

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

2005

**MOUNTAIN
SCENERY
WINNER**

ALPENGLOW IN
SIKKIM

PHOTO:
PHEE HUDSON



**MOUNTAIN
PRINT
WINNER**

RIDGES FROM
THE TOP OF
MT. BAKER

PHOTO:
PHEE HUDSON



CONTENTS

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

KAOUK MOUNTAIN	6	LINDSAY ELMS
HIDDEN PEAK: STILL HIDDEN AND FIRST RECORDED ASCENT OF THE 'OBVIOUS' PINNACLE	8	SASHA KUBICEK
PEAK 5700 - SUTTON RANGE	9	RICK EPPLER
LITTLE MIRACLES ON RAMBLER PEAK	10	RICK HUDSON
THE ELUSIVE SHADOWBLADE & FLAT TOP, THE MACKENZIES	12	JULES THOMSON
A GRADE 5.4 VARIATION ON MT SEPTIMUS	13	RICK HUDSON
ELK RIVER VALLEY TRAVERSE	14	MIKE WATERS
SW STRATHCONA PARK	17	RICK EPPLER
MARBLE MEADOWS - WALKING ON THE OCEAN'S FLOOR	19	PETER ROTHERMEL
THE GOLDEN HINDE TRAVERSE WITH A TWIST TO THE LEFT: FROM THE ELK RIVER TO PHILLIPS CREEK	23	GORDON JOHNSON
RUGGED MOUNTAIN NORTHWEST FACE & LAMA DE LEPORE (FIRST RECORDED ASCENT)	25	SASHA KUBICEK
SHOULDERS OF 5040	27	JUDITH HOLM
MOOK PEAK	28	LINDSAY ELMS
WHILTILLA MOUNTAIN	29	LINDSAY ELMS
TOM TAYLOR: STORIES FROM A FIRST-TIME MOUNTAINEER	31	ANDREW PAPE-SALMON
STEAMBOAT MOUNTAIN	32	LINDSAY ELMS
MOUNT DRABBLE: A SUCCESSFUL ADVENTURE IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD	34	ASHLEY ROBINSON
IN MEMORY OF LARRY TALARICO, 1943 - 2005	35	IAN BROWN & GIL PARKER
PHOTO CONTEST: MOUNTAIN NATURE AND MOUNTAIN HUMOUR WINNERS	37	

COAST MOUNTAIN AND THE ROCKIES

WEDGE MOUNTAIN	38	SONIA LANGER
SPEARHEAD TRAVERSE	40	MIKE HUBBARD
RETURN TO WEDGE MOUNTAIN	41	PETER SHANAHAN
MOUNT SIR SANDFORD	43	DOUG HURRELL
SUMMER 'THE NORTH FACE' LEADERSHIP COURSE	45	JOSEPH HALL
ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION ANNUAL SUMMER CAMP: ROGER'S PASS	46	KEVIN E GILLESE
UNA PALOMA BLANCA: WINTER IN THE SNOWY BUGABOOS	49	RICK HUDSON

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

ALL AWASH IN WASHINGTON'S CASCADES: THE SULPHIDE GLACIER ROUTE ON MT SHUKSAN	51	RICK HUDSON
A NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN: CRISES ON THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL	53	GIL PARKER
THE CASCADE VOLCANOES: LASSEN PEAK, MT SHASTA & MT ADAMS	54	MARTIN SMITH
"TAHOMA, THE GREAT THUNDER-GIVER OF THE SKIES"	57	JULES THOMSON
OLYMPIC PENINSULA: LAKE LILLIAN & MCCARTNEY PEAK	59	JUDITH HOLM
MOUNT ANGELES	60	JULIAN COWARD

DISTANT PLACES: NEPAL & PATAGONIA

ROUND THE HOUSES TO EVEREST. NEPAL TRIP:	61	MARTIN & GWEN SMITH
PATAGONIA DÉJÀ VU	64	RICK HUDSON

THE ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

PUBLISHED ANNUALLY BY THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION 2005 EXECUTIVE

CHAIR – Jules Thomson
SECRETARY – Cedric Zala
TREASURER – Geoff Bennett
MEMBERSHIP – Phee Hudson
NATIONAL CLUB – Gerta Smythe
TRIP SCHEDULE – Sylvia Moser
FMCBC REP. – Sasha Kubicek

BUSHWHACKER EDITORS

Rob Macdonald
Ian Brown
Judith Holm
Design/Layout: Viggo Holm

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Catrin Brown
Selena Swets
Russ Moir
Shawn Hedges

SUPPORT POSITIONS

EQUIPMENT – Mike Hubbard
LIBRARY/ARCHIVES – Judith Holm
WEB MASTER – Viggo Holm
LIST SERVE – Don Cameron

FRONT COVER

MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY WINNER

Charles Turner & John Young on the North Ridge of Wedge Mountain Photo: Christine Fordham

BACK COVER

Winter route on Mt Alexandra Photo: Tony Vaughn



ISSN 0822 — 9473



VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAIN SCENERY WINNER

MT. ALAVA IN THE CLOUDS

PHOTO: JOHN PRATT

VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

KAOUK MOUNTAIN

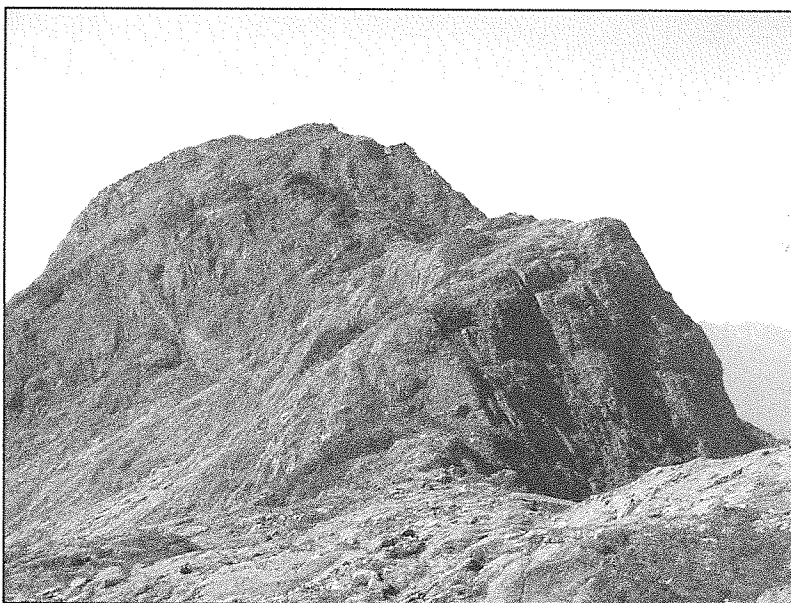
Lindsay Elms
May 1, 2005

An obscure mountain is like a great wine - it takes a connoisseur to appreciate them and they both can give you a good buzz. Fortunately, neither of them are in short supply on Vancouver Island as there are many good vineyards producing captivating wines and there are numerous remote and, although diminutive in height, significant mountains that fit the bill as obscure.

In reality, you don't have to be a connoisseur to enjoy both, however, to be a connoisseur of obscure mountains means being prepared to arrive at the base of the mountain (or somewhere relatively nearby) with very little information (except info from a topo map) or in some cases without knowing what it looks like. This is usually because the mountain has seen very little (if any) climbing activity due to the fact that there is considered nothing really redeeming about the mountain except for its name. Yes, that is right. Sometimes a mountain is climbed solely because of its name. It may have a special meaning to someone or it is just that the name sounds unique and interesting. Call us eccentric.

Sandy and I had been pondering Kaouk Mountain for a number of years but there were always other obscure mountains to distract us. Finally there comes a time when you cannot ignore it any longer. It slowly chews away at you until you just have to check it out.

Kaouk Mountain is only 1,309m (4,295ft) high and is located a few kilometres north of the town of Zeballos on the west side of the Zeballos Road. From the west it dominates



Kaouk Mountain

Photo: Lindsay Elms

the headwaters of the Rowland Creek and, as we were to find out, was no longer easily accessible from logging roads on that side. Although the maps showed logging roads going up to the mountain these roads have long been out of action.

What about a first ascent? There is no recorded first ascent. However, in Jack Crosson's book *Jack's Shack* there is a photo of Red Ponsford on the summit in the 1940's overlooking Zeballos Inlet. Both Crosson and Ponsford were early prospectors in the Zeballos region during its heyday and were obviously familiar with the rugged terrain of the area and had had the time to view the mountain from various angles during their prospecting trips.

Sunday afternoon, Sandy, Rick and I drove up to Zeballos under clear skies armed only with info from a topo map. Therefore we were able to scope the mountain out from this side first hand. It looked steep, bluffy and bushy but we decided that since we had the time we would check out the access from the Rowland Creek. However, as I mentioned, we soon found the road overgrown and it would have required a bit of bushwhacking for a few kilometres to get to the mountain. So back around to the other side we went.

Back on the Zeballos side we found the logging road Z10 and proceeded up thinking that we wouldn't get too high, however, providence was on our side and we managed to drive to just over 760m and this wasn't quite the end of the road. We found a nice flat pull-out area and parked for the evening. Dinner was served around the campfire while our eyes were distracted by the peaks of the Haihte Range piercing the clouds. Prospects were looking good for tomorrow as we zipped the tent shut.

At 5:30 AM the alarm went off so we slowly made a move to get into action. We put a rope into the pack, harnesses, a few carabiners and some slings and headed up the logging road. After twenty minutes we deked off through the clear-cut and into the old growth. Now we began the somewhat horizontal traverse around to the obvious col on the South Ridge two kilometres from the peak. However, it wasn't long before we came across the first of the steep gullies. We angled up beside it for a while then cut across it where it shallowed out but then we were immediately faced with the next gully. Same procedure here until we finally came out onto the ridge. A short angled traverse down and we were just below the col looking for a route through the next set of bluffs that would again bring us back onto the South Ridge.

The rope came out in several places to ensure safety and then more steep climbing through bluffs while tenaciously grasping at whatever vegetation was available and securely anchored for leverage. The vegetation had greater adherence qualities to the mountain than the rock. Soon we were back traveling on the ridge until we arrived at a two hundred and forty metre descent down to the col at the base of the final tower. It was now noon and the climb was taking longer than we had anticipated. Looking up the final tower some of the features looked daunting and there were mutterings that summit prospects didn't look good but we decided to keep going. Within an hour we would know if the route was viable.

The climbing through the bush remained steep but there almost appeared to be a trail leading up the tower. Was this a trail worn by boots or was it a game trail? I couldn't imagine it being a game trail because there was no obvious destination for them to come or go from unless they were also peak-baggers. And it wasn't a natural watercourse.

Fifty metres from the top we arrived at the crux. A small isolated, detached column that we had to either go over or

around. We decided to go over it so again, for safety, we got the rope out. Once on the other side there was a sigh of relief as there was nothing to stop us from getting to the top now. We took off our packs and made the final dash up a steep treed gully to the summit. It was 1:20 PM and we had taken six and a half hours to climb 560m over three and a half kilometres. We could have climbed further in the given time on one of the island's bigger mountains. However, time is not really the issue. We had finally climbed Kaouk the Obscure. The summit cairn (or a few strategically placed rocks) obviously was man made but there was no summit register. A small piece of plastic was found near the top which indicated someone fairly recently (within the last few years) had been up there but who it was we don't know. Another connoisseur of the obscure. After a brief repose on top it was time for the descent.

Knowing the route always aids the descent but once we were back at the col we chose to make an alteration that we hoped would speed our return to the vehicle. From the col we took a level traverse around to some bluffs on another ridge that overlooked a deep gully that separated us from the car. The gully was an unknown quantity but my intuition told me it would be okay. From the ridge we angled down beside some clear-cuts into the old growth and then we went straight down to the creek in the gully. As luck would have it the gully wasn't steep sided and we crossed it without any difficulty. On the other side we had a short climb through old growth timber and then we entered into the second growth vegetation where the undergrowth was thicker and views to see where we were and where we needed to go were reduced.

Half an hour of traversing through the second growth saw some frustration levels rising - hands were becoming pincushions from grabbing hold of the prickly bushes, our eyes were poked and scratched from the branches that were ambushing us, dried fir needles penetrated inside every opening and leg traps mysteriously appeared just where the boot was placed on what looked like solid ground and then didn't want to let go. Arrrgh. Eventually we made a last exasperating beeline straight down, as we knew the logging road wasn't far away. And, as good judgment dictated we came out onto the road right next to the vehicle. Perfect.

We had had an eleven hour round trip on a calm, windless west coast day and bagged another summit. Although the clouds swirled around the tops periodically restricting the view, for the most part we had spectacular vistas of the rugged looking mountains surrounding Zeballos and the occasional alluring glimpse of the vast Pacific Ocean. But what was satisfying was knowing the fact that there are more obscure mountains out there to climb in the future. Enough to keep any connoisseur happy.

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Rick Eppler & Lindsay Elms
Obscure participants: Sandy Briggs, Lindsay Elms and Rick Hudson

HIDDEN PEAK: STILL HIDDEN AND FIRST RECORDED ASCENT OF THE 'OBVIOUS' PINNACLE

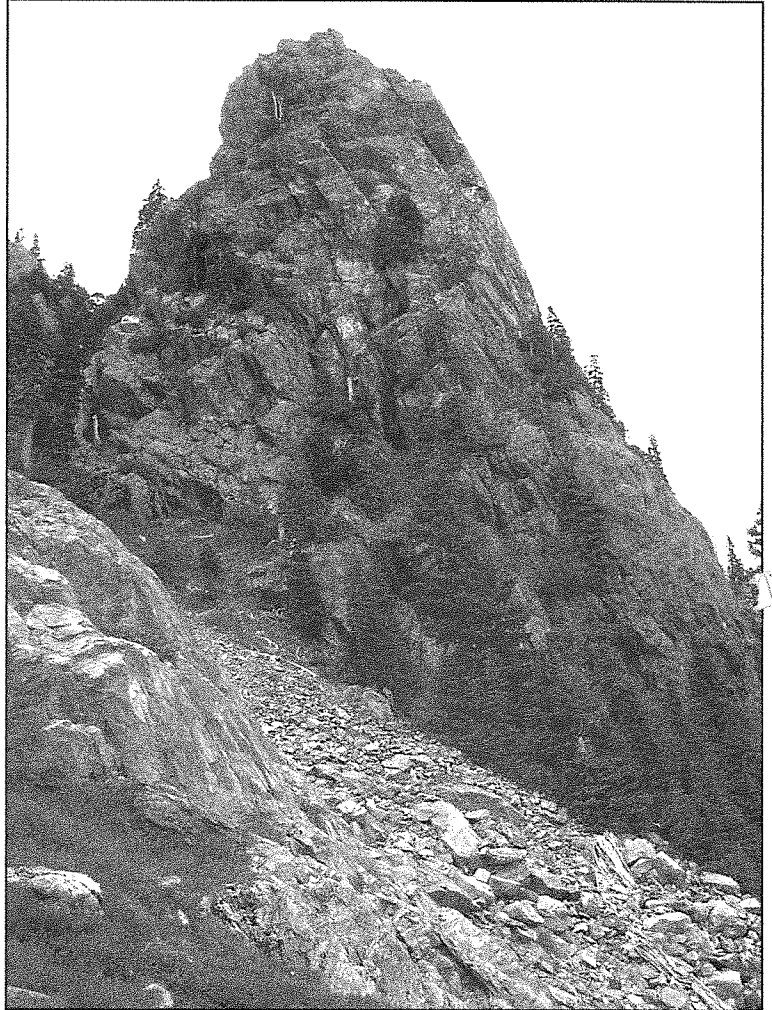
Sasha Kubicek

June 18-19

After a meal in Port Alberni our platoon of three vehicles headed off to Sutton pass in search of access to our objective, Hidden Peak. Our first place to check was Jump Off Bridge located near Kennedy Lake over the Kennedy River. Finding the pull out road all our fingers were crossed and we found the bridge intact but not crossable by vehicle as a big roadblock was constructed to stop vehicles. This was good; one way across the river we could count on but a little far from our objective. A discussion was had and we were off to scout out the Woodfern Lake access as we had the time and that would get us so much closer to our peak.

Cruising around beautiful Kennedy Lake we found ourselves on Sand River Road on the North Shore of Kennedy Lake. Passing a massive pile of old culvert pipes, I'm sure everyone knew what we were going to run into in a few minutes but optimism still ran high. Well it took no time at all till we came to the first culvert removal site, a massive ditch that we somehow got over and then another and this one was too deep for the truck. A few guys went ahead to see if there was another farther up and sure enough there was. This made this simple. There is no way to get to Woodfern Lake at this time with a vehicle. We were maybe 5 minutes from Clayquot Arm Beach and Rec site so to walk to Woodfern Lake from here would be a 'tad bit long'. Well, back to Jump Off Bridge.

On the way back the clouds lifted and we got a glimpse of Hidden Peak. What an impressive mass of rock. The square like features of the towers gave me a vision of a massive fortress with Darth Vader looking down at us from the top. Sounds weird but others found this a good description. After a good car bivy, we were up and off to try to get Hidden Peak from the East via Jump Off bridge and logging road H290. A summary of getting to the alpine: creek bed found leading all the way to old growth; creek bed very slippery due to algae on rocks; top part of creek bed now has creek in it; terrain around creek very steep and wet; old growth was a mass of rotten debris that was full of boulders, holes and pits; big bluffs encountered, going one way became impassible, the other found a weakness that we scrambled up above the bluffs; bush found above bluffs; bugs found above bluffs; bush & bugs; uglier bush & uglier bugs; a full 6 hours of this till we hit alpine.



The Obvious Pinnacle

Photo: Sasha Kubicek

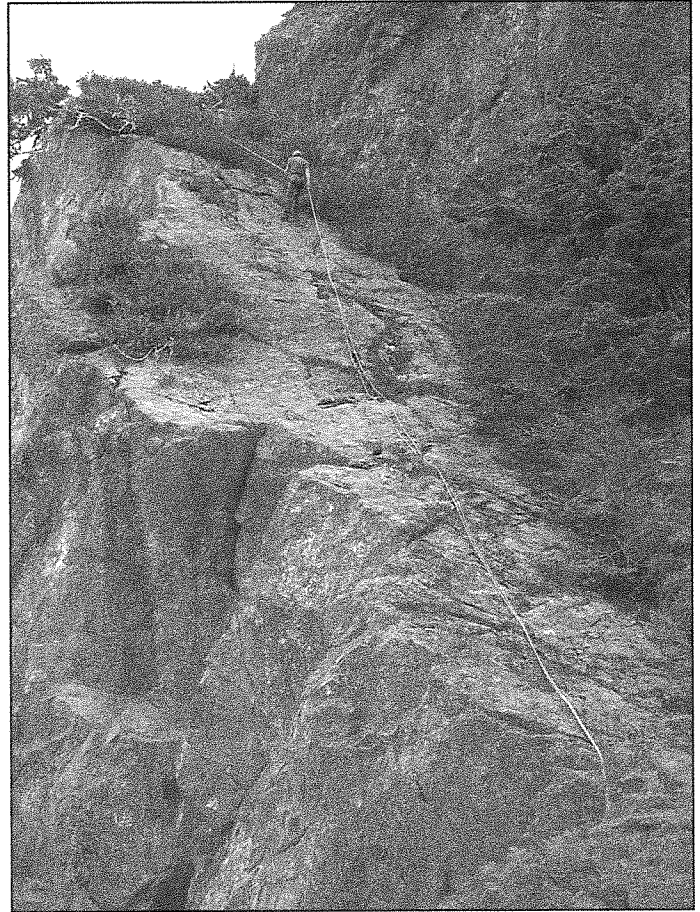
In the alpine we pulled out the maps and figured out where we were and that Hidden was out of the question due to time and distance. However, towering over us was a very impressive looking pinnacle that we thought would be a reasonable consolation prize. We had all our gear and none of us in the group knew of anyone that had climbed this pinnacle. We went up a gully to a col that took us within one pitch of rock to the top. Rick, our leader, asked if I wanted to lead the pitch and looking at what appeared to be a nice slab of rock, I was up for the challenge.

After a bouldery start, I got on the slab and noticed that it was not as nice as I thought. Even though lots of little cracks were available they were full of dirty slime. Having my good boots on, I made sure to dig my edges into the cracks and gingerly make my way up, slinging a few branches and getting one nice nut in after some gardening. A good belay was set up on some small trees and the rest of the group made their way up. A short exposed 3rd class section took us to the pointy summit. No cairn was found on top so we built one. This is for sure a first recorded ascent as I am sure no one would go through the punishment we went through just to climb this pinnacle.

As we were in the Hidden Peak massive, calling this peak the Obvious Pinnacle sounded appropriate. Enjoying the summit the clouds lifted for a few minutes to finally show us Hidden Peak. The peak was almost laughing at us as it loomed in the cloud. We were right on our decision to give up on it, as it was a ways away.

Looking at the time, we had to get back to the cars if we were going to get back before dark. Everyone rapped off the pitch and we got to endure the punishment that we received on the way up all over again back down. Getting to the cars, I vowed to myself to never go in bush like this or venture into this part of the island again. PS: A month and a half later I was back into the bush. It's funny, no matter how tough a trip might be, if you have good company it always still becomes enjoyable.

Trip participants: Rick Johnston (leader) Sasha Kubicek, Martin Hoffman, Karin (hope I spelt this right), Tony Vaughn, and two others that I apologize for forgetting their names.



Rapping off the Pinnacle

Photo: Sasha Kubicek

PEAK 5700 — SUTTON RANGE

Rick Eppler
June 25 - 26

This peak had popped out of the mist on a trip to Maquilla Peak back in '82. Time and weather had prevented further exploration that day. Various attempts had been made in the intervening years but easy access was an issue. New logging roads promised better access to the cluster of peaks ringing the North Maquilla Creek valley, and in 2005 it still seemed to be waiting for an ascent.

Due to bad weather on the south Island, the club trip to the Mackenzies morphed into a trip north to explore the Sutton Range.

Access: Travelling south on gravel from near Woss: Turn left onto Stuart Main under the power line, just before the main road

to Vernon Camp and Gold River goes over the Nimpkish River. A few miles up this, Fiona Main angles off to the right (access for the west ridge approach to Sutton Peak). Stay straight ahead on Stuart Main. At approx 3-4 miles up turn left (north) and cross over Maquilla Creek, on North Stuart Main. Follow this to the head of the valley at approx 3700' (2 wheel drive ATP).

The weather deteriorated overnight and turned into light rain. Discouraged that the Mackenzies' weather had followed us north, we headed off about 8am for a 'reccy' of Peak 5700. Half an hour or so up clean slash above the road (with the last 200' in big timber) dumped us out on the col in the ridge connecting Maquilla and Peak 5700. Another few hundred feet

east up the bushy ridge and we came to a little tarn on the west shoulder of the peak, with a lake nestled in the bottom. This would likely be much more striking in better weather with the west face for a backdrop.

We turned the short cliff band ringing the lake by a bushy slot to the south. This led to mixed ground above. Working back north, easy slopes led to the steeper upper face. I chose the main gully feature containing some hard snow. Rick and

Rob took the minor ridge to the left. We re-joined on the north ridge and ascended rock and heather the last few hundred feet to the summit, in fog and drizzle.

On the summit we threw together a few rocks for a cairn, left our names in a film can, and bid a hasty retreat, chased by rain drops. The road system made the summit an easy half day adventure, round trip from the vehicle. Participants: Rick Eppler, Rick Hudson and Rob Macdonald

LITTLE MIRACLES ON RAMBLER PEAK

Rick Hudson

July 1-3

It feels like déjà vu all over again. Or perhaps I've already said that. It's the Canada Day long-weekend, and we are hiking up the Elk River Trail in rain. Which is what has happened every time I've been here on this particular date. On one such trip, Sandy and I found six full beers on top of the Colonel, but expectations aren't too high this time around. Peering out through the old growth forest across a boiling river in spate, sheets of rain drift lazily down from a great height, pale against the dark forests of Elkhorn. It's not a sight to lighten the load, nor cheer the saddened soul.

The final hour after the turnoff to Landslide Lake is the worst. Any piece of clothing that has somehow remained dry during the 3-hour hike is quickly saturated as we push through shoulder-high shrubbery, every leaf beaded with water droplets, waiting for the unsuspecting traveler to pass. It's like taking a long cold shower, and we are wet, cold and tired by the time we make camp under the tall trees at the valley's end. As the light fades, rain continues to fall in steady waves out in the open, although happily it's relatively dry under the spreading hemlock and fir.

Despite the conditions, we are hoping for a miracle – two miracles really. First, that the dawn will bring no rain, and second that the West Buttress will somehow dry overnight, allowing us a crack at this island classic. At 5 a.m. we are batting a 50% average – the rain is holding off, although as we push up through the slide alder, and repeat the cold showers of yesterday, the sky above is cloud-filled and leaden. It could start again any time. The upper bowl under Elk Pass is draped in mist, and the West Buttress vanishes into a ceiling of cloud, waterfalls cascading off its lower flanks.

There's no chance of the second miracle. It's 8 in the morning and we have nothing to do, so hike up to Elk Pass, where there is no visibility. Streams gush everywhere, as if the whole world

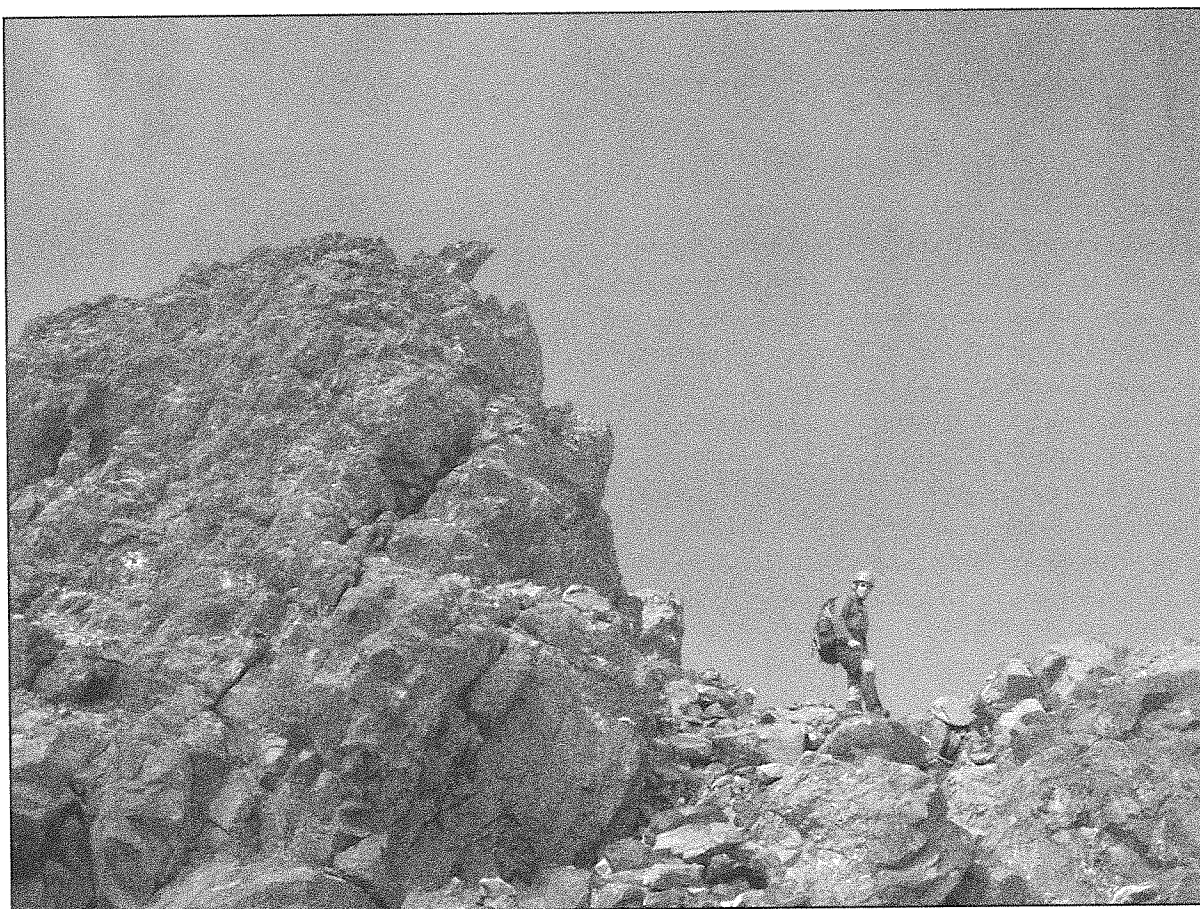
has suddenly risen, whale-like, from the ocean, and dry land is being formed before our eyes.

It's 8:30 and still not much to do. There are no views, and few prospects. We agree to climb to the South Col, just in case. In case of what, is not conjectured. The granite is a friendly



Ned Atkins crossing upper glacier with Rambler Junior beyond

Photo: Rick Hudson



A little miracle – Pete Hudson sees his shadow near the summit with blue sky above

Photo: Rick Hudson

change from the gloomy basalt of the lower valley, and by the time we reach the col, we are in a considerably more upbeat mood. The clouds have lifted somewhat, and we get glimpses of Rambler's great summit, high above. There's no wind. A few patches of blue are visible in places, and we have a whole day ahead of us. We might as well take a look at the gully on Spiral Stairs.

It's full of snow, but in fair condition, considering the soaking it must have had over the past 24 hours. We kick deep steps, ascending into the clouds. Black gleaming rock hems us in to left and right, while mist blocks the view above and below. All we lack is the sound of orc drums to convince us we're approaching Mordor. Two hundred metres later we top

out onto Rambler's south glacier. Somewhere up ahead, a pale tower looms through the mist. Since we must be quite close, we continue, but more out of curiosity than determination. Passing under the east flank we begin to gain height on the snow below the north gully. At the top there's a surprising discovery - the red rocks of the tower are dry. The mood lifts.

A hundred metres of scrambling brings us onto the summit arête, where the most bizarre thing happens – there are shadows! Looking straight up, a pocket of perfectly blue sky is visible. Just don't look sideways – white cloud blocks every direction. A few more metres and we are at the summit in bright sunshine. Who says miracles don't happen?

