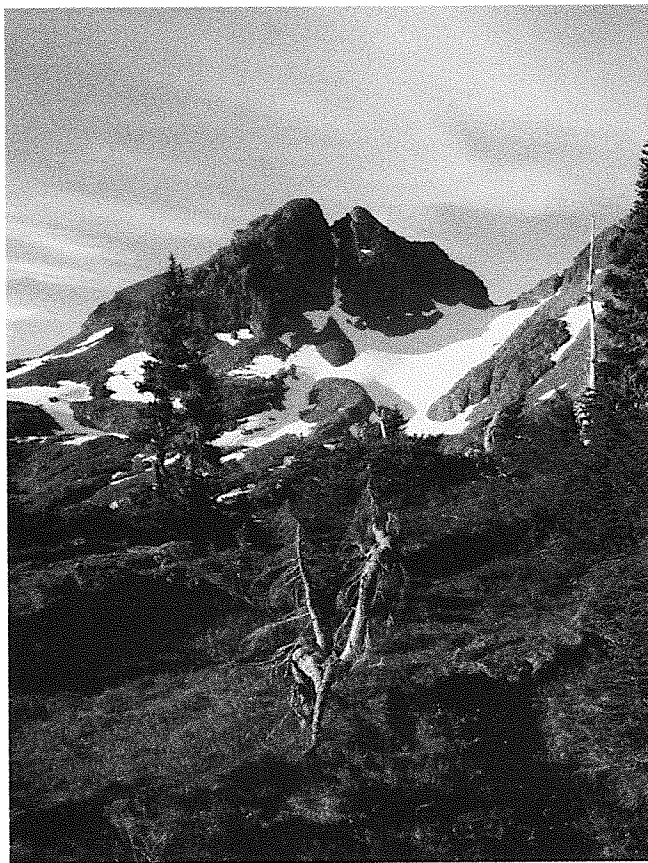
Christine Fordham  
July 24-25

Right on the crack of 11, we were off to an early Alpine start heading for Crown Mountain. Ian Brown's comment in the 1994 Bushwhacker, about some plane wreckage off the pocket glacier on the north side, had me somewhat obsessed. We began along an easy trail to the start of the old logging slash, and then panted our way up a vertical gully in the 35 degree heat. The new logging slash at the top confused us somewhat, as it didn't match previous route descriptions. However, we found the ridge, worked our way through the forest getting off track by not keeping right enough, and encountered a steep gully that we'd have been better off missing. We eventually found an appealing lunching lake, where we watered up and sat in the shade, until all avenues of delay had been exhausted. After following the height of land for quite a distance, we continued until we hit a steep scree slope that ended in a delightful meadow, just below Peak 5412. After supper we scampered up Peak 5412 and figured out tomorrow's approach up between Crown Mountains twin

peaks. No sign of the plane wreck in that pocket glacier yet. The sun sank and we were treated to a wonderful orange silhouette of Victoria and Warden peaks, mixed with clouds of very hungry mosquitoes. The light show continued later, with the northern lights pulsing throughout the starry moonlit sky.

Next morning we were off early for the relatively easy jaunt around 5412, up the ridge, over the boulders and patches of snow to the col between the two summit blocks. We chose the obvious left gully and scrambled up to the large, flat and heathery summit. The hydrographical tripod was broken, our first clue to the plane wreckage. We spent a delightful hour on the summit soaking up the views of "peaks climbed" and on the "to be climbed" agendas. George was happy to look back at Elkhorn, from which he had first seen Crown Mountain. Crown Mountain seems hidden when taking in other panoramas. The summit register, rumoured to be a cookie jar, was actually a CDMC tube with cookie jar lid on top. There were coins from the





*Crown Mtn. from Peak 5412*

*Photo: Christine Fordham*

years of climbs gone by - only 7 parties in the last 18 years. Charles was pleased to see his name still there amongst them. There was "Save Strathcona Park" memorabilia and

a picture of Myra Ellison, who was on the first ascent team in 1910. We humbly added our names. Charles repaired the end of the summit tube, and George carefully put the cookie jar lid over it and re-buried it in the cairn, while I played Nancy Drew and scanned the terrain below for fuselages, wings and other large parts of the mystery plane wreck. Much to my disgust it was not I who spotted the few pieces of broken Plexiglas, some firewall shards, and chunks of lock wires right at my feet. Plane wreck confirmed and summit done, we headed down, leaving the mountain in peace again until perhaps several years in the future when humans tread here again.

The trip out was hot, buggy and relatively uneventful until we chose the wrong steep, bushy, ugly gully out of the newer logging slash, which was actually only 1/3 of a mile from the truck according to the GPS anyway. "Cairo", Charles' trusty dog, who may actually be the first dog to summit Crown Mountain, had rather raw-looking foot pads, and was very happy to see the truck! Still wondering about that plane wreck, we headed back to civilization. After months of sleuthing, I finally discovered the facts and solved the mystery. On July 22, 1988, a Bell 206 helicopter was trying to land on the top of the mountain; his tail boom struck the tripod at the same time as a big gust of wind hit, the pilot lost control and the bird crash landed, nose down. The pilot escaped with minor injuries, and one can only assume the insurance company salvaged the wreckage.

*Participants:* George Urban, Charles Turner, Cairo Turner, Christine Fordham (co-ordinator).

## RAMBLER PEAK - THE TENTH ISLAND QUALIFIER?

Peter Rothermel

July 31, August 1-2

The Elk River Trail leads to many Island peaks that are considered de rigueur for any Island climber's tick list: Kings Peak, Elkhorn, Colonel Foster, Rambler. As well there are many obscure mountains accessed from this valley: Puzzle, Wolf, Volcano, Colwell, Slocomb. Once past the gateway of Elk Pass there are many more well known and unknown mountains through out Strathcona Provincial Park.

It took me four tries to finally make it up Rambler Peak, not so much from technical difficulties as much as "bad ju-ju", as the voodoo folk say. My first time was a

few years back, in the month of May. The day before the trip, I had wrenched my back moving a pile of bricks for the twelfth time in a dozen years of owning them (you know the saying, "Thick as a brick"?). At the beginning of the trip I didn't get my gaiters on soon enough and got snow in my plastic boots and had wet feet the whole trip. Tak Ogasawara, Shannon Finnegan and I were trying to keep up with Greg Gordon and Jeremy Miller, and I was coming down with something that was later diagnosed, when I got back, as probably viral pneumonia. That trip I reached the Elk Valley Pass and ran out of steam. The hike

out was agony in triple, worse trip I've ever had.

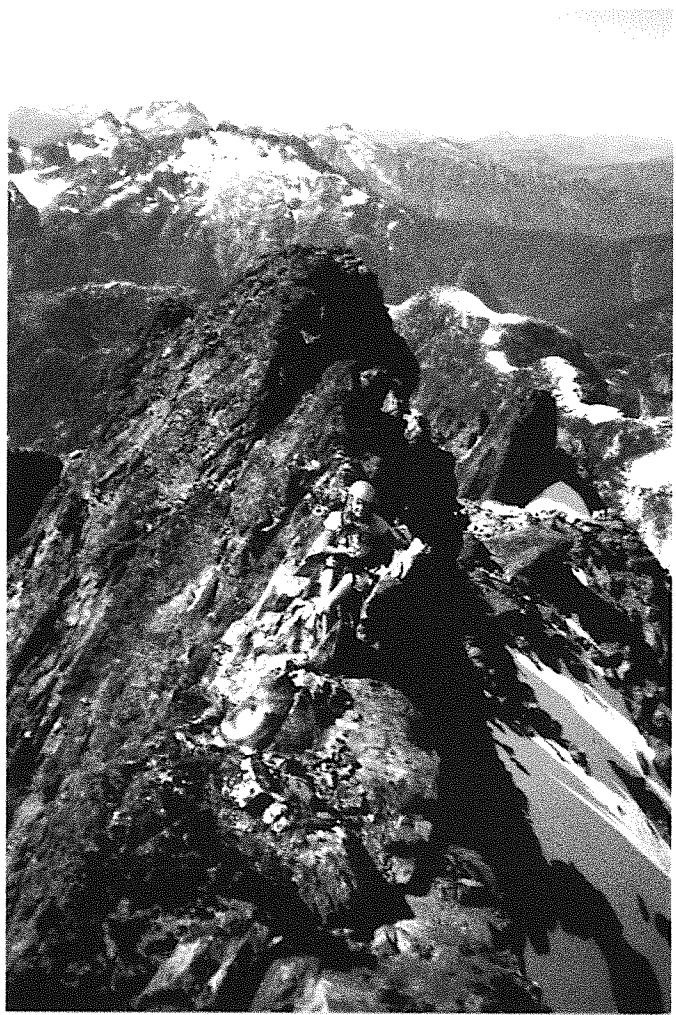
My second trip was in a July 1st blizzard and saw Tak Ogasawara, Christine Fordam, Tom Carter, Denise Hook, Charles Turner and myself up the Southeast Gully, across the Rambler Glacier in a white out and finally up the North Gully to within 200 feet of the summit, where we got stopped by a plug of snow and had to turn back due to a couple of people becoming nearly hypothermic. Probably should have put them to work chopping at the snow.

Third trip saw me back up there again with Christine Fordam, Rory Ford and Denise Hook, in sunny August weather, starting up on the wrong side (right of) of the Ramblers Route, backing off and trying up the Heather Ramps on the south side to the SW snow-field where we found the snow field we'd need to cross, rock hard and hadn't brought crampons. Probably should have gone around Rambler Junior. I think my parting words were something like, "F' YOU, MOUNTAIN."

Fourth time lucky? August 1st weekend found me high and dry for a planned trip to Red Pillar to do a climbing route, when not one, but both my climbing partners had to bail out at the last minute. Not being able to do a 5.6 lead without a belayer, I figured to do something I could maybe solo and my fancy turned again towards Rambler. There was an Alberni Club hike scheduled to go up to Elk Pass, but no further, so I tagged along for company, figuring I'd either solo the mountain or just scratch it up to another reconnaissance trip, or maybe I'd luck out and meet some other climbers and they'd let me tag along on their climb. I had brought a rope and slings and such for rappels if I needed.

On the last day of July, I met up with Stephanie Grover and Glen \_\_\_\_ and we hiked up the Elk River Trail to the "Big Trees" camping spot and set up our tents. There was some other folk's gear near by, that I thought I recognized and sure enough, we later ran into Charles Turner and Christine Fordham. Charles was out to climb Rambler Junior, so as to complete his last of forty-six peaks of over 6,000 feet high. He and Christine were amenable to me teaming up with them and my thoughts were: if I didn't make the main summit again, it would be nice to just get up something new.

Early the next morning Charles, Christine and I set out from camp and hiked up to Elk Pass and there we met up with Sandy Briggs, Torge Schuemann, Mike Miller and Josh Slatkoff. They had made an ascent of Rambler via the West Buttress, the day before and were just packing up to hike out. Their route is one of Strathcona's classic lines and is something I've always lusted after, ever since hearing of Chris Barner and Paul Rydeen's first ascent in 1990. After some short pleasantries and much swatting of mos-



*Christine on Rambler Junior Photo: Peter Rothermel*

quitoes we headed off.

Our route was the same as our past August one up the South Ramps and when we reached our previous high point, we stopped to harness up and put on helmets. Up the ridge we went, weaving through, around and finally right on to the backbone for some very stiff 4th class climbing, with super exposure off both sides. When we reached our highest point, we were looking down to another pinnacle that we couldn't down climb to and couldn't find a good anchor to rap off in that direction. We climbed back down the ridge a bit, until we found a good horn to anchor and rappelled off the southeast face, down to a narrow ledge that carried along and around to the east side above the Rambler Glacier. Looking up from below the southeast face, it looks very sheer and not traversable, so it was amazing to find the ledges that carried around.

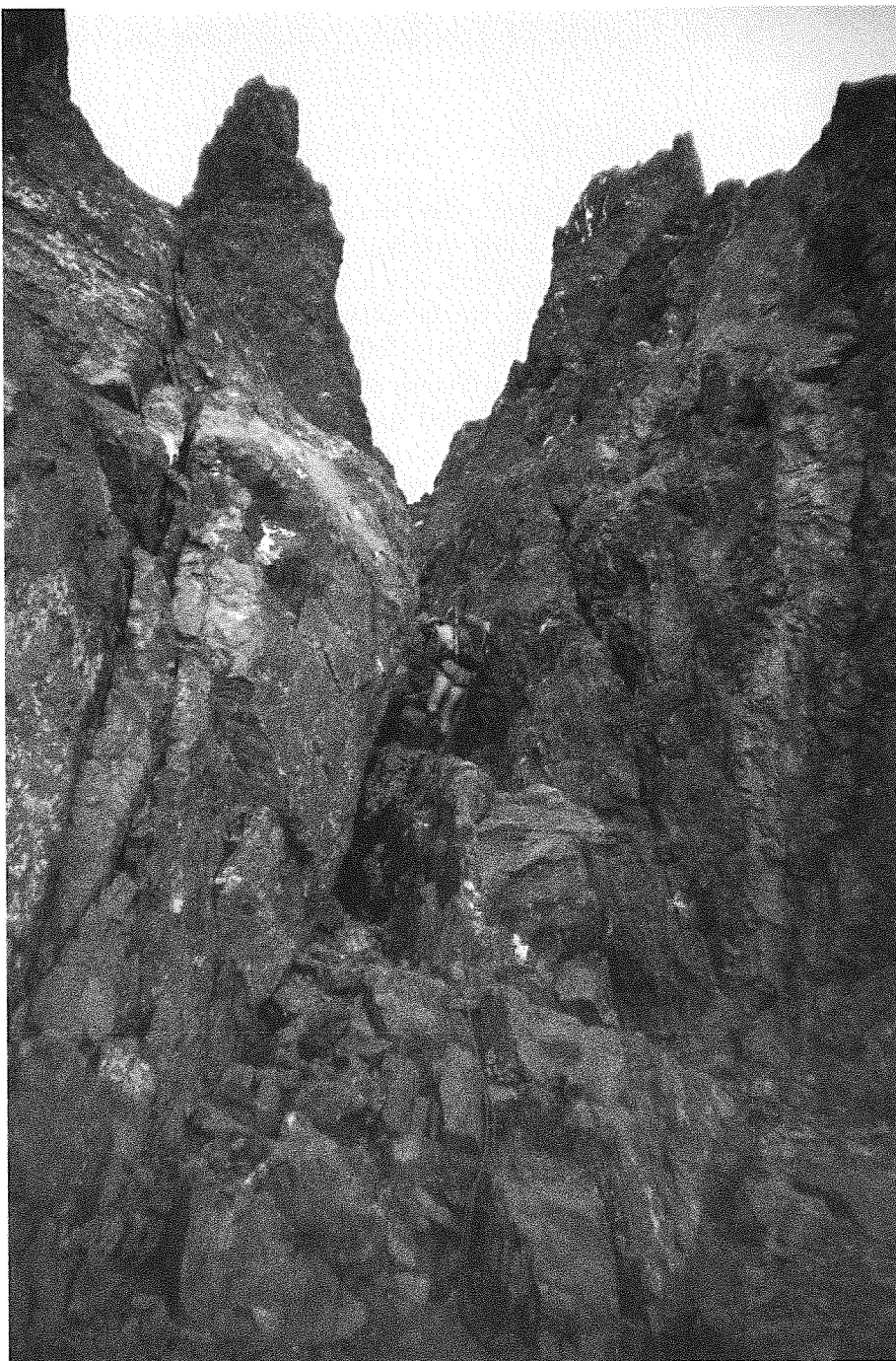
I got ahead of Charles and Christine and made my way down to the glacier and waited and waited. From where I was below, the pinnacle looked to be the highest point

on the ridge, but of course I knew it wasn't. Charles had decided to climb the pinnacle as well, just in case it might be technically called Rambler Junior. After they got down to the snow, we traversed around to the North Gully of the main summit and up we climbed on low 5th class rock, that seemed much easier than Junior's "4th" class and shortly were on the top of Rambler. So I finally made it: four tries, in as many years.

On descent, we did three rappels to get to the bottom of the North Gully and then traversed around to the Southeast Gully. We had been up this way in an earlier season when it was all snowed up. Now it was all loose rubble as we down climbed to a rap station full of tat. We added our own webbing to the nest and I rapped down and found a small grotto to hide in as the next person came down and couldn't help but to let loose a lot of rock. Miraculously our ropes didn't get ruined by all the rock bouncing down.

When we got down to below Elk Pass and looked up the Southwest Snowfield, that pinnacle appeared to stand alone and above the ridge we had ascended, but of course wasn't. Christine looked up at the mountain top and said, "Thank you for letting us climb you." and then she took one look at the smirk on my face and exclaimed to me, "Don't you dare." To which I shouted to the mountain, at the top of my lungs, "GOT YOU, YOU BASTARD."

The hike out the next day was blissful, with me thinking I had that mountain done with and wouldn't have to ever return, except maybe for the West Buttress. Later after discussing our trip with Philip Stone, author of *Island Alpine*, he figured the highest point on the ridge we climbed is a separate peak from the Main Summit and should aptly be called Rambler Junior. The lower pinnacle or gendarme would then be called the Needle, so named on it's first



*Rappelling in Rambler's N. Gully*

*Photo: Peter Rothermel*

ascent by Ron Facer and Mike Henery in 1966.

And now I have maybe two reasons to return again to this intriguing mountain. If the V.I. Section ever decides to add a mountain to the Island Qualifiers, Rambler will get my vote.

*Participants:* Charles Turner, Christine Fordham and too many more to list.

## ON THE HORNS OF THE ELK - ELKHORN (2,195M) BY THE NW RIDGE

Rick Hudson  
September 4-6

**L**abour Day long weekend: The forecast called for rain on Saturday, with a high building on Sunday. After the wettest August on record, it was time to shake off the grey sky blues, and get into the backcountry. Noon saw the four of us at the Elk River Trailhead in Strathcona Park, bent on Elkhorn. For Charles, this would be his third ascent, for Christine her second, for Rick and John, their first. The hike in was not memorable, except for a wasp attack, which left Charles (at the front) and Rick (at the rear) un-stung. We marked the spot on the trail, to remind us on the way out, and continued onward.

For those of you who have made the trek to the Elkhorn alpine, there is little to add. For those of you who haven't, suffice it to say it's five and half hours of uphill, with no easing of the 1,200m slope. The lungs heave, the thighs strain, and the calves crack as the grade stays at an impossibly steep angle, hour after gruesome hour. In a state of moderate exhaustion we broke out of the trees onto the flat *breccia* slabs, admired the view of Elkhorn appearing and vanishing in the late afternoon clouds, and collapsed beside our packs. Across the valley, Colonel Foster refused to emerge from a pocket of vapour. Elsewhere, however, there was a drying trend, which suggested a positive outcome in the morning.

There is, of course, no guaranty that going to bed at 8:00 pm will insure an early start, but that was the case when, the following morning, we found ourselves on the trail at 6:30, Venus still hung brightly in the dawn sky, and all the summits were clear. A perfect day.

