



ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA • VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

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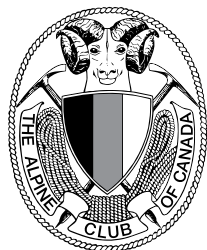


THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA
VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

2007 ANNUAL

VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION
of
THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA



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Viggo A. Holm
1932 – 2007

Like all Viggo's many friends, we in the Alpine Club were shocked and saddened to learn that there had been a motor vehicle accident on Monday September 10, 2007 on Highway 4 west of Port Alberni, and that he had not survived. We have lost a friend, a trusted companion, a dedicated volunteer, and a fellow mountaineer who, over a span of many years – including this year – impressed both the young and the not-so-young with his fitness and enthusiasm.

In 2005 Viggo, along with Judith, was awarded the Don Forest Award for volunteer service to the ACC. We recognize with thanks and admiration his many years as editor of the Island Bushwhacker newsletter, as well as his many other contributions to our Section. Friends comment that Viggo approached everything with a positive attitude, whether it was Island bushwhacking, poor snow conditions, or the stresses of producing the Club's best newsletter on time. His skiing was beautiful to watch, knees together and boards parallel through even the worst coastal crud. Whether on or off the mountain, he encouraged and looked after people. He was steadfast.

By vocation Viggo was an engineer, by avocation a skier, a mountaineer and a sailor. He was a loving husband and father. I know I speak for us all when I say that Viggo will be sorely missed.

- Sandy Briggs

Vancouver Island

Moonlight Dancing - Mounts Cain and Abel

Mike Hubbard

March 30 – April 1

Shall we or shall we not ?

The debate in my car as we drove up past Sayward had an emotional undertone. The issue was minor – was the Mt. Cain Lodge open for dinner on a Friday night and should we go straight up there? The weather was superb, not a cloud in the sky and crisp clear air; time for a powder run before supper on unpacked slopes as the lifts only operate on weekends. However only Becky and I had packed food for Friday night as I had taken over the coordination of the trip from Catrin at the last moment and the message Albert, Julian and Leslie had received from Catrin was that Mike would probably stop somewhere for dinner.

Serendipitously a lone woodsman was climbing into his pickup at the Mt. Cain turn off where we had decided to check the sign. His opinion was that the Lodge would not be open but that a good meal could be had at the Lucky Logger Pub at Woss just down the highway. Reluctantly Becky and I agreed that we had little choice and on we went to Woss. The meal was slow but the customers colourful and cheerful and by the time we arrived at the hill the sun was setting. After dumping our overnight gear in the Blueberry Cabin and hearing from Christine, who was already there and had had a run, that the skiing was fantastic, Julian, Becky and I set off up the hill. Only at Mt. Cain would the Packer operator give us a cheery wave as he maneuvered his machine around us.

The moon was almost full and by the time we reached the upper slopes the sunset was just a pink glow in the western sky; untouched powder, apart from Christine's immaculate tracks, stretched above us on the upper run. We kept going until the slope flattened out and then turned. The snow sparkled in the moonlight and the sub zero temperature gave it a Rocky Mountain lightness as we whooped and hollered back



Julian, Sandy and Becky on the Summit of Mt. Abel PHOTO: MIKE HUBBARD

down to the lower piste. What a run! I've been benighted on skis before and come down in survival mode, but this was a first for an intentional and exhilarating moonlight waltz.

No sooner had we settled back into the cabin than Rudy Brugger came bouncing in from the second cabin which was occupied by Barb Baker, Peter Rothermel and other Mid Islanders and said "who's coming up the hill it's the opportunity of a lifetime." Albert and the others who had not just skied could not resist Rudy's exuberant invitation and off they went returning in the wee hours.

The next morning some decided to ski the lifts but Sandy was persuaded to lead me, Albert, Julian, Becky and Torge up Mt. Abel. We were joined by Alex Nicholl (and his dog Midnight) from whom Sandy had had to borrow some five minute epoxy to mend a popped steel edge on one of his skis. Here is yet another essential repair item which should be in one's ski touring pack. We descended through the first stand timber to the west of the Lodge on hard frozen snow cursing our decision not to go to the deep powder of the back bowl via the lift which is free for seniors like me and Albert. Crossing the valley floor we clambered up between the bump on

the northwest ridge of Abel and the main mountain carrying our skis for much of the way over frozen avalanche debris. At the timberline the snow became steep and in it's frozen state was too much for Midnight so Albert, Torge and Alex decided to ski down the more open southwest slopes whilst Becky, Sandy, Julian and I booted up the steep snow leaving our skis behind. Above it was open and ski able but we tromped on foot through breakable crust for another hour and a half to the heavily corniced summit. Superb views to Victoria Peak to the south and Rugged Mountain to the west made the effort all worthwhile.

From the summit it was not far across the valley to the top of the Mt. Cain lift where we could see and hear the revelers celebrating the last weekend of the season and participating in the longest drive competition. Back down to the skis and then a great run slaloming through new cedar growth to the valley bottom. A plod back up to the cabin but the club radios came into their own and by announcing our impending arrival we were able to persuade those at home to commence the preparation of the Potluck supper which was much appreciated after a great day in the hills.

The Sunday morning weather was very different with the peaks obliterated and snow flurries. We toured to the bottom of the back bowl and someway up but after several of us had unintentionally slid back down into trees we decided to call it a day. After a few turns in the remains of Saturday's perfect powder we were soon skinning back up to the cabin, meeting Leslie doing a solo GPS exercise on snowshoes en route. A little wine, lunch and a snooze for yours truly, and I was ready for the drive home but not until my energetic passengers, Albert and Julian, skied the lifts until closing.

The less said about the drive back the better. It was starting to snow as we left the hill and continued sporadically as far south as Campbell River with some of the worst driving conditions of the winter. There were five or six vehicles in the ditch and at least one accident appeared to have involved serious injuries. We were safely back in Victoria by 10.30 p.m. after another epic Mt. Cain trip.

Thanks to Catrin for organizing it. She has promised to do it again next year and we will insist on her actually coming too!

Participants: Mike Hubbard, Leslie Gordon, Albert Hestler, Becky Halvorson, Julian Hancock, Christine Fordham, Torge Schuemann and Sandy Briggs.

Lucky Mountain - First Recorded Ascent

Sasha Kubicek

April 15

As we crested Sutton Pass, Pogo Mountain presented itself with a fresh cover of snow and it really sunk in that I was finally going to get up into the mountains again! A long winter of work and just hiking local hills builds up a major craving to get onto 'a real mountain'. Our goal was Lucky Mountain, a remote west coast peak at the head of Toquart Bay.

Taking a bathroom break on our way to the west coast, I couldn't believe my eyes when I almost pee'd on hundreds of pink fawn lilies growing on the banks of the Kennedy River! They were out of their prime, but we still got a few pictures. I was going to drive out to Honeymoon Bay ecological reserve to view some but here they were right off the road! After the lilies, we ran into a bear on the highway that zoomed into the bush when we got too close. Not a bad start to the trip.

Winding our way down the highway, Quagger asked me to look out the window and see if we had a flat tire. I saw nothing wrong and he wasn't sure why he was having a hard time controlling the truck and after a bit we confirmed it was ice on the road! Half an hour later we passed some logging support trucks that were on the side of the road chatting and we were sure they were talking about the icy roads.

On the logging road now, we cruised to the launching beach for the Broken Islands where we took some pictures and tried to get a look at our objective but clouds cloaked its summit. Even on the beach all the rocks had a thin layer of ice and Lucky Mountain itself was cloaked with fresh snow. We were hoping for a nice spring outing but it looked like winter was still hanging around up in the hills. After traveling further on logging roads we finally got to the toe of the West Ridge. This was the ridge we were planning to tackle and we were lucky to drive right to its base as active logging in the area could have kept us out.

All geared up, Quagger crossed some logging slash and was the first to 'dive' into the bush. The terrain was old growth cedar forest with a lot of light coming through so the salal was pretty good, but what made things particularly ugly was the number of downed trees and rotting logs everywhere which made for a tricky obstacle course. After an hour of punishment, I had lost my whole winter's worth of built up anticipation and had switched gears and was now asking myself 'why do I choose to do this to myself?' and 'what do you find in this type of punishment?' As we plowed along, some lighting in the forest ahead got our hopes up for easier going but we popped out into a heli logging section. The slash and



The SW aspect of Lucky Mountain showing the approach route

PHOTO: SASHA KUBICEK

new growth here was so thick it took almost twenty minutes to go fifty metres. Once through we took a break and then found ourselves cruising through easier old growth fir forest with minimal bush. Picking up a deer trail we made our way up the ridge that became more and more prominent. The route stuck to the crest of the ridge and in places was knife edged. We thought it was pretty cool that the deer picked the same line we were going for.

Coming up to a major bluff section, the deer trail vanished and Quagger picked a line around the bluffs. Huge old growth trees found existence in nooks and crannies in the bluffs which gave a mystical feel to the place. Topping out above the bluffs we found ourselves on a fairly level ridge. Beautiful big trees grew here and the ridge dropped off on the south side dramatically giving some good exposure even in the tree cover. As we made our way up, the terrain became rockier and the snow deeper and steep enough, that I decided to switch to my ice axe and left my ski poles behind. Quagger was still good with his ski poles and we made our way up to the big buck-toothed gendarme. This unique feature Quagger had seen many times when on reconnaissance of the peak, so we knew we were on track. After getting around the gendarme we knew things would get steeper as we had to leave the ridge due to a huge rock step section and traverse out onto the face. How Quagger did it I don't know but in very limited visibility he used 'the force' somehow and led a great line across the face up some snow gully sections and we found ourselves topping out what we thought might have to be the summit but looking ahead, we saw the summit tower looming in front of us. It looked pretty intimidating... but we dropped down and made our way to the base and Quagger looked up and said "this will go!" Exposed snow and some green belays found us at a tricky exposed corner.

As I made my way around it, Quagger had summited this rocky block that looked like the summit, but when I got up to him we saw that the snow top behind was a bit higher so we made our way over and gingerly peered over the side which was a major drop off. All around us was at least a couple hundred metres drop offs and if the clouds weren't around us we would be feeling way more exposed. We didn't linger long on the summit because the long hours in the wet bush didn't make for a good combination with the snow and ice we were now in. It took six hours to get to the top of only a 1250 metre peak starting at about 200 metres. There was too much snow to confirm that there was or was not a cairn so Quagger edged out onto the side where clear rock was visible and put our summit container between some rocks and we made our way down. The tricky corner was as challenging coming down as it was up and I had to rappel one section on the face we came up before the summit. Quagger made it all the way down without the use of the rope and waited for me in a little under cover rock overhang till I caught up. We were lucky to get some breaks in the clouds and saw the Broken Islands. If we had a clear view from the summit, the views of the Broken Islands from this peak would be incredible. Cold and tired we finally got off the snow and back to the deer trail. Here Quagger pulled out two cans of sardines and we savored every last drop as our bodies needed protein badly! With our attitudes adjusted we made our way down and back into the bush. We didn't gain too much time going down as the log and bush obstacle course made us stay on our toes, but we finally made it to the truck and looked up into the clouds and smiled at each other and yelled out BAGGED! Lucky Mountain was one challenging climb and I could not have done it with a better partner.

Participants: Sasha Kubicek and Craig (Quagger) Wagnell

Handsome Peak

Sasha Kubicek
April 28

Quagger and I found ourselves zooming down the highway to Ucluelet again. We had just bagged Lucky Mountain two weeks ago and were now setting our sights for Handsome Peak across the valley. With no ice on the road this time we came upon a bear on the side of the road. He wasn't running away so we crept slowly up with the truck until I was eye to eye. I took some great close up pictures and said good morning to our friend that was too hungry to care.



Summit cairn of Handsome Mt with a view over the Broken Islands of Barkley Sound PHOTO: SASHA KUBICEK

On the logging road again to Toquart Bay, there was some cloud in the sky but it looked like we were going to get better weather this time round and a summit view, however, Lucky Mountain didn't show us her summit again as we made our way up the road. Driving around Kite Lake and up a hill we ran into an excavator working on a bridge. Quagger had a chat with the guys and they said that we could hike from here if we wanted but would have to park down the hill as the excavator was being trucked out today. Happy that we weren't kicked out of the active area we parked the truck and put on our runners and started our unexpected five kilometre 'warm up'. At the edge of the slash we geared up in our Gortex and made a little shelter for our runners out of some scrap metal that was lying around. All set, we headed up into the slash.

Once in the old growth it was bushy but there weren't as many logs as on Lucky so we were happy. We made our way to a marshy section with little tarns scattered about and

then got to the toe of the ridge. After one steep bluff, we came upon another. We both were wondering what's going on! The topo looked pretty easy here. At each obstacle we found a way around or over so we kept going. After a while the ridge started to become quite pronounced and the bluffs stopped. Semi alpine terrain started along with the snow. We were getting some great views of the surrounding inlets and islands. The summit was visible and we took note of the rocky right handed area and a good tree line in the middle. Post holing our way to the subsummit on the ridge, we finally were treated to full views of the surrounding peaks and Lucky Mountain. Even though this area doesn't look too impressive on the topo map, it sure did in person. Rugged rock and snow peaks surrounded by bush right by the ocean couldn't have been a better Vancouver Island setting. Triple Peak and Mount Hall were also visible and looked like imposing fortresses from this angle. Dropping off this sub summit we found ourselves in a really magical old growth col. We continued up and things started to get steep and I traded in my ski poles for my ice axe. Quagger kept going with the ski poles and we popped out of the trees into the alpine. What looked like the summit was just ahead and Quagger quickly topped out but he soon yelled out 'false alarm.' The real summit was just a little further ahead. We both got excited as we were hoping for no sign of any previous ascent but as we got closer to the summit we couldn't believe the size of the cairn that was on it! When we got up to it, it was huge! Six feet by six feet. It seemed to be a surveyors cairn and must have been built by the surveyors Jackson and McCaw who crawled over that general area in 1939 – 1941 as it had lost its top and was very old.

