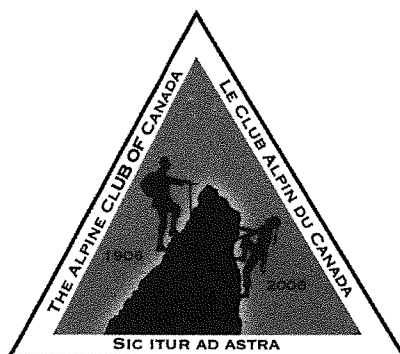
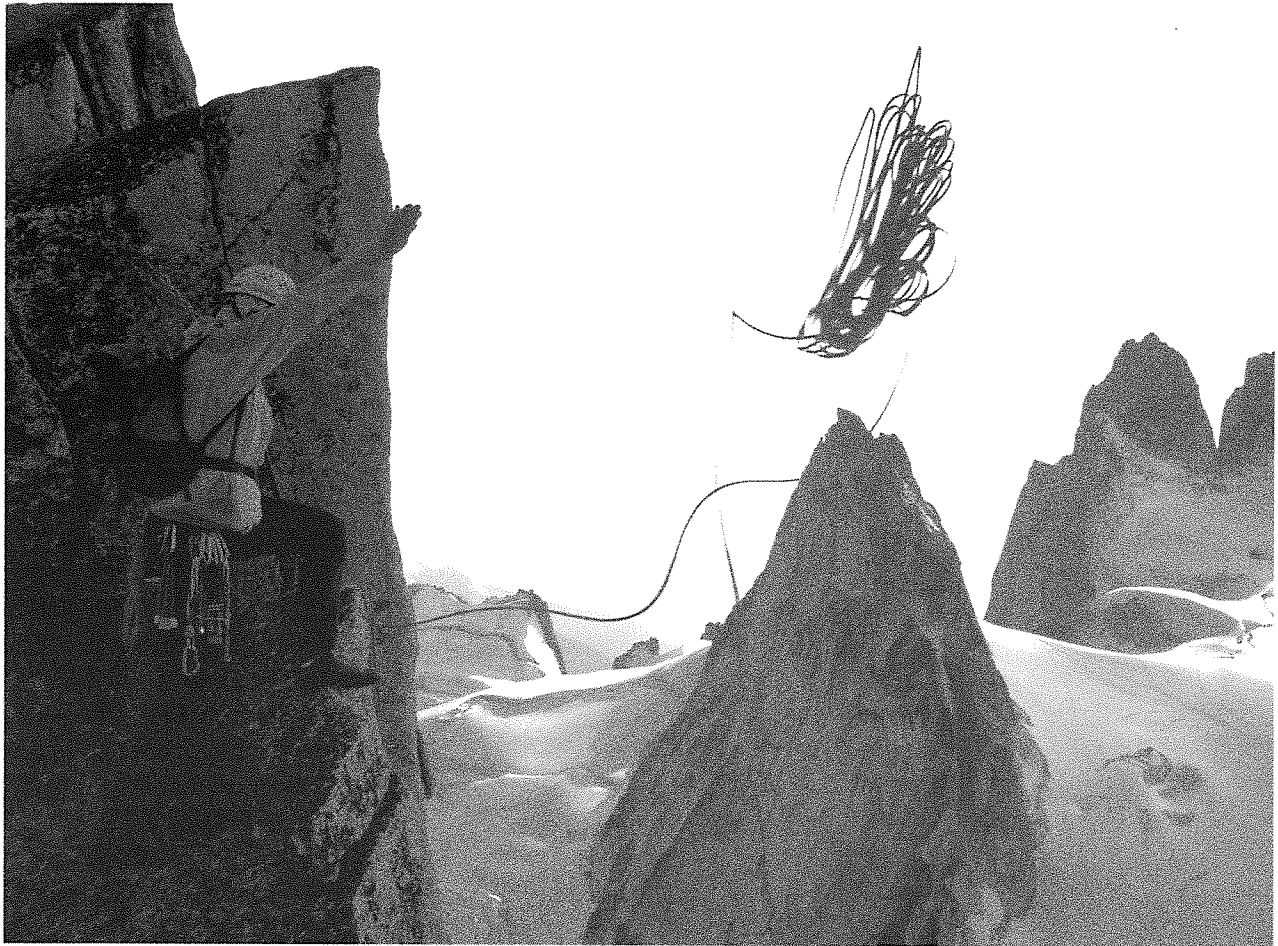


THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

2006





ROPE TOSS OFF SNOWPATCH, BUGABOOS

PHOTO: SELENA SWETS

MOUNTAIN ACTIVITY WINNER

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THE ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

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

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ISSN 0822 — 9473

SWIMMING ACROSS
WHEATON LK, MARBLE
MEADOWS IN JULY

PHOTO: RUSS MOIR

**MOUNTAIN
HUMOUR
WINNER**



LAST RAYS OF SUNSET
ON MT. SEPTIMUS

PHOTO: SANDY STEWART

**VANCOUVER
ISLAND
MOUNTAIN
SCENERY
WINNER**



VANCOUVER ISLAND MOUNTAINS

Mt Albert Edward Photo: Catrin Brown

EL CAPITAN – BIKE AND HIKE

Mike Hubbard
May 14

A disappointed Karen mentioned that unfortunately Gerta's scheduled trip was cancelled as Gerta was still having problems with her knee injury from ski camp at Sorcerer Lodge. A call to Gerta confirmed this but she was happy to have someone take over the trip and the names she had accumulated. Thanks to the efficiency of Phee Hudson and the miracle of e-mail, we had 11 on the list by the weekend and 9 at the meeting at the relaxed start at 8:15 at the Helmcken Park and Ride.

The forecast was for temperatures in the 20s with clear skies so we were a little concerned about snow conditions. As we drove up toward Youbou we could see that there was still a considerable snowpack in the hills. Tony met us at the Cottonwood Creek gate, having come down from fasting in the wilderness at Horne Lake, and by 10:15 we were peddling up the road having just missed a small herd of Elk that Tony had seen whilst waiting for us.

We left our bikes at the last steep hill before the right hand fork for Lomas Lake and were soon on the sunny moraine-like trail through the old logging, which is still easy going despite the



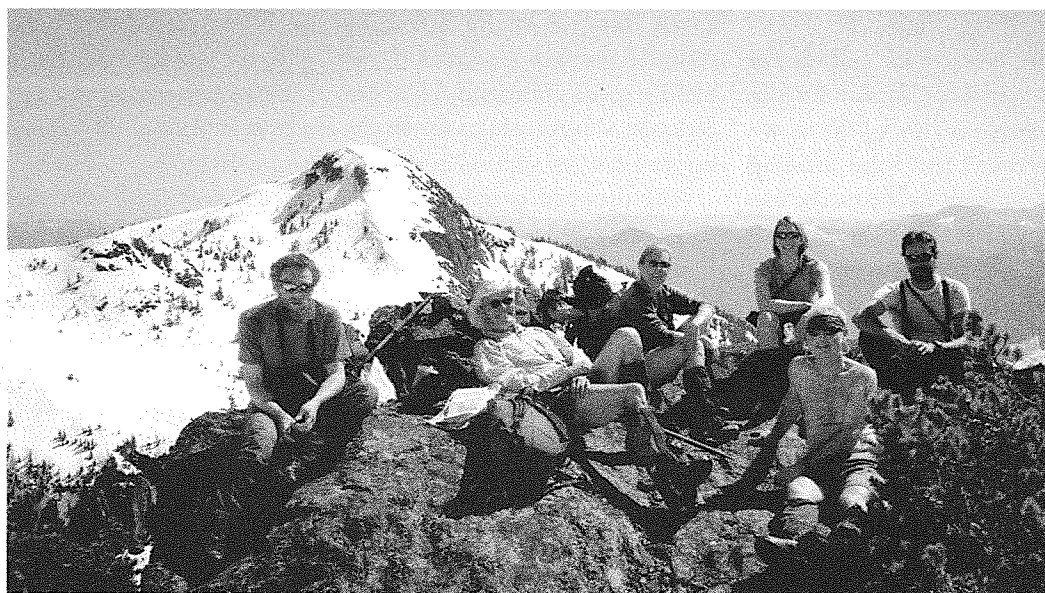
Ready for the fun part, cycling the Cottonwood main

Photo: Mike Hubbard

young Alder growing in as it seems popular with bear and elk not to mention the hiking fraternity. A snack at the beginning of the first stand of timber fortified us for the trail up to the Lake. It very soon became snow but fortunately firm enough not to break through although deep enough to hide many of the red markers

nailed to the trees, which resulted in a rather circuitous route. However by 1:45 we were at the lake, which was partially open, and we had lunch in the sun facing the dazzling white prospect of the north side of Landale more corniced than I have ever seen it and still in prime winter condition. We estimated another 2 hours to the summit but all were keen to go so with Tony breaking trail we took the north side of the lake and on over the knock-down trees and up the steepish snow toward the col between El Capitan and Landale. Fortunately, the deep snow covered both the dead fall and the tangled dwarfed trees that one normally has to force one's way through and we were soon on the ridge.

The views were superb: Baker rising out of urban haze to the east; Garibaldi and Tantalus to the northeast; Arrowsmith and Strathcona Park to the northwest. Tony, with a dinner date at the cabin at 8 pm, was already on the way along the ridge to the summit and by 3:45 we were all there.



El Capitan summit group: Martin Hofmann, Mike Hubbard, Don Morton, Karen Payie, Kate McMahon, Seb Martinez, Peter Rogers
Photo: Tony Vaughn

A vapour trail from a high-flying jet passed overhead. I remarked to Tony that there went Sylvia on her way to Denali. When she returned triumphantly from her successful climb several weeks later we looked at her photos and sure enough there was one taken of the Landale/El Capitan massif at the very moment that we were looking up. She was saying goodbye to us

as we were thinking of her coming climb and wishing her well. Who says telepathy is nonsense?!

A relaxed photo and snack session on the warm bare rocks and then some exhilarating glissading back down to the Lake. Here someone remarked that this would be good place for the avalanche awareness course and right on cue a large block let go on the cliffs up towards Landale starting a minor slide below.

In the beautiful evening light we descended the trail back to our bikes anticipating an adrenalin swoop down to the cars. Inevitably the odds of a flat were high with 9 bikes, and sure enough Martin's suffered a monkey bite and bent rim from hitting a rock at high speed but this was soon repaired and we were down soon after eight.

To my surprise a bouquet of wild flowers was on my windshield with a message "Hope you had a good hike Mike: from the Deer Group Hot Chicks." What sybaritic pleasures had I missed out on, and with whom, I wondered.

It was a pleasure to have two potential new members along, Ross Haacke and Kate McMahon who have recently arrived from the UK, and also Peter Rogers who has recently moved to Victoria from Vancouver where he was active with the Vancouver Section.

The only downer was our inability to find a meal on the way home as the kitchens of the Pioneer House, the Malahat Mountain Inn, and even Ma Murray's Pub were all closed after a strenuous Mother's Day evening - but a great trip, anyway.

We thank Gerta for putting it on the schedule and were sorry, Gerta, that you couldn't be with us. Your Recorder music would have made the summit even more perfect!

Participants: Mike Hubbard (Reporter and Coordinator), Martin Hofmann, Ross Haacke, Kate McMahon, Seb Martinez, Don Morton, Karen Payie, Peter Rogers and Tony Vaughn.

MT. ARROWSMITH - THE SNOW NOSE ROUTE.

Tom Carter

May 17

In the snow months the prevailing wind sculpts a sinuous, often corniced, knife-edge that swoops from the top of the North Ridge (the "Bumps") down over the saddle and up to the rocks of the Nose tower. For most of the winter the snow is unconsolidated and the rock is plastered with rime. It's a route of little purchase. There is a window though, usually in May, when the snow is firm and the rime has melted. I've stared at it for years but never had the confidence to rub my "nose" in it.

On May 6 my group climbed the switchback (climber's) trail in blowing snow and ten metres visibility. No day for the Nose, the main gully was plan B. A compass check told us we had missed the entrance to the upper bowl and were heading north along the base of The Bumps. So we went up. From the top bump I inched to the edge. The corniced leviathan swam down into an ocean of cloud. Tantalizing, but not for a group and not in this weather. Ten days later in a stretch of warm sunny days, Scott Edwardson proposed a Three Gully Traverse and maybe a recon of the Nose.

The road to the Saddle Route was now clear, the snow kickstepable, the sky deep blue. Skirting the collapsed cornice debris

along the base of the North Face, we entered and climbed the Hourglass Gully. Cresting the last Bump there lay the fin, firm and gorgeous. Avoiding the cornices, we traversed down across the steep and exposed north slope. At the saddle it was either down then up the Main Gully or continue up the Nose. Here we were. It was time to rub noses...I headed up. A short rock wall then back on the fin. My trepidation turned to elation. Exposed, yes, but with perfect snow you could enjoy your location. The Coast Range, Georgia Strait, and the Island peaks all around viewed from this skinny fin of snow. With the familiar rock ahead like a trusted old friend, I had one of those moments of extreme pleasure. Overcoming a fear is the sweetest reward of all. I sailed up the rock and gloried in the sun with my friends.

We dropped over to Rudi's Notch, slid down the gully and climbed up and over the first bump then down to the saddle and then the car. Over beer in the Frontiersman we all agreed it was a perfect day. Ten days later, I descended the Nose on my West Ridge trip; the fin was a shrunken rotting snow bank. The Snow Nose is a short lived flower. Five stars!!!

Participants: Scott Edwardson, Cliff Machelenko, Kyle McGregor, Tom Carter

WOSS MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms

June 24

The lights were all out in Woss as we drove through. Everyone must have been still in bed asleep as we saw no other vehicles on the logging roads as we drove around Woss Lake. I had stopped at the Canfor (now Western Forest Products) office last year and talked to one of the young engineers who had skied Woss Mountain that winter. He was able to sketch on my map the new logging roads that had been punched in towards the mountain. Access looked easy!

From the forestry campsite on Woss Lake we continued down the logging road on the east side of the lake to where a sign said Torbank. Here we turned left and started up the hill

taking the next right-hand fork and following it to the end of the road which was about nine km from the lake. Our elevation at where we parked was about 1,050 m and the summit of Woss Mountain is 1,594 m.

The route took us a short distance through the slash to the edge of the old-growth in a small saddle and then we travelled southwest for 360 m to the shoulder of the peak one and a half km south of Woss Mountain. There is a descent of slightly less than the ascent distance and then 460 m of easy travel on firm snow to the main summit.

Woss Mountain is not often ascended by climbers or skiers;

however, servicemen are frequently flown by helicopter to check the three Repeater Towers on the summit. What makes a visit to this mountain worthwhile are the views of Rugged Mountain and the Haihte Range. Only eight or nine km away as the crow flies, the peaks from the Blades in the south to Haihte Spire in the north, are in sharp profile. A visit to Woss Mountain would almost be a prerequisite for anyone thinking of spending some time in the Haihte Range.

However, there are other great views to be had from the

summit. Five km to the south is another range of mountains unnamed and more-than-likely unclimbed, and of course the Mount Bates and Alava area.

After an hour on top, it was that time again where we had to return to the vehicle.

Participants: Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Postscript: One week later Aaron Smeets, and Sonja and Phil Schum also made an ascent of Woss Mountain.

GENESIS MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms
June 25

Genesis n, pl. –ses. origin; creation; coming into being. (<L <Gk.)

Genesis is the name of a Grammy Award winning progressive British rock band formed in 1967, which was at the forefront of the music industry for thirty years until the band announced that it was on an indefinite hiatus in 1999. Lead singers included Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins

So what does the word Genesis have to do with the mountain? Is this mountain the centre of the universe where life as we know it began? Maybe Charles Darwin didn't need to sail all the way to the Galapagos Islands to come up with his Origin of Species! It was right here on Vancouver Island, or has it something to do with the rock band - after all, Morrison Spire on Marble Meadows is rumoured to be named after Jim Morrison of The Doors.

Anyway, we weren't going onto Genesis Mountain (1,486m) because of its name. Again it was on my list of peaks to climb. After coming out from Woss Mountain the day before, we had driven back along the highway to the Upper Adam's Road and followed that to the Compton Creek Main. We then drove up the CC400 which took us high on the Northeast Ridge of the mountain. The last half km of the road was blocked by a fallen snag. We pitched our tent in the middle of the road at an elevation of about 920m and sat outside in our Thermarest chairs until the sun went down around 10 pm.

The next morning we were up early, walking the road to the end. A little bit of slash to walk through then we were in

the old growth and then we followed the easy ridge up to the alpine. After hiking a short distance through fields of heather we arrived on the first summit which looked higher than the summit marked on the map. However, we couldn't stop here and leave the other summit untrodden so we hiked the km across to it. Looking back, the other summit still looked higher but at least we had been to the labeled summit.

The view from the summit was actually quite commanding as Genesis Mountain sits in the middle of the Adam River valley and is surrounded by a number of the higher north island peaks. To the southeast is Mount Nora, to the southwest Mount Schoen and Adam, to the west Mount Abraham*, Sarai*, Abel, Cain and Hapush, and Mount Eden to the northwest and Mounts Romeo and Juliet to the north.

We eventually tore ourselves away from the views and began the hike back to the other summit and down to the vehicle. Once back at the vehicle we had the dilemma of which mountain to climb the next day but it didn't take long to decide on the unnamed peak (Peak 5700) up the North Stuart Main near Maquilla Peak. This peak was written up in the 2004 and 2005 Bushwhacker Annuals. Unfortunately, the road was blocked by huge boulders deliberately put in place to stop traffic while road building was taking place. Okay, plan B – Mount Sarai

.Participants: Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

* Indicates unofficial names for these peaks but found in the Island Alpine book.

MOUNT SARAI/ABEL TRAVERSE

Lindsay Elms
June 26

After spending the latter half of yesterday driving around looking for another unclimbed mountain (at least on my, dare I say it, unclimbed list) on the north island, I finally decided on Mount Sarai. For those who aren't familiar with this mountain and don't have Phil Stone's book, *Island Alpine*, Mount Sarai is a name Phil has given to a peak about two km southwest of Mount Abel. Another peak southwest of Sarai has been given the name Mount Abraham and both are in keeping with the biblical names of the other mountains in the area, although these two mountain names are both unofficial.

Val and I had driven into the area last year with the idea of climbing these two peaks; however, the weather wasn't cooperative on that trip. This time there was no doubt about the weather: blue skies and hot searing sun. Just what the doctor ordered! We spent half an hour driving around the logging roads looking for one that would take us as close to the old-growth as possible so that we wouldn't have too much slash to walk through the next morning. Finally we found one that appeared to give us the shortest approach and put us close to the base of the mountain. At the end of the road we set up camp.

Monday morning saw us climbing up through the slash to get onto a de-activated road that headed across to the old-growth. For the first 50m in the old-growth the going was easy then the bush closed in and became thick. Below and not too far away we could hear the sound of a waterfall in the river making throaty noises as it dropped over the edge. After about twenty minutes the forest opened up and snow filled the valley bottom. Now this was more like it!

We ambled up the valley bottom for half a km then saw a big open snow slope heading up towards the summit ridge. At first I had considered going to the head of the valley then following the ridge to the summit. However, this snow slope looked too good to pass up. Off with the hiking boots and on with the plastic boots and gaiters. The snow was firm and we made good time up the 400m to the ridge. The nice thing was that the sun hadn't hit the slopes yet so we weren't sweltering under its intense rays. Now all we had was 150m of scrambling up an easy rocky ridge to the summit. It had taken us just under two and a half hours to reach the top and there was no sign of anyone having been up

there except for the deer tracks in the snow on the summit.

We spent twenty minutes on top of Mount Sarai and then decided to climb Mount Abel. Looking across at Abel we could see a snow gully that went from the valley floor almost to the top except this one would be in the direct sunlight and temperatures already felt around thirty degrees. Descending back down the ridge a short distance we reached the top of another huge snow gully. This one took us all the way back down to the river near the head of the valley and the snow was perfect for boot-skiing!

Down at the river we had an early lunch, filled the Gatorade tanks and then started up the snow. This time it didn't take long to begin sweating profusely! Onward and upward we went, covering the 600m to the summit in an hour and a half. There we spent the next hour enjoying the view and taking a well-earned rest.

Looking around the surrounding mountains was up-lifting! There were very few peaks left up in this neck of the woods that I hadn't climbed (with the exception of the Haihte Range) and it was easy to name the individual peaks that were becoming so familiar. It felt like they were all old friends living on the same street in a cozy neighbourhood. The old saying is familiarity breeds contempt but that is not the case here. Over the years I have gained a lot of respect for the beautiful mountains of the north island.

Unfortunately we had to tear ourselves away from the summit and head back down to the vehicle. Having skied Mount Abel's Southwest Ridge years ago I knew that it would be an easy descent. Lower down on the ridge we came across game trails and eventually ended up looking into the logging slash. Below us we could see a couple of de-activated roads and then the one we wanted to get onto to get us back to the vehicle. However, there was no easy-looking way down so when in Rome do as the Romans do! Fortunately it was one of the easier slash areas to walk through and in no time we were down on the road walking back to the vehicle. It had certainly been a great day: a new summit, re-acquaintance with another, and a beautiful traverse between the two. Ah, isn't this what being in the mountains is all about?

Participants: Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

OH, CANADA! - COLONEL FOSTER

John Young

June 30 - July 2

"It was the best of climbs; it was the worst of climbs."

No, that's not really true, but it sounds good. Although it was the longest climb of my life, had some of the worst rockfall I've seen, and a jammed rope that got my heart pounding, and a horrifying night climb down the main couloir with a flickering headlamp, and a bivvy on a rocky outcrop, there wasn't anything bad about it. Or so it seems, looking back at the trip through our rose-tinted glasses.

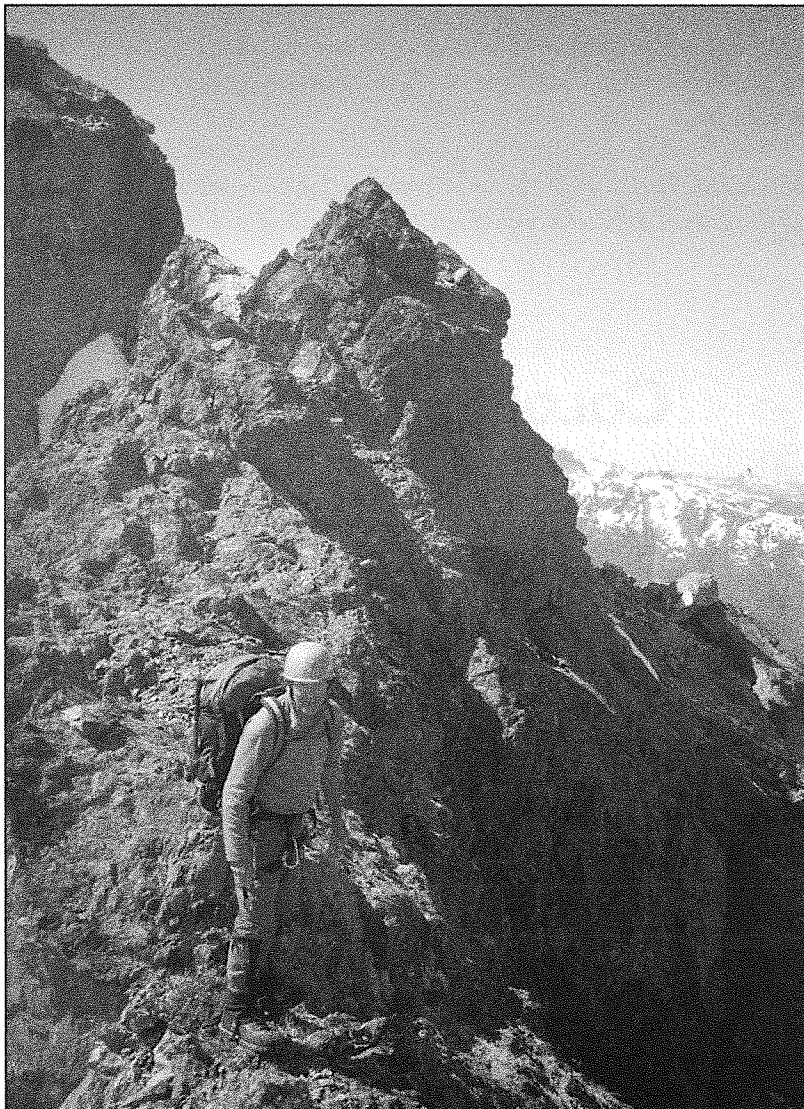
The trip started auspiciously enough on June 30. We made camp on the North Col about 6 pm, under clear skies, with a great forecast for the weekend. Tom, though, was a little uncomfortable sleeping that night, as he'd forgotten his sleeping bag and Thermarest! (And, as he put it, on the "biggest climb of my life!")

The ascent went well. We got under way at 5:30 am on July 1st, and made steady progress to the top, reaching it by 2 pm. Looked good! We reveled in the glory of it all for half an hour, and then started down. Should be a little quicker going down, we figured, so we might not have to bivvy, although we were prepared to do so.

We stopped to make some water at the first snow patch off the main summit with our handy "Pocket Rocket", and then rappelled down to the col between the main summit and the Northeast Summit. I had just called "off rappel" and stepped away from the rope when I heard Tom yell "Rock!" A large rock smashed on the ground, but luckily I was already several metres away from the cliff. When Tom was safely down, he discovered the rock had nearly severed the rope, but luckily two metres from the end.

Our route finding was good – that wasn't the problem. Our rope management was atrocious, and that's the reason for our slow descent. It seemed that after each rappel – and we did several of them – we spent about 15 minutes untangling the rope. Then, on one rappel coming down off the Northeast Summit, we tied both 60m ropes together, and we had twice the mess to clean up!

We were both glad we had helmets on, as we each took rock



Tom Carter on Colonel Foster.

Photo: John Young

shots to the head. One bounced off Tom's helmet, hitting his shoulder. It hurt for several days after.

It was getting dark and cold on our last rappel off the Northwest peak down to the couloir. It was another double-length rap, and not straight down, at that. I finally made it down, twisting and turning down the cliff, with little rope to spare, just

as the sun set. I put my headlamp on as Tom rapped down. Then, we had to pull the rope down, and at first, I didn't think I was going to be able to do it as it was jammed. But I managed to pull it free, and by the time I had the rope down, many minutes later, I was no longer cold!

We worked our way along the edge of the cliff, and finally made it to the couloir. It was about 10:30 pm when we started cramponing down. Luckily, the snow was good, not icy at all, and not balling up, either. Tom made better progress than I did, and it wasn't long before he was way below me. I must admit, I became a bit gripped, and the slope seemed so steep, even though I knew that we'd come up that way just that morning and it wasn't steep. But, in the dark, my mind was playing tricks on me. And then my headlamp started flickering, and I just prayed it wouldn't give out on me. The couloir seemed so vast; I couldn't see rocks to either side of me.

Finally, after midnight we made it to a rocky outcrop, and Tom said, "This is as far as we're going tonight." I couldn't have agree more. I took out my bivvy gear, including a down-filled

jacket, waterproof socks, raingear, and an emergency blanket, as Tom fired up the stove and made some water. We each had some soup, and then I tried to sleep. I was warm enough, but the rocks were hard, and not very level. I'd just find myself dozing off when I'd wake up with a jolt, sliding down the rocks. Tom sat up until it grew light at 4, drinking hot liquids to keep warm.

When it was light, I looked about me, surprised to see the gentle slope of the couloir just above us. The slope I'd thought was about 50 degrees was more like 20!

We were back to camp by 7 am, and after eating and drinking some more, we set off for the trailhead, stopping frequently to soak our hot feet in the cool waters of the Elk River. Finally, by 5 pm we reached the parking lot. I'm glad I was able to help Tom complete his IQ's, and realize how lucky I am, as some people don't get the Colonel until their fourth or fifth try, or worse yet, never at all. And me, a puddle jumper from Saskatchewan, gets it on his first try! Thanks to a great partner!

Participants: John Young and Tom Carter

COLONEL FOSTER – CHASING THE CARROT

Tom Carter
June 30 - July 2

Tiptoeing down the rotten gully I look beyond its drop-off point to the forest and tarns a thousand metres below and feel the clench in my gut. Time for the mantras: We'd been forewarned; there is no drama here, it's just another rotten gully and, anyway, a thousand metre fall leaves you no more dead than the head-splitting fifty footer, just less recognisable, so get on with it. We forged on. This was my third try at the Foster. Dragging your full pack up through the bush is the crux of the climb. I didn't want to do it again. Once, with Peter and Tak in a Canada Day snowstorm retreating off the Northwest tower, then in 2005 when we found no bergschrund to bridge, just a canyon to claw up. Christine Fordham and I climbed the rock pitch to above the waterfall and continued up what was left of the couloir to the col, finding no access to the usual first roped pitch. It was 10m above us up a blank rock step. The amount of snow melt was phenomenal. Calling it reconnaissance, I pondered next year....go ready to bivvy, a team of two, in perfect weather, as early in the melt season the better, and NOT on a scheduled weekend.