Given that John was an unknown force (having recently arrived from 3 years in Chile), we had opted for the NW Ridge – “a classic”, according to Stone's guidebook. We met the sun as the trail led up the ridge to the start. Above, the great gendarme that guards the ridge looked

somewhat daunting, the tottering appearance of its “head” suggesting the face below was not a good spot to be in an earthquake. Nearing the start of the climb, we lost the sun again. The basalt ridge above was draped in cool shade, made chillier by an east wind that blew up from the Elkhorn Glacier. At the foot of the rock we donned harnesses and gloves, although Chris bravely retained the right to bare legs. A hundred metres of scrambling in vertical gullies, carefully avoiding the loose stuff in case it slid onto helmets below, brought us to a 5m layback crack which, although easy, had an intimidating drop-off. We roped up, and were on top in short order, unaware that we had just passed the crux of the route (about 5.4). Above, a large sloping terrace strewn with loose rubble led to the foot of the gendarme, and while Rick brought up the others, John climbed round to the left, following the route description. By the time the three joined him, however, it was obvious that the left option was not attractive. Squeezed between polished rock and the hard ice of the upper glacier, exposed to a cold wind, and without crampons or axes, it was not an encouraging line.

Chris had earlier spotted tracks in the talus going off



*Rick's climbing route on Elkhorn*

*Photo: Rick Hudson*



around to the right of the gendarme, so we chose to investigate that option. At the corner, a narrow ledge (above an impressive drop) rose gently out of sight. There was still some uncertainty until a small cairn was spotted some distance along the terrace. That, plus the route being out of the wind, clinched it. A full run-out left Rick tantalizingly close to a corner that would either make or break our choice of route. Unwilling to bring everyone to the stance without knowing whether it

went, he untied and walked the last few metres, to discover that a descending and then rising ledge would bring us back to the crest behind the gendarme. The right hand side "went". (It transpired later that a different route description did indeed mention this right-hand option. Certainly, from a climbing point of view, it's quick and easy, although exposed.)

Back on the ridge, the description was consulted again. Above, a series of steep faces blocked our way, but "a rising ramp to the right" was sought and easily scrambled past red jasper-like walls, and before we knew it, we were in sunshine in the upper bowl above the west chimneys. A few minutes brought us out onto the summit ridge just after 10 o'clock, where the rocks had a black, obsidian sheen to them.

Clouds drifted up out of Cervus Creek to the east, but elsewhere there were wonderfully clear views in all directions. The forecast had been right on. We idled away a pleasant half-hour in the sun, with little wind, scanned the summit log (Graham Bennett and Martin Smith had



*Charles and Christine on the Summit ridge with Rambler Mtn., Colonel Foster and Landslide Lake in distance.*  
Photo: Rick Hudson

been there just days earlier) and then began our descent, choosing to scramble down the west gullies. A combination of two rappels (the second over the famous chockstone) and some careful down-climbing (lots of loose rock – doesn't anyone ever clean this place?), and we were at the foot of the chimneys by noon.

The rest of the day was spent in indolent somnolence, with the sun providing plenty of reason to lie about and do what mountaineers do best. The evening was mild and we were treated to a wonderful sunset, although all were in bed by 8 o'clock again.

Dawn of Labour Day broke overcast, with what looked like rainsqualls to the north over Victoria Peak. We left by 8:00, descending the knee-jarring route that had been so hard won two days previously. There was little to report except (a) we failed to see the marker for the wasp's nest, and (b) Rick was stung, thereby leaving our gallant leader as the sole un-damaged member of the company.

*Participants:* Charles Turner (leader), Christine Fordham, Rick Hudson, John Willis.





## **MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY WINNER**

**PETER SCHNOPP (FROM ALBUQUERQUE NM) AND GUIDE  
ON PEQUENO ALPEMAYO, 5,365M IN BOLIVIA.**

**PHOTO TAKEN FROM THE SUMMIT OF TARIYA**

**PHOTO: STAN MARCUS**

## TOM TAYLOR

Gerta Smythe

August 20 and September 5

Where does the name come from? Some surveyor of the past, some mountaineer in times gone by? There stands the mountain, greeting you, as you enter the alpine after grinding up the Bedwell trail. It had intrigued me in the past and I was finally given a chance to climb it!

We are a foursome: Don, Catrin and I from Victoria and Jennifer from Nanaimo, who has just recently embraced the spirit of mountaineering. Her enthusiasm is infectious and we soon swap stories and share experiences, have a quick lunch on the balcony of the welcoming Strathcona Park lodge and are at the trailhead by 2 pm. An impressive array of cars meets us there and we are guessing at 'who is who' by the vehicles we see. The trail register is bursting, so we decide to leave our money on our way out and not to further tempt vandalism.

The trail is in excellent shape and those old legs realize that they can still haul up a heavy pack over those ladders; especially since Catrin had insisted to carry our tent up solo. Two hours later finds us at the campsite of 'Little Bedwell Lake' and most available tent sites are sporting handwritten signs 'reserved for ACC' so there are no outsiders present. We meet our trip leader, Peter, there and I am looking forward to finally being on a hike with him and Tom. The lake's water is amazingly warm and everybody is swimming and splashing around.

Only the poor weather forecast prepared us for the next morning's drizzle: well, we started up anyway. We soon lost the trail and as we were crashing through the wet bush, I could hear Don enthuse about the bliss of bushwhacking on Vancouver Island after spending a week on the manicured trails of Lake O'Hara. Just about then, I could have done with some kind of trail: and sure enough, there was flagging, a trail of sorts that brought us higher and closer to our objective. But, alas, the weather kept deteriorating and obliterated the view of the same. In the excitement of gaining altitude, we did not realize that the rain now was pouring down. But then we heard the announcement of our able trip leader in his most determined voice, that the trip was now OFF and he was going back. Good sense won the day. We all retreated to the campsite and soon broke down our tents as well, since there did not seem to be a let up in sight.

BUT we came back! Two weeks later, on Labour Day Weekend, we retraced our steps up the Bedwell Trail.

This time only Don and I shared the ride from Victoria, but reinforcements from Port Alberni and Campbell River gave our group substance. We set out once more under the proven leadership of Peter and Tom: no bushwhacking this time - straight for the trail and up and away. Not everybody in the group was motivated to reach the summit. So there was some dilly dallying and we soon saw the lonely figure of Doug, far ahead and climbing with great determination. Once out of the bush and above the meadows, some beautiful quartzite greeted us and offered many different routes to climb through.

The group met up, diverged again, and leapfrogged back and forth, but never quite caught up with Doug. Once I was quite close, within shouting distance, I thought. But he did not hear me. While I was strapping on my instep crampons, Rudy and his friend ventured out onto the glacier. As the clouds whirled about me and the weather threatened to deteriorate, I too stepped onto the ice with some hesitation. Soon I was following Rudy's footprints and gained confidence with every step: I have done this in the past and knew that I could trust Rudy to choose a safe route across the glacier. Once on meadows again, I lost the track. After climbing some unnecessary bumps on the ridge, the rest of the party had closed the gap and we were a group of five. With Lindsay Elms's map of the route in our heads, we followed those imaginary red dots to the summit.

Once more we could feel the sun's benevolent presence: the rock was warm to touch, the climbing was but a scramble and my spirit soared. Yes, I can still do this!

Doug, Rudy and Brock greeted us on the summit and we in turn waited for Jules and Dale, who had been sharing a set of crampons across the glacier. Karen and Harriet had already turned around earlier and the 3 musketeers went in pursuit. The rest of the party lingered on the summit, enjoyed the views of the Golden Hinde, Mariner and the impressive glacier we had crossed. We then stayed together for the descent: Tom finding the way, Peter keeping us together and Tak bringing up the rear with unfailing patience. Although we were often separated, we always seemed to be together when it mattered and I am so grateful to everybody on this trip. They all helped to create this unforgettable experience, just like the cool blackberry cider, that awaited us at the trailhead on the next day.

## TOM TAYLOR, SE RIDGE

Peter Rothermel  
September 4-6

Mount Tom Taylor was named after the Honourable Thomas Taylor, who was Minister of Public Works from 1908 to 1915... yet another mountain named after a person that had nothing to do with its discovery or ascent... politics!... Bah!

That said, Mount Tom Taylor is the most user friendly mountain I've ever been to... bar none, yet it is still a challenge... Let me explain my oxymoronic statement. First day, the approach is only a two-hour hike on a very well groomed trail to Baby Bedwell Lake, so even if you have to drive up for four hours from Victoria, on the very southern end of the Island, you can still be in camp around lunch time.

As most hikers go to Big Bedwell Lake to camp, Baby Bedwell is usually empty. There are nine tent platforms, an outhouse and a bear-proof food locker, making setting up camp a snap. The only drawback is you have to pay \$5 per person, per day to camp anywhere in the area. The lake is nice to swim in, so you have to boil or filter your water. You can see the ridge route up Tom Taylor from camp, but you can't see the summit until you crest the top of the ridge.

On the second day, we got a 7:00 am start and went around the bluffy (west) side of Baby Bedwell... a bit sketchy at first, but it becomes a well-marked route. Just after passing Big Bedwell you come to a dry creek bed... hike up it about 100 m to find the flagged route through the forest and uphill past the small creek... continue on uphill through thinning forest and blueberry bush and eventually reach the series of high lakes. Continue up past the lakes, still on a worn trail, until you get to the open granite ridge. There's good water all along the ridge in seeps and melt water.

Philip Stone (Island Alpine author) calls this ridge the "South East Ridge". It is in fact North East on the topo. The other ridge he refers to in his guide as the "South Ridge" is more East on the topo. At any rate, once on the "South East Ridge", you're on solid, sixty grit, granite... just follow the cairns to the top of the ridge. If it's socked in clouds, this is where you could get very lost and I'd turn around, if it were me in a whiteout.

From the top of the ridge you follow along a nicely convoluted narrow ridge. Drop down to another wider

bit of ridge and then reach the glacier. The glacier is only about 20 degrees sloping, but has ice hard spots and many crevasses, mostly small enough to step over and the larger ones were easy to avoid, yet I'd still carry an ice axe and wear crampons. Roping up might seem a bit overkill, but for the time it takes, it wouldn't hurt... and you never know.

Past the glacier and back onto rock, we worked our way up, dropping left (south) around a gendarme and continued up the middle of the last bit of ridge until we were at the base of the climb. The East Ridge climb is rated at low 5th and it goes up to a leftward ledge that has a bit of a high step crux along the way, then up a little, one move, angled dihedral crack thing and along another easy, leftward, yet exposed ledge and then up easy summit blocks. We put a new summit register tube with a waterproof book on the peak. We didn't use ropes up or down, but I'd still bring something of a hand line, just in case somebody needed it.

We had double ropes, a small rack and harnesses, but didn't use them. We did wear helmets though. Camp to summit and back to camp at Baby Bedwell took us 12 hours, but that was partly because Gerta Smythe (60ish) and Don Morton (70ish) wanted to travel at a more moderate pace, mostly due to knee deterioration, which we all discover as our age increases ... although I have to say, they both climb rock as well as anyone in our group. It was an honour to have such experienced people on my trip... they're my heroes!

It's a bonus on the last day when you're tired from the previous day and you only have a two hour hike out. A really fast (young) party could probably do the whole thing from the parking lot in a long day... dark to dark... still, personally, I'd rather do it as a three day trip and savour the experience.

The granite on this mountain is so good that the long ridge scramble is a joy. If it were our normal Island choss, it would be hell. I liked it so much that I'm going to offer the South Ridge Route on next summer's schedule.

*Participants:* Gerta Smythe, Don Morton, Harriet Rueggeberg, Tak Ogasawara, Tom Carter, Rudy Brugger, Karen George, Brooke George, Doug Hurrell, Jules Thomson, Dale Nicoll and Peter Rothermel.

## UP YOUR NOSE - IF V'S ALONG IT'S OK

Russ Moir  
September 5

When a trip is taken the leader often has to take the plunge and “go for it”, heart-sometimes-in-mouth. He/she takes on responsibility for people who look to them for guidance and security. Yet ‘bad hair days’ are a well known fact of life. The scheduled trip was meant as a recce for a winter traverse of Arrowsmith, when it should be deep in snow (if we ever get that!). In early September why worry? The group seemed a motley crew (pardon), long experience stretching to a complete beginner, unfamiliar with exposed rock. After some initial phone chat it was agreed the ‘waters could be tested’ on arrival. Judges Route, a relatively benign trade route, was a possibility too.

J gave out positive feelings about L, the “apprentice”, so by the time that the party reached the access road and B had been picked up to complete the team a decision was in place. It was ... The Nose. The leader reminded himself that leadership guidelines would frown on such a choice, hence the cryptonyms to confuse, in case of “ensuing litigation” (ugh!)

A prime factor in the equation was that V was there and general theory has it that if he's there things will go well or if not, then he can always ‘fix things’. It was also the time to say goodbye to C who was migrating across the Straits the next week. This was to be his swan song on the Island hills. A memorable finale was in order and he'd not touched the Nose yet.

The usual trudge up to the Col was a chance to check out L's balance, strength and determination. She convinced; it would be worth the gamble along the Bumps to the top. She was bravely masking her misgivings, maybe behind gritted teeth, though a close observation would see some buckling of knees on a few passages.

At the last Bump a short-rope was offered for the airy down-climb. With a harness on, the leader watched carefully as L gradually gained more confidence under the caring directions of J and B. V kept his usual quiet vigil. Fears for safety began to diminish. By the time the lower slabs on the Nose were behind them, the neophyte was relaxing. Her grin was now getting visible and semi-permanent; so was the leader's!

Progress to the summit continued smoothly, accompanied by much vocal support from the backing trio. Each

contributed at crucial times, so when they emerged on the top they all felt pleased with themselves, none more than L, who now measured an additional 6 inches (ok, 15cm). She looked so elated posing for the mandatory summit shots. She's now entered in the summit book!

Now, with tongue partly in cheek, the leader proposed another ‘no-no’, that he would descend over the Nose to get the vehicle while the others would descend via Judges. He did have a solid faith in his cohorts, but.... we're all in the hands of the angels, aren't we?

V and C then elected to join him, thereby making it a gender-divided group, but all felt good about the plan so off they all ambled towards the rendezvous. Things went well for the males. They traversed down to the inviting green bench at the Col and began to retrace their previous ascent route.

Through the first bushy sections, the leader heard a ‘squeaky grunt’ from behind. He turned to witness his ‘fixer’, V, in a disorganized, inverted pose, body stiffened and rapidly turning pale. Thoughts flashed up of those last Wilderness First Aid scenarios. What did Brooks tell him to do?? Some sketchy plan came to mind on the last few strides to the body, the one person he could always rely on. Here he was, no longer available. A few prods and pointed questions got some movement going. He WAS breathing! The body slowly stirred itself, felt for its sore and bleeding elbow and gave a groan. Carefully he was cranked to a vertical state and it was a chastened trio who plodded on down, now with more caution than bravado.

When they picked up ‘les gals’ on the road the reunited team fell into a celebratory mood. A suggestion of frozen fruit yogurt at the local store was eagerly accepted. I'm here looking at their photo, faces masked behind large mounds of colourful fruit, their laughter and exuberance plain to see. Their leader appears to be having some guilty thoughts; taking a newcomer up a challenging route; splitting the party in two for the descent.

“So what?” he muses. He knows it will all be written down in “The Book of No Rubbings Out” up there in the clouds. He says he will confess his sins when he gets there. Or maybe it will be DOWN BELOW.

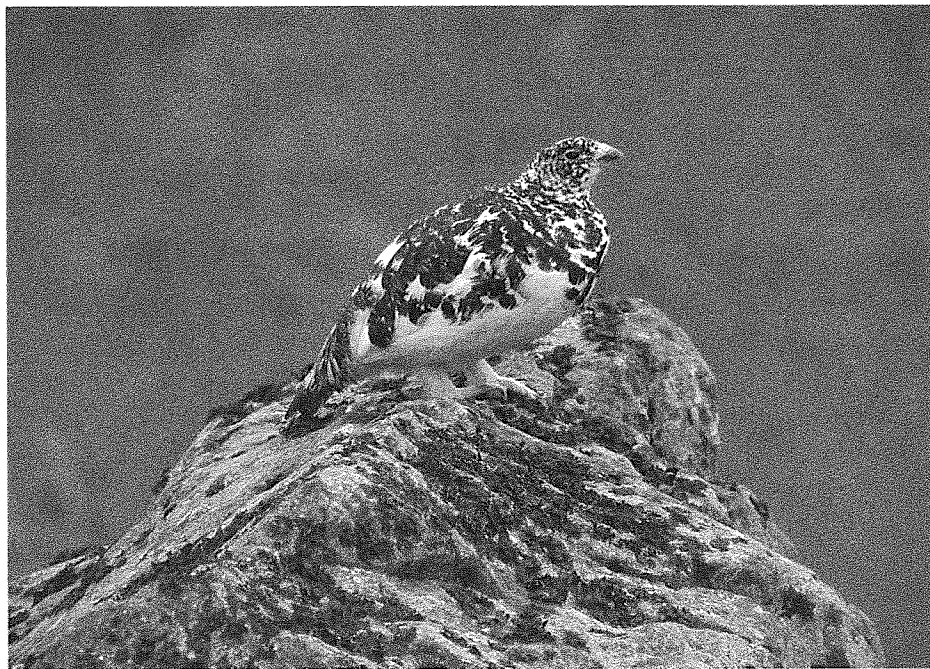
*Participants:* V, B, C, J and L, ‘led by the Nose by...R (No names, no pack drills!)



**MOUNTAIN HUMOUR WINNER**

**AYERS ROCK, AUSTRALIA**

**PHOTO: RUSS MOIR**



**MOUNTAIN NATURE WINNER**

**ROCK PTARMIGAN**

**PHOTO: CHRIS SHEPARD**



## CREST CREEK CRAGS AND CONUMA PEAK

Sasha Kubicek  
September 25-26

After enjoying an awesome day of climbing at Crest Creek Crag, Christine, Charles and I packed our things and drove off to Gold River to meet Peter for dinner. After a great meal and conversation about tomorrow's peak, we drove out to the H-60 logging road where Jim and his son would be waiting for us. A few minutes up H-60 there was a nice cleared area where Jim had a fire going and this was where we settled down for the night.

Perfect weather greeted us that morning and we set off up the logging road in a convoy of two trucks. The trucks battled the cross ditches on H-60 by grinding their bumpers on each of their crests and literally plowing down inch sized alders at the bottom of some of the ditches. Coming up to a major fork in the road we took the right hand turn and cruised steadily up the road. Conuma finally came into view and it did not look as impressive as I had seen it in pictures. Forest went pretty high from this vantage point.

We came to a place where old growth met the logging road and it was as good as a spot as any to gear up and get going. We angled our way up to the ridge through nice old growth that had minimal underbrush. Popping up into a sub alpine area we saw the ridge we were aiming for and a last steep treed section to tackle. This slope was very bushy and steep but when we got to the top of it, we popped up onto a beautiful alpine plateau. We could see the fantastic ridge heading up to the summit and it was all in fantastic alpine. You sure couldn't see this from the trucks vantage point and the sharpness of Conuma sure presented itself from this view.

Hiking up the ridge we soaked up the views. Midway up the ridge we came up to a 4/5<sup>th</sup> class section where the rope came out and we moved quickly past the obsta-



Conuma Arch

Photo: Sasha Kubicek

cle. Only a few 3<sup>rd</sup> class sections were all we had to contend with before we were standing on the summit. The summit area was a huge area of boulders giving a 360 view of the area. Tahsis inlet with a layer of fog, the beautiful Alava Bate area, Haite Range, Sutton Range and Strathcona Park all were easily visible. We all signed in the summit register and enjoyed lunch in the sunny weather. Before heading back we went looking for the mysterious stone arch that Conuma has. Continuing down the ridge the opposite way we came up one comes to an eroded area that drops off. Looking down the drop off you look right into the arch - a truly incredible rock feature. I have never seen a good picture of the arch so I hope the picture I took does it justice.