The views from the summit were incredible. Effingham Inlet and all the islands, Lucky Mountain, surrounding peaks and real cool angles of 5040 and Nahmint Mountain.

The breeze was getting cold so we slid a little summit container into the massive cairn and we made our way down to the magical col and had another break to re-energize. After re-energizing, we made it down to the marshy section with no problem but I couldn't believe how thick the bush was on the way up. We must have been really summit hungry in the morning as on the way down, this bush was draining us with each step. Back at our runners, we again dove into a can of sardines each and got ready for the five kilometre logging road hike back to the truck. It was a beautiful evening and we made it to the truck pretty pooped. Looking back we smiled and said 'Bagged', another peak in the area was under our belt.

Participants: Craig (Quagger) Wagnell and Sasha Kubicek.

Mount Frink - Castlecrag Traverse

Dave Campbell
May 20 – 21

I recently moved to Vancouver Island from Vancouver and I was excited about meeting other outdoor types over here. I had signed up for a Club trip to Cream Lake in May, but due to the poor weather forecast and the road closure from a landslide closing access to Bedwell Lake, the trip got cancelled as the weekend approached. I had a hard time convincing myself that I could bail on the family for a solo trip for four days so I made a compromise and spent the first couple of days of the weekend (and the bad weather) doing house renovations and then spent the next two days exploring.



Castle Crag from the slopes of Mt Frink PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

I had been up Mount Albert Edward and Mount Jutland a few years ago and it seemed like a nice place to go for a couple of days. A nice traverse is described in *Island Alpine* that does a loop around the alpine terrain above Moat Lake. As the ski-hill was closed for the season the general crowds would be at bay. It seemed like a reasonable objective so off I went.

From the cross-country parking lot I made my way through the cross-country trails out towards Helen Mackenzie Lake. The lake was still fairly well frozen so I skooted across the lake to the southwest corner and then up the forested slope behind. I stopped for some lunch below the Albert Edward/Jutland col. I had climbed both peaks on my

earlier visit to the area so I decided to give them a miss on this trip. As I approached the shoulder of Mount Albert Edward the weather began to close in and I found myself in a bit of a white-out and snowstorm. I had a few debates about turning around as I was beginning to commit to traverse and wasn't too keen on getting stuck in the high country in a white out (I find white-outs a bit lonely when you are by yourself.) Plus, I find that I am just getting used to the terrain on the Island. The thing I find the most challenging about route finding on the Island is the micro-terrain. It is really bluffy and for the most part those micro features don't show up on the maps. It makes for a not so great combination if visibility is poor.

In any event after a bit of a clearing in the clouds I could see sunshine on the distant peaks and figured that I was just in a bit of a cloud system so carried on. As I made my way to the top of Mount Frink the weather cleared and I was treated with some amazing views. Off to the west towards Buttle

Lake the Golden Hinde was in clear view. Closer, the peaks rising above Ralph Lake were rugged and reminded me a lot of some of the deeply incised valleys you get near to ocean in the Coast Ranges. To the south the eastern divide of Buttle Lake extended off to Mount George V and beyond. The traverse from here south looks classic.

From the top of Mount Frink I finally managed to get in some good turns. I found a nice flat bench with some exposed rocks where I set up camp and enjoyed the views. The view south really impressed me. There was some pretty big relief on the mountains and some huge cliffs. If you lopped the mountains off at tree-line it is kind of reminiscent of the Arctic.

In the morning I continued on with the traverse. I have developed a bit of paranoia around icy slopes over bluffs after I had a serious fall on the Lillooet Icecap a couple of years ago. I found myself in that kind of a situation getting down to the col between Mount Frink and Castlecrag and I was pretty quick to take the skis off. I dropped my pack below Castlecrag and did a quick run up to the top then carried on along the ridge off of the peak extending east. The exit gully was fairly obvious and I followed it a down a little too far before I traversed up and northward to the ridge south of Moat Lake. From the ridge, it was a bit of route-finding down through bluffs to the lake (I took the skis off again, more because I am a chicken rather than it not being skiable.) From the lake it was a quick jaunt back to the trail. On the way I stopped to check out the hut on Moat Lake.

The return route across the lower plateau was fairly uneventful. I managed to get myself lost in the maze of cross-country trails. I seemed to remember a while back that I told myself that a smart thing to do is GPS the car location at the start of every trip but of course I forgot to follow my own rule. I find trails are the easiest thing to get lost on because you know where you want to go but you always get lured into taking the easy way (the trail) rather than the hard way (bushwhacking in a straight line to your destination.) I haven't skied enough in the area to know the trails yet. After eventually thinking I was too far to the north I over-compensated and came out to the road about 400m too far south. Oh well, maybe I should do the GPS thing next time.

First Technical Route on El Capitan: 'The Schnoz'

George Milosevich
May 24



Kent and George's route, at left on El Capitan PHOTO: KENT KRAUZA

For climbers residing in the Cowichan Valley, the small grouping of 5000'ers at the head of the Copper Canyon road (El Capitan, Whymper, Landale and Service) represent a mere forty-five minute drive and a one to two hour hike between home and an alpine summit. Due to this close proximity, we have enjoyed some great scrambling in the area in recent years on the rare occasions that the logging road has been open to the public. During just such a scramble up the southeast ridge of Mt. Whymper a few years ago, we began to covet the idea of climbing the short but imposing East Face of El Cap's summit pillar across the valley. We couldn't recall reading any accounts of technical climbing being done on El Cap', or any of the other summits in the area. Upon returning home, a clever and cunning plan was hatched for a new technical alpine route up El Cap'.

The following February, we both had a rare free weekend, so we packed our gear and headed up for a day excursion

recon, leaving quite late in the day. It turns out the road was open in February, so we parked at the col between Whymper and El Capitan, and humped our way up the steep, unmarked route out of the valley. Despite attempts to avoid them, we encountered a set of bluffs about half way up, requiring a bit of low 5th class climbing. Even with the sub-zero rock temperature, we enjoyed the 100 metres of alternating rock walls and bush. Once past this, a series of small tabletop plateaus eventually leads to the base of the El Cap' summit pillar. This approach route from the east takes a total of only two hours from the car to reach the base of the climb. With our rather lazy late start, and the shortened winter daylight hours, we spied out some potential routes and cracks, took some pictures, and headed back down, vowing to return soon.

Literally years went by before the logging road situation would allow us to return to the mountain for another attempt. A recent change in ownership of the private timberlands that start twenty kilometres up the Copper Canyon road has resulted in the road being open to the public on weekdays.

We packed for an overnigher, and headed up the Che-mainus River valley on a sunny May afternoon. Due to other commitments, we again ended up leaving the vehicle late at 1 p.m., thinking we'd camp at the base and climb the face the following day. The familiar two hours of steep bush and bluffs brought us to the base of the summit pillar. It was only 3 p.m., so we decided to give it a go, sorted our rack, and attacked the long awaited climb.

The rock quality is mostly excellent, with some looser sections on the right side of the wall. The climbing consisted of three pitches, ranging from 5.7-5.9, with a total of about 120 metres of technical climbing. There is a nice mixture of dihedrals, cracks and face sections. A number of cedar and juniper shrubs poking out of small ledges and cracks on the route are a mixed blessing – while the "coniferous pro" provided a welcome spot to wrap a sling in the absence of anything better, they also tended to poke and claw at the contorted and vulnerable climber's most sensitive areas... part of the fun of it all!? After completing the third pitch, which ends on top of a false summit, a five minute 4th class scramble brings you to this enjoyable Island alpine summit, with excellent views of Whymper, Landale, and Service.

As the rock climb only took two and a half hours, we reckoned that with some hustle, we could still get back to the vehicle before dark. So, we bolted down the south ridge, then boot skied down the large open snow chute leading out of the Landale-El Cap' col - it took only nine minutes from the summit to return to the spot that we had dumped our overnight gear! If there had been a decent campsite to be found, we likely would have spent the night on the mountain, soaking in the alpine atmosphere, however there was a complete absence of anything quasi-flat, or semi-dry. Faced

with digging a spot for the tent in the wet snow, or a high-ball descent, we chose the latter, arriving back at the truck exactly eight hours after our lazy departure. In retrospect, climbing technical routes on El Cap' is readily done as a day trip. We already have a couple more lines picked out for our next trip!

In tongue-in-cheek homage to the most popular and historically famous route on Yosemite's El Capitan, which is surely an order of magnitude longer and harder than our little route, we elected to name our climb 'The Schnoz'. This seemed only fitting as the two climbers involved, who normally can't agree on anything, both admit to owning a larger than average proboscis ... the argument rages on as to whose is really larger!

Technical Route Description

At the right hand side of the base of the summit pillar's east face, scramble up a few metres to an obvious ledge with a few cedar shrubs growing on it. This is an excellent belay station for the first pitch. Looking up, there is a large white inclusion of rock at the right end on the wall – you will be climbing just to the left of this white scar.

1st Pitch – 20 metres, 5.9: At the right side of this ledge, the fun climbing starts with a 15 metre, right-facing dihedral with a small crack in its center. The crack accepts medium sized cams nicely. You can climb directly in the crack, or alternately climb on the arete/face to its left. There is a sturdy cedar on the right edge of the dihedral about 10 metres up, yielding reassuring protection with a sling wrapped around it's base. Kung – fu your way around this black-belt prickleshrub to a small ledge. Traverse a few feet to the right on the ledge, past his buddy - A larger teenage mutant ninja juniper. Although we did not do so (to our peril), this is the best place to set up the next belay, as the next comfortable belay station is about 65 metres from the start.

2nd Pitch – 40 metres, 5.7: The face directly above looks inviting, but has no protection. Instead, begin climbing up and left on the face, to a small diagonal crack running left to right, which takes small to medium cams well. Follow this crack up, then move out onto the face to its right. There is no protection for about 10 metres through this section, and the face is nearly vertical, but has many positive hand and foot holds on high friction rock – fun climbing! Make your way up and right to the cedar shrub near the top of the face and experience a sigh of relief as you slap a sling and 'biner on it. Then, traverse directly to your right until you are at the extreme right hand edge of the East Face – from here, you can look down the vertical wall on the north side of the summit pillar, down into the steep snow gulley. This is another run-out section devoid of pro, but after climbing up over a bulge, you can put another sling around the base of

a sturdy pine. Crawl through a tight spot between the rock and a tree trunk, and you are at an excellent belay ledge for the next pitch.

3rd Pitch – 50 metres, 5.8: Scramble a few metres along the obvious horizontal ledge to your left, then climb a short diagonal slab which runs left to right. At the top of the ramp, crawl under yet another large tree branch, then scramble to the base of a short face with an intimidating overhanging roof. Climb the face to just under the roof then traverse to your left, around a bulge, to the safety of yet another coniferous pro placement. A brief, low 5th class section will bring you to the small plateau of a false summit. From here, the rope goes back in the bag, and it is 4th class scrambling to the top!

Participants: George Milosevich and Kent Krauza

Adder Mountain: Climbing By Braille

Martin Smith
May 26

My first time on Adder Mountain was in late May 2006. Others familiar with the terrain led the trip at that time and, as one does, the tendency was to let the experts lead the way and just plod along enjoying the scenery. Not that there was that much scenery after a while anyway. The clouds moved in, visibility went to near zero and the trip leader called it after just three hours or so. Nevertheless in that short time I'd seen a lovely forested approach on perfect-for-step-kicking snow, a wide-open alpine ridge and what looked like the prospect of a nice easy summit to add to my Island collection. I didn't worry at all about turning round early because I was for sure heading back there the next week to bag this one. Two days later I tore my right medial meniscus and was plunged into the nightmare of what masquerades as a health care system in BC. When I finally emerged, repaired and rehabilitated, the summer season was just about over except for a few local hikes around the immediate Victoria area.

Never one to leave anything half-done, Adder Mountain was naturally first on my list for 2007.

Early May reports from Alberni valley locals spoke of dangerous summit cornices above the North Face – our chosen route – as well as limited road access because of snow at low levels. We therefore put our original May 12/13 date back a couple of weeks and waited for the sun to ease the way a little. When Graham Bennett and I eventually drove up on the evening of May 25th it was to find the approach roads

clear of both snow and deadfall all the way to the highest point where the route begins. Late evening saw us happily camped at the top of the approach road, my favourite cello concerto on the truck stereo and bedtime drinks in hand. VERY civilized trip this one!



Martin Smith approaching the alpine on Adder Peak

PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

If there's one absolutely functionless occupation on Vancouver Island (after government of course) it's that of weatherman. On this occasion he promised us scattered clouds and a 40% chance of showers. Being idiots ourselves we naturally listened and believed.

After a good sleep we were up at 5:15 a.m. and off about 6:30. Far from "scattered" clouds the clag just a few hundred metres overhead looked remarkably un-scattered to me.

The first half hour of the route up through the forest was nice and straightforward. There's a sort of boot-path and plenty of flagging. As is so often the case, the clouds had not penetrated the trees to this point. We reached snow after less than an hour. Nice and consolidated, lovely for step kicking and only occasionally steep. It soon became apparent, however, that there was much less snow at this elevation than at

the same time the previous year. The many braided streams flowing down the valley we were climbing were open and it was necessary to cross and re-cross them continuously. This entailed climbing up and down the two metres or so vertical snow walls carved out by the flowing water. We only found one snow bridge in place and that was at the highest point before reaching the alpine. At least we had uninterrupted visibility to this point.

After about an hour and a half, the valley had narrowed, we were faced with rock bluffs ahead and it was clearly time to exit the valley to the west. A bit of steep snow, the trees thinned abruptly, the wide north ridge opened above us and then promptly disappeared as the clouds came down.