Two days after school was out, John Young (a school teacher)

and I rounded the North tower to find much more snow but still a waterfall and a canyon. A snow bridge got us onto the rock above the fifth class moves (protectable) Christine and I had climbed a year before. Up the couloir the ledges to the first pitch were obvious 30m below the col. Three medium cams up and I knew the Colonel's door was unlocked. Even in perfect weather the route-finding was "interesting". The habit of looking back for the route home is invaluable here. I was glad I'd been up the roped pitches before. It is a bit of a maze. Tak Ogasawara's route map is a very valuable aid.

From the Northwest Peak I knew we were "there". Only two more mountains to climb! – the North East and Main Peaks, involving pleasant third and fourth class climbing, two rotten gully descents (mantras blaring) and a last scramble to the ultimate summit. So much effort (physical and emotional) to get to a point only 50m higher than the infinitely more pleasant to climb Southeast Summit. I tied my prayer flags to the cairn, leafed through the dearth of entries in the register and headed back....only two more mountains to climb!

I would not want to do this in bad or threatening weather.



Tom Carter tying prayer flags to the summit cairn. Photo: John Young

We had two 60m ropes and kept on futilely trying to maximise our rappels. We spent way too much time untangling excess rope. Five metres of my brand new "excess" rope got chopped by the 'everywhere so loose' rock. Scads of time spent inspecting remaining rope. Obviously one 50m rope would have served our needs. Fast and no complications. But if it got chopped in the middle?... At least tying and chopping from our long coils of webbing was fast and efficient.

Untangling rope as bright sun turned to golden, then turned to dusk; it was headlamp time when we finally got down to the couloir. Our hoped for two-stage rappels down the couloir were ruled out by the dark hunt for anchors. The soppy-puddled ledge made a bivvy most undesirable.....there was nothing left to do but descend the couloir. Two pools of light kicking steps forever down into delirium. At midnight we tottered onto the ledge above the waterfall. It would have to wait until first light. Wet and very tired, we never really slept. Our stove gave us hot water....ambrosia!

It never really did get dark that night. Victoria Peak was always silhouetted against a red-orange glow. The wheel of stars rolled too slowly overhead. . Water dripped everywhere. Two ptarmigans cried in the shadows. As good as down, staring out at the night-long twilight, I was glad.....for having a solid team mate.....no worry ever about John falling, for not having to do it again, for wanting to do it again, driven and persistent, the carrot touched but not held, half full and half empty, forging on. On a ledge, on a mountain, in the night.

Participants: John Young and Tom Carter

AN ALPINE TRIFECTA: LEIGHTON, STEVENS AND MALASPINA PEAKS

Lindsay Elms
July 3-5

In New Zealand's TAB betting systems for racehorses there is a type of bet called the Trifecta, and within that there are different types of Trifecta's. During my misspent youth the one type my friends and I would bet on was the picking of three winners from three different races during the same race meet. The odds were good if you could pick the three horses but you would have to follow the horses regularly to have any chance. There was usually a race meet during the week and

then one on the weekend which meant that if I wanted to watch the races I couldn't go climbing on the weekend. A small price to pay if I wanted to beat the odds and win. Unfortunately I never did win so I went back to mountaineering before I got too far in the hole. Probably a good thing for me!

So here I was deciding what to climb on my days off this week. I thought, "how about an alpine Trifecta; three peaks in three days in three adjoining valleys?" Leighton, Stevens and

Malaspina Peaks had been on my agenda and were suitably located to fit the bill. Leighton Peak was up the Conuma Valley, Stevens Peak up the East Canton and Malaspina Peak up the West Canton and all are located between Gold River and Tahsis.

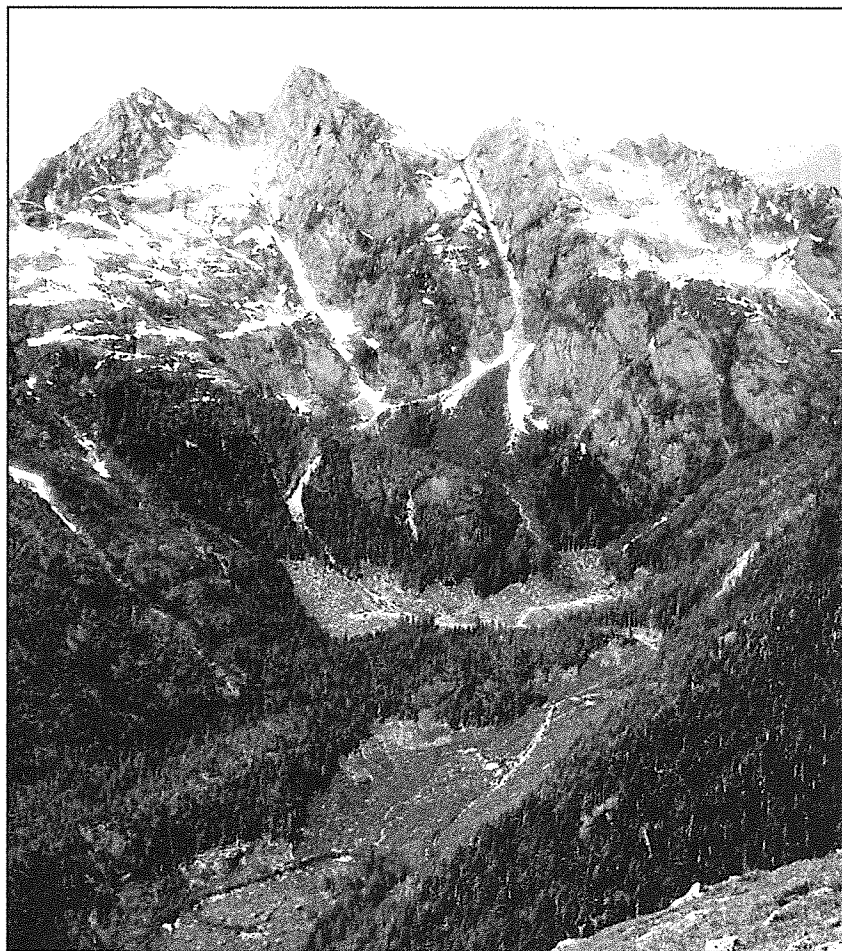
Val and I were up early and headed off towards Tahsis. It was beautiful clear skies until we reached Gold River and then we became mist bound. However, when we turned off the Conuma Main and began ascending the C-22 logging spur road we broke out above the mist into blue skies. As luck would have it the road went quite high before we had to stop and park.

With light day packs we crossed the slash and dived into the old growth. It was steep with lots of bluffs that we had to circumnavigate but we gained elevation rapidly. Eventually we broke out onto the summit ridge to the west of the peak and had an easy scramble to the top. The



Stevens Peak

Photo: Lindsay Elms



Malaspina Peak

Photo: Lindsay Elms

aluminum survey tripod on top was damaged, which was unusual because others (Mount Albert Edward) have been up for years without receiving any undue damage.

We spent the next hour with map in hand identifying the surrounding mountains and looking across the valley to Stevens Peak – our destination for tomorrow.

The return trip was tricky because of all the bluffs, and required a lot of micro navigating but we made it down in one piece. One peak down two to go! We drove back out the Conuma Main and around to Head Bay where we accessed the East Canton Main. This road took us high onto a saddle overlooking the Conuma River to the east of the Stevens Peak where we camped for the night.

Up early again the next morning and into the bush at first light. The bush was thick in places and after half an hour we reached a series of heathered bluffs which we were able to interconnect to avoid too much bushwhacking. It was another beautiful day and we reveled in the great views. However, below the mist had poached the lower valley from the west coast but as the morning went on it dissipated. The easy bluffs continued up into the alpine and the main peak loomed up in front of us. There was a short descent off the end of the ridge before the final face leading up to the summit. Once on the summit we spent an hour enjoying the

views and scoping out the route we would take up Malaspina Peak the next day. Again back down the ridge to the vehicle and out to Head Bay.

Once back on the Tahsis Road, we crossed the bridge across the Canton Creek and immediately turned right onto the West Canton Main. This we followed as far up the valley as we could until the road became too rough. After setting up the tent I went for a short wander farther up the road and found that it became drivable again. However, we couldn't drive the rough section. The road went up a small hill and then dropped down the other side back into the valley. I could then see the big gully that we wanted to get into that would take us to the summit ridge. Unfortunately, it looked like we would have some thick second growth to contend with for a few hundred feet between the road and the gully.

Next morning we were hiking the road in a foggy mist but we knew it would burn off as the day went on. From the end of the road we had to enter the second growth and the next few hundred feet were quite time consuming until we entered the old growth. We had a short climb through the forest until we arrived under a headwall and then we swung left onto the snow which gave access to the bottom of the gully. Although we could see that there would be places where the snow would be marginal, it looked like we could get through. A few weeks earlier with more snow and this gully would be a breeze. We put our crampons on and started up the steepening gully. I immediately sensed one of climbing's most delightful sensations when the spikes of my crampons bit reassuringly into the crisp frozen snow.

Just before reaching the summit ridge we deked off out to the left and onto a heather slope which also took us to the ridge. Things had been easy so far. We had a mid-morning break and then headed across the snowfield which led up to the East Ridge. Although easy at first it soon became a little tricky and I had to scout around for the best route. Eventually we pulled the rope out and made a short rappel into the notch below the main peak. It was then just a scramble up to the main summit of Malaspina Peak. Again incredible views from the summit and we could see back to Leighton and Stevens Peak which were part of our alpine trifecta.

On the descent I found an easy route that by-passed the rock tower, which we had rappelled, and then we boot-skied down to the top of the gully. An hour later we stepped out of the gully and off the snow and into the trees again only this time we found an

elk trail which took us through the second growth and back onto the logging road. Another wonderful weekend in the mountains and we won the trifecta to boot!

Participants: Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

History:

Leighton Peak is named to remember RCAF Flight Sergeant Robert Frederick Leighton, from Duncan who was serving as a pilot with 404 Squadron when he was killed November 1, 1941. Robert Leighton is buried in Lerwick New Cemetery, Shetland, UK. "Fred" worked for the Geographic Division, Department of Lands prior to enlistment, and was the first Provincial civil servant killed on active service overseas in WWII; he had been an enthusiastic and popular member of the Vancouver Island Section, Alpine Club of Canada. Additional biographical information may be found in the Canadian Alpine Journal 1941, p.130 - 131. Probably in the 1980s a Canadian Geodetic Survey party was on the summit and cemented an aluminum tripod to the rock; otherwise there are no other records of ascent.

Stevens Peak is named after John F. Stevens, R.C.A., who was killed in action in Sicily on June 12, 1943. He was a former member of the Geographic Division staff. In 1947 the surveyor Alfred Slocomb used the summit of Stevens Peak for photo-top triangulations and marked the summit with a brass bolt (#117) and built a 6' cairn. The next recorded ascent wasn't until May 2000, when John Damaschke snow-shoed to the summit as part of an ACC party (IB 2000, p.11.)

Malaspina Peak is named after Captain Alexandro Malaspina, a celebrated Italian seaman in the naval service of Spain, who explored the west coast of Nootka Island in the corvette Descubierta in 1791. There is no record of a first ascent but in July 1976, John Gibson, Syd Watts, Rick Eppler, Steve Hinde, Gil Parker and Alan Robinson climbed Malaspina's slightly lower South Summit and found a cairn on top. (IB Sept. 1976, p.3.) Gibson, Watts, Robinson, Eppler and Jim and Geoff Squarok returned in August 1977 and this time reached the summit of the main peak. (IB Oct. 1977, p.1.) On October 19, 1997 Sandy Briggs and Charles Turner climbed Malaspina's main summit (and south summit) from the Perry Creek. On the summit they found a note left by "Dave & Dave" from October 2, 1993 who said they had climbed the peak from the Canton Creek. In 2002 Paul Rydeen and Darren Wilman climbed Malaspina from logging roads off the West Canton Main that accessed the ridge southeast of the peak.

CHOCOLATE AND A TOWEL - MOUNTAINEERING WITH KIDS

Nadja Steiner
July 22

When we moved to Canada in October 2000, Anna-Lena (4 at the time) had already accompanied us on the occasional outdoor trip and Finn (then 1) had developed an amazing ability to climb shelves, window sills and bunk beds. We had taken both kids hiking on a regular basis and made sure they got used to wearing a backpack, however small. In recent years the children's abilities improved significantly, and encouraged by a tour in the Austrian Alps and a trip to Cream Lake in Strathcona Park in 2005, we decided to make 2006 our mountain year.

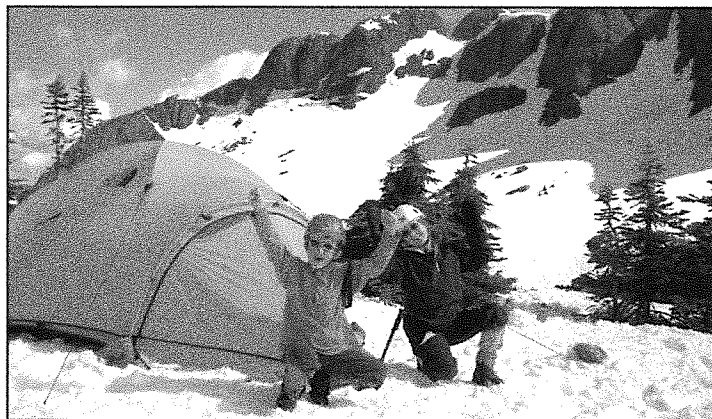
One idea had circled my mind for quite a while: The Phillips Watershed High Ridge Tour in Strathcona Park. The kids were already used to mum's adventurous ideas and the "who-knows-what-mum-plans-next" saying has been manifested in their heads in addition to the notion that there is always chocolate and a towel in mum's backpack. Since the day I put out the high-ridge-tour-idea to the family, Finn, 6 at that time, was my strongest supporter. Anna-Lena, a bit more reluctant, couldn't really prevent Finn's enthusiasm from squirting over to her. We worked on stamina with shorter hikes around the area (Gowlland-Todd, Mt. Finlayson – or Mt. Finn-my-son – as I call it, etc.). In June we took a first real trip to Mt Arrowsmith. The kid's backpacks were packed as usual with their rain gear, small water bottle, pocket knife, emergency light, sun hat/glasses, toque, gloves and Thermarests. This time, to premiere, a brand new climbing helmet was fixed outside. Finn could hardly wait to try it out. But due to the hot sun he had to wait until we reached the final snow slope before the saddle. We encountered quite a bit more snow than expected and ended up having the kid's first camp-on-the-

snow experience.

By the time we set up camp, everybody else had left the mountain, the weather was fantastic, the view amazing, and we passed the afternoon building snow sculptures. The next morning we headed up toward the gendarmes. Every child was roped to an adult, mostly for psychological support, since this kind of exposure was rather new to them. Reaching the 2nd gendarme, Finn remarked that he would be a bit scared. Some clouds also started to come in and we decided to declare the current peak our summit, have a lunch break and head down. We reached the car in a good mood and in good time to make it to the ice cream store.

The trip had been a real treat and was definitely encouraging. We kept up with the occasional day hikes and had one more little adventure in Gowlland-Todd Park, where we took a wrong trail trying to find Durrance Lake from our house in Brentwood. After 6 hours in the forest, with Finn seriously worried that we might have to spend the night, we decided to take a taxi back from Willis Point Rd. and forget about the lake swim. We didn't use the towel, but we certainly had the chocolate. We now know how to get to Durrance Lake in a nice 1 1/2 hour hike. After that, I declared both kids High-Ridge-Tour-prepared.

Chocolate and a towel would not be quite enough this time. Luckily we already own lightweight equipment, good hiking boots and backpacks. We (kids included!) spend several evenings brain storming and making lists. Usually, with kids, we double the time estimates and add a few days of relaxation in between. That would mean 2 1/2 weeks! oops...no way!!! We ended up planning food for 12+2 days; turning back is always an option. However, even food for 12 days and four people is a lot to carry in two adult packs (don't even succumb to the illusion that mountain-kids would eat less than an adult). We dried beef jerky in large amounts, together with apples and a few other fruits. Together with some crackers and nuts this would be our lunch snack. For breakfast we had granola, oats, milk powder and a couple of bags with scrambled eggs. For dinner we invested in freeze dried food. This certainly reduced the weight of food and gas, but it was a tough test on our taste buds, especially for the kids. For the next trip we'd rather neglect the variety and have Lasagna and Turkey Terrazini every day. There were of course also energy bars, candy, cough drops, cookies, CHOCOLATE and gum. (The latter, always good for emergency situations, was later used to fix the holes somebody had poked into the roof of



*Finn and Anna-Lena snow camping on the saddle below Mt Arrowsmith
Photo: Nadja Steiner*

Wheaton Hut). As a last step of our preparations, Sandy, who was leading one of the ACC Centennial traverses to the Golden Hinde (thereby covering most of the High Ridge Tour), had promised to give us some more insight into the route. So, one nice evening, BBQ-ing in the garden and leaning over the map we even managed to put Harry's overworked brain into a mountain mood.

Finally, July 22nd! Well, we spent the whole day packing..., the kids' packs were done quick, but ours.... I don't recall how many times we unpacked and resorted, but we did it! We decided, however, not to weigh the packs, otherwise good reasoning would have forced us to stay home. We left the house on Sunday, stayed a day with friends to give the kids a good dose of kid's play and left for Buttle Lake Monday morning. The weather was amazing, the lake calm and



Anna-Lena and Finn on Marble Meadows, Morrison Spire in the distance Photo Nadja Steiner

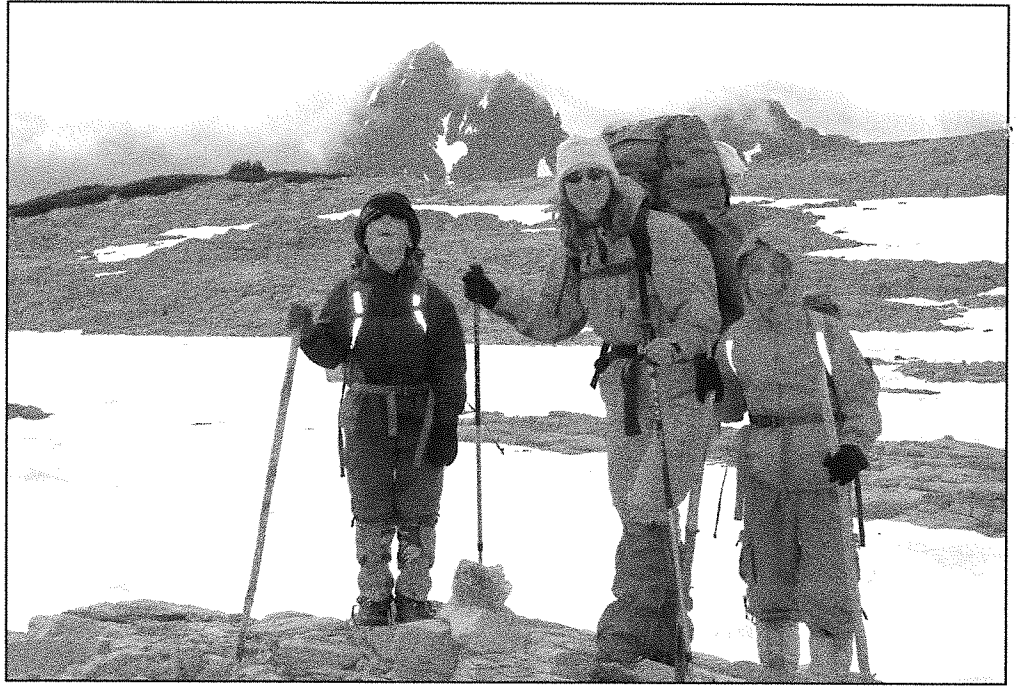
we could cross over quickly to Phillips Creek. Before we started on the long and exhausting Marble Meadows Trail, we had to go for a plunge! FREEZING COLD, but, we would long for it again rather soon! The ascent was incredibly slow and tiring. It was so hot we ended up rationing the water to small sips. We camped half way up, at the only water-bearing stream on the way. After lots of water and some food with too much mosquito protein, the kids went hiding in the tent. Harry became creative hanging up the food. Loud swearing announced some mishap during the project: An accidental pull at the wrong rope in the dark had moved the one end to inaccessible height. Kids to the rescue! Finn was put in his harness and pulled up into the tree to grab the lost end. Looks like we can't manage WITHOUT kids!

The strenuous ascent continued the next morning, and I am still amazed that the kids did so well. However, our scheme of short, but frequent stops (like every 15-25 min, or every second switchback...) served us well! Every stop means drink and treat (dried fruit, nuts, cracker, cookies, a candy, fruit roll-ups or even a piece of chocolate...). Apart from stopping and treating, there is a good deal of talking involved, either in the form of word games, knowledge questions or just telling stories about things and places. Most kids are like sponges, they take in whatever they can, and while their mind is busy, the feet are moving. There is a lot to wonder about, too! Flowers, bugs, rocks, BIRDS (Finn's specialty), amazing views, and simply the fact that we are out there. Having an especially talkative sponge in the family made us switch places every so often, to preserve our ears from falling off. Finally out of the woods, we were greeted by bright sun – an amazing view and soon the first lakes are in sight. The kids

were already running again, looking for the best camp spot and remarking that they definitely have to explore that big snow hole over there. We set up camp at Limestone Lake, here to stay. After a cold night (for Harry) and some issues in aiming at the bottle (Finn), we had a good day of rest. The weather was amazing; the view exposed our whole route, with the Golden Hinde in the backdrop. So, when we started up again through beautiful Marble Meadows, the kids kept singing: I want to climb higher than Morrison Spire.... Although the kids loved Wheaton Hut, we decided to continue and by the afternoon we found ourselves hiking over fossilized ocean floor. This was truly a place of wonder, small fossilized mollusks and worms (I guess...) everywhere, absolutely fascinating!!! In a long day's hike we made it to the saddle below Morrison Spire. Finn, who had been quite grumpy the last half hour, ended up RUNNING over the last snow field and immediately forgot his complaints when he was rewarded by the sight of some ptarmigan. Anna-Lena, even though often complaining at an early stage, is incredibly persistent at day's end and had long found her pace. The tent was up quick and the kids snuck in to wait for dinner. It cooled down quite a bit that night and clouds greeted us in the morning. We decided to stay and climb, if not higher, at least on top of Morrison Spire. What looked so majestic from the front, turned out quite a pile of rubble in the back. Nonetheless, the ascent was much quicker than we thought. Between some jerky, pretzels and chocolate we found the "We-were-here's" of the ACC-Golden Hinde teams in the summit book and from some time ago even an entry of an eight year old boy.

We continued on the next day. Even though the spring flowers looked beautiful between the white rocks, they weren't always easy

to traverse for the kids, and we had to lend them a lot of hands. Nonetheless, I had to smile: thinking of the two ACC-groups a few days ahead I was sure they had put on a stronger pace, but they were certainly not entertained by kids' voices singing in high energy mode. Limestone Cap was again a treat of Mother Nature. Glacier carved rock, dressed up with dots of fossils everywhere, big holes covered with blue ice and snow... The kids decided to write a book – "Magic School Bus Takes a Hike" (It never got finished though). Descending from Limestone Cap we found a beautiful campsite and decided to stop early, hoping for improved sight the next day. Waking up the next morning was quite disappointing in that respect. Not only was the Golden Hinde in clouds but also everything else; the world ended right behind our tent pegs. At the end of the day we had played many a game of dice and everybody had hair bands and/or hemp bracelets. Since there was no cooking in the tent, we had to expose ourselves to the moist cold creeping into every opening of our clothes at least once... This was summer vacation, right? We all ate more than our usual day's ration, cold certainly burns calories; we decided to turn back after one more day. Harry was the first one daring to look out of the tent the next day. Unbelievably, the sun WAS back. We continued on, one descent on the rope and over the snow fields to the Tibetan Ridge which would be the highest

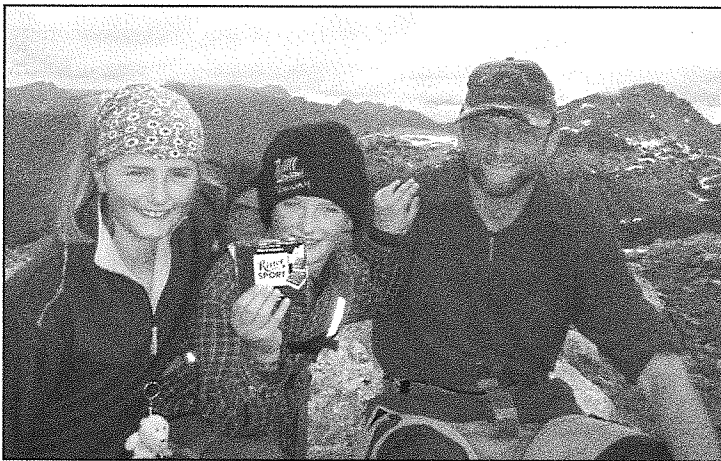


Finn, Nadja & Anna-Lena on the Limestone Cap, the Golden Hinde in back. Photo: Harry Steiner

climb the mountain) snuck into my mind, too. Finn announced his plans to climb the Golden Hinde when he is 9... Well, we'll see if he still remembers two years from now.

The next morning was gorgeous again, but not for long. Clouds were climbing faster than we could pack and we pushed the kids more than we liked. By the time we reached Limestone Cap, the clouds had caught up with us. Finn was grumpy, and moving extra-slow. However, since he was still constantly bending over to catch grasshoppers and poke snow holes, this was clearly more a problem of motivation than energy. Just mentioning that we would like to explore one of the big holes on the cap had him running again. The clouds stayed behind and we continued toward blue sky. By the time we reached our old camp spot at Morrison Spire it was only early afternoon and we talked about the possibility of reaching Wheaton Hut that day and, if so, stay there for two nights. The kids got caught in the fever and RAN. It was theirs to decide when and where to stop.

Unbelievably, by 7:30 we reached the hut! The kids were in high spirits and started to get homely. At night another inhabitant of the hut got active. By the time I convinced myself to get up and check, the toilet paper was already shredded. I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Mouse! She certainly was not starving! We spend a very relaxing day, swimming (o.k. quick dipping...) in Wheaton Lake and hanging out. In the evening we got incredibly inventive building a mouse trap: a stick that would fall into the pot when Mrs. Mouse passes and trap her. Excellent plan! A piece of jerky for bait, we were ready with the flashlight, waiting for the inevitable to happen. There goes the trap – lights on! What's that? Mrs. Mouse is just running up and down the pot walls, unbelievable... Mrs. Mouse must have laughed her tail off



Anna-Lena, Finn & Harry on Tibetan Ridge Limestone Cap with Mt McBride in back. Photo: Nadja Steiner

point on our tour. The turning point was a lovely little place with view of the Golden Hinde.

What a peaceful evening! Admittedly some wishful thinking of grandparents taking the kids (so Harry and I could actually

(and had a good chew on the jerky). We had a good laugh, too, and a bit less sleep. The next morning the melt ponds around the hut were frozen; so the kid's snow fort got some glassy windows. The weather was just as beautiful as when we started the trip and we decided to ascend Marble Peak for more marveling. It was more alpine than expected and the kids got to do some climbing. Shortly before the summit we encountered a gap about 1 m wide, which the kids weren't quite ready to cross. We covered the last 100m alone and returned just in time to see the last piece of chocolate disappear into the kids' mouths.

Then, back to Marble Meadows for one last night, one more peaceful evening, time for reflection. It had been a truly wonderful tour. I was incredibly thankful to the whole family for putting up with the idea and going through with it and, even better, everybody seems ready for some new adventure. We had a few more relaxing days camping on Rainbow Island (Buttle Lake) before we ended the most relaxing vacation we've had in years.

We had one more trip in our mountain year, Mt. Albert Edward in mid September. The weather was again beautiful, the leaves already coloured and the bushes full with blueberries.... But that's yet another story!

SLOCOMB PEAK & COLWELL

Peter Rothermel
July 22-26

For the Alpine Club Centennial there were several trips planned that would all happen in, or pass through the Elk River watershed. Since I had been up all of the better known summits in the Elk River area, Kings, Elkhorn, Rambler, Colonel Foster, I was looking for something new to me. Slocomb Peak, at 1840m and Mt Colwell (also known as Elkhorn South), at 1989m were worthy destinations. These two mountains, while overshadowed by the bigger peaks in the valley, are still over 6000 ft and both rightly belong in the list of the 40 plus big island summits. I couldn't decide which one to put on the club trip list and in the end decided to try for both over a long five day weekend... my kind of weekend.