Overall this is a super ridge hike/scramble/climb. Too bad H-60 is getting overgrown, as truck access in the future might not be possible. A great group and a super day.

*Participants:* Sasha Kubicek (Leader), Charles Turner, Christine Fordham, Peter Rothermel, Jim Raper and his son

# CAMPING ON MT. DRABBLE

By Meg Jabusch  
October 2-3

Everybody takes pictures of the mountains. It's because they're shocking. They rise out of the earth like bones, or teeth. Driving through the Rockies at dawn is like watching monsters solidify in the air around you. The impulse to grab a camera and start snapping pictures is irresistible.

I've seen thousands of pictures of mountains. Snowy peaks, craggy peaks, people smiling and hugging on the edges of things, people hanging from vertical walls of rocks, grainy photos, snow in sharp relief, the works. Some of the pictures are beautiful, frame worthy even, and yet they always have an odd effect on me. They make me feel like mountains aren't real, or like they're as unattainable as other planets. The pictures lack the spirit of mountains. They're missing the emptiness, that sensation in your chest that comes from staring out at a huge entity that does not need you at all. It's not often that photographs capture humbling awe.

It's hard to find time to get out and camp in the mountains, especially in the middle of the school term. It's hard to figure out where to go, who to go with, what to bring, and, well, how not to get lost and die. I was thrilled this October when Sandy organized a trip out to Mt. Drabble and invited members of the UVic Outdoors Club. I'd never heard of Mt. Drabble and couldn't help but notice that the name combined all the eloquence of "babble" with the dubious charm of "dribble", but when I heard we'd be camping on the summit in an Alpine

meadow, I was in.

Sandy told us it would be a six-hour hike up hill, but that it would be worth it because the views would be "fine". It's funny because to me, "fine" means something pretty okay, like having sandwiches for lunch or walking only a couple of blocks to the bus stop every morning. Just....fine. It turns out that what Sandy meant was that the entire walk up the mountain would be through gorgeous dark trees and patches of sharp, bright rock. He meant that in the fall, the Alpine meadows turn into a sphere of colour. The deep dark green of the pines, the juice red and carrot orange of the leaves, the tiny pale purple flowers and the pure blue of a clear sky all gathered and reflected in the Alpine lakes in a way that would make a rainbow jealous. It was one of those times when the world seems to have taken everything awesome out of a country and tucked it into one enchanted place.



(not in order) Sandy Briggs, Gerta Smythe, Claire Ebendinger, Josh Slatkoff, Sofia Tvaradze, Bob Saunders, plus the following UVic Outdoors Club Student Affiliate Members: Adrienne Johnson, Matthew Pope, Rob Habalus, Christian Lieb, Martina Bezzola, Nick Beckolay, Philippe Benoit, Eri Sibata, Michelle Riddle, Adam Palmblad, Sylvie Zaplata, Erin Harmston, Meg Jabusch, Jessica Worsley, Dilian Stoikov. Photo: Meg Jabusch

My bag was kinda heavy. It was hot. My shirt was sticking to my back. When someone suggested swimming, I couldn't say no. We ran to the edge of some random lake and hopped in. I would guess that the surface of the lake looked beautiful, lying serenely on a plain half-way up into the sky, but given that the water actually stopped my heart, I was too busy clawing my way back onto the rocks to notice. I recommend jumping into an Alpine lake, but expect cold toes.

This is getting long, so I'll cut to the view from the summit. We set up camp on a plain of rock and moss,

with a ring of mountains all around us. Standing beside the summit cairn felt like being on a bull's eye. We watched the sun drop behind one range of mountains and then turned to see the moon slide up from behind another. It was odd because we were watching the sky do what it does every night, but to see it from such an isolated vantage point forced the realization that the every day life of the sky is one of the strangest and most beautiful things ever.

In the morning I turned a full circle and stared out across the fields of peaks and sky. The feeling of being alive in the middle of something that couldn't care less

about my existence was incomparable. Standing on that silent plain at five in the morning surrounded by air and rock, I reached for my camera and then changed my mind. I knew that I couldn't pin down that feeling.

The trip was a good time. *fyi:* This was a trip organized by Sandy Briggs of the VI ACC for the Student Outdoor Club Affiliation Program with the University of Victoria Outdoors Club.

*Participants:* (see photo caption on page 42)



*Sandy's birthday celebration on Mt Drabble*

*Photo: Meg Jabusch*

# MT. ALBERT EDWARD

Gerry Graham  
October 9-10

The weekend before Thanksgiving was sunny and warm – perfect weather for climbing Albert Edward, which I did with fellow Kludahker, James Scott. What's the big deal, you say? Albert Edward – why, anyone and his dog can climb that! And you're right; it's not a technical climb, more a logistical challenge and hard slog than anything else. But, one man's cakewalk is another man's challenge, and for me, bagging Albert Edward was the culmination of a personal quest.

My three-day journey started when I picked James up at his place in a suburb of Victoria. We had never met before. He had responded to my ACC/VI, Kludahk Outdoors Club listserv appeal for a hiking companion. Call us the odd couple: me, the intrepid backpacker in my mid-fifties, and he the lean and hungry adventure racer half my age. Happily, things worked out smashingly, and in the process I learned a lot about the younger generation from this quiet, unassuming man.

My first ever glimpse of Albert Edward came from the trailhead at Mt. Washington in the summer of 2000. That year, and for four consecutive summers thereafter, I helped guide groups of handicapped people on hiking and camping trips in Strathcona. That mountain looming way off in the distance looked so tantalising, with its distinctive, ski jump slope and alpine countenance. Alas, the closest I ever got to Albert Edward in four summers was Kwai Lake. When the opportunity did present itself to go for gold, as it were, the trick was to find a hiking partner. None of the 180-odd ACC/VI members responded to my email, but James, whose philosophy appears to be "I'll try anything once!" rose to the occasion!

James and I did Albert Edward the traditional way – over the course of three days, overnighting at Circler Lake, and then doing the summit on day two, returning to Circler on night two, before heading back to the trailhead and home on day three. It was a challenge for me, partly because I was carrying too much gear in on the approach.

Nevertheless, the scenery, the view from the summit, the camaraderie and the sense of accomplishment I experienced all combined to make it a very rewarding experience.

The week before, a number of hapless, ill-prepared 'Survivor'-type participants had to be rescued off Albert Edward in the middle of the night. It seems some of them had set off from Paradise Meadows at 4 PM, hoping to make it to Buttle Lake by nightfall. What amazed me during James' and my excursion, was the motley collection of individuals we encountered attempting Albert Edward. This mountain, it seems, is to Strathcona Park what Mt. Finlayson is to Victoria. Everyone and his dog really is out there, with some people running to the summit and back, others with more gear than you'd find on Everest, while others look like they're out for a Sunday stroll, with no water bottles, food or equipment of any sort.



*McPhee Lake, below Mt. Edward*

*Photo: Gerry Graham*

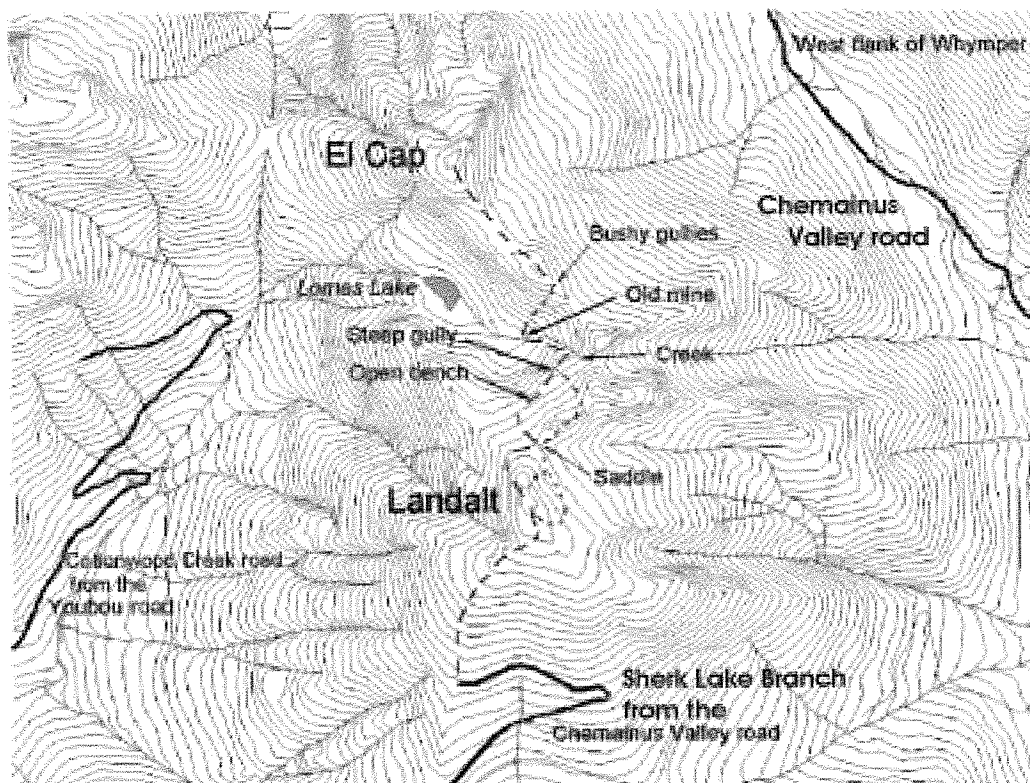
Albert Edward, I have since discovered, can be done in a single day, if you're well prepared. But James and I made it there and back, safe and sound, in three days. I have no doubt that James himself could have done the circuit in one day. Instead, he chose to go at my pace. Our trip was the alpine equivalent of 'slow food', and I savoured every minute of it. So, I salute you both – James Scott and Albert Edward.



# NOTES ON THE RIDGE BETWEEN LANDALT AND EL CAPITAN, THE HEAD OF THE CHEMAINUS RIVER VALLEY.

Rick Hudson

The recently resumed logging on the south flank of Mt. Landalt (sometimes labeled Landale) is a mixed blessing. The road up the Chemainus River (Copper Canyon Main, past Sherk Lake) now climbs to the 1,240m contour, making the summit (1,537m) less than an hour's hike up its NW spur. While some will rejoice at the happy absence of effort required to reach the top of one of the south Island's finer summits, there will be others who will hanker for more.



As the crow flies (and who wouldn't want to be a crow at times?) it's just 1,300m to El Capitan (1,492m) to the north. One of the great pleasures of traversing the intermediate ridge is that the route is by no means straightforward, providing a varied line of ups and downs, most of it in the alpine. Further, there are a variety of route options, and always spectacular views. In good weather, assume 1½ – 2 hours for each direction.

From the summit of Landalt, three alternates allow you to reach the saddle on the ridge below to the NE. The best option is to head NW over the top and pick up a line that curves N and finally NE to the saddle. Other options

are to go NE off the summit of Landalt, and descend a steep and narrow gully onto a steep slope. While it is the most direct route, the consequences of a slip, when the heather is wet, could be serious. A third option is to retrace your steps a hundred metres off the top of Landalt in a SE direction, and then drop and curve left, heading E, then NE.

From the saddle below Landalt, two options are available. The obvious line is to follow the series of minor bumps NE along the skyline. Then descend steep heather slopes on the W flank, when the ridge approaches the major bumps that form the dog's leg in the ridge between Landalt and El Cap. A better alternate (from the saddle directly NE below Landalt), is to drop NW over easy ground to pick up an open bench that descends NE. This leads to where the top of a narrow, steep gully must be crossed. There is only one level where this is possible. Cross higher, and you face steep cliffs. Cross lower, and the gully is too wide and vertical.

Across the gully (there are cairns), traverse 30m NE on a faint trail before descending 50m to an open area, which is crossed diagonally NE to a terrace that leads horizontally E into a major creek bed. (This drains the notch between the two major bumps on the ridge.) Descend the creek on its left (SW) side (open boulders) to the old mine, a distance of about 200m.

From there, a faint trail traverses NE below the cliffs, then climbs to a series of parallel bushy gullies, one of which is well trampled. Climb to the ridge above, from there an open hike brings you to the summit of El Cap.



# COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

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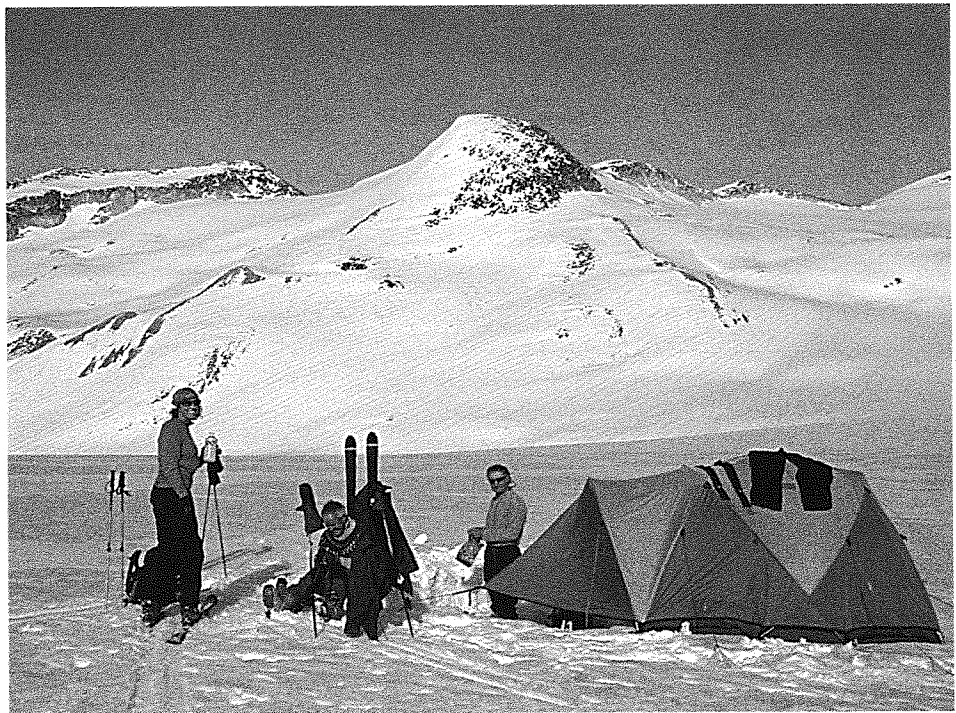
## PEBBLE/THIASSI GLACIER

Lisa McBain  
Spring 2004

In the spring sunshine Pebble/Thiassi Glacier has it all—peaks, turns, views, and Easter bunnies. Sitting at 6700' the smooth flat glacier makes an excellent base camp to access a variety of peaks, ranging from ski to boot pack ascents, and endless terrain to make those spring snow turns (remember east facing in the morning and west facing in the afternoon).

The glacier can be accessed via Tyax Air's Beaver (ski plane). The flight starts on wheels at the Pemberton airport, winds through the Pemberton Valley and ends on skis on the glacier approximately 1/2 hour later. For a group of 9 we required two trips. (The max allowable weight of 245 lb each was plenty. The contractor was Dale Douglas and he charged \$500/trip).

Thanks to Rick Hudson's planning, the first flight departed at 8:00am on Friday morning, and after the second drop, and a bit of unpacking the sun was shining, and the building began. Tents went up, (even one for gear), and kitchens and an out-house were snow sculpted. The full lounge created by Christine and Charles was the envy of our village. After a quick lunch, and some serious disrobing (temperatures were in the low 20's), the group was off for the top of the closest rolling mountain to the west. The afternoon jaunt allowed



*Lisa McBain, Mike Hubbard and Colin Oloman at Glacier camp  
Photo: Rick Hudson*

us to figure a few things out. Most significantly it became clear that spring snow could be found—aspect was key; the conditions were bomber; and there was endless terrain readily accessible from the tents.

During three more days of sunshine, peaks were summited and thin powder eights carved in all directions. East of camp was a ski summit nicknamed Snow Dome. It had good moderate to low angle turns down its west face, and moderate angle turns down its east face to McParlon

Glacier. Continuing east up McParlon Glacier, one could ascend a ridge for more great west facing turns, or even follow the ridge north and contour east for a snow and rock summit of another peak and some steeper skiing. West of camp had one of the higher summits close by. It was a ski and steep boot pack summit named Pt 8600. North of Pt 8600 was a lesser summit that one could ski off from the top (though the snow tended to be rotten underneath). Between these two peaks was access to great moderate to steep angle turns. South of camp, one could check out Moby Dick.

For our visit, it was the blue skies and sunshine. This allowed for a few inches of spring snow. Hence the com-

ment that the aspect was key. We also had the luxury of choosing to stay high. However, there also appeared to be great turns to be had descending from the glacier, exposure permitting.

The views, turns, and summits, mixed with great story telling, Gerta's recorder, and visits from more than one Easter bunny, left only smiles and sun tans on our faces. As Rick summed up following the trip, "Great trip. Great friends. Great weather".

*Participants:* Charles Turner, Gerta Smythe, Jules Thomson, Mike Hubbard, Chris Fordham, Colin Oloman, Phee Hudson, and our trip planner Rick Hudson.

## MT. ADAMS AND SURPRISING SEQUEL

Judith Holm, Lisa Baile, Peter Paré, Gernot Dick and John Godel  
July 8-11

**M**t. Adams is a fairly remote peak in extreme NW BC on the eastern edge of the Boundary Ranges, adjacent to the Juneau Icefield and at the south end of Atlin Lake. Judith reckoned that few people would think to go there and it could be a worthy destination after attending Botany BC in Atlin, but access would depend on finding a boat owner willing to help. To route plan, Lisa, Peter and Judith met atop Whistler Mt., sat on our skis and poured over the topo.

What followed in July was a splendid traverse and summit, which exceeded our expectations. Yet the climb itself was only the beginning.

**Gernot:** July 6, 2004 began a series of events that evolved into intrigue and discoveries of 50 years ago. On that day Judith Holm, Dr. Peter Pare and Lisa Baile asked Gernot Dick to take them to the base of Mt Adams, formerly Black Mountain. They were determined to climb Black Mountain. Gernot dropped the party off on July 8 with arrangements to pick them up 4 days later at midnight, 2 km to the south of the drop off point. The climbers began their ascent that morning following a planned traverse of the NE and SE ridges. On reaching the summit they were surprised to discover a tobacco metal can. They opened the can and were thrilled to find one note only from three climbers who had ascended the mountain 50 years ago. They are presumed to have been the first to have reached that peak. The 2004 party along with Gernot began an email correspondence and Judith searched by

internet to see if she could possibly still contact the three climbers of 1954. The following are excerpts from the email correspondence that ensued.

The correspondents are Gernot (Owner/operator of the Atlin Art Centre and Atlin Quest Boat Charters, artist and mountaineer, originally from Austria), John (Quadra Island, retired Prof of Paediatrics, U of Alberta, who currently teaches Paediatrics as a volunteer for one to two months a year at the University of Mbarara in Uganda). Peter (coincidentally also a medical doctor/UBC Professor, Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Research), Lisa (Vancouver, co-founder of WEP - Wilderness Education Program) and Judith (who suggested the climb).