Immediately to the west of our exit point from the trees, we were confronted by a series of rock bluffs partly covered by snow. These same bluffs must have confronted us in 2006 but I had no recollection of them – serves me right for not paying attention. We were not carrying any gear with us and so were forced into an end run to the right (north) of the bluffs on steep snow and using trees for aid. A single flag on one of the "aid-trees" told us that folk had gone this way before. Which was a good job since we'd seen the last route marking over an hour previous to this. We were now on the north ridge proper and with it went the last vestige of any visibility.

At this juncture the north ridge is several hundred metres wide from east to west. Navigating it in ten metres visibility was by map, compass/GPS and intuition. Fortunately, Graham is blessed with an over-abundance of the latter and we made steady progress recognising terrain features from the map (or convincing ourselves that we did) helped by occasional glimpses ahead as the murk thinned momentarily. The map clearly showed that the ridge narrows right down as it begins to approach the north face proper, so as long as we kept pointing uphill while heading south, logic said we should be fine. And so it proved. About five hours from the start (it should be more like three in good conditions) the route steepened noticeably and we began to come across what was obviously cornice debris. So at least the cornices had started to fall off then!

Proceeding up cautiously we were eventually blessed with enough clearing to make out a vertical shear line ahead and to assure ourselves that the cornice line along the summit ridge had either completely fallen off, or damn close to it. We had, however, no way of discerning how high the shear line was, how far above us it was and if there was any point at which it might be climbed.

At first we tried to traverse to climber's left, underneath the higher east summit. We soon ran into some pretty scary looking bluffs with a nice moat underneath them. At least the clag spared us any view of the run-out below. Backing off, we traversed back west and down. Another momentary clearing

revealed the shear line again and this time we made a beeline for it. It proved to be only about twenty metres above us and only three to four metres high. The murk had distorted distances to the point where everything seemed to be ten times higher and further away.

Nevertheless, a four metre vertical wall of snow is still not a straightforward proposition with one ice axe each, no gear and an unseen run-out below. So we traversed west some more and were duly rewarded. At a point just to the east of the west summit, the shear wall had briefly reduced to a height of two to three metres. Kick two big steps, step up, sink the axe over the top into the flat ridge crest, heave over the top and we were up. All that was then necessary was a gentle five minute stroll along the summit ridge. It had taken us nearly ninety minutes to solve the last thirty vertical metres. Something that would have taken five to ten minutes in normal conditions.

The high point was probably not where it normally is. I'm told that there is a summit cairn and register but both were well buried somewhere in the vicinity. Nevertheless we tagged the highest point we could without crossing the cracks guarding the edge and settled in for lunch.

After enjoying the views, sometimes as far as the juniper bushes ten metres north of the summit, we set off down at 1:30 p.m.. Other than care downclimbing the cornice shear line and the steep snow around the bluffs, this passed uneventfully. We even dropped out of cloud just before entering the trees and got some views right down to Highway 4. The one useable snow bridge in the forest was still there but noticeably more bowed. It had one or two more days to go before it too collapsed, adding one more tricky river crossing.

We got the car at 5:15 and a couple of hours later it was pizza and beer time.

Adder Mountain in summer is regarded, quite rightly, as a B2 "somewhat strenuous" scramble. This trip was a bit more than that.

We didn't get a shred of a summit view but there are other things we can take from our all too brief visits to the high places. Companionship, the satisfaction of problems met and overcome, a safe return and, above all, the joy of simply being there.

This article originally appeared on the Summit-Post website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/303273/Adder-Mountain-Climbing-by-Braille.html> for the original article and lots more photos.

Participants: Graham Bennett and Martin Smith.

Mount Mitchell

Peter Rothermel

June 2

In 2006, Tak Ogasawara and I were on the summit of Syd Watts Peak, looking over at Mt. Mitchell and Tak was talking about how he would like to climb it some day. I was taking in the view of Mt. Mitchell's South Face and noting how it truly was a real face from this angle. I could pick out lines that might be climbed... if I were younger or a better climber and just put my interest in this peak on the far back burner... way back.

So in the spring of 2007, when Tak started making serious noises about Mt. Mitchell, I realized I was in for yet another island peak of over 6,000 feet. This mountain was likely named after Jack Mitchell, from the 1930's, who was known for frying up a fine flapjack (See the Beyond Nootka web site).

On May 22, Tak and I went on a reccy trip up the Oyster River. Tak had done all the homework and found that the Oyster River Main was gated and only open between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.. As the logging company prohibited over-night camping, we were faced with having to do a day trip to a mountain inside of Strathcona Provincial Park and getting out before the company closed off evening access. I have a real problem with private corporate land owners restricting through access to a public Provincial Park, but I digress.

We kind of figured that we would drive in as far as the road was clear and expected to get to a point where we couldn't get any further due to snow. We brought AT ski gear, so we could skin up the road and then explore the approach. As it turned out, the road was clear all the way to the end and the snow was hard as ice in the forest beyond.

Tak and I decided to leave our skis behind and hike up the approach along Pearl Lake and see how far up we could get. Unfortunately we hadn't brought hiking boots and we spent the entire day hiking up steep forest terrain in ski boots. After several hours of this torture and reaching our turn around time, we bailed out. Yet, our high point was just at the tree line and we were convinced that we had the route pegged.

About two weeks later on June 2, Tak and I went back with Dean Williams and Tom Carter. From our previous trip we knew that we could drive to the end of the road and could hike in regular boots.

It was amazing how much snow had melted back in just a few weeks. The route along Pearl Lake was mostly free of snow and a well defined trail that could easily be followed. Past a slide area, we turned up hill and worked our way up through the forest and old avalanche debris back and forth through

the slide area. Above the slide area we were once again on snow and shortly regained our previous high point.

Continuing through the forest we broke into the open alpine and were confronted with a steep headwall. It looked possibly passable on the northwestern ridge but after a look it was a no-go. We went a bit further to the west and dropped down a bit to have a look.

Here both Tak and Tom started searching out on 4th class terrain for a way up and Dean dropped down and traversed around the corner. It didn't look good for getting this done before we would need to scoot back to reach the gate before it was locked. Tak and Tom were hollering indecipherable noises and I just decided to sit and wait for some intelligible communication.

Pretty soon Dean came back around the corner and said that he thought it might go but found he was stuck at the end of a ledge. Tom and Tak were long gone so I took Dean's option. Sure enough, the ledge petered out and below was a steep gully that didn't look too good to fall into. We found a tree to attach a handline and bypassed the ledge. Above us was a scramble mostly on scree and loose rock before we came to a snow slope that eased off a bit then went up steep.

Here we found Tak and Tom's foot prints in the snow going up to what looked like the summit but then dropped off towards the southwest. Sure enough, when we looked around the corner, we were on a false summit and the true summit was a long drop of elevation loss and gain and here we caught up with Tak and Tom.

Calculating that our turnaround time was about an hour overdue, we did what most testosterone wracked, over fifty year old males would do and pushed on.

The summit was ours and the views of last year's summit and past year's summits were there to view from angles never before seen by any of us. Mt. Albert Edward was exceptionally spectacular from this side as a series of pitches up an arete that Chris Barner and company did in 1976.

I left a new summit tube and register, as there was none and it was a brief visit before we reckoned that we needed to scoot back before the gate closed and off we went.

Of course on the way back everybody figured that they themselves knew the best way down and we wasted a bunch of time hollering back and forth before finally becoming a single group and on track. On our way out we made the gate with only a couple of minutes to spare.

It's really too bad that access to this public Provincial Park has changing restrictions when it passes through private forest lands. For example, during the strike in the summer of 2007, access into the Pearl River Mainline was completely cut off for the duration of the strike, which was the entire summer, yet the Comox Glacier Trail approach was open to all. Access points into Strathcona Park are becoming fewer or more difficult and confusing, resulting in heavier

park use in those few points of access that remain open. We need to make sure that our existing and traditional access points remain open.

Mount Regan looks pretty nice from the Pearl River side... maybe this year?

Participants: Tak Ogasawara, Dean Williams, Tom Carter and Peter Rothermel.

Mount Hooper and Mount Buttle

Lindsay Elms
July 1 – 2

A number of years ago I had driven down to Lake Cowichan to climb a couple of the peaks but was turned back by locked gates and snarly Timberwest employees who carried on as though there was a war going on. I chose then to drive back around to the Chemainus River and drive up the logging roads passed Sherk Lake high onto Mount Landale. I was able to climb Landale, El Capitan and Mount Service on that trip but now it time to go back to Lake Cowichan. This time if we could find the gates open – great, but if not then I guess we would have to walk.

Saturday evening we drove around the lake and onto the Nitinat Main but were stopped at Redbed Creek by a locked gate. So, walking it was to be! Sunday morning we spent three hours walking up logging roads that if the gate had of been open we could have driven. We walked for one and a half kilometres along the Nitinat Main to the BR12 at the bottom of the South Ridge of Mount Hooper. Here the roads gently wound up the ridge to about 1,120m. A little bit of slash to negotiate and then all we had to do was climb the last three hundred metres up the Southwest Ridge to the 1,491m summit. Lots of views, lots of logging which of course meant lots of logging roads all of which are gated. From the summit I was able to pick out all the surrounding peaks as well as eye up Mount Buttle, tomorrows objective.

Once back down at the truck we drove around to the lake and checked the gate at R Branch into Heather Mountain and Shaw Creek but both were locked. Back around the lake a little further and to our surprise we found the gate at McKay Creek was open. Bingo! So up the McKay Main we went checking out all the side roads to see how far up we could get but unfortunately, although they had once switch-backed quite high onto the mountain, they were all overgrown now. It looked like we were going to have to walk again. We camped on the side of the McKay Main where it crossed the

bridge to the East McKay Main. Although it was the Canada Day long-weekend fortunately for us no yahoo's drove up the road in the middle of the night looking for adventure!

Monday morning we started walking up an old road and after fifty metres we crossed an alder covered bridge. On the other side we peered at the forest which looked like it had been planted twenty to thirty years ago as the underbrush was virtually non-existent. Instead of following the switch-backs we dove into the trees and followed the north side of the creek up. Over the next six hundred metres we must have crossed about five roads on our direct route to the top.

Once at the highest overgrown road we followed it around to our left for fifteen minutes then picked-up an Elk path through some slide alder to the old growth. We then hiked directly up through snow and heather ramps to the slightly lower north summit of Mount Buttle. The Elk had obviously been up here as their tracks were all over the snow. They must be the rare subspecies of Roosevelt Elk known as Peakbaggers! A little to the south was the twenty metre higher (1,380+m) main summit which ten minutes later saw us standing on to. Another summit under the belt! An hour later we began retracing our ascent route and managed to reach the truck twenty minutes before it began to drizzle.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Peak 5040

Miriam Davies

July 10

This summer as a birthday treat my Aunty Catrin organized for me to come out to Canada and see her for a few weeks. It was amazing trip in which we canoed at Lake, walked around Witty's Lagoon, hiked up Mt. Wells, cycled The Galloping Goose trail, attempted to run around Matheson Lake.....amongst many other fun activities. All in beautiful places! Towards the end of the holiday we went on a proper hike. I wouldn't call myself very unfit, but I definitely don't get up at four or five in the morning to go walking at home, and when the ice picks and various layers of clothing came out I was slightly worried that Catrin thought I was fitter than I really was! Anyway, we drove up-island the next morning, picking up the rest of the group as we went. As we drove north the scenery became prettier as the road got worse; at some points we had to maneuver the car around huge rocks in the middle of the road!

We began the walk in a dense forest area; the start was

particularly scrambly, climbing over huge roots and general forest shrubbery. Unlike the paved National Trust walks at home, packed with people, there was no obvious path and throughout the day we didn't see one other person on the mountain, nor any of the surrounding ones. The forest part of the walk was, for me, the hardest as it was steep and uneven ground, but it was still very beautiful, full of the tallest trees I have ever seen!

Slowly the trees started to thin out and the ground became more rocky. At one point I remember Rudi and Russ helping us around a particularly steep side of rock, which was fun, even though it was a little bit scary. As the trees dispersed and it opened up you could see all the beautiful range of mountains surrounding us and snow capped mountains in the distance.

I loved the snow; for me it was a bit of a novelty, especially so as I was still wearing shorts and t-shirt. We stopped for a little lunch break a bit further up. We sat amongst the snow eating sardines and crackers, which tasted amazing.

From then on it was a walk in thick snow. It was stunning looking out at the view behind us, and the trees coated with snow which got better and better as we climbed. The way got gradually steeper until we actually had to kick our boots into the snow to get a grip and also we had to weave backwards and forwards to get further up.

There were a few times when I thought I could see the top, but it just kept going. When I stopped to look at the gorgeous view behind, I realised quite how high we had climbed and how steep the slope we had just climbed was.

The last section was a very steep ridge, in my opinion, probably just a walk-in-the-park for my companions. I honestly was very scared as we were reaching the full height of the mountain, with no protection from the wind on a very steep, snowy ridge. It was a really excited, scared and adrenaline-rush sort of feeling at the same time. I knew I was with people who knew exactly what they were doing and they very kindly looked after me.

At the very last bit, Russ put me on a rope, so I felt a bit safer and could enjoy it more. I practically crawled to the top, hugging as close to the ground as possible, determined to keep going. When I finally reached the summit it was the most amazing feeling, being able to see miles and miles of gorgeous scenery and feeling so tiny in comparison to it all; to be able to sit down and look at it all. Knowing you've pushed yourself to get there makes it so worthwhile. It makes you enjoy your food more too!

I was shown the little container on the very top in which all the people who'd walked this mountain had written something and I wrote a little something too as proof that I'm a real walker! We started making tracks soon after that, as time was a bit of an issue. Russ put me on the rope again as going down was a bit scarier as you could see everything

below you. Once I got into a rhythm with my steps it was great fun. As it became less steep everyone started to slide down on their boots. I was a bit nervous about this but it was really fun when I had a go, even when I went flying. Just by the time I was getting into it the snow began to disappear. The walk back through the forest was nice too. You could look around a bit more now, as the climbing down was a lot easier, needing less concentration. By the time we were at the car though I was tired, but very proud of myself!