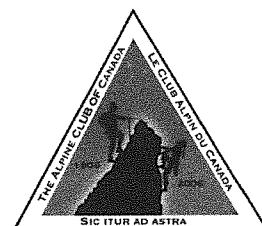
Five of us, Graham Maddocks, Harriet Rueggerberg, Peter Rogers, Judith Holm and myself met, on the Saturday, at the Elk River Trail head and began the long hike up the river valley. We were experiencing a hot spell of weather and it looked like the snowpack was going through a big melt down, with water gushing off all the surrounding mountains. It was cool enough near the river and under the forest canopy, but out in the open sun, it was blistering hot.

Just below Landslide Lake, we took the left fork leading to the upper Elk River Valley. There's an area of avalanche debris that the route leads through and normally you just hike up the middle of the dry river bed and scramble over the log debris. This year the river was flowing over the gravel bed and the way through was balancing above the torrent on logs strewn like a giant game of pick up sticks. Past the log jam is the "big tree campsite" where we gladly threw off our packs and set up camp on the gravel bar, alongside the river. This is an island oasis of old growth timber,

among a vast area of slide paths. Winter in these parts would be pretty risky business indeed.

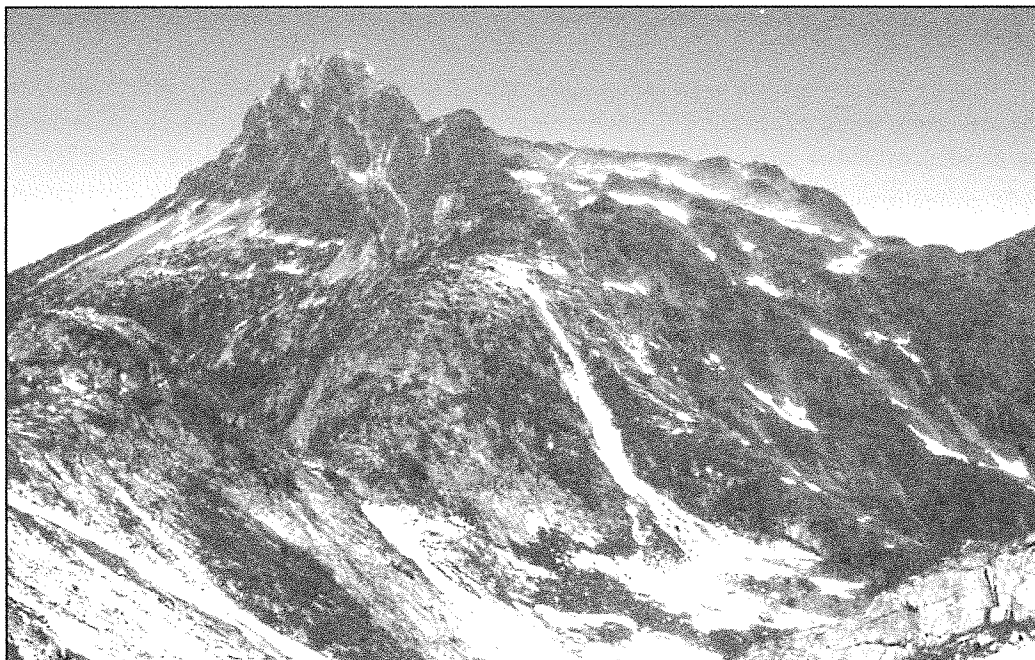
The following Sunday morning we hefted our day packs and started up the valley. The demarcation between the old growth forest and the first area of slide alder is like night & day. One minute you're stepping around a stout tree and the next you're up to your eyeballs in pale green twisted growth, which seems to have the singular purpose of stopping all forward progress. In years past there had always been a few bits of flagging and over the years, I had gotten to know the way through pretty well... I thought. I guess that past winter's avalanches had been pretty active, because the slide alder was so mixed up with broken debris, that we were swimming blindly all the way through to the other side. Once up on a rise, with a small patch of protected first growth, we looked back across the slide area. You could huck a rock and probably just about reach the forest with your throw, yet it took us over an hour to get through. Looking back towards the forest over the slide alder, I said, "It resembles a great big salad bowl." At which Graham stated, "More like Hell's kitchen", an apt name for that passage.

We continued up the valley through slide areas and patches of forest, until we reached the open rocky valley, where the growth seems to terminate. My first trips up this way, we would just head up the valley bottom and have to negotiate slippery scree slopes above the rushing river. A few years ago I noticed some flagging on a bench above the river's west bank. Sure enough, it's a better way and a faster passage to the snowfields in the uppermost valley. Once we reached the col at Elk Pass, we stopped for lunch and Judith hung up some gifts for the two Golden Hinde parties



that would be passing through this way in a few days. She had made up a package with eat treats, notes of encouragement and a mickey of whiskey for each group and then hung them in obvious places that couldn't be missed. It sort of felt like Christmas in the mountains... in July.

After our interlude, we dropped back down a bit and traversed over to the base of Slocomb Peak. This summit is directly between Rambler Peak and Mt Colonel Foster and offers excellent views of familiar routes on these peaks. There is a band of granite that runs from Rambler's southern base, through Elk Pass and up Slocomb's south side, almost to its summit. We rejected going up the south shoulder; although it was blocky granite, it looked like it was steep in places and might require a few serious moves and as we didn't want to use up our waning time on an exploratory area, we rejected that route. In retrospect it might be a more aesthetic way up. As it was, we opted for going up a snow filled gully and then onto loose crumbly rock. Once above this rotten area we found solid tilted granite slabs and easy scrambling to the summit blocks, where the rock changed into volcanic, yet solid medium. On top we found a cairn, but no summit register, so I placed a new tube and book in the cairn. We had excellent views of Colonel Foster's Southeast Summit route and Rambler's classic West Buttress route. We also had a straight on view of our next objective, Mt Colwell.



Mt Slocomb from Mt Colwell (Elkhorn South)

Photo: Peter Rothermel

The return trip off the mountain and back to camp went well and we made it through "Hell's Kitchen" just before dark. Near camp we came across a group of three American climbers camping, who were on their way to the Golden Hinde. We asked how they had heard of this route and mountaineering on Vancouver Island, in general, and one guy replied that his grand dad grew up in Courtenay and that his family always spent a summer vacation in the area. His grandfather was Roger Schjeldrup who, at the age of 16, missed what was thought to be the first ascent of the Golden Hinde at the time by one day, however, it turned out to be the third ascent. Schjeldrup later became the most decorated Canadian officer in W.W. II. A very nice touch of history and a chance meet, in the Elk River Valley. We had a good sleep that night, knowing that the next day would be an easy "rest" day.

The following day, Monday, we slept in, packed up and headed down the valley at a leisurely pace. At the junction below Landslide Lake, we dropped our packs and took a jaunt up to the lake, for the views of Colonel Foster. There we met up with Tak Ogasawara and Don Morton, who had come up to join us on the second half of our journey. After the short hike down to the gravel flats camp site, we spent the remainder of the day resting up.

The next morning, Tuesday, we were up early and off on what we figured to be a long day, as we knew we were going to face the monster, *Bushwhackerus horribilis*, that day. Crossing the Elk River was a snap, as there was a big level log spanning the stream just a few



Mt Colwell (Elkhorn South) from Mt Slocomb, Elkhorn on the left. Photo: Peter Rothermel

minutes from where we camped. We went upstream as far as we could on the flood plain gravel and then dove into the forest, still heading upstream and parallel to the river. We were looking for what was described as "a dry creek bed and then follow up and to the right, where you might find bits of old flagging." This we found, but eventually came to a small headwall and chimney feature (the right way), where the flagging stopped, but decided to follow a ledge heading to the right. It started out well, but eventually became very spongy in places, as if one were walking on a ledge made of moss, small roots and air, which I think we were. We thrashed our way up, hanging onto roots and made our way up onto a forested ridge and lo and behold bits of flagging. Following the ridge up, with rock features forcing our route, we would not see a piece of flagging for quite a while and then just use our bush sense to find our route and then there might be a lone piece of flagging and then nothing for a long while again. We were stymied at one place and had to cast back and forth for some time before we found a way through and eventually made our way out onto the open tilted slabby rock of the upper mountain. It's a huge open slope that is tilted at an average of maybe 20 degrees and you can mostly just walk up, yet it seems to go on forever.

When we finally reached the top and looked over the back side of the mountain, my stomach did a flip and my eyeballs swam cross eyed at the exposed drop. You could spit, on a windless day and it would drop over 4,000 ft before it would hit the

Cervus Creek valley bottom. On top we found a cairn, but no summit register, so I placed a new tube and book in the cairn.

I was especially glad that my good friend Tak was there on the summit. He had been recovering from some very serious surgery a few months previous and wasn't sure if he was up to such a long climb and thought he might have to turn back. I've shared many a summit with Tak and it sure felt good to be sharing this one with him.

Our descent went well and we removed our flagging on the upper mountain where there had not been any before, but left our new tape down lower, where we had tied it next to the old bits and pieces. We also followed the forested ridge down to the chimney spot we had avoided on our ascent. Well, it's the right way to go... a bit scrambly, but somewhat easier than our spongy ledge. We came out onto the river bank a bit too early and ended up in a real thrash through the flood plain alder, until we reached the log crossing. We were back at camp before dark, but still I think it was a 14 or so hour day.

Last day, Wednesday, we had a leisurely hike out and stopped at the Strathcona Park Lodge for a home cooked meal and there ended another great Island trip, with a great group of friends. While not requiring technical climbing, these peaks are still well worth a trip too. They are likely not often visited and offer a remoteness and different perspectives of the surrounding mountains.

Participants: Judith Holm, Graham Maddocks, Harriet

GOLDEN HINDE TRAVERSE

Karun Thanjavur
July 23-30

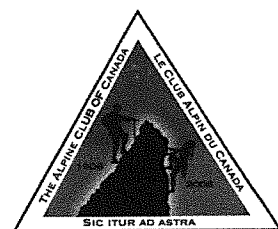
How many mountaineers does it take to witness a romantic, mountain top exchange of rings and yet remain totally clueless? That too, despite prolonged kissing and other such excited hints by the bright eyed culprits? Well, thirteen ACC members - not counting the couple themselves of course, who at least were more clued in, one hopes!! And, at the head of these dreamy-eyed, space cadets, the gallant trip leader(s) themselves - in that priceless photo capturing the moment (credits to Russ), one can almost hear Sandy saying, "uh, I wish those two would stop that lovey-dovey stuff and let me enjoy a view of the peaks beyond," as he shyly turns away!

But wait, I am getting way ahead of myself in this narration, three full days in fact of perfect Strathcona experience, of the incredible variety the park has to offer! Let me rewind to July 22, to the warm, sunny afternoon on the shores of Buttle Lake,

the start of our week-long Golden Hinde Traverse - this was a highlight trip of the Vancouver Island Section during the ACC Centennial Celebrations.

The Hinde was, of course, the centerpiece of this traverse of Strathcona, from Phillips Creek to Elk River, with a side trip to Rambler if weather/energy permitted. We were Group 2, Jain, Richard, Phil, Matt, Lenka, Gordon, Russ, as trip leader, and me. We were scheduled to be a day's travel behind Group 1 led by Sandy - need I elaborate further why we wished to maintain a safe distance? However, just as we arrived at the Auger Point day use area, we witnessed the last canoe load of laggards making a very bouncy crossing of the lake to Phillips Creek, the start of the trail.

As Russ had predicted, the late afternoon winds, funneling steadily up the valley, were whipping Buttle Lake up into sizeable



whitecaps. We spent the lazy afternoon hours swimming, snoozing and skipping stones and waited for the cool of the evening to calm the waters. We had scuttled our earlier plans of camping at Auger Point and making the crossing early next morning, and had decided instead to use the long summer evening to make the crossing, camp at Phillips Creek and get a start on the trail early the next day. After dinner, the paddle across went smoothly. Sleeping under a star-studded summer sky at Phillips Creek was a nice curtain call to a very pleasant day.

Day 1 of the traverse gave us our first taste of Russ'early to bed, early to rise' regimen that kept us bleary eyed, but happy as we hit the trail at some unearthly hour every morning. The hike up the well-maintained trail to Marble Meadows helped gently ease the weight of a big pack on to a body used to sedentary ways. As we came out of the trees, the meadows greeted us in a riot of glorious alpine colours, a sight that was repeated often throughout the traverse.

After a relaxed lunch, we crossed Marble Meadows to our first camp at the Wheaton Hut – the A-frame hut would be ideal for an overnigher with a light pack to explore the fascinating geology and the endless botanical variety of the area. Even the sweltering heat of the afternoon was not enough to goad any of us to jump into the lake, except for the two lassies, who coolly powered their way to the ice floes and back! Phil, after a cursory jump into the frigid water, summed the experience as, "F# + %, my *&00\$+ hit my throat!" with his trademark Québécois frankness.

Bright and early on Day 2, we followed the meadows to the limestone crest at the head of Marblerock Creek, and then angled left along the crest of the ridge (a treasure trove for fossil seekers) to Morrison Spire. A quick scramble, without our packs, up the Spire – which looks daunting on the approach but is quite tame from the back – gave us some great views and the first 'summit' pictures.

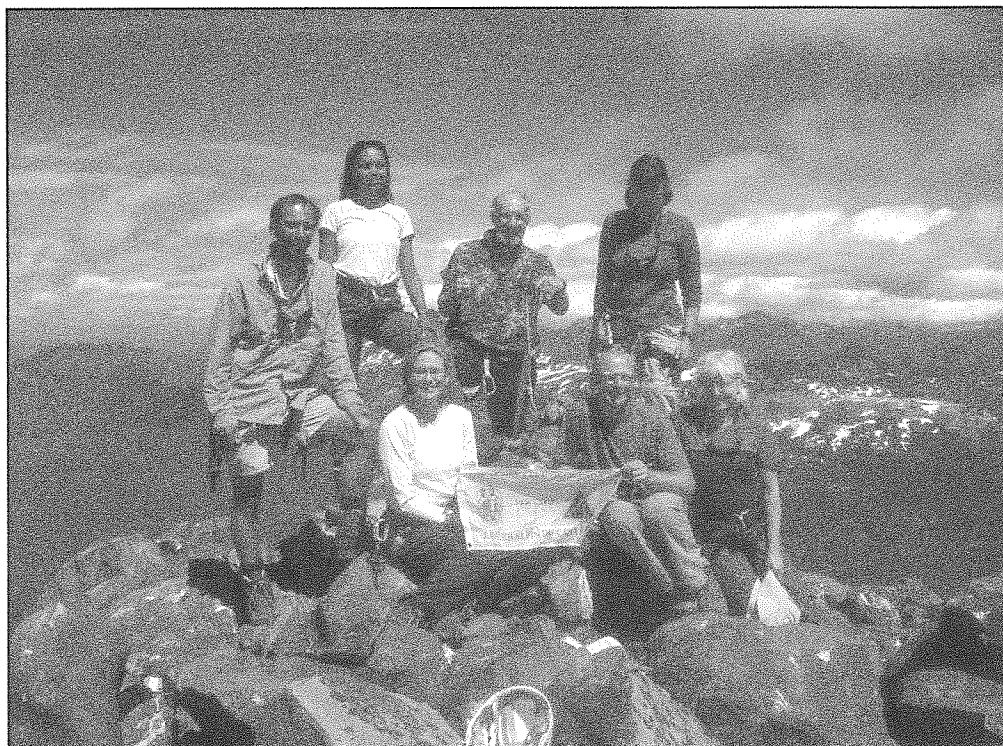
We continued along the crest, up and down several bumps to the point where another ridge comes in from due East – we had to angle down to the right to a partly exposed shallow gully with loose rocks; we chose to lower our packs on a rope and then scramble down one or two at a time (saw several slings to tempt the unwary rappeller!) Camp 2 was in the pass before Greig Ridge.

Our trail on Day 3 went south-westerly along Greig Ridge to a prominent notch above Schjeldrup Lake.

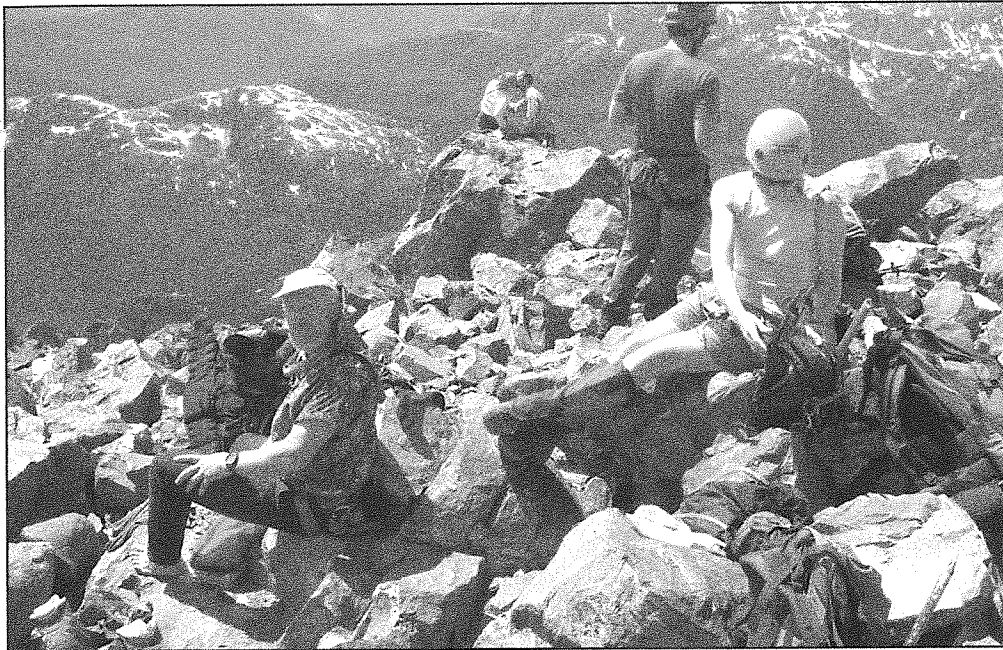
Russ remembered a route from the North edge of the lake (a faint memory from his solo traverse many donkeys' years ago and "going the other way" as he reminded us). Unable to locate that route, we chose an alternate trail that went steeply up a shallow gully, then dropped down the first of two gullies leading down to the lake; about 100 m down the gully, a dog's leg turn to the left (watch closely for the trail!) through the woods brought us the bottom of a steep snow gully. We had to stay high up and traverse through the bush instead of following the natural instinct to drop down to the lake (and be bluffed out!). The trail through the bush leads to the watershed at the south end of Schjeldrup – a nice open spot for a refreshing swim and lunch.

We hugged the south-west shoreline, with marginal flagging to lead us, through rocks and dense bush to the outlet of the lake. Then up through beautiful old growth to the granite ridge from Mt. Burman. We dropped down to Burman Lake battling thick bush from which the rocky sections gave some respite. The route brought us to the narrow defile where BC Hydro had tried their ill-planned scheme to drain Burman Lake to Wolf River to feed the hydro plant in upper Campbell Lake – a whacky project that was shelved, thankfully, before the damage was extensive and irreversible. But, oh sweet heaven! to sit on a log in the late afternoon sun for a well-deserved communal back massage!

The following morning, Day 4 of the traverse and the scheduled summit day, Sandy's group were already well up the snow slope on the south side of the Hinde when we reached the tarn at the bottom – the previous evening, we had set up Camp 3 half-

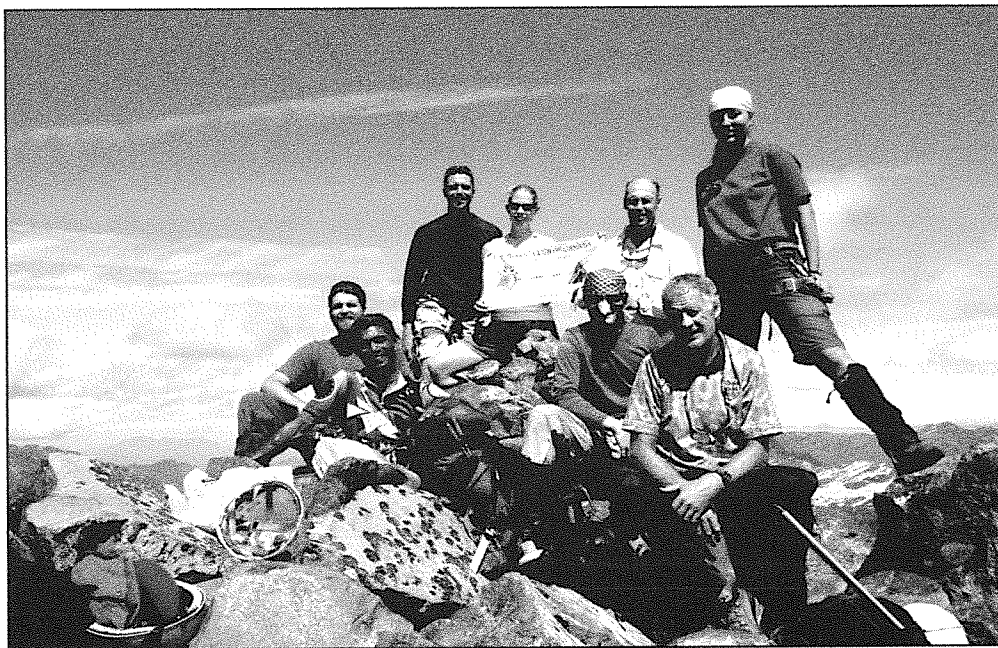


*Sandy's group on the summit of the Golden Hinde
Standing: Hinrich Schaefer, Shawn Daniels, Sandy Briggs, Anja Pakendorf
Seated: Julie Deslippe, Lee Salter, Fern Hietcamp*



"Oh, Hinrich, I thought you'd never ask!"

Photo: Russ Moir



Russ' group on the summit of Golden Hinde

Standing: Gordon Nienaber, Jain Alcock-White, Richard Eaton, Lenka Visnovska

Sitting: Phillipe Benoit, Karun Thanjavur, Matt Pope, Russ Moir

way between Burman Lake and the mountain, graciously –befitting our genteel group –leaving the better campsites at the tarn to the "Other" group.

The conditions for the climb were picture perfect as we too headed up, after having set up camp and readied our daypacks. We just followed the well-marked route up, scrambling through the rock couloir below the summit (and rappelling this section on the way down). And thus, there we were, all fifteen of us together on the summit of the Hinde! (Elizabeth from Sandy's

group had decided to enjoy a relaxing day in camp.)

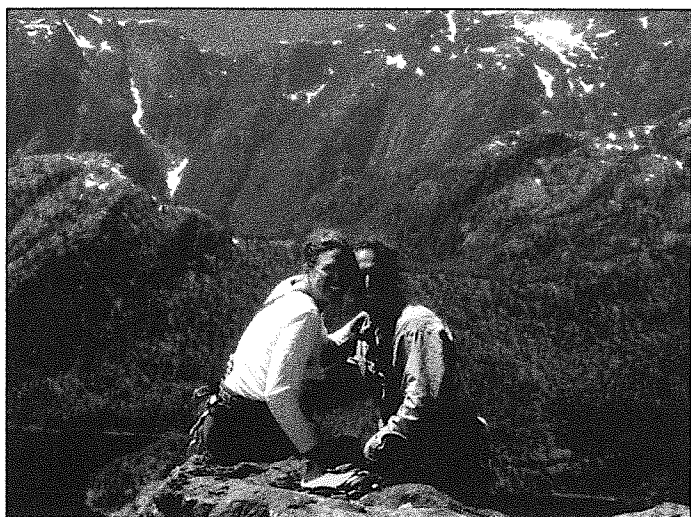
It was a warm, sunny day with a vista that ran to the horizon in all directions. Celebrations, with hi-fives and much back slapping, photos to fill several albums, with enough bars of 'summit' chocolates to bring a dentist a gleeful smile, cellphone calls made to loved ones in faraway places, and rings exchanged too, of course (small detail!).

The descent was straightforward on those warm, dry rocks with a cautionary rope rigged for a short section in the rock couloir. On the last bumslide down the snow slope above the tarn, we managed to gather enough speed to almost attempt a 'hop-n-skip' across the icy waters! Later that evening, the warmth around the 'combined' camp truly reflected the camaraderie, which the ACC has come to symbolize to me! In addition, the suffusing 'warm glow' was aided by a bearded medicine-man who walked around camp dispensing to the tired wayfarers large doses of cheer to be washed down with capfuls of healing tonic.

Early on Day 5, with our bearing now set toward Elk Pass, we headed up from the west end of the tarn, over a shoulder to a westward traverse along a ridge to a prominent gangway. Halfway along the traverse, it was nice to down packs and take a minute to admire a spectacular, unnamed lake at the bottom of a cwm ("as the Welsh call a Scottish corrie, or a great big hole for the ignorant rest", Russ explained).

At the bottom of the boulder-filled gangway, we set up a rope to traverse across a steep, exposed snow slope above another boulder field. Past the traverse, we continued angling to the right and rappelled down a short drop onto a second steep but protected snow slope. These normally rubble slopes still had snow this year, and in the late morning sun the snow was soft and easy to just boot down.

The drop continued through a forest to a very narrow drainage defile. We dropped into the defile and had to search to locate a marginally flagged route that led up through steep forest to an open snow and rock platform. Skirting the summit to the right,



Julie Deslippe and Hinrich Schaefer get engaged on the summit of Golden Hinde
Photo: Russ Moir

we threaded our way through limestone areas and followed the ridge going due north. The July sun was hot and bright as we walked along the ridge for the better part of the afternoon, crossing several bumps to our camp for the night in a marshy meadow below 'Mighty' Mt. DeVoe (Sandy's description).

The trail in the early part of our penultimate day was straightforward as we traversed through steep bush to a col from where we could see the notch due west. We climbed up to the ridge, and then headed north along the spine till directly above a circular lake. We dropped down to the lake and walked through the bush along the west shore till it opened onto old growth at a stream. Up through the forest we went to a narrow lake from where we could see Elk Pass in the distance.

We walked, rather trampled, through lovely marshy meadows, eight pairs of eyes searching in vain for flagging which would

lead us up through a seemingly impassable wooded cliff; finally we decided on a route up a bouldery and wet stream bed, scaling several water falls till we came out at the top onto a heather meadow – almost running into Sandy's group who had been successful in finding the flagged route and were happily tramping up!

It was indeed fitting that both groups should reach the Pass at the same time, for there lay a pleasant surprise meant for the entire gang. At the bottom of the snow slope leading up toward Rambler Peak, lay a mess of flagging tapes of various colors, a mess colorful enough to make Sandy see red – as it was meant to do! Muttering vile threats, he picked up the mess only to discover a cache of brandy and a letter from Judith welcoming us all to Elk Pass, the destination of our successful centennial traverse. Judith had tipped me off before our departure regarding a "surprise" somewhere between the Pass and the trailhead – but the location of the surprise and the timing of the discovery could not have been better orchestrated! The brandy made its warming rounds that evening around our combined camp at the tarns below the Pass. The weather was turning, there was a cold fog hanging heavy and low but the cheery spirit held the elements at bay!

Sandy's group decided to spend another day at the tarns and explore the neighborhood but we hiked out the next morning, stopping often to look back on our traverse and let the experiences of the past six days sink in – or perhaps it was only to pick the manna of delightful blue berries along the trail! Participants:

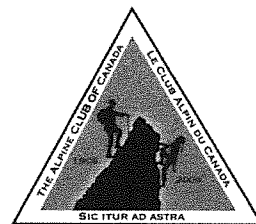
Sandy's Party: Julie Deslippe, Hinrich Schaefer, Shawn Daniels, Lee Salter, Anja Pakendorf, Fern Hietcamp, Elizabeth Bornoth, Sandy Briggs.

Russ' Party: Karun Thanjavur, Jain Alcock-White, Richard Eaton, Phillippe Benoit, Matt Pope, Lenka Visnovska, Gordon Nienaber, Russ Moir.

KING'S PEAK

Cedric Zala
 July 26

About four years ago, my wife Lissa and I hiked up the Crest Mountain trail opposite the Elk River Valley. The upper reaches of this trail gave a splendid view of King's Peak, which our daughter Krista had recently climbed. On that warm and clear day, with the awesome peak towering 1000 feet above us across the valley, I thought – got to get up there some day. That day finally came on July 29th, during the Section's celebration of the National ACC Centennial, when Charles Turner put on a trip to King's Peak.



The night before, a group of us, including Charles and his dog Cairo, met at a camping spot by the Heber River some time after dark. Despite Charles' excellent directions to the site, I couldn't believe that the second gravel road turnoff was actually the one he meant, since it was overgrown with grass and gave the night-time impression of having great pits in the road. So, after proceeding along the first gravel road for another fruitless mile, I turned around and gave it another try. It turned out that the pits were just minor, but the low-angle illumination of the headlights had

created a false impression, and there was no risk of bottoming out. After meeting and greeting the group, and some last-minute crampon adjustment, it was off to sleep, for the clarion call came at dawn.