**Judith:** Hello Gernot. Thank you for enabling our traverse of Mt. Adams. We very much appreciated all the help you gave us. The home you have built by yourself is a huge achievement. It would have been a great shame to miss seeing it. I hope you will have time to try your NE Ridge Route before the snow comes. Here are my notes and photos of our climb:

08. 07. 04 10:30 am Left the "lagoon"(elev 2195'). Headed west through the forest up to a prominent open bedrock formation at 2771' (E5643 N65554). We then angled SE up to gain the ridge you had suggested. At 2 pm reached sub-alpine (3735'). First camp on bench at 4047', with several nice tarns.

09. 07. 04 Day 2: What a mellow ridge hike up, with spectacular views to both sides, then a rock scramble

to the summit. The mountain goats were very curious about us. We thought the lead goat considered us to be of poor design and certainly no threat. I had brought a copy of *The Cremation of Sam McGee* for the summit, since we were so close to the Yukon, and P recited it well. L found a cairn and a Player's tin can with only one enclosure, dated August 1, 1954. Someone called John Godel had written, "Would anyone finding this can please communicate with the above addresses and we'll swap yarns." We gazed for ages at spectacular views, hazy owing to many forest fires near Dawson City. Camped just S of summit on edge of drop off -4500' down to Llewellyn Glacier, where we set up camp quite near the herd of goats. The mountain goats too stayed overnight.

made possible one of the lushest displays of flora in full bloom that I have ever witnessed. There were marmots, also Hammond's flycatchers well fed with mosquitoes. It rained. I spent the whole evening wandering amidst the flowers, overwhelmed by the beauty.

11. 07. 04 Day 4: Followed SE shoulder to Sloko Lake, bushwhacking down and up over 2 bumps, then through a swamp to the delta. Grizzly, moose and bird tracks aplenty and claw marks on the trees, but we only saw the birds. Found the old gold miners' trail you recleared from Sloko L. to Atlin L. and thereby were spared thrashing through devil's club. To find a peninsula where you could easily get your boat to shore at midnight, we finished up with a good, wet, coastal bushwhack.



*High camp on Mt. Adams, Llewellyn Glacier with Juneau Icefield in distance Photo: Judith Holm*

10. 07. 04 Day 3: Spent entire morning individually exploring around the snowy, rocky summit area and grassy slopes with colourful flowers and lichens where the goats grazed. Packed up at 1 pm and followed edge of SE shoulder to see another unnamed glacier. Camped on bed-rock at 4700', at end of a hanging valley below which the trees began. It was open gentle alpine terrain all the way to this elevation. Snow-melt created a reliable water source, and the meandering stream and deep soil in the valley

**Peter:** Dear Gernot, thank you for the amazing support and hospitality you showed us during our visit to Atlin and in our climb of Black Mountain (Mount Adams). I'll never forget the midnight voyage back from the end of the lake, the episode of the missing key (you remained amazingly calm.), the 3-6 am visit to your beautiful home, your delicious home smoked salmon and potato salad and the fox on your front porch. We have made contact with one of the 1954 climbing party. He is Dr John Godel, a

retired paediatric professor from the University of Alberta, and he sent us some scanned images of his first ascent (attached picture of him on peak) as well as a letter he wrote to his wife on the night he climbed the mountain (attached). I'll also copy the text of his e-mail below for your interest,

**John:** Dear Lisa, Yes, this is indeed me, many long years ago. I spent 2 summers during my medical undergraduate years surveying in the arctic and did some climbing on the side. What a wonderful reminder. What were the circumstances of your climb there? I'm intrigued. Tell me more. I'd love to see a picture of the can and if possible, of the note. I am enclosing a picture of me in 1954 with Atlin Lake in the background, (and then). Thanks for your note, I found it interesting and exciting, because the day we climbed the mountain was the day our first daughter was born (although I didn't know about it for 2 days when a telegram to our chief in Atlin caught up with me). Not only that, during our stay at the south end of Atlin Lake I would pen a note to my wife Marge in Edmonton every day, although the mail was only picked up once a week. We kept all the letters and found the note I sent the evening of August 1st when I got back to camp. I am enclosing a transcription and pictures scanned from slides I took at the time. In answer to your question, I have never smoked. The tin belonged to Paul. I'm surprised it lasted 50 years. I'd be quite happy to answer any other questions. It's interesting you are in the medical field. I am a retired paediatrician and at the time of the climb I was an undergraduate medical student at the University of Alberta.

August 1st, 1954: Today dawned cloudless and warm, so we went mountain climbing - from Atlin Lake - elevation 2,100 - to the top of the mountain at 6,900, about 4,800 feet of mountain. That's about the same height as Mt. Rundle at Banff. As a matter of fact this mountain is almost the spitting image of Rundle. We left camp (Paul, Grant and I) by boat up the inlet and into a small side channel, which brought us out into a little cove nestled quietly in the hills at the base of the mountain. Up the mountain we went— There wasn't too much difficulty climbing - only a couple of sheer cliffs that we couldn't get around. Everywhere we saw evidence of goat - tracks, droppings, trails - but saw neither hide nor hair of them. (Speaking of hair, I'm enclosing a lock from an old ram). We reached the top about 2 o'clock. The view was breathtaking - mighty glacier to the south, east and west, with majestic peaks rising high above us; Atlin lake to the north and east, its islands like little cookies set on platter of different shades of blue from a dirty gray glacial water through milky, and turquoise to a deep almost-navy blue. To the

southern stretch Sloko Lake, heavy with silt, towered over by the battlements of Paradise Peak. We saw thousands of little wild flowers high above timberline - two grouse on a snow bank, bees and grasshoppers 4,000 feet above the valley. There were some amusing moments - I tore my pants - at the knee, that is - almost made them short pants. I was able to repair them with fixit glue. Paul wore through his shoes so we had to stop every once in a while so he could tuck his toes back in. He claimed he had much better traction on the cliffs - he could grip with his toes,

**Lisa:** Hello John - This is so exciting to have caught up with you. Gernot didn't think Mt. Adams had been climbed before (he was hoping to climb it later this year) and he said that Black Mountain had been given a name change after a helicopter pilot crashed there and his son wanted the mountain named after him (the area is now part of Atlin Provincial Park),

**Gernot:** Hello Judith, Lisa and Peter, Thank you for sharing your Mt. Adams experiences in both words and images. Absolutely exquisite that you were also able to "dig up" John Godel. Having John's input by sharing his "Gipfel Reflections" and the letter to his wife makes Mt. Adams to me even more precious. It's also great seeing him standing there, in prospector boots, on the peak, in his young years. Mt. Adams got snowed in early this year. It will be next year that it's my turn. But should those ongoing autumn storms (5 foot waves) finally stop in the next few days, I might still go for it. Even though, it might not get as exciting, like us looking for a car key underneath the boat tarp, with lights on our foreheads, three o'clock on the morning. Besides Mt. Adams, we have a few more interesting mountains around Atlin Lake. I would enjoy very much if we could go together some times. Berg Heil.

**John:** Dear Gernot, Thanks for including me in your correspondence with Judith, Lisa and Peter. I never dreamed that my past would come back to haunt me in such a wonderful way. Thanks for those excellent mountain pictures. By the way, are you from Atlin? If so, were you there 50 years ago? Our pilot at the time was Herman Peterson,

**Gernot:** Dear John, Your question about Herman Peterson, sadly to say, was very timely after so many years. We buried him 3 days ago. His wife is still alive. He was a very good chess player and we have played on many winter evenings. Are you thinking of an Atlin visit? I always have a place for you.

**John:** Dear Gernot, My wife and I are in Uganda but should be home next week. Thanks for the picture of Black Mountain. I'd love to take you up on the Atlin visit. Maybe have a game of chess and a mountain climb?

# MY FIRST GMC

Gerta Smythe  
July 10-17

One day, I always thought, I would participate in a GMC, the General Mountaineering Camp, of the Alpine Club.

I had heard a lot about these camps: positive things from anybody who had ever been there; negative things from people, who had never been, but thought they knew. As club representative, I thought I should gain first hand knowledge and am I ever glad, I did!

The list of participants told me that members would be coming from all across the nation; meeting them for breakfast in Golden made me realize that they also spanned many generations.

After a long logging road ride, we were whisked away by helicopter onto a most astounding spot: Icefall Brook, indeed, the waters were practically falling off the cliffs and the constant splashing silenced alarm clocks and would-be snorers. Individual tents had been set up in 3 little boroughs; the most distant one was closest to the biffy. Three large group tents were in the center with one for cooking and eating (dishwashing was done out of doors under a tarp and there was quite an amazing routine with plenty of volunteers). One tent had a woodstove and was for drying gear and the third tent had a hot plate and offered the means for impromptu gatherings in inclement weather. The drinking water was diverted from one of the waterfalls and was easily obtained with a spigot from the hose.

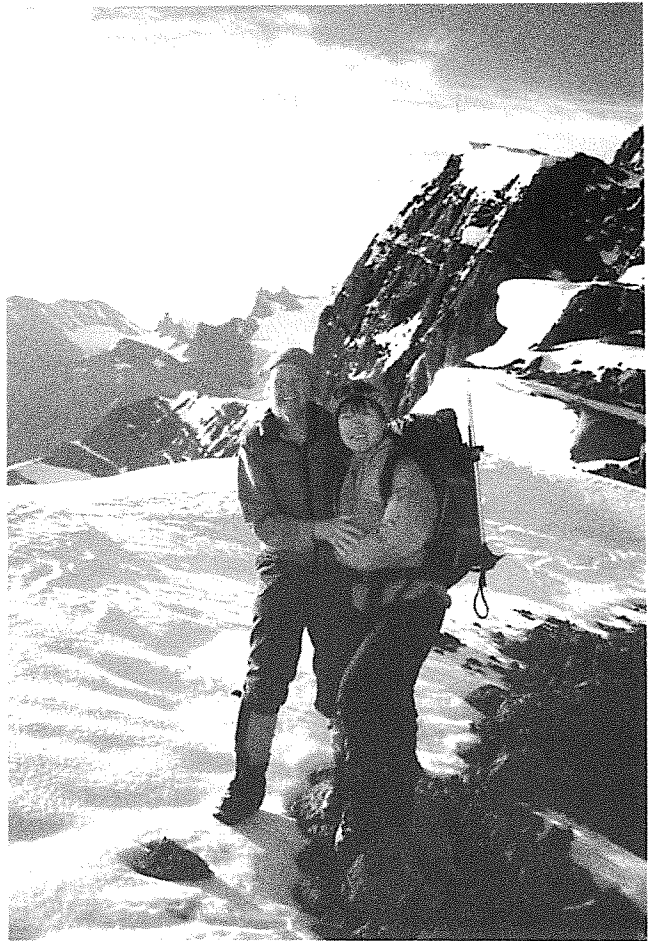
Bridges had been built across the wider streams and hand washing was encouraged in strategic places with liquid soap activated by a foot pedal. It became evident that some people had been to these camps before, some come every year and others remember the times, long ago, when there were 100 participants at one camp, the ladies changed for supper and horses transported the gear.

These 'experienced' campers had cans of beer stashed in the creek by their tents and walked about with giant umbrellas on the one rainy day of the week.

The food was incredible; many options for breakfast and lunches and even a turkey dinner with all the trimmings for supper once. Vicki has been running the kitchen for some years now and she had some hard working helpers who were all given one day off to go climbing. Brad was never far away when help was needed. He was the first one up, marching from tent to tent with his flashlight to check on the 'early starters'. And even the 4 o'clock start-

ers were given a warm breakfast with a delicious porridge and coffee or tea. Brad has managed these camps for many years, even helped his father before him and he has become part of the GMC tradition. He finds the location, sets up the camp, helps with the cooking, guiding and washing up. When I was sitting back after a long day, cooling my feet in the creek and sipping coffee and brandy, Brad was splitting wood, stirring a pot, selling T-shirts or meeting with the guides to discuss the next day.

We had 3 professional guides, 3 amateur leaders and some 30 participants. My tent mate was Margaret, a friend from Toronto, who I had met at another National trip. She was very social and always had a group of people gathered about her, laughing, telling stories or just simply connecting.



*Gerta with Margaret from Toronto at the GMC*



There was Glen Boles, one of the 'Calgary Grizzlies, whose graphic art drawings of the mountains have become legend and who was credited with the photos in our guidebook. We loved to listen to his stories and when I asked him which one of the Lyalls I should climb, if only given the chance for one of the five, he unhesitatingly said: Christian! And he was right. It proved to be an unforgettable trip; an early start, watching the sun rise over Mons Peak, slogging across a long, long glacier and finally ascending the elegant pyramid, not knowing if our approach would work and then, oh joy, standing on the knife-edge of the summit, no room to embrace or dance and frolic, just looking and marvelling at the incredible privilege to be standing on this 11,000 foot peak of the Rockies.

Every evening we were allowed to choose our destination for the next day and after supper we would hear of the adventures of the different groups. Although I knew that my slow pace would not allow me to participate on a climb of Mt. Forbes, the giant in the area, I received first-person accounts of the conditions and hazards encountered there. One person could not possibly climb all the peaks in the area in just one week. But we came away with a feeling to have participated on all these climbs, being well satisfied with the individual accomplishments and having gained more confidence, and were filled with happiness and joy and a fervent wish to come back for another camp soon.

## LAKE O'HARA IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Rick & Phee Hudson

(Poetry by the entire cast)

Summer Camp 2004: July 25–August 1

What to pack for the alpine, when it's the hottest July on record? At Hope, BC, the temperature hovered at 39°C and thoughts of glaciated peaks seemed ephemeral. Even at the Lake Louise Hostel the air seemed drowsy with the heat of summer as two dozen club members assembled.

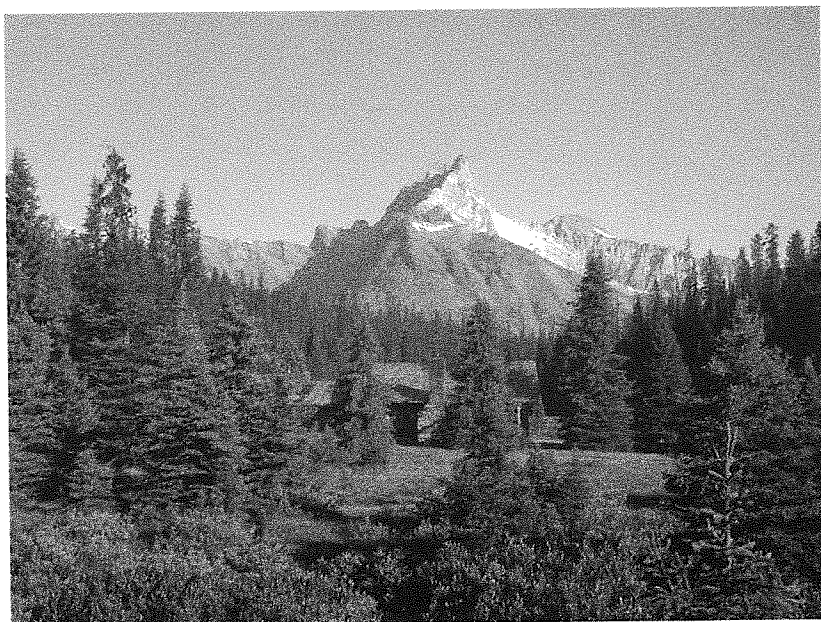
*To a lake called O'Hara they went  
Eight ladies and sixteen fine gents.  
Mid ground squirrels and picas  
With foamies and Tikas  
A week in the mountains was spent.*

Sunday dawned fine and clear, something that was to become a regular feature of the week, (unlike two years previously, when it snowed 5 out of 7 days in the Tonquin Valley). The party split into two shifts and by noon the buses had delivered groups, gear and general clutter to Lake O'Hara, where everything was carried to the Elizabeth Parker Hut. Snorers and non-snorers were mixed and matched, with 16 in the main building and the balance in the adjacent Wiwaxy Hut. And so the games began.

*With challenging peaks all around  
Not a quiet day was to be found.  
Over shale-covered ledges*

*They whacked in some wedges  
And scrambled fine routes up and down.*

There being half a day remaining and much sunshine, a variety of keeners chose easy summits to bag. A party climbed the pleasantly firm quartzite on the North Ridge of Schäffer (2,693m), meeting others on top, next



ACC Elizabeth Parker Hut with Cathedral Peak behind  
Photo; Rick Hudson

to the inukshuk that guarded the summit. Elsewhere, Yukness (2,847m) received the first of many ascents, with some folk staying on the upper ridge, while others scrambled the loose gullies to the true south summit.

*The worst peak of all was Yukness –  
Just rubble and scree - what a mess.  
Yet the view from up there  
Was very hard to compare,  
In the heart of those mountains, no less.*

Down at Lake O'Hara, a large group took the scenic trail round to the quartzite crags on the east side near the waterfall, and spent time getting used to the type of rock they would not encounter anywhere else in the valley. Firm, pink and warm, it made for great cragging in the late afternoon sun. Across the valley, five signed themselves through the grizzly corridor that divided the valley, and hiked up to Grandview on the east flank of Feuz (Little Odaray – 2,952m), some returning via All Souls Trail, and others via Lake O'Hara.

*Over peak, ridge and glacier we'd roam  
Then return to our meadowy home  
Where marmots were hoary  
And night times were snory  
And most coiffures were in need of a comb.*

Thus was set in motion the daily ritual. Each evening, while progressively grander *hors d'oeuvres* were served, Don would call for daily reports on what had been climbed, and what disasters had befallen the participants. New routes for the following day would be requested, and over dinner small cliques formed to discuss potential groupings, then broke up, and reformed elsewhere - not unlike a high school dance.



*Schaffer, Odaray, Deception & Cathedral from Yukness*  
Photo: Rick Hudson

*Schäffer ridge was a popular pick  
Most of all for that mountain goat Rick.  
He scrambled the face  
With panache and with grace  
Then returned and repeated that trick.*

Rather than list the many peaks climbed by many people, it might be best to summarize some of the highlights. The North Ridge of Schäffer, for example, saw many ascents and not a few descents too, some roped and others not. The hard rock, clean handholds, and broad ledges between steps made for a pleasant, although short, day out, Rick E distinguished himself by leading the route more times than even he could remember, taking up a steady stream of others who wished to enjoy a 2-hour outing from the hut.

Early in the week, Rick H and Larry climbed Grassi Ridge on Wiwaxy North Peak (2,704m), a line of some 300m of 5.4 - 5.6 quartzite, with a delicate 5.7 crux over loose banded shale. Near the summit, the angle eased and the descent turned out to be the most difficult section, down-climbing awkward overhanging steps that turned Jules and Dale back earlier the same day. Larry later confessed he had thought they were going to attempt "Grassy Ridge", and wondered why there was such an excess of rock.

*Rick and Larry went climbing on Grassi  
Where the rock ranged from so-so to classy.  
As they climbed ever higher  
The quartz became drier  
While views they could then near and far see.*

The valley is certainly one of the Rockies' premier hiking areas, with hundred year-old trails laid out by Swiss guides, when trails were real trails, and Swiss guides were real Swiss guides. Lake Oesa, Wiwaxy Gap Trail, the Yukness Ledges, Opabin Pass (2,590m) and All Souls were popular traverses that offered spectacular views of the valley, with the turquoise jewel of Lake O'Hara in the centre. And something of a tradition was established by those visiting Sleeping Poet's Pool above Yukness Ledges: everyone was expected to compose immortal verse in the tradition of Keats and Shelley. Like so many traditions, this one alas, failed sadly.