Participants: Ned Atkins, Peter Hudson, Rick Hudson

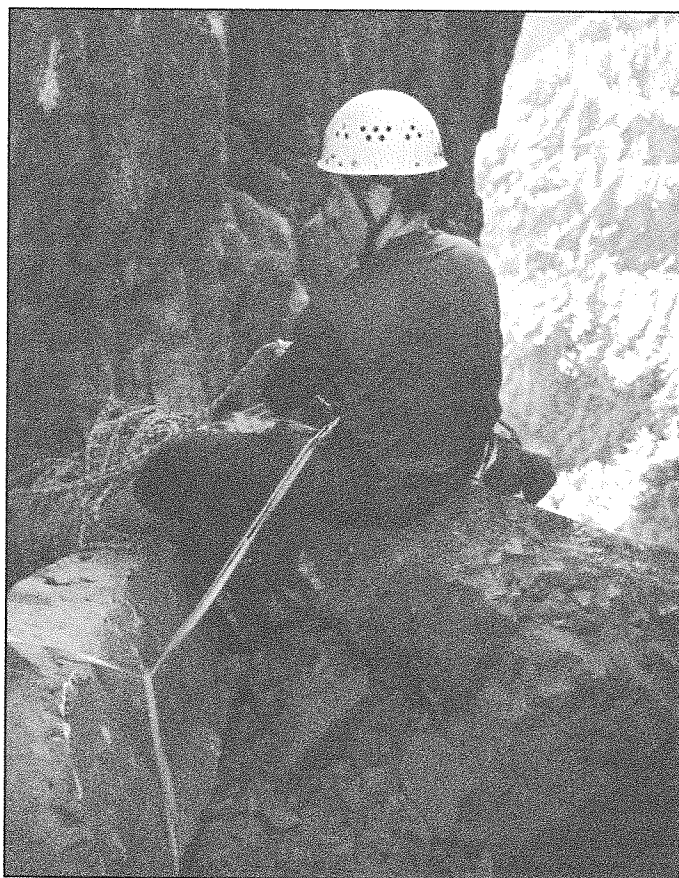
THE ELUSIVE SHADOWBLADE & FLAT TOP

THE MACKENZIES

Jules Thomson
July 16 - 17

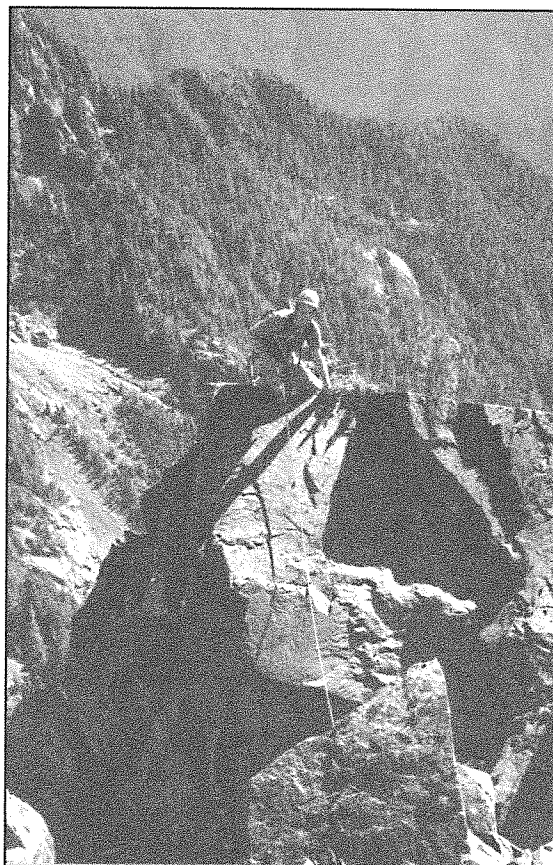
A brilliant sun-drenched weekend in September, ha! ha! – those fools who foresaw rain and ominous blackness in the sky and demurred for another day, lost their chance. We four adventurers left the city lights for the blackness of the ribbon of road, winding its way to Tofino. Searching in the night for the hidden entrance that finally revealed its secret to us, slumber was a welcome relief.

Early in the morn we route explored for the not-so-obvious trail that would lead us to our summit peaks of the Mackenzies. Steepness met us with our heavy loads, we grunted up the sides of the mountain to seek a resting place with a jewel of a miniature pond; the most precious need---water. Free, then, to lighten our back and scamper on with rock shoes and rope towards adventure. Memory, though, often becomes hazy, and our goal of Shadowblade and Flat Top was thwarted, traversing too long, so Centaur became our prize. We returned to a glorious sunset and a feast before a tableau of isles and sea.



Marcelo on Redwall in the Mackenzies

Photo: Jules Thomson



Knut on Redwall in the Mackenzies Photo: Jules Thomson

Again, next day we challenged the peaks, but this time we traversed too short, so Mackenzie Peak became our prize, a new route, no doubt. Was this all contrived? For the chief advisor had already captured Shadowblade and Flat Top – but she protested -“no”.

We had climbed our fill with two expert leaders, Selena and Marcelo, so we fled the mountain late into the evening, racing against the darkness, down root-grabbing, steep trails, falling with heavy packs, suddenly without warning. Sweat pouring off our faces, shirts wet to the skin, we are tired and exhausted, losing our way, off trail in the dark, searching and finding the route again, thanks to past knowledge. We arrive, finally, and dine, a mountaineer's feast, then home for another day. The perfect weekend, ever, in the notorious, insect afflicted Mackenzies, but we were spared, so late in the season.

The climbing was airy and challenging with some difficult moves that required experience and courage, so thanks to the leaders.

Participants: Selena Swets, Jules Thomson, Marcelo Laca and Knut von Salzen.

A GRADE 5.4 VARIATION ON MT SEPTIMUS

Rick Hudson

July 17



South face of Septimus showing the lower pitches of the route, starting to the left of the only snow couloir

Photo: Rick Hudson

Septimus and Rousseau, and then trend left near the top. This provides 7 consistent pitches of 5.2 – 5.4 on clean rock.

Since the south side of this range is large and complex, it's important to start at the right point. From the saddle at the top of Septimus' west glacier, traverse east under the south face for several hundred metres until a prominent gully leads up into the face. In July, a 30m high tongue of snow connected to the snow slopes below.

Scramble 10m up the rock on the left of the gully to a ledge, to start. From there, 5 full 40m pitches lead up, trending right to avoid the brown-stained faces and overhangs above.

Whenever possible, climb

Being one of the Island Qualifiers, Septimus receives a fair amount of attention from the climbing community. Phil Stone's *Island Alpine* lists 3 routes to the top:

- (1) the north glacier route, which varies in condition, and may have major crevasses that make a summit attempt complex;
- (2) the SW Buttress, which is a low-class 5 scramble (exposed), but gets you only to the West summit from where the the main summit is unreachable; or
- (3) a 5.7 route on the S side that is listed by Stone as "Route 1" on his photo. This latter line may be harder than many climbers would want to undertake on a 300m face.

A fine alternative is to take Stone's "2" route, a grade 5.4 line that leads ostensibly to a prominent rock spire between

the pale granodiorite dikes that cut the face vertically and horizontally – they have good friction and are well cracked. The climbing is easy, although protection is hard to place. At the top of each pitch, a convenient cluster of dwarf cedar offers stout trunks from which to belay.

At the top of the 5th pitch, a bowl offers 3 alternatives. If you continue to trend up and right, you will reach the rock spire's summit in a further 3-4 pitches. Going straight up gets you into a mess of minor spires on the ridge. Trending left (from a large cluster of cedar on the left) brings you in 2 rope lengths to the low point of the summit ridge. To the right, a huge wall goes nowhere. To the left, a gentle 400m stroll leads to the summit of Septimus.

Participants: Torge Schuemann, Nathan Bengey, Knut von Salzen, Rick Hudson

ELK RIVER VALLEY TRAVERSE

Mike Waters

July 22-24

The idea for us to traverse all the major mountains around the Elk River Valley started in the late 90's when my brother John was looking for climbing information about Vancouver Island Mountains. He was sneaking around in the basement of the Simon Fraser University library reading old Canadian Alpine Journals when he came across an article about Mt. Colonel Foster. He read that Peter Croft and Greg Foweraker had attempted the traverse but were unsuccessful. Their attempt started at Puzzle Mt., then completed a super fast traverse of Mt. Colonel Foster before ending at Elk Pass. John and I had climbed some routes on Colonel Foster, Kings Peak and Elkhorn but had never been to many of the other summits around the valley. The idea seemed too difficult (Croft and Foweraker didn't complete it), and faded as a major climbing goal.

Six years later, after climbing Colonel Foster a couple more times, John started talking about the Elk River Traverse again. The idea seemed more feasible now with a few more years of climbing experience. Three of us would try to traverse all the major mountains of the Elk River Valley. John and I have shared most of our climbing adventures for the past 15 years. He always seems to pull up the slack when I'm sucking wind or doubting whether a route will go. Rene Monjo was the third member, a very skilled alpine and sport climber who we have climbed with for the past couple years. Rene and John had climbed a new route up the North West peak of Colonel Foster in the summer of 2003.

Our first attempt started in mid-July, and ended the same day as we were shut down by fog, sleet and rain. There was light drizzle when we started up the Kings Peak trail, but as we scrambled higher up the north spur of Kings the rain and clouds became more persistent. We stubbornly pushed on until finally giving up in poor weather halfway along the ridge between Kings and Elkhorn. We hiked out the major drainage that comes off the north face of Elkhorn and tried to reach the main trail down the mountain. Embarrassingly poor route finding resulted in us missing the main trail down Elkhorn. We found ourselves down climbing the lower forested North West ridge of Elkhorn and rappelling 100's of metres of bush and wet cliffs. We finally reached the Elk River valley many hours



From Summit of Kings Pk. looking South up Elk River Valley. Peaks from left to right: Elkhorn, Rambler and Colonel Foster

Photo: Mike Waters

later with darkness coming quickly. This adventure off Elkhorn created a better climbing partnership between the three of us and gave us confidence that if required, we could get off any mountain on the traverse.

One week later on July 22 we were back at it again. Rene drove the old VW bus up the power line road to the Kings Peak trail as far as it could go. We did our final packing and settled in for a restless sleep. The alarm went off at 4 am and we are ready to go in 15 minutes. The skies are clear and it is a little chilly. We are finally going and everybody is optimistic. We move quickly up the trail, spirits are high and we talk about how poor the weather was a week before and how nice it is now. The ground was familiar and we quickly made our way up the trail and onto the north ridge of Kings. Easy scrambling brought us to the summit of Kings Peak. Next was the North Ridge of Elkhorn which Rene had climbed a few years before. Rene guided us along the ridge that connects the two mountains, and we skirted around really hard sections by down climbing gullies to the west, then climbing back up to the ridge.

We followed Rene up the North ridge of Elkhorn, which has a 5.7 crack near the top. Just below the crack John traversed 50m to the right and found an easy wide gully. We scrambled up the gully and over the summit boulders to the top. We took some photos and then we were off, down climbing the West

Couloir route to the west snowfield. An easy gully off the south end of the snowfield led us to the slabs on Colwell.

We had been going now for around 7 hours and we only needed to get up and over Colwell and down to the base of the North Buttress of Rambler for a good first day. The slabs on the west side of Colwell were fast going and we were on the summit quickly. Next was the south ridge of Colwell which John had viewed from the SE peak of Colonel Foster a month earlier. He suspected that the ridge would be quite rough and difficult and possibly the worst part of the trip. The ridge started off solid, but became steep and loose. It was the sketchiest 5th class I have ever descended (I have soloed most of the east face of Colonel twice). We continued down climbing steep rock and gnarled yellow cedar and sub-alpine fir. On a particularly steep band of cliffs I dislodged a huge boulder I was standing on and found myself momentarily hanging by my arms before I regained my footing. The huge thunder of the boulder caused alarm in Rene and John who were still above me and had yet to down climb the same section. "Are you ok?" they asked. "Ya, I'm ok. That was a bit sketchy!" I yelled back up to them. They were relieved that I was safe (relatively) but worried because they still had to follow. We continued down the ridge of Colwell. The down climbing was more mentally than physically challenging because you had to stay alert at all times. During the down climbing I noticed clouds coming in from the west coast. The clouds always seem menacing when the climbing is dangerous and benign when the climbing is fun and relatively safe.

By the time we made it to the col between Colwell and Rambler, the clouds had really moved in and the summit of Mt. Colonel Foster was no longer visible. I suggested we continue up the first steep face of the north ridge of Rambler but I was really hoping the others would reject the suggestion because I was exhausted. They vetoed and I didn't argue much, as the clouds were moving in anyway. If the weather took a turn for the worse, escaping to the valley from this col would be much easier than down climbing 400m of steep wet rock on Rambler. We had been going for 16 hours straight and it was time to stop for the night. We gorged ourselves on energy bars, dried fruit and nuts. We had decided not to bring a stove to save weight. Warm food would have been nice but we would make do. Rene shared with us some of his delicious smoked salmon. What a treat. Why didn't I bring smoked salmon?

We set up a small tarp that we could barely fit under and settled in for the night. We set the alarm for 5:00 am, got under our sleeping bags and watched as the clouds moved in on Colonel Foster. "I'm not going up Colonel if it looks like that tomorrow," Rene declared. We all agreed that we did not want to spend a night on Colonel if it looked like that either.

A good night's sleep would have been ideal at this time. Between the vicious mosquitoes, the rocks jabbing into my back and the one sleeping bag John and I shared to save weight, the

sleep was horrible. Rene had small pieces of mosquito net that we brought to ward off the bugs. We tried with limited success to keep the mosquitoes out, but they had not tasted flesh for a long time. Each of us lost precious blood that night. I was more sore and tired when we woke in the morning than when I went to sleep. In the middle of the night the clouds were all around us but by morning the skies were clear and starry.

The north buttress of Rambler looks much worse than it is. Even though we were all tired and sore we were moving again and it felt good. Our spirits were once again high as the memories of the descent of Colwell faded. We crested the first steep section of the north buttress of Rambler as the sun began to fill the morning sky and light up the east face of Colonel Foster. We continued along the flat ridge for over 1km before reaching the small pinnacles on the final section of the north ridge of Rambler. This was the most technical climbing of the trip as we climbed up and down these intimidating 50m pinnacles. We used our rope for a short rappel and then Rene lead a 25 m pitch back up to the ridge. We down climbed to the Rambler Glacier then quickly scrambled the last 100m of easy 5th class up the gully on the east side of the peak.



Mike rappelling down from Northeast peak of Colonel Foster

Photo: John Waters



Scimitar from Scissors

Photo: Rick Eppler

Photos of SW Strathcona Park do not convey the beauty, rugged nature, and remoteness this part of the Island possesses. The peaks are spectacular and well defended. Travel is not easy. Glaciation has carved steep walls in the ridges, and getting on and off them proved to be problematic, and tedious. Travel is likely improved greatly by seasonal snow cover, but we had none. The snow had completely melted away, leaving complex and bluffy terrain to navigate. Relatively short distances seemed to take hours and one week to do this traverse is not nearly enough time. Two weeks is a more realistic time frame, especially if one wants to climb stuff, and relax a little, along the way.

We used a Satellite Phone (vs cell phone) to maintain communications with VI Helicopters and Nootka Air. This was very useful for logistics

east off the ridge, into the north arm of Kowus Creek. We descended big timber, skirting bluffs, crossed the open bowl, and ascended a steep gully to the ridge east of Scimitar.

The route across the south face of Scimitar looked steep, and complex. Rob and I did a reconnaissance (our duty) sans packs, and after negotiating an endless tangle of bushy ramps, were stopped cold by a huge rock chute about ½ the way around. The only alternative would be to back-track and drop off the ridge again to bypass this section of the route – this time into the south arm of Kowus Creek. This would likely cost another day.

The ridges were proving slow and difficult. Half our time was gone, and with at least 2/3 of the route still in front of us, doubts surfaced on whether we could make it all the way to Moyeha Bay in time for our arranged pickup - if at all. I knew from the air photos that there were more gaps along the route, and getting past Lone Wolf Peak was going to take time. This would not be a nice place to be in bad weather, with the forecast change that we had been warned about for Friday.

Considering these concerns, we made the decision to end the trip Thursday. Late Wednesday afternoon we made camp on the rocky terraces east of Scimitar. Heavy bands of cirrus and alto-cumulus had swept over, early indications the weather change was coming. This would bring the sea fog rolling in to consume the ridges, and would cut us off from an easy exit.

Day 5 – Thursday. We decided to 'get while the getting was still good', and made the call for a pickup. The four of us were back in Gold River that afternoon.

changes, status updates, as well as weather checks. Without it the outcome of this trip could have been very different as we would have had no way to communicate with our support pickup.

We were fortunate in that we had mainly clear, hot weather – maybe a little too hot, as the heat often sapped our energy. Signs of wildlife were everywhere although we encountered none up close. I was grateful to have wandered a new chunk of the Island; scrambled some nice rock, explored some wild terrain, swam in spectacular pools, balconied on the edge of nothing, and lounged in a proliferation of flora. Strathcona reaffirmed itself worthy of respect and recognition for its rugged nature and wilderness setting.

Participants: Rick Hudson, Graham Maddocks, Rob Macdonald and Rick Eppler



Rob, Graham and Rick H. on Scissors

Photo: Rick Eppler

MARBLE MEADOWS - WALKING ON THE OCEAN'S FLOOR

Peter Rothermel

July 29 - August 1

& August 26 - 29

For years, I had been putting off doing a trip to Marble Meadows, because of all the switchback squiggles on the topo map in the Hiking Trails III book. It looked like a lot of work and, true, there are over 150 switchbacks (yes, I counted them) and you do have to gain 1280 meters to reach the rim of the plateau, but the trail is rarely steeper than about 12 degrees and it's a fairly easy four-hour hike. Once past the crest, it's another easy hour and a half through the meadows and along ridges, past tarns and lakes to reach the Wheaton hut. Yes, a hut! But I'm getting ahead of myself, so I'll back up a bit.

Last winter when we were making the upcoming summer schedule, I figured I would put on a trip for Mount McBride. Since it was one of the Island's fifty or more peaks over 6,000 feet that I hadn't yet been to, it was on my tick list. It turned out that Judith Holm had put the same trip on for exactly the same weekend as I did. Even more uncanny is the fact that the year before, Judy and I put on the same trip to Steamboat Mountain for the same weekend and this was with no previous communication between us! When I heard about our second connection, I just had to ask her, "So Judy, where are we going next year?"

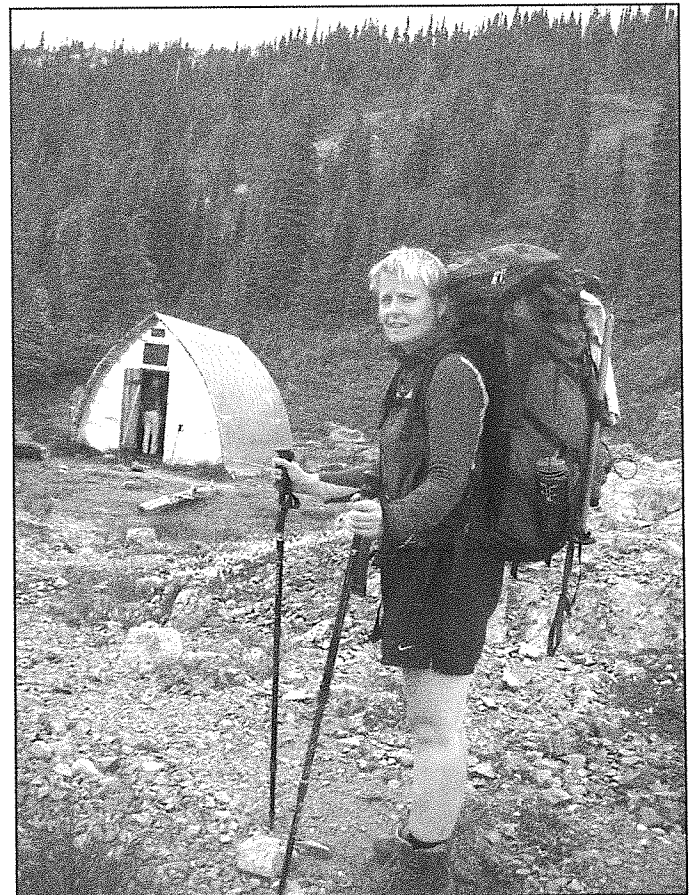
At any rate, together we organized this trip, which involves a canoe paddle across Buttle Lake to reach the trail head. Introduce a boat into a mountaineering trip and the possible difficulties and group logistics multiply exponentially.

The end of July found ten of us assembled on the beach on Buttle Lake with a bunch of heavy packs and life vests and four canoes. The weather was fair and forecasted to be good and the crossing went without a hitch... except when I realized I had left my wallet in the truck and had to paddle back and forth across the lake to retrieve it. In calm weather the paddle across the lake only takes fifteen or twenty minutes. After hauling our boats up the beach, we set up camp at the BC Parks, Philips Creek Marine Camp Site.

The next morning we were packed up and hiking by about 8:00 and I wasn't looking forward to this part, but once under way I realized the trail wasn't the vertical, quad killer I had expected. Building the trail had been a joint effort of the Comox and District Mountaineering Club and the Island Mountain Ramblers in the late 1960s. It gently switchbacks its way up and was fairly enjoyable, except for several of us getting stung by yellowjackets. I have heard that wasps and such venomous

creatures get agitated and cranky just before unsettled weather. Hmmm, I think maybe they might have been trying to tell us something!

After about four hours of switchbacks, we crested the edge of the Marble Meadows plateau and stopped for lunch. After our break we hiked through the meadows, keeping on the north side of Limestone Lake and Globe Flower Lake, stopping at the col above Marblerock Lake for a second lunch and a short snooze. When we stretched the kinks out and got moving again, we dropped down to the north side of Marblerock Lake and then climbed right back up to the same elevation again on the other side of the lake from the col. There's a better way, which will be revealed a little later on in the story, that doesn't require so much elevation loss and gain. Then a hop, skip and a



Tanya arriving at the Wheaton Hut

Photo: Peter Rothermel

jump and we found ourselves at the Wheaton Hut, about a one and a half to two hours hike in from the crest.

From the rumours I had heard about the hut, I was expecting a leaky, mouse-ridden shack that was on its last legs. Wrong! It's a wonderfully ugly duckling little hut... a politically incorrect cabin... a snug refuge from the storm... and full of good vibes. The one mouse has good manners and won't eat your food unless you are lax about storing it properly. Mouse even sleeps at night and doesn't make much noise, until it's time to wake up in the morning. The hut is a bowed A-frame, with (sagging) floor space of 12' X 16' and has a 8' X 8' loft and is covered in silvery aluminum sheet metal. There's a register that makes for good reading and up hill is an open air biffy. From the front door and the loft window, there's a fine view of Morrison Spire across the valley, with the Golden Hinde peeking up behind it and all around outcrops of whitish limestone.

The Wheaton hut has a plaque under its eaves stating, "Wheaton Hut August 1970. Built by the boys of Shawnigan Lake School, and erected in memory of Billy Wheaton, who was killed August 7, 1967 in the Austrian Alps."

We made our camp and pitched our tents by nearby Wheaton Lake, went for a swim, had dinner and swatted mosquitoes until it was time for bed.

The following morning we were up at early light and soon fed, packed and heading out for a day trip to Mount McBride. A ridge behind the hut leads up and then down to the valley low point on a trail clearly marked with cairns, then heads up towards the connecting ridge between Morrison Spire and Mt McBride. There's a northerly angled vault of limestone, which is the easiest route up to the pass leading to the flanks of Mt McBride. Just follow the "white brick road" and you will find your way.

I must now say I like cairns... Yup, that's right... I like cairns! I'm sure the "cairn busters" will be gnashing their teeth at this statement, but on a well used "trade route" like the Golden Hinde route, I feel that they are appropriate and help keep people from braiding trails all over the place. On the high ridges, in the fog or a storm, they can be a life saver... So what's wrong with that? Some of these cairns might even be viewed as art work, what with the odd shapes of karst and using different colours of rock.

At the pass, we stopped for a break and to regroup. Someone noted that there were fossils all throughout the limestone we were standing on and everybody started searching and sighting ancient sea creatures and exclaiming, "Here... Look... I found some!" So here we were, over a mile above sea level, yet we

were walking on the ocean's floor. I was struck by the feeling of a common bond of life, between these creatures frozen in stone and time and my own existence, yet I could not (or may never) grasp the concept of the time between us. It's just too huge. This ancient life is meditative to contemplate and I could wander through these sea beds for days.

Many millions of years ago, from a latitude south of the equator, the small subcontinent of Wrangellia, made up of under sea lava flows and layers of sea bed, traveled northwards and eventually collided with the West Coast of North America about 130 million years ago. These tortured, buckled and upward thrust layers created what now is Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands and parts of the Alaskan Panhandle.

The limestone encased fossils of Marble Meadows dates back to the Permian Period of about 250 -290 million years ago and consist mostly of crinoids, which were stalked creatures with a fan-like head and rooted to the sea bed and brachiopods



Fossils on the ridge to Mt McBride

Photo: Peter Rothermel

that look much like our present day cockles, but were not the bivalves we know today.

We had the club's new two way radios and were experimenting with them as a group communication tool. The radio crackled and reported that our team botanist was reported missing. Viggo said he wasn't sure where Judith was and that he was heading back to try to find her. About ten minutes later Judy came along, mumbling in Latin and said she was sidetracked looking at plants (likely daydreaming of discovering "Eureka Holmus," the new phylum!).

After we regrouped, we headed off for Mt McBride. We tried to traverse at about the same elevation as the pass so as to not lose ground that we would just have to make up again. We followed along Mt McBride's south flank around to its west aspect and found a gully step onto a ramp that led to the summit ridge. The rest of the ridge hike was easy and I think my hands only touched rock once or twice the whole day. As is my habit, I left a new register & tube on the summit. The round trip from the hut to the summit of McBride and back to the hut took about eight or nine hours.

Mount McBride at 6,827 feet (2,081 meters) is the seventh highest peak on the Island and was named after Sir Richard McBride, Premier of BC from 1903 to 1915. The first ascent was possibly made by Leroy Sterling Cokely in 1925.

When we returned to camp, I decided to move our tent up to the ridge above the hut, so the breeze would help keep the mosquitoes at bay. That night the "breeze" hit gusts of about eighty kilometers an hour and put my new four-season tent to the test and nearly flattened it a couple of times.

The yellow jackets were right. The next morning it was blowing a gale and raining in sheets. Our original plan was to day trip to Morrison Spire, but considering the rotten weather we called it off. Almost everybody wanted to head out and only Tanya and I decided to stay the extra day in hopes of a break in the weather. As it was, we were hut bound the whole day and made use of our time cleaning the hut and reading the register.

The last day we leisurely packed up and ambled out through the meadows under clear blue skies. We took a different route out and kept to the ridge above the hut for a ways, then dropped down to the col above Marblerock Lake, then down along the southern shore of Globe Flower Lake and along the northern shore of Limestone Lake, a much nicer route than the one we traveled in on, with much less elevation gain and loss. Then it was over the crest and down the one hundred fifty plus switchbacks and a nice refreshing swim in Buttle Lake, before the paddle across and a promise to return.

At the end of August, Tanya and I returned for a three-day trip, with a nice high system in place and no wasp stings on the way up to the meadows. On the ridge above the hut we came across a strange area of torn up ground and trees with dead branches on one side. At first we

thought earthquake, but later surmised that it was probably from a lightning strike.

Day one, we settled into the hut. Not bringing the weight of a tent allowed us to bring more food and luxuries. As well, I brought a few gifts for the cabin. We replaced the old dog-eared topo wall map with a new one made of tyvek and duly dotted in all the routes and place names and pinned it up. I had also plastic laminated all the pertinent pages of the route descriptions, from "Island Alpine" and "Hiking Trails III" and mounted them on the walls as well. We brought Nepalese prayer flags to brighten up the place, a candle lamp & spare candles to see at night, an umbrella for the biffy on rainy days, mosquito coils to deter the buzzing little buggers, a mirror to hang up to see my grizzled face in, a new deck of cards and



Tanya with Morrison Spire behind and the top of the Golden Hinde just over the ridge

Photo: Peter Rothermel

lastly a used copy of the "Collected Poems Of Robert Service," to while the time away on rotten weather days. That bit of swag was more than equal in weight to a tent and I was glad not to have to carry it any longer.

On the second day we got an early start and headed up ridge and down valley, towards the connecting ridge between McBride and Morrison Spire and trended southwest up onto the ridge and followed it along, upwards and southward.

From most aspects Morrison Spire looks pretty intimidating, even approaching close to it along the ridge. Once on its southwest side, it is a short jaunt on a "goat trail" to the easy summit. We had lunch on top and again I added another summit register & tube. It took us about three hours to hike from the hut to Morrison Spire summit... an easy trip. The weather went from sunny to snowing in a short time and we scooted down.

Morrison Spire, at 6001 feet (1830 meters), is in the list of big ones. I checked high and low for the history behind the name. Neither Janet Mason, Provincial Toponymist in charge of BC Geographical Names or the Vancouver Island Trails Society could tell me where its name had come from. When I asked our local mountain scholars, Lindsay Elms and Philip Stone suggested it was named after the deceased rock star, Jim Morrison and Sandy Briggs backed up that theory by stating that the Spire was one of the "Doors" leading to the Golden Hinde. Yah, come on baby, light my fire! Finally I talked to Ruth Masters and she didn't know the origin of the mountain's name either, but said that it was known as Morrison Spire when she first started hiking in the area over forty years ago... when Jim M. would have been about fifteen years old.

We were going to go take a look at Limestone Cap, but when we reached the end of the ridge, there was a steep drop to the col between us and the Cap, so we decided to leave it for another trip.

The route back followed cairns downward along the westward side of the ridge. I tried to keep higher, so as to not lose elevation and Tanya followed the cairns. Soon we were out of sight and sound of each other and rejoined about where we were to hop over and drop down the eastern side of the ridge. Tanya's route was the better, as I ran into steep ground in places. The cairns don't lie and women really do have a better sense of direction than do men.

Below the spire was a massive outcropping of limestone, and having lots of time to spare we decided to explore its nooks

& crannies. What a wonderland, chock full of fossils, sink holes and caves. A land where waterfalls spring out of nowhere, drop thirty feet and disappear into the karst – a land of tilted and buckled ancient sea bed. We spent hours exploring for the "Holy Grail" of fossils, the "Archaeopteryx". Even though the flying bird/lizard didn't exist in the era we were travelling through, (let alone at the bottom of any ocean), it was still fun to pretend.

Later, back at the hut, I rustled up dinner while Tanya read out loud from Robert Service. There's an especially poignant story about "this little cabin." The following day we packed up our much lighter packs and headed out. When we reached the col above Marblerock Lake, we stashed our packs and headed off on a side trip up Marble Peak. We came to a huge tilted step that looked impossible, but found passage around to the right and then up a steep chimney feature and then out onto an easy ridge. Farther along we came across another steep step. I thought it looked good to, maybe, drop right, but Tanya had had enough, so after a snack with great views of the Meadows, the Spire, Golden Hinde and Buttle Lake, we headed down, but with a reason to return.