It was a brilliant day and although it was very tiring I loved it, especially the open snow. It was so different to any other walking I'd ever done and so much fun. I was really lucky to have so many advanced hikers to take me up, to talk with and help me on the way up and down. If I come back again, which I very much hope I do, and I probably will, I'll do it without the rope!

Participants: Catrin Brown, Miriam Davies, Gerta Smythe, Rick Hudson, Rudi Brugger and Russ Moir

Access to 5040 (via new route cut by "the Alberni Gang") – Rick Hudson

From the top of Sutton Pass on Hwy 4 heading west from port Alberni to Ucluelet, drive 5.3 km down the west side and take the gravel road on left (Marion Main). Set odometer to 0. At about 2km you pass the down pipe for the local hydro turbine. At 6.3km you cross a bridge with a solar-powered water meter attached to it. On the S side of the bridge, Marion Main runs approximately N-S. A bushy road leads downhill W. Another fainter road heads SE uphill. Park on the south side. The trail you are looking for starts at the point where the SE road joins Marion Main. It is partly obscured by a large deadfall. Fight through the bush a short distance until you pick up flagging, then follow it uphill (obvious though faint), as it climbs on bearing 115 degrees True (95 Magnetic) - first through old growth, later into alpine. Time to the top is approximately 3 hours (elevation 400m to 1,530m)

The final hour is on the ridge, offering fine views in all directions. Because of its elevation, large snow patches will likely be encountered as late as July. The start of the trail up the NW ridge of Peak 5040 is difficult to find for the first 100m, after which it is easy to follow. Be patient and all will be revealed.

This route is deemed *better* than the older one which ascends to the lake from a starting point further along the road.

Friday the 13th – Tempting Fate at Mount Colonel Foster

Ken Wong
July 10 – 15

In an early morning second week of August 2005, George Butcher, Jamie Duncan and I rounded the North Tower and saw the north "snow gully". It's all melted! Just a slimy rock gully with a couple patches of dirty ice.

I opted to stay behind swatting mosquitoes while watching George and Jamie weaving in and out of rock outcrops, and over and under remaining ice patches. By 11 a.m., they went out sight and I left for the hot tent to murder a few hundred more bloodsuckers. I went back at 6 p.m. and saw them on a ledge high above the waterfall, pacing back and forth and running up and down like two scared rats - looking for a safe rappel anchor as I was told later. Another three hours and a stuck rope requiring back climbing, they were down, exhausted. I duct taped Jamie's gashed fingers and we headed down defeated. All day they only reached the top of the gully with no clue on how to get onto the block. I gave up the hope of completing the ACC Island Qualifiers.

At the Fairy Meadow ski trip in 2007, Selena said that the Colonel was not difficult. It's only mid-5. I could do it etc etc. She didn't tell me that they summited at 6:30 p.m. and encountered route finding problem; besides, she was a rock jock while I could count a handful of easy rappels to my credit. My IQ spirit rekindled.

June, planning of the "final?" assault of the Colonel intensified. In addition to the three of us, George Urban was eager to go. It's nice to have a doc to provide extra insurance! George Butcher had the route descriptions from various ACC summiteers but whenever I studied them, my hands shook. I read the Bushwhacker Colonel trip reports and my legs trembled. Did I have Parkinson?! No, it was my nerves shaking. The Colonel is terrifying! A couple weeks before heading out, I wiped out on my bike and bugged up my wrist and a couple fingers. Climbing with damaged gears - great! Somebody was telling me something... On the Wednesday before the targeted weekend, I doubled the number of rappels on my belt at Mt. McDonald. The first one was messy. The next three were better. I brought an ATC at MEC the next day. Can't be cheap on the Colonel! However, the Sunday weather forecast was iffy so we postponed. Indeed it rained.

On Tuesday, July 10 which was the hottest day in Victoria history for that day, 36 C or something, I emailed my sister about where to find my new will; said goodbye to some dear friends and headed out. No doctor after all as George Urban could only go on weekends. George's Taurus got hot



The north peak of Mt Colonel Foster from the approach. The standard NW gully route requires a short descent to the right. PHOTO: KEN WONG

and quitted twice in Nanaimo and we switched to a rental. Can't be cheap on the Colonel! We started hiking at 10:30 p.m. while a helicopter was busy lighting up the Northwest Ridge of Elkhorn. Somebody was telling us something, huh? We camped at the first gravel camp. The next day was hot so we went up the ridge right of Landslide Lake outfall through the cooler vertical forest which would do my knee in on the way out a few days later.

Early Thursday morning we rounded the North Tower and saw the snow gully in much better shape. We roped in and out of the first bergschrund and bypassed the second to the right on rock and then resumed kicking steps up. We saw the entrance to the ledge system but wasted time climbing to the top of the gully to eat. Route finding on the ledges were challenging. George spent many minutes down climbing and looking as I saw some slings above and so we went up. Ah, so that's what climbing 5.4 with a pack was like! Top roped and a hard push by Jamie from below and I was up. Well, I was carrying the stove, a pot and the second rope.

It was slow going and the route description was rather hard to follow in the real world. We finally got above the "Notch" and quit for the night. We were distressed by our progress and doubtful if we would see the main summit. The night was windy and cold. What happened to the heat wave? I should have brought the heavy polypro tights. No sleep. Distance flashes to the north and east. Hmmm...

Friday the 13th - Summit Day! We made steady progress through the Catwalk; bypassed the NW Summit; then crawled down the longest, steepest, scariest, rottenest gully; peeped through the portal down Landslide Lake; climbed up big lose blocks; gained the NE Summit; took photos of the

Mike Walsh's lichens summit registry; and came face to face with the Main Colonel. Then the storm piled in tossing thunders and hails while we were searching for the next gully down. What timing! Just before the Main Summit! It's all over! We're toast! The air turned frigid. Jamie dived into his bivy sack. George bundled up in his thermal blanket. I put on everything. Sleepless night fatigue crept in. Our spirit waned but George could not resist the Colonel's lure and moved down further. Jamie and I worried that he might go for it alone and I yelled, "Let's get this sucker together when the storm is over!" The Colonel had mercy on us and the wind died, the sun reappeared and the wind warmed. Our spirits lifted and we went down the last? loose gully one at a time. In no time we were

below the top. We honoured George to be the first 2007 Colonel summiteer as he led every pitch and was the most obsessed with the Colonel. Jamie and I went up together. Hands shaking all around. Big grins across our faces. Snapping pics and videos, savouring the vista. Thus Jamie made IQ8 while George and I achieved IQ9! Absolutely unbelievable! All DONE! I took photos of the summit registry for later reading. The registry was sparse: twenty-five groups since 1996 and just under fifty summiteers. One group in 2002; none in 2003; and some fantastic recent entries: a solo double traverse, a ropeless solo, and a two days summits and ridges traverse of Kings, Elkhorn, Colwell, Rambler, Slocomb and the Colonel – bushwhacking up and down only once! How smart! But now it's time to go.

As George always maximised his rapp, I gingerly went sideways along ledges and verticals and over loose boulders in fear of losing footing and ending in a pendulum. It was advanced rappelling and I cursed all the way. Couldn't we just scramble down! Two more summits following our ribbons and a few gingerly executed rappels got us back to the bivy ledge. It was late on Friday the 13th so better not to tempt fate further. I ate a power gel and a bar and melted snow for the last tea bag. The sunset was marvellous with a single intensely red crepuscular ray stretching from the hidden sun to the zenith. Grey clouds gathered at the foot of Victoria and Warden Peaks and fog rolled in from Gold River. It was even cooler and windier than the night before. I crawled in my backpack, watching Ursa Major circle Polaris till dawn.

A couple rappes got us just above the top of the snow gully. George went down another rapp and the rope snaked over a loose boulder which went tap, tap, tap-tap. Horror! The rope



Jamie Duncan, Ken Wong, and George Butcher on Mt Colonel Foster

PHOTO: KEN WONG

slackened and George was off. Huge relief! We gingerly bypassed that tap dancing boulder and joined the unknowing George who was setting up another rapp. He should have waited for me - the ribbon layer - to look for the WONG way. George rapped off to the left and into the void. He could neither go down nor up. A few minutes later, panic set in.

Jamie got into belay with two backup anchors. He worried that a pendulum fall would pull him off so I added another anchor onto him. Peeping over the void, I relayed George's progress and messages to Jamie. Tension, tension tension! A little slack, tension TENSION! 100% weight, CLIMBING. George stalled for a few minutes and I told him to tie his pack containing the second rope below him on the rope - my review of Freedom of the Hills before the trip proved fruitful. With Jamie fast pulling in the slack, George charged up the crux and out of the edge of potential accident. Both of them were drained and so we had a round of power gel to replenish the burnt adrenaline. I found the pink ribbon on the right side below the rapp station and George rapped down. The snow melted significantly in our absence so we set up belay with snow picket and gained the snow gully where we entered the ledge system. I led and kicked step down to the obvious ledge skier right above the waterfall. We scrambled along and found an old rapp station. I scouted further along the outward sloping ledge scattered with ball bearings. My mom should have given me tiny feet to get between them to reach terra firma! I found a seemingly solid piton with a couple tattered slings through a beautiful shiny handmade rappel ring. A rusty piton was dangling in the chain. George ruled it out but scooped the rusty piton and the rappel ring. Hey take only pictures and leave only footprints! Cleaning up the mountain was his excuse. But I found it first! He compensated me with a little summit rock later. Oh my precious! We did two sixty metre sideways rapps

on the North Tower side bypassing the two gaps in the snow gully. Finally I was facing the moat - the black hole of slime. The instruction was to feed enough slack through the ATC and then run and jump for it. That's advanced rappelling not in my schooling! I executed the procedure twice, falling and banging my fingers bloodily in the process before finally a leap of fate got me over the black hole, almost captured in video. So I graduated from the George Butcher's Mt. Colonel Foster Advanced Rappelling Workshop. The sky closed in further and wept farewell while I took the victory pose of us below the snow gully.

So long Colonel Foster. XieXieNi! Thanks for letting us summit! Farewell! Adieu! Zaijian!

We gorged ourselves at the north shoulder camp. Then I wiped rain off the inside of my tent without its fly for a few hours before dawn. "Oh trilliums!" someone exclaimed near the bottom of that nasty vertical forest. I turned and replied, "Nope, vanilla leaves" as I went down on a slippery log and popped my left medial collateral ligament. Botanizing only on the way up Ken! I limped the rest of the way to the car, arriving before 6 p.m.; however, we missed the Gold River RCMP by fifteen minutes - the relations in Victoria had heard about the thunder storms and wondered where we were.

Some climbed in record time. Some made many attempts. Some achieved more difficult routes but this was just tough enough for me without wiping me out completely. A classic climb of a lifetime!

Thanks to all who shared my IQ moments over the last dozen year's. Without you I would be zero IQ.

Jamie Duncan 7, George Butcher 5, Gerhardt Lepp 2, Rob Adams 2, and Ed Welwood 1.

Participants: Ken Wong, George Butcher and Jamie Duncan.

Got Lucky!

(Not the beer, eh, but the mountain!)

Lindsay Elms

July 15

Got Lucky! That could be interpreted a number of different ways. If you went to the Waverly Hotel in Cumberland you might ask the barperson for a Lucky. To a teenager, got lucky meant you scored with the opposite sex last night. For a lotto player it could mean you won a sizeable cash prize. For some mountaineers it means you 'bagged' another summit. For Val and I it was not just another summit but Lucky Mountains summit.

Lucky Mountain is not one of those frequented peaks and its height is only 1,250m, but where is Lucky Mountain? If you have paddled in the Broken Island group or driven around to the Toquart Bay campground, Lucky Mountain is one of the peaks in the foreground of the MacKenzie Range and Mount Hall. Access is via the Toquart Main off Highway 4 at Kennedy Lake and it is the same access for those few climbers who have been into Mount Hall.

Although Lucky Mountain has been in the same location for a long, long time, there is no written history for the peak. Loggers have been cutting down trees all around its lower slopes and there doesn't appear to be any record of surveyors visiting its summit. The only known ascent that I know of was on April 15, 2007, when Craig (Quagger) Wagnell and Sasha Kubicek climbed it via the West Ridge. Quagger had been into the area a number of times climbing and paddling and it was on his to-do list. I had seen the photos from their trip and decided it was interesting enough to demand a visit. I might as well make it worth my while and visit Mount Hall and Mount Toquart while I was in the area.

Sunday morning we drove down and across the island and then back towards the middle of the island. Visibility was poor and there was some drizzle in the air as we checked out various access points for the mountain. From Ellsworth and Kite Lakes the climbs looked steep and bluff, the West Ridge looked an option but on the northwest side of the mountain the logging roads went a little bit higher so we decided to climb from this side. We looked at the map and then at the terrain in front of us and we picked a couple of options. The first one was straight up the creek that went to the summit. The second was to the right of the creek which would come out onto the West Ridge. The third was to the left of the creek and up onto the North Ridge.

As we ate lunch the drizzle stopped and it appeared to become a little lighter, although the upper slopes were still hidden from view, so just after noon we decided to go for it. We chose option three, the route up to the North Ridge. We hiked up the logging road for a few minutes then crossed the slash into the old growth. The terrain was steep, the salal, copperbush and huckleberries were wet from the earlier rain, and there were a few rock bluffs we had to navigate around but the weather didn't deteriorate any further. After two and a half hours we broke out onto the North Ridge. We wound around the first large rock tower and got back onto the ridge. A few small bluffs to negotiate and then in the thickening mist we saw the final summit, unfortunately we had a gap to descent into and then climb out of to reach it. Getting into it was straight forward but in front of us was steep rock. Since we didn't have a rope we searched for an easy breach and found one around to the right. A few pull-ups by the tree branches and we were on the summit at 3:45 a.m..