*There once was a club called The Alpine,  
Whose poets favoured pasta and wine.  
And in between meals  
They took to their heels  
And wandered the mountains divine.  
Across the Rockies, the warm dry sum-*

mer had depleted the glaciers of snow, and even where there was cover, it was generally thin and poorly attached to the ice below. A tense moment developed when Martin, Don, Harry, Sylvia and Geoff (in that order) were crossing the upper Odaray Glacier en route to the saddle between Walter Feuz Peak and Odaray Mountain (3,133m). Traversing a steep slope with little traction, Martin slipped and in quick succession, each member of the roped party had their feet pulled out from under them. Geoff, as back anchor, watched in mild disbelief as the team unzipped. Then he too was sliding down slope. Less than a hundred metres below, the angle eased and the snow resumed. Everyone came to a halt, relatively undamaged except for Don's ruptured hand, which was ably stitched later by surgeon-in-residence Dale, whisky being used in preference to anaesthetic to ease the discomfort.

*It started with Martin's birthday.  
His treat was to climb Odaray,  
But a slipp'ry sluice  
Caused one heck of a bruise  
To remind him of his special day.*

Undaunted, Don tried Odaray again later in the week, with Tak as partner. Ahead, Rick H and Larry chose a low route to bypass the steep section, and climbed the gully to the Feuz-Odaray saddle. Don and Tak were late to that point, and turned back. The lead pair however, made the top of Odaray on a hazy day that limited views. Then, rather than reverse the tottering rock pile that passed for a gully down to the glacier, they traversed under Feuz's NW face to pick up its West Ridge, and hence reach the summit. There, they searched unsuccessfully for traces of hemlock and mistletoe, supposedly used by previous summiteers in some Wiccan ritual, about which little was said but much surmised.

*The ladies, themselves to amuse  
Climbed alone to the top of Walt Feuz.  
There's a rumour those goddesses  
Removed all their bodices.  
To confirm or deny, they refuse.*

Although not overrun with wild life, the valley did have some birds, which were of interest to the resident ornithologists among the group, notably Geoff, who pursued all reports of duck sightings on the lake with considerable passion. Elsewhere, wild flowers were in bloom and the botanists in the party spent time finding and identifying alpine flora. Cedric penned the following stanza at Poet's Pool:



*Phee Hudson admiring the view of Yukness in near distance , with Lefroy, Glacier, Ringrose Pks. behind.* Photo: Rick Hudson

*We traversed the Ledges Yukness:  
A classic reliever of stress.  
Phee spent several hours  
Identifying flowers  
But - I've forgotten them all, I confess.*

Geoff had singled out Park Mountain to the west of Lake McArthur as a worthy objective, and on Wednesday a party of 5 set off early. Traversing the west shore of the lake proved easy enough, although the trail was narrow and the drop into the lake somewhat intimidating. Thereafter they chose the southern-most snow couloir to reach the ridge at Biddle Pass (2,609m). The couloir was bare ice near the top, and Geoff placed screws and a picket as the party simul-climbed the steep upper section. The choice of route transpired to make the day longer than necessary (the north couloir avoids some of the messy ridge climbing above), and they reached the summit late.

Near the top, they encountered a lone climber, clad in runners, a light top and jogging shorts, whose only climbing gear appeared to be a Walkman and earphones, and who was in the process of completing the Schäffer-Smith-Biddle-Park circuit. He disappeared down the North Ridge of Park, and was apparently seen later back in O'Hara. This clearly raised the ante somewhat, and all members of the party felt they should push their limits, even if they lacked the flower of youth, which their co-climber clearly enjoyed. Whether this was a mitigating factor or not, on the descent Don took a fall that left him relatively undamaged, but the party returned late, as twilight approached.

Meals were catered by three or four each evening,

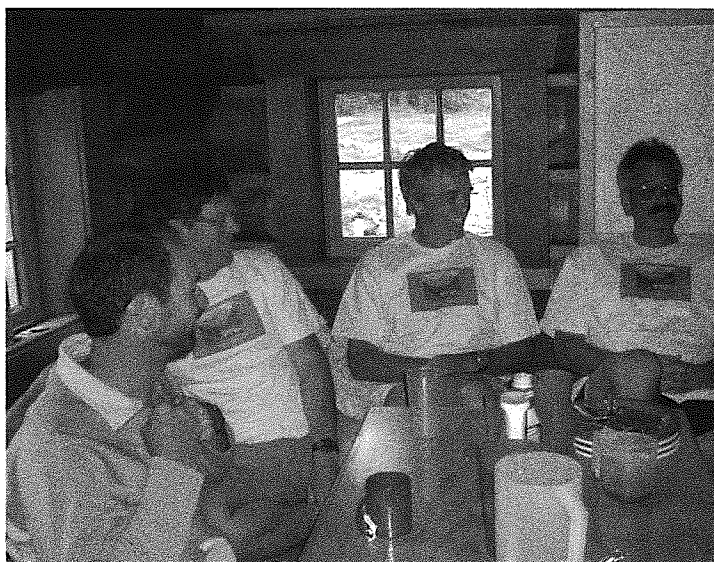
and while climbing is, by definition, non-competitive, the same could not be said for the lavish dinners that were prepared from a range of fresh produce, worthy of Granville Island's market. Delicate starters, complex entrees and calorie-laden desserts appeared nightly to much acclaim from the awaiting diners, usually accompanied by a house vintage (sometimes two) and plenty of private reserve. To cap it all, the late nights were lit by a brilliant *aurora borealis*, seen alas only by those forced to make pre-dawn trips to the biffy on more mundane matters.

*On the last night to Judith it fell  
To ensure that the camp was fed well.  
Some had expressed doubt  
That the bean shoots would sprout  
But they did, and the meal was très swell.*

Other explorations that occurred were a crossing from Wiwaxy Gap (2,532m) under the west flank of Huber to access the Huber Glacier, prior to an attempt on Mt. Huber (3,358m) or Mt Victoria (3,462m). Yukness Peak was climbed numerous times, with both the north and south summits being reached by a variety of routes. There was an attempt on Mt. Ringrose (3,292m) that petered out 2/3 of the way up, when talus-balanced ledges made the prospect of free-climbing dangerous, and roped climbing pointless. A trip stalled half way up Glacier Peak (3,294m), after approaching from below the Abbott Col (the NW couloir - the usual route - looked rock-swept and icy). There were several trips to Opabin Pass to enjoy the view south into Prospector Valley. Finally, several hikers headed north to explore the Cathedral Lakes area and the erotically named Consummation Peak (2,542m) - suggesting an alternate means to join the Mile-High Club.

The week passed quickly and offered many options. Everyone pulled together at the hut, whether it was hauling water, clearing plates, washing up, chopping firewood, or feeding the bush-tailed rats outside, and the organizers are to be congratulated on a successful Summer Camp. On one of the final evenings, Judith produced 30 Summer Camp T-shirts, like rabbits out of a hat, which were an instant success for no other reason than they were clean.

The week was made doubly pleasant by the perfect weather that only faltered on the final day. Sunday dawned wet, and a light drizzle almost deterred Geoff, Judith and Rick H from choosing to walk out over Opabin and



Stan Marcus, Martin Davis, Dale Nicoll and Rick Eppler modeling t-shirts.  
Photo: Rick Hudson

Wenkchemna cols. Faith prevailed, however, and before they had crossed the first pass the clouds began to clear, and by the time they stood at the head of the Valley of the Ten Peaks, it was just another perfect day.

*The time in the mountains we spend  
Like all things, must come to an end.  
But we quickly confirm  
To the alps we'll return,  
And climb some more peaks with our friends.*

*Participants:* Judith Holm, Don Morton (*organizers*); Jules Thomson, Martin Davis, Rick Eppler, Rick Hudson, Tak Ogasawara (*amateur guides*); Barb Baker, Geoff Bennett, Larry Borgerson, Catrin Brown, Claire Ebendinger, Paul Erickson, Diane Erickson, Viggo Holm, Mike Hubbard, Phee Hudson, Terry Lunn, Stan Marcus, Sylvia Moser, Dale Nicoll, Harry Slobodan, Tony Vaughn, Cedric Zala.

#### Acknowledgments:

The authors thank Don Morton for his scrupulous record-keeping, which allowed the logistics of so many people, over seven days, to be set down in some semblance of order. Any errors or omissions are therefore entirely Don's. The authors also thank all participants for their contributions to the poetic doggerel, for which the authors happily claim no credit whatsoever.

# O'HARA CLIMBING DIARY:

<b><u>Sunday July 25</u></b>			
Martin, Don	N Ridge of Mt. Schäffer	Rick E, Tony, Tak	Mt Feuz, tried traverse
Rick H, Phee	W Ridge of Mt. Schäffer		to Odaray, but retreated
Geoff, Dale, Cedric, Jules, Barb	Yukness Mtn.	Viggo, Judith, Cedric, Diane, Stan	Wiwaxy Gap, Lk Oesa,
Rick E, Larry, Harry, Stan, Tony	Crags on E side		Yukness Ledges,
	Lake O'Hara		Sleeping Poet's Ledge,
Tak, Mike, Claire, Sylvia, Paul, Diane	Grandview on		Opabin plateau
	Mt. Odaray	Paul	As above without
Judith, Viggo	All Souls		Sleeping Poet's Ledge,
<b><u>Monday July 26</u></b>			but All Souls
Martin, Don, Sylvia, Harry, Geoff	Odaray Glacier, later	Larry, Terry, Harry	W Ridge of Mt. Schäffer
	some to Mt. Feuz SE	<b><u>Thursday July 29</u></b>	
	Ridge	Jules, Phee, Catrin, Barb, Judith, Sylvia, Claire	Mt. Feuz
Tak, Mike	N Ridge of Schäffer		(little Odaray)
Viggo, Terry, Stan, Diane	Mt. Yukness main	Cedric, Viggo (separately)	Grandview on Odaray
	summit	Terry	N and S summit of Mt.
Rick E, Judith, Paul, Tony	Mt. Yukness N and S		Yukness
	summits	Tak, Geoff	S summit Mt. Yukness
Rick H, Larry	Grassi Ridge on Wiwaxy	Mike, Martin, Paul, Diane	Opabin Pass
	Pk	Larry, Harry, Stan	All Souls to Opabin
Claire, Barb	Lake Oesa, Wiwaxy Gap		Pass
Jules, Dale	close to summit on	Rick E, Rick H, Tony	N Ridge of Mt.
	Wiwaxy Pk		Schäffer, All Souls
Phee, Cedric	Yukness Ledges,	<b><u>Friday July 30</u></b>	
	Sleeping Poet's Pool,	Tak, Don	Odaray Glacier
Lake Oesa		Rick H, Larry	Mt. Odaray, traverse to
Catrin	Lake Oesa		Mt. Feuz
<b><u>Tuesday July 27</u></b>		Viggo, Mike, Stan	Mt. Feuz
Martin, Don, Phee, Mike	Opabin Pass	Martin, Sylvia	W Ridge of Mt. Schäffer
Rick H, Sylvia, Jules, Geoff	some distance up Mt.	Rick E, Jules, Terry, Barb, Dale, Catrin	N Ridge of Mt.
	Ringrose, later Opabin		Schäffer, All Souls to
	Pass		Opabin Pass
Tak, Tony	Wiwaxy Gap	Geoff	Mt Schäffer
	exploration to Huber	Phee	McArthur Lake
Glacier		Claire	Cathedral Lakes,
Rick E, Barb, Catrin, Stan	N Ridge of Mt. Schäffer		Consummation Pk.,
Rick E	continued on to TV		Duchesnay Basin
	Smith Peak	<b><u>Saturday July 31</u></b>	
Viggo, Judith, Cedric, Diane	W Ridge of Mt. Schäffer	Rick H, Geoff	part way up Glacier Pk.
Harry, Terry, Larry	Opabin trails	Martin, Mike, Phee, Sylvia, Claire, Catrin, Don	All Souls,
Dale	Lake McArthur		Opabin Prospect,
<b><u>Wednesday July 28</u></b>			Sleeping Poet's ledge,
Geoff, Sylvia, Mike, Don, Dale	Park Mtn.		Lake Oesa, Wiwaxy Gap
Rick H, Phee, Catrin	Mt. Yukness	Tak, Tony	Cathedral Lake and
Barb	Sleeping Poet's Pool,		Duchesnay Basin
	Victoria Lake	<b><u>Sunday August 1</u></b>	
Jules, Claire	W Ridge of Mt.	Geoff, Judith, Rick H	Opabin Pass,
	Schäffer, then Lake		Wenkchemna Pass to
	McArthur		Moraine Lake



# THE NORTH FACE LEADERSHIP COURSE SUMMER 2004

Selena Swets

August 5-16

This year's leadership course took place in the spectacular Icefall Brook area, in the Mt. Lyell group on the west side of the Rocky Mountains. We shared the camp with members on the national club's GMC, making for a fun and social camp. Base camp was a scenic fly in/fly out, to a box canyon at the headwaters of Icefall Brook, with an elevation of 2166 metres. Objectives in the area included Mt Forbes, the Lyell Group (five spectacular peaks over 3355m or 11,000 ft) and other summits including Mons, Messines, St. Julien, and the Divisions. Our inspiring Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) guides were Cyril Shokoples and Helen Sovdat, with help from Masten Broolsma, our excellent amateur leader.

The first day we flew in, we were beset by storm clouds and low visibility, making for some long waits at the helicopter landing both at the parking area and at camp, and multiple flight attempts for others. Note to self: always carry sleeping bag and pad with you on the helicopter, as you never know when they might not be able to fly. We all made it in however, and even had our gear.

That evening after a fantastic meal done up by our camp staff we got to meet everyone, and check out the itinerary for the week. There were representatives from ACC sections from Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, and N. Vancouver - an interesting mix of people and experiences from across the country.

Day one was spent as skills day, as we covered short roping skills with lots and lots of practice. Then we worked on protection placements, rope anchors and piton craft. As well we covered aspects of rock rescue. The evening, after a sumptuous three-course dinner, was spent learning about liability and legal issues and leader roles and responsibilities. A very busy and intense day.

Day two was spent with a trip up 3085m Mons Peak as we practiced pacing and route transition from rock to glacier. Short roping skills were practiced in earnest, as we took turns in leading each other up and down the summit rock. Bluebird skies on the summit made for route scouting as we took in the views; future objectives noted. Descent involved ice anchors using an abalokov and lowering multiple climbers using a monster Munter hitch.

Day three involved ascents of Messines, St. Julien, and Main Division by teams of three or four. On this day

we were given more leadership roles under guidance by our leaders. We crossed glaciers, negotiated crevasses (some people seem to fall in more often than others!) and furthered our short roping and route assessment- thankfully no crevasse rescue skills were needed. After this day some swam in the tarn behind the tents, then everyone enjoyed the usual fabulous meal.

On day four everyone started early- at 4:30 am - for some big summit days. The GMC group were doing the Lyells as a two day trip with a bivy at high camp, while most of us were going there as a day trip. None of our three groups returned earlier than 12 hours, with one of our groups who headed to Forbes clocking the summit for 19 hours. After a long day in the hot sun on the glacier, the tarn felt wonderful. Themes for the day were again pacing, group assessment and management, glacier navigation, and weather assessment.

Day five was instructional day in camp, providing a much-needed 'rest' especially for the Forbes group. We covered contents of a leaders pack, route planning, radio/GPS communication, first aid and repair kits, navigation and crevasse rescue. After this we were assigned our 'home-work' - to plan and execute a route we had never climbed. Our guides, amateur leader, and each other were neophyte climbers we had to safely lead to bag a peak. This was the chance to hone our skills and seek out our weaknesses.

Day six was Friday, when three eager groups executed route plans in climbs of Main Division and St. Julien. This was where it all came together. The guides/amateur leader were excellent in summarizing our learned skills and accomplishments of the week. After dinner were single interviews with the guides to review our individual strengths and weakness from the week. At last in the evening we rounded up some guitar players, singers and the rest of our nonexpert voices for the end of the week bash around a bonfire.

The week ended with many goodbyes and thank yous, then the scenic flight out to our cars. What a week! And now it remains to distribute the good knowledge amongst our member. I would recommend this course to any of our leaders, aspiring or experienced, for the experience it brings to our section.

Warmest thanks to the VI ACC section executive for endorsing me on this course. It was a wonderful and eye opening experience which I hope to share with all of you.

## MULVEY BASIN

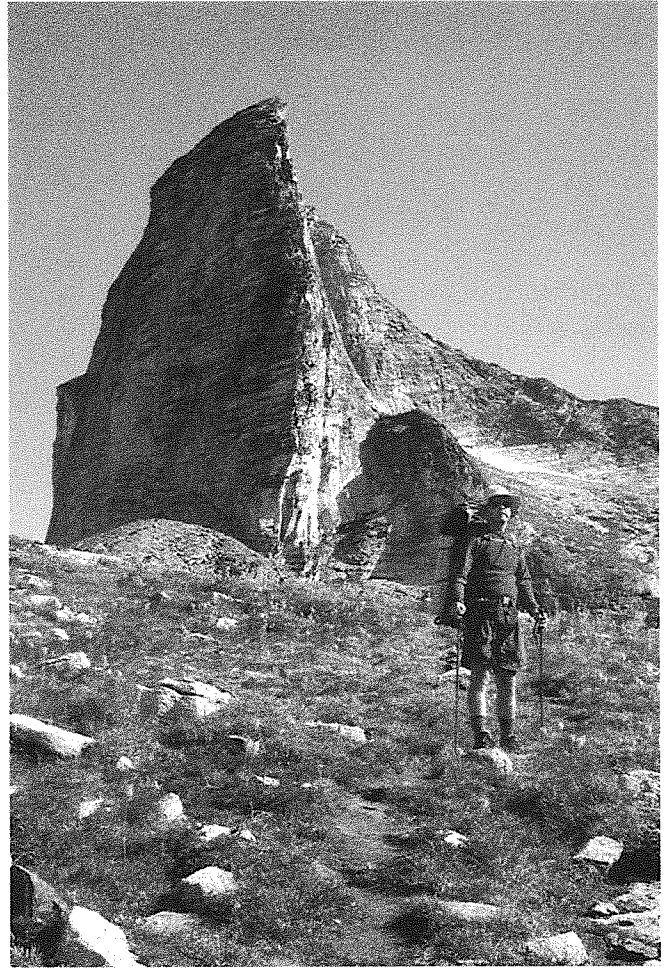
Doug Hurrell  
August 8-14

Mulvey Basin lies to the west of the Slocan valley within the southernmost reaches of Valhalla Provincial Park. From Slocan City forty minutes of driving on a good gravel road takes one to the trailhead on the edge the park. Rudy and I started hiking at 4pm following an excellent trail which leads up into the alpine to a well defined campsite below the spectacular south ridge of Gimli, a famous rock climb. We kept going below the overhanging cliffs of Gimli until we could look over some bluffs and down into the basin. An easy slanting ledge led us down the bluffs to the top of a gently sloping ice field. We donned crampons and walked backwards down the ice - quite nerve racking with a full pack. The angle eased off as we made our way down the ice and the slabs below, reaching a beautiful campsite in a lush meadow on the shores of the uppermost of the Mulvey Lakes at 8 pm. (I believe that the ice slope can be bypassed by going around the back (or west) side of the next peak which is called Nifelheim.)