Just over the plateau rim, on the trail, we met up with a group of people heading up for five days. Too bad they didn't realize that the weather was turning. We knew, of course, because Tanya got stung by a yellow jacket. Yup, down at the lake the wind was starting to pick up and we made our crossing just in time before it was blowing too hard to cross safely.

The Marble Meadows area is an ideal place to bring a youth group or for families with kids. The short lake crossing is usually calm in the morning. The hike in is on good trail, without any bushwhacking. The hut is a comfortable alternative to lugging up heavy tents for everybody, leaving more pack room for food and such goodies. There are easy non-technical peaks to climb and lakes to swim in and billions of fossils to explore. It would be easy to spend a week in the area and have something different to do every day.

I highly recommend Marble Meadows, as it is one of the most beautiful parts of Strathcona Park that I have ever been to. It's a place I'll surely be back to visit, many more times.

Participants: Judith & Viggo Holm, Jason Oulton, Wes Klaussen, Russ Moir, Mike Hordelski, Robert Heron, Tony Vaughn, Tanya Silvonen, and Peter Rothermel

THE GOLDEN HINDE TRAVERSE WITH A TWIST TO THE LEFT: FROM THE ELK RIVER TO PHILLIPS CREEK

Gordon Johnson

August 6

A report on a traverse across Strathcona Park may be nothing new in the venerable pages of the Island Bushwhacker, but it is so grand a trip it's worth revisiting. The traditional route is between the Elk River Trail and Phillips Ridge ending at Boliden Mine (formerly Westmin), but Gord Johnson (bartender and birder), Paul Spriggs (gardener) and myself (reporter) gave it a little twist. We started from the Elk River Trail July 30, but once above Schjelderup Lake and on the ridge we made left and went north and east, passing Greig Ridge, over Limestone Cap, into Marble Meadows and arriving at the Phillips Creek camp site on Butte Lake Aug. 6.

Though I was not enthusiastic about the logistics which, finishing at Phillips Creek, required: get two canoes, take both across Butte Lake to lock one up at the camp site, drive up to the head of the Elk River Trail, canoe back across on the last day, retrieve the other vehicle from the ERT, the lashing of canoes to vehicles, it didn't take a lot of convincing (well some) from Gord to go along with the idea.

The trip started (and nearly ended) in foul weather at the Elk River gravel flats camp. The first day there was minor drizzle and the skies only threatened to open. The second day, seeking our way up Elkhorn via the southwest route was wet, and I shall leave it at that. After some searching we found the trail which led us to a bushhack out to the creek leading up to Elkhorn's southwest flank. We then carefully picked our way up the muddy Y scree gully. We would not recommend this route for other parties making a first effort on Elkhorn. We also somehow overlooked that there are 1500 metres of accumulated elevation gain from the gravel flats to be done in one day.

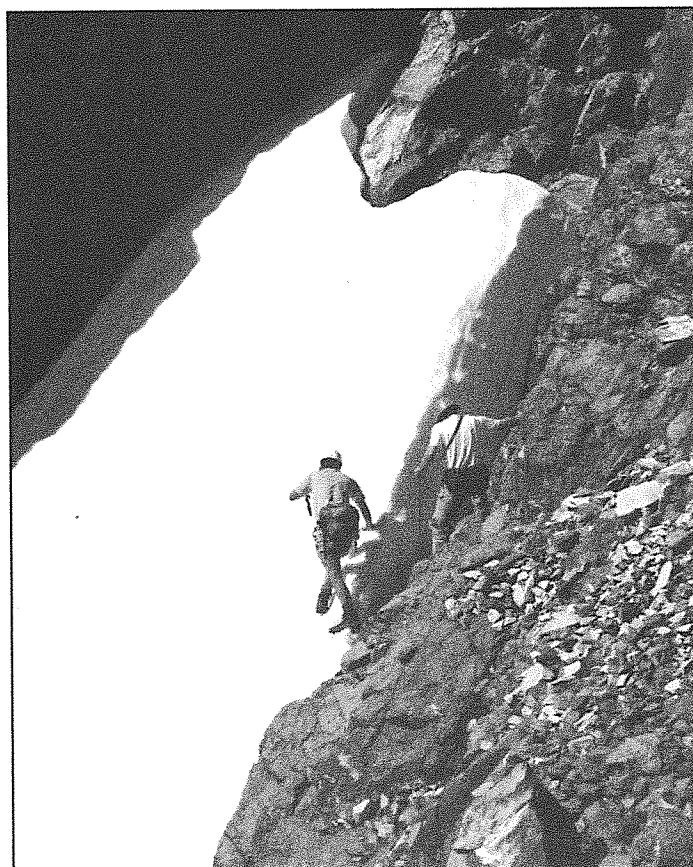
Because of heavy cloud cover it remains uncertain to me whether we even got into the Western Couloir where we were to start our last leg to the summit. Regardless, wet, cold, hungry and tired we turned back at that point, but not before losing Paul Spriggs' camera. If anyone finds an old SLR Pentax on a west slope of Elkhorn it's likely his.

Although I swore back at camp that if the rain continued the next day I would rethink the whole trip, I woke in the early hours of day three to silence; no rain on the tent. That morning, Aug. 1, we made for what is variously called Elk Pass, Elk River Pass or Rambler Pass. On the way we made a short detour to

look upon the awesome sight of Colonel Foster from Landslide Lake and we started to dry out.

Arriving at the pass that afternoon our pace was set for the rest of the trip - slow and steady. That night we agreed to abandon plans for climbing Rambler the next day to stay on a schedule which would include summiting the Golden Hind Aug. 4 and returning across Butte Lake the morning of Aug. 7.

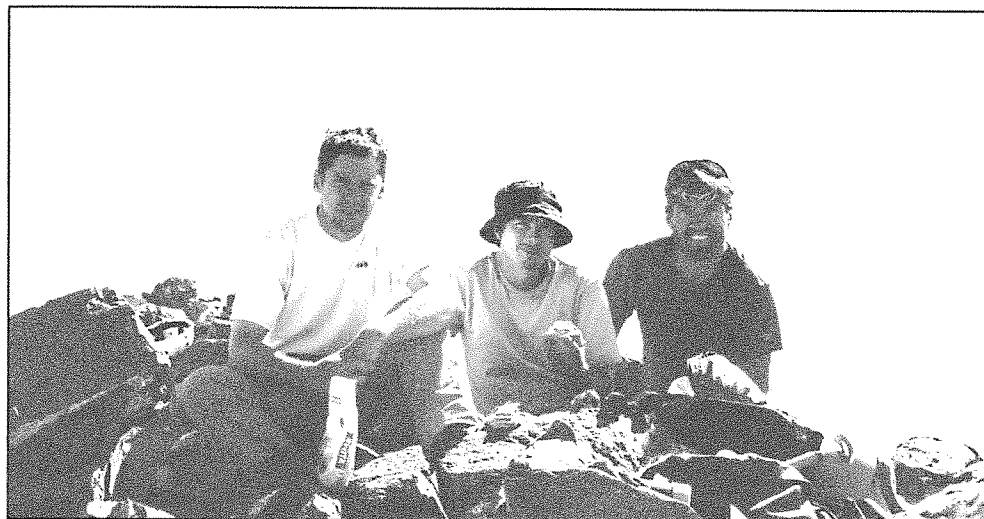
Sunscreen, water and rest stops were required in plenty in the hot days that followed. The skies were deep blue and the pristine weather allowed us at every turn to soak in the stunning beauty of Strathcona Park. Cool breezes blowing across the ridges were a welcome relief.



Paul Spriggs and Paul Walton on the upper snow gully

Photo: Gord Johnson

After some minor (in hindsight) route finding challenges between the pass and the Behinde, we arrived at the Golden Hinde base camp in the afternoon of Aug. 3. Shortly after 10 a.m. the next day we were on the summit of the Hinde. It was clear enough to see Mount Waddington jutting just above a mass of haze spread over the coast. The last summit entry was a week prior, July 27.



Paul Walton, Paul Spriggs and Gord Johnson on the summit of the Hinde Photo: Gord Johnson

After the Golden Hinde, Paul Spriggs and myself thought our delight with Strathcona Park couldn't have been greater, but neither of us had seen Limestone Cap or Marble Meadows as Gord had. The strange beauty of Limestone Cap with its fossils made me ask forgiveness from Mount Judy, Crystal Mountain and Tibetan Mountain especially (since it was the hardest) for the curses I levied on them in getting there. For Paul Spriggs the fascinating plant life in the limestone made him vow to return for a closer look.

The next day, Aug. 6, we made our way with blistered and swollen feet through Marble Meadows and right down to Phillips Creek. At the west end of Marble Meadows we encountered an odd scene. Uprooted trees and dirt tossed about made it appear as if someone had been digging with machinery. Gord's theory was an earthquake and others have

suggested lightning. For those interested in looking if going to Marble Meadows, the coordinates are N 49:41:25.0 and W 125:37:24.9. (We had a GPS with us, but, subscribing to the theory it's not "cricket", used only map and compass to navigate).

Just as Paul Spriggs fulfilled his plant interest throughout the trip, Gord did double duty with sending (as birder) a dozen sightings to Birding Vancouver Island and at Phillips Creek (as bartender) fishing out the beer we had stashed. I'm doing my part in submitting this report for the ACC.

We saw no other parties after leaving the Elk River gravel flats, which we didn't mind. We only regretted that others may have been missing a great opportunity to see this part of Strathcona Park at its fair weather best. And though the Phillips Ridge route has much to recommend it, other parties in future may want to consider finishing (or starting) at Phillips Creek. It's definitely not easier,

but it's a route which includes some of the most interesting and beautiful scenery in Strathcona Park. Participants: Paul Walton, Paul Spriggs and Gord Johnson



Gord Johnson, Paul Spriggs and Paul Walton with the Golden Hinde behind Photo: Gord Johnson

RUGGED MOUNTAIN NORTHWEST FACE & LAMA DE LEPORE (FIRST RECORDED ASCENT)

Sasha Kubicek
August 10-12

After a beer in Zeballos, Rick and I found a nice spot off of Nomash main to car camp for the night. We were engulfed by mosquitos, but slept fine in my tent nicknamed 'The Condo'. The next morning our rental car made its way past fresh logging off of Nomash Main and then entered a tunnel of alders as we approached N-20. Gearing up we started off wondering if we would have to battle alders again for the last half of the road as we did last year. To our surprise, the whole road has been cleared of alders. A huge thank you to those that did all this work, we owe you a beer (ed. note: *The Heathens?*).

As the massive Southwest Face presented itself, I marvelled again at the lines Rick/Don Newman and Sandy Briggs/Don Berryman both did back in the late 80's.

From the road we picked our way up a creek bed towards a bluff and the old growth. This route was stomped out and flagged. The flagging continued through the old growth and we popped up on the ridge that takes one to Nathan Creek Col. Following the ridge and sporadic flagging, great views of the South Blades, Merlon's South West Face and Rugged presented themselves to us. With big packs we trudged our way upwards to some scree slopes and then the top of the 'Slabs' where we refreshed ourselves amongst some water seepages, beautiful alpine flowers and the smooth glacier polished rock. Because of the bad snow year of 2004/2005 there was no snow leading up to Nathan Creek Col and the talus slope was a grunt in the heat.

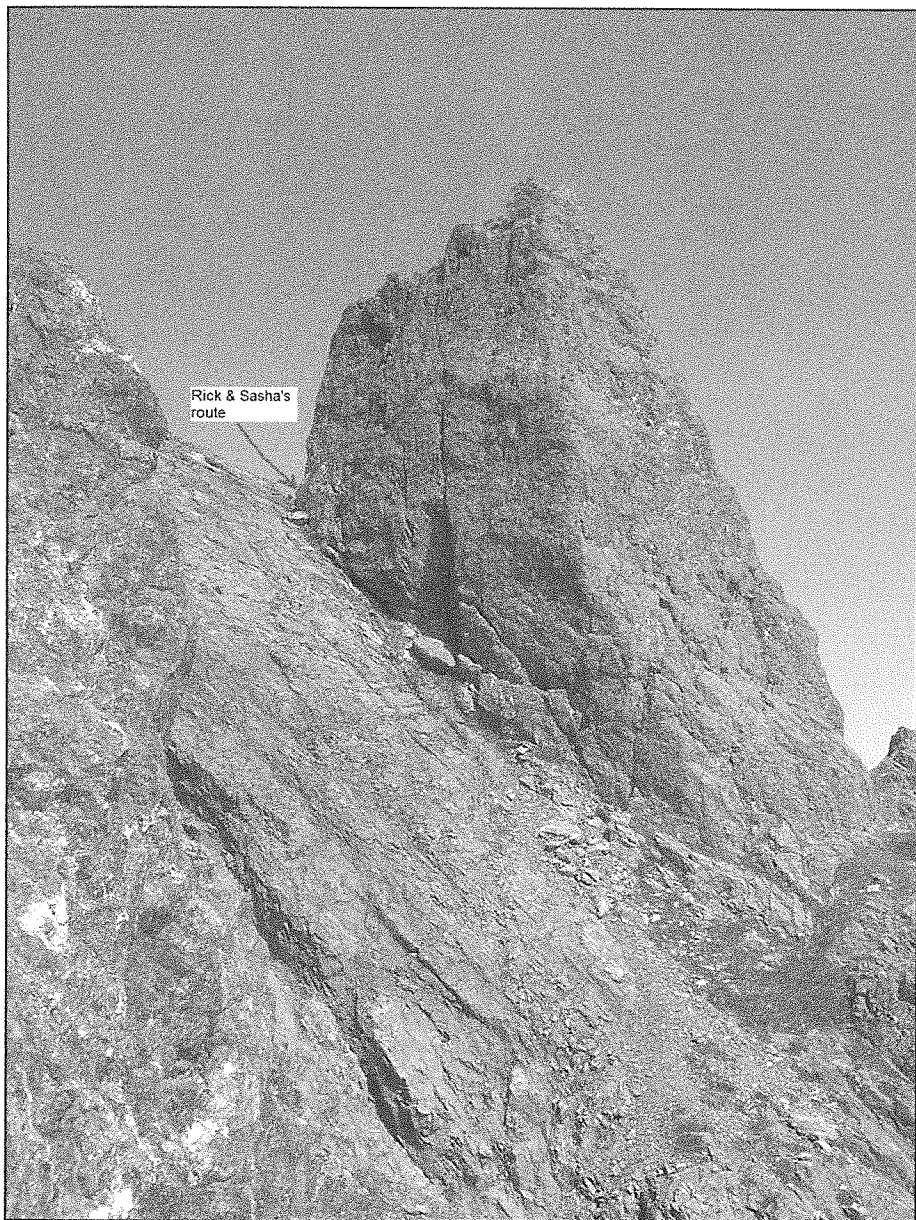


Rugged Mountain

Photo: Sasha Kubicek

We finally made it over and the Upper Rugged Glacier's cool breeze congratulated us on making it this far. We dumped the packs and eagerly went to look how far the glaciers had receded. Looking down to the Rugged Glacier, Rick was amazed at how far things have receded. With so little snow our objective of Ya'ai Peak and beyond wasn't looking as promising as we hoped.

After a good meal and a good night's sleep we decided to go for Rugged Mountain via the Northwest Face and if all went well maybe a shot at climbing Lama de Lepore. Rick was raving about this Northwest Face route and the neat vegetated ledges that one follows up onto the Southwest Face. Following his lead, I soon was raving about this route too. Small, exposed, vegetated ledges took us right up to the top of the South West Face in no time. What a cool way



Lama de Lepore showing Sasha and Rick's route

Photo: Sasha Kubicek

up. Rick was also raving about the rock climbing that took one from the base of the Southwest Face Summit Tower to the top of Rugged.

We started to gear up to start the climb when Rick noticed he forgot his harness back at the tent. I started to panic in my mind but before I could say anything he had rigged himself a harness out of webbing and was good to go. Rick let me lead and after a few attempts I figured out the bouldery start and

was off on the route. What great climbing! Two pitches of great rock took us up to the final pitch of the climb that Rick said was the best pitch of all. Enjoying the large crack that takes you up the whole last pitch, I soon found out the last bit of climbing topped right out onto the summit. Well I now knew why this climb made such an impression on Rick. I am now raving about this climb too.

Enjoying the summit view, Rick called out that he saw a line that would get us up the Lama de Lepore. He pointed out a crack system that went up the whole blade. We made our way down from the summit and then had to do one rappel, which got us right to the blade's base. There was a perfect lawn chair belay position waiting for us and once again Rick let me lead the climb. After Rick got comfortable in his 'lawn chair', I was on belay. A hand traverse took me across to the start of the crack system. This was a bit tense as I was a ways up and had just a solid rock slab below me, but a perfect horn awaited me at the start of the crack. I started climbing and was blown away by the solid rock, great horn features and good gear protection. I set up a belay and Rick followed, also raving about the climbing. He continued past me to the summit and shouted back that he couldn't see any cairn or sign of an ascent. I joined him on the summit and we soaked up the views, watched the clouds roll in from Tahsis inlet and built a cairn. One rap down and we were off to retrace our steps via the vegetated ledges.

What a day. We ate up that night and were treated to a spectacular display of the northern lights. With no snow for our other plans and being so satisfied with the climb we had done, we decided to call it a trip and made our way leisurely back to the car. We made our way back to the Zeballos River where we savoured some Corona's Rick brought along and a took a nice dip in the Zeballos River. What a super area and a great trip. Participants: Rick Johnson and Sasha Kubicek

SHOULDERS OF 5040

Judith Holm
August 18-20

Thanks to the kind hospitality of Libby and Rick Avis, we were able to get an early start with the others from Port Alberni. We were curious to find a recently flagged new route. The Carlsons knew it started from the Marion Creek Mainline, one ridge past the regular trailhead for the NW ridge of 5040, at the high point of the road just before a road junction. (See map of 5040 on Quagger's <http://islandhikes.com>.) We discovered that it was only about a two hour bushwhack up to a good campsite with some water and great views of Steamboat and Triple Peak. There is a flat area where we set up camp on relatively unvegetated ground, enabling less impact on this pristine subalpine site. From camp it took about half an hour through alpine to reach the south col of 5040, where we lunched, then dipped down to glorious lakes in grey limestone with contact zones of whiter limestone. Sadly, the dayhikers had to head home at this point. The rest of us continued around to the north saddle of 5040 where some of the limestone is white, with karren formations*. After one dramatically exciting discovery, it was time to continue our route around 5040 to make camp before dark. We would like to have carried on along the north ridge to the Jack Peak area.

For the whole of Friday we had the most interesting time scrambling over impressive karst topography. The southeast

ridge has white limestone and fascinating geological and mineralogical features, such as some geodes and tiny garnet crystals. Along contact zones the limestone was highly metamorphosed and the volcanic dykes were narrow bands of bluish black iron rock, folded nearly into circles. We descended from the SE ridge, had a swim in one of the lakes, and then scrambled along a talus slope at the base of the first limestone patch on the long East ridge. Karst is responsible for unique flora and this slope was especially lush with flowers still in the peak of bloom.** Because Hans is the botanist who made a plant inventory of the nearby and similar Steamboat Mountain area of the Clayoquot Plateau, the explorations were lively and educational.

It was great fun to explore for flora and geology with a group of mountaineers. The goal of finding rare plants, instead of the summit, involved some excellent scrambles and unusual route choices in order to reach likely locations. The summit was not our goal. While skirting around the peak in late afternoon on our way back to the tents I looked up and felt a huge pull to nip up there. I was intrigued by the depth of emotion I felt in consciously choosing not to go - this time.

Next morning, in lieu of descending the same ridge route, we dropped down from the camp to the south, following beside the inflow creek to the small lake. There was a "homeward" route roughed out beside the outflow creek, with a sopping wet AAA bushwhacking finale. With the way that creeks chart steeper courses than the shoulder ridges between them, this route is better for the descent until a trail is created. The explorations and company were excellent and I look forward to returning.

*Here Hans identified the special fern *Asplenium adulterinum*, plus *Lewisia columbiana*, *Saussurea americana*, *Salix arctica* and other plants.
** e.g. *Aster paucicapitatus*, *Zygadenus elegans*, *Hypericum scouleri* and *Arnica amplexicaulis*

Participants: Hans Roemer, Judy and Harold Carlson, Viggo and Judith Holm

First day: also Barbara Baker, Rick Avis and Karen George



Hans Roemer, Judy & Harold Carlson examining geology. Peak 5040 in the distance

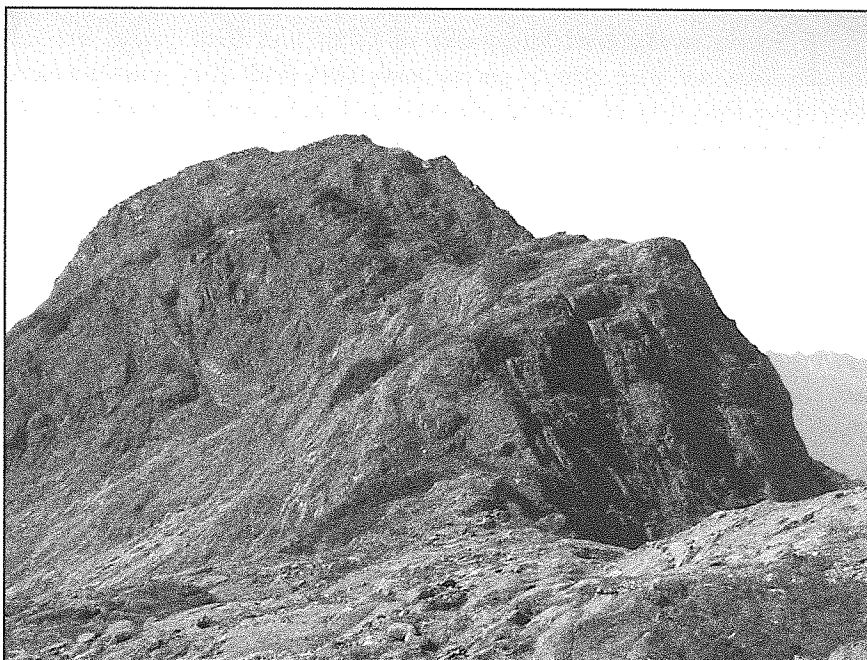
Photo: Judith Holm

MOOK PEAK

Lindsay Elms

August 23

This was the second time I had traveled down the Zeballos Road this year and the second time I stopped at various places to look at the steep slopes of the mountains between Pinder Peak to the north and Mook Peak (1,505m) to the south. I had climbed Pinder Peak, The Stone Trolls and Barad-dûr on previous trips but all from the west side of the range, however, to get to the summit of Mook Peak meant using a different access. The slopes above the road definitely looked challenging but since it was already 11 AM we were looking for a less menacing route, or in reality an easier shorter climb. This I was hoping to find from the Artlish logging road that went around the southern end of Mook Peak. The word Mook means in the Indian Kwakwaka'wakw Sept 'four' and my guess it indicates the fourth peak of the Province Range.



Mook Peak

Photo: Lindsay Elms

Val and I drove up the valley a short distance and saw there were no roads ascending the western flank of the mountain so we went back around to a road that headed up to the base of the Southeast Ridge. It didn't go very high but according to the map we were already at about 500m, which meant there were only about 1,000 metres to the summit. No problem I thought, as we would have roughly nine hours to get up and down the mountain, plenty of time.

We parked a short distance from the end of the road and had a quick lunch. The weather was beautiful so we decided to go light, as there didn't appear to be any technical difficulties along the ridge. This knowledge had also come from the previous trips into the peaks of this range. All the routes were scrambles and the rock was solid. At 11:40 AM we deked off the road, crossed a log spanning the creek and angled off into the salal. The bush, although thick and four to five feet high, wasn't difficult to negotiate if you weren't concerned with getting a few scrapes on the bare legs. After about half an hour we were on the ridge and all we had to do was follow it up. Eventually after about two hours we started breaking out onto the occasional heather slope and at three hours we were free of the bush and scrambling up the rock.

At the first summit we found a large cairn but the main summit was further along the ridge. A short descent and then up to the next summit with the high point a further fifteen minutes further on. After four and a half hours we were on

Mook Peak's summit. No summit cairn this time but in its place was a bicycle. It wasn't one of these high tech multi-gear mountain bikes with large knobby tires but a steel-framed ten-speed road bike. It was obvious it hadn't been ridden up here and knowing the nature of the bush I am fairly certain it wasn't carried on someone's back so the only other alternative was that it was transported up by a helicopter. Although there was no one's name attached to the bike there was a sticker from Pedal Your World in Campbell River but that still doesn't answer who put it there.

As usual the views were stunning. We didn't spend too long on the summit before back tracking to the col between the summits. Here instead of following the ridge back down to the vehicle we chose to descend directly down the western slope of the mountain to the logging road. There were a few bluffs we had to circumnavigate and the bush wasn't any less thick. In fact, the lower down we got the thicker the bush got. By 8 PM we were back at the vehicle with numerous scratches on the legs, lots of fir needles down our backs but we were satisfied with the climb although thirsty and hungry.

Post Script: If any one wants to try riding this bike down the mountain it needs air in the tires and I would suggest knobbies.

Participants: Val O'Neill and Lindsay Elms

WHILTILLA MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms

August 24

Whiltilla Mountain is a 1.6m peak located east of Bonanza Lake on the North Island near Telegraph Cove. Although not the highest in this range it dominates the northern end of the Bonanza Range with its large blocky summit. As with many other mountains, I had scanned this peak from the summit of Mount Ashwood and Bonanza Peak and many other north island mountains and I knew I had to go there one day. That day was today.

Whiltilla's name originates from the Indian word of the Kwakwaka'wakw meaning 'fire' which comes from the rock that becomes inflamed as a fiery red colour in certain light conditions. The mountain has also been known as Porphyry Peak, which to geologists is a very hard, purplish-red rock that contains small crystal of feldspar.

Val and I left Atluck Lake at 9 AM and took the road detour back to the highway and then proceeded to cross the road onto the Steele Creek Main. We had to take a double look to see where the road went and found we had to drive across the rail bridge. Certain train songs came to mind as we drove across but there were no blaring whistles telling us to hurry to get off the tracks. We then followed the mainline to the southern end of Bonanza Lake but before we got there we obtained views of the mountain and the logging roads that ascend its southwest aspect. They certainly looked like they would take us to the 760+m contour.

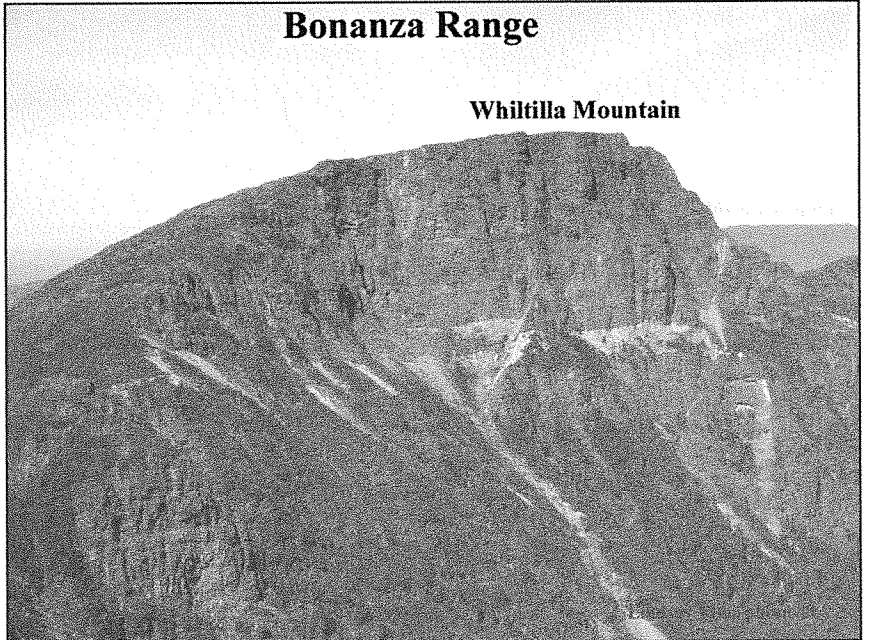
We turned right onto the Bonanza Main and followed that to the second obvious road on our left. We drove up to the high point and parked. Another early lunch and by 11 AM we were hiking up a newly constructed logging road that was being cut where there was big tall timber worth its weight in gold. We then took off into the old growth and began angling up towards Peak 5,540.

Compared to the bush we had traveled through on Mook Peak the day before this stuff was luxury and we gained height rapidly. We continued to angle slightly to our left and after two hours came out onto the south-southwest ridge 160m below the summit of Peak 5,540. From here it was about three kilometres to Whiltilla Mountain.