There was no sign (cairn) of anyone having been on the summit and I knew from Quaggers photos that there had

been a lot of snow on top when he had been there in April so I wasn't expecting any register. However, as I was to later find out he had left a small box slightly off the summit but unfortunately we missed it. We didn't spend long on top as visibility hadn't improved and we wanted to make sure we got down before the rain had a change of heart.

We managed to follow our ascent route with out too much difficulty, however, the last rock bluff had us confused but we eventually came out into the slash at 6:45 about one hundred metres to the right of where we had gone in. I was happy with that and for me it just reiterates that flagging a route is unnecessary if you make careful notes of your ascent route and trust your intuition even when visibility is poor.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Mount Hall and Mount Toquart

Lindsay Elms
July 17

In 2002 Mount Hall saw its first ascent by a party of VI-ACC members (see Bushwhacker Annual 2002, p. 13) and then in 2003 there was a flurry of activity by those who wanted to see what this Mount Hall fuss was about. By the end of that year eighteen people had ascended the mountain. Not bad for a mountain that over the years had interested a number of climbers but few had the cojones to attempt it. 2004, 2005, 2006 – nothing! Nada! Zip! Well at least on Mount Hall anyway although Craig (Quagger) Wagnell made a couple of excursions into the area to climb Mount Toquart and Sawtooth Peak (both are unofficial names.) I knew that one day I would get in there but I had a list an arm and a leg long of peaks to climb so I wasn't sure when that day would be. Roll-on July 2007. Val and I had a number of days off and since the forecast didn't look all that great up the north end of the island I decided it was now my turn to check Mount Hall out!

Upon entering the area on Sunday we climbed Lucky Mountain in damp, misty conditions, and then the next day dried our gear out at Toquart Lake. That afternoon we drove up to the end of the road, cooked supper, packed, and then at 6 a.m. with light packs began walking up the three kilometres of logging road that Quagger said was a "pleasant walk." Baloney! Alder had reclaimed the road, especially the last kilometre. With the bugs out in force we put the tent up in record time and while Val organized things I went and scouted the 100m of route through the slash from the end of the road across to the old growth. Large boulders, ten foot

high saplings, hidden leg traps, slippery logs, prickly bushes, thick vegetation, tree stumps – got the picture! Anyway, I found a route through it for tomorrow.

Next morning at 5:15 a.m. the alarm went off and within the hour we were thrashing our way through the slash, or was it slashing our way through the trash. Once in the old growth we turned right and followed Quaggers description written up on his website (islandhikes.com.) Eventually we got out of the bush and into the dry creek-bed which we followed up until we reached the sub-alpine. Mount Hall now loomed up above us to our right. Several leads of snow interspersed by firm sloping rock gradually led us up toward the summit. Although we had been consulting the map throughout the morning for some reason I thought the main summit was to the left (east.) At the base of the tower we left our packs and began scrambling up the steep rock. Upon reaching the first summit I could see another more airy summit to the east but away out to our right there was another summit that looked somewhat higher than what we were on. We decided to check the airy summit out first. After returning to our packs we climbed back onto the snow and soon reached the main summit where we found the summit register tucked into a rock cairn. We were the nineteenth and twentieth climbers!

Lunch, photos – the usual summit things, then we began down the snow. While in the area I wanted to climb Mount Toquart across the valley so we found another route down around the head of the valley. A short stint through the trees and then we were below the south slope which separates the two summits. Val decided not to go any further so I began hiking up the slope towards a rock bluff which I passed to the right. I then found a small draw that took me most of the way to the col. It was then just an easy scramble up the East Ridge to the summit of Mount Toquart. The register Quaggar had placed on the summit was gone but I found a steel spike with BCLS stamped on it lying on the ground, obviously left by surveyors sometime ago. A couple of quick photos and then I headed back down to Val. The hike down the valley was uneventful and we reached the tent ten hours after leaving. An hour and a half later we were at the vehicle ready for the long drive home. The ruggedness of this area (which includes the MacKenzie Range and Triple Peak) is spectacular and I think quite unique on the island. I'll be back to this area sometime to climb some of the lower, but just as interesting, peaks.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Golden Hinde Area,... Almost Spanked On The Behinde!

Peter Rothermel

August 3 – 10



South aspect of the Behinde and the Golden Hinde from Schjelderup Lake
PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

Tak and I had been talking about going into the Golden Hinde area and climbing a couple of peaks we both hadn't been up, so with Tak's suggestion, I put it on the trip schedule. While both Tak and I had summited the Golden Hinde several years before, most of the people that showed an interest in the trip were pretty well fixed on that one peak, while Tak and I had the main purpose of the nearby peaks: the Behinde and the Comb.

Typically, near the date, we had lots of interest and several dropouts but in the end we had a group of nine that we started out with.

We decided to give ourselves eight days which would allow for three days hike in with heavy packs and base camp three days for summits and then two days to hike out.

Day one was from Westmin Mine to Arnica Lake which took four and a half hours but I began hurting just before we reached the lake. Although the switchbacks make for easy hiking, I was suffering from severe calf muscle cramps. Sonia asked me how much coffee I had that morning and it dawned on me that the five to eight cups that I had, from home, on the drive up island, at the lodge and finally one more at the

trailhead, were causing my pain. The rest of the trip was fine as I kept it to one cup per morning and hydrated plenty during the day.

Our second day found us along Phillips Ridge where two of our party, Simon and Heather, decided to turn back as they realized that they wanted an easier trip. Just past the ridge's high point, on the descent and just before a chimney, Mike took a tumble on the crystal studded cheese grater rock and got pretty badly scraped up. Most of the group was waiting at the low point on the ridge to regroup and discuss our camp options before heading further along the ridge. When someone caught up with us and told us of the accident and then when we saw Mike's scraped up legs and forehead, I immediately thought that we were turning back. It looked worse than it was and Mike, while feeling a bit shaky, still wanted to continue. We kept on until we reached a spot just north of the lowest point on that part of the ridge. We had originally hoped to reach Schjeldrup Lake for our second camp, but after an eight and a half hour day, we decided to camp on the ridge. This actually was better than the buggy lake and we got an earlier sunrise to boot.

On the third day, we went a bit further along the ridge and dropped down just before we reached a high point on the ridge known as the "Black Rock" due to a dark volcanic rock cap on the predominately white limestone that most of the ridge is made up of.

There are several places that you can drop off the ridge and everyone of them has an argument for its merits and the drawbacks. Suffice to say, our route went OK and we dropped down to the southeast end of Schjelderup Lake and contoured around it in a clockwise manner. There was an unusually deep snowpack this year and along the west shore of the lake we were often on snow slopes that had the ice cold lake as a runout. Loosen those pack straps and hip belt.

After a quick lunch at the north end of the lake, we worked our way up onto the North Ridge of Mt. Burman. There were some steep snow slopes to get up that had poor runout, so we took care along this part. Once on the ridge proper, we made our camp near a tarn and had great views of our objectives. Still it had been a seven and a half hour day. Before dinner, Tak and Geoff took a forty-five minute jaunt up to the summit of Mt. Burman.

Day four took us from the north shoulder of Mt. Burman down to the east end of Burman Lake and then up again to the large tarn at the base of the Golden Hinde's south side, where we set up our permanent camp for the next few days. We had lost a day along the way and that left us with maybe only two days for summits and with our rate of speed for the return trip, it might mean only one summit bid.

We met a couple of young guys that had hiked in and decided to turn back, so with a short conference among our group, we decided to stretch our trip by another day and gave

the young guys phone numbers of people to call to let them know we were extending our trip by another day. This still made the option of three summit days kind of iffy.

As it had been a short day and it was only 2:30 in the afternoon, Tak, Sonia, Geoff and I decided to take a recon hike up to the col between the Golden Hinde and the Behinde and get a better look at our objectives... or at least that's what I thought I heard!

Geoff being in his early twenties was way out ahead and it took us about an hour to tromp up the thirty degree slope. When we reached the col, I said to Geoff, "That was the finest track that I have ever followed." His boot spacing was close enough and the traversing switchbacks were at a low enough angle that I wasn't even out of breath when we reached the col. Just behind me was Tak and he echoed my sentiments to Geoff.

Then Tak said something about dropping our ice axes and putting on our harnesses and helmets and I said, "what?" I hadn't brought any gear because I thought we were just going to have a look. So here we were within striking distance and because I hadn't cleaned the wax out of my ears, we were turned back. I felt bad, because if the weather deteriorated, this might be our only chance. So much for gaining back that lost summit day.

On the morning of the fifth day Tak, Geoff, Sonia and I hiked back up to the col with our climbing gear. The rest of our group decided to stay back either because of the technical climbing or to have a rest day and practice their ice axe self arrest. The clouds were roiling up the lower valleys and we were soon in a fog, but above was clear, blue skies.

On the south side of the Behinde we went up a heathery apron and traversed an east trending ramp and went up a gully system on the mountain's southeast side until we reached a notch.

From this point there was either a narrow rotten ledge or a short pitch leftwards and up a loose slope to the safety behind a large block to choose from. We couldn't see beyond the big block and didn't know what was ahead. We decided the rope was needed here and Sonia led up to the block, putting in a cam and slinging a horn on the way, while I belayed her from the notch. Once she secured the ropes (we had 7mm twin ropes) I went up the fixed line protected with a prussic as did Geoff, and Tak was then belayed up.

When I reached the block, the ground looked easier beyond so I said I'd go ahead and take a look. After a short loose gully I was on the ridge crest and the high point... Except the adjacent peak looked as though it might be higher... and it was. There looked to be a big drop between the peaks and from where I was it looked doable but I waited for the rest of the group. When we were all assembled we scrambled across to the main summit with no problems, other than a bit of exposure and loose rock.



Geoff topping out on the Behinde with big exposure below

PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

Once on top we searched around the cairn and in all the obvious spots for the summit register but only found a few shards of plastic. This was too bad because Christine Fordham told me of finding an old register in good condition a few years before that had one of Mike Walsh's aluminum discs with "Island Mountain Ramblers" stamped on it, from this summit's first ascent in 1966. She had described the register as a large book, so I brought up a piece of hypalon rubberized cloth to wrap it in as well as a regular plastic tube and waterproof book. It's too bad when these old registers go missing, for whatever reason. Sometimes the register is damaged or destroyed by weather, such as rain or lightning strikes, or just snow creep. I have brought down water damaged registers from several summits to our Section archives but if the register book is in good condition I leave it in the new register tube that I usually bring up.

Here under a blue sky and radiant sunshine we ate and rested while the clouds below went by and gave cameo views of the surrounding mountains. We mentally picked our way up the route to the Comb and several routes up the west side of the Golden Hinde.

Then we reversed our route, rappelling the rotten technical part and working our way back down to our base camp that had been locked up in the clouds all day.

The next day (day 6) the clouds were scudding by and the wind was up with spitting precipitation. I didn't think it was wise to let most of the group head for the Golden Hinde while Tak and I went off to the Comb. If the weather was good this would have worked since Sonia has enough experience to lead the Golden Hinde, but in crappy conditions we had to come up with a plan.

I thought Sonia and Jeff should go for the Golden Hinde, since they were the strongest and had the best chance to summit, so they geared up and left early. Tak decided to take anyone that wanted on a Golden Hinde reconnaissance trip and see where it might lead. Betsy and I decided to hang back at our base camp.

As it turned out, Sonia and Jeff summited in poor weather and totally missed Tak's group that also summited later when the weather later cleared. I felt bad that I hadn't tagged along with Betsy so she could have summited.

When we were all back at camp we talked of maybe Tak and I staying behind for a day to climb the Comb and then catching up with the rest hiking out. In the end we all decided to head out the next day and keep the group together.

On day seven we hiked down to the east end of Burman Lake and up onto the North Ridge of Mt. Burman. At the spot where we had camped on day four we stopped for a break and no sooner had we taken our packs off then it started to rain. As it steadily got worse we began down to Schjelderup Lake.

The trip along the lakes west side was some of the wettest hiking that I have ever done and we were all pretty dejected by the time we reached the north end of the lake. We looked for a place to camp, but with the exceptionally high levels of snowpack nothing looked good, so we pushed on to Phillips Ridge and by evening the weather broke a bit and we had a sunny, yet damp, camp for the evening.

On the last day of our trip (yes, the last), we packed up under clear skies and headed out. Whether it was the "horses, open barn door" effect on us, or the promise of a shower and home cooked meal, we all hoofed it out to the trail head on that last day.

So I guess Tak and I have yet another reason to go back into the heart of Strathcona Park... not just to climb the Comb but also because it is a wonderful trip to do.

Participants: Tak Ogasawara, Sonia Langer, Betsy Williamson, Mike Hordelski, Geoff Dunbrack, Jeff Davidson, Heather Horne, Simon Rook and Peter Rothermel.

Henshaw Creek Traverse: Flower Ridge to Shepherd Ridge

Dave Campbell

August 11 – 12

I had been eyeing up the traverse around the headwaters of Henshaw Creek for some time. On the map, the route jumps out at you as a continuous high-level, well-defined route that heads around from Flower Ridge to Shepherd Ridge. Access is as good as it gets - paved road to a trailhead parking lot and the route starts and finishes at the same spot.

I had attempted the route a couple of years ago before I moved to the Island. I got a late start on my first day and since I had to catch a ferry back to the Mainland on the second day, I bailed about a third of the way along the route because I knew I didn't have enough time.

This time, I was confident that the trip could be done in two days if you got an early enough start on the first day. In mid-August I convinced Scott Nelson and Sandra Nicol to come over from Vancouver. They came over on Friday night so we could get an early start on Saturday.