During our three-day stay in the basin we climbed three peaks - Asgard, Midgard, and Gladsheim - all by the easiest routes available. The first two mentioned were relatively short although exposed class 3 to 4 ridge scrambles on fine rock which we climbed unroped. We arrived back in camp early in the afternoon after these climbs and spent the rest of the day swimming, sun bathing, reading, napping, and walking around the meadows exploring, sometimes in our bare feet. There were hardly any bugs - only a few horse flies. We did not see any other humans for four days.

Gladsheim, the highest peak in the cirque, was much more difficult. It took almost all the available daylight hours to get up and down it and we used the rope quite a bit, with Rudy doing all the leading as usual. Once we got up on the west ridge the exposure was almost continuous and I felt quite burned out by the time we reached the top. I believe that there were 6 rappels on the descent. The climb is similar in character to the Kain route on Bugaboo Spire but harder.

After four nights of perfect weather in the basin we retraced our steps and set up the tent at the previously mentioned campsite below the south ridge of Gimli. We then climbed Gimli unroped by the class 3 to 4 East Ridge,



*South ridge of Mt Gimli*

*Photo: Rudy Brugger*

meeting another party on the summit. We made it back to camp for a late dinner and a spectacular sunset and the next morning hiked down to the car.

I can't say enough good things about this area. The access is easy and it offers rock climbs for mountaineers of all abilities on superb rock. The scenery is spectacular with sharp peaks, many lakes and ponds, ice bergs, lush vegetation and beautiful flowers. We saw many animals including marmots, pikas, ground squirrels, pine martens and a snaffelhound. We also saw grizzly bear tracks on the glacier. All this plus good companionship made for one of my best trips ever.

*Participants:* Doug Hurrell and Rudy Brugger

# SOUTH OF THE BORDER

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## PCT 2004 (PATHETICALLY CONVOLUTED TRAIL)

Gil Parker  
April 2004

In the continuing saga of the Pacific Crest Trail, I finished a 650 mile instalment in 2004. For many, the whole PCT takes only 5 or 6 months in a single year. Not for me. A month at a time is my limit. In early April I left the Mexican border for a 23 day hike in the Peninsular Ranges that extend from Baja north and then west to Los Angeles. This 350 mile jaunt was through desert mountains from Campo to Cajun Pass north of Pasadena.

It was a matter of dealing with extremes, snow at 9,000 feet in the San Jacinto range and 107 F temperatures climbing out of the Palm Springs pass three days later. But the main hazards of this section were the lack of water, sometimes 20 miles between springs, and the rattlers. I had three 'conversations' with these obstreperous creatures.

Cactus, lilies, sage of many types, gave the land an ever-changing aroma and view. I saw deer, ring-tail cats, lizards and thousands of geckos.

While I traveled solo for that section, one is never totally alone on the PCT. Every day you will probably meet another hiker(s) and there is a sense of a mobile community of like-minded souls. Fortunately for me, age is no barrier to the friendships that one acquires on this incredible trail.

In June, I returned with Ron Holmes to do 300 miles, heading south from Lake Tahoe to Mount Whitney. We



*Gil Parker at Mountain Lake near Silver Pass, PCT*

*Photo: Gil Parker*

met a few of the hikers from my earlier sections, still chugging north toward the Canadian border. The Sierra Nevada is the toughest section, every day involving the traverse of a pass over 10,000 feet, some up to 12,000 feet. (Sorry, all map distances and elevations are in English units in the USA.) Averaging 15 miles per day, we had to climb one of these daily, usually involving about 4000 feet vertical. Water and rattlers were never a problem here, but the bears did give us some pause. One night in "Evolution Valley" I woke to the sound of a pack being dragged away from under the tent fly. We had lost both of our flashlights in the previous week, making our search and recovery impossible until daylight. There was little damage to the empty

pack, but the bear had totally scoffed a food bag we had hung from a high tree branch. Of course, we also had used “bear barrels” to carry our food, but just having just left a resupply station, we had a bit more than could fit in the barrels. In the following days, we had to trade and beg from other hikers, to make it to the next resupply. We borrowed our two barrels from the Forest Service (no rental fee, just a deposit) but it was inconvenient to return them. Another time, I might buy my own. There are about three different models, all weighing about 2.5 pounds. But, these are mandatory equipment—hanging food in trees just doesn’t work in the Sierras.

My memories from this part of the PCT, which generally follows the John Muir Trail here, were the incredible scenery and the people we met. They are from all over the world. Some are real characters. One example was “Billy

Goat,” the trail name of a 64 year old man who was on his fourth consecutive yearly trek of the 2700 mile trail. His wife, “Meadow Mary,” waited at each pass with their little camper, distributing fruit to PCT hikers as they came through. She is one of a group of people known as “trail angels.”

Most of the hikers, including “through hikers,” are young, usually covering 20 miles per day. Some do 30 miles per day on easier stretches. One guy was trying to do the “yo-yo,” that is, going to Canada and back in one season, a total of 5400 miles. It is hard to find someone that wants to travel at your exact speed, so most hike alone, with periodic reconnection to the moving community.

I still have 1000 miles to go, all in California. With any luck, I’ll finish next year.

## MT. HOOD

Martin Smith

June 29-30 2002 and June 16-17

*“Honey, I’m Home”...Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson)  
in Kubrick’s “The Shining”*

Once upon a time I worked for a living. And when I did, a bi-annual road trip to Monterey, California, to a conference held regularly there, was a highlight in our family routine. This conference was held usually in March or even February, so the trip down was customarily in heavy rain, blinding spray or even snow—at least until one drops down into the Sacramento River valley where the first palm trees coincide with the appearance of the sun. One year, however, the event was held in late April and we had cloudless skies the whole way from the ferries to the Bay area. This was when it finally became apparent that you can see a lot of mountains from the freeway. For many of us on the Island, sitting on top of all 9 IQ’s at one time or another is an achievement we aspire to. Suddenly, however, I had an additional goal—the 7 I5’s—the volcanoes you can see from the freeway. From south to north: Lassen, Shasta, Hood, St Helens, Adams (a glimpse only, you have to know when to look and where), Rainier and Baker.

Start with Baker of course. As Rick Hudson says (*Island Bushwacker Annual – 2003 – p56*) “...the urge to look at the Saanich Peninsula, rather than the familiar other way around” is both logical and irresistible. Chicken fac-

tor well to the fore, unlike Rick, I soon discovered I liked climbing volcanoes for the reasons he doesn’t. Gentle snow slopes, not too threatening terrain and no-one can argue with the views. St Helens next—an easy hike—and in 2002 I convinced Graham Bennett to come and do Hood with me.

One can be easily persuaded that Hood, by the standard South Side route, is a walk in the park. Summit Post tells us that it has reputedly been summited by a “woman in high heels” and certainly dogs get up it regularly. Nevertheless, it kills a lot of people. In 2002 alone 4 died and fortune alone kept the toll down after a rescue helicopter crashed. In 1986, 9 climbers, including 7 students, died when they were trapped on the mountain by bad weather. The single greatest objective danger on the mountain is probably its popularity and the number of people, many of them with little or no experience, that this brings. With all these issues in mind, Graham and I left Victoria on June 29, 2002 cautious but with no serious doubts about summiting. The mountain had been re-opened on June 7, after the authorities had removed the last of the debris from the helicopter crash!

With hindsight we still took it all far too lightly. Up

at 5 a.m. to get the 7 a.m. ferry, we drove into Timberline Lodge at the base of the mountain at ~1,800m at about 5 p.m. The summit is 3,426m. A bit of a rude awakening here already; you get to be intimidated by all 1,600m to the top with no obstruction. No false summits, no saddles. It's a long way and it looks it.

Timberline Lodge is the base operation for the ski hill that operates year round on Mt Hood on the Palmer glacier. The place is crawling with rubber neckers from Portland, skiers/boarders and the occasional climber or two. As my diary notes, the weather was "fair to bad" and the one climber I spoke to said no-one had summited that day. I'm already thinking at this point that maybe there's more to this one than I've reckoned with. Graham is as gung-ho as ever though, so I keep my misgivings to myself.

For any horror film fans reading this, "The Shining" is a classic of the genre. I am a fan and the exteriors for the film were all done at Timberline, so I couldn't wait to look around inside. What a disappointment! No sinister hallways, no echoing main hall, not a twin in sight and not even a maze outside. Instead, an old fashioned cosy relic of the 30's (it was built in 1936) brought up to modern standards. Except, apparently, for the soundproofing. Every room is provided with a complimentary set of earplugs, thereby establishing climbing hut flavour in the midst of all this luxury. Not for us hardy souls though, it's off to camp for us. However, it's weekend. All the NFS campgrounds are full and there's still too much snow to open the climbers' campgrounds anywhere near Timberline. So it's tent up by the roadside somewhere near Government Camp where we could enjoy the rock music and chain saws of the SUV crowd during what passed for the night.

"Up" at 11.30 p.m. and moving by 1.30 a.m. after driving back to Timberline and signing in at the "Climbers Cave". The weather is cold at the start (~10C) and there's a strong wind blowing from the west. I'm feeling awful. I've been awake for over 20 hours and it feels like more. Graham is as chippy as ever and loving every minute of it.

The first 800m of the climb is where I start to agree with Rick. It's right up the ski hill. The boring snow flog to end all snow flogs. We're passed repeatedly by snow cats ferrying people up to the top of the Palmer lift—having paid \$100 each for the privilege of course. But, hey, we're Canadians, poor as well as morally pure. Dawn comes reluctantly as the weather worsens and by the time we pass the top of the ski lifts, visibility is down to a few metres, it's well below freezing with the wind chill and I'm thinking I don't want to be here. Finally at 3075m (I just had to

make 10,000 feet) and with rime forming on clothes and gear, I'd had enough. Graham was as gracious as he always is in such circumstances and immediately agreed to turn around. We headed down at 7.45 a.m. and were back at the car by 10.30 a.m. The weather at least had the grace to stay awful during the descent and as we drove away, me across the US to Ontario and Graham home to Victoria. At this point we had been awake and moving for over 30 hours.

The drive over the next few days gave me lots of time to reflect on what we'd (I'd) done wrong on what should have been an easy summit. First there's no such thing as an easy summit above 3000 metres. Second I learned I could handle no sleep or bad conditions but not both at the same time. I vowed that I wouldn't make these mistakes again and would presume nothing next time.

Next time turned out to be June this year. The weather gods promised fair and this time I had a way to beat them if they reneged on the deal. We would bivouac at Timberline Lodge. They offer rooms at this time of the year for US\$85—cheaper and morally more acceptable than the snow cat ride up the first 800m. So it was then that Graham and I arrived in the lap of luxury on June 15. We even allowed ourselves to take the 9 a.m. ferry. We both enjoyed a wonderful stay in a historic and delightful place, and, most importantly, got 10 hours of solid sleep after the drive down. The next day was spent enjoying a good lunch, the ambience, the swimming pool etc and we were in bed and asleep by 9 p.m. The alarm (in the form of a wake up call) went off at 1 a.m. and we were ready to go by 2 a.m. It felt rather odd to be checking out of a hotel whilst trying not to scratch the furniture with the gear on our packs but at least we waited to get outside before putting our crampons on!

Once we got going I had an awful feeling of déjà vu. It was clear but as cold as the last time and with the same strong wind but this time from the east. This brought an unexpected hazard in the form of volcanic dust blowing from the moraines to the east of the route. With the lower snow pack it was more than just an irritant. I hadn't brought goggles and very quickly began to experience problems with my contacts. Although I got through this OK when I took the lenses out that night one was badly scored. However, the main adverse factor was the wind. It's hard to find shelter during breaks. At one point the best we could do was huddle in behind a "Climbers Trail" sign put up by Timberline to keep you out of the way of the grooming machines.

As we climbed above the top of the Palmer we came increasingly into the shelter of the east ridge and the wind factor disappeared. We arrived on the Hogsback ridge at



8.30 a.m. in still and sunny conditions and joined the snowcat brigade who had either already summited or were on their way up. Graham counted 31 climbers in sight. Strathcona Park this ain't!!



*Up through the Pearly Gates*

on this relatively benign ground. She's wearing hiking boots, no crampons and is having every foot placement scoped for her by the roped pair. Don't these people read newspapers? Talk to others before they go? We make a

mental note to bring more pickets next time and move on once the group is below us.

We're on top shortly before 11 a.m. A broad snow summit with a steep drop off on the north side. Not a breath of wind and breathtaking views all around. St Helens, Adams and Rainier to the north, Jefferson, the Sisters and Broken Top to the south. Graham phones in a forest fire to the authorities but they know about it already. There's the customary and always enjoyable bonhomie with the

*Photo: Martin Smith*

The Hogsback is a seasonal wind-generated phenomenon. You climb straight up it early season into a 35 deg gully known as the Pearly Gates and from the top of this it's a couple of hundred metres map distance to the summit. At this time of the year, however, a large bergschrund forms just below the Gates and you have to make an exposed traverse around it to either side. As the guidebook says "oxygen void" fumaroles and asphyxiation await you 200m below, if the 'schrund doesn't get you first. This area is where almost all the accidents on Hood occur. This is where the helicopter crashed in 2002 and 3 of the 4 deaths on the mountain that year resulted from falls into the 'schrund. All those neophytes who make their way to the Hogsback with no problem then become potential objective (i.e., falling objects) hazards above, as we were about to find out.

Roped up and off by 9.30 a.m., we were on the traverse around the 'schrund a few minutes later where Graham suddenly starts banging in pickets. Now I'm as big a coward as the next man but I'm thinking pro on this bit is a bit of overkill. Not so. As we climb up a 40 deg pitch to traverse back to the Hogsback a group appear above us. We take a stance and wait. A rope of 2 is assisting a young lady who is clearly way out of her league even

others on the summit—one of who skis right off the top—lunch and we're off back down at noon. Problem-free descent except for being low on water (in spite of carrying 6 litres between us and topping up bottles with snow). Gear off at 1 p.m. and we're back at Timberline by 3.30 p.m. Now here comes the really good bit: As a guest of Timberline—and even though you've checked out—you're welcome to use the showers, pool, sauna, everything except a room having a bed in it, all at no charge. After a 13+ hour day I would have paid extra to use these facilities!

In any event, 2 tired, satisfied and extremely clean puppies drove out of the Timberline lot at 4.45 p.m. Our bivouac that night was the Value Inn in Bellingham and we were home on the 9 a.m. ferry the next day.

All in all a great trip. Yes the snow slog is a bit much, but the top 400m make it worth it. If the weather is clear, the views are incomparable and, of course, it's a tick on the I5 list.

If you go:

- Don't be overly seduced by "easy" ratings. Prepare as you would for any 3000m mountain.

- Take goggles or other eye protection at any time of year against blowing grit.



*Graham and Martin on the summit*

*Photo: Martin Smith*

- Prepare for crowds of people and avoid weekends if you can.

- Consider staying at Timberline rather than driving down and going up that night. At the price it's good value and a great experience.

- Get an early start, closer to midnight than dawn.

- If the weather is clear, route finding is child's play.

Hell you can see the summit almost every step of the way. However, if it socks in, don't be tempted into a fall line descent. This sewers you right into the Zigzag glacier. Instead, from Crater Rock, where most people unrope, follow a magnetic south compass bearing to intersect the Palmer lift and follow the towers down.

Graham Bennett and Martin Smith



**MOUNTAIN PRINT WINNER**  
**KALA PATTAR (5623M) AND PUMORI (7165M), NEPAL**  
**PHOTO: ALBERT HESTLER**

# DISTANT OBJECTIVES

## NEPAL & SIKKIM

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### THE ULTIMATE MOUNTAIN RUN!

Sylvia Moser

May 11 - June 03

My burning desire to finally go to Nepal and my need to do something challenging in a four-week period, led me to sign up for the second annual "Tenzing - Hillary Everest Marathon."

Did I truly realize what I was getting myself into - NO!

After training as much as I could, my friend Jayne Hawe (who was going along for the trek) and I left for Kathmandu on May 11, 2004. Spending only two nights in Kathmandu, we flew to Lukla. From here we had a wonderful trek to Namche Bazaar and on to Everest Base Camp. I enjoyed every day, seeing the people, experiencing the culture, passing temples, prayer wheels, mani stones, chortens and stupas along the way, and of course the mountains - absolutely magnificent! Our group would trek in the morning and settle into a teahouse sometime after lunch. Then in the afternoon, David, from Seattle, Thiru, from Madras, India and myself would go for a run, retracing a part of our day's hike, thereby acclimatizing and being able to see the route in the right direction. I found these runs to be very enjoyable, until we got to Loboche (16,200 ft/ 4930m), when I started to wonder, how I was going to actually run at this altitude. Walking was fine, but running....game over!

On May 26, after a 5:00 am start we hiked up to Kala Patter (18,373ft/5545m) and enjoyed the most fantastic sunrise over Everest. The view was absolutely awesome. I was so overwhelmed that I could hardly bring myself to leave, and only got back to Gork Shep at noon. Now our group split, the trekkers started down to Namche and the runners went up to Base Camp (17,750ft/5360m).

It was the end of the climbing season and throughout our trek up we had passed many expeditions going

down. We had met the Malaysian team, whose summiteer was only 22 and had the goal to be the youngest person to climb all seven summits in a year. Ed Visters and Dave Breshear's team had summited and were making a new "Into thin Air" film. There was also the Korean team that was unsuccessful at their attempt at Lhotse and the list goes on. Therefore, Base Camp was almost deserted. Now that the Marathon camp was set up, some life was coming back to Base Camp. There was a steadily flow of Nepali runners arriving. One of them literally came out of the Khumbu Icefall at the time that we were doing the mock start for the press. Having summited Everest a few days earlier, he dropped his huge pack, removed his crampons, went to the small shrine that the Sherpas had built at the foot of the Icefall, to give thanks to the Gods and joined us at the start line. Rather intimidating! In all there were 75 runners, 71 were Nepali, most of them from the Khumbu region, and four foreigners. The fourth was Mike from Edmonton, who had been at base camp for six weeks researching the effects of altitude on Sherpas and getting acclimatized for the race. There were only 5 women entered in the race. When race bibs were handed out, I received #1, "Ek" in Nepali. This proved to be very entertaining for all the children in the villages, cheering me on - as the last runner in the race!

Race day - May 29, fifty one years after Hillary and Tenzing reached the summit of Mt. Everest, we were lining up at 6:30 am (the same time that they had set out from their high camp). I was very cold (temp - 8 degrees) and very nervous, for it was a long 42km to Namche Bazaar. 7:00 am the gun went, and everyone was on their way. Unlike other marathons, the route had been changed numerous times and was poorly marked, thus having run-





*Everest Marathon Start*

*Photo: Sylvia Moser*

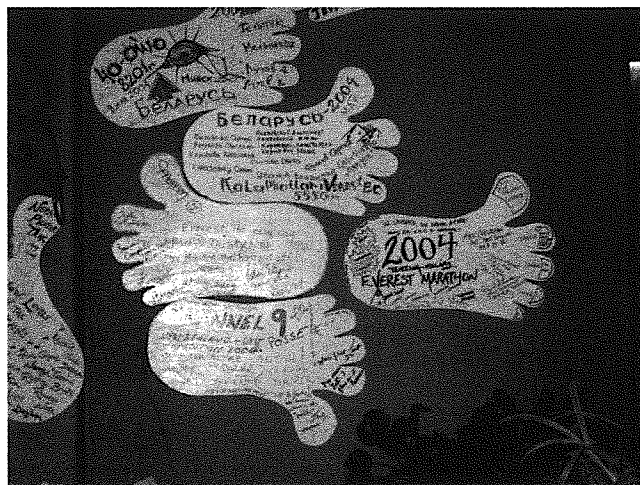
ners, including me, lose their way. In fact one of the top runners actually got disqualified for taking the wrong path. With only three water stops and no first aid stations, everyone had to run with a pack.