We met at the Elk River trailhead at 6 am, piled in 4WD vehicles, and bumped along the road under the power lines to the King's Peak trailhead, with its elegant trailhead marker sign. At this point, there was the first of many laments by Stan that his camera batteries were low and did anyone happen to have a couple of double A's? Luckily there were several cameras in the group, which mollified the situation. The power line right-of-way was rife with huckleberries, but thankfully there was no sign of bears, here or anywhere, along the trail.

The up began at 7am, and there was no shortage of up – King's Peak stands at 2065m elevation, and we started at about 300m. The first part of the trail is an extensive series of well-built switchbacks, and the trail then follows a creek and becomes steeper, passing through an extensive area of fallen trees, - maybe the result of a large avalanche a few years ago. We reached the lower meadow in a hanging valley in two and a half hours, and discovered the bad news that the snow gully, our intended route, was broken and impassable and that we would have to take a longer route. The good news was that we lightened our packs, caching crampons and harnesses and so forth. We also had a break – a second breakfast – and indulged in a bit of creative sniping ("Well, I guess it's all right if you were brought up that way...").

We meandered across the lower meadow and headed up a forested slope to a higher meadow, filled up our bottles with water from the last stream, then snaked up a long gully with lots of green belay. At the top of the gully, it was out in the open from that point on. Even so, we lost the trail for a few minutes, following an appealing but false trail leading along a contour, and then angling down. We soon discovered our error, and backtracked to what was indisputably the real trail, as it headed steeply up and was graced with what was arguably a cairn-like structure. From here on, there was a profusion of alpine wildflowers, including paintbrush, moss campion, saxifrage, harebell, western anemone, and penstemon (which got me to musing what rhymes with penstemon – fence the lawn? ...not really...).

Our trip took place during the middle of two long spells of wonderfully warm, dry and clear weather. Unfortunately, the day of our trip coincided with the one break in the clear spells, and the mountain tops were shrouded in cloud from the get-go. Moving up the ridge toward the fog, we got a view of the lower slopes of Puzzle and Colonel Foster, and what we thought was probably Rambler before moving into the clouds and entering the realm of swirling mists, cold gusts, gloves and toques.

Trudging up for another hour, we took a break in what passed for shelter. I was personally wondering whether it would be wise to continue, but Charles assured us that we were within half an hour from the top, and so, heartened by these words and

some of Phee's chocolate, we continued along. Indeed, we were soon passing over Queen's Peak, dropping down through the col, then scrambling up the slope and gullies to the summit. With many whoops and summit photos ("damn camera – maybe if I warmed the batteries?") we celebrated the Centennial ascent. As we enjoyed our lunches, an occasional local clearing in the mists provided a view of great precipices beside us and on the far side dropping off to the valley below.

Then it was time to get ready for going down ("Why are you putting on your gaiters? – we won't need them" "I brought the blasted things all the way up here and I'm damn well going to use them"). On the way down, I got to practice my recently acquired skill of plunge-stepping through the snowfields, with other folks trying boot skiing and glissading. As a result of this fun and enthusiasm, we lost the trail once on the way down. The snowfields were simply too inviting, and we eventually had to branch upwards to regain the trail, which apparently had angled away partway down the snowfield. We set up a few new cairns here and there to improve the route marking.

Finally dropping below cloud level, we doffed our toques and gloves, and continued downwards. It was interesting to see how well I remembered the path and landmarks. Some sections were unmistakable, of course, while others I found I really did not recollect at all from the upward journey. We were glad to have had an experienced leader along, particularly in the foggy sections, and on the one or two occasions of some real doubt, we simply followed the dog!

Then it was down the long gully, getting to practice calls of "ROCK!" and "BIIIIIG ROCK!". Then lots more down. Finally to the switchbacks in the lower reaches of the trail, and the huckleberry bushes at the trailhead.

We counted a total of fourteen people on the mountain that day – our group of six, a family of six (with four youngsters), and two solitary hikers. The only animal I recall seeing was a ptarmigan. Maybe some day we'll be seeing some marmots up there, if the recovery program continues its successes. It was an excellent trail, with lots of work done by the Heathens. Finally, I must admit that the fog and cloud at the top did have a silver lining – the ascent was mercifully cool, and I'll certainly have to go up again to see the view from the top!

Participants: Cedric Zala, Karen Payie, Gordon Turner, Charles Turner (leader); Phee Hudson, Stan Marcus



MOUNTAIN FLORA ON LIMESTONE: STEAMBOAT AND 5040

Judith Holm, Ken Wong

Peak 5040, August 7-9

Steamboat Mt, September 3-5

Perspective

Mountaineering with a small group of friends to explore for plants was (and is!) great fun. In particular, we were seeking flora associated with limestone because this is where to find more variety of species and the rare ones on Vancouver Island. While we thoroughly enjoyed the expansive views from the tops of 5040 (early morning) and Steamboat (midday heat), summiting was not our main goal. In addition to appreciating the alpine scenery whilst hiking and scrambling, we were there to stop and carefully look, with hand lens and the camera's lens, at a world not normally visible. Oh, what beauty and excitement is to be found.

In 1985, botanist Hans Roemer and some others had flown in and spent several days documenting the flora and major plant communities of the Clayoquot/Kennedy Mountains Limestone Area. This list has the highest number of plant species documented for any area on Vancouver Island. Quagger's route up Steamboat on the south side of the Clayoquot Plateau was new terrain for all of us. Over the past two summers we had explored limestone on the ridges that extend outward from Peak 5040. For years Hans has botanized more freely because of his mountaineering skills.

Trailhead of Quagger's route

Alders are filling in quickly, obscuring the trailhead description in *Island Alpine*. It is handy to realize that Quagger's route follows the shoulder on the west side of the outflow creek from the lower lake. It is even handier to know the GPS coordinates for the start of the flagging, although we are not putting them into print.

Armed with 1:20000 TRIM maps, air photos, 3-D stereographic images and 3 GPSs, we charged too high up the east side of the outflow creek, trying to find the flagging, and then had a try at ascending the shoulder east side of the creek. This detour wasted energy and a day; however we learned quite a bit about the topography which enabled us to appreciate Quagger's line, once we wisely retreated, crossed the creek and found it!

Lower lake

The lower lake area was more beautiful than anticipated. It was well worth taking time to circumnavigate the lake in



Knives of limestone

Photo: Ken Wong

the afternoon. To the west, the ridge between the two lower lakes was mellow and scenic until it led us northward into the limestone maze that was sharp and ominous, making exploration challenging and dramatic. At one point we chose different "knives" to ascend and became separated. Even though we could



"We found flagging! It's a super highway", Judith & Hans Photo: Ken

hear each other, it was a complex puzzle to connect the sharp ridges and time elapsed before we reunited, not long before sunset. This circle provided views from different angles and was a good preview of next day's route to the summit.

A rare find



Asplenium adulterinum

Photo: Ken Wong

When you are climbing limestone at higher elevations on Vancouver Island, you might find the spleenwort *Asplenium adulterinum*, likely nestled into a crevice. In North America, this hybrid is known only from the mountains of Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland. If you find a plant that looks similar to the photo, then check the stem.

To be the rare hybrid, the top portion of the stem is green (for ~ 2 cm) and the lower portion of the stem is a lustrous dark brown-black.

(One of its parents has an all green rachis (stem) and the other parent has an all brown-black rachis; there are also backcrosses. Of course there is much more to learn, and Google can help, but not as well as Hans Roemer and Adolf Ceska!)

If you find *Asplenium adulterinum*, please try to photograph it and GPS the location and contact me at holm@telus.net.

Hans so graciously shares his expertise and it's a privilege to learn from him. We appreciate being able to include for you his updated shortlist. The complete list is long, below are the species most likely to be associated with VI limestone. To see how the plants look, try Pojar&MacKinnon's *Plants of Coastal British Columbia*, the *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*, or simply google the names. If we know what to look for, it is easier to find them.

Participants: Hans Roemer, Judith Holm and Ken Wong

Pk 5040 and Steamboat Mt. plants associated with limestone (Hans Roemer, 02.2007):

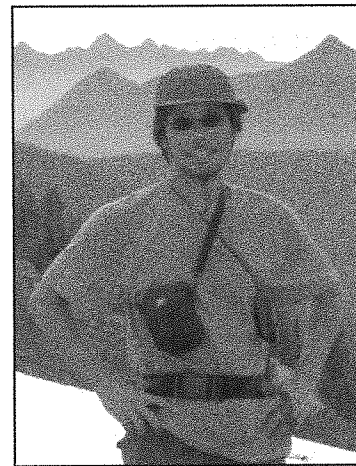
Highly correlated with limestone:

Asplenium viride
Asplenium adulterinum (blue-listed)
Aster sibiricus
Elymus alaskanus ssp. *latiglume*
Dryas drummondii
Dryopteris filix-mas
Salix arctica
Saussurea americana
Zigadenus elegans

Moderately correlated with limestone:

Abies lasiocarpa
Anemone multifida
Anemone parviflora
Asarum caudatum
Asplenium adulterinum
Aster paucicapitatus (blue listed)
Carex capillaris
Epilobium glaberrimum (blue listed)
Erysimum arenicola
Hypericum scouleri (blue-listed)
Oxytropis campestris
Parnassia fimbriata
Poa cusickii
Poa stenantha
Polystichum lonchitis
Potentilla diversifolia
Potentilla drummondii
Sanguisorba canadensis
Saxifraga oppositifolia

(Note that most of these plants have an association with limestone on Vancouver Island, NOT however elsewhere in BC)



Ken Wong Photo: Judith Holm

SYD WATTS PEAK

Peter Rothermel
September 2-3-4

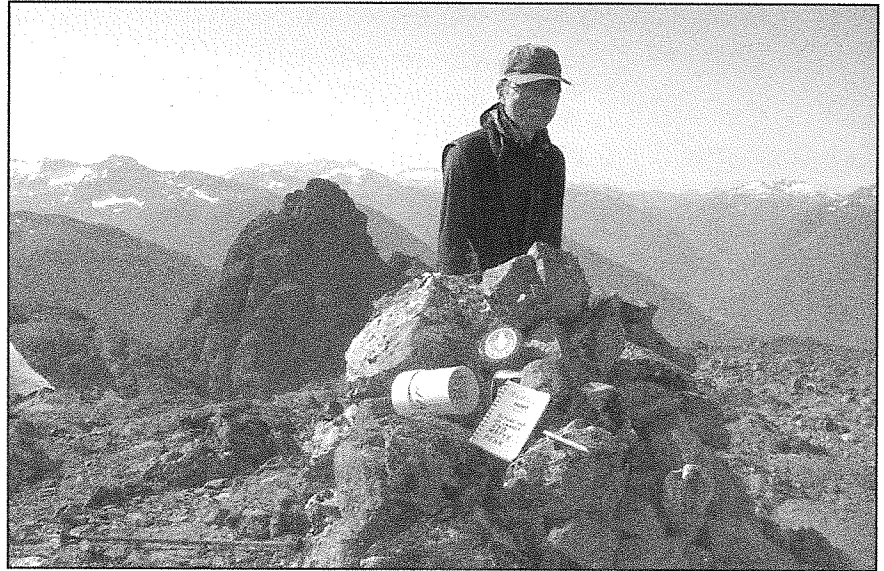
This peak is named after Syd Watts, a well known mountaineer who was responsible for much of the exploration and route finding during the island's golden age of mountaineering when there were many first ascent plums waiting to be picked. This is an unofficial name for this 1840m mountain, as Syd is still very much alive and still leading the odd trip.

Syd Watts Peak is a summit I refer to as a big easy, meaning that it is over the 6000 foot mark, yet it is not a technical climb and can be done in a reasonable weekend. It is found along the Augerpoint Traverse, that leads from Paradise Meadows to Buttle Lake and that traverses over Mt Albert Edward.

Tak Ogasawara had asked me if I wanted to do an easy trip with him, on Labour Day weekend, as he was just getting back into shape from recent surgery and I said OK, as I was just getting out of shape from recent slothiness. Also it was a peak I hadn't been up and I thought it was about time I stopped avoiding the infamous Augerpoint Trail that has a reputation for its steep calf burning angle. Our plan was to hike up from Buttle Lake and do a short trip to Syd Watts Peak and then back out the same way.

Saturday found us driving along Buttle Lake, looking for the painted red arrow on the road pavement, pointing to the start of the Augerpoint Trail. After missing it twice, we finally found it on our third try. This is not an official BC Parks trail and has no signage. There is no funding coming forth from the government (our) coffers, for frivolous things, such as maintaining trails in a world class park that attracts visitors from around the globe, who contribute \$40 to the economy for every \$3 that is invested into parks by government...Talk about a cash cow!

Anyhow, the cool of morning found us huffing up the trail and as usual it wasn't as bad as anticipated. All the squiggly lines on the maps in the trail guide books mean lots of switchbacks up steep terrain, but switchbacks usually equate to a lower angle of trail, and all-in-all it's a pretty good trail. A few times, the route runs along an area opened up by forest fire in the 60's, that's starting to regenerate in new forest growth. The original trail ran through the burn area and was rerouted to where we were hiking after the fire. The route takes you up to a bench with a small lake and then up further, partly through a loose section of scree,



Tak on the summit of Syd Watts Peak

Photo: Peter Rothermel :

finally cresting out, after about a 1280 metre elevation gain, to a number of tarns. Being early yet and wanting to camp closer to our summit, we continued on to a broad ridge above Shark Lake. It was end of summer dry and at first all we could find was dried up tarns and mud holes, but finally found a patch of snow, melting cold and clear into a small pond. We pitched our tents on level ground, with enough of a breeze to keep the bugs away and had a leisurely dinner. Our camp had a beautiful view across Buttle Lake towards Marble Meadows, the Golden Hinde and many other familiar peaks. As a side note, there is cell phone coverage in places along the ridge, as there's a clear view to Comox. A nice thing to know in an emergency or for late through-hikers, to keep a search party from starting.

The next morning, with a lazy start, we dropped down to a small pass and climbed a long ridge to a small summit between Augerpoint Mountain and Syd Watts Peak. From there we had a stunning view looking down on Ruth Masters Lake, with a cluster of brightly coloured tents, like small dots, along its shore.

After a short break we dropped down to a col above the lake, continued up the ridgeline on the flank of Syd Watts; side-stepped an outcrop, and scrambled up the easy north spine on real nice solid rock to the summit. We took a long lazy lunch break and a bit of a nap. As the summit tube was broken, I replaced it with a new one and a waterproof book. The old register papers were still in good condition, so we left them in the new tube. Directly

to our south, was Sid Williams Peak, (unofficial name) separated by a deep drop and looking pretty technical. It would be a fine destination for some future trip.

Looking westward, I could see Victoria Peak just poking up over the horizon. I remarked that a group of friends from the Alberni Valley were on a trip there and should be summiting the same day. Little did we know at the time, the disaster that would be unfolding for them. A good friend, Brooke George, was knocked off balance by loose rock and fell to his death that day.

Meanwhile, Tak and I hiked back to camp, spent another

night and hiked out the following day. This trip could easily be done as a two day trip and strong hikers could probably do it as a day trip.

After dropping Tak off at his place in Campbell River, on my way home listening to the radio, I heard the news of a Port Alberni climber, aged 61, who had died on Victoria Peak and I knew in my heart that it had been a friend.

Participants: Tak Ogasawara, Peter Rothermel

TYEE MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms
September 21

Light drizzle was falling as I drove up the Menzies Main from Menzies Bay north of Campbell River. I had just passed the South Fork Main turn-off (Crown Mountain access) so I knew that the next road would be the Grisle Main (to the right) and then the next left (after crossing a bridge) would be the SR-15. SR standing for Salmon River. Already I knew that the Menzies Main didn't turn into the Salmon River Main as the *Island Alpine* book suggests it does at Mohun Lake. The *Backroad Mapbook* is also wrong when it says the Salmon River Main follows the south side of Grisle Creek after First Lake. In fact, this road remains the Menzies Main. I was soon to find out that the SR-15 is now called Menzies 1100, after driving further along the road than I needed to. Visibility was diminished due to the drizzle but the Menzies 1100 gradually gained elevation, and I was hoping it would pop out on top of the ridge. A few weeks ago while on Crown Mountain I saw roads on top of the ridge to the northeast of Tyee Mountain. It was from this road that I also saw an easy ridge for hiking to get to Tyee Mountain, Tyee being another one of those obscure mountains to climb. Unfortunately, most of the roads dead-ended and those that didn't were too overgrown to drive even though I wasn't concerned about the paint job on my vehicle. I parked at the end of the highest road, but even as dusk was descending, I could see old logged areas higher above and some roads dissecting the slopes. Ah well, I would just have to walk from here.

During the night visibility improved as the mist lifted, and by next morning it looked as if the forecast was going to be right about the weather improving as the day went on. I still couldn't work out exactly where I was, but I knew that if I kept going up I would eventually reach the ridge and get my bearings. I hiked through some fresh logging slash and then dropped down to a creek. I then climbed out of the creek bed and accessed a logging road which went close to the ridge. Just before deeking off the

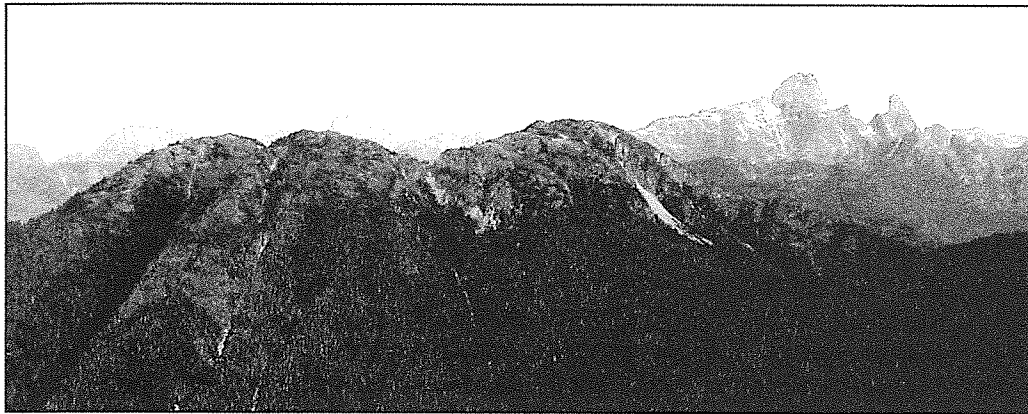
road and into the forest, I startled a herd of about a dozen elk which made easy work of walking through the logging slash. I was envious of them, after all the years I have spent fighting this type of terrain.

Within minutes I was on the crest of the ridge but it was a round forested ridge with very little visibility due to the bush. However, I did get the odd fleeting glimpse of Crown Mountain in the distance, so I knew that if I kept going I must surely see my objective eventually. The bush was quiet and there was a strange calmness in the air, almost like the calm before an earthquake. I put it down to the solitude of solo hiking.

I continued gaining elevation along the ridge and soon broke out into the sub alpine. Ahead of me now I could see Tyee Mountain and the familiar features that I had seen from Crown Mountain. The heather benches continued until I arrived at a small bluff. There was a big drop-off to the valley below, but further over to the left was a low saddle between where I was and the summit. An easy descent of about one hundred metres brought me into the saddle and then there was a climb of three hundred metres to the top. All I had to do was connect the heather benches, which reminded me of the art of connecting the dots. The summit was almost in the bag!

When I reached the summit, I found the high point was adorned with a cairn! Not a small one made up of a dozen rocks, but a huge five foot high one. There was no summit register so I could only guess that it was built by the surveyors when they were up here back in the 1930's.

Now that I had stopped, the cold was beginning to penetrate. I pulled out my fleece and Gore-Tex jacket and quickly bundled up. Off with the damp gloves and on with the dry ones, over mitts, and a hat. This is still September! It's not supposed to be this cold! I had a bite to eat and a drink. I wandered around the summit looking for anything of interest, but there was no sign



Tyee Mountain

Photo: Lindsay Elms

of any one having been up here, other than the cairn. In *Island Alpine*, Philip Stone had written: "Rewards from this unassuming summit are views of ..." I wasn't disappointed!

It was only 10 am. I was hoping that it would have been warmer than this, so that I could spend some quality summit time lounging in the sun and admiring the views, but it wasn't to be. To the southeast I could see Crown Mountain. I remembered being up there just a few weeks ago. Back then it was summer! After twenty minutes the cold was still penetrating and my wet boots didn't provide any comfort. My toes were cold and numb! I decided that if I wanted to warm up, I had to keep moving and get out of the wind. Since there was no one to talk to, or warm

my feet on, I started down.

The steep heather slopes leading back down to the saddle were slippery in the boots I was wearing, and I wished I had my other ones on. Hiking back, I savored the moments of hiking alone: I explored some of the small sinkholes, walked across fallen logs, and filled up on the fat, ripe huckleberries that were dripping purple liquid ambrosia. The purple of my hands wasn't from the dye coming out of my polypro gloves!

Finally I broke out of the forest and was looking back over the logging slash. I dropped down onto a road and followed that until I was forced to climb down through the slash to a lower road. Fortunately the elk had been through here and there was an easy game trail through the thick bush. Then back down to the creek, up the other side, and a short walk back to my vehicle, where I arrived satisfied at having completed another climb of an obscure mountain.

Postscript:

Tyee Mountain was given its name by the surveyor Norman Stewart and is a Chinook word meaning "big" or "chief."

Participant: Lindsay Elms

"INTO BLUE BOWLS OF DEATH"

Karun Thanjavur
September 15-17

Into the shimmering blue bowls of death, marched ... well, only the six this time, give or take the hundred! The story of our Little Big Horn, aka Mt. Septimus, had a good ending (no pun intended) to all concerned, thanks to the benevolence of the spirit of the mountain, and the warmth of the weather gods during our trip!

The head count (ditto on the pun) included Lenka, Jain, George, Sandy, Phil (standing in for Rob Eldred as trip leader), and me. The trip seemed to have a dubious start with Rob, the only one of the group who had been on Septimus before, having to pull out due to work pressures. Having then to scout for ourselves, queries on the ACC-VI bulletin board regarding the favorable route, and snow conditions, for this mid-September trip, evoked a flurry of rather ominous responses. These seemed to ratchet upward in grimness as the days progressed, till the dire one about huge crevasses, - the blue bowls of death, waiting for

the unwary! In addition, the weather forecast for our three day outing - rainy and cold - was beginning to put a further damper on our spirits.

True to ACC form however, we disregarded the well meaning advice and the usually accurate short-range weather forecast, and set off on the Bedwell Lake (Westmin) trail on a warm forenoon. Given the forecast, the sunshine was all the more appreciated. The warmth made the wild blueberries and huckleberries heavy with sweetness.

It was a pleasant hike along the well maintained trail to Baby Bedwell Lake. After a short snack break to admire Mt. Tom Taylor mirrored in the waters of the dead calm lake, we pushed on past Bedwell Lake and Little Jim Lake to our planned camp for the evening at Cream Lake. During our hike, dark ominous clouds rolled in as the afternoon progressed. Occasional shafts of sunlight broke through the darkening skies and provided some

stunning vistas of the many arrayed peaks in that area; Tom Taylor, Big Interior, and Septimus.

Despite the popularity of the stunningly green Cream Lake, and the consequent hiker traffic it receives, there are no designated campsites (as there are at the Bedwell lakes). Jain and Phil decided to bivy in the natural shelter under a huge boulder (fairly well protected) while rest of us pitched our tents.

Looking up the snow couloir, there were two options for our route the next day, follow the standard route to the top of the couloir or scramble up the X-gully, which was completely barren of snow. Unable to judge the condition of the rocks in the gully, we decided to get half way up the couloir, to what seemed like an access from the snow on to one of the legs of the X (the moats were deep, we had been warned), then pick the route after a closer peek (factoring in whatever the weather would throw our way). As the long summer evening drew to a close, the lowering sun lit up the mountain in a glowing orange hue, a moment captured perfectly by Sandy's shutter (See the ACC-VI 2007 calendar to share that moment).

We had the whole day for the ascent the next morning, so we could enjoy a warm breakfast in the freshness of the summer morning. The clouds were still low, but the rains were holding off, and the firm snow aided our ascent up the couloir. At the base of the X-gully, the rocks looked loose, perhaps rotten in places, but manageable, so we decided on some rocky excitement.

The condition of the rocks deteriorated as we pushed up through the gully, and scrambles over the loose rock set off sizeable slides. We took the scramble in small, slow stages, to ensure that all of us stayed close together and were clear of rock fall. After passing the notch at the top of the gully, we had to descend about 25m before we could gain access to the glacier. The climb up the icy side of the moat, even with crampons and ice axe was dicey, but we made it up without incident.

There, arrayed in neat parallel ranks on the glacier were the blue bowls of death, some a mere slit in the snow while others gaped in blue-mouthed wonder. With just one rope for the six of

us, there was need for extra caution. We probed our way slowly over the glacier, descending quite a ways, and switching back and forth for a secure route. To our good fortune, the low morning fog had lifted by then, and we had good visibility in the warm sunshine.

It was a relief to get off the glacier and onto the rocks on the south face of the summit; we could just walk off the snow, there was no moat on that side. The scramble to the summit was straightforward though wisps of the fog were moving back in. On the summit there was even a brief snow flurry as though to warn us not to tarry for too long. For once, we did pay heed to good advice and after a round of photos, high-fives and signatures in the summit register, we headed back down.

We just retraced our steps over the glacier, skirting the crevasses back to the gully. Getting off the snow and on to the rock needed an extra dose of caution, as did the slow descent down the bowling alley on the other side. There were anxious moments as we hunkered down in the lee of boulders and in the cave at the cross of the X, and watched the rocks set off by others higher up go rocketing and ricocheting by. It was a relief to finally get off the loose rock back on to the snow couloir, and collapse into one long and exhilarating bum slide all the way to the bottom!

That evening, the rains, which had been shadowing us throughout the trip, finally caught up in windy, tent-shaking gusts and pelting showers. It was a cold, wet hike out the next day but it was good to let the rains wash off the sweat of the journey while our minds wandered back to reflect on a memorable, warm and dry day on Septimus.

Now, when I think back there is a pang of anxiety on all that could have gone wrong either in the bowling alley or the blue bowls. I am glad we came together well as a group, to support and help each other, and now have just these pleasant memories to recount.

Participants: Lenka Visnovska, Jain Alcock-White, George Urban, Sandy Stewart, Phillipe Benoit, Karun Thanjavur

TRIPLE PEAK

Russ Moir

September 23-24

It's strange, but this trip should have been easy to describe. It's been far from that. Triple is a fine, bold summit suspended above a snowy, rocky shoulder and guarded by a steep, forested lower face. From the end of Marion Main the peak is an imposing, inviting series of craggy bluffs. It's an off-shoot of the Mackenzie Range, and as such a worthy target for an alpinist. For the Island, it has class. On a previous ascent, in damp conditions, it had challenged a determined group of us, enough to feel very satisfied after a long day's climb.

This time, in lovely Fall weather, three of us, Catrin, Tony and myself headed to the mountain on what promised to be a balmy week-end. Somewhat at the last minute, Rudi and Doug arranged to join us in Alberni and this made the climb so much more than just a climb. The two friends had very recently lost their great pal, Brooke, on a tragic day only three weeks before. Last week we'd gone up to Port to share our grief with our friends there ; everyone was in a state of shock from facing the big hole left by Brooke's loss.

It was therefore both a joy and a sadness to have these two old friends along with us. We'd shared many days together in the hills and it was obviously going to be a poignant interlude for them, their first return to the mountains since the accident, in which they were so closely involved.

We met, we hugged, and we socialized with them and our other good friend, Barb, chewed over some thoughts, and then set off for the mountain. Doug and Rudi had agreed to come with us as far as the lake beneath the crags, where we would camp. They just wanted to be 'up there' for a thought-filled week-end; no summit desires, only a return to the hills. We felt an empathy with them, and the feelings added a real depth to the trip.

The two of them led on up the newly flagged/brushed route, which ascends along and through the beautiful cascades that pour from the corrie lake up above.

There's bush, there's pools, there's slab to ascend. It's not for the faint-hearted, but it's a great entry to the rock basin where we camped. The lake is on a ledge overlooking the valley, across from Adder and 5040 peaks. On this clear week-end, the eyes could sweep from Strathcona in the north, around to Arrowsmith in the south. It's truly a spectacular site for a camp.

The evening meal was garnished with a glowing sunset, and as the first stars appeared, we gathered for a chat. It was a memorable passage; our two friends talked sadly, but with fondness of their friend, who they missed badly. Brooke was anything but a wallflower - full of dynamism, of ideas (often at odds with others' views but always passionately expressed) yet he had a strong generosity of spirit. We quietly listened . . . as they both opened up their private thoughts. It was intimate, moving, and warming to be with them on the ledge below the rocks. The time seemed suspended, I felt a sense of communion, and we hadn't even climbed yet.