The route is roughly described in the Hiking Trails guide, and in Phillip Stone's Island Alpine and Island Turns and Tours, however, none of these resources describe the route or difficulties in too much detail. On the map the route looks pretty straightforward. In reality, there are a few trickier route finding issues. I am beginning to realize that this is de rigueur for the Island - there is a lot bluffier terrain which isn't obvious on the map and this can make route-finding challenging.

We decided to do the route in a counter-clockwise direction. This allows for taking the well built trail up Flower Ridge to gain the alpine and leaves the bushwhack from Shepherd Ridge to the road to be done in a downhill direction.

We arrived at the Flower Ridge trailhead at about 9 a.m.. We quickly gained the crest of Flower Ridge and had some great views back along Buttle Lake and across to Mount Myra, which was hiding in the clouds. Overall, it was pretty cloudy and the head of Henshaw Creek was shrouded in heavy clouds, as was most of Shepherd Ridge.

Views were pretty limited as we worked our way along Flower Ridge which was too bad. I remember from my first trip here a couple of years ago that the views south to Mount Septimus, Mount Rosseau, and Nine Peaks were superb.

We left the beaten trail at the end of Flower Ridge and had some brief views of Mount Septimus, however, by this time it was raining off and on. We even startled a ptarmigan at one point.

We stuck more or less to the crest of the divide. From the end of Flower Ridge, the main divide starts to head in a north-

east direction. We worked our way along about half of this section of the ridge out towards where the ridge leaves to head over to Mount Harmston. We encountered one short bluff as we approached our chosen campsite for the evening. There was another fellow that was camped there and he helped direct us to the way down the bluff to the spot where there was a reasonable down-climb. He was also trying to do the Henshaw traverse and had been holed up in the weather all day.

Originally I had planned to bivvy and Scott and Sandra had planned to tent (fly-only). With the rain continuing into the evening, we set there two-person tent up with just the fly and managed to squeeze all three of us under it. I was pretty cold when we went to bed (5 degrees) and I was surprised I was so warm during the night (since it was summer, I had a pretty light over-bag to sleep in.)

By next morning conditions hadn't improved much, however, since we had covered about two-thirds of the traverse we decided to continue, despite the weather.

The Shepherd Ridge section of the traverse is much more involved than the first part of the trip around from Flower Ridge. We worked our way through the fog and followed the ridge-crest until it headed back in a westerly direction. We continued to stay on the ridge-crest as much as possible but encountered a few difficult sections and route finding challenges getting through bluffs. To gain the Shepherd Horn we had to traverse a bit to the left (west) before gaining the ridge.

You cannot follow the ridge-crest the entire way. Below the Shepherd Horn there is an impassable cliff and gendarme. It may be possible to rappel this section, but it might not be advisable as it may be difficult to get around the gendarme from the gap you would rappel in. The Hiking guide and Stone's guides suggest that you can by-pass the difficulties by traversing along the glacier on the east side of the ridge. Getting from the glacier back up to the ridge looked like it could have been quite difficult on the map, and we didn't have enough visibility to see the route from where we were.

By the time we were stopped by the bluff it was not possible to drop down to the glacier. We were able to back-track a little and then descend into a basin on the west side which led down to a series of lakes. We were able to maintain our elevation and traverse high around the basin above the lakes and work our way into an obvious gully which led back up to the ridge (there were some recent footprints descending down the gully.) It was easy to work our way back up to the ridge and the difficulties were more or less over.

We continued along the final ridge but by now it was beginning to get later in the afternoon and we were starting to wonder if we could make it back for Scott and Sandra to catch the last ferry back to the mainland. We stuck more or less to the ridgeline as it dropped into the forest, however, there were still a few bluffy sections in the forest that needed to be negotiated.

Getting back to the road took longer than expected. There is also a long, flatter section of forest near the bottom where we had some difficulties estimating our location. We had planned on coming out to the road about one kilometre up from where we had parked the car. We were pretty tired by the time we actually hit the road and were happy that we had popped out to the road less than 100m from the car! It was a little after 8 p.m. and I had to apologize that we weren't going to make the last ferry (I had assured them we could do it in two days despite the route being described in guidebooks as a longer multi-day trip.) We did manage to have a great Greek dinner in Campbell River before the drive back to Nanaimo.

This was a great traverse! It was disappointing that the weather was so poor as we really didn't get to many views the entire trip. Normally the views would have been stunning. The route seems a bit more challenging than I had anticipated given the lack of route description in the guidebooks, and the fact that it looked pretty easy on the map. I guess it is just part of the mountains on the Island. The bluffness of the mountains doesn't really show up on the maps but poses serious route finding and technical challenges. The trip felt a bit more difficult than the traverse over to the Golden Hinde from Arnica Lakes (via Burman.) I would certainly give any people trying this traverse as a ski trip a heads up about the difficulties. That said traversing along the glacier below the main Shepherd Ridge might make things easier.

Participants: Dave Campbell, Sandra Nicol and Scott Nelson.

Bonanza Range

Lindsay Elms
August 7 and September 1

Having climbed at both ends of the Bonanza Range (Whiltilla Mountain to the west and Mount Ashwood and Bonanza to the east) I was hungry to complete the peaks through the middle all of which are over 5,000 feet. I had checked out the access roads two years ago which would put me close to the middle of the group of four peaks: Peaks 5540, 5467, 5550 and 5769. With this knowledge I drove up Monday night and didn't have too much trouble finding the roads, however, a new washout meant that I would have to walk the road for about two kilometres before deeking off into the bush.

I was up early the next morning and hiking up the road just as it was getting light. There was a lot of high cloud about

and I couldn't see the tops but I knew the route finding would be fairly straight forward. Once in the old growth I got onto a ridge and followed that up for two hours to the alpine which put me at the junction where I could either head west or east. I decided to climb the west mountain, Peak 5540, first and then if the weather was okay go to the others out east. There was steep bump on the ridge that I by-passed by dropping down and around it then got back onto the ridge. In some places the bush was fairly gnarly and I remembered similar terrain from two years ago on Whiltilla, however, I knew that there were lots of heather benches I could zig-zag up. By the time I reached the summit the mist had become thicker and visibility was low. I didn't spend much time on top as the temperature had also dropped and I was hoping this mist would only be temporary and I could get out to the other peaks.

Things didn't go the way I planned and by the time I got back to the junction on the ridge visibility had dropped to about fifty feet. I checked out the ridge a little way towards the other peaks but soon realized I would have to make another trip back to this range.

Nearly four weeks later I returned with Val to the area with a slightly better forecast predicted. Again we had to walk the road for two kilometres before entering the bush and following the ridge back up to the junction. There was no snow around this time and we could see all the peaks. The plan was to first ascend Peak 5467 and then head across to Peak 5550 and 5769 and then retrace our route back over the peaks to the junction. Every thing went fine until the last couple of hundred metres to the top of the first peak via the West Ridge. All of a sudden the bush became thick: there was not enough space to crawl under the bush and it was just a bit too high to climb over the top it. Eventually after a lot of thrashing we got through to a small heather bench and were able to zig-zag up to the summit. It had taken about forty-five minutes to cover the last two hundred metres.

The descent was made down the East Ridge and what a difference as there were hardly any shrubs. In about twenty minutes we were down on the small saddle and it would be an easy ridge walk up to Peak 5550. From the top of Peak 5550 we had to descend about three hundred metres to another saddle and from there it looked easy up to the top of Peak 5769. Part way down the ridge we took the packs off (which included the rope and some hardware) and left them so we could go light (lighter.) A few small bluffs to climb but the rock was good, however, most of the ascent was on heather benches. On the top we found a cairn but no summit register. So others had been up here before us! But who? Although I had a register for the summit I had unfortunately left it in the car.

We ate a couple of power bars and admired the view across to Ashwood and Bonanza and then headed back to

our packs and up onto Peak 5550. We descended down to the saddle on the other side but instead of going over Peak 5467 we decided to sidle around the peak to the south. In a couple of places we encountered some thick bush but it was minimal. A short climb and we were back at the junction and ready to descend the ridge down to the road and back to the vehicle. At last I had completed all the peaks in the Bonanza Range.

For a photo of the Bonanza Range from Whiltilla Mountain see *Island Bushwhacker Annual* – 2005, p. 30.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

In Flower Ridge, Out Shepherds Ridge

Lindsay Elms

August 23 – 24



Shepherd Ridge from Flower Ridge PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

When one hasn't been along Flower Ridge for a while one very quickly forgets how long it is. Most of the times I had traveled the ridge as part of the Comox/Cliffe Glacier to Flower Ridge traverse so I had been reversing the ridge (descending it.) Adjacent is Shepherds Ridge which connects to Flower Ridge at the head of Henshaw Creek. Located on Shepherds Ridge are two peaks over 1,900 metres. Although not named, not officially anyway, the odd climbing party over the years have traversed them as part of the large horse-

shoe loop or used the ridge to reach Tzela Mountain (unofficial) and the Cliffe Glacier, or climbed the highest peak to say they had been there and done that. With a forecast that had no mention of precipitation over the next two days Val and I decided to go light and complete the loop.

As we drove passed the Ralph River campground at Shepherds Creek we measured the distance to the Flower Ridge Trailhead as this was where we intended to exit Shepherds Ridge. We would have to walk back along the road to our vehicle which fortunately was only about three kilometres. There were several cars at the Flower Ridge Trailhead but over the next two days we saw nobody. We started up the trail and after two and a half hours hiking we left the forest behind and had the long low angled ridge ahead of us. It looked a long way to the head of the ridge known as the Central Craggs. This was the name given to the high point on Flower Ridge by Reverend William Bolton and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition in 1898 during his traverse of Vancouver Island.

There is not much to write about this section of the traverse except that the trail passes by numerous beautiful mountain tarns that on a hot summer day would be tempting

to have a dip in. Also the view across to Cream Lake and the Septimus/Rosseau/Misthorn massif is spectacular with its rugged peaks and tumbling glaciers. By the late afternoon we were sitting on the Central Craggs looking at the ridge heading to the north towards Shepherds Ridge. We continued along the connecting ridge for another hour then stopped for a well deserved break and to cook dinner. We still had some distance that we wanted to cover before we stopped for the night. By 9 a.m. that evening we put our packs down, leveled a spot and laid out our bivvy sacs. We watched a beautiful sunset to the west then crawled into our bags for a heavenly slumber. There is always something about alpine air that helps you have a good night's sleep so that you feel refreshed the next morning.

We were up bright and early the next morning and just had a short ascent to the highest peak on Shepherds Ridge. Fifteen minutes from the top we put our packs down and scrambled to the summit. There was a small cairn on top but nothing inside it. After carefully viewing the route ahead we descended to our packs then dropped down onto a bench on the south side of the ridge. On hindsight we could have carried our packs to the top then dropped onto the glacier/snowfield on the north side then traversed along the ridge. We angled along the bench for a bit then climbed a gully

which took us onto the ridge crest. Although the ridge was easy there were several ups and downs and a couple of times we dropped onto the northern snowfield and then got back onto the ridge. Again in hindsight we should have just stayed on the snow as eventually we had to drop back down onto it to by-pass a steep bump into a saddle which was at the base of the second 1,900+ metre peak. This summit had no cairn but I am sure we weren't the first up there. After searching around for the best descent route we found there was only one option and that was to go down some steep rock which brought us out onto a scree bench on the south side below the main ridge. A little while later we stopped for lunch beside a small pond, one of the few we had seen along the ridge.

While eating lunch we pulled the map out and located on it where we were. All we had to do was scramble up a steep gully back onto the ridge then all we would have left would be a gradual descend along to the end of the ridge and then down through the forest to Shepherds Creek and out to the trailhead. If only it was that easy! The gully and scramble along the ridge was easy and enjoyable and so was the forest for most of the way. Through clearings in the forest we could see the peninsula where Ralph River campground was and it looked quite a distance away. We just kept plugging away in that direction. Eventually the angled decreased and the bush started getting thicker and thicker. This was probably where the old burn had gone through. We had been hiking on this low angle terrain for what felt like a long time and I kept thinking the road can't be far away. After thrashing through one particularly thick pocket of saplings we came across some flagging. A trail at last I thought! A half hour from now we should be on the road!

Although we were able to follow the flagging it was not really what I would call a trail, more a route and I couldn't understand who would have flagged this route, however, it was obvious it had been used more than once. An hour and half later we were still following the flagging. It was now becoming frustrating! I quick check of the compass told me we were still traveling in the right direction. Well there wasn't much we could do except continue to follow the flagging. After another half hour we eventually came onto a more substantial trail. We were now beside Shepherds Creek so all we had to do was follow the trail out to the road. It couldn't be far away! Well it did go on but finally we came out onto the road opposite the campground. All Val wanted to do was lay down as we had been on the go for over thirteen hours. I talked her into walking and we stuck our thumbs out at several cars as they went by but none stopped. Forty minutes later our vehicle came into sight and with a big sigh of relief we took our packs off. They had been two very long days!

Unbeknown to us a couple of weeks previous a friend had gone in along Shepherds Ridge to climb Tzela Mountain. He hiked up the ridge from the Flower Ridge trailhead

and camped in the alpine. The next day he traveled along the ridge, cut over the snowfield and climbed Tzela and returned to camp in a long day also. He had followed the description in Island Alpine and he described the route as being much shorter then trying to come out at Ralph River campground.

If there was a next time for me, I too would descend Shepherds Ridge to the Flower Ridge Trailhead instead of going out to the Ralph River campground but since I doubt if I will be doing that trip again, I can only suggest that others exit the ridge this way. I would also suggest to most people that you take more than two days to complete this beautiful traverse.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms

Comox Glacier

Mike Hubbard
August 25 – 26

A popular trip judging from the number of phone calls but we were fortunately whittled down to a manageable group of eight: six from Victoria and two from Royston, by the Friday night BBQ at Gerta's. We met at the Gas n'Go at Cumberland at 9:45 a.m. which is a good meeting place at the corner of Bevan Road which leads directly north to the Comox Logging Road. We transferred Ryan and Phil to Mike Bonner's Honda CRV from Ryan's low slung Nissan sports coupe and set off up the logging road via Cruikshank Canyon. Concerns about the access proved unjustified as the road has been very gently decommissioned leaving a mere thirty-five ditches which were easily navigated by our vehicles although normal cars are being left some three or four kilometres below the trail head.