I ran the downhill sections and walked uphill. Unfortunately, there was a lot of uphill; one time it was about 3000 ft elevation gain, and I thought that I had signed up for a downhill race! There were yak trains and military check points to contend with. At times I was all alone, and loved it - it felt so wonderful to be running through this beautiful landscape. At times I thought that I would not make it, and when the turn off came with the direct and flat route to Namche, I hesitated for a moment, but continued up the hill to Khunde and finished my race, 71<sup>st</sup> 11:11:46. The first Nepali came over the finish line in 4:03:08 - unbelievable! Mike, first foreigner, came in 61<sup>st</sup> (7:07:44). Three people broke ankles and one was disqualified.

Reunited with our whole group, the next day we hiked 8 hours to Lukla. The following day we flew to Kathmandu, one day before the general strike imposed by the Maoist

group, but we had no problems. We had our last dinner before going home, at the famous Rum Doodle restaurant where a great honour was bestowed upon us. We were given a "foot" to put up on the wall, along side those of famous climbers, such as Hillary, Tenzing, Messner, etc.

Home again on June 03, after an amazing and unforgettable trip!





# MS AND A MOUNTAIN OF DREAMS

Joseph Hall  
September-October

Just before being diagnosed with remittent MS this summer, I had made plans to travel half way around the world to climb in the Himalayas. After having my legs go numb a few times, and having blurry vision for two full weeks, the doctor told me to see him immediately if I ever had a bad headache. Sure enough, I soon had a serious headache that sent me to the hospital, where I had a CT scan, and then an MRI. Then came the diagnosis, a lot of tears, and the fear that I would never enjoy the mountains again.

After the diagnosis, giving up this trip of a lifetime would have been an easy choice. At 20 years old, taking on a major high altitude mountain climbing trip is daunting enough. Hearing the news from my doctor made my question a lot of things about my life, including the wisdom of taking such a trip.

That afternoon visit to my doctor gave me lots to think about. I thought long and hard about the things I just assumed I would do with my life. I'm young, and I had always thought of the world as a wide open place that I would explore. I'm passionate about skiing, climbing, mountaineering, and mostly anything to do with the outdoors. At first I feared that MS would change these things, and that I would have to give up many of my dreams and outdoor pursuits. After some research, discussions with my parents and doctors, and some soul-searching, I decided to go ahead with my trip to the Himalayas.

On September 19, 2004, I left Canada for the long trip to Nepal, a country deep in the Himalayas. My goal was to climb Ama Dablam, a 22,000 foot mountain in the Khumbu Valley, next to towering Mount Everest. After arriving in Nepal, I met up with our expedition team members for the short flight from Kathmandu to the village of Lukla. Our team included 7 others, from various places around the world. I was the tallest and the youngest by about 12 years. The approach to the base camp of Ama Dablam is quite challenging. There are no roads in the Khumbu Valley; just well-traveled yak trails that wind along the edges of steep mountain valleys. After three days of hiking, we set up our base camp at approximately 14,000 feet. The views from this height were stunning, at least when the clouds cleared. In total, we spent twenty days on the mountain, both climbing and acclimatizing. From base camp, our team established camps higher up the mountain in order to prepare for the final summit push.

Unfortunately, I didn't make it to the summit. Like a few others on our team, my body became host to a little parasite while in Kathmandu. It was sucking all of my energy, and gave me stomach problems that are best not described. Three of our team of seven did stand on the summit, and I was very proud of them.

While climbing, I realized that my goal wasn't to stand on the summit of Ama Dablam. What drew me to Nepal, despite my diagnosis, was the challenge and wonder of the journey itself. We've all read and heard quotes and popular sayings that talk about the importance of the journey, not the destination. Being able to realize the truth of this popular piece of wisdom, while surrounded by the tallest and most beautiful mountains on earth, was a life-changing experience for me.

We all experience the thrill of a great trip, and the unknown challenge that lies around the corner. It has become an excellent analogy for how I want to live my life. I've learned to become grateful for the journey of each day – whether it is riding my bike, or climbing with friends. I can't wait for this winter, as ski season is just beginning here in Canada. I can't wait to return to the mountains, where I have so many memories of past trips, and the knowledge that there are many more memories to be created.

People ask me how my diagnosis has affected my active lifestyle; they want to know why I still climb, ski, and ride. The answer is that I have no plans to change my life because of one obstacle. To me, that would be absurd. MS is another challenge – perhaps larger than some we encounter on our journeys, but not so large that it can't be overcome, or worked around. I'm still me – I think, I move, I act as normally as any 20 year old guy can. The only difference now is a greater degree of caution in my movements, and an increased ability to listen to my body. I learned so much on this recent trip about my body, and how it reacts. I know that I will continue to discover limits to what my body can do, and that I will have to listen carefully to my body so I don't worsen my condition. But I will continue to climb, if for no other reason than – simply – because I can.

On a regular basis I rock climb, mountain bike, go mountaineering, backcountry skiing and more. Dealing with my MS is no easy task, but I'm getting the hang of it. A consistent healthy diet and sleep schedule are the most

important aspects of my life. If I stick to the regimen, I feel healthy all day and always have the energy I need for work and play. I don't take any special milkshakes or unusual remedies to make me feel better. I have learned to accept the changes to my lifestyle, and the fact that there aren't a lot of choices except to look MS in the face, and smile at it.

Part of smiling in the face of MS involves setting goals – something that I would not be doing right now if it had not been for MS. I am planning trips to South America and Africa over the next couple of years. More

immediately, my friends and I are planning a trip to a remote mountain in British Columbia this May, to ski and climb. My biggest goal is to live life to its fullest, and to do it passionately.

It has been rewarding to write this, as I know that people find motivation in all sorts of different places. I hope people who read this are also finding ways to live with optimism, and hope, and to find something they love and pursue it with passion. I don't plan to hold anything back, and I hope you don't either.

## PUMORI SOUTH RIDGE

John Pratt

October 16 – 6 November

*I thought I could not breathe in that fine air  
That pure severity of perfect light.*

*Tennyson*

It was not long before darkness fell that I arrived, tired, at the Kailash Guest House in Monjo, a small village in the Khumbu region of Nepal. It had been a fairly taxing walk from the airstrip at Lukla, not because of its length or because of all the ups and downs which added up to a net elevation gain of zero, but because of a cold I had contracted in Portland a couple of weeks previously and which had not yet entirely left me. Thus I coughed my way past an assortment of guest-houses, other tourists, porters, yaks, locals and farm-animals; sniffled my way across suspension-bridges, up hills and down again; and sneezed my way (always on the left-hand side) around prayer stones with a muttered “ob bani padbe hub”. Like most of our accommodations, the place at Monjo had only a yak-dung-burning stove and once darkness came, that was it: one then may as well be in bed, since electricity is in short supply, as is hot water. Furthermore, a vigorous day's exercise awaited us on the morrow. Given some Latin verses to learn, it would have been just like public school (however, in fairness to public schools, I always remember them as having plenty of air to breathe – another commodity which acquired the value of scarcity as our expedition progressed).

The next day, I felt a good deal better: my cough was bothering me a lot less and the scenery was, by degrees, starting to become more interesting. I reached Namche Bazaar somewhat after 10 am and quickly located the Namche Guest House where I speedily unpacked and in-

stalled myself on the terrace, looking out over the town and sipping a beer in the sunshine.

We spend a couple of nights in Namche, at 3400m: I used my stay here to buy myself a second ice axe (4000 rupees, second-hand), relax and go on an acclimatization hike up to Khunde and Khumjung. From just above the Namche airstrip, I had my first view of Mount Everest off in the distance: so there it was at last. It looked just like its pictures.

The day after this, October 19, we hiked on to the “Himalayan Lodge” at Pangboche, at 3960m. This was a tough hike as it involved a steep climb up to Tengboche, famous for its monastery. Of course, much altitude was lost as the trail went up hill and down dale and most people start to feel the height here. As most of our gear was going in with the yaks and the porters, we ourselves had relatively light loads, but it was nonetheless taxing enough to make me seek comfort in the Klingon proverb that “that which does not kill me, makes me stronger” (actually, I believe that was Nietzsche). It occurred to me that one way to reduce crime would be to sentence some of the worst malefactors to five years' portering in the Khumbu: once word got around, the crime-rate would nose-dive (my friends who know me well will notice a distinct move toward liberalism here – I used to say it ought to be six years).

The accommodation became, as one might expect, more and more Spartan the further up the valley we went.



*Namche Bazaar*

*Photo: John Pratt*

The nights became colder and the air thinner as the lodges' Egon Ronay ratings dropped from five stars to four, to three, to two...

The next nights (20 - 22 October) were spent in the "Pumori Lodge" in Pheriche (4200m). Here, we met Tim Rippel, our expedition leader (he had just come back from leading a trip up nearby Ama Dablam) and continued, over the typical dinner of yak stew, fried potatoes, cabbage and lemon tea to get to know one another. It had by now become apparent to me that I was not going to be holding anyone up by being the slowest person on the climb (despite being the second oldest – and that not by much – of the nine people on the trip). Now, although I took a great deal of satisfaction in the evident success of my efforts to get fit for this climb, a disturbing feature was emerging – from my talks with some of the others – that a few of them were not up to the rigours of this undertaking and that, if they dropped out, it would end up leaving those remaining with too much work – load-hauling and chopping out platforms for tents – to do. This concern, alas, was to prove more than justified.

From Pheriche, I did a couple of acclimatization hikes, one up to a spot-height of 5099m, where I spent a few hours getting used to the thin air before going back down to that village to sleep for the night.

The next day, we went on to Lobuche, an unpleasant place (although surrounded by stunning scenery) at 4920m. Here, I had a horrible night as I awoke (in a

small, dark and airless little room) unable to get my breath. Of course, one has to calm down, breathe normally and resist the temptation to hyperventilate. One tourist in the same lodge as us had to spend the night in a Gamow bag as he'd had the same thing, but had not recognized it for what it was. He was able to walk out the next day, but the commotion had kept me awake all night.

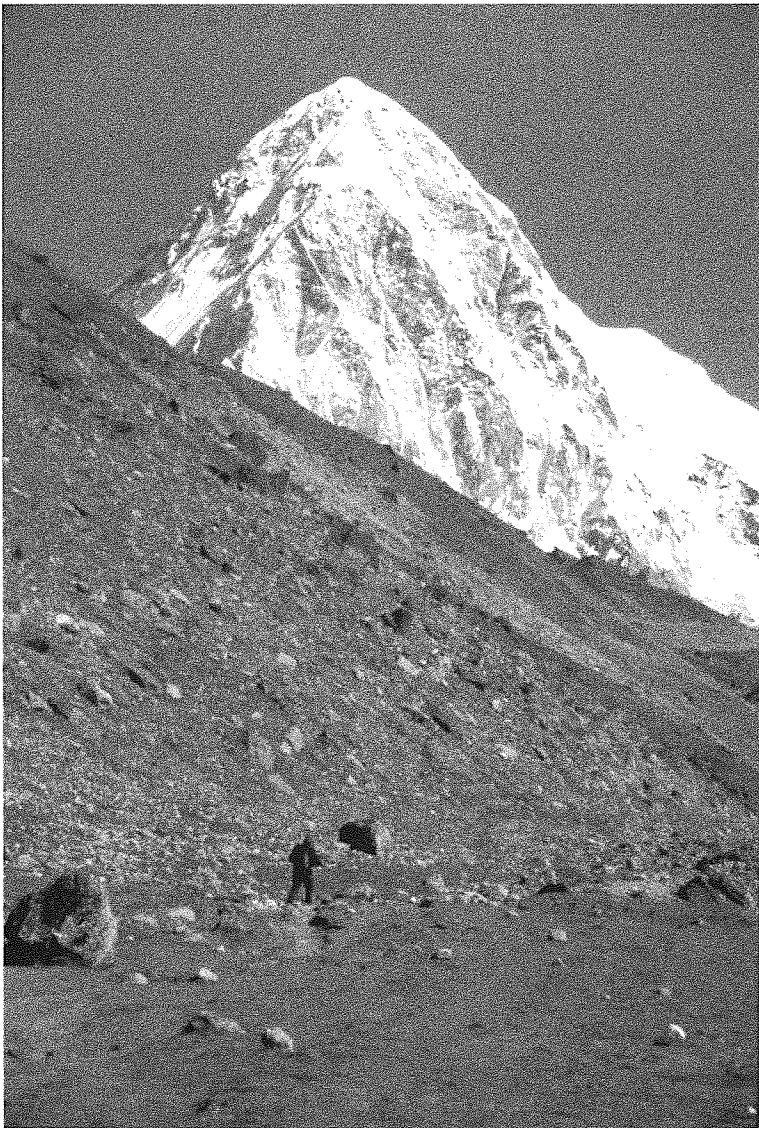
The following morning, 23 October, dawned clear and very cold (as it did every day of our climb, in fact) and after a warm breakfast, which greatly improved

morale, we set off for Pumori Base Camp, stopping at Gorak Shep (5200m) for lunch (which gave me a thorough-going heartburn). By now one could see Pumori in all its glory and it was an impressive sight indeed – and a sobering one.

The moraine we had to cross seemed interminable and, despite being surrounded by the world's most delectable scenery, I found the experience quite unpleasant. By about 2:30 pm, however, I was feeling better: my personal tent was up at Base Camp (5316m) and I was sipping hot lemon tea in the spacious mess-tent. Behind my tent (which faced Pumori) rose Everest, Nuptse and Changtse – an unbelievable sight, but one I would be glad to see the back of ten days later!

The time spent at Base Camp and higher consisted of load-carrying to Advance Base, a disagreeable and lung-searing trek over a few kilometres of rubble, steep and unstable in the upper parts, where we pitched two tents at 5700m. I spent a few nights there, on and off, and did that beastly trek about three or four times. As one member of our section once remarked to me while on a climb here in the Coast Ranges, "If this were my job, I'd quit". The things one does for a hobby!

Above ABC, we spent the time fixing ropes up to the site of Camp I, on some snow-flutings at, I'd say, 6200m. I spent several work-sessions of a few hours each trying to cut out enough ice (with a hand saw) to park a tent in the excavated spot. I was pleased at my performance at manual



*Pumori*

*Photo: John Pratt*

labour, at that height and at my age, but knew that the two figures trying to force the route just 50m above me were playing a losing game – a fact not lost on them, I am sure. Several people had now dropped out and it was getting colder by the day as the winter advanced. The lakes near our base camp now had, every morning, ice around their edges and pretty soon that ice was not melting during the day – and it was perishingly cold at night. To have gone on, our trip leader declared (correctly), would have been to risk frostbite.

My platform, so laboriously carved out, never had a tent put on it, and we went no higher. But it was a good try and I felt more than satisfied with my performance, both absolutely and vis-à-vis the group as a whole. Also, no one had been killed or injured, unlike two members of an Austro-German team attempting the south-east side of Pumori: one had been killed in an avalanche, the other had gotten frostbite. At least we would be going home alive, and in my books that counts for something.

*Mt. Everest*

*Photo: John Pratt*



# AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN GIANT - TREKKING IN KANGCHENDZONGA NATIONAL PARK, SIKKIM, INDIA

Rick & Phee Hudson  
November 2005

*A climber in the Himalaya  
Should shun the lamas when at prayer.  
If interfered with, they may kick him  
Over the border into Sikkim  
Om-mane-padme-um*

Breathe in. Breathe out. Each step up the faint track brings us closer to the stone cairns. Ahead, faded prayer flags hang limp on their lines. Breathe in. Breathe out. The air is cold and crisp. Apart from the lack of oxygen, it is pleasantly invigorating. Breathe in. Breathe out. We are almost there. In the shadow it's cold, but the sun is bright - I can feel its warmth through my jacket.

Breathe in. Breathe out. We reach the Goche La at 4,900 meters. Beyond, just a few kilometers away, rises the snow and glacier-covered wall of Kangchendzonga, the world's third highest peak (8,596m), soaring in a smooth sweep to the summit far above, white against a blue morning sky. We are alone in the sunshine. Not a breath of wind stirs - rare on Himalayan passes, especially this late in the year. Today, the weather gods favor us.

Ten days earlier the jeeps met our group at Bagdogra airport in India's West Bengal state. There followed a slow crawl up the twisting road from 150m above sea level to the cool ridge of Darjeeling 2,000m above. Along the way our path crisscrossed the narrow gauge 'Toy Train' that huffed and puffed its way up the same grade.

Generally the hill station provides a cool respite from the Indian plains, but in late November it was more than cool at night. There was a welcome fire burning in the grate when we checked into The New Elgin Hotel. The name is misleading - it is one of the oldest inns in Darjeeling. The lounges are filled with overstuffed armchairs and tiffany lamps. Sepia prints of pastoral English scenes, military parades and pre-Raphaelite beauties look down from gilt-edged picture frames. In the dining room, roast beef & gravy with steamed cabbage, followed by bread-and-butter pudding recall boarding school. Everything reeks of its colonial past.

We had a few days to acclimatize in Darjeeling, which is a chaotic, polluted, vibrant community. One morning we rose at 4:30 and drove through dark streets to Tiger Hill, to witness a sunrise over the Himalayas. Alas, clouds blocked the view, but more than a thousand visitors, shiv-

ering in their silks and cottons, seemed not to mind, and cheered when the red orb broke the horizon, even if the panorama was negligible. Ironically, you can get a spectacular view from pretty much anywhere in town, without paying someone RS 10- to stand atop a concrete viewing platform.

Of course, you can't visit Darjeeling without visiting a tea plantation, and our guide took us to one where steep slopes draped in *camellia sinensis* dropped far down into the valley. This is the same plant that was first domesticated in China, millennia earlier. In India it grows wild in the states of Assam and West Bengal, and the British established plantations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to break the Chinese monopoly. After walking the slopes, we took a tour of the processing plant, where the delicious aroma of old leaves, accumulated as fine dust, made the whole building a scented experience. In a dark room, a massive cast iron machine identified itself as the Britannia Balanced Pucca Tea Sorter. Later we visited Nathmull's Tea Room (founded 1931), where packets of tea cost anything from a few rupees to hundreds, depending on the quality.

In Darjeeling we first met Jamling Tenzing, son of the man who first climbed Everest in 1953, and now director of Tenzing Norgay Adventures. Jamling would be our guide for the trek, and kindly invited us to his beautiful home to meet his family. There, we visited his private museum that included, among many honors and awards showered on his famous father, the 4 flags that Norgay tied to his ice axe for that celebrated summit photo on May 29<sup>th</sup>. He had left them there, where they were recovered by a later expedition.

As an interesting aside, all the photos from that 1953 expedition, including Hillary's, automatically became the property of the Royal Geographical Society. Some time in the 1960s the original 3 summit photos that Sir Ed had taken, went missing. Today, all reproductions are made from early prints, not the negatives.