We descended into a basin and then climbed up several heather gullies onto the next summit – Peak 5,500. Here we

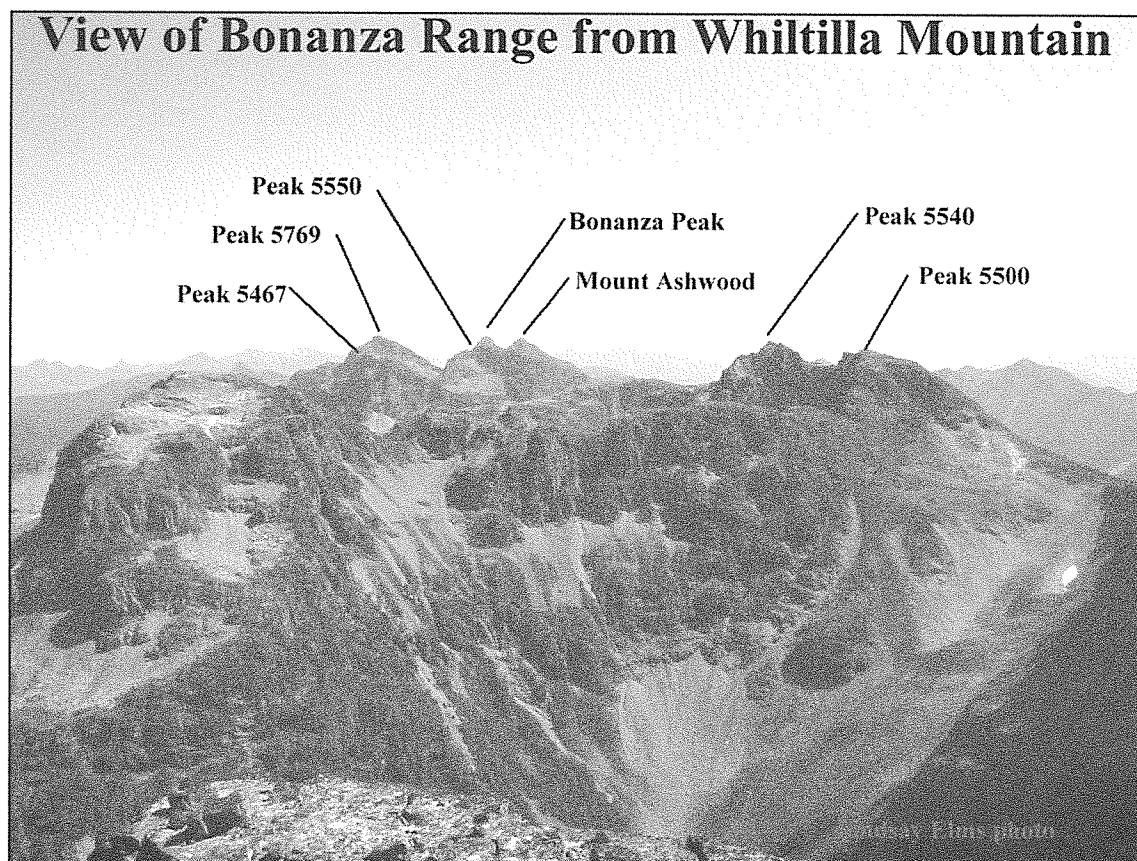
Bonanza Range

Whiltilla Mountain



decided to stop for a snack. Again the views were spectacular of the ever increasingly familiar peaks of the north island. To our north was Tsitika Mountain. Without referring to the map it took me a few minutes to figure out that this is what it was as it assumed a different shape when seen from this angle. Mount Derby and Peel were to the northeast as well as the unnamed, possibly unclimbed summits to the south of them. In the distance we could see the familiar peak of Mount Hkusam - the sight of the grueling Kusam Klimb race back in June. And to the south Mount Cain, Abel, Hapush, Schoen, Eden and the distinctive Victoria and Warden Peaks. To the west Tlakwa Mountain, Mount Karmutzen and Merry Widow Mountain, and to the southwest the Province Range and Haihte Range. And of course Mount Waddington on the Coast Range towering clearly above everything else.

We now descended a narrow cleft in the rock face down onto the ridge leading towards Whiltilla. Here, although we were in the subalpine where it was mostly open heather benches, we had to contend with thick patches of krumholtz. We couldn't go around them so it was either over them or under them depending on how scratched up we wanted to get. Over the top of a small bump on the ridge and then it was open heather slopes to the summit plateau of Whiltilla Mountain where we arrived at 3 PM after four hours of climbing.



The summit was the size of a football field but instead of astro-turf it was boulder field. Gracing the high point was a huge rock cairn built in 1911 by the surveyor George J. Jackson but there was no evidence of anyone else visiting the summit. However, as I have learned over the years that doesn't mean a thing. There are a few climbers on the north island who sneak out into the mountains every now and then to climb the peaks that are on their backdoor.

After forty minutes on top we began the descend but instead of going over the top of Peak 5,500 we skirted around its base zigzagging up and down gullies to avoid getting bluffed out. Once back in the basin under Peak 5,540 we then beat a hasty retreat back down through the forest arriving at the vehicle at 6 PM. If I had known that we'd get down that fast I would have made a short detour to the summit of Peak 5,540 but as I didn't it's a good reason to return sometime to climb the last few metres to its summit. However, I still need to return and visit the other peaks to the southeast in the direction of Mount Ashwood and Bonanza Peak.

While driving down to the campsite at Bonanza Lake, Val and I were talking about the five distinct, unnamed summits

between Whiltilla Mountain and Bonanza Peak. All of them are close to or just over 5,500 feet high. "So Val, what do you think we should name them? I was thinking that since this is the Bonanza Range maybe we could name them Little Joe Peak, Hoss Mountain, Ben Cartwright Peak, Hop Sing Mountain and Ponderosa Peak." Somehow I don't think that would go over well at the BC Geographical Names Department of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management so for now we'll just have to go with their heights as peak nomenclature.

Participants: Val O'Neill and Lindsay Elms

The following peak information for the Bonanza Range (north to south) is from the Nimpkish 92L/7 map.

Feet	Metres	Name	Grid Reference
5,554	1,6m	Whiltilla Mountain	631815
5,500	1,676m	unnamed	642800
5,540	1,689m	unnamed	646796
5,467	1,666m	unnamed	675787
5,550	1,692m	unnamed	679779
5,769	1,758m	unnamed	688779
5,800	1,768m	Bonanza Peak	706755
5,722	1,744m	Mount Ashwood	750710

TOM TAYLOR: STORIES FROM A FIRST-TIME MOUNTAINEER

Andrew Pape-Salmon
September 9 - 11

Prior to the weekend of September 9-11 this year, the concept of doing a C3 rated "mountaineering" trip was inconceivable. How could I possibly cope on the mountain top without a course on doing crevasse rescues and using crampons, ropes and other technical gear? Peter Rothermel, the trip leader, emailed me that the glacier was down to "blue ice", that we would need crampons and an ice axe and that we should probably rope up. Fortunately, he assured me that if I hadn't done this before, "this is a good place to learn". While I still plan to take a mountaineering course in the near future, Peter's willingness to share his knowledge with a number of us beginners, along with the inclusive manner of other group members, opened the door to a new world for me.

After a single trip, I must now confess that I have developed an addiction to mountaineering. I guess it helps that we had magnificent weather, excellent views, and a dynamic group who "clicked" with each other. I have looked into purchasing my own set of crampons and climbing gear for a full season this fall and next year.

A mountaineering experience that goes smoothly provides an incredible "natural high". In my mind, this is shaped by a combination of significant physical exertion, the emotional relaxation and tranquility of being in the wilderness where the only noises are "of the earth", and the spiritual transcendence of being on top of the world.

The terrain on Mount Tom Taylor provides an excellent quality, grayish granite texture for easy travel, visual appeal, and plenty of foot and handholds. The mountain has a classic, majestic peak, a Rocky Mountain like experience here on Vancouver Island.

As the photo illustrates facing northwest, the peak of Mount Tom Taylor is approached from the southeast col, along a ridge, across a glacier a short piece, behind the east col to the left of the peak and up a couple of gullies to the top.

Here is how the summit day progressed: at 7am left camp at Baby Bedwell Lake, elevation 960 metres. Traveled above the west side of Baby Bedwell and Bedwell Lake with views of Big Interior Mountain; at 9:20am approached the lovely alpine lake below the Bedwell/Moyeha Divide with

good drinking water, elevation 1,100 metres. Climbed up a challenging gully on the flank of the mountain, followed by an ascent on granite, which provided excellent grip for the rest of the climb. We had a lot of trouble navigating a plethora of cairns. One more steep gully put us onto a ridge. The theme song at this point was (in the tune of Old MacDonald had a Farm ... there a pig pig here, a pig pig there...), "... there's a cairn cairn here and a cairn cairn there, here a cairn, there a cairn, everywhere a cairn cairn ..." (written by Chris Shepard); at 12:30pm reached SE Col, elevation approximately 1,600 metres. At this point, we had good views of Mount Albert Edward in the NE direction, Septimus east of us, and the Golden Hinde to the north. We traveled through heavy wind along the ridge until we met a small glacier, at which point we geared up with ice axe, ropes, crampons, and helmets. I got a refresher on ice axe self-arrest



Mt. Tom Taylor, taken from the South East Col

Photo: Mike Springer

MOUNT DRABBLE: A SUCCESSFUL ADVENTURE IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD

Ashley Robinson

October 1-2

It doesn't matter whether it's backpacking the steep rocky ridges of Pemberton, peak-bagging some unknown mountain in the Purcell range, conquering a day-hike in the Cariboos outside of Prince George or camping on one of the pristine mountains on Vancouver Island; outdoor enthusiasts know that challenge, adventure and camaraderie at 1600 metres- surrounded by rock, trees and earth are far superior to anything found in the concrete jungle of society. They know that beneath all of society's struggles to be more successful, more efficient and to constantly maximize time while minimizing effort, everyone is missing the quality experiences. Pursuit of the outdoors allows a small segment of people that rare chance to slow down, look around, shake off society and its expectations for a bit, and enjoy the earth around them. This may not be what society necessarily deems as successful, but a fortunate few know a little better.

For most of the people to whom I described my recent Mt Drabble excursion as filled with snow, hard physical work and sleeping on the ground, success would probably not be the first word that came to their mind. Maybe I am getting ahead of myself though. The trip planning started two weeks prior, in the form of a UVic Outdoors Club meeting. Many of us were new members who needed an opportunity to meet the others, and many of us were new hikers - so the announcement of Sandy Briggs' overnight hike up Mt Drabble in Strathcona Park was one of excitement. The feeling that only anticipation of discovery could bring started to well up inside me, and I ran over to get my name on the sign up list.

A couple of midterm tests later, I found myself unpacking my modest gear from the astrovan in a cloud of mist on a gloomy Saturday morning. Among 14 other UVic Outdoors club and ACC members, we began our journey to Mount Drabble from an obscure parking lot in Strathcona Park. Everyone was locked and loaded, complete with rain gear and trekking poles and we began our ascent. We travelled up a fire road of sorts, chatting to new-found friends, sometimes failing to gain footholds in the shifty gravel. Layers were shed, and then we left the open, abandoned ski areas we were hiking, and entered the dense forest and the roller coaster that is the Plateau trail. As I fell behind the group, snapping photos of vividly coloured fungus, I took a moment to look around. Towering trees cast their shadows on the mucky earth

underfoot, the intense variation in plant life intrigued me and the fact that everything was alive, green and soaking wet was vastly different than the fall hikes I had done in Ontario or Northern BC. Such beautiful landscapes! I hurried to catch up with the others and we started the portion of the hike that Sandy lovingly referred to as the section where "you have to take your hands out of your pockets" - otherwise known as a bit of a scramble. What followed was a series of steep rock steps and rock walls, very entertaining to scale with a 30 lb pack, made all the more interesting by the slippery state of the moss-covered rocks.

Once the rock walls were completed, we started to look excitedly for the top of Mt Drabble. One of the more enthusiastic outdoor clubbers managed to spot a cairn and rushed to be the first to it. Once pictures were snapped of many of us standing next to the official Mount Drabble sign, the sun began to peek out from under the clouds. We hurriedly set up camps, divided up tent buddies, and got to work cooking some well deserved dinner! The feast that ensued was shared by many, even the dessert (which consisted of a very burnt attempt at cookies-from-scratch). After dinner one of the Outdoor Clubbers decided to initiate an activity she had always favoured: appreciations. The kind where we go around to each individual and ask them what they are particularly thankful for at that moment. It was like thanksgiving- with Mr.Noodles instead of turkey. Soon enough the sun began to fade, the rain started to set in and attention spans drifted from food to sleep. Eight of the rowdier Outdoor Clubbers decided to huddle in a very cramped 2-person tent to play some cards, progressively getting louder and louder - competing against the howling wind. After figuring we were probably keeping the rest of the camp up with our incessant giggling, we all retired to our respective tents.

I believe it was roughly 8 am the next morning when I awoke. I ignored the slight dripping of water on my head, and huddled even further into my down sleeping bag. Then something caught my ear - the sound of howling wind outside, tent fabric flapping incessantly, and voices. I wearily popped my head out of my protective sleeping bag and grumbled. One of my tent buddies poked their head inside and informed me with glee, "There's snow outside!" Snow? On the Island- isn't that an oxymoron or something? Being new to this environment,

snow is the last thing I would have expected in October from a place where they don't own much more than a couple of snow plows. After a huddled breakfast consisting of bagels and semi-frozen cream, we packed the soaking wet gear into our now very heavy packs and started our descent. The first complication of the unexpected snow was that the cliffs we had come up the previous day were now too dangerous to go down. Our other option was to find a way around them. There were a few confused moments about which way 'down' actually was, but soon the discrepancy was sorted out. The plod back to the parking lot was marked by frozen feet, a lot of puddle jumping and of course, polka. Yes, polka. While waiting for the confusion of direction to be sorted out, we decided to fend off the cold by getting one of the ACC members to teach us a little polka. I was pleased to see everyone join in! After our brief dance lesson, complete with singing, we found our way back to the safety of the vehicles.

As I sat in the astrovan watching the miles roll by, now warm and dry with food in my belly, I recalled a story lent to me by one of the more experienced members of the ACC. At the top of Mt. Drabble, amidst the foul weather and the grim faces of lads and lasses huddled around each other for warmth, he simply smiled and laughed. Curious, I asked him

why he was so enthusiastic in such nasty weather. He told me that in his younger hiking days, this trip would have been a wash – expectations of sunny skies, breathtaking views and uninterrupted sleep dashed because of cold, wind, and snow. He would have grumbled about not using that weekend to do a myriad of chores, work or projects he had waiting for him. These thoughts could have resembled the thoughts of missed schoolwork going on in the minds of us students. The smile and laugh of this ACC member were those of the knowing outdoors enthusiast, who doesn't qualify success in quite the same way as society does – not in number of hours worked that day, or how many chapters read in an hour. Success is on a more intimate level for the ones who understand: it is an appreciation of the mysterious complexities and vast beauty of nature, even if just for a weekend. They know that no outdoors excursions, not even the ones like Drabble that don't go exactly according to plan, are a wasted effort.

Participants: Ashley Robinson, Fraser Harris, Patrick Saunders, Kelly Dougan, Alea Macey, Mark Leslie, Cory Horner, Chris Chutter, Megan Adams, Daphne Kessel, Gerta Smythe, Rick Reeve, Martin Smith, Stijn Ruiter, Sandy Briggs

IN MEMORY OF LARRY TALARICO, 1943 – 2005

Ah Larry. Crossing the ledges on the South side of Mt. MacDonald today, I saw an orange and black route marker and it brought tears to my eyes. That was Larry marking the route so he wouldn't get lost on his own and also to show others the way. That heavy daypack he carried must have weighed 35 pounds. What could have been in it? Turns out he had three litres of water though he never used more than one. The rest were so that no one would ever again get dehydrated the way they did on one Alpine Club hike he attended. He had three fleeces when he could only wear one, in case anyone got cold. The rest of the weight was more equipment to serve others.

If he had lived another four days, three of those days would have been at a Search and Rescue workshop, improving his rescue skills. Larry died within sight of the new Sooke Potholes Park to which he contributed money via the TLC. That was Larry thinking how to help people, thinking how to make things better for people.

I thought I'd got a bit of a nut for a backwoods companion the first time he stopped on the trail and started mumbling into his jacket. But it turned out that was just Larry being high tech and meticulous, using a tiny tape recorder instead of a notebook and noting every trail junction. I used to tease Larry

that if he'd just pay more attention to the lay of the land and less to his GPS he would learn to navigate better. Maybe. But I sure like all those lovely maps he made, carefully recording all our routes in the Sooke Hills. And more than once since his death I have wished I had him and his GPS to tell us precisely where we were on the map.

I miss Larry in the hills for his enthusiasm, for his perennial willingness to help me clear a trail somewhere or find a new one, for his support and his thoughtfulness, as well, of course, for his GPS. And if I get to choose a place to die, let it be in a spot like he did, high in the glorious beauty of the hills.

Ave, Larry
by Ian Brown

Larry Talarico, Fully Committed

Larry Talarico died on July 7th, while hiking in the Sooke Hills with the "Thursday Hikers." He was only 62, far too young for us all to have lost a valuable contributor to the Alpine Club and, for me, a true friend.

As a regular participant in ACC events, Larry was known to many members. He joined many up-Island trips, but his major activity was hiking on the periphery of Victoria, often

as a leader. The Kludahk Trail was one focus of his interest, and he loved to demonstrate his four-wheel-drive technology in reaching remote sections (notwithstanding the fact that a Volkswagen "bug" sometimes got there before him.)

For several years he was a volunteer for CRD Parks, and when they secured the land to join Thetis and Mount Work parks, he was first to lead an ACC trip from one end to the other. In East Sooke Park, Larry catalogued invasive species, locating each of them (believe it or not) by photographs and a GPS coordinate. He was a detailed organizer who did everything in his own unique, thorough way.

When a hiker was lost in East Sooke Park, Larry developed an interest in search and rescue, joining the Juan de Fuca Ground Search and Rescue group. He found the training sessions very absorbing, so much so that within a year he was looking after the group's equipment.

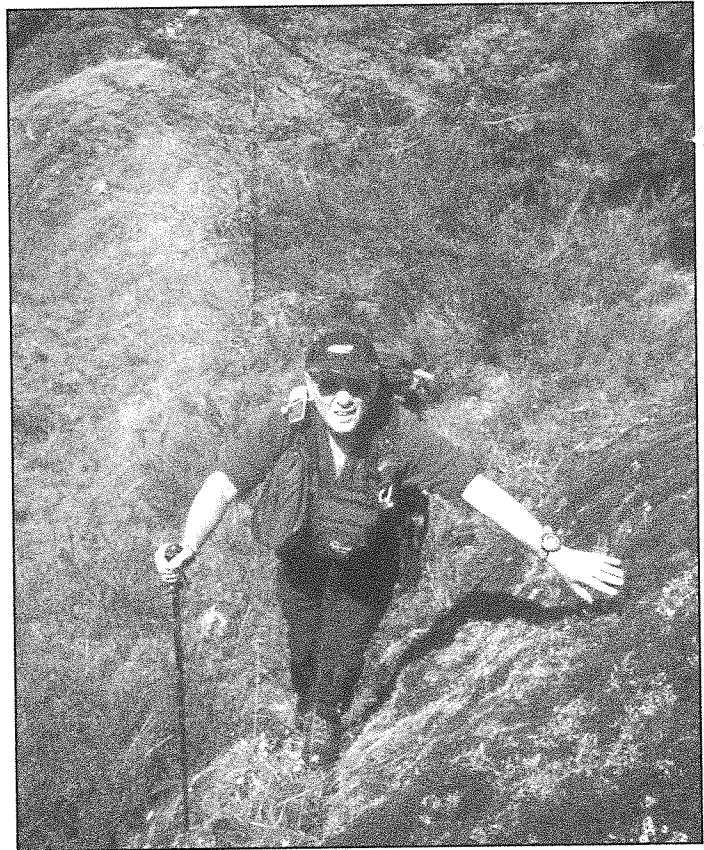
When one of our friends dies, it is our personal associations that stick in memory. On an early morning climb of Mount Adams, together we paused to watch the shadow of the peak extend way out to the Pacific. And as we climbed, Larry was fascinated by different colours of butterflies that we encountered at different elevations.

Along the Pacific Crest Trail through the Goat Rocks Wilderness and on a similar trip on the Great Divide Trail from Coleman to Waterton, Larry was a steady hiker, his GPS expertise often useful on the seldom-travelled GDT route. It was only recently in May of this year, that we completed the 47 km Juan de Fuca Trail in 20 hours (over two days.) My hip was giving me trouble, so Larry carried the tent the last day. It was typical of Larry's helpful, generous spirit.

At the July 14th Memorial Reception at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, many relatives and friends spoke of this quality, among others. In his dental practice, Larry's attention to detail impressed his clients and fellow workers. In all aspects of his life, there was a concern for family and anyone who needed his help. A continuous sequence of Larry's photographs demonstrated the versatile interests of the man, from delicate flowers and interactions with his grandchildren, to soaring rock faces and ocean vistas.

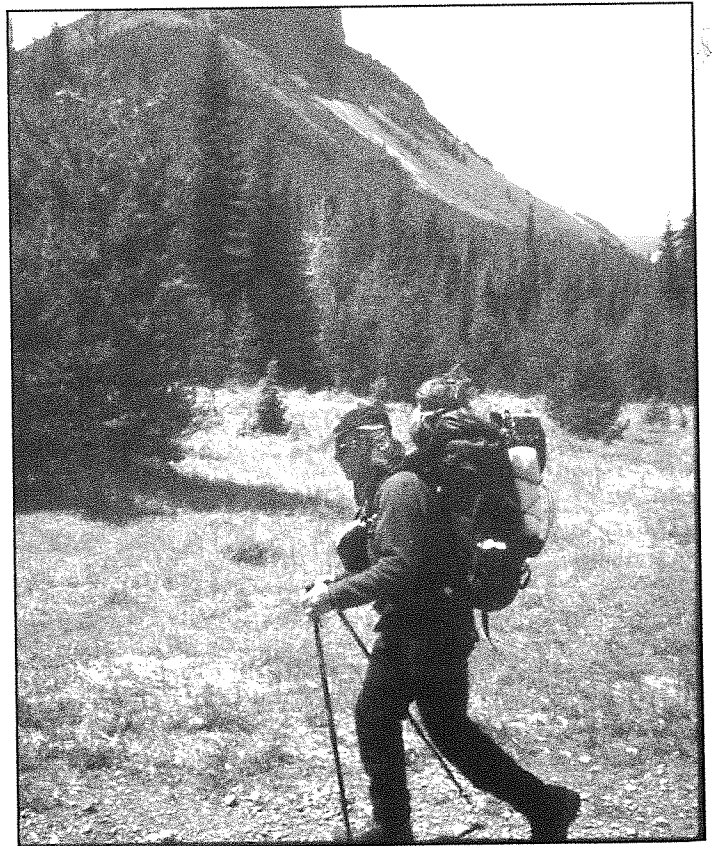
Our sympathies go to Larry's wife, Alison, (who continues to hike with several ACC members,) to daughter Trina, husband Mike, and grandchildren Tessa and Michael, and to son Tony and wife Kelly. Larry was a self-deprecating man who probably did not realize his positive effect on those around him. His generous spirit and pleasant companionship will not be forgotten.

Gil Parker



Larry Talarico in the Sooke Hills

Photo: Gil Parker



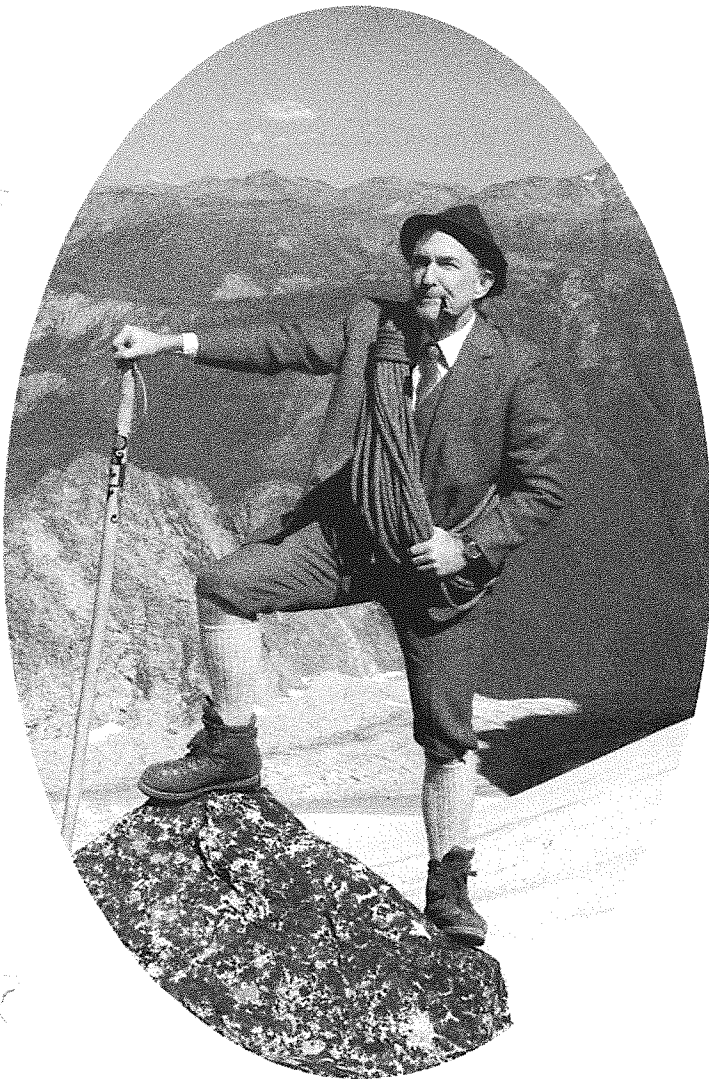
Larry Talarico - South of Crowsnest Pass on the Great Divide Trail

Photo: Gil Parker

**MOUNTAIN
NATURE
WINNER**

PATAGONIAN
WOODPECKER

PHOTO:
GRAHAM MADDOCKS



**MOUNTAIN
HUMOUR
WINNER**

SIR GEOFF BENNETT

PHOTO:
ANDREW BENNETT

COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

WEDGE MOUNTAIN

Sonia Langer
May 28-29

The trip to Wedge Mountain (9527 ft), the highest mountain in Garibaldi Park, was indeed a blissful mountain experience full of sunny skies, a gorgeous white-shrouded mountain, and many laughs with great people.

After ferrying from Nanaimo, and driving into the night, we found the access road easily on the right-hand side, 7 miles north of Whistler, and then across the Green River. Russ drove his little car up the access road, politely asking his passengers to get out and walk at every large rock, and massive divot in the road. Soon, the little car, as well as the larger more suitable vehicles, made it to the trailhead with much laughter. Waking up at the trail head and heading off at an ambitious 6am, we were happy to find the trail up the Wedgemount Creek drainage

sunny, hot, and fast. Almost no snow was to be seen en route to the cabin. After an early arrival, we had the better part of a gorgeous sunny day. (We could've had that morning coffee at the trailhead after all!) Some went for a short day hike high



Wedge Mountain from across the Lake

Photo: Christine Fordham

on the south-facing shoulder of Mount Cook to gain a view of our stunning objective. Others rested, napped and lazed about at the small, BCMC hut. As the weather was unusually warm, with the freezing temperature at about 4000 feet, we debated

and discussed our departure time. After much deliberation, the decision for six out of our seven ACC-ers to leave at midnight was apt as we were the first of what seemed like hoards to set out for our summit.

Walking quickly on the north side of Wedgemount Lake, we were soon at the glacier. Roping up in two teams of three, we were soon ascending the glacier. No crampons were necessary. The decision to ascend the whole North ridge was soon made to avoid the open crevasses easily seen on the more typical Wedgemount Glacier route. The North ridge was an exciting route, which narrowed to knife-edge at one point. Unfortunately, there were many others on the route that day.

We later learned that our alpine start was not soon enough,



Sonia on the North Arête

Photo: Christine Fordham

as the intense sunlight was softening the snow; those ahead of us were setting off loose sloughs beneath them. We watched slough after slough ride down into the bowl formed by the Weart Glacier to the east of us. Perched safely on our ridgeline, we were happy to be out of the way of these small avalanches.



Christine Fordham on the summit

Photo: Charles Turner

At one point, another team ahead of us kicked down as much snow as they were able, in an attempt to release whatever slopes were going to release. We had been feeling quite safe, yet we did debate the sanity and the safety of this action. Soon, it was our turn to cross one exposed slope, using a boot-axe belay. This slope allowed us to gain the summit ridge. Once all were safely belayed up onto the summit ridge, the un-roped walk for the glory was indeed stunning. So were our photos!

Because of the instability of the slopes on our ascent route, the decision for an alternate descent was made. We headed west past the two para-gliders equipped with video cameras to film their two skier friends on a ski descent of the south slope of Wedge Mountain. (There were hoards on the mountain that day!) Having no para-glider, parachute, skis or other, we simply walked down towards the col between Parkhurst Mountain and Wedge Mountain. The descent was an easy, enjoyable, warm, sunny walk down to the glacier where we roped up once again. One rope team snowshoed the length of the glacier, and one team walked the quick descent to the hut. A blissful glacier walk with great people, lots of laughs and incredibly stunning views of Wedge: You couldn't ask for a better weekend trip!

Participants: Russ Moir (leader), John Young, Charles Turner, Christine Fordham, Jules Thomson, Peter Shanahan and Sonia Langer.

as a leader. The Kludahk Trail was one focus of his interest, and he loved to demonstrate his four-wheel-drive technology in reaching remote sections (notwithstanding the fact that a Volkswagen "bug" sometimes got there before him.)

For several years he was a volunteer for CRD Parks, and when they secured the land to join Thetis and Mount Work parks, he was first to lead an ACC trip from one end to the other. In East Sooke Park, Larry catalogued invasive species, locating each of them (believe it or not) by photographs and a GPS coordinate. He was a detailed organizer who did everything in his own unique, thorough way.

When a hiker was lost in East Sooke Park, Larry developed an interest in search and rescue, joining the Juan de Fuca Ground Search and Rescue group. He found the training sessions very absorbing, so much so that within a year he was looking after the group's equipment.

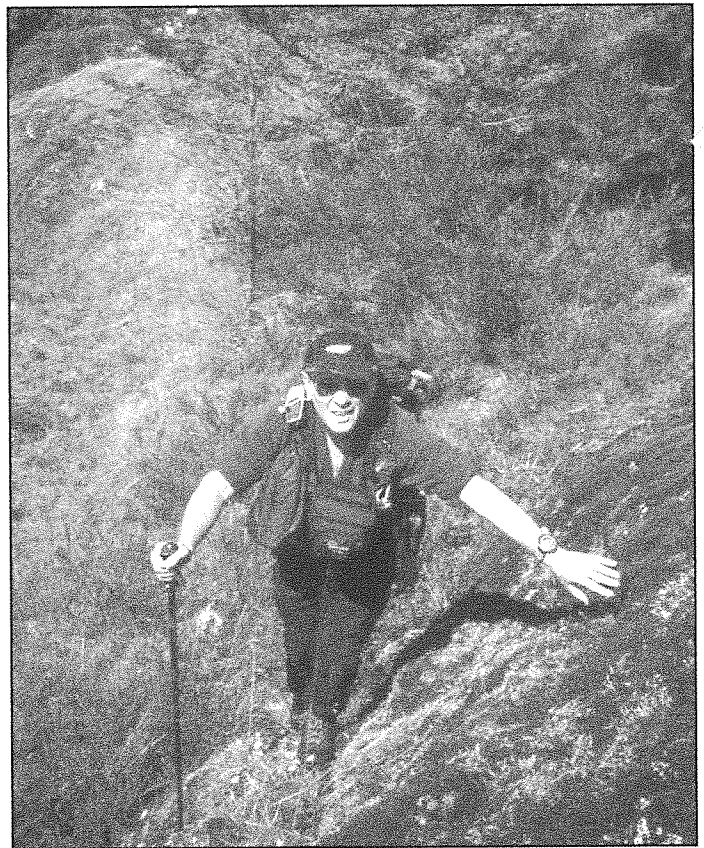
When one of our friends dies, it is our personal associations that stick in memory. On an early morning climb of Mount Adams, together we paused to watch the shadow of the peak extend way out to the Pacific. And as we climbed, Larry was fascinated by different colours of butterflies that we encountered at different elevations.