The new access to the Glacier is signed but for us was well marked by a familiar Canary yellow Xterra on which we left a note for Christine saying we hoped to meet her, and whoever she might be with, on the trail. The new access is just before the river crossing and shaves about forty five minutes off the old route up the north side of the creek.

We reached the Frog Ponds by 3:30 with little difficulty but plenty of aerobic exercise carrying our overnight packs up to the ridge. Several new fixed ropes have been placed on the trail where it has been worn away by heavy use. Low cloud and occasional drizzle made us less than optimistic about crossing the glacier the next day.

After setting up our tents some of us decided to reccy the trail. We found that the fixed rope just beyond the Frog

Ponds is very badly weathered and offers little if any real security apart from some dubious psychological comfort. It has been there for about ten years to my knowledge and should be replaced. Mosquitoes drove us to bed early and soon afterwards it started to seriously rain with the occasional peal of thunder.

Despite the ominous signs the morning dawned clear and we were off by 7:30. I had had concerns about our youngest member, Ansel, down climbing the cliff with the frayed rope but it turned that he and his dad had been climbing 5.8's and it was only me who was somewhat nervous on that portion of the route.

Swirling clouds of mist from the night's downpour held off and we were soon on the south east summit where we found Charles Turner, Gordon Turner and Christine Fordham camped well guarded by Charles' dog Cairo. I used to say I can go anywhere a dog can go but I may have to exclude Cairo. I was amazed that he had navigated the cliff by the Frog Ponds without being carried. Out of an abundance of caution we placed wands across the glacier to the NW summit where we had lunch. There were superb intermittent views across to Argus, down to the heavily crevassed Cliffe Glacier and out towards the sea. The Comox Glacier itself was well covered on the upper part with no need to rope which was fortunate as we didn't have one. There is however a large schrund just below the SE summit which could be dangerous in a whiteout.

Crossing back across the glacier we were thrilled by several low passes by a blue monoplane which seemed to be checking up on us and which I have seen before in Strathcona!

We were in camp by three but thoughts of relaxed brew ups were scotched by the fierce mosquitoes and we were soon back on the trail reaching the cars about 6:30. After a quick wash in the creek we headed back down to Cumberland and on home stopping only for a quick bite in the Ladysmith Subway, passing up the temptation of a beer as several of us had to work the next morning. One day I suppose I will have to retire!

A good trip with everyone fitting in well and I hope enjoying it as much as I did.

Participants: Mike Hubbard, Mike Bonnor, Ansel Bonnor, Ryan Bartlett, Patrick Donker, Martin Hofmann, Kelly Osbourne and Phil Benoit.

A Comedy of Errors at the Sooke Potholes

Cedric Zala
September 9

On a warm September Sunday I went along with a small ACC group on a bike trip along the Galloping Goose to the Sooke Potholes. It was a lovely late summer day, full of the sound of crickets and the scent of forest resins, and the time flew by along with the miles.

We finally arrived at a spot on the trail beside the upper Potholes with a rough path leading to the river. We chained our bikes to convenient trees by the bike trail and headed down the path to enjoy a welcome lunch and a dip in the refreshingly cold water. During lunch, one of our party, who for the sake of anonymity I shall call "Mike", mentioned that he had had a sudden grave misgiving when he engaged his bike lock. It seems that he had reorganized his keys recently, and placed the bike lock key in a separate ring. Only just at the very moment of engaging the bike lock had he realized that this critical ring might have been left at home.

After exhaustive furling in his pack, he came up empty-handed and we started devising ways of handling this dire situation. Calling BCAA? – nope, not an automobile. Calling a taxi? – seems a bit of overkill. Hitch-hiking – maybe, but a long ways to go to find cars. Doubling up on the bikes? – get serious!

After lunch, I decided to walk back up to the trail and take a careful look at the bike. What I saw after a glance, and a push and a prod or two, surprised and delighted me. Then, grinning like the cat that got the canary, I ambled back to the river and announced: "Well, here's a situation where two wrongs can make a right. You did a good job, a creditable job, a very thorough job indeed, of chaining the tree itself, but *you did not chain the bike to the tree!*" It had turned out that the bike's owner had indeed carefully placed and secured the chain around the tree, but not around the bike itself!

Incredulity, followed by joyful relief! So the bike had been free and clear all the time. The sole remaining problem was that the chain was well and truly locked around the tree, and our best efforts at picking the lock were to no avail. However, my trusty Swiss Army knife with its saw blade was then whisked out and in a few minutes we had cut the four-inch stem right through and slid off the chain.

And so through happy circumstance did the two wrongs become a right "comedy of errors".

Perambulations on Vancouver's Island – Chapter Twenty-Seven: In which our companions tackle Triple Peak, Richard vanishes, and Russell's old friend appears.

Rick Hudson
September 11 – 12



Russell on the infamous snow slope below the central peak. Once across the moat (not visible from here), the rock route follows the line to the summit. PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

The weather being fine, Russell proposed that we dispense with the customary attitude to employment, and instead take ourselves to the heights, there to enhance our physical and spiritual well-being. It was then a matter of a few moments to seize our cordage, axes and fairisles, and we were away to Alberni and beyond.

From the end of Marion Main, Russell, having had prior experience of Triple Peak, led the way boldly down a steep and tortuous talus slope, and then through canvas-piercing shrubbery, but shortly we gained a faint trail, and set ourselves to the task of gaining altitude. The sky promised nothing but blue as we ascended bush and creek, admiring the improving panoramas as the trees fell away below us, and scrabbling on the fine rock which emerged in the upper regions of the track.

At the lake, an acceptably level spot was found for the tent and we settled into the customary necessities of a culinary na-

ture. At the lake's exit, a shallow creek spilled out over lately glaciated slabs, and from there our unimpeded view encompassed the southern flank of 5040 Peak and, in the distance, the north-west the tops of Mounts Septimus and Rousseau.

The evening could not have been more perfect, except for the unseasonal presence of an excess of insects, and I was grateful to Judith Holm who, just a few hours earlier, had casually remarked that the flowers were late this year, and quite wonderful in the upper alpine. Her observation, innocent though it had been, had nevertheless triggered a train of thought which, despite Russell's assurances that the lake area would not be buggy (this was, after all, mid September) had confirmed my decision, when packing, to include tentage.

As dusk turned to dark we withdrew into the protective confines of the REI, and Russell was noted to observe, with considerable fervour, that my decision earlier in the day to bring a tent had been a sound one. Small biting creatures threw themselves furiously at the all-encompassing netting, but inside we slept the sleep of the righteous, awaking occasionally to admire the stars that sparkled down from a clear sky.

Dawn came early, and we were away before the sun, rising to meet it on the northern flanks of Triple Peak. Now this mountain has, as its name implies, three summits, with the central one being marginally higher than its NW and SE neighbours. We approached via a snow slope on the north side. This gave us easy height with the assistance of irons attached to the underside of

the boots – a new device developed by the Swedes, I believe, but which are known most commonly by their French name *crampon* (literally: 'stud' or 'spike'). The ease with which we ascended the otherwise slippery ice can hardly be described, and in short order we found ourselves at a snow moat, which separated us from the final rock tower.

At this point, Russell exclaimed with delight that the moat, or *schrund* as the Germans call it, was in capital condition, and would present no challenge to an accomplished alpinist of his ilk. While he prepared the equipment, I placed an ice screw a few yards back from the lip and, with a short length of cordage attached, Russell lowered himself over the edge, quickly found footing on a bump in the ice wall, and then on the rock below. I followed.

We were now in a good position, for above us stretched two pitches of clean rock that offered plenty of handholds, and then a gully, somewhat bushy, leading to the summit



Russ reunited with an old friend on the ridge below Triple Peak

PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

ridge. In no time we surmounted the rock, both members of the party having the opportunity to put hand to basalt at the sharp end of the rope. Russell then turned the great chock stone by passing behind it, and we were briskly into the gully, before breaking out onto the ridge, where splendid views were to be had in all directions.

A short scramble up large blocks, and the summit was ours. The hour was yet early, the day calm and sunny, and as we gazed around at the sea fog lying sunlit and enveloping in the valleys below, we could not but marvel at the splendour of the location, and our luck to be there. It felt, as lady novelists are wont to observe, that the world was our oyster.

But dark forces were at work, and there is many a slip twixt cup and lip, as the old adage goes, the more so when an ice moat proffers the lip. The descent of the tower went smoothly with three long rappels, and then there we were, back at the *schrund*.

Using the length of dangling cordage that had been left as a climbing aid, I ascended to the moat's lip. There, because of the awkwardness of my position, I made the careless transgression of rolling over the lip, rather than getting a foot down on the far side. My rationale was I still had the cordage firmly grasped, but, with no crampon in contact with the snow to slow my downward progress, I quickly accelerated

past the ice screw, jerking it straight out as I went by. There followed a wild ride with nothing to allay the descent, my axe being regrettably left in the moat wall above Russell. As I tumbled, my eyes full of snow, I endeavoured to remember whether the slope below steepened or ran out.

In either event, it was in excess of fifty paces before I could turn my boots downhill, where the crampons quickly arrested my wild peregrination. Once stationary, I was happy to observe that the slope leveled below, proffering neither rocks nor, worse still, a cliff.

While I was thus diverted, Russell, of course, was left in the metaphorical dark. He had seen me surmount the moat's wall and then promptly disappear, dragging the cordage (his only means of extricating himself from the moat) with me. There followed a considerable time when his shouts for further enlightenment went unanswered, as I had come to a stop some distance downhill. There, I caught my breath, removed a surfeit of snow from numerous locales, before finally plodding back up to the moat's lip, where I encountered a somewhat relieved climbing partner. It was the work of a minute to bring Russell to the top of the moat, carefully avoiding my asinine genuflection, and thereafter we followed our tracks back down the snow.

But the day was far from over, for my friend had been harbouring a secret agenda to which I was now introduced. On a former sojourn to the mountain, Russell had inadvertently misplaced an ice axe not far from our present line of descent and, the hour being still early, he expressed a wish to recover it, if possible. In this endeavour I offered him my heartiest encouragement, and he set off like a terrier after a rat. However, the exact location of his inadvertent misadventure was unknown, and for some time I observed him casting about in the shrubbery of an adjacent rock band without success.

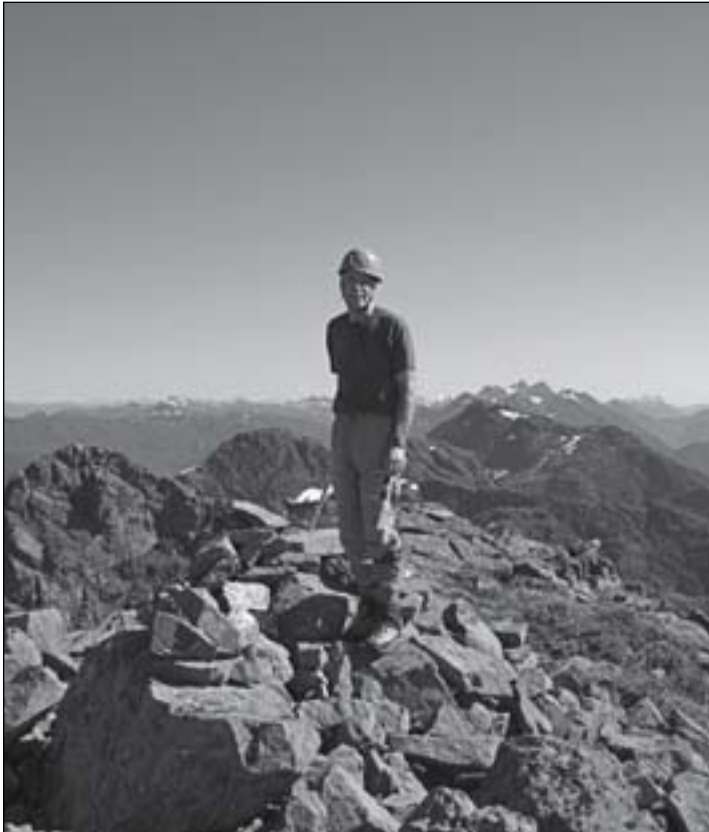
Presently, however, a loud cry in the Yorkshire vernacular reached my ears, by which I implied that he had been successful, and in due course, so it was. He reappeared sporting a broad smile, and holding an axe which, while its adze was somewhat rusty, appeared in all other respects to be in first class shape.

The day being so successfully concluded, we descended into the mosquito zone, packed hastily amid a blur of entomological vituperation, and returned to our carriage in the valley below, well pleased with our expedition.

Participants: Russ Moir and Rick Hudson.

Pinder Peak

Martin Smith
September 13



Tony Vaughn on the summit of Pinder Peak PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

Tony Vaughn and I left Victoria on September 12 with the intention of climbing Pinder Peak, the highest point on the north Island before the mountains begin their slow descent to tidewater on the north coast.

“Island Alpine” and “Hiking Trails III” both point to access to Pinder up a disused logging spur known as “Apollo Creek”. We arrived in the area in plenty of time to scout around, locate what was indicated as a major feature, drive up it and camp at the highest point we could reach.

Two hours of driving up and down the Artlish valley main line later and we were no nearer to locating this mysterious road than when we started. Any spurs we tried took us away from not towards the mountain. Finally at about 9 p.m. we pulled into a flat bit and camped for the night. In fact, according to the map and GPS we weren’t even on a road at that point!