Jamling took us to visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, founded in 1954, with his father as the first director. Today, it is run by the army, largely as a military training wing. Its dingy museum holds a mish-mash of climbing memorabilia in dark display cases. What was of interest to us was the rapid improvement in equipment after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Oxygen bottles shrank in



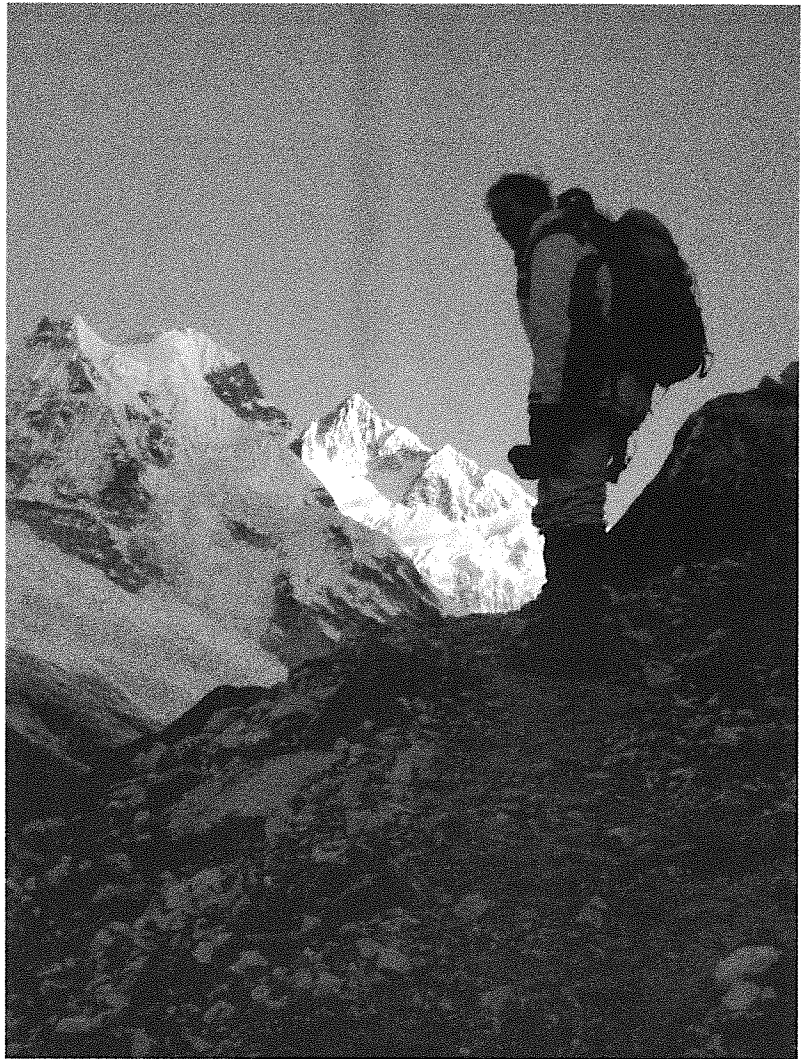
weight, boots advanced in technology, and clothing changed from wool to fibre in rapid order. We were particularly intrigued by the great Swiss alpinist Raymond Lambert who, with Tenzing, so very nearly climbed Everest in 1952. In Tenzing's biography ('Man of Everest') he made no secret of the fact that he regarded Raymond as his preferred climbing partner. We knew that Lambert had lost all his toes on an earlier expedition. His boots, on display at the HMI, looked almost like hooves. It is remarkable that a man with such a handicap could have come so close to reaching the summit of the world's highest peak.

After two days, we left by jeep for Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, which lies between Nepal and Bhutan, on the Indo-China border. This tiny Buddhist country was ruled by a king until 1975, when it ceded to India as its 22nd state. With a population of just 400,000, it is a remote region of sprawling mountains, including Kangchendzonga on its western border, which it shares with Nepal. Early expedition access to the peak always started from Darjeeling, but went through Nepal, approaching via the south-west. This involved a long (10 days), low altitude approach through humid country. As a trek, it holds no attraction. On the other hand, the Sikkim route that we were to enjoy (a south-east approach) quickly rises above 2000m into the alpine zone of Kangchendzonga National Park. However, because the peak is considered sacred in Sikkim, it may not be climbed from its eastern side.

Late in the season (20th November), with the yaks and horses loaded, we set out from the village of Yoksum at 1,800m. The track first traversed gently through humid jungle - waterfalls tumbled down through dense green leaves, but by the second day we had climbed into the rhododendron forests above 3,000m. April is the best time to view these colorful trees, when the paths are strewn with brilliant flowers.

By the third evening we were in the alpine at 4,000m. Short dry grass and low juniper bushes offered little protection from the wind and snow, which enveloped camp that night. We stayed in our tents, only emerging at mealtimes to duck into the dome mess tent. However, the sky cleared the following night, and an early start the next morning found us atop a nearby hill where, at 6:05, the sun touched the clear summit of Kangchendzonga.

Minutes later, the many satellite peaks to west and



*Behind Rick dawn touches the summit of Kangchendzonga.*

*Photo: Phee Hudson*

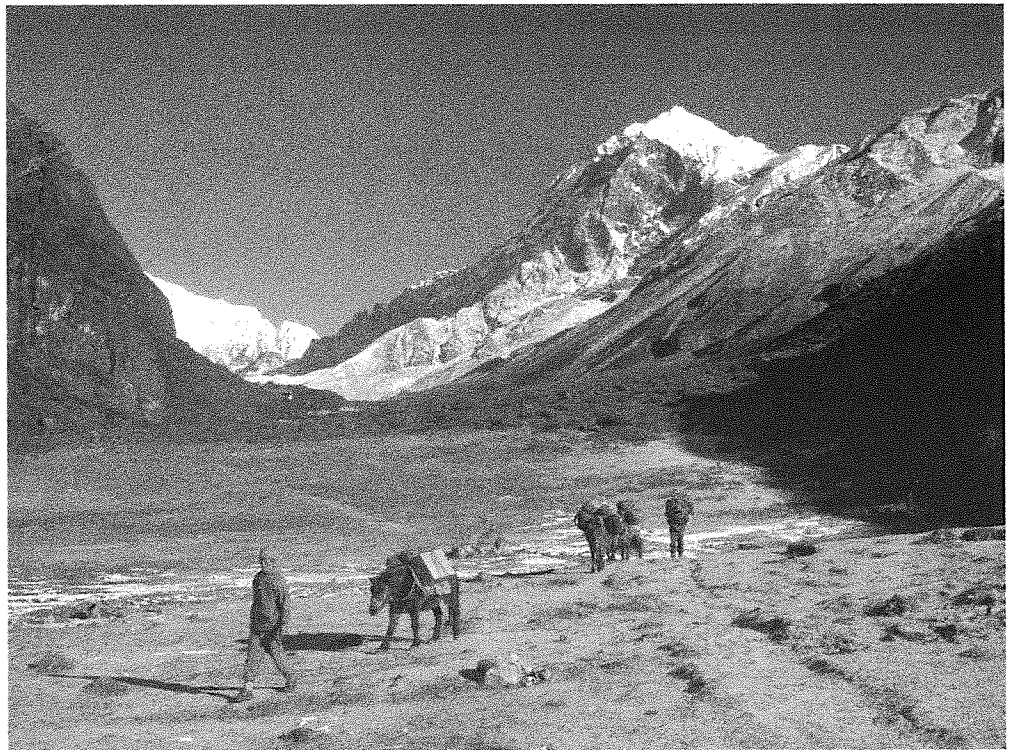
east caught fire too. From our viewpoint, we could just see into the upper basin of the south-west Yalung Valley and make out the Great Shelf, which had appeared so challenging to Charles Evans' successful expedition of 1956. Yet when Joe Brown and George Band reached it, that huge ice slope had proven to be the key to gaining the summit ridge.

Our Sherpa trek crew, always quick to set up or take down camp, made especially good time that morning to leave while the weather was still fine. We crossed a broad shoulder from the Ratong Chu into the Praig Chu valley, at the head of which stands the perfect pyramid of Pandim (6,691m), which would dominate our horizon for the next week.

Snow fell most afternoons at the higher elevations, but the nights and mornings were generally clear. Our routine was to rise early, eat and then get on the trail as the light strengthened. Being a small group (8) of friends who knew each other - indeed, had climbed together - this

*In the upper Praig Chu valley, ponies bring the gear into camp. Behind, the perfectly formed Pandim (6,691 m) fills the valley.*

*Photo: Rick Hudson*



was easy. Each day's trek was 4-6 hours, with a stop for lunch along the trail. The young and energetic kitchen crew would clean up breakfast after we had left, then race ahead as we hiked. At noon, rounding some corner, we would find them, stoves roaring, food prepared, and be greeted with a welcome mug of hot tea or warm lemon juice.

On the evening of 25 November we arrived at Samiti Lake (4,400m). In the late afternoon the weather turned cold, and snowflakes drifted down from a dark sky. Supper in the mess tent was a cold affair, with steam rising from plates, and breath clouding the view across the low camp table. The temperature inside the dome dropped to  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Later, the sky cleared – always a good sign.

The next morning saw us away at 5 o'clock, heading for the Goche La, some 4 hours away, in a perfect dawn. The stars shone brilliantly in a dark sky, and the glaciers on both sides of the valley glowed in the setting moonlight. Breathe in. Breathe out. Put one foot in front of the other. Don't look up. Just focus on getting to the next bend in the path. Keep the rhythm steady.

At 9 a.m. we stood on the pass at the foot of the mountain giant.



*Approaching the Goche La (4900 m)*

*Photo: Rick Hudson*

# HALEAKALA

Chris Shepard  
December 20

**Mission:** Avoid Christmas, escape winter, and climb a big mountain

**Objective:** Haleakala, Maui, Hawaii - elevation 3055m (10,023 ft.)

**Route Description:** Paved road to within a couple of meters of the summit. The crux is a 2-metre pitch of Class 1 stairway leading from the summit parking lot to the lookout.

**Our plan:** Cycle from near sea level to the summit

The most popular way to climb the volcano in Haleakala National Park is by car or bus. Many tour operators offer guided bike trips DOWN the volcano; they drive adventurous tourists to the end of the road near the summit and then lead them on an effortless coast down the mountain. Few cyclists attempt the ride the opposite way. The best riders summit in less than 3 hours - we were hoping to do it in 6.

Expedition preparations began in November of 2004. We planned an intensive cycling regimen to whip us into peak condition. Due to jobs, a home reno, bad weather and other excuses, training amounted to a mere 2 to 3 hours a week, which included stops at friend's homes and the occasional latté break. When we arrived in Maui on December 16<sup>th</sup>, we were not the prime specimens of fitness we had hoped to be.

We doled out a significant sum to rent a couple of mediocre road bikes. After 4 days of training rides on the lower slopes of the volcano, we decided to go for it.

We started out at the crack of dawn on the morning of December 20<sup>th</sup>. The morning was cool and still: perfect conditions for a long suffer. We planned to climb slowly and steadily, with the emphasis on slowly, and hoped to reach the summit by about 1:00 pm. By 9:00 am, we had encountered over a hundred down hillers on their descent. Many of them looked at us with puzzled faces wondering why on earth we were cycling the "wrong" way. Passing

motorists and downhill tour leaders shouted encouragement as we climbed, which helped us keep the pedals turning. The average road grade is about 6%; however, a couple of sections are 8 – 10%. The climb is not particularly steep; nevertheless I constantly tried to shift into non-existent lower gears.

The success of our mission was in jeopardy at about 2100 m (7000 ft) when my legs started to cramp. We pulled in for a rest at Hosmer Grove, a small campsite just inside the park boundary. Lesia gave me a macadamia nut



*Nearing the summit - crater rim in background*

*Photo: Chris Shepard*

chocolate bar, which successfully rebalanced my electrolytes and rekindled my spirit. After a 15-minute break we began to climb the final 1000 m (3500 ft) in a cool mist. I suffered terribly while Lesia spun silently and patiently behind me; at one point she suggested I try a bigger gear to speed things up a bit! Much appreciated advice, L. Near the summit she politely asked if I would mind if she went ahead. I begrudgingly told her I did not mind, and she promptly disappeared up the final and steepest section of the entire climb, with no apparent difficulty. I dragged my sorry butt up the last 100 m and





*The mandatory summit shot*

*Photo: Chris Shepard*

was never so happy to be finished a climb. From the top we enjoyed spectacular views of the crater and the surrounding lunar landscape.

What took seven hours to climb took a mere one hour and forty minutes to descend. The first few thousand feet were bone-chilling cold. With blue lips and numb hands we raced down the mountain to the warmer lower elevations. The descent was exhilarating to say the least. Because the grade averaged about 6%, brakes were required only for the hairpin turns. Luckily we did not need to use them more, because the brakes on my bike were not particularly good! We passed groups of tour riders, and even the occasional motor vehicle, on our descent. We were back in the warmth of the coast in no time.

I had promised myself on several occasions during the ascent that I would never ride the volcano again. However, after a couple of days of R&R, we both craved some more and summited again. Much easier the second time!

#### Summary Statistics

**Distance:** 74 miles round trip

**Elevation gain:** 10,000+ feet

**Ascent Time:** 7 hours 15 minutes

**Descent Time:** 1 hour 40 minutes

**Fuel:** 1800 calories in energy bars and a gallon of water each.

# REQUIEM FOR WILDERNESS

## A RANT DESIGNED TO PROVOKE THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

Sandy Briggs

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First we need a definition of wilderness, and it turns out that the Vancouver Island's 1993 Strathcona Park Master Plan provides a good one in its description of a Wilderness Conservation Zone: "The objective of this zone is to protect a remote, undisturbed natural landscape and to provide unassisted recreation opportunities dependent on a pristine environment where no motorized vehicles will be allowed. Development is nonexistent ... In short, areas designated as Wilderness Conservation are large natural areas free of any evidence of modern human activity, with very low use and without facilities." [Emphasis mine.] Approximately 75% of Strathcona Park is zoned as Wilderness Conservation.

I am mourning the death of wilderness. Perhaps this is a little premature, but I think not. As Kojak (Telly Savalas) once said, "Light a candle baby. A get well card won't do."

Wilderness is dead because we are selfish, because we have forgotten the meaning of the word 'wilderness', and because we seem to be incapable of ignoring the specious issue of translating unvisited wilderness into an economic bottom line.

Wilderness has been murdered by selfish convenience in the form of technologies such as cell phones, satellite phones, gps, and keyhole.com. Or it has been sacrificed to the pernicious allure of helicopters, planes, snowmobiles and ATVs.

Wilderness has been made to appear to be less than it really is, namely a place where one must be strong and alert, where one must take responsibility for one's actions, and where decisions may have consequences.

I am moved to quote H. W. Tilman who, in his book *Two Mountains and a River*, wrote: "I have quoted elsewhere the Bengali proverb that 'the sight of a horse makes the traveller lame', and I have some fear that the sight of an aeroplane might make the mountaineer think. To see an aeroplane accomplishing in four hours a journey which will take him nearly three weeks of toil and sweat is bound to give rise to thought some of it subversive: The farther

away from mountains we can keep aeroplanes the better; a sentiment with which even pilots will not quarrel, and which, I hope, even those mountaineers whose pleasure it is to keep abreast or well ahead of the times will echo."

To be more succinct let me quote the poignantly sarcastic Chinese proverb "He saw the flowers, from a galloping horse."

Maybe we need to ponder whether we would like our children's children's children to be able to experience something of the exhilaration we have felt when we have worked hard to contort our way through dense bush, traverse snowy hills, and climb steep pathless mountainsides to arrive on a clean untouched plane where Nature prevails and the signs of man are only subtle: the occasional jet trail, the acidity of the lake, the too-red hazy sunset, the points of light rushing across the night sky. It is already too late to ask for more.

I suppose there may be those of you who will accuse me of pointing a finger, but I want to assure you that I have ski-planed to Mt Vancouver and Mt Logan and Devon Island. I have helicoptered myself and food caches into the mountains. I carry a satellite phone in the arctic and I even own a gps unit. But somebody has to start casting some metaphorical stones, for if we wait for him who is without sin to begin the process then we may wait quite a while. I am a participant in the murder of wilderness.

But I am hoping, and wrestling almost daily with the issue, that as I am overtaken by the natural course of time's passing which is to say, by deliquium of the spirit and/or physical decline I will have the dignity to recognize that I have had my turn, and that the wilderness (if there is any left alive) will do just fine without my technologically assisted visits.

I have mentioned some of the ways by which we are killing wilderness, but there are many more. Every piece of flagging tape I put up and do not later remove is another stab in the death of a thousand cuts. So also is, in some sense, every new summit or route cairn I build, every new summit register I place. These latter intrusions have a



long and somewhat useful and engaging tradition in the human context, and so far only the very unacquisitive and strong-willed have been able to abstain.

But now when we go to summits we are increasingly likely to find not only that someone has left a note, but also that someone has decided, generally unilaterally, to make that summit a memorial for a deceased friend or relative, even if the deceased didn't die on that mountain - even if the deceased had nothing in particular to do with that mountain.

A memorial plaque has recently appeared on the summit of the Golden Hinde. Like the wooden cross that appeared there about 1985 it is unauthorized, and moreover it contravenes the BC Parks Policy on Memorial Markers. This policy states, among other things, that anyone wishing to place a plaque must apply in writing to BC Parks and that "free standing memorial plaques or markers will not be permitted unless by previous agreement." Almost certainly permission to place such a plaque on the summit of the Golden Hinde would be denied because it contravenes the Wilderness Conservation zoning that was defined at the beginning of this article. There is an unauthorized memorial plaque on the summit of Elkhorn, and there is a more modest memorial installation outside Strathcona Park on the summit of Conuma Peak.

Such memorials are certainly not restricted to summits. Memorial cairns and/or plaques not authorized by BC Parks have appeared in recent years at Schjelderup Lake outlet, at Owens Lake (west of the Golden Hinde, and at the recently named MacIntyre Lake SE of Mt DeVoe. All of these contravene the Wilderness Conservation zoning for those parts of Strathcona Park.

Other Island locations where there are, or are reputed to be, memorial plaques and/or cairns, some of which may have been officially authorized, in the wilderness are

(An\* means it is in Strathcona Park.): Douglas Lake\*, Century Sam Lake\*, Capes Lake, Idiens Lake, Gem Lake\*, Mt Argus\*, Mt Clifton, Mt Chief Frank, Greig Ridge\*, and Wheaton Memorial Hut\*. There may be more that I have not heard of.

Let me be clear. This particular rant is not about the naming of geographical features, though one does wonder what our successors will do in three hundred years to honour their heroes, after all the geographical features have been named. This rant is about sullyng the wilderness so that it isn't wilderness any more. It is about rendering the wilderness no longer "free of any evidence of modern human activity."

An even more modern technology-supported threat to the integrity of wilderness is the sport of geocaching. One can go to [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com) and zoom in on geocaches already appearing in Strathcona Park and many other places on Vancouver Island - heck, even on Baffin Island. While such caches themselves, placed and sought by hikers, represent a contravention of the definition of wilderness accepted for the purpose of this article, it is the idea that such caches in this worldwide game might be placed and sought by those using helicopters or snowmobiles that disturbs me most.

Well OK, maybe not the most. After all, I haven't even mentioned mining, logging, roads, radio towers, micro-hydro dams, pipelines, or Survivor wannabes.

So Wilderness is dead - on Earth. But the cosmos is full of wilderness where there are, so far, few signs of man. I think it's chimerical to think of getting to those new worlds any time soon, so we'd better think a little more about this one and how it's going to look in 50, 100, 500 years. Will there be any wilderness? I doubt it. Sorry kids, we blew the family fortune.