Along the Pacific Crest Trail through the Goat Rocks Wilderness and on a similar trip on the Great Divide Trail from Coleman to Waterton, Larry was a steady hiker, his GPS expertise often useful on the seldom-travelled GDT route. It was only recently in May of this year, that we completed the 47 km Juan de Fuca Trail in 20 hours (over two days.) My hip was giving me trouble, so Larry carried the tent the last day. It was typical of Larry's helpful, generous spirit.

At the July 14th Memorial Reception at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, many relatives and friends spoke of this quality, among others. In his dental practice, Larry's attention to detail impressed his clients and fellow workers. In all aspects of his life, there was a concern for family and anyone who needed his help. A continuous sequence of Larry's photographs demonstrated the versatile interests of the man, from delicate flowers and interactions with his grandchildren, to soaring rock faces and ocean vistas.

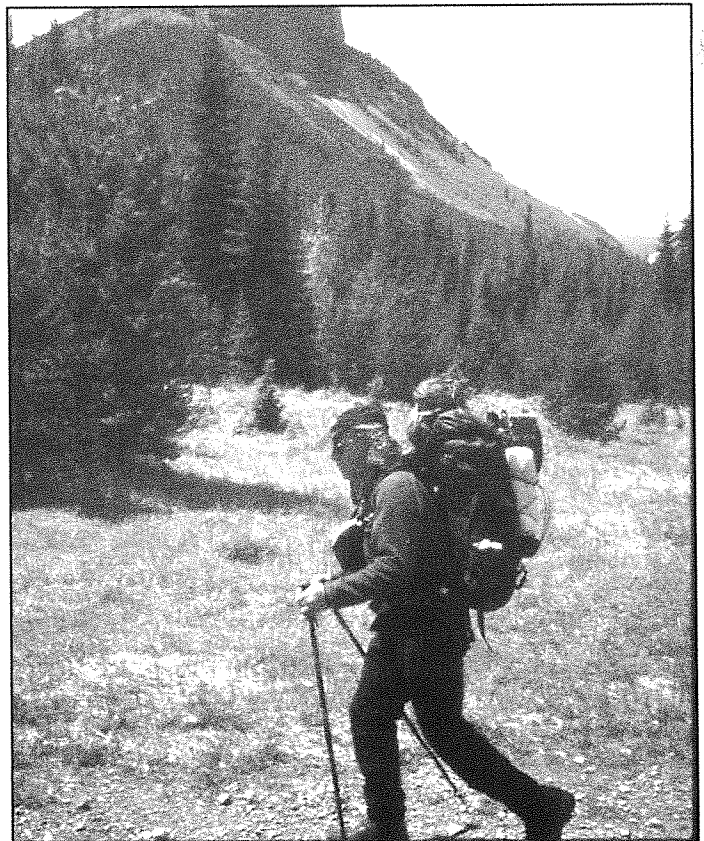
Our sympathies go to Larry's wife, Alison, (who continues to hike with several ACC members,) to daughter Trina, husband Mike, and grandchildren Tessa and Michael, and to son Tony and wife Kelly. Larry was a self-deprecating man who probably did not realize his positive effect on those around him. His generous spirit and pleasant companionship will not be forgotten.

Gil Parker



Larry Talarico in the Sooke Hills

Photo: Gil Parker



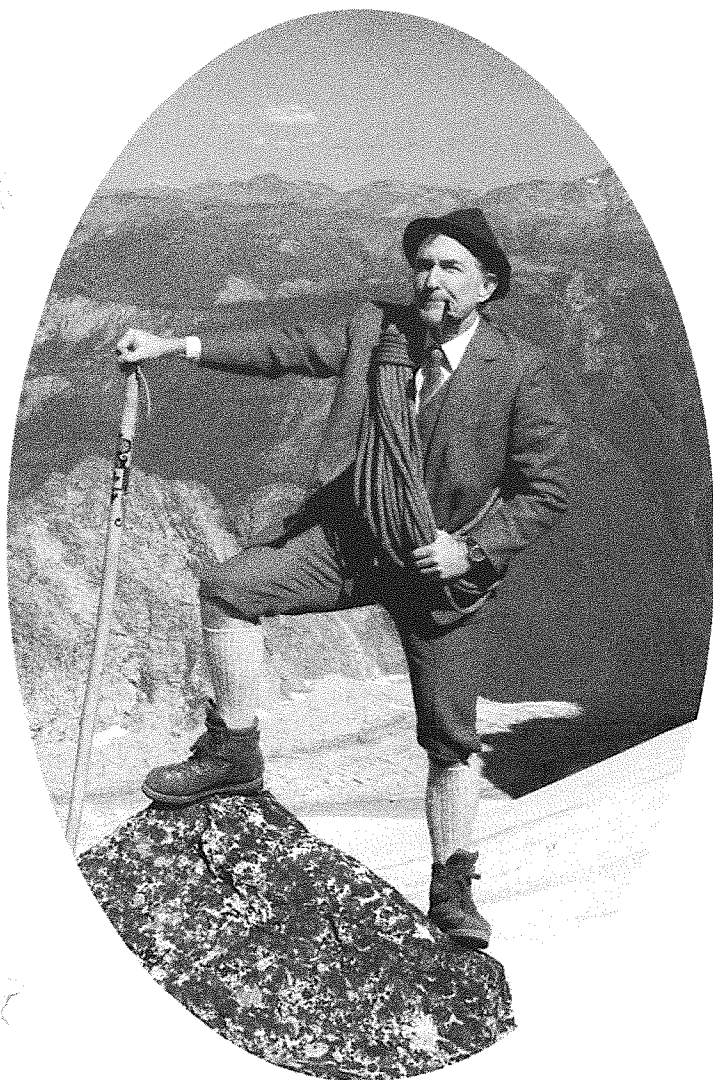
Larry Talarico - South of Crowsnest Pass on the Great Divide Trail

Photo: Gil Parker

**MOUNTAIN
NATURE
WINNER**

PATAGONIAN
WOODPECKER

PHOTO:
GRAHAM MADDOCKS



**MOUNTAIN
HUMOUR
WINNER**

SIR GEOFF BENNETT

PHOTO:
ANDREW BENNETT

COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

WEDGE MOUNTAIN

Sonia Langer
May 28-29

The trip to Wedge Mountain (9527 ft), the highest mountain in Garibaldi Park, was indeed a blissful mountain experience full of sunny skies, a gorgeous white-shrouded mountain, and many laughs with great people.

After ferrying from Nanaimo, and driving into the night, we found the access road easily on the right-hand side, 7 miles north of Whistler, and then across the Green River. Russ drove his little car up the access road, politely asking his passengers to get out and walk at every large rock, and massive divot in the road. Soon, the little car, as well as the larger more suitable vehicles, made it to the trailhead with much laughter. Waking up at the trail head and heading off at an ambitious 6am, we were happy to find the trail up the Wedgemount Creek drainage

sunny, hot, and fast. Almost no snow was to be seen en route to the cabin. After an early arrival, we had the better part of a gorgeous sunny day. (We could've had that morning coffee at the trailhead after all!) Some went for a short day hike high



Wedge Mountain from across the Lake

Photo: Christine Fordham

on the south-facing shoulder of Mount Cook to gain a view of our stunning objective. Others rested, napped and lazed about at the small, BCMC hut. As the weather was unusually warm, with the freezing temperature at about 4000 feet, we debated

and discussed our departure time. After much deliberation, the decision for six out of our seven ACC-ers to leave at midnight was apt as we were the first of what seemed like hoards to set out for our summit.

Walking quickly on the north side of Wedgemount Lake, we were soon at the glacier. Roping up in two teams of three, we were soon ascending the glacier. No crampons were necessary. The decision to ascend the whole North ridge was soon made to avoid the open crevasses easily seen on the more typical Wedgemount Glacier route. The North ridge was an exciting route, which narrowed to knife-edge at one point. Unfortunately, there were many others on the route that day.

We later learned that our alpine start was not soon enough,



Sonia on the North Arête

Photo: Christine Fordham

as the intense sunlight was softening the snow; those ahead of us were setting off loose sloughs beneath them. We watched slough after slough ride down into the bowl formed by the Weart Glacier to the east of us. Perched safely on our ridgeline, we were happy to be out of the way of these small avalanches.



Christine Fordham on the summit

Photo: Charles Turner

At one point, another team ahead of us kicked down as much snow as they were able, in an attempt to release whatever slopes were going to release. We had been feeling quite safe, yet we did debate the sanity and the safety of this action. Soon, it was our turn to cross one exposed slope, using a boot-axe belay. This slope allowed us to gain the summit ridge. Once all were safely belayed up onto the summit ridge, the un-roped walk for the glory was indeed stunning. So were our photos!

Because of the instability of the slopes on our ascent route, the decision for an alternate descent was made. We headed west past the two para-gliders equipped with video cameras to film their two skier friends on a ski descent of the south slope of Wedge Mountain. (There were hoards on the mountain that day!) Having no para-glider, parachute, skis or other, we simply walked down towards the col between Parkhurst Mountain and Wedge Mountain. The descent was an easy, enjoyable, warm, sunny walk down to the glacier where we roped up once again. One rope team snowshoed the length of the glacier, and one team walked the quick descent to the hut. A blissful glacier walk with great people, lots of laughs and incredibly stunning views of Wedge: You couldn't ask for a better weekend trip!

Participants: Russ Moir (leader), John Young, Charles Turner, Christine Fordham, Jules Thomson, Peter Shanahan and Sonia Langer.

SPEARHEAD TRAVERSE

Mike Hubbard

April 29 – May 2, 2004

The scheduled trip to Glacier Peak has had little luck for the past three years. This time it was a washed out road which Charles fortunately heard about in time to organize a substitute and what a substitute.

This traverse is rightly called "The Haute Route of the Americas" and with Summit Expeditions would cost you \$800.00. For us it was \$112.50 Nanaimo to Nanaimo and what a bargain.

Our first technological challenge was to re-programme my GPS for UTM10 as Latitude and Longitude, whilst fine for the ferry crossing to Horseshoe Bay, was little use in pinning down the precise location of the Holm – van Citters cabin on Nesters road in Whistler, which they had kindly lent us. We fortunately did not have to rely on my budding navigational skills but it was a close thing on the Sunday when we woke to a white out below Mt. Decker.

Thanks to the use of the cabin we had a leisurely start on Friday morning taking the first 9 o'clock lift to the Whistler Summit as Blackcomb, the preferred and higher starting point, was already closed for the season. Leaving the lifts we headed east over the Bumps to Singing Pass. Clear blue sky and initially icy conditions, softening as the sun warmed the snow, sped us to the Pass, losing a considerable amount of altitude in the process. After lunch we climbed up to the south of Whirlwind to the col below Overlord. Here we were following a young Australian couple one of whom took a short fall on the rocky scramble one had to take to reach the glacier. Charles managed it by passing his skis up ahead of himself. Martin managed it – just – with skis strapped on to his pack. I, always a bit of a wimp on rock, had to unload mine and pass them up to Charles whilst perched on some very wobbly crud. On reaching the Glacier the Aussies camped just below a rather large crevasse whilst we decided to traverse high over some ominous cornice debris with crevasses below us to the col between Benvolio and Fitzsimmons. Here we found a tent platform already prepared by a previous party right on the col and an ideal campsite from which to watch the sunset whilst cooking dinner, ideal that is in the windless conditions in which we set up camp.

Hardly had we remarked on the idyllic nature of the site when a breeze started from the east. An evening thermal, we thought, but it turned into an all night blow with flapping tent and wild dreams. The morning was still clear although the forecast change was in the air. A few feet down from the col the wind left us and we had a great ski down some 2000 feet to where a Vancouver Section group travelling ahead of us had left the signs of their camp with an outhouse built even further from camp than our recent biffy on the Easter trip to the Pebble Glacier.

From there it was up – and down – god knows how many times and how many vertical feet with full packs and pumping hearts until, after climbing a steep snow slope which we had to boot, we looked down to the Glacier below Decker where we saw what looked like an Inuit Summer camp. It was more probably the Vancouver Section camp as some vigorous skiers were striding up the slopes for one more un-laden run. We, having used up all our excess energy in just getting that far, crossed below their camp and up on to a corniced ridge which promised to be as windy as the previous night's camp but blessed with a running snow melt creek, dryish ground and a great view over to the Black Tusk and beyond. We found a flatter and less windy snowfield about 100 feet down but dumped our packs by the water and decided to eat first and put up the tent later.



Camp 2 on the Spearhead

Photo: Mike Hubbard

A strong front line of weather passed over and we fondly forecast a drop in wind with the blue sky beyond but by dusk a second front was approaching creating fantastic light conditions but with ominous clouds forming to the west. We set up camp on the lower snow, tethering the trusty club Sierra Design Tent with skis, poles and shovels as securely as we could, and went to bed. We were wakened some time during the night by the sound of heavy rain on the tent but it had fortunately stopped by first light. I looked out and could see nothing but white. What a place to have to master the GPS and put in the several passes yet to go from the map – an art I had yet to master or even practice.

Fortunately, after cooking in a snow hole, outlines of rock and the immediate pass above us could be seen. After an hour or so of plodding we came to the col above what is ominously called “Body Bag Bowl” and rather tentatively skied, and mostly step turned, down another 2000 feet of fairly steep, crevassed and crusty snow. To the North was Mt. Wedge looking Everest like in the now lifting cloud and to the west a high pass that we hoped might be the last. When we finally reached it – what Joy - on the next ridge were the towers of the Upper T Bar of Blackcomb and below us the Blackcomb Glacier.

As another white out enveloped us we traversed the Glacier and by noon were posing triumphantly in front of the Blackcomb Summit sign. Lunch with a view was followed by some more whooping downhill whiteout skiing to the Glacier



Mike Hubbard, Charles Turner and Martin Hoffman

Photo: Mike Hubbard

Lodge followed by our first views of the Valley and Whistler Village with excellent skiing on diminishing snow which turned to grass only about 500 feet above the Village. From there it was boots and down through the multi million dollar homes to condo land and eventually to my venerable Volvo in parking lot number 4, in what felt like tropical sun.

A trip and a half Charles: one of the best and most strenuous that I can remember. Thanks for leading it and well done Martin, a new member fresh from a sojourn in Australia, whose only other club ski trip this winter was Mt. Brenton. From the least strenuous to the most and I for one, despite the fact that I had been out most weekends since Christmas, was pushed to keep up.

Participants: Charles Turner (Leader), Martin Hoffman and Mike Hubbard.

RETURN TO WEDGE MOUNTAIN

Peter Shanahan

July 17-19

My summer in Vancouver had not gone without its bumps and scrapes. My attempt at climbing Wedge Mountain by the NE Arête on Russ Moir's trip in May 2005 was abruptly cut short. After the 4-hour slog up the Wedgemount Trail with a particularly heavy pack whilst enjoying some of the best weather BC had had for a long while, I twisted my ankle on a little jaunt up Mt Cook's west ridge. Russ' party made the summit the next morning leaving me to nurse my ankle and make a solitary walk/hobble back to the cars.

Feeling cheated out of a peak I vowed to return.

An opportunity presented itself when a very good friend of mine from the UK said she wanted to come to BC. Mary, a doctor from Cardiff, Wales is an avid alpinist and fresh from the Matterhorn was keen as mustard to visit Wedge with me in July 2005. During the third week in July, the weather suddenly improved from the rains which would have scuppered most other thoughts of entering the mountains. We were in luck, and so just a day into Mary's arrival, the two of us headed north

from Vancouver by Greyhound on a glorious afternoon to our destination: Whistler. On arrival, time was getting on and the trailhead was a good 10 km away. A taxi took us to within 200m of the trail for \$25. It was a surprise that the driver took us as far as he did in the sedan after my cautions of the bad ruts in the trail road that climbs from Green Lake. It was I think a challenge for him to drive that far rather than making a few more bucks.

So we were off. We shouldered those familiar overburdened packs and headed into the darkening forest at 8 pm. The headtorches would come out quite soon in the depths of the forest, but the trail is so well marked and the heat of the day left the canopy to make the 3 ¼ hour hike quite pleasant. Only the chase of a run away roll of toilet paper broke the still night's air. Reaching the Wedge Lake hut at 11:30 pm along ground now completely devoid of snow compared to two months previous, Mary and I pitched our tent on the high ground of the hut, which was sparsely populated by fellow campers and climbers. It was decided that the next morning would be our summit attempt, even though we had only just had two hours sleep and no dinner. The weather just looked too good to miss out. In fact the weather was to remain fantastic for the next week. The summer had finally arrived. Following Jules Thomson's lead from May, I awoke us at 2 am to be off by 3 am so to be on the glacier during the descent at a reasonably early time in the afternoon. Well that was the plan. After getting all the gear on and roping up, we commenced the glacier plod a little past 4 am. At that point we had been joined by another party of three young lads who looked rather inexperienced and said they'd follow our lead. Our route was then to take the Wedgemount Glacier to the 2300 m contour and then bear off east to climb the large couloir at the northern end of the NE Arête. Crevasses were our concern at this late in the season, and Jules Thomson had earlier suggested avoiding the southern, narrower couloir seeing as the route would take us over some formidable crevasses. So we gained the 1 km arête on good snow at 6 am to be greeted by the sun-bathed Needles Glacier and the mountains beyond. Following the ridge line southwards, we crossed increasingly softer snow on slightly corniced slopes lying between rock outcrops. The exposure was not a problem for us over the first 700 m, but as the ridge steepened towards the summit ridge, the snow was giving way

under Mary's feet. The slopes either side are over 50 degrees and so a snow stake would have been nice here. With that only dicey part of the route over, we made the summit ridge and summited at 8 am with high winds but fine views across the Garibaldi Park. We were the first to summit that morning. I had made the summit at last. Thanks Mary.

Now to get down.

With a little less clarity from McLane's Alpine Select description of the descent and my poor memory of Russ' wise words, we had some indecision over the correct ridge to scramble down on the western side of Wedge. We chose the NW ridge, the wrong one. After some difficult scrambling over particularly nasty loose rock we came to an abrupt drop just a few hundred metres from the col between Wedge and Parkhurst. At that same moment a soloist, who had followed us, appeared. His name was Brian, a ski guide from Rossland and was stuck just like us. So we ummed and arred about what to do. We shuddered at the thought of reversing the ridge and then descending the correct west one. It was the best option as we had plenty of time being only 12 pm, the time we should have been back at the hut, and a rappel down to the Wedge Couloir route was not on the cards with only one 50m rope. So up we went. We however discovered a tantalising way down. The Wedgemount Glacier climbs steeply up to the north face (below the North Face Routes on the topos in McLane's book) at around 2500m and the bergschrund was in good nick. The crevasses were foreboding, but negotiable and the now three of us were confident and pleased about a route off the ridge. So in good, professional fashion, we made along the bergschrund and onto the glacier diagonally as to avoid all of us being on the lateral moraines. We then went down the ascent route illustrated in Alpine Select for routes 42, 43 and 44, back down to the familiar glacier and the toe to end a 12-hour day. Our thanks go to Brian Cotley whose professionalism brought us all home safe.

Mary remains impressed with BC's mountains after our little epic and is sure to come back. We wrapped up her week with a hike up to Garibaldi Lake and Panorama Ridge, a truly outstanding place.

A special thanks to all in the ACC Vancouver Island Branch for making my year in B.C. from the U.K. a most enjoyable one. Participants: Peter Shanahan and Mary Claydon

MOUNT SIR SANDFORD

Doug Hurrell

July 28 - August 5

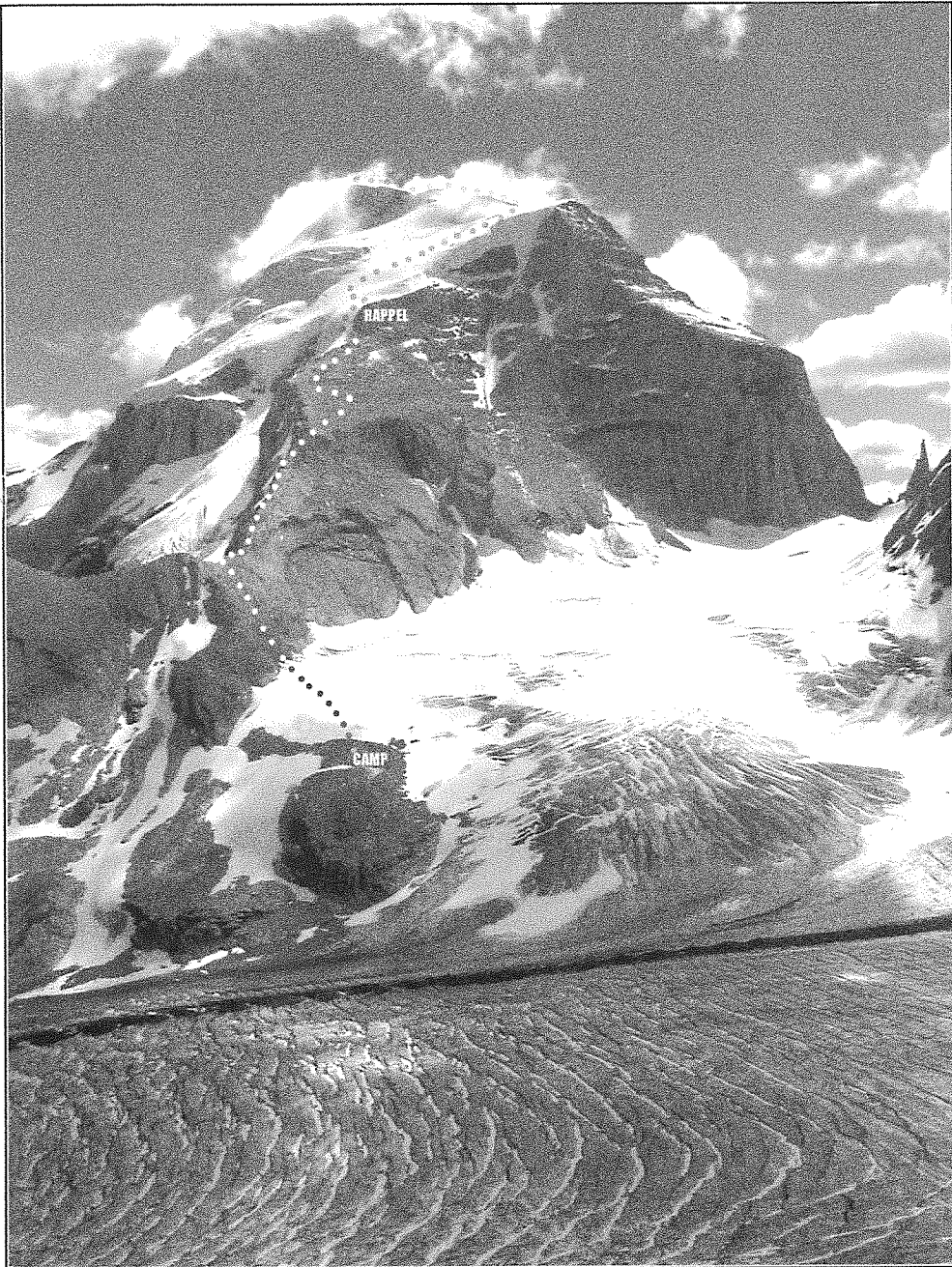
Mount Sir Sandford lies about 55 km north of the Rogers Pass within the Big Bend of the Columbia River. At 11,550' it is the highest peak in the Selkirk range. In the pioneering days of Canadian mountaineering Sir Sandford was regarded as a real prize and it was finally climbed in 1912 on the 8th attempt by a party that included two Swiss guides.

The difficulties included the dense Selkirk bush as well as the steep snow and ice slopes on the north side of the mountain in the pre-crampon era. The tragedies and misadventures of this era of exploration included two drownings in the Columbia River and a climber who spent the summer in the forests of Palmer Creek waiting for his broken femur to heal before he

was carried out to the CPR on a litter by his companions.

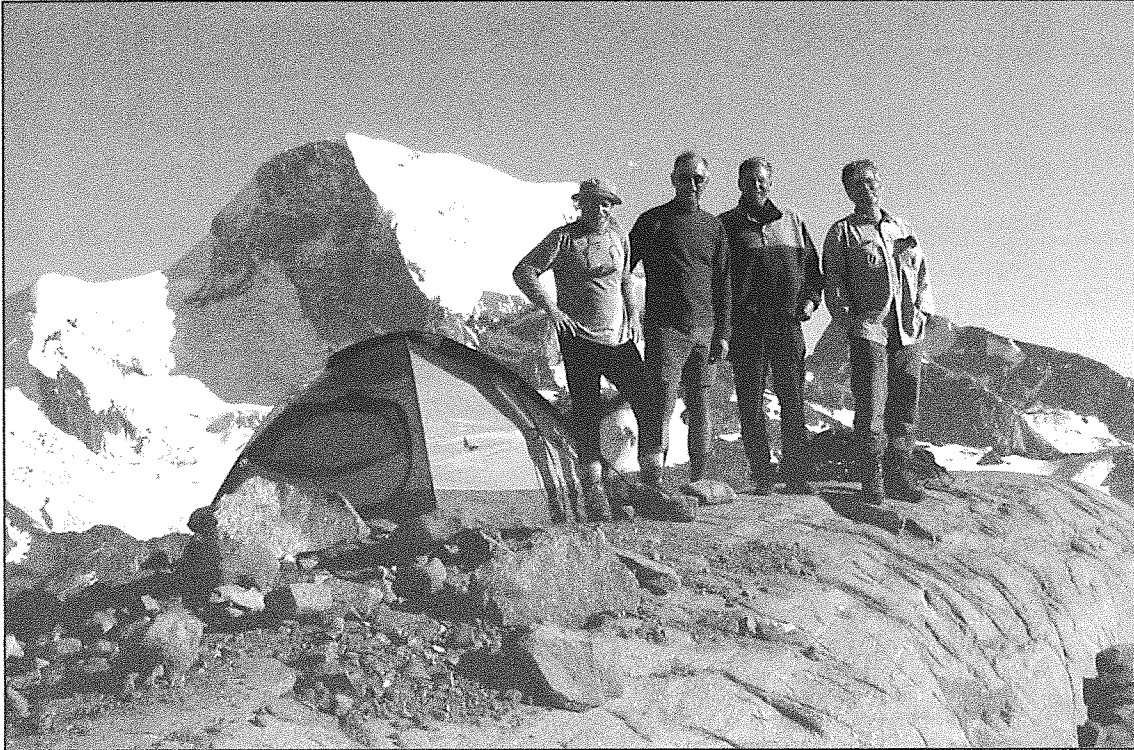
With the challenges faced by these pioneers in mind, it was with some guilt (on my part at least), that four of us flew into this area at the end of July last year. These sentiments were soon replaced by overwhelming feelings of awe at our surroundings and relief that nothing important had been left behind. We were in a world of rock, glaciers and snow and there was no sign of human presence (except for a few levelled out areas for tents) and almost no vegetation as far as the eye could see.

On July 31 on a very windy day we climbed Sir Sandford by its northwest ridge from a camp approximately 500' above the Sir Sandford glacier. Most of the first part of the climb was exposed low angle scrambling (up to 5.0 according to the guidebook) on poor rock with few handholds. Where the ridge was blocked by a cliff we moved to a system of ledges and slabs over to the right. I remember climbing on my knees a lot in this section. After regaining the ridge one is again confronted by a big cliff, which is bypassed by climbing the ice bulge to the left. The ropes and crampons came out for the first time and we front pointed 2 ½ rope lengths of 50 degree slush covered ice, which we protected with our 4 ice screws. After getting by this section there was no holding us back and we plodded up through the deep snow of the upper glacier to reach



Route up Northwest ridge of Sir Sandford

Photo: Rudy Brugger



Rudy Brugger, Doug Hurrell, Brooke George and Robert Gunn

Photo: Rudy Brugger

metamorphic rock. The next morning was again fine and we descended to cross Silvertip Creek, then hiked up very steep heather slopes to Azimuth Notch - quite tiring for four elderly gentlemen carrying full packs. After rappelling off the cornice on the north side, we descended and then traversed the blue ice of the Adamant glacier to its far side. A steep hike over talus and slabs led to our next campsite below Thor Pass. This was a fantastic location among huge boulders and with great views of Sir Sandford.

the beautiful snowy summit ridge. The rope came out once more just before we reached the top where the ridge narrowed down to a knife edge. From the top we had good views of the Great Cairn Hut, the Adamants and Gothics, and could see Sir Donald beyond the Rogers Pass.

The descent of the upper glacier went very quickly. I ran down a lot of it. There is the most beautiful 50 meter rappel that avoids down climbing the steep ice. Unfortunately Rudy's 11mm rope blew into a crack and jammed when he was trying to retrieve it and there it still must hang like a piece of spaghetti. Getting back down the rotten rock to our camp went fairly well although I used my arse a lot for friction. We arrived back at the tents after a 13 hour day, feeling very fortunate to have had the weather and snow conditions to climb such a fine route on this beautiful mountain.

The following day it rained and blew so hard that some of the tent poles were damaged. This was a good excuse to rest, do a bit of exploring, and drink up most of our remaining alcoholic beverages. On August 2 we awoke to clear skies and walked up the Sir Sandford glacier, crossed Palisade Pass, and strolled down the dirty blue ice of the Haworth glacier to our second camp on the gravel flats near the terminus of the Silvertip glacier. This was a lovely place with the odd small tree, a few beautiful flowers, and amazing patterns in the glacier polished

The following morning we walked up the Thor glacier and started up the steep slopes below Thor Pass. The first part we front pointed on perfect crampon snow. The last bit was a loose gully reminiscent of Vancouver Island. From here we easily gained the snow covered Gothics Glacier, familiar to many of our members from the Fairy Meadow winter cabin trips. We dropped our packs and did a side trip up Pioneer Peak (10,700'), an easy snow climb but with great views of the Adamants and the Granite glacier. Then it was the long walk over the glacier to Friendship Col and down the snow and ice slopes, scree, and finally a trail to the Fairy Meadow hut. This seemed like walking down into paradise with meadows, trees, incredible flowers and views of the Granite glacier far below. However the first mosquitoes of the trip attacked us viciously and we soon dumped our packs and dived into the hut. We enjoyed a pleasant evening of hot showers, drinking, dining and socializing. The next day hiked down the Swan Creek trail (badly overgrown in places) to our car.