In the early morning, under a gorgeous sunrise, we headed off up the slabs, leaving our friends to wander alone for the day. The approach was drastically different from the broad snowfield I'd previously climbed. Now the rock slabs were exposed, along with bands of iron hard snow. We had managed to borrow two pairs of crampons on the way, but the absence of a third pair would compromise our route choice.

Though we were in no hurry and in the mood to relish just climbing up, it was with some frustration that we spent valuable time groveling up a loose gully, wedged between dripping ice sheets. Retreat and then another moat ascent brought us up to a last stretch of smooth slabs with a gaping hole waiting to suck in any sliding body. The only alternative was getting out onto

an upward traverse across a hard snow slope to easier ground. In a pair of borrowed crampons I led out across. It turned out to be far easier than it had looked, though we had a fun exercise in passing down my crampons for Catrin to come up with. Time was at a premium, but we were enjoying a fine, relaxed time between us.

It didn't take long to pound up the snow couloir to reach the base of the final pyramid. But that's where we met our match. The moat, usually passable in deeper, softer snow conditions, was now a wide, frozen chasm, with a nasty step-out onto the rock face. The move would have to be carefully protected and it was getting close to 'turn-around-time'.



Catrin and Tony at the moat

Photo: Russ Moir

No sweat! - we happily peered over the void, only two rope lengths from the top, but it was as far as we wanted to go. The decision ?? . . . lunch on a sunny rock ledge, with the glistening lake below, tiny tents standing out. The moment was good for a pleasant, easy viewing and chewing on many things, food as well as ideas.

By the time we had descended to our tents, Rudi and Doug were packed and ready. We greeted and chatted again, talking

over our day and then parted a bit emotionally with a clear feeling that somehow the week-end here had been a success beyond any achieving of a goal. For Doug and Rudi I believe it was a way of coming to terms with the loss of their friend, as well as a renewal of their passion. For the three of us, it was a special time to spend together with friends, to relive our memories, and to experience something of why we can look forward to more such times ahead.

I know I'll be back soon.

I have to . . . I left my ice-axe behind!!

[Note: - the newly brushed route up the cascade would be a challenge in wet conditions but is direct and more straightforward than the alternate bush traverse from the obvious draw to the right of the roadhead. Just drop down the very loose landslide left by the road blasting to pick up the flagged route. The final moat needs a good snow pack to get across without mental and physical gymnastics.]

Participants: Rudi Brugger, Doug Hurrell, Catrin Brown, Tony Vaughn, Russ Moir

TAHSIS AND SANTIAGO MOUNTAINS: A VERTICAL BUSHWHACK

Lindsay Elms

September 28-29

*New peaks hold the fascination of the unknown,
they challenge our ability and skill,
but the old mountains have charms less strong perhaps,
but more subtle.*

*It has been said that the personality of a mountain is
increased by the endeavors of climbers upon it;
certainly it gains appeal.*

Scott Russell

To the west of the Bate and Alava Sanctuary are two rarely climbed mountains. Okay, I should have said two more rarely climbed mountains on Vancouver Island. Having that distinction is right up my alley as I am lured to these mountains to find out why they are rarely climbed, and to do something about that distinction. Now, I have climbed on the west coast before and knew how thick the bush can be. Add to that, the fact that I had attempted Santiago Mountain fourteen years ago with a friend, Kathy Campbell, but rain had stymied our short foray. What stood out in my memory from that attempt was the vertical pull-ups at the beginning of the climb. Because of the foggy conditions I couldn't see the rest of the climb, and didn't know that it would be like that all the way to the summit.

With a forecast for good weather, I decided it was time to head back out to the west coast. I left home in the dark, but by the time I was going around Upper Campbell Lake the skies were beginning to lighten up. Conuma Peak looked tempting as I want to visit the giant arch sometime, but I kept going. A few kilometers after passing Head Bay I turned off at Stolze Creek and started up the Tsowwin Main. As I popped out on the saddle I saw Santiago Mountain looming up ahead of me to the west and it looked steep. Dropping down into the Tsowwin River I contin-

ued to the T-60 turn off (not marked). Signs indicating there was road building underway didn't deter me and I found, because of recent activity, that the roads were in good drivable condition. I ended up on the saddle between Santiago and Tahsis Mountain and saw that both climbs wouldn't take that long.

Atmospheric conditions were incredible for this time of the year: there was not a breath of wind and the temperature was in the mid 20's. With a small pack I took off from the end of the road and climbed through the slash into the old growth of the South Ridge of Tahsis Mountain.

There was not much history written about the mountain and the only people I know who had been on the mountain were John Gibson, Rick Eppler, Gil Parker, Steve Hinde and Syd Watts, back in 1976. They had gone in to the mountain via logging roads to the west of Malaspina Lake. Unfortunately they didn't have time to get to the main summit but they managed to get to as far as the two southern summits.

Although the bush was thick in places I reached the Southeast Summit and could see the main summit about one kilometre to the north. I scrambled over to the South Summit and by passed a small rock bluff to get on some heather slopes that took me over to the main summit. (1,310m) As I expected there was no sign of anyone having been here, but I still keep an open mind as it is possible someone has, and not recorded the ascent. The view from the summit was fantastic. I watched the M.V. Uchuck pull out of the town of Tahsis and then go around Mozino Point and stop at Ceepeecee. A half hour later it pulled out of there and continued on to Zeballos. Beyond the Hecate Channel I could see all the way out Esperanza Inlet to the west coast of Nootka Island and into the Nuchatlitz Inlet. I was also amazed at how much of Nootka Island was logged.



Santiago Peak

Photo: Lindsay Elms

I retraced my steps back to the south summit and descended down to my vehicle. That evening I sat outside having a beer until the evening's tangerine sky looked like the ceiling of a planetarium. I curled up in my sleeping bag and drifted off into a contented slumber.

The next morning dawned clear and calm. While brewing a pot of coffee, I watched a mama bear and her two cubs munching on some local delicacies about fifty metres away. They weren't too concerned about me so I thought why should I be concerned about them. Ten minutes later they moved on and I finished my coffee.

I hiked up to the end of the logging road which put me under the Northeast Face of Santiago Mountain. I short stint in the slash and then I was in the real bush. Immediately, the angled increased, and I soon found myself doing vertical pull-ups on roots and dangling branches. The line through the steep gullies, bluffs, overhanging trees, and tangled bush was slim and I took a couple of false leads, but continued to make upward progress. I know there was a smile on my face during the ascent because when I finally made it to the summit (1,291m) I said: "Wow,

what a hoot! That was great! A vertical B6 bushwhack!" That was all I could think about. I had spent the last two hours hauling myself up through the thick vertical bush. For me this felt like it was close to the ultimate bushwhack! However, I was gob smacked to find a cairn on the summit. Someone else had been up here but had they gone up the same way I had? I looked into the cairn but there were no names only an old rusted aerosol spray can. I had no idea what that would be used for up here.

I spent an hour on the summit enjoying the view before I decided to make tracks back down the mountain. In a couple of places, after swinging down through the bushes, I found myself bluffed out. By moving a little left or right, I'd find a way. Only in one place did I have to pull my rope out and make a

rappel down through the trees and a bluff. I reached the bottom of the face, shook the needles out of my clothes, wiped the sweat off my face, and looked at the blood as it trickled out of numerous cuts and scratches from skin that wasn't covered. The endorphins were flowing through my veins today!

I never found out who had been up there and built the cairn, but after posting a message on the ACC Bulletin Board I did find someone who had climbed Santiago Mountain back in 2002 via the Northeast Face. Someone else who seeks the solitude of the obscure mountain! They found the cairn on the summit as well but no note inside. Because of the vertical nature of the bush, they looked for an alternative route down. I also talked to John Gibson about both mountains, and although he had looked at Santiago Mountain for many years while fishing on the west coast, he had never got around to attempting it. John called it "the first snow peak" because, while trolling offshore near Lookout Island, Santiago Mountain was the first mountain to emerge into view behind Nootka Island

Participant: Lindsay Elms

HORSESHOE MOUNTAIN

Lindsay Elms
October 7

Situated close to the northwest corner of Strathcona Park is a descriptively shaped peak, (I don't see the correlation) called Horseshoe Mountain. It has also been called Sentinel Mountain, but there is no information on where that name originated. Back in 1989 when I climbed neigh-

boring Mount Judson, the Heber valley had just been logged and it was an easy stroll to the saddle between the two peaks. Nowadays that access is more difficult as the bush has grown back, the roads are overgrown, and a good bushwhack is necessary. I had been rained out from an attempt via the Heber River

last year but I had obtained some new information while on Leighton Peak this year. On the west side of the mountain from Horseshoe Creek I had been able to see logging roads going high on the mountain, so it was these roads I was looking at accessing the mountain this time.

I left home early in the morning and drove around Upper Campbell Lake. Just before Gold River I turned right on to the Saunders Main and followed it through to the other end. At the T-junction I turned right and followed that around into Horseshoe Creek. Somewhere along the way was the trail into Gold Lake, but there was no trailhead marked. Obviously, it had been a while since anyone has gone in that way.

Although there was fresh evidence of recent logging there were no chainsaws in action, but several trucks were hauling their victims out so I had to pull over on the side of the road to let them past. Just before the end of the valley I turned left and started climbing up logging roads towards Horseshoe Mountain. I was unable to see the summit but I tried to judge where it would be and chose the appropriate road. It wasn't long before I knew I was fairly close to the ridge. I parked a few hundred metres from the end of the road at a spot where the old growth came down to the road. A quick look at the map as I tried to guess where I was, then I started up through the bush. After about fifteen minutes I popped out onto a ridge and was able to confirm where I was. This was a short subsidiary ridge that joined the summit ridge halfway between its two peaks, which was a further fifteen minutes away.

Once I arrived on the summit ridge, I could see a survey tripod up and out to my left on the main summit. I followed a buck and doe for a few minutes until they decided they didn't want me to follow them any further, and half hour later I was standing on the summit of Horseshoe Mountain. I had been hiking for one hour and it was only 9 am. I spent some time taking in the view and looking at the map. There wasn't much left in this neck of the woods for me to climb.

I dropped back down along the ridge and wandered over to the lower east summit where I could look into the Heber valley. The trees had really grown over the last seventeen years! On the high point someone had built a small cairn to mark their ascent but there was no note inside. Later when I returned home I found that Gillian Good and Bruce McKerricher had climbed Horseshoe Mountain as part of their "Up Your Peaks" for the Island Mountain Ramblers in 1983. Otherwise I haven't heard of anyone else.

I toured around, exploring a small alpine lake just below the summit ridge. It wasn't far away from the edge of the logging and it was obvious someone had gone all the way up to the lake with their chainsaw and dropped a couple of small trees. There was no obvious reason for what they had done and hopefully those will be the only trees cut down as it is a beautiful little spot. I returned to my vehicle then tucked in behind one of the loaded logging trucks until he signaled me by. Then off to Gold River for a late lunch at The Ridge pub to cap the day off.

Participant: Lindsay Elms

MOUNT BUTTLE 4400+'

Rick Eppler
October 29

Originally scheduled to go to Mount Whympier, issues with active logging and locked gates barred access to both the Chemainus and Cottonwood Valleys. This forced a Plan B to surface yet once again. Shaw Creek was the only one in the area allowing vehicle access. Both Marmot and Buttle could be tripped from it, and to put a positive spin on it, I had never been in to Mount Buttle, so this would be an opportunity to see something new.

The logging has encroached on the steep slopes of the upper mountain from all sides. Studying the air photos, and a recce on the Saturday, led me to believe the ascent would be straight forward from the hanging valley on the west side. This could be accessed from the main Shaw Creek valley further west. Plus this thing was only 1340m so how hard could it be. I figured on an easy day.

Saturday was a wet and miserable day, with the upper slopes cloaked in rain and mist. I never did see the actual top, but mapped out a feasible line up a minor west ridge to where it should be, through the windshield of my truck. I spotted a big bull Elk strutting along the road on the way out. What an impressive animal. I felt like he was in control of his valley.

Sunday the group collected at Home Depot off Millstream under a clear sky! What a bonus, as I thought this trip would be a soaker at best, or a lengthy coffee stop in Duncan at worst.

From Shaw Main, roads lead steeply up East Shaw Creek to the ridgeline on the eastern divide at 1036m. We only needed to go to the 640m level to intercept an old road leading south to the hanging valley. The road had been deactivated and alder now choked it right out of the gate. An hour of pushing aside wet alders dumped us out on a clear road that leads directly up from

Cowichan Lake (A long walk of 6km+ as it is locked at the lake) A left turn at this point led back toward the mountain. Nothing like thick second growth to diffuse those clear route images, and sidetrack the best intentions. The mountain is defended very well, with steep slopes and bluffs almost all the way around. Our route was no exception.

Once we fought our way clear of the lower slopes choked with second growth, the forest floor was open and awe inspiring amid the old growth giants. We spotted some old flagging at a strategic spot on the little ridgeback we were following, so obviously we were not the first to venture this way.

The breakout into the alpine was sudden and dramatic. We topped out on a big slab and stepped off the back into the heather and rhododendron of the upper mountain. Navigating by flawed logic, and confident the summit was just a few more hundred feet up and to the south, we shuffled along in the sub-alpine, negotiating little rock steps and heather ramps, all the while enjoying the crisp air, and good fortune at having a fine weather day for this peak.

Sandy was the first up and the first to notice this wasn't the highest point. Over our left shoulders to the north seemed to be a higher one. Out came the maps and sure enough, - we were standing on the 1280m+ bump just south of the main summit.

Looks like we should have zigged when we zagged down at the top of the trees. My fault. I was so sure of where the summit should be, I forgot all the reconnaissance work and benchmarks from earlier in the day, and the day before. I just buried my head in the forest in front of me. I ignored the most obvious landmark of all (when we walked over it), the big slab. It was the point to make the turn to the left, which would have led us up into the col to the south of the main summit. From there the route along the ridge to the north would have been more obvious, as the steep slopes down to MacKay Creek to the east would have been visible.

Time was ticking away, so weighing the prospect of backtracking and bagging the true summit, most likely coming out in the dark, and being late with the gate keeper, vs calling this the high point and enjoying the descent, we opted to be a little lazy and head back down from here. Not before a little celebration was in order though . . .

Turns out it was Karen's birthday, and luckily the leader just happened to have a cake and some candles packed away (always come prepared for anything!), so we toasted another fine year on the south summit

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Karen van Dieren, Su Castle, Tanya Inglis, Linda, Josh Slatkoff, Rick Eppler (leader)

TRAILRIDER PROGRAM COMPLETES SUCCESSFUL INAUGURAL YEAR

Gerry Graham

The TrailRider hiking program for people with a disability was initiated this year, with the cooperation of Recreation Integration Victoria (RIV) and various Alpine Club Vancouver Island Section members. In this, its first year of operation, more than half a dozen outings took place in and around the Capital Regional District.

For those of you who don't know already, the TrailRider is a BC-designed device that facilitates access to the wilderness for the disabled. A cross between a wheel barrow and a baby jogger, the unit has handles front and back, a seat for the disabled passenger in the middle, and a single wheel with rubber tire positioned directly underneath the seat. A team of 'sherpas', or porters, if you prefer, are thus able to push and pull the TrailRider and its occupant over rough terrain, including roots, rocks and fallen trees, where wheelchairs and disabled people would not normally dare to tread.

Four of our outings were listed on the club event schedule,

which meant that all the club members who acted as sherpas were covered by club insurance. Over the course of the summer a total of a dozen volunteers participated in at least one event. The core team consisted of the author plus half a dozen other Club members. All of us are registered as volunteers with RIV, which means we are covered by RIV's insurance policy while on outings, as are our RIV-registered TrailRider passengers. Our two TrailRider clients were Nairne (assisted by her sherpa father, Ian McInnis), and Roy. On two occasions we had Nairne and Roy out in the two TrailRiders on the same day, at the same time, with two teams of sherpas. Thanks to RIV for donating a van to transport the TrailRiders, as well as the TrailRiders themselves. RIV also paid for the gas for the van.

Our inaugural TrailRider season started in May with an orientation session at RIV HQ at Lambrick Park. David Ostrud, a TrailRider expert, came over from Vancouver for the day to give us a demonstration of the TrailRider and how it works. As

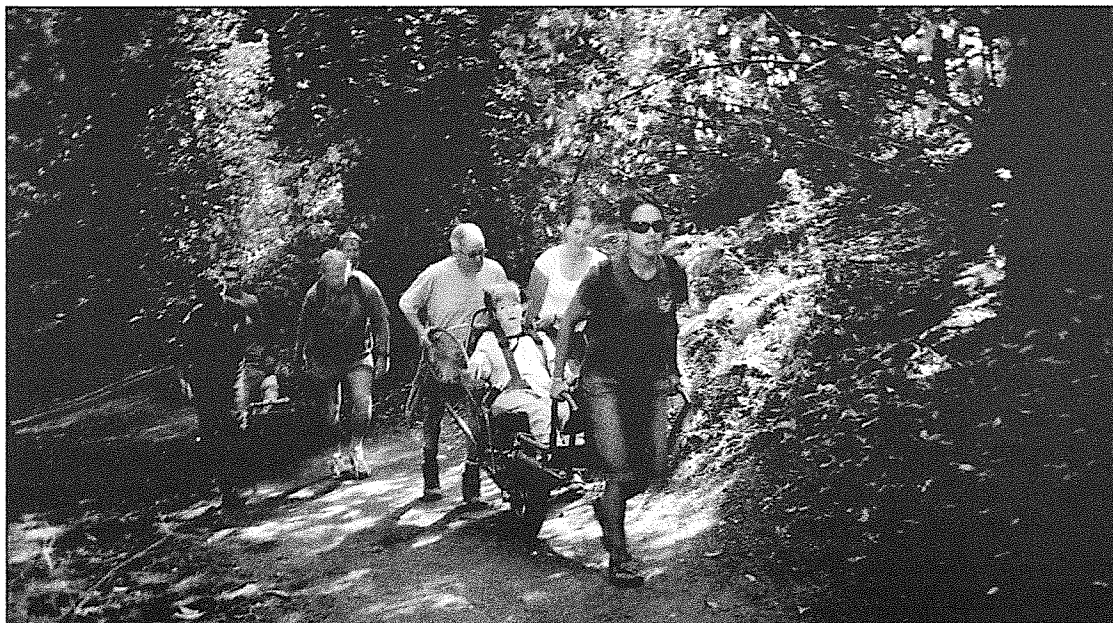
part of our training, we took the TrailRiders to nearby Mt Doug, where we each took turns both as sherpas and passengers. This gave us a feel for what it's like to be at the mercy of other people, especially going down steep slopes. It was quite a revealing experience for most if not all of us; a lot of trust is involved.

After that initial dry run, we pulled off six different outings over the course of the summer at a total of four different venues: Mt Douglas, Mt Finlayson, Elk Lake and Thetis Lake. All along, we were blessed with excellent weather.

So, all and all it was a successful first year for this program, which we hope to continue and expand in 2007. Plans include increasing the number of sherpas, lining up more TrailRider clients, and adding more routes in and around Victoria. We

are also planning a multi-day hiking and camping excursion to Strathcona Park, and may enter a team in the Access Challenge, particularly if this year's event takes place on Vancouver Island. The Access Challenge is an annual, competitive, multi-day event involving several TrailRider teams, mainly from the Lower Mainland.

To find out more about the fun and rewarding TrailRider program, and how to become a sherpa, call me (Gerry Graham) at 480-5580 in Victoria, or email me at gg@worldoceanconsulting.com. You can also contact any of the other sherpas from the TrailRider team to get a first-hand assessment of the program from them



From left to right: Karun Thanjavur, Roy Easterbrook (in TrailRider), Ludovic Clavier, Russ Moir, Ian McInnis, Mike Hubbard, Nairne McInnis (in TrailRider), Lenka Visnovska, Shawn Daniels Photo: Gerry Graham

VISITING POLISH
HIKER

PHOTO:
MURROUGH O'BRIEN

**PEOPLE
IN THE
MOUNTAINS
WINNER**



ICE
CRYSTALS

PHOTO:
PHEE HUDSON

**NATURE
IN THE
MOUNTAINS
WINNER**



COAST MOUNTAINS & THE ROCKIES

GMC high camp Photo: Torge Schuermann

VALKYR SKI WEEK

Russ Moir
February 6-13

It's a gamble when you try out a newly established operation with little 'track record'. Booking into Valkyr Ski Lodge was a little like that, as Martin and Shelley had only opened up their lodge in the Southern Selkirks the previous year and there were few sources from which to build up expectations. Only their web site gave indications. To skip to the last chapter now, the gamble paid off in spades!

Things didn't start out that well though. When we arrived at the helipad on the muddy shores of Arrow Lake, outside Burton, the skies were packed with dark, woolly blankets and the radio was telling us that the incoming pilot was dubious. Eventually, openings appeared in the clouds and in he came to ferry us up to the lodge beneath Naumulten Mountain, beyond the dripping ridges high above us. The mild optimism of the first load of eager-beavers quickly deflated as the chopper came scudding back a few minutes later with comments about scary ridges and big trees appearing out of nowhere. With thoughts of a futile extra night down in Burton in mind we waited for the proverbial 'window'. Our luck was in, within an hour the seem-



Martin and Rob Valt-early ski out

Photo: Russ Moir

ingly relaxed pilot gave the all-clear for another shot and off they went. An hour later we were all together admiring a beautiful work of art, Martin's lodge.



Phoebe in Lodge meadows Valkyr

We'd listened to comments about him from Shelley, his wife, as she cautiously explained some of the family's present situation. She was giving us the first really clear indication of what had happened up in the basin only two days before. Her son had luckily been able to dig himself out of a tragic avalanche, in which two ACC members in the previous group had been fatally buried. Within literally minutes, Martin had dropped everything, flown in with the rescue helicopter, helped to excavate the bodies and then taken over the lodge supervision from his injured son. The rest of our stay was a continuing sequence of 'Martin moments', as, with a huge, relaxed grin on his face, he went beyond any normal hosting to make our stay such a pleasant, memorable passage.

The terrain around the lodge isn't bold, in-your-face alpine country but it has a variety of open meadows, enticing tree glades, panoramic ridges and great powder. Our pictures show skiers swooping over glistening ridges, skinning past trees bent over with heavy snow loads and grinning into cameras at every opportunity. Oh, and I forgot to mention... the cabin has hot running water, a shower and ...an INSIDE flush toilet! What more could you ask the Nordic gods for??

With an obvious trepidation after the recent accident, we began cautiously to explore the nearest basins, some temptingly visible from the lodge balcony. We quizzed Martin ad infinitum on what was 'safe' and where the

'no go' areas would be. He happily replied to all of our questions with his perpetual jovial wit, especially remarkable since his new lodge was now involved with a coroner's report and his wife was below dealing with press and public. Always, with his infectious grin, he was there to do the little things that mattered.

Slowly we learned that if we used our accumulated skills wisely, we could evaluate options with clear minds and just 'get out there' and ski. We returned each evening to swap tales such as snowshoeing into a hidden glade where a trapper's old cabin still offered a little shelter, or waxed on about setting tracks in Heart Basin over snows untouched since the last big snow dump. That was a magical day, with a watery sun pushing underneath a hanging cloud layer, lighting up some awesome ice shrouded cliffs above us. We sank into comfy armchairs reading, dozing or chatting on this and that, getting to know new friends or relishing the old ones,

the sort of stuff that makes you want to return to these snowy pastures, away from distractions.

My own fondest memories are those etched in bright sunlight. We spent two hours sitting on the crenellated ridge of Naumulten high above the cabin, watching our friends Gil, Paul and Barb getting ready for an early exit in the helicopter. We watched an ant-like Paul do repeated loops up and back through the meadows to the cabin, as they waited their flight. You could see over the ridges out onto the distant Valhallas, where Martin

Photo: Russ Moir



Valk-Catrin in early am

Photo : Russ Moir

was hoping to build a companion cabin for more extensive ski tours. It wasn't a hard way to spend the day, especially exciting when the chopper swooped low over our grandstand and we could wave goodbye to our friends in their plastic bubble.

The next day, having to return to real life, Catrin, Rob and myself set off to ski out in a bright, cold and glowing sunrise. Martin had graciously volunteered to ski with us to show the difficult way through the woods and then to ski back in, a six hour round trip!

In his charming low-ego way he showed us just how a seasoned back-woodsman can really skim through steep bush at

some pace. We just couldn't stay with him and he was breaking trail!

My thanks go to those nine good companions who together made up a sweet team of relaxed alpine 'veterans' (though they may not like the term). Their cooking and jokes weren't too bad either. And, of course, all our good wishes go to Martin for being the perfect host. I'm hopeful of a return visit someday.

Participants:-Catrin Brown, Ian and Margaret Brown, Rick and Phee Hudson, Barb Baker, Gil Parker, Paul Erikson, Rob Heron, Russ Moir

YOHO VALLEY CAMP, 1906 - LITTLE YOHO MAGIC, 2006

Roger Painter
July 16-22

In 1906 one hundred new and prospective Alpine Club of Canada members gathered in July to explore the Yoho Valley as participants of the ACC's first general mountaineering camp, hoping to climb Mounts President or Vice-President and thereby become active members, having scaled a summit of over 10,000 feet.

Part of the Alpine Club of Canada's 2006 Centennial Celebrations was a camp in the Little Yoho Valley, at the Stanley Mitchell Hut July 16 - 22. The billing: "something for all levels of ability" attracted my partner and me as we are active but haven't much recent mountain experience. Maureen was especially interested in the historical focus of the camp.

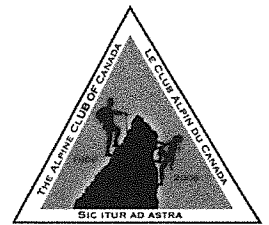
Following suggestions in our registration package, we arrived at the Lake Louise Hostel two days early to hike and acclimatize. Definitely not enough time for sea-level dwellers but all we could spare. The Lake Agnes - Beehive circuit and Fairview Mountain gave us a full dose of Lake Louise summer crowds. Sunday morning sixteen eager backpackers met at the Bill Peyto Cafe for intros and breakfast. Camp managers Dave McCormick and Cam Roe, and guides Peter Amman and Cyril Shokoples provided background on the week ahead. After a gear check, we drove off to Takakkaw Falls, the start of a very special seven-day mountain experience.

Up the trail we puffed (at least some of us puffed...), not breaking any speed records with our hefty packs, arriving at the lovely Stanley Mitchell Hut in three hours. The spectacular setting,

at the edge of a meadow looking south toward the peaks of the President and Vice-President, makes this classic 1938 log cabin an ACC Hut not to be missed. We settled in, while cook Kelly Mager produced the first of a week of fine afternoon nibbles. The nightly discussion of the next day's activities determined we would climb the President on Monday as the weather looked unsettled mid-week.

A beautiful morning saw three ropes heading up the President glacier at 5 am. Crampons off at the col, we short-roped up typical Rocky Mountain crumbles to the snow summit of The President. What an incredibly clear view - 100km in all directions, allowing us to pick out peaks on the 360 degree skyline: the Lake Louise Group, northwest up the Rocky Mountain trench, the Mummery Group and east to the Divide peaks. There was much picture taking with our centennial flag before returning to the col.

After lunch Peter and three energetic women climbed the Vice-President. Remembering I had five more days to go, after a pack in and this day's first summit, reason over enthusiasm prevailed and I went down the glacier with the rest of the group to the comfort of the hut porch and the antics of the ground squirrels in the meadow. Arriving at the hut, we found Chic Scott, the many-faceted mountaineer and author of *Pushing the Limits*, had hiked in to spend an evening sharing stories with us. He gave us a fascinating historical perspective of the hut, the valley and the Alpine Club.





Kiwetinok Lake, the President behind and the Vice-President left of centre. Photo: Maureen Hoole

Maureen brought out a few photos printed from glass slides that her grandfather, Rev. George R. B. Kinney, had taken at the 1906 mountaineering camp. Kinney first came to this area in 1903 as a young pastor to the Methodist community at Field. He participated in the 1906 camp as a active member and amateur guide and was in the first Yoho party to make an official climb of the Vice-President on July 10. As an amateur photographer he caught many images of the climbing activities and surrounding scenery.

Tuesday morning Maureen and I joined the Pollinger group. As no glacier travel was involved, a leisurely hike took us to Kiwetinok Pass with its starkly beautiful lake, then we scrambled up the scree to Mount Pollinger's summit. Lunch, lounging in the sun enjoying the view, photos, weather talk...then back down to the hut for afternoon tea and talk, dinner, and another evening surprise.

Two new women had joined us for supper. Later, a vision in period dress floated out from the guides' room: Elizabeth Parker, co-founding first lady of the fledgling Alpine Club of Canada. Laurie Schaffer, as Ms. Parker, did a superb job, bringing the early history of the club to us in memorable fashion - a centennial play. Vi Sandford, who accompanied her, contributed reading materials to the Stanley Mitchell Hut Library, many of which were authored by her husband Bob.