This was a great trip shared by four good friends among some of Canada's most beautiful mountains. The climbing was challenging, the route finding always interesting, and the scenery spectacular.

Participants: Brooke George, Robert Gunn, Rudy Brugger, Doug Hurrell

SUMMER 'THE NORTH FACE LEADERSHIP COURSE'

Joseph Hall
August 6-13

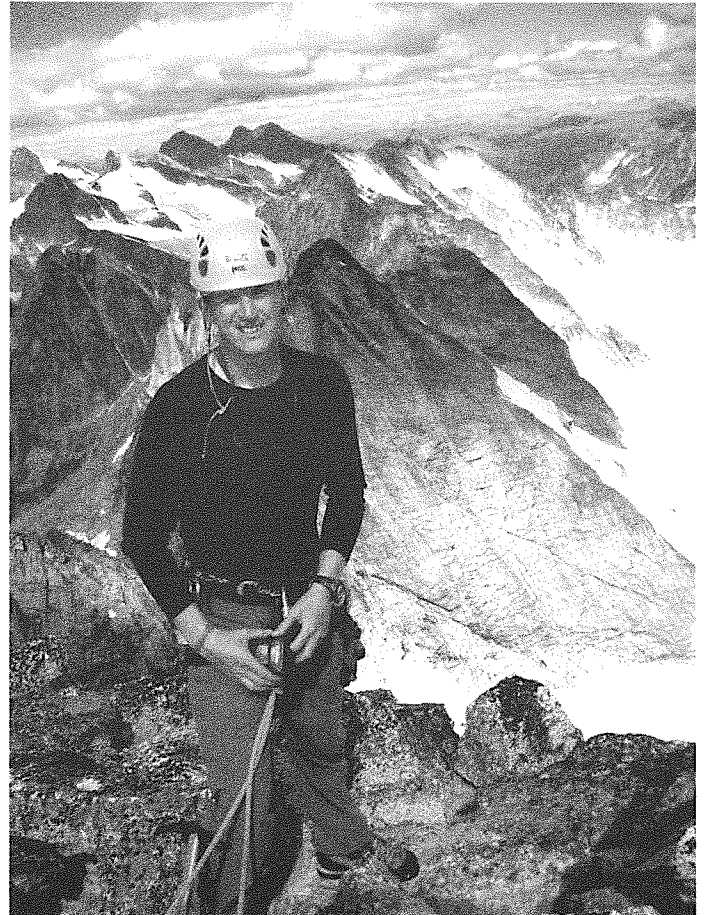
The Moby Dick Range, located just outside of Golden was the location for this year's course and general mountaineering camp. Views of surrounding peaks and a crystal blue lake greeted us daily. The ten participants were from across Canada. As usual on ACC trips, I was the tallest and the youngest. The first day had us helicopter into the range in the morning. After orienting ourselves with the camp for the afternoon, the whole camp (which included the ten of us for the leadership course and 25 people for the GMC) gathered for dinner where we were treated to a three-course dinner. After stuffing ourselves with endless food, we had a meeting with the three instructors where the week's itinerary was given; we received laminated maps of the area, and the free clothing from The North Face.

The plan for the week would follow one day of instruction then one day of climbing. The great thing about the area was that every mountain was right in our back yard. Every other morning, our group climbed to Houston Pass where we were taught and learned the new skills.

The first day of instruction had us on the rock where we learned a variety of systems for you guessed it, rock. Anchor systems, short roping techniques and general travel were covered. The next day was our chance to try our new techniques learned from the day before. Our mountain trip for the day was a traverse from Claggert Peak to Mount Billy Bud. A little bit of 5th class climbing and steep snow travel brought us to the top of Claggert Peak. We all made our way over to Billy Bud by down climbing, lowering and short roping over the blocky terrain. Even though we all felt comfortable on the terrain, we needed to practice these techniques for future use on trips. A full day of climbing and short roping each other brought us back to camp in time for the best part of the camp, DINNER.

Snow and ice techniques were the topic for Tuesday. Once again just past Houston Pass we played all day on the ice below Mt. Proteus and Escalade Peak. The great thing about climbing is that it's a hands on learning scene. So the best way to practice the things you learn is to climb. We practiced or played, however you want to say it, until the sun started to go down enjoying the summer sun and each other's company. The evening had us in the eating tent organizing for the next days climb up Moby Dick Mountain.

An early start at 5am had us eating breakfast in the tent and out of camp at 6am on our way. Primarily a snow and glacier



Joseph on Claggert Peak

Photo: Joseph Hall

travel peak, Moby Dick Mountain was the 2nd tallest in the range and provided the group with an entertaining day. We all traveled through the glacier and up the slopes without incident. Once off the snow the group made its way to the rocky summit where the mandatory summit photo was taken and lunch was eaten. We made our way back to camp down the snow and what was left of the lower glacier that had retreated half a kilometre up the rock. I was surprised to see this everywhere in the valley. There were many small glaciers in the valley that were all retreating so much, just hanging above the moraine. I knew glaciers all over the world are retreating everyday, but to see the remains of these glaciers in person really hit me hard.

Thursday was the grace day. We were treated to a day in camp working on our crevasse and rock rescue systems. This gave us all a chance to rest our legs and soak in the sunshine in camp. By the evening I smelled like a yeti so it was time to

have a swim. Houston Lake is crystal clear water surrounded by sand. The only problem was, was that I am a wimp when it comes to cold water. Houston Lake is glacier fed which keeps the lakes temperature pretty mild. So after much whining and crying I jumped in, jumped out, used a little soap, jumped back in and back out in a matter of seconds.

That evening dinner consisted of picking on the young one in camp. Or in other words, picking on me. Unfortunately the topic of discussion shifted to what vegetables people don't like to eat, so of course the "young one" got picked on and was forced to eat his nemesis, Mr. Broccoli. After much grief and aggravation I managed to win the battle and an extra dessert that no one wanted was mine. Stories from the GMC's day of climbing on the surrounding peaks brought the day to a close. After dinner, the ritual of making our lunch for the next day brought us back to the eating tent where more socializing took place.

The final day of activity had us split into three groups so we could tackle three different routes with one guide in each group. I had the privilege of climbing Escalade Peak with Janice and Christian. The next morning we headed up towards Houston Pass. The cool part of Escalade Peak is the fact that the bottom of the route begins with 5.7 40m pitch on solid rock. So on the last day we were able to lose our big boots and get into our climbing shoes and enjoy a day without instruction. More 5th class climbing the whole way up the route allowed us to work

on our new techniques we had learned throughout the week. As I approached the summit I realized we were quite ahead of schedule. So being the young ambitious one, I suggested to the others that we try to climb two other peaks to the east, Mt. Proteus and Harpoon Peak. After a little convincing we were ready, but first we needed to descend Escalade Peak. Down climbing, a lower and a rappel brought us back to our gear we had stashed at the bottom of the route. We laced our boots for more glacier and snow travel. A short glacier crossing brought us to a football field sized glacier where we snaked our way through the crevasses up onto the summit ridge of Mt. Proteus. Great views of the area and camp way below had us in awe. A short down climb and across the glacier brought us to Harpoon Peak. By this time everyone's boots had soaked through and hunger was setting in. With little over 2000ft. to descend to camp we made haste so not to delay dinner. After some boot skiing and scrambling down the moraine one last time we made it in time for dinner.

The morning brought us to the close of the camp. Many numbers and email addresses were exchanged and good-byes were said as the helicopter loaded people out all morning.

I can't thank the club enough for helping me get to the camp. A special thanks to Cyril Shokoples, Helen Sovdat, the ACMG guides, Mastion Broslma, the amateur leader, for putting up with me for the week and teaching us so much.

Thank you again.

ACC VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION ANNUAL SUMMER CAMP: ROGER'S PASS

Kevin E. Gillese
August 16-23

So many memories from the high country are ineffable and inexpressible. Like sublime moments in poetry and love, certain mountain moments give us the chance to transcend ourselves – and in our transcendence to become more than we ever thought we might be. That's why mountaineering is more poetry than engineering (although combining elements of both, and more). And that's why no one can pretend to objectivity in describing those mountain moments. Magic, even when shared, is always unique, and uniquely understood. We know that on the mountain heights, with the vastness of this earth at our feet, all things are possible. In a twinkling of an eye, fear which seemed to threaten one's very identity is replaced by growth and poise and inner-confidence. Strangers become trusted friends after only a day

or two sharing the sharp end of a rope. A group becomes a community as it struggles to share pains and disappointments along with joys and triumphs. As mountaineers, we know that we actually do meet – or at least live out -- our destiny in these high places. Can we deny that to ourselves?

One of our 2006 summer camp participants, Mike Dillistone, said in the Bushwhacker 2000 about a 1999 up-Island climb:

"Maybe we were missing the point. Maybe this wasn't about getting wet or trying to stay dry. Maybe this was about friendship and having fun with other people who love doing crazy things too. I wanted to take my clothes off and dance around in the joy of the moment. But I didn't."



Some of the summer camp participants, the others were out climbing or hiking

Photo: Richard Mathews

Maybe he should have yielded, then, to his ecstatic impulse. Maybe we all should have yielded to such impulse at this summer's camp. Or maybe it's better we just start a rumour -- why not here? -- that we did dance naked with joy around the thrones of the mountain gods in Roger's Pass.

However, I'm not thinking of Dillistone's latent Dionysian impulses just now -- as he smiles down at me and our teammates Richard Mathews, Greg Lawrance, Martin Davis, from another airy move on gray-black beautiful rock. We're on the Jupiter traverse, a ridge climb made by a number of our camp teams, guided and not. Others have done the route all the way from the valley. But we start from the high Asulkan hut, thus shirking the weighty packs shouldered by more stalwart campmates. Right now, my wee day pack -- in which I even forgot to pack lunch -- floats on my back like a cushion. The sun is intoxicating. The air is glacier fresh, glacier cold.

So

Dillistone's smiling down. We're strung out along a class 4 ridge, having ascended through the heavily crevassed Sapphire Glacier. Dillistone is not really smiling -- more bursting with joy. His grin stretches off his cheeks out to a distant horizon. Beneath us, glaciers sprawl, waterfalls tumble down immense cliffs. Serrated rock ridges ring us. "Man, this is fun!" Dillistone calls down. "Eh?"

No one replies. It's a rhetorical question. Redundant.

Upon reflection, if I had at that moment remembered Dillistone's earlier ruminations in this journal -- and if I had thought then of him taking off his clothes on the ridge and dancing for joy -- I grant you that I might not have been smiling.

But it wasn't like that. The impulse to joy was as present as rock or ice. And I wasn't thinking of his, or any, words.

And of course I was smiling.

How could one not?

There are lots of different ways of understanding or describing this past summer's climbing camp (mixed with hikers). The moment described above, on the Jupiter Ridge, was only a fragment from a very full week. We had friendship and fellowship, mountaineering and hiking, hot springs and railroad museums. We even had live music from our fiddlers Vinzenz and Andrew. We had all that we have ever come to treasure from our trips to the heights. A cynic might comment: No one from this year's Camp summited Mount Sir Donald.

And while that is true, the correct response would be: So what? First, there were all sorts of summits won other than Sir Donald, and traverses traversed and routes completed and climbs climbed.

But -- and I suspect it is more important than all the checkbox ticking of summit registers ever can be -- quite apart from any of our many "summits" there were all sorts of wonders and joys and comradeship and ecstasy, "summit experiences" of a different but no less profound kind.

The best things in life aren't things. Not even such things as "summits." But cynics can't quite accept that. As with much (or most?) criticism, the cynic's comment would miss all that we had this summer:

- The rain and the wind and the cold of our first day climbing as mounts Abbot and Afton, and North Terminal Peak, were summited by our hiking/climbing teams;

- at week's end, the ritualistic carrying in on a royal chair of our guide, Mark Klassen, in manner of a Conrad Kain procession;
- the thrusting to the heights by party after party, day after day, and the reports – some laconic, some not – delivered around the dinner table each evening;
- the feverish planning for each next day's trips by candle light and cheap red wine
- the Uto ridge, in lengthening afternoon shadows;
- another endless talus ridge on Avalanche Mountain or Eagle Peak;
- welcome relief for our tired muscles in the nearby hot springs.

Would the cynic truly appreciate the enthusiasm of that sudden jolt from sleep into the dark of a 5 in the morning start by headlamp in the wind and rain? The sudden rush of adrenaline as one steps over a crevasse yawning first blue then black, beautiful and mysterious beneath one's crampons? The delicate move above air, in the sunshine, on friable blocky rock, one's body stretching like a cat towards the sun, the movements a kind of ecstasy-in-motion?

Not likely.

But this summer's camp participants would understand.

That was their life for a week in August.

[Rather than list all the parties on each peak, I think it more fitting to the solid teamwork of the whole camp to list simply the peaks and dates ascended. I have also left off many hiking routes other than mountain ridges which participants walked. And there are some camp events which are just plain hard to explain: like Geoff Bennett's doppelganger of Conrad Kain in 19th century Swiss-guide costume. I guess other camp participants might agree that you had to be there to understand such an odd mountain phenomenon.]

First day of camp Wednesday August 17th

Rain and wind. (1) Mount Abbot, (2) Mount Afton, (3) North Terminal Peak. (The day before – Tuesday Aug. 16th the technical start of the week-long camp – was a full day of travel for the 23 camp participants. Camp was based for the entire week in the A.O. Wheeler Hut (the ACC's oldest extant hut), and also a high hut, called the Asulkan Hut, from which a number of Jupiter traverse teams set out.)

Second Day: Thursday Aug. 18th

Better weather, early morning mist and rain. (4) Eagle Peak, (5) Avalanche Mountain, (6) Uto Peak, (7) beginning of the "greater Jupiter traverse" along Abbot, Afton, Rampart, Dome (staying this night in the Sapphire bivouac hut).

Third Day: Friday Aug. 19th

Mist in morning, clearing to sun. (8) Finish of the Jupiter traverse over Jupiter, down through Asulkan hut to Wheeler hut, (9) Uto Peak, (10) Glacier Crest.

Fourth Day: Saturday Aug. 20th

Perfect weather, sunny, not super hot. (11) Uto Peak (12) Jupiter Traverse from Asulkan Hut up the Sapphire Col and over Jupiter back to Asulkan and Wheeler

Fifth Day: Sunday Aug. 21st

More superb weather. (13) Jupiter Traverse from Asulkan Hut, (14) Glacier Crest Loop, (15) Illecillewatt Glacier.

Sixth Day: Monday Aug. 22nd

Not so sunny but still beautiful weather. (14) Cheops Mountain, (15) North Terminal Peak.

Seventh Day: Tuesday Aug. 23rd

Camp's Over! Clean up, move out, return home, do the laundry

Lessons Learned/Executive Summary:

Lying in the bunk upstairs in the Wheeler Hut, I remember a time in the Maligne Canyon Hut in the Rockies, on a climbing trip with the Edmonton Subsection, long, long decades ago. It was 1974. We wore wool pants and cotton anoraks. We drove pitons into the rock with hammers. It was a very different era – but the rushing streams and the brisk heights and the towering majesty of the mountains here are just the same as they were there those long years ago.

Memory is an odd thing. The fresh cold scent of pine boughs suddenly fills my nostrils with a pungent fragrance, and I suddenly find my face wet with tears. A pang of recognition. I have been here. I know this space. It knows me. Here all is well and all is well and all will be well.

I remember how as a teenager I – along with the world I climbed in – consulted *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills* (3rd ed.). It was our Bible.

And now its words come back to me:

A mountaineer is simply one who seeks the freedom of the hills, full wilderness citizenship with all its privileges and rewards, but one who also accepts all its responsibilities and demands. For though mountaineering at best is exhilarating, at worst it is frustrating and discouraging and punishing, or even catastrophic to those who ignore nature's stern and impersonal rules.

We had no catastrophes this summer. Oh, sure, we had frustrations and discouragement; a member with so much pain from a bad back he had to leave very early, a member recovering from pneumonia who fell ill again, the occasional burn, scrape, cut and bruise. But no serious injuries, no real falls, no accidents. And mostly all we had was joy – the joy of our mountains. The exhilarations, the exultations, and summits, summits, summits! Then, and there, we were full wilderness citizens. Then, and there, we lived the freedom of the hills.

Participants (in no special order): Martin Davis, Guide Mark Klassen, Mike Dillistone, Don Cameron, Greg Lawrance, Jules Thomson, Geoff Bennett, Andrew Bennett, Gerta Smythe, Vinzenz Proffen, Rick Eppler, Robie Macdonald, Catrin Brown, Keith Routley, Alexander (Sandy) Stewart, Kevin Gillese, Richard Mathews, Gerry Graham, Graham Maddocks, Cedric Zala, Lissa Zala, Philllipa (Phee) Hudson, Stan Marcus

UNA PALOMA BLANCA: WINTER IN THE SNOWY BUGABOOS

Rick Hudson
August 18

It's mid-August. At the car park the dust is awful, coating the mesh fencing that wraps each vehicle, and forming thin layers on their roofs. The hike up is hot and dry, the flowers in the middle meadows limp in the afternoon sun. For once, we are going to have good weather in the Bugaboos, and expectations are high.

Not so. That evening, clouds march in from the west, and by dark it's raining. Later, it turns to sleet, and at midnight we are treated to the mother of all thunder storms, the lightning so close it shakes the hut. Thoughts travel to those poor sods up at Applebee, awash on their granite slabs. I snuggle into my sleeping bag and know we made the right decision by staying in the (more expensive) Kain Hut.

Dawn brings sleet, wind, and a snowline barely half way up the boulder slope. Those poor sods in Applebee. No, wait, I've said that already. In the hut, it's a kill-time day. A cheerful band of Japanese climbers occupy an entire table, and produce bizarre food, which they offer to anyone brave enough to try. We in turn introduce them to jerky, guavas, maple syrup and rum. They retaliate with sake. It passes the time. By late afternoon, having read all the magazines, Denis, Daniel and I hike up to the foot of the Bugaboo-Snowpatch col, to stretch our legs and see how much snow damage there is. Above, snow-caked granite walls sweep away into brooding cloud, promising little.

Change of plan: it's time to lower our sights and aim for an easy classic, given the condition on the peaks. Late next morning we leave the hut under fine blue skies, watching the water stream in runnels off the east face of Snowpatch Spire. The upper sections are crusted in white, but are beautiful, in an awful sort of way (provided you don't have to climb them, of course).

At the bottom of Pigeon Spire's West Ridge, we stare in awe at the "easy slabs" on this 5.4 classic. They are plastered,



Where are the \$%^#! handholds? First pitch on West ridge of Pigeon Spire Photo: Rick Hudson

and what is usually a scramble, barely warranting a rope, is a smooth patch of verglas and snow. Cracks have filled in, and it takes half an hour to find a route up the pitch, feeling for handholds under the powder. "First winter ascent," shouts Denis cheerfully.

The worst of it is, although we have left the hut late, we are breaking trail, ploughing our way up the snow-filled chimneys and along the ridge. From the first summit, we pick our way cautiously down the ramp that can usually be strolled with hands in pockets, wishing we'd brought crampons. Thereafter, the climb to the second summit includes the classic 15m knife edge that is generally walked (cautiously). Today, it's a skating rink, and only Denis is brave enough to stand upright. Daniel and I scurry across like monkeys, prehensile-like.

The true summit involves dropping into the shadow of the cold north side, where the snow is deep and crisp, but seldom even. I lead through drifts, unable to see what my boots are doing. The final slab pitch to the summit is horrible and desperate. An icy wind is blowing, we are wearing every stitch of summer gear we have, and our teeth chatter by the time



we arrive. Behind us, two likely lads follow, which is opportune. Now we have a pair of ropes, and can rappel all the way to the shoulder, avoiding the need to reverse that horrible slab and the snow ledges.

Back at the second summit, we take stock. The sun is shining. Snow and melt-water are sloughing off the rock, revealing that honey colour that makes the Bugaboos such a visual, as well as tactile, treat. We are out of the wind, and it's almost warm. At the first summit, the ramp is now bare, and can be strolled in fine, indolent fashion. We watch with some annoyance as a pair of climbers appears from below, almost running up the line which, four hours earlier, we had battled to climb.

"Silly buggers," says Denis, "they've missed all the fun."

Denis exhibits bipedal form on the knife edge pitch of Pigeon Spire
Photo: Rick Hudson

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

ALL AWASH IN WASHINGTON'S CASCADES: THE SULFIDE GLACIER ROUTE ON MT SHUKSAN

Rick Hudson

May 7-8

May is the best of months, and the worst of months. The best, because the air is warm, flowers fill the valleys, and there is a hope of summer days to come. But it is also the worst of months – the seasons are in transition, and to the mountaineer there is no clear line on what to expect in the high country.

Such was our fate when we left the cars at 2,500' at about 2 o'clock and climbed slowly up through old-growth forest on a faint, increasingly snow-splashed trail, loaded down with skis, boots, poles, skins, crampons, ice axes, snow shovels, Pieps, snow probes plus all the usual overnight camping gear. Small wonder we compromised on climbing equipment – a few pickets, a couple of ice screws, a handful of runners and (what was to be a crucial decision later) just two 7mm ropes.

It's a long pull up to Shannon Ridge at 5,500', and the weather forecast, cloudy with a chance of showers on Sunday, looked like it was right on track. Dark clouds cloaked the sky and, when we reached the ridge, Mt Baker to the west was hidden from view.

We camped on snow. As the evening's ritual started, the sun broke through, and the mists burned off our larger neighbour, gradually revealing the splendid outline of that great volcano.



Rick & Christine on upper Sulphide Glacier view storm clouds over Mt. Shuksan

Photo: Sasha Kubicek



Shuksan turnaround time — Russ & Christine on the SE ridge of Mt. Shuksan at about 8800 ft in high winds

Photo: Rick Hudson

By 8 pm the sky showed promise for a clear morning. However, it had been a long day, starting at 4:30 am to catch the first ferry from Swartz Bay, so we sank into the land of nod with speed.

Struggling out of a warm sack at 4:15 the next morning, we could see a few stars, but much of the sky was obscured. Away at 5:00, we climbed to the Notch, and then traversed on hard, icy snow to the base of the Sulfide Glacier. Five of us were on skis, while Sasha favoured snowshoes. A series of rises brought us out onto the upper glacier, where the final tower of Mt Shuksan came into view, its summit wreathed in cloud.

The sun broke through sporadically, but the weather promised little. We reached the foot of the steep section by 9:30, leaving plenty of time to tackle the final 500'. Charles had been to this point before, when the party had tried the SE Ridge. The more traditional route is straight up the couloir in the S Face. In early May, both were heavy with snow, but there was considerable debris below the couloir, so we opted for the gentler-angled ridge, which we gained after shedding skis and donning crampons.

The clouds, always present, now descended. We climbed about 200' up the ridge on good, well-cracked rock that could be scrambled easily in the summer. Under the prevailing conditions however, we needed more runners and rope. At 11:00 we were in a white-out, the wind increasing and the temperature dropping. The absence of gear (we only had 160' of 7mm rope) meant our rate of progress was too slow, and we reluctantly turned around.

Off the ridge and out of the wind, we relaxed. At the skis we stripped away skins, the visibility improved slightly, and we set off down 2,500' of glacier, gliding with ease over what had so painfully been gained in the morning, the gallant Sasha running along behind. On the upper sections in the early morning, crampons would have been better (and our uphill loads the previous day considerably lighter), but lower down the snow softened considerably and we were grateful for skis/snowshoes.

Back at the tents by 2:00 we packed hastily, and then dropped down through the forest, plunging into tree wells in the snow, the trail seeming to go on forever until the roadhead finally appeared. A rapid change of clothes, and then the usual wild race in Sunday afternoon traffic

back up the I-5, trying to second-guess which ferry we'd catch. The gods smiled, and we drove straight onto The Spirit of British Columbia at 7:05 precisely, for a leisurely buffet home.

Participants: Christine Fordham, Mike Springer, Sasha Kubicek, Charles Turner, Russ Moir, Rick Hudson

Trip Notes:

Heights are in feet, since US Survey maps use imperial units. Distances are in kilometers, since that's what Canadian cars display. The traditional route up Mt Shuksan is from the south, up the long Sulfide Glacier. Take the I-5 to Burlington, then State Route 20 east. A free backcountry permit is required for overnight stays within the North Cascades National Park, which includes camping on Shannon Ridge. Get one any time outside the Ranger's Office, (360)856-5700, which is at 810 Route 20, Sedro-Woolley (next to the ARCO station). A few km before Concrete on Route 20, get a regional parking pass costing \$5/day or \$30/year at the Baker Lake Grocery (360)826-3776 at 3692 Route 20, which is open 24/7. Turn left on the Baker Lake road and drive 37 km to opposite Shannon Creek Campground. Turn left on road 1152 and drive 7 km; turn right onto road 014 and drive 2 km to the end.

Starting Elevation: 2,500 ft (750 m)
Summit Elevation: 9,127 ft (2782 m)
Height Gain: 6,627 ft (2,032 m)
Roundtrip Distance: 12 miles (20 km)

A NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN: CRISIS ON THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

Gil Parker
May 29

I crouched behind a rock promontory while ahead, the gap I had to pass through was roaring with hurricane winds. Physically bowled over several times trying to get past the opening, I felt defeated, wondering what to do. Squatting on the trail, I was cooling off rapidly. To avoid hypothermia, I had to do something—quickly. My tent would not stand in such conditions, so it was a matter of putting on all of my clothes and retreating inside my sleeping bag.”

Such was my diary entry of May 29th on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) near Wyley’s Knob, a radio tower hill south of Walker Pass. (See L.A. Times, May 24, “A Piece of the Bigger Picture.”)

As I slowly warmed up in the bag, ears covered to shield out the shrieking winds, the panic slowly subsided. Soon I was even able to poke my head out, grab my camera from the pack to photograph the changing colors of the lenticular cloud that hovered in the jet stream above. And despite the erratic crashing of the wind either side of my protective rock outcrop, fatigue from the day’s hike soon brought on intermittent naps.

Hikers on the PCT, 2650 miles of mountain trail from Mexico to Canada, live through many such crises, depending upon their skill, knowledge and experience. At 68, I thought that I’d been in most situations—but not the cold hurricane winds of the desert. A week earlier I’d come within a foot of stepping on a rattlesnake, avoiding its strike only by edging back up the trail slowly. And a week later, I would spend several uncertain hours trying to find the trail as it switch-backed down the mountainside beneath frozen snowdrifts west of Olancha Peak.

A “through hiker,” one who does the whole trail in a season extending from April to October, will have to deal with many crises. Dehydration, hypothermia and other health problems combine with the environmental challenges of a constantly changing terrain. “Section hikers” like me will do a few hundred miles in a month or so, hoping eventually to complete the trail.



Gil after a bivouac on Jetstream Ridge, Wyley’s Knob

Photo: Gil Parker

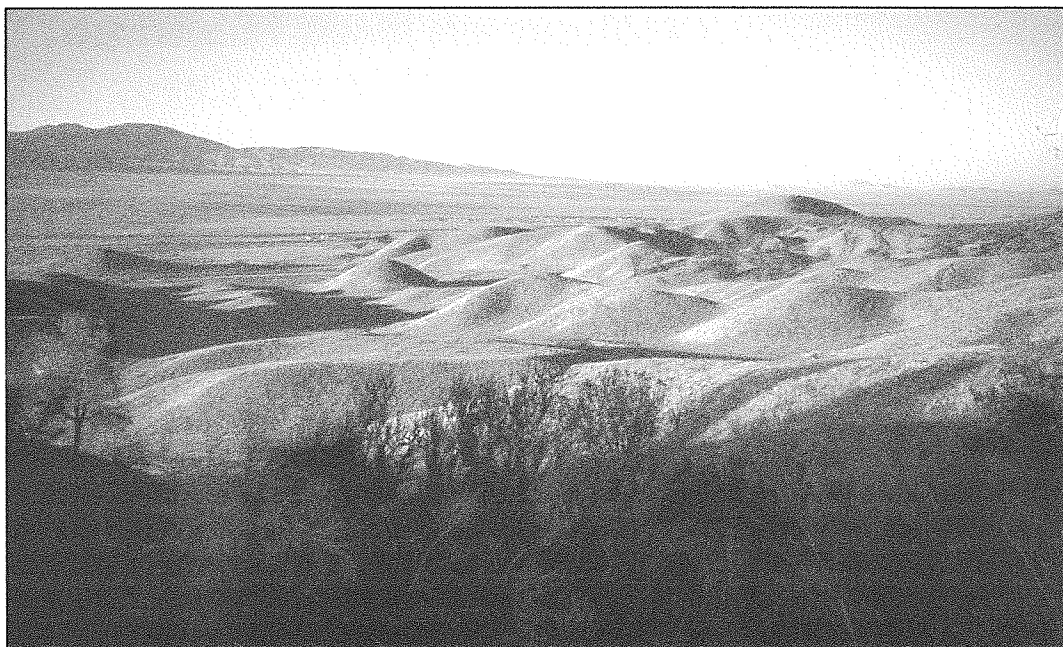
Each PCT hiker has to arrange food resupply (mailing dried food to Post Offices along the route,) to make equipment replacements (running shoes that expire after 500 miles,) to plan daily walk schedules between scarce water springs and finally, to decide when to take a day off, rest for a weary body from chalking up mileage, the so-called “zero days.”

Along with the periodic panic and pain comes a sense of having accomplished a traverse of Southern California’s desert mountains, the Sierra Nevada’s snowbound passes, Oregon’s volcanoes and Washington’s spectacular Cascade Range peaks. Most long-distance hikers will also glean a better understanding of self and will acquire a lot of new friends. They may not know these friends’ names—hikers often take on new identities for their PCT sojourns. Some are Squeaky, Swift, Kickstep, and Smack. More often the names are nouns, like Dirt Magnet, Greyhound or Billy Goat. I ask them why they don’t use their real names, as I have been trying to reinforce my identity for a lifetime.

“Easier to remember,” says one. But another reason is more likely. “Hiking the PCT is a life-changing experience. You want a whole new identity.”

Whatever the reason for a new name, or for the commitment to walk these 2650 miles, it is clearly not just a "cop-out" from life or work. Young women and men, some just completing college, walk the PCT. Some use the abrupt departure from the ordinary to decide questions of academic study, of vocation, or of personal relationship. Retirees like me use it to renew life goals. Others reinforce their connection to the Earth in a society more than ever estranged from it.

All who walk the PCT are grateful to the trail builders and to the Congress of 1968 for preserving the PCT as part of the National Trails System. The connection one feels to Nature here is therapeutic: the long daily tread dictates thinking time. The spirit of commitment and the sharing of information and resources (even food) are not often found in our competitive and commercial lives.



Descending into the Mojave Desert with the La Liebre Hills in the foreground

Photo: Gil Parker

Even the crises, with uncertainty, fear and eventual success (or survival) add to the depth of my life. The long walk along the Pacific Crest in the company of others of like mind restores my faith in human endeavor.

THE CASCADE VOLCANOES: LASSEN PEAK, MT. SHASTA & MT. ADAMS

Martin Smith
Lassen, June 14,
Shasta, June 15 + 16,
Adams, July 19 + 20,

In last year's Bushwhacker Annual (p59) I reported on Graham Bennett's and my trip down to Oregon to climb Mt Hood as part of my quest to climb the "I5's", the volcanoes you can see as you drive down the freeway to California. Graham must have enjoyed himself since he agreed to go back this year and add the California members of the septet, namely Lassen Peak (3186m) and Mt Shasta (4317m).

We left Victoria on June 12 on the 9 am ferry and drove down over two leisurely days to Mt Shasta Township. It didn't take long to recognise that my original count of 7 "I5's" was seriously in error. The Three Sisters in Oregon, although

distant, are clearly visible from the freeway and one practically drives right by Mt McLoughlin. So, if one ignores Shastina – it's a satellite of Shasta after all – the revised list of eleven peaks from south to north is: Lassen, Shasta, McLoughlin, South, Middle and North Sister, Hood, Adams, St Helens, Rainier and Baker. The good news is that I did South Sister last year without knowing it was on the list.

The plan was to climb Lassen first but we thought we might as well have a look at Shasta on the way. The standard route up Avalanche Gulch was snow covered from the trailhead at Bunny Flats at 2100m and looked in perfect condition. The rangers in town, however, warned of an incoming system 3 days

hence. This was a bridge to cross when we came to it and, after chatting to a number of that day's successful summit parties, we headed on down I5 to Red Bluff to spend the night.

Lassen was to be my first serious go at ski mountaineering and I couldn't have asked for better conditions. Surrounded by palm trees in the garden of the Super8 in Red Bluff, we loaded the skis in the car and set off east at 7.30. The southern approach to the park is best. It's a shorter route to the trailhead than that from Redding and the south access road usually opens first in spring. So it was skis on and away up the south ridge route by 9.30 on perfect snow. An easy trail runs up this route in summer when, apparently, it makes Finlayson on a busy Sunday look empty by comparison. In early June, although there were plenty of folk around, not that many were heading up. Certainly nothing like the crowds we'd seen on Hood last year. The route represented pretty basic stuff for Graham who has a lot of experience on skis. However, I found it harder than expected especially as the ridge steepened just over half way up. So, rather than struggle too much, I put it down as a lesson learned, took off the skis and we walked the rest of the way up the snow, finally topping out at 1pm. We then spent an hour eating lunch, staying out of the wind and trying to ignore the summit phallus. As I've climbed "I5's" over the years, I've been accustomed to views of mountains climbed or to be climbed both north and south. On Lassen, however, you've reached

After retrieving the skis, we traversed across to the south face of the mountain and skied 300m of steep, perfect corn snow back to the car, arriving at 3pm.

Our plan the next day was to sleep in, make an unhurried trip back up the freeway, check into a motel, do a leisurely gear prep and set off for Bunny Flats round about mid-morning the following day. Before all this, we thought we'd better get an update on weather conditions from the ranger station. The news was not good. The system that had been predicted was right on course to arrive next day, intense and promised to hang around for several days. Over lunch we decided that our only chance was to go for it right away and hope we could beat the storm to the top. So it was off to the local park to prep as quickly as possible and rush up to Bunny right after that. At 3pm, instead of watching telly with my feet up in a comfy chair as I expected, there I was lugging a hefty pack up a big mountain in the blazing sun. So much for a rest day! In fact the late start worked out to our advantage in that the snow soon firmed up enough to avoid post holing as we got higher and the hour got later. After an uneventful plod to >3200m, we pulled into Lake Helen, the usual overnight staging post, at 8.15pm. The weather was still clear and we could admire the constant traffic on the I5 far below. There was only one other party in residence at Lake Helen, so we had our choice of the many ready built snow shelters up there.



Lassen Peak. Graham Bennett approaching the summit

Photo: Martin Smith

the southern terminus of the Cascades and it's the plain of the Sacramento River valley that stretches out to the south. To the north was our next objective, of course, looking alarmingly higher than us even from a hundred miles away.

The night was quite comfortable. The only negative being the Backpacker's Pantry "Jamaican Chicken" for dinner, which I advise anyone reading this to avoid at all costs. We overslept a bit, got up at 5.20 and were ready to go by 6.30. To this point, it was still relatively clear, although the approaching front was obviously almost on us. I'm afraid it won the race hands down. By the time we'd reached (according to the altimeter) the base of the Red Banks, visibility was zero and we could hear the wind like an express train on the open ridge a couple of hundred feet above. The winds on Shasta are legendary and I for one had no intention of testing my mettle against them. So at a highpoint of 3600m it was time for a careful, planned and orderly retreat or, as I think I put it at the time, "let's get the f*** out of here".

On the way back to the tent we came across the other party foolish enough to be out there. They had made the mistake of not sleeping in, had made a proper alpine start and were on the ridge when the storm hit. They were blown off their feet several times. Good planning to sleep in I thought.



Mt. Shasta. Graham Bennett packing up in a hurry in the storm Photo: Martin Smith

In any event, we got the tent down and packed without too much trouble thanks to our super duper snow shelter, were on our way back down at 10.15 and at the car by 12.20pm. Although it started to snow heavily on the way down, visibility improved the lower we got and route finding was never an issue. We arrived at Bunny to find 20cm of snow on the car where we had baked in the sun less than 24 hours before! By 1.30 we were in a roomful of drying gear instead of standing on a 4000m summit. That's the mountains for you. They're the definitive paradigm when it comes to expecting the unexpected.

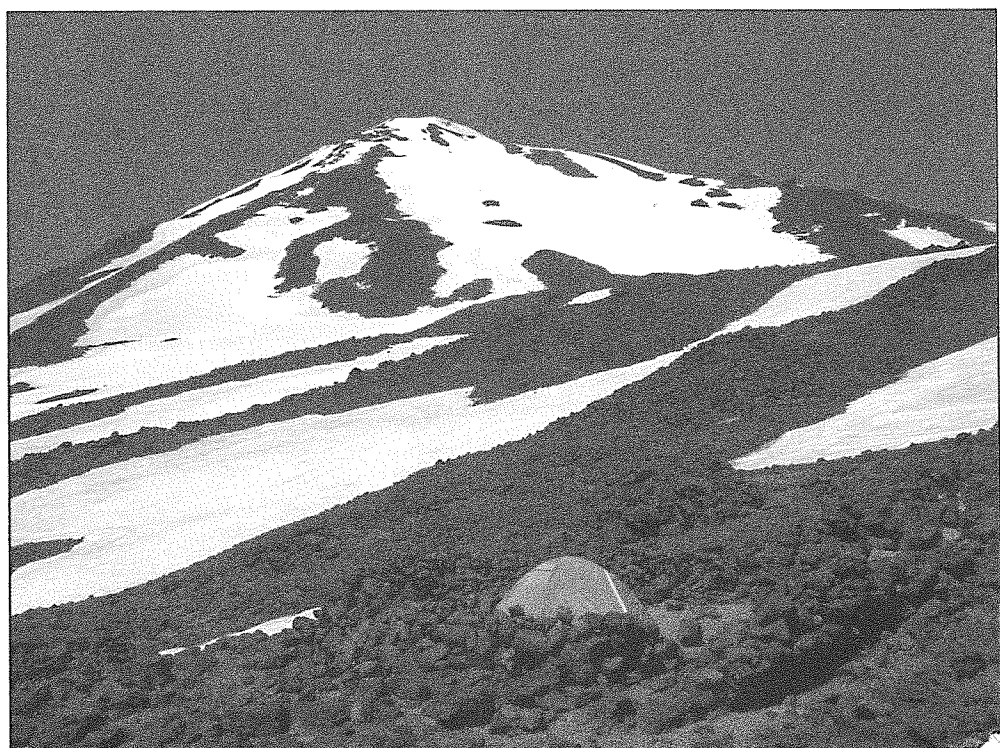
As we all know, that weather system hung around the west coast for the rest of June and well into July. It was only around about the middle of July that the long range forecast began to look anything like reasonable. After an enforced idle month, I was ready for anything and, since Graham wasn't available, decided to go off down to Washington and solo Mt Adams (3742m). Happily, however, a last minute posting on the ACC list server produced a response and I was delighted, as well as privileged, to enjoy Don Morton's company for the trip.

Don and I left Victoria on July 18, headed initially to Randle, WA

and then drove over forestry service back roads to Trout Lake where we spent the night. This approach route gave us several excellent views of our objective.

Many people summit Adams as a day trip. If the weather cooperates, though, the trip is stunningly beautiful and better enjoyed at a more leisurely pace. We left Trout Lake at 7am and drove up the half hour or so to the Cold Springs campground where the trail starts. I use the word "trail" advisedly. This being the US, it's more like a road and it took us to within half an hour of the Crescent Glacier, which is the normal approach to the standard South Spur route. At the top of the Crescent is a relatively flat area known as the "Lunch Counter" and this is where we had planned to camp for the night. It took us just over 4 hours to walk up from the trailhead to Lunch Counter. Just in time, in fact, for lunch. I suppose we could easily have gone on from here to the

summit and back to camp the same day. However, at this hour and time of year the snow is soft and makes for hard going and, anyway, the weather was perfect, the situation idyllic, the humming birds (even at 9000 feet) a delight, so why push it? There was no-one else around and it was hard to imagine a more perfect situation than lying there in the sun, looking up



Mt. Adams. High camp and the South Spur route

Photo: Martin Smith

the next day's route and admiring the views of Hood and St Helens. The afternoon slipped away peacefully and left me (for once) in perfect harmony with the world.

The next day we got up at 4am to a breathtaking bright red moonset. With such an auspicious beginning it was hard to imagine the day ahead being anything other than perfect. And so it proved! We were off at 5.15 and, after only a short scramble over a rocky bit, were able to put our crampons on at 5.30 on absolutely perfect, hard snow. Another treat awaited us at this point as the sun began to rise and cast Adam's shadow 30 or 40 km to the west and onto St Helens. Spectacular! The South Spur route is crevasse free, never more than 30 degrees of gradient and with such perfect snow conditions nothing other than a pleasure to be on. We cramponed all the way up, made the false summit, Pikers Peak, at 8.30 and thereafter it was a short hour to the true summit. The old firewatchers' shack up there was barely visible except for what I assume were the remains of the chimney, which protruded through the snow at exactly the position of the summit. The wind was a bit strong to hang around too long although the views argued strongly in favour of lingering as long as possible. The Sisters, Jefferson and Hood to the south, St Helens to the west,

Rainier dominating to the north and, yes, just peeping above the far northern horizon, Mt Baker. The stuff of goose pimples indeed!

We set off down just after 10am. It was still icy, so crampons stayed on until Pikers. To this point we had had the mountain entirely to ourselves. It couldn't last of course and neither did it. As we looked over the shelf at the top of the South Spur, a line of climbers was heading towards us. Oh well, we enjoyed our solitude while it lasted. By this time the snow had softened and it was off with the crampons for the 900m glissade back to Lunch Counter, reputedly the longest in the Cascades. A couple of "wee-hees" and a lot more "oh sh**s" later and we had reversed in 20 minutes what it took us nearly 3 hours to climb. Tough to argue with that kind of efficiency.

A leisurely lunch at the Counter, pack up, stroll down and we were at the car by 4.15.

In my book the only way to end such a successful trip is a "treat night". So off we went to the Columbia River Inn in Hood River, a good dinner, a stroll along the river in the contented state that only a perfect trip into the hills can bestow upon you and, finally, the bliss of a soft bed. Ahhhhh

Trip participants: Lassen and Shasta: Graham Bennett and Martin Smith; Adams: Don Morton and Martin Smith

"TAHOMA, THE GREAT THUNDER - GIVER OF THE SKIES"

Jules Thomson

June 23-27

I have come to like the Schurman route, so each year in June, I gather a few eager mountaineers in their quest to experience the thrill of standing on the summit of this very aesthetic massif, with 26 major glaciers, covering 35 sq. miles. I prefer late June when the nights are warm and starry with the promise of blue skies and sun-drenched, dazzling glaciers as far "as the eye can see".

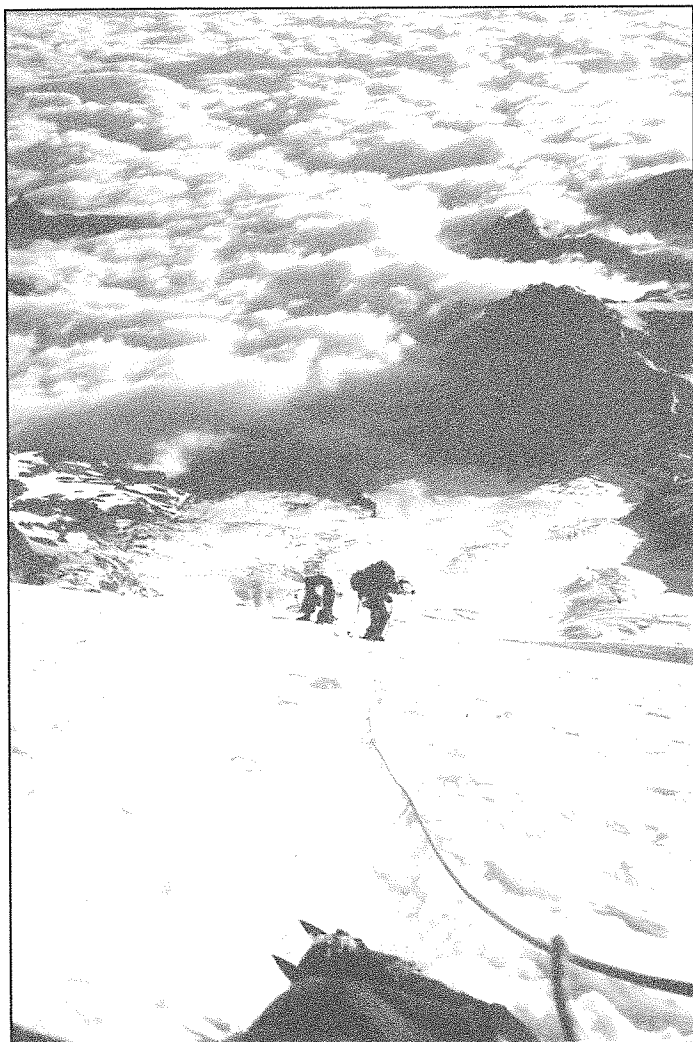
Playing with the arrangements of the days, the leavings, the arrivings, the sightseeing, the meadow gazing, the slogging up the glaciers, has become a favourite pastime of mine. The combinations are endless and one can get lost in alpine meadows amongst thousands, upon thousands of yellow *Erythronium grandiflorum*, the Glacier lily.

Setting out on a Thursday morning, we four headed south with one honest guy declaring his "beef" at the crossing, forfeiting his prize, or consuming it, lost for its purpose of lunch on the mountain. The challenge of the journey is to survive the "I-5", with changing lanes under hood ornaments, which gave air-raising moments. Surviving the ordeal, the test of nerves [so to speak] we were ready to challenge the mountain.

The obligatory sightseeing of the touristy Rainier showcase is always on the agenda for day one, and offers light entertainment before we trudge off into the alpine for our Glacier Bay, first night. Next morn the approach to the interglacier is always varied, so it seems, with a new route every year, and with much discussion we charge off.

Climbing, climbing over the ridge, descending, descending, discreetly avoiding the crevasses on monsieur Emmons glacier. Onward to Camp Schurman, 9,440 feet, to claim a treasure of a home on the snow, free of the little brown creatures with beady eyes.

Howling motions batter our synthetic home during the night, but, two intrepid climbers shake loose their night's slumber at midnight, beckoning me to stir and lead the team. I snarl at the wind and growl a compromise of an hour's more restless sleep. Still, we begin in the moonlight, the howling wind is warm and soft, and not as intimidating as first thought. The route of 2005 on Schurman was exquisite, amazingly simple, one foot in front of the other, and then there was the summit. The fumaroles still spewing steam, warming our souls



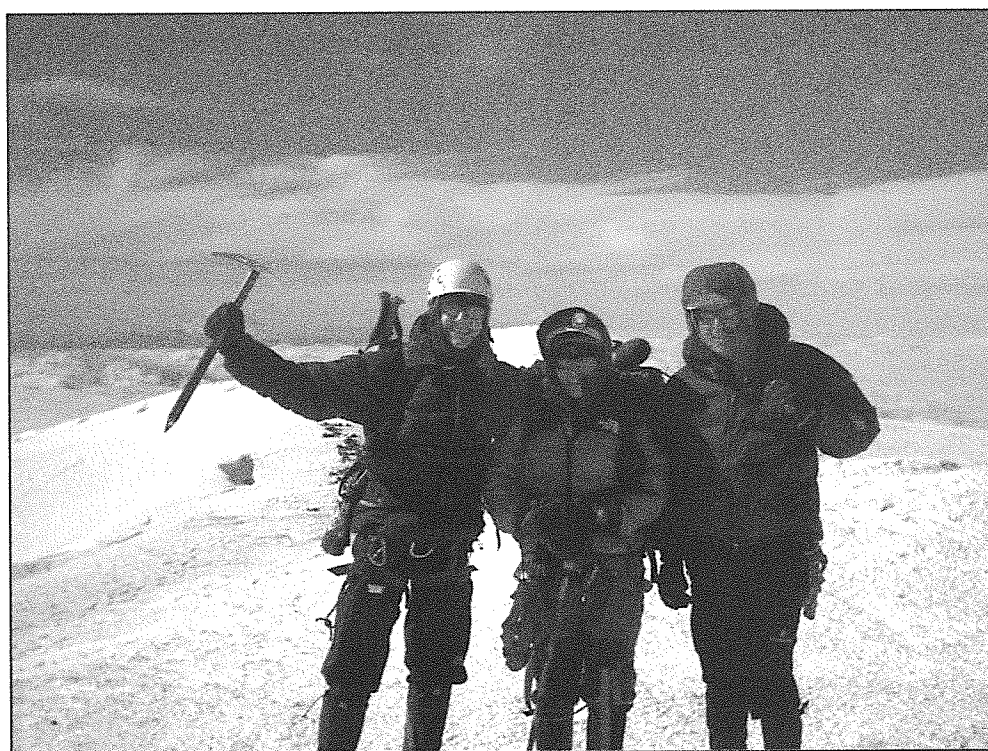
Peter and John climbing on Rainier

Photo: Jules Thomson

as we gobbled our food, eager to satiate our empty stomachs. Glory photos and then plunging, down, in the heat, with the soft, soft, snow.

Two continued on a short rock climb, loose, nasty rock, with heavy packs, to bum slides and mini avalanches in troughs, to blossom-laden meadows and running brooks for another night under the stars. Next morn, before dawn, we depart our magic meadow and back to reality for a seabound ride to the Emerald Isle. Leisurely, and a very civilized climb, so join me this June, again, for the summit of Rainier. Fourteen thousand, four hundred eleven feet, or four thousand, three hundred ninety-two meters.

Participants: John, Peter, Mike, and Jules. [they know who they are]



Peter, Mike and John on the summit of Rainier

Photo: Jules Thomson

OLYMPIC PENINSULA: LAKE LILLIAN & MCCARTNEY PEAK

Judith Holm
July 18-20

Route: From the end of the Obstruction Point road, hike south along open Lillian Ridge (~6500'), leave the ridge south of Moose Peak (~6753') where the shoulder levels out, scramble southwest down scree then bushwhack and route-find into coniferous forest, past a boggy area beside Lillian River (~5000'), around base of a ridge, up to Lake Lillian (~5800'). Only one party at a time can camp at Lake Lillian, so we were legally there while having this glorious area all to ourselves.

The following day we climbed McCartney Peak (6784') via the saddle and west shoulder.

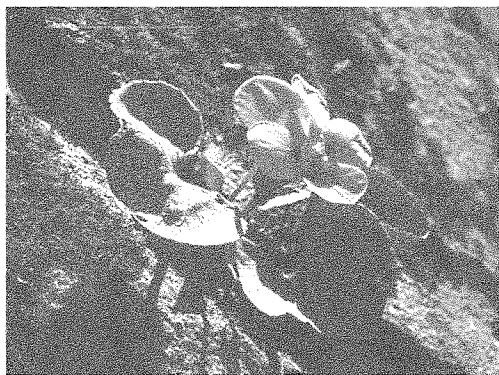
The flora were at the peak of bloom in an exceptionally good year. There was time to carefully observe, and botanist (also mountaineer) Hans Roemer kindly shared his knowledge. We had such a good time.

Participants: Hans Roemer, Viggo & Judith Holm



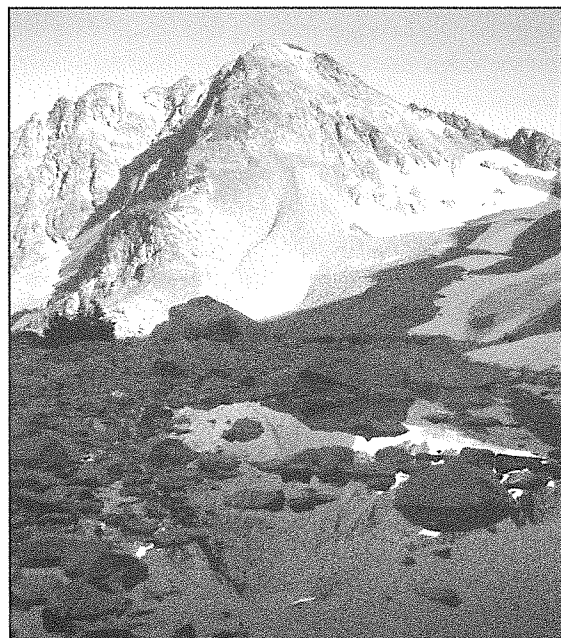
Hans Roemer on the saddle of McCartney Peak, Lake Lillian below

Photo: Judith Holm



Viola flettii, violet blossom with yellow centre and violet veined green leaves, delicate, yet flourishing in a tough place for any of us to even try, on open, windy Lillian Ridge (>6000') in a rock crevice. Known only to the alpine of the Olympic Mountains (particularly N&E).

Photo: Hans Roemer



Mt McCartney from just above Lake Lillian

Photo: Judith Holm

MOUNT ANGELES

Julian Coward

August 28

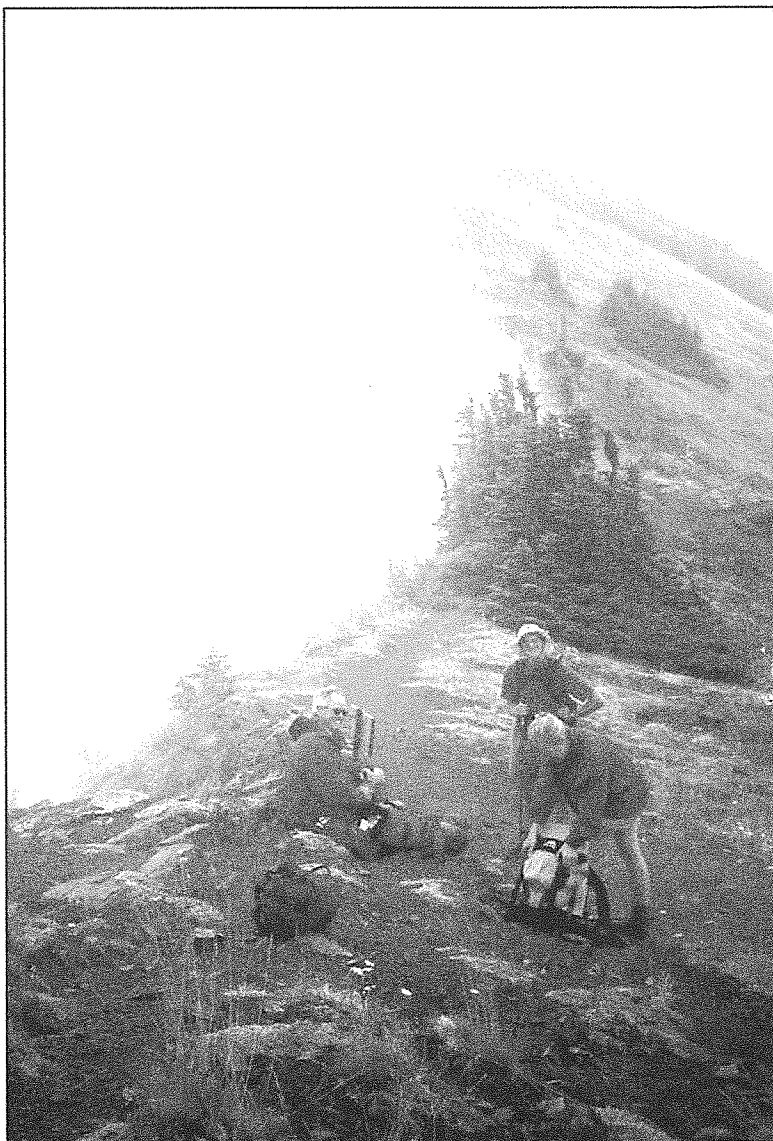
Up at 5:00 am, a quick repack, and then a cycle to the Coho ferry for the 6:10 am sailing starts another Alpine club trip. Six of us were planning a day trip to Mount Angeles in Washington State, including the ferry and bike ride to get to the mountain.

The ferry ride was a nice break, and after a snack on the boat we arrived in Port Angeles. To get to the hike, we had a 15 km bike ride up to the Mount Angeles trailhead in Olympic National Park. Fortunately, an acquaintance was willing to drive up with people's packs or even drive people up, and one of us did get a ride up the hill. The rest of us biked up, climbing about 1000m up the park road. Thank goodness for the 18 speeds on our bikes. At the trailhead, we chained the bikes to trees, and then started up the trail towards Mount Angeles on the Mt Angeles – Big Meadow Trail. A moderately steep climb took us up through the trees to Heather Pass, and after a couple of hours we arrived in a pleasant alpine meadows where we stopped for lunch. Continuing on, we hiked up to a junction where one route went up to the mountain, and the other across towards Hurricane ridge.

At this point Karen and Gerry decided to go down, while the rest of us continued up the ridge towards Mt Angeles. Some steep walking and scrambling brought up the ridge towards Mt Angeles, but there were still several gendarmes to pass, and the weather was getting worse: sleet and some winds, with some snow on the ground. With dinner and a few beers calling, we called it a day, and proceeded down on the Lake Angeles – Klahane Ridge Trail.

Somehow the hike down seemed longer than coming up, but the bike ride down the hill was very pleasant. At about 7:00 we arrived in Port Angeles for a few beers and supper at the Hacienda del Mar restaurant, then on to the 9:30 ferry (which was late as usual) for the trip back to Victoria, arriving home about midnight. A good trip. Thanks Michael for organizing this trip.

Participants: Michael Hubbard (L), Mark Thibodeau, Lenka Visnovska, Karen Payie, Gerry Graham, Julian Coward



On Klahane Ridge in the fog

Photo: Julian Coward



DISTANT PLACES NEPAL & PATAGONIA

ROUND THE HOUSES TO EVEREST. NEPAL TRIP

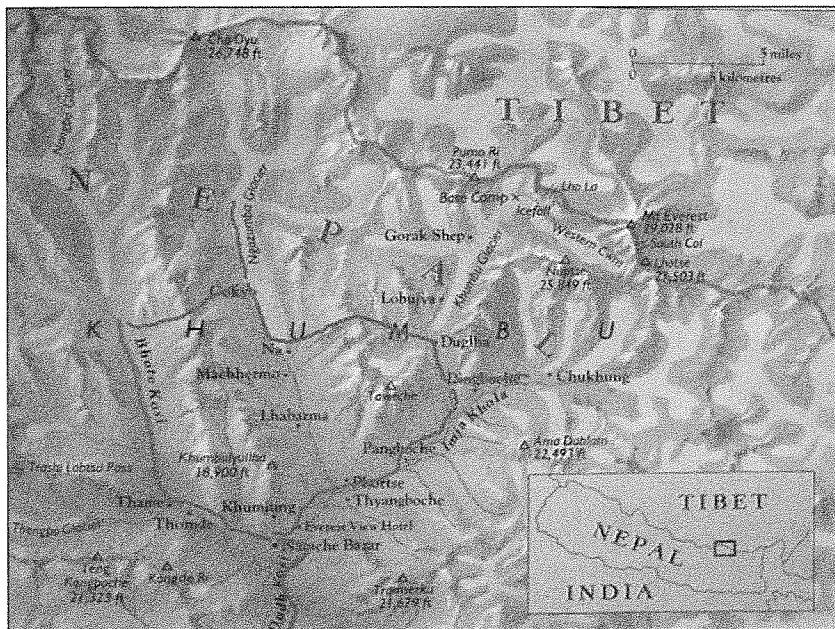
Martin & Gwen Smith

October 15 to November 18, 2004

Of the many trekking groups that visit the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal, 90% travel the well worn path from Jiri or Lukla to Namche Bazaar and then make their way up the valley of the Imja Khola to Gorek Shep and Everest Base Camp. Everest is shielded from view for most of the way and, therefore, everyone goes up Kalar Patar for the obligatory view of the SW Face and the Icefall. To get the best views one needs to be much farther west in order to be able to allow perspective to do its work and allow the traveler to look over the intervening peaks. This is possible by ascending the valley of the Dudh Kosi as far as Gokyo and then either climbing Gokyo Ri or ascending to the fifth Gokyo Lake closest to Cho Oyu. Most of the 10% who don't go directly to Gorek Shep take this route. Relatively recently the Nepal Government opened a third valley farther to the west of Namche. The valley of the Bhote Kosi leads directly to the Nangpa La pass and provides an important access route for Tibetan traders coming down to Namche, their yaks piled high with all those Chinese knock-off Nikes, Adidas, etc. My wife Gwen and I were invited by an old university buddy, Tony Hamza, to take part in a London Mountaineering Club expedition to approach the Everest region from the western valleys and attempt Lobuche East Peak (6119m). We didn't need to think too much before accepting the invitation.

Tony has been going to Nepal twice a year for the last twelve years. Consequently he knows a lot of locals. For both of us, and Gwen in particular, the social aspect of our first trip to Nepal was as important as the mountains. With Tony's input we were fortunate in being able to see and do things there that most travelers have no inkling of.