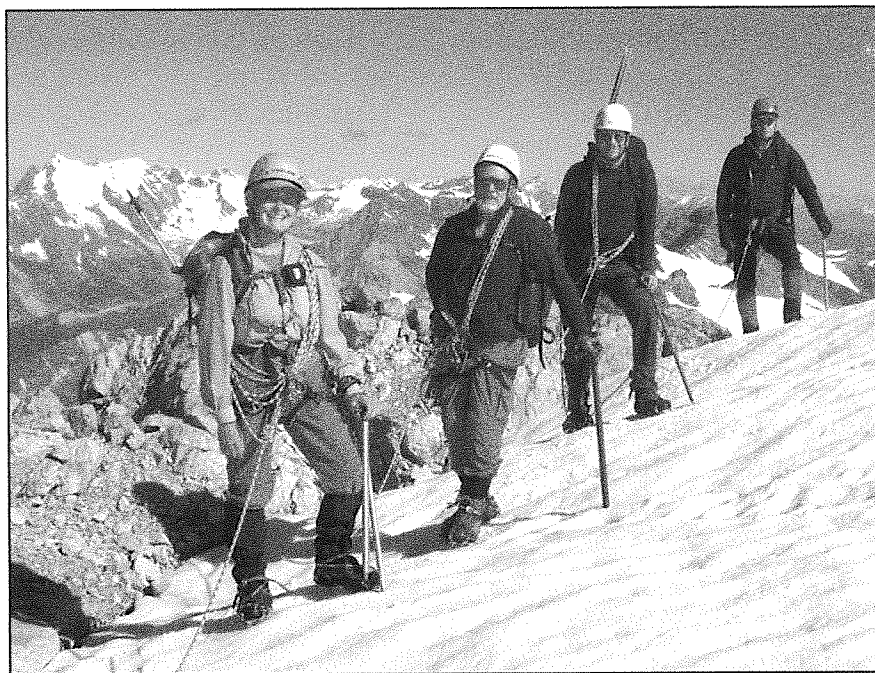
The evening discussion of the next day's options found a number of people interested in Mount McArthur. Cyril and

Peter, with strong feelings of self-preservation, rightfully expressed doubts about our ability to pull them out a crevasse, if need be. They suggested a bit of crevasse rescue training was in order. Six of us spent Wednesday with Cyril and Dave at Snow School: the morning in front of the hut for theory, knots and rope instruction; the afternoon at Kiwetinok Pass building anchors and pulling our packs and/or Dave up over the lip of the snow bank. We then practiced self-arrests on the slope.

Club history readings by Dave, soft guitar music by Cyril, more jokes with Cam and Peter, much laughter and good conversation finished the evening.

Thursday found Maureen and me heading for McArthur at 5 am with Cyril, Lyle and Mike. Lloyd "Kiwi" Gallagher and another guide with a group of cadets had an earlier start, leaving us a lovely staircase up the steep snow just below the summit.

After lunch in the glorious sunshine we headed across the rubble to meet Peter's group on the Pollinger summit.



On McArthur: Maureen Hoole, Roger Painter, Mike McNabb and Lyle Miller

Joe Jazvac from Parks Canada entertained us that evening, presenting historic anecdotes and bringing us up to date on current Park Policies. Such dedication, hiking in and out in an evening just for us! Much appreciated!

Friday, our last camp day, and so many fine destinations out

there?!? Maureen, nursing tender heels, hiked the Ice Line/Celeste Lake Loop while I headed back up the glacier to the McArthur/Isolated Peak saddle with Cam leading our rope. Again, sunshine and spectacular wildflower meadows. We slogged over loose rock to the summit and watched one of our other groups making their way down the Whaleback. Lunch and a nap brought us down the glacier a little late, slush surfing to the glacier base. More afternoon lounging and tea on the porch, chatting with Mike Mortimer who, with his sidekick Loki, hiked in for our last evening in the Little Yoho. Mike, Past President of the ACC, and chairman of the Centennial Committee, provided background on the Centennial Year and some great stories of the Stanley Mitchell Hut.

Saturday morning - my 60th birthday. Breakfast: an inspired scone 'cake' sporting a rolled-newspaper candle. Maybe my best birthday ever! With sorting, packing, photos and good-byes, the group drifted down the valley to our different vehicles. Amazingly, one person who had inadvertently left his passenger window rolled down the whole week we were up in the valley found everything intact. Another, who unknowingly dropped his

sunglasses as we first departed up the trail six days before, found them conscientiously placed on his windshield!

More goodbyes, then we were off to Lake Louise for a desperately needed, very refreshing shower.

Driving back to Victoria, we had time to reflect on a week that unfolded beyond our expectations. If we had ordered the weather from a menu, it could not have been better. Peter, Cyril, Dave, Cam, Kelly and guest speakers were wonderful. We learned many new skills and improved old ones. We enjoyed meeting our very interesting and eclectic companions, and were comforted by the fact many of them were as grey beneath their toques as we are. We felt a special connection to those mountains and valleys - coming to understand why Maureen's grandfather was drawn to them, caught up in the mountain enthusiasm of his time. As I too was, traveling to the Rockies as boy scout from Illinois in the early sixties. True, some of the scenery has changed considerably, but the adventures will always be inspiring!

Note: The 2007 Vancouver Island Section Summer Camp is at the Stanley Mitchell Hut this July/Aug. If you are able, be there!

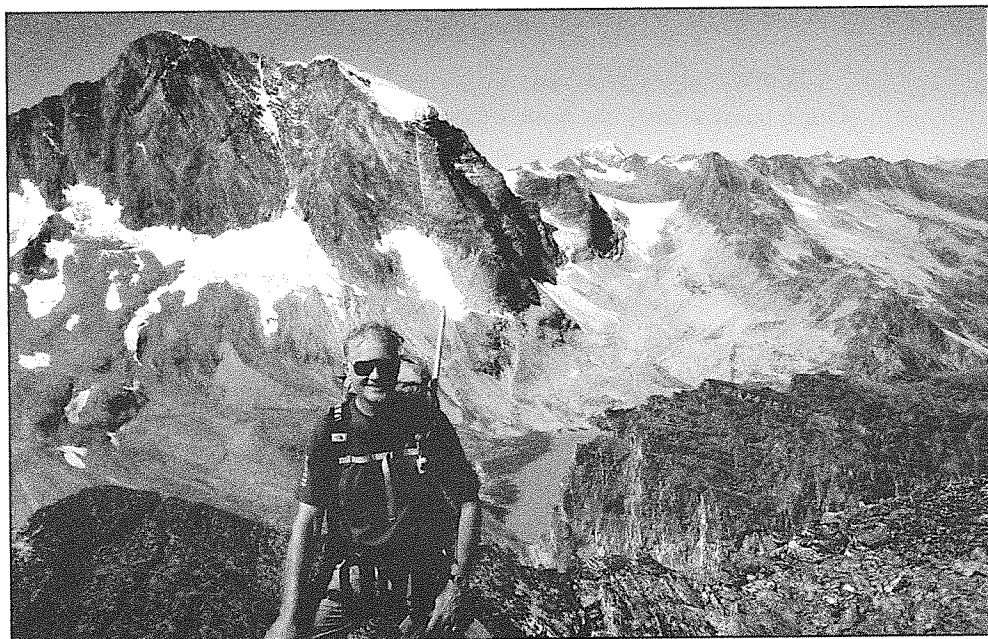
SORCERER LODGE TRIP

Cedric Zala

August 26 - September 2

Last August, a group of ACC'ers from Vancouver Island and Canmore spent a marvellous week at the Sorcerer Lodge in the Northern Selkirk Mtns. This trip had been organized by Gerta Smythe, who was the successful bidder on a silent auction (donated by Tannis Dakin). We were blessed with great weather and a real spirit of camaraderie. On all but one foggy day, we ventured off on journeys over rock, snow and ice, to be rewarded by stupendous views, good times, and the taste for more adventure.

On one of those days, I was part of a group of nine who went on an assault of Iconoclast Mountain, the highest peak



Cedric at the Sorcerer— Iconoclast behind

in the immediate area. Although we did not reach the summit, the trek was so exhilarating for me, as a newcomer to the joys of glacier travel, that I had an attack of the Muse and, during the one socked-in day, sat down with a piece of paper to recount the tale of the trip in verse. And here is what appeared:

The Ballad of Iconoclast Mountain

*Iconoclast Peak was the goal we did seek on a glorious sun-streaming day,
With Richard and Phee, and Reinhard and me, cheerfully making our way.
Catherine and Murrough were both very thorough, and Tony and Gerta were smiling.
Merrie-Beth all serene was our young mountain queen, we found her demeanour beguiling.*

*First we traversed the Heinous, which didn't much pain us, and scrabbled our way to the lake.
Its name was Ventego and by it did we go, seeing goat hair like icing on cake.
The Jolly Green Giant, his Valley compliant, allowed us to pass unassaulted.
Over mud flats and rockfall we travelled and walked tall, 'til up to the glacier we vaulted.*

*Once there on the ice, it sure wasn't nice to see Gerta with her leg in a hole.
And since no one's a dunce, we roped up at once, and proceeded to trudge to the col.
The view was just awesome, we ooh'ed some and aah'ed some, and studied the peaks on the map.
But our progress went reeling when Rick said, with feeling, "There's no way I'm climbing that crap!"*

*Some had the best fun when we went on a run just seeing how far we could go.
Although it was testable, it wasn't digestible, so we lunched and went back on the snow.
On the way down the plain, it happened again, and quite to their common surprise,
Both Cedric and Murrough, while on the same furrow, sank suddenly up to their thighs.*

*When their spirits had rallied, we hiked down the valley, and made our way down to the lake.
While some soaked their feet, Gerta soaked her complete, though the temperature made us all quake.
Then back by the Heinous, which couldn't contain us, and up the moraine we did dodge.
And with manner Edwardian, Reinhard played his accordion, as soon as we entered the Lodge.*

*There's little so fun as to be on the run with an ACC group on a route.
The trip to Iconoclast was really quite a blast, and quite an adventure to boot.
The lake was inviting, the glacier exciting, with many a hidden crevasse.
But the Heinous Traverse, for better or worse, was really a pain in the neck.*

Cedric Zala

Participants: Gerta Smythe, Reinhard Illner, Rick & Phee Hudson, Catherine Veitel, Anna Frank,
Tony & Anita Vaughn, Yves Parizeau, Claire Ebendinger, Daphne Kessel, Pat & Murrough O'Brien and Cedric Zala.

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Mt. McLoughlin: Photo: Tony Vaughn

VOLCANOES 06

Tony Vaughn
June 11-16

This story really starts back in 1995, when sometime during a trip to somewhere Catrin Brown stated that she never had any trips to do in early June. So I suggested we start climbing the Cascade Volcanoes, following Jeff Smoots "Guide to the Cascade Volcanoes." June is the nicest time as there is still snow on the volcanoes, and they become a snow plod instead of a scree slog. In '96 we started with Mt Adams and Mt Hood, '97 Mt Hood again, Mt Shasta and Mt Lassen, in '98 we did South Sister and Mt St Helens. In between the June trips we climbed Baker, Glacier Peak and Rainier, all of these trips done with a variety of different people. Then for various reasons we stopped, not climbing volcanoes that is, as we managed to climb some in Mexico, Guatemala, Hawaii, and Chile, but the Cascades were on hold.

In 2006 we restarted by doing the easiest two of the remaining mountains, Mt Bachelor and Mt McLoughlin. On Sunday June 11th a party of five of us set off on the 10:30 ferry to Port Angeles in the fog which soon burnt off as we headed south into hot sunny weather. Little did we know that this was the last of the nice weather we would see for a few days. Unfortunately by the time we reached our campsite at Trillium Lake near Mt Hood, the weather had changed to cool, cloudy and wet, though the snow cats grooming the ski slopes on Mt Hood were still

visible through the mist

Next morning, after a lazy start and a walk around the lake, we moved south to Bend in Central Oregon where we got caught in an unbelievable hail storm, which fortunately didn't last more than half an hour. Following lunch by the river in Bend, we visited the Obsidian Fields of Central Oregon, which were quite fascinating, though still partly buried by snow. Our campsite that night was by Cultus Lake, a good hour's drive south of Mt Bachelor, but because of the low snow levels, closer campsites were still buried.

Tuesday morning we arose at 5am and drove back to Mt Bachelor. On reaching the ski area we were met by an incredulous security guard who advised us that the facilities were closed, which suited us perfectly, as all we wanted to do was climb up to the summit, without any skiers getting in the way. The choice of a parking spot was a little difficult, as we had a huge empty lot to choose from, so we opted to park right in the middle. Off we went, straight up, with snow starting right at the parking lot. Catrin was on skis, the rest were on foot. A steady plod got us to the summit by 10am, through mist and cloud with occasional views of Broken Top and the Three Sisters. Following a brief rest on the summit, the crash of thunder reminded us of how exposed we were, so down we dashed, having a wonderful fast glissade,



Pat and Catrin on the summit of Mt Bachelor

Photo: Tony Vaughn

while Catrin skied. The rain caught us just before we reached the parking lot leaving us wet and sodden. The climb took 2½ hours up, ¾ hour down. Then it was back to camp, pack up, and drive on to Klamath Falls for our next climb, which was to be Pelican Butte on Wednesday. Although the weather was nice and sunny, the road was still blocked with snow, so we settled for a hike on Pelican Butte slopes and an easy day. The weather throughout the week had been pretty unsettled, occasional sunny breaks, but mostly cold and damp, so we didn't hold out much hope of an improvement for the next day when we planned on climbing Mt Mcloughlin.

At 7 am on Thursday morning we left the trailhead under grey skies and in fog. There is a trail up Mt Mcloughlin. However, it wasn't in evidence that day, as the snow buried everything within 100 metres of the trailhead. Following the compass, old tree blazes, and the odd footprint in the snow, we headed up towards the east ridge. As we got higher, the weather gradually improved and soon we were out in the sunshine, looking over the cloud tops to Mt Shasta in the distance. By 11 am we had left the snow and worked our way up the exposed,

rocky, main east ridge that led to the final steep snow slope. That in turn, led to a very windy summit. Although the clouds had all disappeared, leaving us with fantastic views for miles around, it was too chilly to hang around on the summit so we dropped back down for a lunch break in the shelter of the rocks. All signs of our passing upwards had by now melted out, so we couldn't follow them back down to the trail head. Fortunately we had marked the waypoints on the GPS, so were able to travel cross country back to the vehicles, getting back at 4:30 p.m., 5 ½ hours up, 3 hours down.

That evening we all showered and cleaned up in a motel in Klamath Falls before having our farewell dinner and going our separate ways. Pat, Murrough, and Catrin went back home to Victoria. Anita and Tony went on to San Francisco to visit family.

It was a good trip with hopes of doing it again next year. There are still more of the Cascade Volcanoes waiting to be climbed.

Participants: Pat and Murrough O'Brien, Catrin Brown, Anita and Tony Vaughn



Murrough and Pat on the summit of Mt Mcloughlin

Photo: Tony Vaughn

DEUS EX MACHINA*

ACCIDENT REPORT ON TWIN SISTER, WA

Sandy Briggs, Rick Hudson
June 10-12

** Latin phrase used to describe an unexpected or improbable device or event, introduced suddenly into a drama to untangle the plot.*

It's remarkable how many articles in the Bushwhacker start out with rain on Friday. It almost makes you wonder whether there's some Greater Force at work. Ours was no exception – the forecast was 100% chance of rain on Friday, continuing into the following week. Unlike other hardy souls, we postponed. A rock ridge in the rain is not something to anticipate with pleasure.

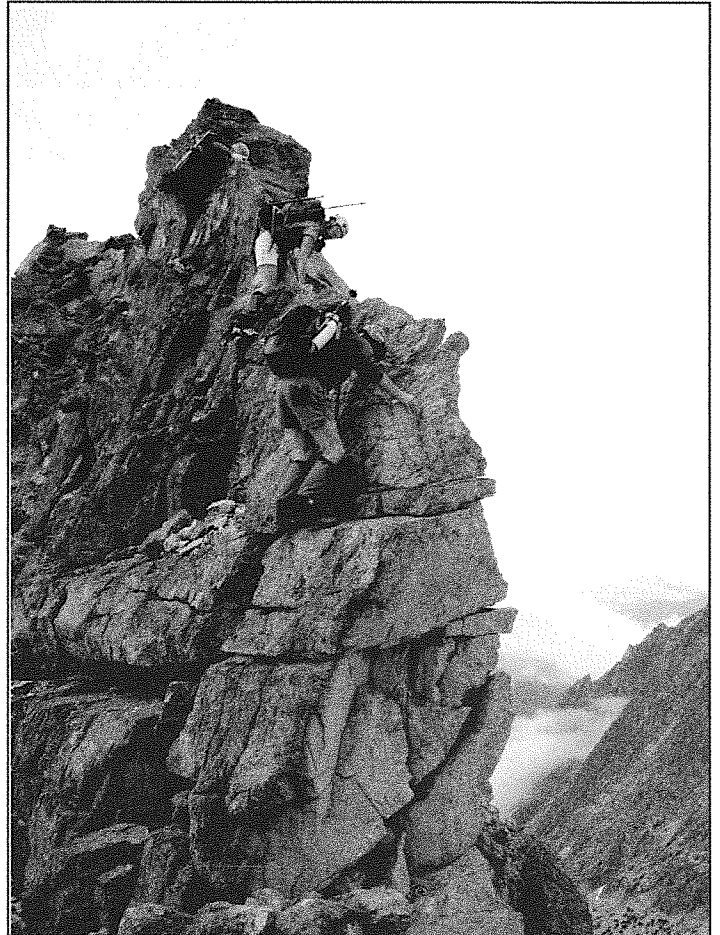
By the following Wednesday, the front had passed. Christine, Charles, Rick and Sandy were still available, but Tony was leading a volcano trip to Oregon, and declined the second attempt. No matter, we were a strong party. Our objectives, the two long west ridges on the North and South Twin Sisters (just to the west of Mt Baker in Washington state) were reported to dry quickly.

Saturday morning delivered the first blue skies as Sandy and Rick caught a ferry to the mainland, with plans to meet Charles and Christine on the back roads of Washington, near the curiously named village of Welcome on Route 542. A hasty detour into REI in Bellingham, and we were away, and the connection with the other two made. Up the Middle Fork of the Nooksack River to the gate, and by mid-afternoon we had started the 5-hour hike to the bowl that lies between the two Sisters. The air was humid after the rain. We regretted not bringing the recommended mountain bikes, as after the first few kilometres the track leveled, and we could have made better time.

After a few hours, the trail swung uphill through forest and a long talus slope. Clouds came and went. By the time we reached the bowl, still filled with late-season snow, we were in mist and gloom. No matter: tents were pitched, supper made, and the inner man catered to. Later, the western sky cleared and we were treated to a brilliant sunset. Well, you know what they say about "red sky at night ..."

A June dawn comes early. The weather was clear and crisp. We were away shortly after 6 o'clock, and reached the west ridge of the South Twin (the longer of the two) by 6:30. Below, the valleys lay cloaked in cloud. Above, the sky promised a perfect day.

Both Sisters are formed from dunnite, a rock rich in iron and magnesium that draws its name from Mt Dunn in New Zealand, which in turn got its name from its color – a brownish



Sandy, Christine and Charles scramble lower class 5 on the West ridge of South Twin Sister
Photo: Rick Hudson

tan. Dunnite is hard and abrasive, providing excellent holds and easy 4th class climbing, as we rose to meet the sun. The going was easy, and we gained height steadily. The sun topped the peak ahead, the rock warmed, and we were treated to a sea of cloud stretching away below in every direction. Just a few summits pierced the sunlit layer.

The ridge ahead, clean and rough, led higher. Turning the occasional gendarme to the right or left, the grade was never hard until we reached a shallow col about 150m below the summit. There, the route description advised a traverse onto the south



Charles & Christine on the upper section of the West Ridge of South Twin Sister
Photo: Rick Hudson

slope (still mostly snow-covered in June) before climbing a rib back to the west ridge higher up. Mt Baker appeared to the east, and shortly after, a gently inclined snowfield led to our summit.

The day was warm, the weather fine, and we loitered on the top for an hour, eating and idly discussing the issue of which descent route to follow. We could, of course, retreat down the west ridge, which we had so recently climbed. It was certainly not difficult, but the attraction of the unknown lured us to the north face to peer down its steep slope. A series of loose, rubble-filled rock ledges led down to a steep snow slope that in turn ran onto a large glacier.

The rock looked messy, but do-able, and the snow below was likely to be in good condition, based on what we had encountered elsewhere. Was there a bergschrund? It was difficult to say – the snow steepened at one point, and there might be hidden ground in which surprises lurked.

No sweat – an unknown route held more attraction than a known one, and once on the snow below, the route back to camp would be quick and easy – a short cut almost. The decision was easily made, and for once forgetting the old maxim that we didn't have time for short cuts, we descended quickly. The rock, though loose as suspected, was no worse than many other slopes, and we were an experienced party. Once on the snow, Sandy led down, first facing inwards, but soon turning out and heel-booting down.

In short order the hidden ground came into view, and looking left and right, confirmed there was a continuous bergschrund. No problem: we produced one of our as-yet unused 45-metre ropes, Rick slammed in an ice axe, Sandy clipped in, and Rick lowered him on a munter over the edge. "It's not far," came the cry from below, and after a while, the line went slack.

While Sandy had been descending, Charles and Christine cut a large snow bollard. The 45m rope was hauled up and doubled, looped over the bollard, and Charles prepared to rap. As a

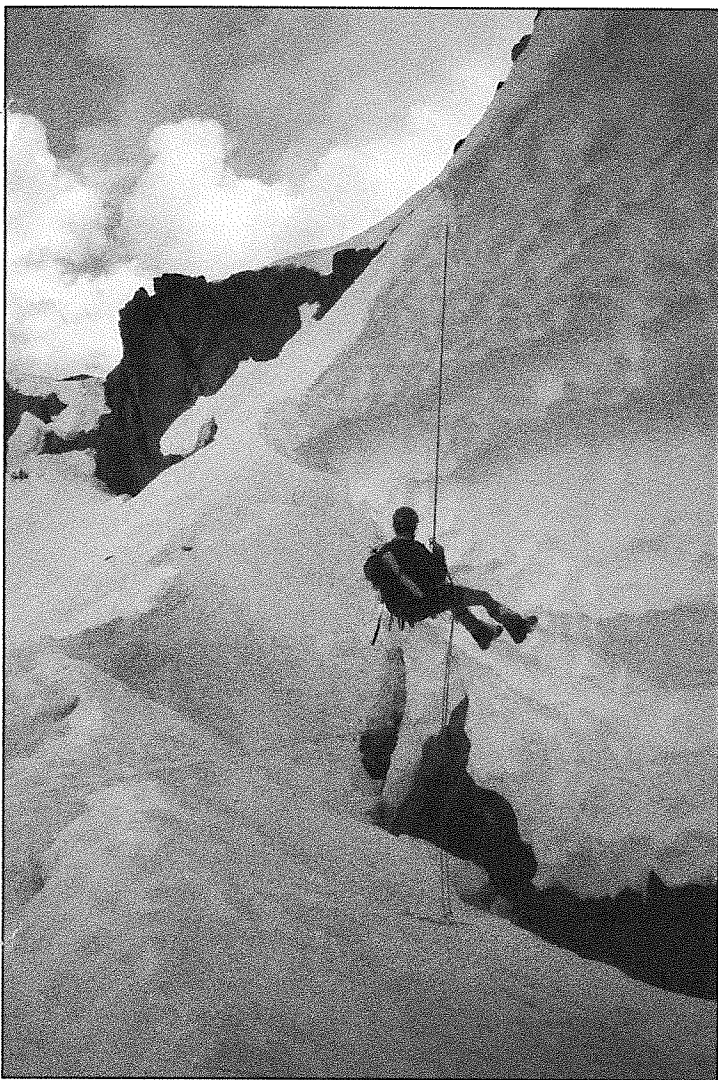


Charles Turner coming over the lip of the Bergschrund at the bottom of the North face of South Twin Sister
Photo: Sandy Briggs

precaution, Rick buried his axe in the snow above, and tied off to the top of the rope, where it bent round the bollard. Charles disappeared, and some time later, Christine followed. While this was going on, the sunny afternoon evaporated and we became engulfed in cloud. The temperature dropped.

As the last man down, Rick had the unenviable task of rapping without a back-up ice axe anchor. He looked at the snow bollard carefully. It was neither very deep, nor the snow very firm. He weighed his options. To the right, rather than rapping, he could traverse above the bergschrund across a steep slope to the NE ridge, walk down it to below the crevasse, and traverse in again. Rick reckoned the detour would take 45 minutes or more. The weather was closing in, and we had already spent over an hour getting 3 of the party down the ice cliff. Time was ticking by. Besides, Sandy had said: "It wasn't far." What's the worst thing that could happen? He could slide 3 or 4 metres to the snow below.

Clipping into the double rope, Rick eased himself gingerly down the steepening snow to the lip (as we all do when not too



Charles rappelling into the Bergschrund where Rick fell

Photo: Sandy Briggs

sure of a rap anchor) and slid over the edge, trying hard not to load the rope any more than necessary. How often have we all done that?

His first and only impression was surprise – below was not a short drop, but a heavily undercut ice wall and metres of air. He was about to go free. And then what every climber dreads, every time he rappels, happened – the rope went slack – and he fell.

* * *

Sandy continues:

So there I was, wandering around under the lip of the bergschrund, at the bottom of a very long snow slope, above which were many ribs of somewhat loose rock. I was nervous. Not that I had actually seen any rocks falling, but the snow around me was pocked here and there with rocks of various small sizes that had fallen. I looked up and tried to calculate things, such as the most likely path of a falling rock, and whether I was a worse target by standing still or by moving around. I tried to calculate how much warning I would have, if any, should a rock be released from

above. No rocks came.

I busied myself photographing Charles and Christine rappelling over the lip of the schrund, though I am not sure why, since I almost never show rappelling photos, considering them to be a misleading representation of what mountaineering is about.

Our day had been sunny and very fine, but during the rappelling process some clouds moved in and enveloped us, so that our visibility decreased once or twice to as little as maybe 50 m. Things had gone well. Rick, the last person to come down, moved down to the lip of the schrund and eased himself over the lip with an audible “Bollard don’t fail me now.” To our shock and horror the bollard did fail. Rick fell something like 6 m and hit the sloping snow ramp at the lower edge of the bergschrund. As if that weren’t enough, his momentum carried him down the sloping snow ramp to crash hard into the crack between the bedrock and the glacier. I cringed.

Charles and Christine were closer to Rick at that moment. Charles went down into the crack to check and help him get out. It was clear that Rick was injured and in pain, but he was conscious and speaking coherently. Our sun was gone, both literally and metaphorically. I no longer recall exactly the extent of the then-diagnosed damage, but I seem to recall that Rick had a facial or head cut with minor bleeding, an extremely painful injured shoulder, and some pain in the hip or lower back as well as arm scrapes and bruises. He was, in any case, in very rough shape. It was clear that the first choice would not be an attempt to get down under our own steam. However, completely fogged-in as we were, that is the process we began. We managed to get some extra clothing onto Rick, as he was in shock, of course. The afternoon was getting on, we were fogged in, and sitting in the likely line of fire of any falling rocks was not the thing to do. Fortunately, Rick was mobile on foot as long as he had a person on each side and another managing him on a short rope.

Proceeding, by our memory of the terrain in visibility as low as 30m, we made our way very slowly around the side of the glacier cirque toward the rocky pass at the head of the west-facing valley in which we had our camp. Rick’s arm was causing him a great deal of pain, but he was extremely stoic and pressed on after each sudden nerve-searing slip or stumble. Fortunately, the cloud cleared away somewhat as we neared the first destination. By the time we had made our way to a resting spot in this notch the sun had made a very welcome reappearance. The thunderstorm that had passed through, nailing Mt Baker more than the Twin Sisters, disappeared, leaving us with gratifyingly clear conditions. Nevertheless, there was a cool breeze blowing through the notch. Rick took some painkillers and we anchored him in a sunny and partly sheltered spot in order to evaluate the next steps.

Fortunately Christine had her cell phone with her. There had been no signal from the site of the rappelling, but now that we had a clear view to the west (Bellingham), it was possible to phone 911 and report the accident. She reported that we need-

ed a helicopter evacuation of an injured patient, and there were several subsequent communications indicating that such a rescue team was being deployed.

Time slipped by. Rick was getting cold and was still in pain, of course. The cell phone batteries were getting pretty low. While we tried to come up with another plan, we noticed another party descending steep snow off the side of the west ridge of North Twin Sister. They would eventually pass by our campsite. We decided that someone should go down and hook up with them to see whether they had a cell phone with which our communication with the rescue authorities could be continued. We had only a relatively short rope (45 m) with us, so I rappelled on a single line and extended it with a couple of untied slings in order to get down to where I could climb safely to the snowfield below. It must be said that, while it would have been possible to get Rick down this rock section with the equipment we had, it would have been difficult and slow.