We left Victoria on October 15th with one bag of gear and 3 bags of stuff to give away. We've been on so many trips in the past when we have met many people in need, have had nothing with us and had to take addresses to send things later. Unfortunately, the 3rd world being what it is, these gifts never make it to their intended recipients. This time Gwen was determined to make sure everything was delivered where it is most needed. After the obligatory overnight in Bangkok, we arrived in Kathmandu on the 18th to find the festival of Dhasain in full swing. The next few days were a whirlwind of visits with new Nepali friends. The contents of the 3 bags had no shortage of takers. By our standards, even middle class Nepalis from Kathmandu are very poor, so people were grateful for all that we brought. Reciprocation is paramount in the east of course and this meant that we were privileged to be invited to Dhasain celebrations in private homes on several occasions. Without a doubt, the best of these visits was arranged by Tony



Khumbu map and route

Photo: Martin Smith

to the village of Cheterali on the banks of the Darde Kola about 30 km from and 1000m below Kathmandu. We took a taxi to the small town of Rangapur and then walked for 2 or 3 hours down the "mini truck" road and into the sub tropics. What a breathtakingly beautiful place! What a wonderful welcome from the villagers. The only mistake was to mention at one point that I had been bitten by a mosquito. Our host promptly rushed into the house and reappeared with a bowl full of ghee (clarified butter) that he proceeded to smear all over me! Gwen and Tony found this hilarious and thereafter kept their own bites strictly to themselves. We spent the day feeling humbled, watching and being watched by lives so different from our own. Our bed was on the house balcony above the cattle byre and if you needed to visit the bathroom in the night you had to run the gauntlet of the rather aggressive family water buffalo. The following day was the part of Dhasain set aside for sacrificing animals – or "cutting" as Nepalis call it. This was going on throughout the valley and scenes rather difficult for my faint western stomach punctuated our walk back up to Rangapur. I can say with conviction, however, that not a shred (no pun intended) of the sacrificed animals goes to waste.

The LMC group arrived from London on October 23rd and on the 25th we took the early morning flight to Lukla. The group consisted of 14 clients, mostly Brits plus 2 Aussies, a Kiwi, an American and we two Canadians. With us we had 3 climbing and 2 trekking sherpas and a kitchen staff of 5. We started out with 30 or so porters but lost some to illness (and raksi) as the expedition progressed. Trekking days in the Himalaya have been well described many times in this journal and ours were no different – awakened early to "bed tea", pack up by 6:30 and then a leisurely breakfast in the mess tent while the porters got a start on their carry for the day. Mid morning

stop for tea, a full lunch prepared by the kitchen staff and a halt about 3pm all made for mellow days, at least at lower altitude. We camped most of the time with two nights in a lodge in Namche as part of the acclimatization process. Having read so many descriptions of idyllic approach marches of the past, I have to confess a disappointment at this aspect. Camping was almost always outside lodges on yak dung covered "pastures". Every afternoon without fail, the clouds would roll in and it would get really cold, really quickly, often forcing me into my sleeping bag before 4pm. If one takes Sandy Briggs' definition of wilderness despoilment (Bushwhacker Annual 2004, p75) as being the result of the unauthorized installation of a memorial plaque anywhere in Strathcona Park, then the Solu Khumbu is the Himalayan equivalent of Highway 401 on a Monday morning. Until one gets sufficiently west of Namche and on the whole trail up the Inja Kola to Gorek Shep there are

literally hundreds and hundreds of people and animals in view. By comparison, on a trip to Victoria Peak one weekend in 2004 Graham Bennett and I were almost affronted to find another truck at the bottom of the route. We have come to take it for granted that we can enjoy our climbs on the Island in solitude. Do we all know how fortunate we are to have what we have here? Hopefully enough to make us fight to preserve it at all costs. But this isn't supposed to be a rant.....

From Namche we headed initially west and then north to the wonderfully named Thame Og with its monastery at over 4000m. Perched in a breathtaking location and a particularly fine example of that unique combination of tranquility and squalor that these establishments exhibit. We then gradually gained altitude over two days before leaving the route to the Nangpa La, heading east and setting up camp below the major pass, the Renjo La, at 4850m. Gwen, who had originally only planned to come as far as Namche, left us a half day's march north of Thame, having reached 4000m and returned with a porter to the village of Thamo. Her intention was to offer her services at the school there. More on this later.

To this point I had been moving surprisingly well never having climbed higher than 3400m before. Tony's successful acclimatization "secret" is to drink 6-8 litres of fluid per day and, aside from having to pee constantly, it seemed to be working fine. I had a cold but so did everyone else. The night below the Renjo was my first experience of Cheyne Stokes breathing. I can't say I enjoyed it but since I felt fine in the morning, didn't think too much about it. I also had some facial edema according to others. Whatever – I still felt fine. We left camp about 9am having waited for the sun to reach at least part of the route and topped out on the gunsight pass at 5425m right on the stroke of 11. What a view!! The Gokyo Lakes 1000m below and the



Renjo climb, nearly there

Photo: Martin Smith

in my experience. The ascent of the Cho La was to be my last significant climb of the trip. AMS symptoms returned again and I finally had to admit to myself that I would be a liability on a rope with others. I decided, therefore, to descend to the village of Pheriche at 4250m and see if I couldn't shake the effects of altitude there. Even this wasn't to be and after 3 days of trying, including going slowly back up to ~4600m on the route to Chukung, I was forced to descend again to Deboche at 3800m. This was where I was finally able to shake the symptoms and after over a week of suffering feel more normal again. Unfortunately and almost immediately I caught a really bad chest infection and was glad I had brought antibiotics with me, which raises the main conundrum of travel in the high Himalaya.

Do you stay in the relative comfort and

whole eastern horizon filled with the names of legend. Pumo Ri, the Everest group, Makalu and Ama Dablam, the latter almost unrecognisable from this western aspect. The biggest thrill of all was being able to see so much of the north face of Everest from this point. I hadn't expected it. The 2nd and 3rd steps on the north ridge were clearly visible as was the south summit. No plume that day but you can't have everything. The Renjo La is absolutely the best place from which to see the whole Everest massif and, at least to this point, almost no-one goes this way. There was only one other party on the route and they had left earlier than us. They were French, so of course, they had to make sure they got the best seats on the pass!

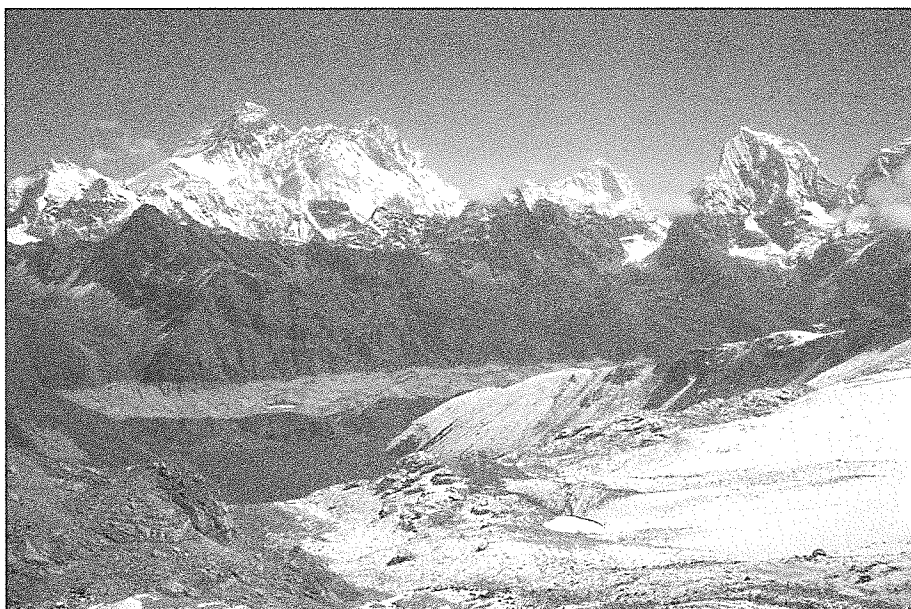
There's no room for complacency at altitude and if I had been taking it in my stride to this point I was soon to receive my come-uppance. Thirty minutes, a couple of hundred metres below the summit of the Renjo and completely out of the blue I was overtaken by the mother of all headaches as well as overwhelming dizziness. Classic

AMS. I made it down to Gokyo eventually and felt better at lower altitude but what a shock – and whilst descending too.

The next day I went back over 5000m to the 5th Gokyo Lake for another view of the north ridge of Everest. A wonderful walk but the AMS symptoms reappeared. I began to be discouraged.

After Gokyo our route took us due east to the foot of and then over the Cho La pass at 5420m. Our camp below the Cho La at over 5000m was memorable as being the coldest

warmth (if you like the smell of burning yak dung) of the lodges and get sick? Literally everyone I met in lodges was ill with something. Or do you endure the hardships of camping and get a little less sick but probably more exhausted?



Renjo summit - Gokyo Lake and everest group

Photo: Martin Smith

In any event, led by Tony, six of our group summited Lobuche East on November 5th in perfect weather and in the course of a 13 hour day. The only day in almost 3 weeks, in fact, when afternoon cloud didn't come in. Someone had been saying their prayers. Everyone got together a few days later at Deboche and we walked back to Namche the next day.

An hour's walk north of Namche and there was Gwen and two others who had dropped out before the Renjo with AMS. Did she have her own tale to tell! Not only had she helped

the school at Thamo by teaching English, Gwen had also become self appointed school fund raiser. The children are so poorly dressed that it makes your heart ache just to look at them. So Gwen set about any passing trekkers and succeeded in raising 20,000 rupees (about C\$400) from many generous souls anxious to contribute to such a deserving cause. She then took it and her porter back down to Namche and negotiated with the Tibetans in the market there for 45 pairs of shoes and socks, 45 sets of toothpaste and brushes and 3 full uniforms for the worst dressed of the kids. She literally shod the whole school. By the time we got there she was already a legend in the area. The whole village of Thamo turned out to give her a tea ceremony at which she was given 61 prayer shawls. The main thing everyone wanted to know was when "Gwen didi" was coming back.

A couple of days later we were back in the polluted hustle and bustle of Kathmandu, it was festival time again (Dipwhali this time) and the mountains felt like a dream.

Would I go back? A few months of routine later and I'm becoming more inclined to remember all the wonderful bits and to forget the attendant pain and sickness. There were so many truly magic moments. Cheterali, the Dhasain parties, Sherpas singing and dancing in the lodges and, best of all, the view from the Renjo. Sensory overload all of it. I think it's also important to prepare for the overall experience, not just the mountains, hugely impressive as they are. Let your gaze wander down from the peaks and there are signs of man everywhere in abundance. But that's how it is, at least in this part of Nepal and these signs and the people that make them belong there and are part of what you go to experience.

PATAGONIA DÉJÀ VU

Rick Hudson
November

You can never go back. Peter Pan knew that. So did Orpheus. So, why are we? Back over three decades, to a time when we were ¼ well, fill in your own adjectives ¼ child-free, unencumbered, newly graduated ¼ the list is long.

We're going back to Patagonia, a place that has held a special place in my heart for 34 years. If life is a contradiction in that it must be lived looking forwards, but only understood looking backwards, then, with hindsight, I can see that Patagonia was probably where I did my best climbing. It was a magical time, in the company of six buddies. We chose the area based on one vague article and four fuzzy photographs in a British climbing magazine. Throwing caution to the winds, we headed for the Torres del Paine in southern Chile.

It's November 2005 now, and we are driving the same road (better graded) and come around the same bend to see, suddenly, our destination across 40 km of rolling pampas. The great granite spires of the Paine rear up, like golden teeth against a boiling sky of cloud, just as I remember them long ago. We stop the van, get out and take photos which, it later transpires, are from the exact same spot – same fence posts in the foreground, even. Perhaps you can go back, after all.

The idea to return had been simmering for more than a decade, but always there was a rational reason why we couldn't. But we kept our options open. We stayed in touch with a couple who'd befriended us years ago in Punta Arenas, which is the provincial capital, located on the Magellan Straits. Every year, we traded stories about our kids growing up in our Christmas

cards. And then, in 2004, Cathy came to Canada. How could we procrastinate any longer? Researching the region via the internet, we chose our destinations, enrolled two couples who we'd traveled with many times before, reserved air tickets and a minivan, and did it.

The approach to Chile's Punta Arenas runway is across treeless, windswept grassland. It's spring, yet everyone in the terminal is bundled up in warm clothing. And there are Cathy & Hugh to meet us. In the car, driving to town, there's talk of high winds and snow the previous week. We have plans to spend most of our 3 weeks hiking, so this doesn't come as welcome news.

When last we visited Punta Arenas (literally, 'Sandy Point') the population was about 30,000, the main commerce wool and meat-packing. Today, the town is over 120,000, and while agriculture is still big, oil and gas, tourism, and a free port have all added to the economic energy of the region. The supermarkets are well stocked, there are numerous outdoor gear shops, and there's an internet café on every corner. Times change.

After a few days to get us all on the same time zone, the six of us set off in our diesel AWD minivan which is old, but sounds healthy enough. In 1971 we left for the mountains on the back of a 5-ton truck, exposed to the sleet, bouncing for an entire day over pot-holed roads. Today it's different – the first 250 km of road is paved. Spectacular snow-capped peaks

the west fill the horizon. Shortly after leaving Puerto Natales, the paving ends and the road deteriorates.

After 60 km we turn east, passing through a check-point reminiscent of the Russian steppes. A few huts, a gate across the road, two bored Argentinean soldiers, and nothing else for miles in every direction. By nightfall, we are in Calafate on Lake Argentina. In 1972 there was a bus once a week out of Calafate, and I remember I nearly missed it. After trying to hitchhike for an entire day, and being passed by not a single vehicle, I had gone to sleep in a nearby ditch (money was tight), determined to be at the bus stop at 5 am, when my only chance out of the place was due to leave. Those were the days of wind-up watches. In the middle of the night, I'd woken to discover my watch had stopped. Panic! Then came the slow realization that above me was the world's original chronometer, rotating majestically every 24 hours. A quick observation of the height of Orion above the western horizon, some simple math, and I knew within +15 minutes what the correct time was. I wound and reset my watch, and went back to sleep, waking in time to walk into the dark village to catch the bus. At the police station, I asked the duty sergeant what the time was, and was advised it was just after one o'clock!

Calafate has changed. Now, it's the gateway to the Andes, like Banff or Whistler are to their respective mountain play areas. Trendy outfitting stores, trekking offices, splendid restaurants and, god forbid, Argentinean chocolate shops are everywhere along the tree-lined main street. But the old familiar Patagonian wind howls out of the west, and we opt to sleep in a hostel, rather than do battle with flapping tents and dust.

The next morning, we drive west to Lago Roca at the foot of the Andes under blue skies and no wind. The peaks here start as suddenly and impressively as do the Rockies west of Calgary. Pampas or prairie (it matters not which) changes suddenly into rising snow-capped summits, the only difference being that here, at 5000S, glaciers fill the valleys, and there is no development. A pristine land lies before us, just as I remember.

We locate the start of the trail up Cerro Cristal, on the south shore of Lago Roca. It's one of those picture-perfect mornings. The lakes are like glass, reflecting the clouds above in perfect symmetry. Our peak looks easy – a thousand metres of rising grassland and alpine talus – no cliffs or other hazards. It's good to work the stiffness of our legs after long flights and days of driving and, as we climb, the views

just get better and better. Across the wide valley, the massive Perito Moreno Glacier fills one of the valleys, and does its party trick of pushing right across the lake and into the shore on the opposite side, forming two lakes. There is an ice tunnel that allows the upstream lake to drain into the downstream one, but in 1970 the glacier had been particularly active, and had dammed the upper lake for much of the year. It had burst shortly before I arrived. The river over 100 km away that drains the lower lake was a torrent of boiling water that prevented the ancient ferry from crossing for 2 days.

Now, all is still. Near the summit, a condor with a 2-metre wingspan drifts lazily overhead, just out of reach. On the ridge, the views south to the Towers of Paine are amazing. To the west, the Andes offer a jumble of snow-clad peaks and ice. Alas, to the north Fitzroy (3,128m) is hidden in cloud.

But Fitzroy is our destination, and a few days later we drive north around Lakes Argentina and Viedma and turn west towards the mountains again. Where once there was a sandy, tussocked track linking 5 remote farms to a gravel road threading 200 km to the coast, there is now a smooth, paved highway that carries us at high speed to El Chalten (the local native name for Mt Fitzroy). This boom town has grown up at the foot of this most famous of peaks in Los Glaciares National Park.

We arrive at dusk in driving rain. Precip is OK on travel days, if it means sun on hiking days. We opt for a hostel. It's cheap and clean, and there's a kitchen where we can cook our own food. On the first evening, feeling tired, we eat at a local restaurant that boasts its own micro-brewery.



Near the summit of Cerro Cristal, the view West to the Andies across Lago Roca to the Perito Moreno Glacier
Photo: Rick Hudson

The village of El Chalten is a wonder. Where once there had been a lonely estancia, there is now a grid of muddy streets, some 200 new buildings, and at least another 50 being built. Everywhere there are piles of construction materials – sand, bricks, lumber, roofing – and everywhere there is noise and activity as new hotels, hostels, restaurants, trekking offices, tourist stores are being built. The place feels like a gold-rush town from the 1880s, except that here, the motherlode is tourism.

The next 3 days are spent hiking. There are an infinite number of good walks that can be done from the town, returning each evening to good bakeries, a warm common room and a dry bed. There are multi-day trips onto the ice cap for the adventurous too. There are trails now, and sign posts, where once there was nothing but silent forest and empty glaciers. We made our own trails then. Now, people are everywhere, camping, hiking, resting, but no litter, which is a wonder in South America. We're told the national parks have an aggressive policy of no garbage, and it's working extremely well.

On our first day, we hike 4 hours up the Rio Electrico, close to the ice cap, and get faint glimpses of Fitzroy through cloud

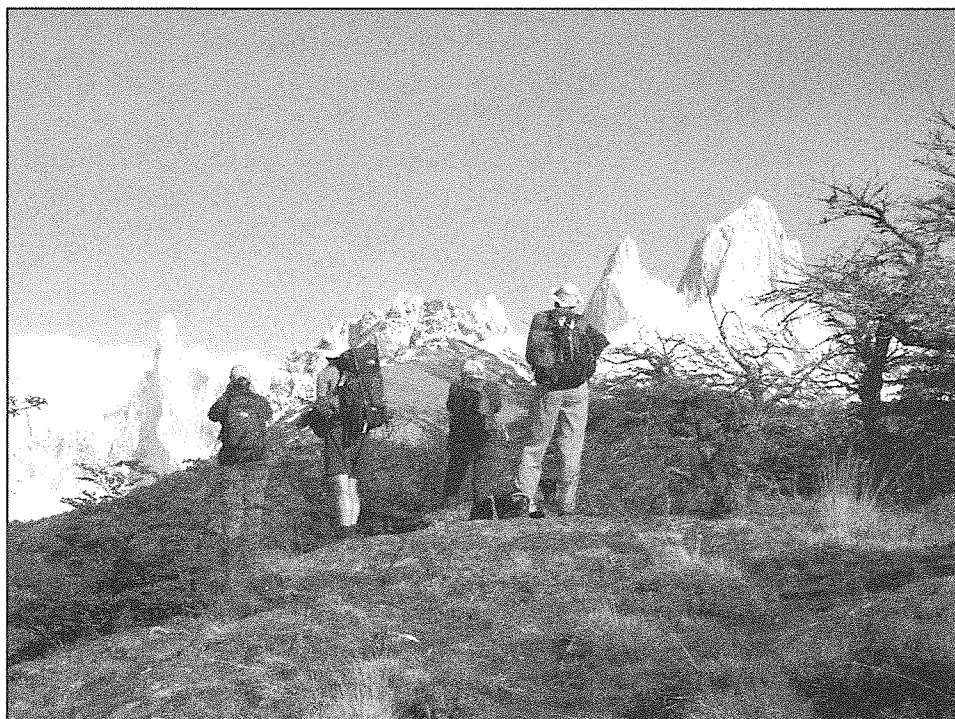


Fitzroy from the East with Poincenot to the left. The peak was first climbed by the French via the left hand skyline
Photo: Rick Hudson

from the north. That evening it begins to clear, and the next morning when we hike the southern approach, up the Fitzroy River, the sky is blue and there is no wind – a perfect Patagonia day.

Fitzroy comes into view. It was first climbed by the famous Chamonix guide Lionel Terray with Guido Magnone in 1952 via its southern shoulder. To the left, the smaller but no less impressive tower of Poincenot pierces the sky, a curious reminder of French libido. Although Jacques Poincenot officially drowned while crossing a river at the start of the expedition, it was common knowledge among the climbing fraternity that he was shot by the irate estancia owner, who had learned of the Frenchman's affair with his young wife. The irony of having to live within sight of that granite phallus, named after Poincenot, must not have been lost on the murderer, who was never charged.

Higher up the flat valley, Cerro Torre (3,128m) comes into view. What can you say about a peak that looks like a railway line stood on its end, rammed into the surrounding glacier. Sheer, honey-coloured, and capped with a crown of overhanging ice, it is a



Blue skies over Cerro Torre (left with cloud off the ice cap beyond) and Mt Fitzroy (right)

Photo: Rick Hudson

climber's nightmare. It certainly scared the early pioneers who came to try it. Walter Bonatti attempted the west side – the ice cap – the route was exposed to the gales for which the area is famous. It's true the climb is considerably shorter from the west, but he stalled at the dome, about 2/3 of the way up. In 1959, Caesar Maestri (the Spider of the Dolomites) and Toni Eggar tried it from the eastern, longer side, which we could now see from our valley. Controversy surrounds that attempt. Eggar died in an avalanche, and Maestri was found wandering on the glacier some days later. He claimed they had made the summit. But the questions wouldn't go away. In 1970 Maestri returned in winter (when the winds were calmer) and, with the aid of a compressor and drill, proceeded to bolt his way to the top, in one of the more infamous incidents the climbing world has witnessed.

Maestri would have loved today. The lake at the snout of the Torres Glacier is like a mirror, and we lie on sun-warmed rocks and eat our lunch and look at the south face, which sweeps a breath-taking 2,600m in one vertical wall. There's much for the next generation to tackle.

We hike other routes too, sometimes in the shade of the ubiquitous northofagus antarctica, the Patagonia birch which serves as dwarf scrub, krumholtz and full forest. In very sheltered areas, the tree can reach a height of some 20m, but is generally a lot smaller – hardly surprising, given the prevailing winds and cold latitudes. One curious thing about the beech forest is the absence of undergrowth. Perhaps the tree roots are so aggressive they simply choke out all competitive plants. Whatever the reason, the forest floors are clear and make for easy hiking – unlike certain BC areas.

There is another Patagonia curiosity in the beech forests. It started during the Second World War, when Bill Tilman heard it from a German prisoner – there were parrots in the forests. Could that really be so? It so enthralled Tilman that he bought a Bristol cutter, named it Mischief, and set sail for the South Seas. The resulting books are testament to the magic of the green parrots of Patagonia. Today, they still fly in squawking flocks through the upper canopy, bringing a curious tropical quality to these semi-arctic regions.

Out on the pampas again, there are upland and buff-necked geese on every lake, pink flamingoes cluster in the windiest of places, and the elegant black-necked swans are a treat whenever we see them. There is the curiously named Long tailed meadowlark, a name so ordinary it fails to hint at the brilliant

scarlet breast, that puts an English robin to shame. But pride of place goes to the torrent duck – their feeding style is remarkable. Undaunted, these small birds dive, swim and hunt in rivers that can only be described as raging. Where any other bird would be pounded to pieces in a matter of moments, the torrent duck leaps in and out of tumbling rivers, disappearing for such long stretches you are convinced it has been battered to death under the cataract of water, only to see it pop up elsewhere as though it was the most natural thing in the world.

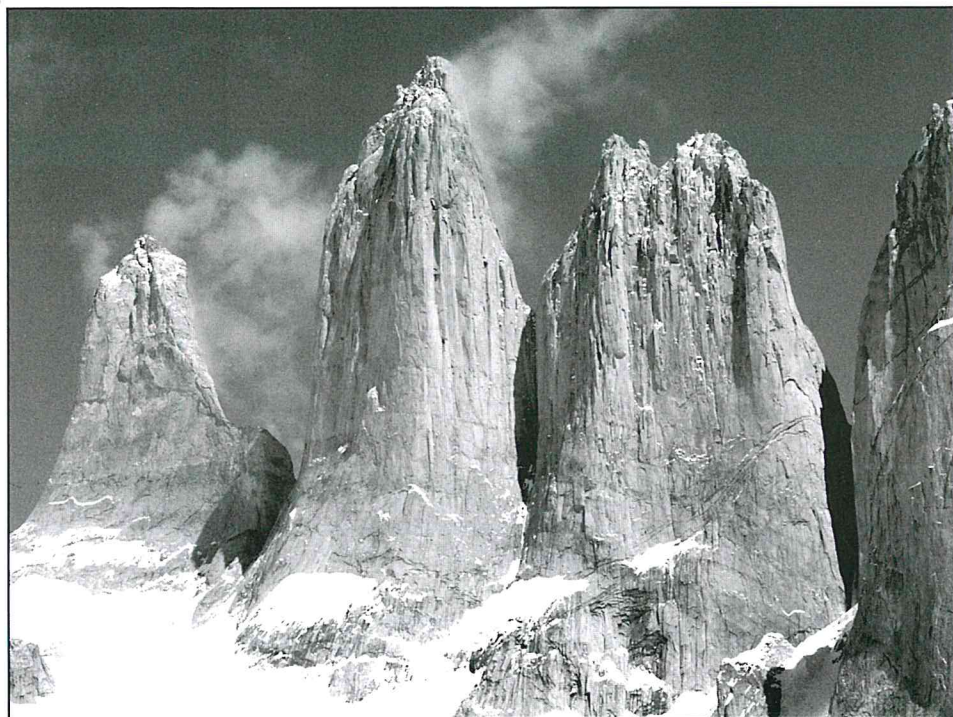
We are back in Chile, and into Paine National Park. The origin of the name is still uncertain - Thomas Paine was a lieutenant on HMS Beagle, and the name may have come from there. Whatever the origin, in 1971 the park had barely been declared, and there were no facilities. Our truck rolled to a stop at the end of the road, where a lone gaucho happily rented horses to pack our gear into the Frances ('French') Valley. Returning to the road, I had the unusual experience of being blown out of the saddle by a gust of wind (as was my co-rider on another horse). The gales of the region are legendary, and during our 50 days there we developed a healthy fear of them. A loose rope-end could snake away in seconds. Metal etriers, if not stood on, would whip up and slap you in the face. Throwing a line down a face prior to rappelling was simply impossible – the rope went sideways or even straight up, like an Indian rope trick.

Times change. Global warming, they say, has mellowed the winds. Certainly, the glaciers and snowfields are a lot smaller than I recalled them 3 decades ago. The Glacier Gray has retreated a kilometre up the valley.



Denis and Phee in the upper Francis Valley with the Sword, Blade Mummer and North Horn behind
Photo: Rick Hudson

In the Frances Valley, where we'd spent so much time in 1971, the campsite is called Campo Italiano, honouring the first expedition to use that location. I remember it well – when we had arrived 2 years after the Italians, the litter left no doubt what nationality had been there before us. This time, the camp is clean, but strangely different. The trees no longer hem us in. There is space for many tents under the canopy, and I can't pinpoint our exact prior location. But some things remain the same – the following day, it snows and blows just like old times. Calm under the leaves, we listen to the wind roaring over the treetops, and watch the flakes fly horizontally down the open river channel. Yet, between the trunks, it's calm enough to light a candle, and we are grateful for the shelter.



The three Towers of Paine (left to right) South, Central and North. The South African route followed the central dihedral up the Central Tower

below us, although not for long. Later, some of the occupants of the 30 tents at Campo Italiano will appear. In Dec/Jan (summer holidays), the valley must be like a zoo.

A day later we arrive at the Ascensio Valley, the other important access route into the Paine peaks. If possible, the Ascensio is even more popular than the Frances Valley, because it is home to the Towers of Paine, visible from far out on the pampas, but only appreciated from up close. The path is wide and easy, curving along the banks of the Ascensio River for 2 hours before a final pull up a long terminal moraine, which brings you suddenly into an upper valley. In front is a small glacial tarn with a glacier behind it, and the soaring granite walls of the South, Central and North Towers.

Nothing you read or imagine can prepare you for the sheer majesty of those three monoliths of rock, rearing 1,500 vertical metres into the sky. We sit at the lip of the moraine and stare at the spectacle for a long time. Curiously, when we were climbing the east face in 1972, we never saw this view – we would pass off to one side, bound for the glacier above, while hauling loads. Where we are now is definitely the place to look from, and we are not alone. French, Italian, English and Australian accents merge with local Argentine and Chilean ones. It's sunny again, and we lie on boulders like lizards soaking up the heat, while eating lunch and chatting.

Later, Phee and I angle off the well-trodden descent path, aiming for a massive boulder that sits by itself in the middle of the talus field. Under it I find the cave that served as our old base camp – large enough to sleep 5 comfortably,

deep and well sheltered from the probing wind, and sand-bottomed to make a perfectly comfortable sleeping spot. Apart from the addition of some stone walls at the cave's mouth, nothing has changed.

As I crouch in the cool darkness, it's as if the years have gone, and I'm back in a world of rurps and bongs and Salewa peg hammers, Craghopper britches and Dachstein mittens. That was when kernmantel was new, Edelrid was the only rope to own, and real climbers stepped into Don Whillans harnesses and carried frameless Joe Brown packs. The best tent that money could buy was an Arctic Guinea (weighing 18 lb), and RAFMA had just pioneered the hoop design.

Perhaps you don't need to go back after all. Rick and Ph Hudson.

We have set aside a day to hike up the Frances Valley. It's the heart of the area, with many spectacular granite spires, most of which are invisible from the road. There's a lot of personal history in the valley too. The Mummer was climbed by two friends. So was the Fortress and the Cuerno Principal (Principal Horn). We spent 8 days climbing the Sword, and another 4 on the Cuerno Norte (North Horn). The place has ghosts, all right. And the walls look bigger than I remember them. But in the valley, putting a hand to any of the many granite boulders is to travel back to another time, when double boots were a novelty, wool was all anyone knew or wanted, and Gortex and fleece weren't even a twinkle in someone's eye.

The sun pours down on snow-covered slopes as we plod up towards a col, leaving crisp tracks behind. The valley is empty