I reached the other party just as they stopped at the base of their descent slope to remove helmets, rest and snack a bit. It turned out to be a BCMC party from Vancouver, and I spoke to several of them including Peter Gumplinger. Just as I was in the process of asking about a cell phone, the big rescue helicopter chugged its way into the valley. It appeared ready to land near us, but we frantically signaled that the injured party was up at the pass at the head of the valley, so off they went.

Some time later the helicopter soared back toward Bellingham. It was clear that the other party need not stick around, so they set off down with friendly farewells. I hiked back up to the steep snowfield and watched as Charles and Christine did two or three careful rappels to get down the face below the notch. We then had a pretty good boot-ski down to the valley floor. It being late evening, we decided there was no advantage in us pushing for a tedious descent to the cars in the dark, so we spent the night at our camp.

Rick had the presence of mind to give me his car keys before I went off to see the other party, so when we reached the vehicles the next morning I just drove Rick's car home. We learned from phone calls before, that he had been picked up late at night by his son Peter, driven to Pete's place in Vancouver, and then taken the first ferry home the next morning. All in all he had been quite busy. I arrived at the Hudson's place on that sunny Sunday afternoon, and Rick, his arm in a sling, invited me in for tea. We had a good chat on the sundeck. Notwithstanding, that Rick's shoulder injury was serious and would take a long time to heal, it was very heartening to see him in such relatively good condition, considering our predicament of less than 24 hours before, and considering what could have happened.

I think it was so soon after the injuries, that the full pain-and-discomfort effect had not set in. Things deteriorated for a while after that. Fortunately, and happily, as far as I understand, Rick has made a close-to-full recovery. If there is a moral to this tale that I am in a position to offer, it is only the usual one; that we

can never let our guard down, even though it is easy to do and, I suspect, we have all done it. Lots of times we just get away with it.

* * *

Rick's account:

Pain. A total and overwhelming ocean of pain, like a surfer buried inside a massive wave. I was being drowned in pain. I was in some bizarre position, smothered in unspeakable, unbelievable agony. The drowning metaphor was appropriate. As the pain subsided, I realized I was lying face down between rock and snow, my left side under. Above, a steady river of icy water poured down, soaking me.

Struggling to get up, I pushed down with my left arm. The pain returned at excruciating levels, threatening to make me black out. Helpless. Freezing. Wet. Head down.

Charles was somewhere above: "Rick, you OK?"

"No, I'm &*\$#! not OK!" I realized I was screaming.

He gently pulled me vertical, and together we stepped clear of the icy waterfall. My teeth were chattering, my left shoulder was on fire. I couldn't breath. "I think I've broken my &*^%# ribs," I said.

Charles helped me up the soft snow to the bergschrund's edge. I was shaking like a leaf. Christ, this was bad, and I hadn't had time to go into shock yet. That was a treat that would follow shortly. The others stared at me with that look – you know the one – their eyes revealing their faint hope that this wasn't as bad as it looked. My shoulder shouted otherwise. In fact, it screamed it at the top of its lungs, if shoulders have lungs.

"We'll just let you catch your breath."

"Where does it hurt?"

"It'll go away after a minute."

"Do you want to sit down?"

Jeez, if I sat down, I'd never get up. Slowly, painfully, they helped me into my Primaloft and then my Gore-Tex. The cold ebbed, even if the pain didn't.

"What do we do now?"

"Let's try to get down to the col. We can take stock of things there. Do you think you can walk?"

Back-roped by Sandy and Charles, leaning on Christine with my right arm (my left was still on fire), we descended about 150 metres down-slope, me screaming a blue streak every time I jolted the shoulder or ribs. The snow was initially steep, and progress very slow, but gradually the angle eased, and we made slightly better time. Above, the cloud turned day into dusk, making the situation gloomier than it already was.

"I'll try my cell at the col," said Christine. "There's no reception here."

There were still options. Was I really so bad that I needed a rescue? If we called, would they come? When? How could they fly in thick cloud? Uncertainty. Could my companions lower me down the other side of the col, where I could then walk back to the tents? That would be simpler. But then what? I couldn't

descend the talus slope below the tents, even without a pack. Confusion. Nothing made sense. It had to be the shock.

Christine was talking to someone. She described the situation, our position, and asked for help. The 911 operator said they'd get right back to her. Nothing happened for half an hour. What was going on? She phoned again – a new operator knew nothing of the previous case. She patiently re-described the situation. The operator promised to get back to her. Nothing happened.

I struggled to the col and looked down the long, gently sloping rock slabs. Under normal conditions, I'd have hopped and scrambled down them in ten minutes. Now, they brought tears to my eyes. There was no way I could endure being lowered – the mere thought of jolting my shoulder was more than I could bear. But if there wasn't going to be a rescue, then I would HAVE to get down there. On the other hand, if there WAS going to be a rescue, I didn't want to be half way down the rock when the chopper arrived. There was a perfect landing spot on the glacier behind us, where it leveled off. &*&#! Where were they?

Whispering behind me. "What?"

"It's OK, Rick."

"What you talking about?"

"We didn't want to tell you. The cell phone battery's dead."

"Jesus." What now?

It's two hours after the fall. The sun has been out for an hour, and I have sat, still cold and shivering, but soaking up its warmth on my face, and blessing its rays. It really lifts the spirits. Just don't think about the future – what are we going to do if those &*&# don't come? Sandy heads down the valley to cut off a group of climbers descending from the North Twin. Perhaps we can arrange a rescue party and carry me out. Or something. The pain has lessened, provided I don't move.

Then we hear it, the sweet, sweet thud of chopper blades. A US Navy S-76 appears in the valley. We shuffle to the glacier, but it's too late to get down to the flat spot – that will take 10 minutes of walking, and it's already above us, prop wash sweeping loose snow off the glacier, a medic descending on a cable.

There's a rapid examination, explanation, consultation. Radios crackle. I don't care any more. I just don't want to stand any longer. Only I can't bear to contemplate sitting, far less lying down. I'll never get up. A stretcher appears in my peripheral vision, is wedged across the slope, and very slowly I lie down on it and am strapped in. Helpless – now totally dependent on others.

The tech is cheerful. "It's a brand new helicopter," he shouts proudly above the roar. I don't care. As the noise increases to a thunder, he leans close to me, and I ask him to pull my toque down over my eyes. Deus ex machina. I can't bear to look. Anyway, I'm beyond thinking.

The noise, impossibly loud, gets louder. I feel the stretcher jerk level as we leave the snow, and then nothing until there's a screech of metal on metal. That must be the stretcher and the helicopter floor talking to each other. The side door slides closed, and the prop wash and sound drop. There are four, count them,

four uniformed bodies with helmets, plus two in the cockpit. One of the four identifies himself as a doctor.

All I can think to say is: "Sorry to spoil your afternoon."

"No problem. If I wasn't here, I'd be cleaning my garage. This is better."

He turns away, and his knee slams into my exposed left shoulder. I scream, but with all the rotor noise, no one hears. I struggle to get my right arm free, and bang his leg, none too gently, to get his attention.

"What?"

"My arm! Don't touch my arm!"

"This one?" He grabs it firmly.

"Don't touch my &*&# arm!" I scream.

"Sorry," he says, and smiles. He reaches for a pair of scissors, and I know exactly what he has in mind.

"No!"

"What?"

"Don't cut my jacket!"

"What?"

The noise in the cabin is deafening, and it doesn't help that he's wearing a helmet with built-in headphones, that further block the conversation. He's probably lip reading, anyway.

"Don't cut my jacket! It's nearly new!"

They slack off the stretcher straps, and with difficulty I sit up and painfully, slowly, remove first the Gore-Tex, and then the Primaloft. Underneath is a fetid polypro vest.

"Help yourself," I say, lying back. The scissors fly. He was obviously determined to cut something. The polypro will have to do.

Within minutes I'm in a neck brace, left arm bandaged tightly to my body, and have a drip in my right. All I can see is the webbing in the ceiling above. Then the helicopter bumps, and the howl of the rotors eases. Doors slide open. A gale blows through. The stretcher is moving. Above me, the ceiling vanishes and is replaced by blue sky and swirling blades, then the ceiling of an ambulance. Bump. The air is warm and aromatic. Doors close. It's suddenly quiet.

"Hi, I'm Chuck, and I'll be escorting you to the hospital."

"Where are we?"

"St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham."

I'm safe.

Rick's postscript:

Many accidents don't happen; they are caused. This was no exception. A series of poor choices by me, led to the final debacle. I could have padded the rope around the snow bollard to reduce the cutting-in effect, but I didn't want to leave anything valuable behind. I could have traversed off to the rock ridge and avoided the schrund altogether, but I didn't want to waste time. Although it was only 3:30, there was light until after 9:30, and we were barely 2 hours from camp. I could have re-dug the snow bollard, but I chose not to, to save time. Any one of those actions might have prevented the fall.

The CAT scans revealed I had a broken rib and 2 fractures to

my upper left arm. There were also lacerations to the head which bled badly, but were of little real consequence.

On a positive note, I could have done myself a lot more damage. My ice axe was tucked down my neck between the pack and my back. The adze could have wreaked terrible damage to my exposed neck or spine. Or, I could have fallen on my head and been paralyzed. Or, I could have broken a leg and been immobilized. There's nothing so awful, that you can't conceive of something worse happening.

What did surprise me was the pain. It was simply overwhelming. I've had accidents before, but never pain like that. It basically prevented me from doing anything, even breathing, at times.

Post-postscript:

The shoulder healed without surgical intervention. Ribs – well, there's nothing you can do about ribs, except avoid laughing or sneezing for a month.

My clever wife had, just a week earlier, renewed our out-of-province travel insurance, and paid the \$10 extra to have no deductible. This was extremely fortuitous. I was admitted to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham at 6:30 pm on Sunday evening. In less than half an hour they did 2 X-rays and 5 CAT-scans (no waiting in the US medical system). Within two hours I had been drugged, plugged and de-bugged, and was ready for discharge. The bill for those 120 intense minutes was over USD 15,000. Strangely, the US Navy did not submit a bill for their helicopter time, for which I am grateful. As my son Peter later commented:

Ticket to the mainland to go climbing - \$35.

New REI tent for the climbing season - \$200

Being rescued by the US taxpayer at zero expense – priceless.

For everything else, there's

Acknowledgements:

Situations like this illustrate just how many people are needed to rescue a single body. I am greatly indebted to the 911 emergency operators who tried, it turns out, for over an hour to contact Christine on her cell, but for some reason were unable to do so. The US Navy search & rescue team was extremely professional, and used top-of-the-line equipment – I've never been on a rescue where we had the use of an attending physician and a twin-engine helicopter.

The staff at St. Joseph's was friendly, reassuring and efficient. True, it was a quiet Sunday evening, but they moved me through the radiographic department in record time. The 69 year-old physician who stitched me up had not the slightest hand tremor, and was kindness himself.

Finally, my deepest appreciation for my three colleagues, who handled the crisis so well, got me out of there so speedily, then packed up camp and, early the next morning, hauled all my gear plus their own down to the trailhead and back home. (It was a new tent, and I would have hated to lose it!) Thank you all.

Participants: Sandy Briggs, Christine Fordham, Charles Turner, Rick Hudson

TAGGING VOLCANOES

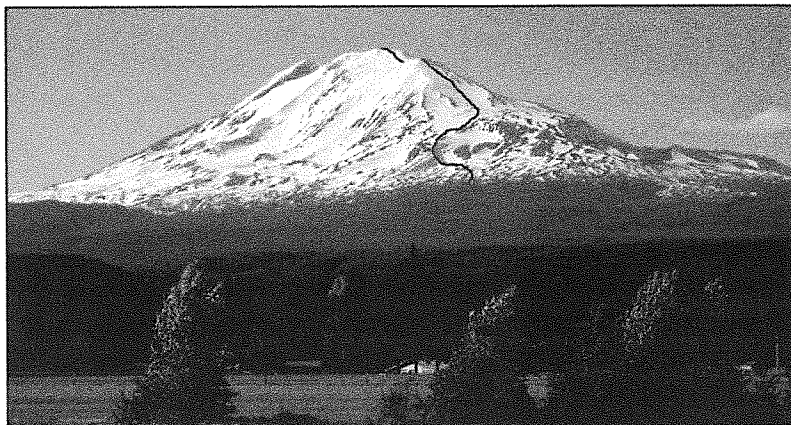
Karun Thanjavur

August 5-7

The weather gods were good to us and the vista from the summit of Mt. Adam on that clear, sunny day was truly breath taking – and not entirely due to the altitude at 3700m (12,300ft)! The view was made more impressive by four sister peaks arrayed at cardinal points, Mt. Rainier to the north, Mts. Hood and Jefferson looking south, and off to the west, St. Helens with a gentle plume trailing in the wind.

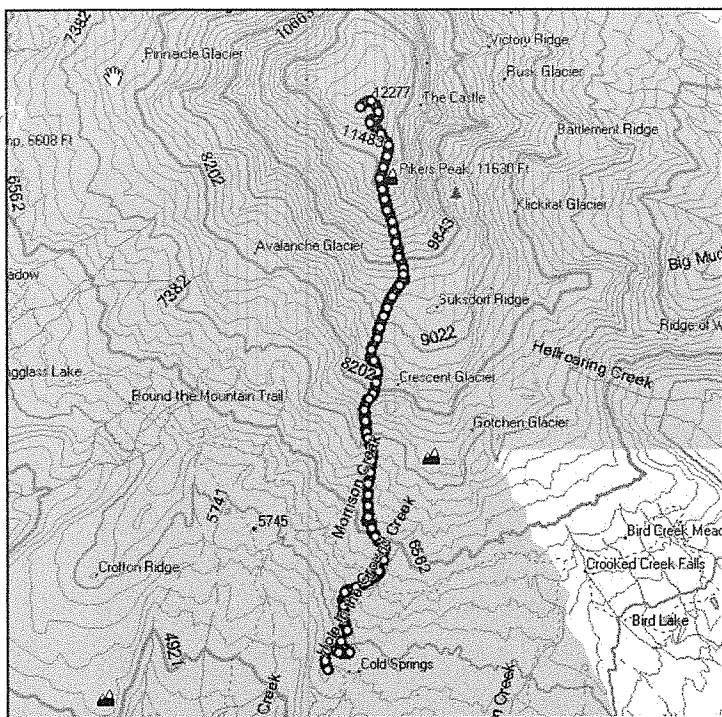
To add to the excitement (ONLY for the few 'wartoys' buffs!), roared two pairs of F-15s (I am told!) out of the clear blue, skimming the summit at close range and almost at eye level. The last of the lot gave an acknowledging wag of the wings, much to the joy of the hand waves and shouts.

We: Shawn Hedges leading the trip, Lenka Visnovska,



The route on Mt Adams

Photo: Karun Thanjavur



Map of route on Mt Adam

Photo: Karun Thanjavur

Andrew Brown, and I, had a very enjoyable 3-day August long-weekend trip to Mt. Adam, of which two were eaten up by the long to and fro drives (nearly seven and a half hours from the Tsawwassen Ferry, including a half hour border crossing delay).

On Day 2, our only day on the trail, we had an alpine start at 3 am from our car camp at Cold Springs (elev. 1540m/5080ft), the trailhead for the South Climb (Trail #183). We had decided on this camping option instead of the usual and popular higher campsite at the 'Lunch Counter' (2730m/9000ft), to avoid having to heave our gear up high. Beware that Cold Springs, despite its misleading name, has no springs, – so pack in all the water you need. (thanks to Shawn's foreknowledge we had a much needed reservoir)

With our early start and light packs, we made good time and were past the campers at Lunch Counter even as most of them there were just crawling out of their sleeping bags. The trail up to there, was well maintained and the grade gentle. There was no snow on that section of the trail –however, Shawn remembered from his reccy just a month earlier, the snow line was much lower then, with the trail commencing at Morrison Creek, adding another 10km to the round trip.

Past Lunch Counter, the grunt started with the first long climb up the moderately steep Crescent Glacier. Since it was still early, crampons made the hard, icy crust easier to handle. The



Andrew, Karun, Lenka and Shawn on the summit of Mt. Adam

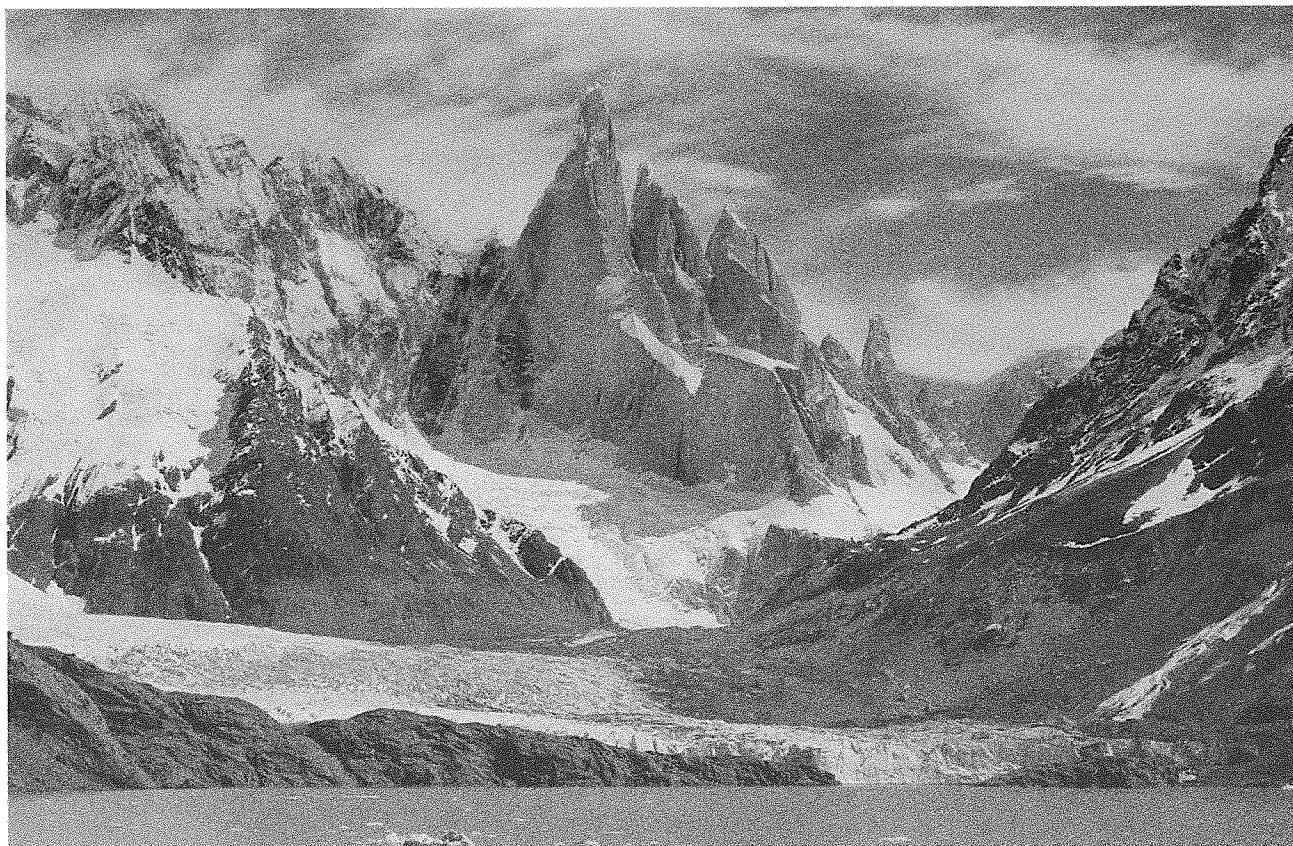
route was fairly straightforward –and ran straight up (as seen on the topo map)! The only decision was whether to stay on the snow, or scramble up the (fairly loose) volcanic rock piles.

On this section, the one other drawback to camping lower down became evident –not having had even a night-long acclimatization at Lunch Counter. For this reason, we slacked the pace off several notches on this steepest section of the whole climb and made it to the 'false summit' at Pikers peak by mid-morning.

The grade in the last section from Pikers Peak to the summit was again gentle and the switchbacks in the trail made the ascent easier. The Mt. Adams Fire Lookout, its ruins half buried in the snow, was there to welcome us with a sun-warmed roof to sprawl on, and take our fill of summit photos.

There were rowdy 'bum slides' on the way down (even past Lunch Counter), barreling down what looked like Olympic bob sled runs, the depth of the bum-carved chutes attesting to the popularity of the sport! All told, a memorable trip offering good altitude and steep snow experience (for aspirants) and rewarding efforts, with many magnificent views (weather permitting, of course!). On the drive home, a very scenic detour along the 'Gorge' on the banks of the Colombia River really took the tedium off the long hours on the road. Thanks to Lenka for having coaxed us into it. "Highly recommended!" Shawn would perhaps add - as is the mandatory REI stop at Bellingham to lighten your wallet,!!

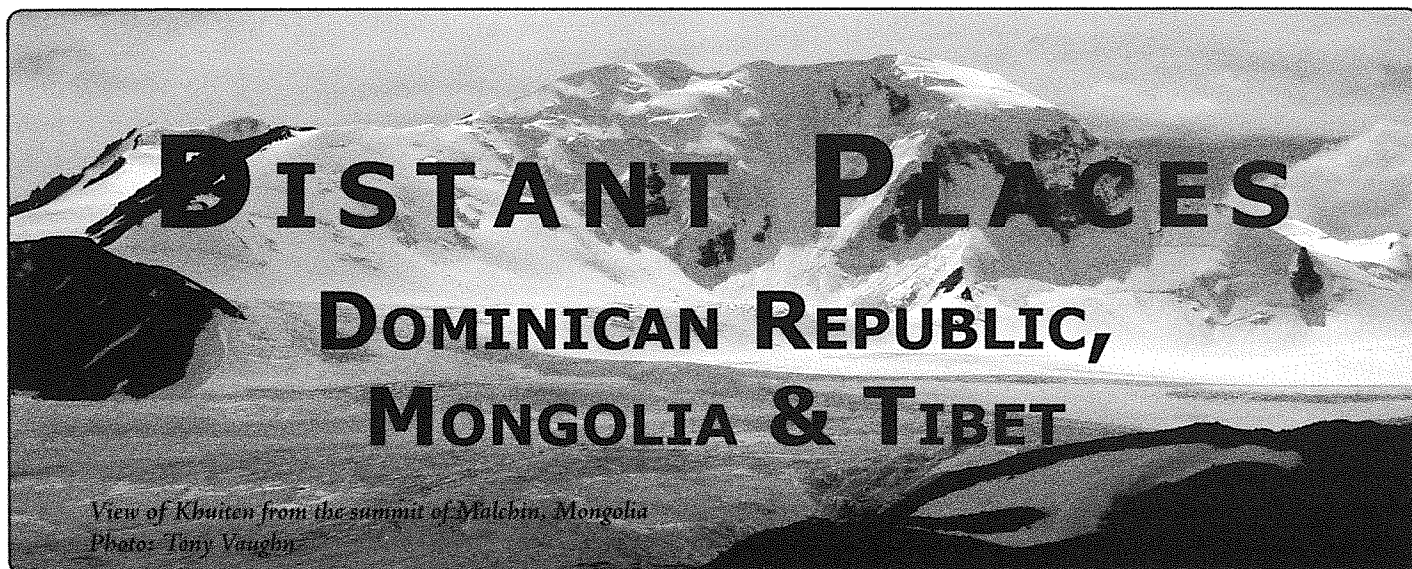
Participants: Shawn Hedges (leader), Lenka Visnovska, Andrew Brown, Karun Thanjavur



CERRO TORRE
PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

PHOTO: PHEE HUDSON

MOUNTAIN SCENERY WINNER



PICO DUARTE (3175m)

Graham Maddocks
December 2005

At 3175m, Pico Duarte is the highest mountain in the Caribbean, located in the Cordillera Central of Hispaniola, a mountain range running through the center of the Dominican Republic into Haiti. The peak is protected in the National Park of Bermudez - Ramirez, Dominican Republic, and contains a unique species of Mountain Creole Pine. Normal temperatures in the park range between 12°C and 20°C most of the year; lows of -5°C are not uncommon especially in December and January. The Parque Nacional Armando Bermudez receives between 2000 mm and 4000 mm of rain annually, Parque Nacional Jose Del Carmen Ramirez on the southern side of the range receives about one third as much rain.

The peak can be approached from the village of San Jose Las Matas in the north east, about a five day round trip; a second approach is from the village of Sabaneth in the south east, also a five day round trip. I chose an approach from the village of La Cienaga in the west as the direct and most used route. La Cienaga, a tranquil, bucolic mountain village is about one and a half hours by pickup over mostly dirt roads from the pleasant mountain town of Jarabacoa, altitude 800m. The road follows the Yague River through beautiful agricultural villages producing Tayota, a green eggplant sized vegetable.

After some intense negotiating in bad Spanish, a reasonable price was agreed on for a guide, a horse and a mule for 6 days and 5 nights, the pack animals were hired as I am adverse to the quaint Canadian custom of carrying your own pack. The first day was almost consumed by organization of the guide, food and pack animals and we spent the night at the campsite at Las Tablones beside the Yague River, the area contains dense stands of wild native cane. The second day was climbing through lush mountain vegetation, mostly West Indian Cedar, on a steep washed out trail. The beauty was marred by a major forest fire that had swept through the area 8 months before, the complete absence of bird life I can only attribute to all the insects being consumed in the fire. The second night was spent at the campsite and refugio at La Compatacion; I chose to camp as the refugio looked suspiciously like rat city, even though the guide assured me that all the rats had been toasted in the fire.

On the third day, we climbed in clear warm skies through high alpine pine forest to Pico Duarte at 3175m giving sweeping views of Hispaniola in every direction. On descending, we visited a new refugio built in a valley at the foot of Pico Pelon (3087m), the second highest and very close peak in the range. The night was spent again at La Compatacion with a rest day and a fourth night at this beautiful campsite with clear cool weather and access to a

pristine mountain stream. Good food was provided by the mule's back and we dined well on eggs, fresh chicken, green bananas and pineapple, washed down with Dominican rum. I had brought 45 eggs, to allow for breakage, and the mule purposely careened into every tree, but we only lost a few, the fresh country chickens were tasty but had suffered from malnutrition.

The fifth day we descended a steep rocky trail through the worst of the burn, the only things that seemed to have survived the fire were large Aloe Vera plants more than a metre high; the packs on the horse's back were covered in charcoal, never to be

clean again. The night was spent in a lush grassy alpine valley at Valle De Tetero (1700m); this site is truly exquisite, next to a rushing mountain river with a new refugio that we slept in and proved to be rat free. That night we were treated to a perfect display of the stars without the interference from city light.

The sixth and last day was a steep climb out of the valley, 8 km through lush tropical vegetation onto the main trail descending to Las Tablones and La Cienaga. The entire trip was made in crystal clear weather after an initial day of cloud and rain at Jarabacoa.

MONGOLIA

Mike Hubbard, Tony Vaughn
and Catrin Brown
July 8-30

Ane-mail from Helen Sovdat to Mike in the early summer of 2005 asking if he was interested in a climbing trip to Altai Tavan Bogd on the border with Russia in Western Mongolia coupled with the Nadaam Horse Festival in Ulaanbaatar required thirty seconds of in depth analysis before he fired off an enthusiastic "Yes count me in!".

By our departure on July 8th the group had swollen to 13. Of the Victoria contingent Mike, Tony and Jules flew with Air China from Vancouver to Beijing meeting Dave McLung from Vancouver on the same flight. Here we met Catrin, who had arrived a few hours earlier from London, at the low key but excellent Beijing Airport Garden Hotel. Here too we met Ken Little from Kelowna, who had already been in China for a few weeks, and Warren Bell from Vancouver.

After a much needed sleep, we were soon on the way back to the Airport for our 9:00 am flight to Ulaanbaatar or UB as it is commonly known (population 870,000 at an altitude of 1286m). What a contrast to the sunless smog of Beijing; the sky was clear blue with billowing white clouds and the hills green with new grass as we waited outside the modern Chinggis Khaan International Airport for our group to gather from several different flights. We were met by our Canadian Guides, Helen Sovdat from Canmore, Alberta, Tim Styles from Golden, BC, our Mongolian Outfitter Purev Bold, the owner of Mongolia Trekking and his assistant, Shinee, who was to accompany us on our travels.

The initial impression of UB was a great contrast to Beijing.

Many of the signs are in English, the Russian Cyrillic alphabet is used and the Soviet influence can be seen in the wide streets, large formal squares and statues of Lenin. The influx of capitalism is evidenced by the number of flashy SUV's and the desk welcoming visitors to the Vancouver-based Ivanhoe Mines, which has a vast copper and gold property at Oyu Tolgoi in the Gobi Desert. The town was decked out in festive splendour for the Naadam Festival; this year's festival was bigger than usual as 2006 was the 800th Anniversary of the foundation of the Mongol Empire by Genghis (known locally as Chinggis) Khan in 1206. This Empire, as we were to learn from our visit to the excellent National History Museum, stretched in its heyday to the borders of Egypt, Poland and Hungary in the west and the Sea of Japan in the east. An astounding Empire to construct on horseback from these apparently isolated and boundless steppes!

Our party was now almost complete. We had been joined by Millie Carson from Red Lodge, Montana who had been traveling in the Gobi desert, and Margaret Saul and Lise Beaulieu from Calgary. This left only one more, Monique Mills, a friend of Lise, who was joining us in Olgii as she was coming directly from Kazakhstan where she runs a Calgary-based oilfield service company. We stayed at the Anujin Hotel, a modest but adequate establishment with a fascinating wobbly multi-jetted shower and, most importantly, within walking distance of the city centre. For the next three nights, we were treated to an intensive program of what UB and the Naadam Festival has to offer.

The Opening Ceremonies in the Stadium were a highlight: a cross between the Calgary Stampede and the Nuremburg Rallies

featuring Chinngis in front of a large ceremonial Ger (as Yurts are known in Mongolia) mounted on a large chariot drawn by oxen, with hordes of mounted warriors following. Traditional wrestling followed in the Stadium with archery and an unusual flicking game played with sheep anklebones, which attracted intense spectators and competitors of traditionally-dressed men, taking place in side venues. At meal times we were off to excellent restaurants of an international flavour. In the evening we were entertained by throat singers and by young women doing the most amazing contortionist dances in some of which they bent over backwards and put their heads between their feet. Amongst the crowd at the Festival was a man with a hunting eagle on his arms who, for a fee, would permit you to hold the bird for a picture.

Catrin spent an interesting day visiting with one of her former students from Pearson College. "Before leaving home," she said, "I had established contact with Dolgoon, a Mongolian student I had taught back in 2001, and who was now studying in the States. Fortuitously he was home in UB for the summer so we were able to meet up – to the delight of both of us. Dolgoon was a wonderful guide – with a balance of proprietary pride in his city and curiosity about my reaction to it all. Meeting his family was a highlight as they greeted me with quiet charm and an understated welcome, which I later learned was typical of Mongolian hospitality. From the absolute equanimity of their greeting, an observer may well have concluded that I was a daily visitor popping in to say hullo. His father works as an engineer helping to establish solar panels in remote villages and spoke with real confidence about the improving condition in the country since the fall of communism in 1996. Dolgoon is interested in returning home after his studies and setting up in the tourist industry, which he believes has great potential."

On our last day before flying west to the Altai Mountains we drove out of town some 30 km to an open plain called Hui Doloon Khutag to see the Horse racing. For horse lovers this was an incredible scene. Horses are raced over a long track coming from the horizon. The jockeys are young boys between the age 7 and 12 dressed in colourful silken costumes and hats. Most of the spectators were also on horseback some standing on their saddles to see over the crowds as the racers came in. It is serious business and looking away back down the track one could see horses that had been ridden beyond their endurance lying dead. Parents and relatives were greeting the finishing jockeys on their lathered horses and cantering off with them to their encampments. The boundaries of the track were protected by foot soldiers dressed like extras from Dr. Zhivago in Soviet style uniforms and the whole sunlit prairie with racing clouds and shadows was filled with wailing Mongolian traditional music. It was like being inside a National Geographic Spectacular.

The next morning we were at the airport early and off to the west in a lumbering twin-engined, propeller-driven aircraft. The country is vast and empty; of a population of some 2.5 million,

half live in the few cities the rest are nomadic or semi nomadic and are spread over an area about two thirds the size of India. Unlike China, population growth is at an all time low of 1.4% and the government is offering subsidies for newborns and newly weds. As we flew west the country became dryer and browner and by the time we reached Olgii some three hours later it reminded one of the newsreel footage we are seeing nightly from Afghanistan.

At the Airport we were met by our drivers and a somewhat decrepit Rangerover and two Russian Furgon Minivans. These are high clearance boxy 4X4's which perform superbly over the terrain we were about to travel. So enthused did Warren and Mike become about their performance that they discussed the possibility of opening a franchise to sell them in Canada! Olgii is the capital of the Western Province but is very run down with potholed streets, crumbling buildings and a plethora of seedy bars. The population is about 28,000 and on the outskirts are many gers. The people are of Kazakh origin and Muslim faith. After banking and picking up a few snacks we headed out of town towards the snowy mountains we had seen in the distance before we landed. We passed several small towns of mud block houses, some of which were abandoned for the summer as they are winter quarters for the nomadic herders, and as we approached the mountains noticed more and more timber being utilized. We passed many large herds of goat and sheep which were contributing to the overgrazed and barren appearance of the landscape. Our first night's camp, however, was on green meadow by the clear and fast flowing Khovd River. Some of us swam and remarked that it was a little warmer than the Sooke Potholes had been the week before and an ocean away!

Soon after leaving our camp the next morning we crossed a rickety looking wooden bridge and passed a rusty sign announcing the Tavanbogd National Park. Here we stopped for a break and for the drivers to siphon fuel from a jeep that had come over the bridge from the gers at the park entrance; it was loaded down with adults and children, who came to curiously look at the strangers from another land. We then continued on rough tracks sometimes losing our companion vehicles, especially the Landrover with our two cooks and food. We passed Turkik gravestones dating back over a thousand years, piles of rocks apparently placed by Mongolian armies to record the numbers of their hordes heading west toward Europe, or Kurgens (burial mounds) depending on which guidebook you read, and many herds of camels. We stopped for lunch on a high plateau where there was large cemetery. Here we were somewhat aggressively asked to remove ourselves from convenient stones, which were apparently marking graves, by the driver of a truck laden with fleeces. When we descended to a wide river valley, and having forded one braided stream, our drivers seemed completely lost but fortunately a lone horseman appeared from a ger camp and led us back across the stream to a track heading southwest along the valley floor. We were meant to arrive at the road head by noon but it was dusk before we finally descended to a glacial river, two

gers, an army truck and a large mixed herd of goats, sheep, yaks, camels and horses. The clouds were down on the mountains but we could see the feet of the glaciers protruding from their base in the twilight. Tents were pitched, a meal appeared and soon we were snoring away apart from one or two of us who were suffering from the inevitable gastrointestinal problems of third-world travel. We were occasionally disturbed by the very scruffy and unkempt camp dogs that patrolled all night to keep predators away and slept all day.

It was a slow start in the morning with ample time to take pictures of the colourfully dressed women of the encampment milking their yaks, and for Tony to visit one of the gers to deliver the pens he had brought for the children. He was treated in return to a glass of airag, which is fermented mare's milk, to which he seemed to develop a minor addiction. He later secreted a bottle in his duffle but it unfortunately leaked lending a malodiferous tang to his gear! Tony, Mike, Catrin and Jules also hiked up to the ridge behind our camp for a view of our route up the valley towards our objective. Around 11 am, after our camels were loaded with gear, we were away and soon came to a ford which Shinee, our Mongolian guide, thought we should cross on horseback. Helen, however, convinced her that in Canada we were used to such things and most of us stripped down to our underwear and sandals and crossed the braided, milky and icy stream on foot. It does wonders for Plantar Faciitis! Our gear and camp staff went on ahead on horseback and camel and some 15 km later we stag-



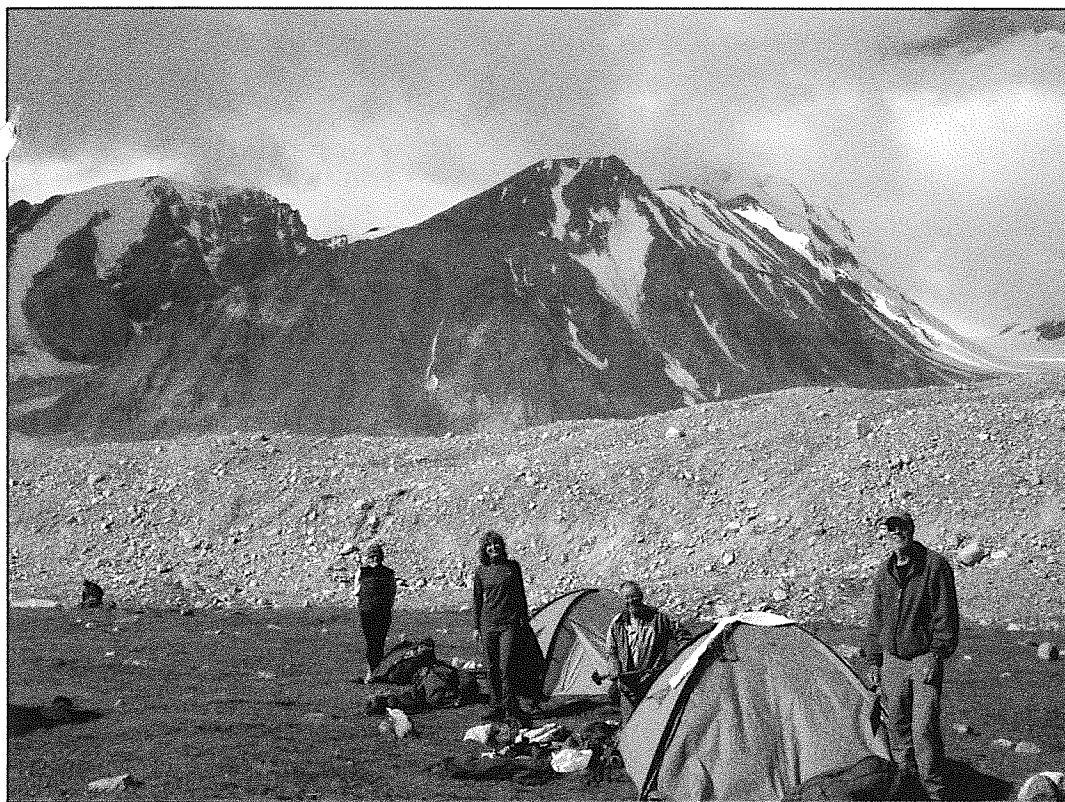
Mike arriving in camp

Photo: Mongolian Horseman

gered, or in Mike's case, rode, into camp by a moraine wall with a fresh stream running beside it and a stunning view of the Altai Range. There were two gers already pitched but they were not for our use and we ate outside hoping for good weather. This base camp was a truly international place with groups from England, France, the USA and Mongolia. There was also a convenient bathing pool on the moraine wall. The next day we hiked up the outside of the moraine to a glaciated but un-crevassed peak,

Malchin (3980 m), as an acclimatization day. We did some self arrest practice on the lower slopes and then climbed slowly to the summit. Unbeknown to us it was to be the best day from the point of view of weather with clear skies and a wonderful view of our higher objectives Khuiten (4374 m) and Nairamdai (4082 m) and of the dry country to the east that we had hiked the previous day. The plan was to move to high camp by a rock outcrop some 4 hours up the glacier the next morning but the weather was deteriorating so this was delayed for 24 hours and most of us decided to take a rest day around camp. Helen, Tim, Ken, Marge and Bogey (Bold's younger brother - an unemployed Geologist and enthusiastic mountaineer in training) went on an exploratory trip and climb up the Alexandroff glacier returning just before dark when we ate our customary plain but wholesome mutton and rice evening meal. Food in Mongolia was not particularly memorable but was generally adequate with plenty of meat and not, to Mike's delight, highly spiced. It snowed during the night but was clear in the morning with a dusting of snow and minus 5 centigrade. We packed as lightly as possible and moved up the Potanina glacier with minimal tentage leaving our cooks and camp staff, save for two porters, in camp. Once we reached snow covered ice we roped up as the glacier was laced with crevasses. After five hours of heavy plodding up the glacier we reached our advance base camp by a windy Nunatuk, but the sun was shining and the views across to the heavily corniced and steep icefalls of the east face of Khuiten were fantastic. However,

the regular route up the North East Ridge, which was the original route first climbed in 1956 by a Russian climber and twelve Mongolians, looked straightforward. We set up our tents on the ice and enjoyed a glorious evening outside. That evening a lone climber came up the glacier in our tracks and camped above us just below our open bivvy. He introduced himself as "George" from Romania and was anxious to join us on on Khuiten but Helen was not prepared to add to her already large responsibilities. By nightfall the weather had deteriorated again with high winds and steady snowfall making for an uncomfortable night. We awoke to high winds and poor visibility. After snoozing in the tents until noon we decided to venture out on the glacier and see whether we could make it up Nairamdai, which is the triple border peak of Russia, China and Mongolia. We did, but in a white-out; all peaks in whatever country look much the same which was rather disappointing. After eating in our tents we fell asleep hoping for better weather in the morning. It snowed all night and froze solid. We had to dig out the tents before we could move. The simplest operations became challenging and we could only huddle up and yell at each other over the wind. Visibility was poor and the wind still blew. Base camp, the larger tents and a catered meal were tempting. George,



Jules Catrin Mike and Tony at base camp

Photo: Catrin Brown



Tony, Tim, Mike and Dave on the summit of Nairamdal

Photo: Tony Vaughn

who had set off for base camp by himself, returned saying, so far as we could understand him, that it was not safe as he had put his feet into several crevasses. However around 10, as the weather appeared to be clearing, we gathered ourselves together

planned an alternate hike to some petroglyphs beyond the road-head. The river at the crossing just above the ger camp was a little higher than on the way in and more of us opted to cross on horse-back. Mike and Tim, who had waded first, kept an anxious eye

and set off towards the summit. Patches of blue sky appeared and we had occasional glimpses of the summit ridge. When we were about half way across the lower glacier a lone figure appeared in our tracks – George was coming too! Unfortunately the weather once again deteriorated but nevertheless we all made it to what we are confident was the summit. The way down was badly drifted in but with difficulty we were able to follow our up tracks and were safely back by 3 pm. After some food we hacked our frozen-in tents out of the ice that had formed around the anchors and high tailed it for base camp. What a treat it was to be greeted by Shinee and the cook's helper about a km up the trail from camp with a jug of refreshing fruit juice. We were in camp by 8 pm for a good meal, this time in

the ger, washed down with red wine and vodka courtesy of our camp crew. We were discussing the program for the next 2 days with options of a rest day or climbing one or two of the inviting peaks to the south followed by a second day of climbing when Shinee piped up and said that we would have to go out to the road-head the next morning as the army had arrived and were clearing the valley of tourists in anticipation of the arrival of the President of Mongolia. At first we did not believe her but on checking the other groups and noting the camels and horses that had arrived we found that it was so. After some grumbling and after hearing that a large encampment of troops was half a mile down the valley we realized we had little alternative but to pack up and go. Sure enough in the morning we passed the military camp, fully equipped with communications equipment, heavy trucks and a large Russian helicopter buzzing around, as we headed out with, to some extent, our tails between our legs, although the weather and good company soon dissipated that feeling as we



Helen and Dave on Khuiten

Photo: Tony Vaughn

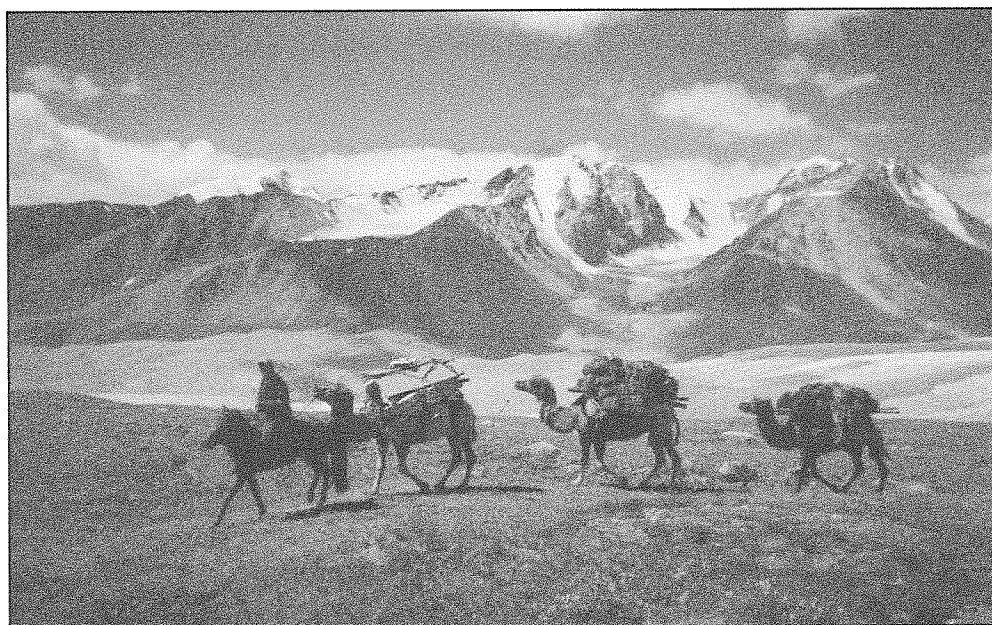
on the rest of the party crossing as a rescue downstream would have been difficult with the braided streams converging into a stronger and deeper channel. However all went well and we were soon setting up camp at the road-head. The next day we said our goodbyes to the family in the ger and were made welcome with airag and homebaked cookies. The contrast of modern technology in the shape of solar panels powering a wall clock and TV with the traditional skin of fermenting mare's milk and handwoven rugs in the ger gave us some insight into the changing lives of

in a stream. We camped that night just beyond the cemetery where we had lunched on the way in on what was obviously a shallow lake in the wet season, and experienced the only mosquitoes of substance that we were to encounter. After an early start we stopped at a roadside ger where we were greeted by three generations of a family who appeared to be developing a tourist business with their caged and rather timid eagle which was being trained for hunting and which, for a small fee, one could hold on one's arm. Grandmother was totally blind but appeared to

these nomadic people who are coping well with the advent of ecotourism.

After a short drive the party split and the more energetic of us, including all four Victorians, went up a dry mountain to the north of the track, Sheveed Uul (3350 m), whilst the rest of the party stayed low looking for the petroglyphs. Near the summit we saw a distant group of shy either Ibex or mountain sheep who took off as soon as they saw us and were apparently timid from being hunted. After descending a scree slope we met up with the lower party who had, with the assistance of a loan horseman nicknamed the Tuvan Mystery Man by Monique, found the petroglyphs finely etched into some rock slabs. These were exquisitely drawn figures of man and beast in the hundreds if not thousands.

We left this valley at 4 pm and once more drove until 9 pm. We were bogged down in places, stuck in river crossings, and bounced around in the back of the minivans like corks



Horse & Camel caravan going home

Photo: Mike Hubbard

enjoy our company. It was interesting to see how the different generations lived as one unit compared with our warehousing of the older generation in senior's residences. After more airag we moved on, arriving in Ogi in time to locate a rather scungy hotel and do some shopping. Being Sunday evening, everything was closed except, thank goodness, for the bars. However, we had a stroke of luck; Millie had heard of an American running a handicraft cooperative for Kazakh weavers. After a telephone call we met Susan Bourke the director of the Altai Craft Women's project, which provides a marketing outlet for the chain-stitched wall hangings and other items made by nomadic women. She opened up her store for us and it was probably one of her best days of the year,

for the quality was superb and the items irresistible. After our spending spree we had a great last night party, dancing until the early hours, as our drivers and cooks were driving back to UB, a three or four days drive, and Monique was leaving us to head back to Kazakhstan. Following our return to UB we reverted to being normal tourists, staying in a ger camp, visiting a Buddhist Monastery at Karakorum, Chinggis Khan's old capital, and doing some last-minute shopping in UB. Most of us then had three nights in Beijing visiting the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and

Tian'anmen Square, before flying home.

An interesting and varied trip giving us all new insight into both the emerging super power, China, and one of the few remaining nomadic and unspoilt cultures of our Planet.

Participants: Helen Sovdat (Leader and climbing Guide), Tim Styles (Assistant Guide), Warren Bell, Lise Beaulieu, Catrin Brown, Millie Carson, Mike Hubbard, Ken Little, Dave McClune, Monique Mills, Margaret Saul, Jules Thomson and Tony Vaughn.

NAAR PHU ---A RECONNAISSANCE--- A 33 DAY ROMP IN THE NEPAL HIMALAYA WITH JOHN YOUNG

Tom Carter

October 27 to November 30.

Seas of rice flow golden in the breeze. Trails, foot-slapped mud, maze their way through the paddies. Walls of white rise to the north, but our world now is bananas, water buffalo, tangerines, and red saris. The harvest has begun, backs bent under the sun. We sweat and hide under umbrellas of banyan and pipal trees . . . Jungle and palm and deep green shadows full of cicadas. On this un-trekked trail, Nima and I ask for directions. Hands pointing to the next thatched roof village, our ultimate destination, unheard of and incomprehensible to these people. Namaskars (the honorific greeting) are given rather than the more familiar Namaste . . . Eye to eye contact everywhere. Then Bulbhule, the Annapurna Circuit, and the all too altered Nepal for trekkers.

Climbing up the Marsyangdi canyon we pass through to the north of the main Himalayan range. Approaching Koto I look back to Manaslu, the Larkya pass, and a journey of a year ago is laid out like a map. Ahead, all 7980 metres of Annapurna Two appear through pine and fir. In Koto at 2650 metres, permits are checked, kerosene, extra food and extra porters are found. It's like the edge of the world. Leaving the Circuit we turn north into "restricted" territory and the unknown.



Nima getting direction from villager, Vishnu with load

Photo: Tom Carter

This canyon of the Naar Khola is so deep and tight the camera flash comes on. Much of the trail is dynamited out of the cliff side. I can only imagine the original bamboo scaffolding that once provided precarious passage. Emerging out of the canyon, the world above is overexposed, the light blinding. We have entered Naar Phu.

Wildly eroded crumbling conglomerates make many trail traverses tenuous. The forest is left below. Only shrunken juniper

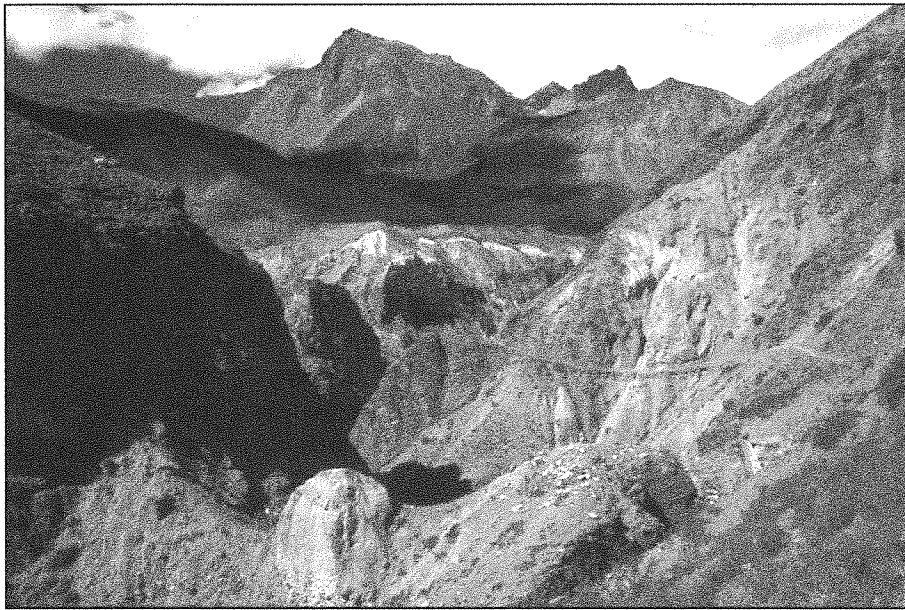
and thorny scrub dot the Desert hillsides. The colours are raw, super saturated . . . We pass through the toppling stone walls of abandoned Khampa villages. The Tibetan Khampas fought the Chinese from their refuge villages within Nepalese borders until the Chinese threats forced the Nepalese army to flush them out. Tombstones to lost hope.

Climbing up above the third canyon of the Naar Khola we pass through the gate to the Phu valley. My knees buckle at the spectacle of the contorted desert beyond. A crumbling fortress totters on a pinnacle above the abyss. They warred here. No sweet Namastes . . . they were sharpening spears. The reality of Himalayan history was kingdoms and warlords that constantly battled each other. Even rival sects of Buddhist monks had their armies. Orange mud chortens line the trail towards the moraines up river.

shines down on the open fire on the floor of a smoke blackened room. Strips of yak meat hang from the ceiling like hundreds of bloody stalactites. We sit under them around the family hearth, drinking bowl after bowl of butter tea. The woman of the house proudly pumps at her churn preparing more of the Tibetan staple drink. Rich and fatty, it is one antidote to the cold. Grampa is slurping at his bowl while spinning his prayer wheel. The kids, in long woolen chubas, are rolling tea-dampened balls of barley flour (tsampa) while poking each other, giggling. The son is sharing news with his friends. A snow leopard had taken a sheep a week ago. Through a tiny door, made of hand-adzed planks sewn together with gut and hinged with hide, I step out into the high desert glare. The sky is impossibly blue. Prayer flags are snapping in the wind.

At 4800m, high above Phu Gaon, the 7200m tower of Himlung Himal rises above the glacier spilling into the Naar Khola. Our proposed shallow contoured ridge climb to a 6400m sub-peak, had looked good on the map. Reality showed a frightening line of seracs and ice cliffs. I could only laugh. It was easy to bail. Ten foot wingspanned lammergeiers were swooping past, close enough to hear the wind in their feathers . . . Excitement enough.

Amazingly Naar Gaon has a lodge, but we still sit around an open fire drinking still more butter tea. There are cymbals and drums playing on the rooftops. Everyone is wearing new kata scarves. A grandfather in chuba and felt boots is even tying kata around his horses' necks! Meeting Nima, he tells me a Rimpoche is in town, hence the celebration. Climbing the log-ladder it seems most of the town is here with satin shirts, felt



Phu Valley from the gate Photo: Tom Carter:

Around a corner and there is Phu Gaon. I'm stopped in my tracks. Walls of mud and stone, buildings stacked climbing up the cliff sides to the castle/gompa/fortress on the peak. Prayer flags are everywhere. We were invited to pitch our tents on a roof that doubled as the porch and drying rack for the house above. Heads peeped down on us from rooftops above. Narrow alleyways led into dark passageways. A series of notched logs (the Himalayan ladder) climbed through ancient prayer rooms with dusty Buddha figures and drums. We emerged on the roof into the snow peaks swirling around high above this rabbit warren. Where are we? From a very small window, a shaft of light



Phu Gaon

Photo: Tom Carter

boots, and chubas.. Everyone is excited. With laughter they push me into the line. Smells of smoke and sweat and burning juniper fill the room where the Rimpoche sits . . . Kneeling, giving the kata we had all brought, looking into benign eyes, as he blows on the kata and places it around my neck. Jong Ri flashes spindrift and twilight high overhead. Everyone is elated. Chang flows.

Kang La Pass 5320m is our exit from Naar Phu. I watch the dawn light growing over Kanguru, and now distant Manaslu, as we slowly make our way up the trail. Just before the pass, the sun bursts across the slopes of Jong Ri, bringing much welcomed warmth – and coming over the lip, the view I'd been anticipating for so long, across the valley, all thirty kilometres of the Annapurnas, all over seven thousand metres.



*On Kang La 5320m. From left Nima, Vishnu, Singhi, Sansa, Pordip and John Young
Photo: Tom Carter*



Teshi Lama -- above Manang

Photo: Tom Carter

Overwhelming. We add our prayer flag to the others draped between the rocks, and begin a very long descent.

Down in Manang at thirty-five hundred metres, back on the Circuit, of course apple pie and cappuccino. and sitting in a small bhatti with Singhi and the guys, drinking some very fine chang. I was told Lama Teshi now ninety, was still giving pujas at his tiny aerie of a gompa high on the cliffs above Manang. With his high pointed hat he performs a short ritual with blessed water to drink, a tap on your head with the scripture book, and a red cord he ties around your neck, which he says is for good luck crossing the Thorung La . . . And then tea. He was most happy hearing this was my second visit, saying it would double luck. He took me to his wife, now eighty-nine and blind. She reached out and traced her hand over my face and brought my head down to touch her forehead. Smiling she went back to beading her mantra: Om mani payme hung. Across the valley, Gangapurna spread her snowy arms to encompass us all.

Thorung La, at 5420m is high and cold and the wind screams at you as you arrive at the crest. It is as if the Jet Stream sinks particularly low at this point . . . An inch of ice in my water bottle in an hour. Descending it abates and all the peaks of western Nepal stretch out to the horizon. Very familiar with the route, the journey down the Kali Gandaki passes as a vacation, my core untouched. It's still up there somewhere with the Phugaon wind in the prayer flags.

I'll be going back in the fall to retrieve it.

Participants: Nima Sherpa, Vishnu Chetri, Singhi Tamang, Sansa Tamang, Pordip Tamang, John Young and, Tom Carter