Resuming our search early next morning, we spotted a barely distinguishable track off Artlish Main about where

Apollo should be. We reasoned that this couldn’t be it. This was only a little bit better than a bushwhack, never mind drivable. So we looked further back along the main line towards Atluck Lake until a possibility finally presented itself. The spur wasn’t marked on any maps but as we all know, logging roads come and go.

The spur was well equipped with the usual deep water bars but they posed no obstacle to my truck and we ended up at ~ 600 metres elevation before coming to a halt at a log barrier placed there as a warning that the bridge ahead had been removed. A quick walk up the rest of the road and a map check showed that we were one drainage to the north of Apollo but that we might be able to approach Pinder from here. We made the call to give it a go, returned to the truck, geared up and were off at 9 a.m..

At 9:30 precisely we stepped off the road end into the usual logging slash. Map reference at this point is: 9U 0647265/5561153 (NAD27) and the altitude 775 metres. Ahead of us was the creek that the map showed as originating on Pinder’s south slopes. It was dry. Animal trails took us through the slash somewhat further to the east of the creek bed than we wanted to be but once in the trees we traversed northwest back towards it and then resumed the desired northeasterly course. Huckleberry bush soon enveloped us, Tony began to enter regular waypoints in his GPS and put the first flagging up.

A little over an hour of steady climbing through moderate bush and we suddenly emerged from the trees and rejoined the creek at the bottom of a steep ravine.

We saw no evidence at all of human passage to this point or indeed beyond it until almost on the summit. Other living creatures, however, were obviously frequent visitors and this phase of the climb soon earned the appellation “bear shit gully”.

After a ten minute breath catcher we chose a line initially up the centre of the ravine and then traversed off to the right as it began to steepen. Under the (climber’s) right wall we found an easy angled if damp ramp that took us almost to the top of the ravine and, as if in punishment, dumped us into some serious krumholtz. An hour of swimming about in this stuff and we emerged once more into clear terrain below a boulder field and with the summit block in full view for the first time. Thirty more minutes saw us into the saddle between Pinder and its satellite, “The Horn” with views down to Atluck Lake, to both coasts of the Island and to the coast mountains on the mainland.

Island Alpine describes the summit route as follows. “From just below the col between Pinder and the Horn strike directly across snow or scree to gain the final rocky section of the SE ridge to the summit”. Well, we could see scree and we could see the SE ridge but I thought I’m damned if I want to climb it. From the saddle it looked like steep, exposed 5th Class climbing and, apart from helmets, we’d brought no



The route on Pinder Peak PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

gear with us. However, as the old saying goes, you have to rub your nose in it before judging. So we had a bite to eat, put the lids on and started up.

It only took me four or five vertical metres to decide that this wasn't on. Not that the climbing was that difficult. It was more about the fact that we had 200 metres of it to do and that that offered an awful lot of room for just one slip in the course of the up- and, particularly the down-climb. So we came down and traversed off left to a promising looking gully. Same story. It might go but sans gear, I wasn't happy. A bit more casting around and still nothing obvious appeared feasible. So, disappointed but prudent, we backed off and headed down to the packs.

As we got a bit lower and the summit complex came more into perspective, a possible route on the extreme left of the summit block presented itself. So I called Tony back. It certainly looked like it would go but it put one into a saddle below a sub-summit to the southwest – the wrong side - of the main summit. Would they connect? It even looked like the route sketch in the guidebook, but it was up a southwest feature not southeast. Then again, the same guidebook would have us still searching for the mythical Apollo Creek road at this juncture.

So, up we went. Tony up a loose gully, while I chose a steeper face to its left but on good rock. Neither option was more than Class 3. We popped out onto the saddle in five minutes, turned right and five minutes later were on the sub-summit. There was the main summit ahead with no impediment to getting there. At this point and for the first and last time that day, we began to see boot prints in the dirt other than our own. Five more minutes of hands-in-pockets stroll and we were there.

In addition to the staggering 360° views, the summit offered a little interesting local history. A metal plate dating

from September 1955 had a whole bunch of names properly engraved on it and a whole bunch more just scratched on. We added ours. We were just the second party to summit Pinder in 2007. There was also the inevitable memorial plaque but at least this one was in wood and just sat there - unlike the intrusive block of stone bolted to the summit of the Golden Hinde that I had encountered just three weeks previous.

After fifteen minutes or so on top we set off down and retrieved the packs twenty minutes later.

The last waypoint Tony had marked was at the bottom of "bear shit gully" and, paranoid about being sucked into the Apollo Creek drainage, we made a beeline for it. This put us nicely into the worst bush of the day. Steep and with a clear tendency to become vertical, we were soon blessing the same bush we were clinging on to that we had cursed for its unyielding intransigence on the way up. The bed of the ravine offered relief to our right and we eventually succeeded in getting into it. Thereafter we preferred the exposed scrambling down the ravine to any more vertical bush.

Once at the bottom of BSG we simply followed the GPS down and out to the road in under an hour. It took about five and a half hours to reach the summit from the car, including breaks, route finding and false starts and just three and a half to get down. With knowledge of the route, the round trip should take no more than seven and a half hours in future.

Once back at the truck we made the call to camp there for the night. It's a nice spot in spite of being at the end of a logging road. In a patch of old growth with good water only two minutes walk away. A fire ring, target and empty shell casings clearly pointed to it being a hunters' camp. In any event, we got out the chairs, beer, chips etc and had ourselves the luxury of a car-camping evening full of the events of the day and the always enjoyable climb post mortem.

The next day we went off to climb Conuma Peak but they'd closed the "H-60" road access and removed the bridge. That's Island climbing for you.

Precise approach directions are as follows:

Take the Zeballos turn-off from Highway 19. About 7 km from the highway turn right at a signpost for Atluck Lake. You are now on Atluck Main. Follow this road to and then around the lake. Pinder Peak dominates the view at the west end of the lake. Once around the lake, watch for a road turning off left and signed Artlish Main. Set your trip meter to 0 here and take this road.

Drive exactly 4.4km to the logging spur you want. A few hundred metres before reaching your turn, a road labelled "AR0600" breaks off left. This may also give access to Pinder but I don't believe it goes too high. There is no label at your turn but – as of September 2007 – plenty of pink flagging wrapped around a wooden post. Your main guide should be the distance travelled from the Atluck/Artlish junction. A high clearance 4WD vehicle is needed beyond this point.

Drive up the spur 2.8km negotiating many deep cross ditches to the point in a patch of old growth where a log has been felled across the road. Park here.

The best approach to the final climb up the summit block is from the bottom of the small southwest facing bowl below the Pinder/Horn saddle. Not from the top of the bowl and certainly not from the saddle itself – although it's worth going up to there for the views.

What of the mysterious Apollo Road? From the summit we could see quite clearly the streak of lighter green that indicates where it used to be. The overgrown spur we had spotted off Artlish Main was indeed Apollo. The guidebooks are seriously put of date – as is the road. It's impractical to all intents and purposes.

This article originally appeared on the SummitPost website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/343037/exploring-northern-vancouver-island-pinder-peak.html> for the original article and lots more photos.

Participants: Martin Smith and Tony Vaughn.

Conuma and Tlupana Peak*

Lindsay Elms

September 18 – 19



The stone arch of Conuma Peak from below PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

Martin Smith, Tony Vaughn and I had been exchanging emails for a few days as they had just been into the Conuma area looking at access to Conuma Peak. They had read Sasha Kubicek (2004) and Sandy Briggs (1997) stories in the Bushwhackers and were hoping they too could climb the mountain from the H-60 logging road, however, much to their dismay they found the road that went up the valley deactivated. They spent the morning thrashing about in the mist looking for anything that vaguely resembled the description that Sandy and Sasha had written but eventually gave up. They thought they might have been in the wrong drainage so they checked out a couple of other roads. Unfortunately they came away empty handed and put their failure down to "stupidity/cowardice/unwillingness to get wet."

They feared that access to Conuma Peak was closed. That's when they emailed me hoping I could shed some light on the subject. I told them I would contact them in a few days time as I was about to go back to the peak.

I had climbed Conuma Peak in winter conditions back in February 1990 directly off the H-60 which at that time they were actively logging as we drove up. Last year, while climbing Leighton and Stevens Peak, I had again looked at Conuma Peak as I was interested in visiting the giant arch on the West Face. I had noted a couple of roads on the west side that were probable access points. One went up under the Northwest Ridge while the other cut across the western aspect to just below the crest of the South Ridge. I had been thinking about the road near the South Ridge but as Val and I drove up I quickly changed my mind and decided to go up the Northwest Ridge. This would give us shorter access to the arch.

Val got off night shift at 8 a.m. so when she got home we threw everything in the vehicle and I drove out while she snoozed. At noon I parked the vehicle near the end of the road under the Northwest Ridge and we put our packs on. I had no qualms about beginning at this time of the day as the weather looked good and we still had eight hours of daylight left.

From the end of the road we cut across the slash into the old growth and began heading straight up. There were a few bluffs that we circumvented and some steep gullies that we climbed in until we were forced onto spurs but after just over an hour we were on the flat ridge that angled up and across firstly to the Northwest Ridge/Face and then to the arch. We continued climbing up angling across to the big cleft that cuts under the arch. We found a way into the cleft and then climbed up the steep, loose gully until we were directly beneath the giant arch. It was an amazing place to stand with big walls hemming us in and a rock bridge looming overhead that looked like it could collapse at any time. We just hoped that would not be any tectonic movement in the plates under Vancouver Island at this very moment.

Being ever the explorer and looking for an easy way up Val ventured up the gully. The challenge was to not send any loose rock down. A bit further up Val navigated around a large block of ice that remained hidden from the sun. Further on the gully widened and looking up you could see what appeared to be the summit off in the distance. The only way out of the gully appeared to be to the right where it might be possible to

find a route but not without bringing down lots of rock.

For years a rumour has circulated about a helicopter flying through the arch but looking at it from here there wouldn't be much leeway. It would be a very tight squeeze and the down-draft from the rotors would send a lot of loose rock flying in all directions in that confined space! I personally couldn't see it happening.

It was cold in the gully as the sun didn't penetrate into it at this time of the year so we climbed back down then out onto the route we had climbed and back into the sun. We looked at the ridge/face and I thought it feasible but it would require some intricate route finding to get up. A small bench led us onto the face and then we zig-zagged our way up eventually reaching the summit about 5 p.m. We read through the summit registered and then scrambled over to look down on the arch. Even from the top it didn't look like it offered



View from Tlupana Peak: Malaspina Pk (centre), Stevens Pk, Mt Alava, Mt Bate (snowfield), Conuma Pk (middle distance). PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

much room for a mistake by a helicopter.

We spent twenty minutes on top before beginning the descent. Almost immediately I pulled the rope out as rappelling the tricky sections would be quicker than scouting around looking for an easy descent route. In all we made five rappels, some off trees, the others around large boulders or horns of rock. It definitely helped speed up the descent.

We then angled down to the flat Northwest Ridge and then plunged down towards the road. By now the sun dropped over the horizon and I realized I had left my headlamp in the vehicle. The steep bush seemed to go on and on and we put off using Val's headlamp for as long as possible but by 8 p.m. we finally pulled it out. I learned a valuable les-

son and that is never to do a climb without my headlamp in my pack. With just one between us the going was slow and tedious especially in the thick bush we encountered but by 9 we broke out of the bush unscathed, had a short descent through the slash and then a five minute walk along the road to the vehicle. We had a late dinner back at the Upana Caves carpark.

The next morning was another beautiful day and we decided to climb the unnamed granite peak to the south of Bull Lake near the summit of the Gold River/Tahsis road. I had been looking at this small peak for years and always thought it would be an interesting excursion and it did prove to be just that. We parked down the road from Bull Lake at a small pull-out. Although the climb looked straight forward, I made sure I had my headlamp and the rope in my pack. I have found over the years that although the peaks are generally lower out on the coast, the terrain is steeper and there are lots of small bluffs hidden in the trees and on many a climb I have had to make short rappels on the descent.

The terrain was steep and the rock bluffs kept forcing us to our left until we found a breach in the rockwall. Once on top of that we just had thick underbrush to content with. After a couple of hours we were on a subalpine ridge looking at the final ascent ridge to the summit. Heather benches zig-zagged up through the granite bluffs and where ever we could we climbed the granite because the rock was so solid and nice to climb over. Just below the summit we came upon a beautiful small tarn nestled amidst the granite and thought this would make an exquisite camp spot if one was to come up here on an overnight excursion. About 11 a.m. we reached the summit and there was no sign anyone had been up here before us.

We spent a wonderful hour on the summit enjoying the weather and taking in the views. After consulting the map and viewing the adjacent valley it appeared that we might be able to descend via an alternative route. We traversed across the ridge to the south then dropped off it and picked up scree benches that took us down onto a spur. The spur seemed to go all the way down to the creek and then it would be a short walk down the creek to the old logging road. However, we soon found that there was a large rock headwall that swept around the valley but was hidden from our view. I looked over the edge and saw that it was too big to rapp down but my instinct was telling me to traverse to my right and we would get through it. The terrain was steep and the bush thick but we were able to gradually angle down and eventually find a small, steep spur that we could get down by hanging off tree roots and branches. Looking back at the headwall we had found the only slim line through it. We got into the creekbed then followed it down for half an hour until we hit the deactivated logging road. An hour later we were down on the Gold River/Tahsis Road and thumbed a ride back to our vehicle. The peak was a beautiful little climb of just over 1,340m (4,400ft) but the great thing about it is you don't need to drive any rough logging roads to get to it as it comes straight off the main road.

* We decided at first to name this peak Upana Mountain but after doing a quick search I found there was a peak near Gold River with that nomenclature, so instead we called it Tlupana Peak. At the moment this is an unofficial name, however, the information has been sent to the Naming office in the Toponomy Department to get this officially sanctioned as Tlupana Peak.

Participants: Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms



Coast Mountains and the Rockies

Exploring around Franklin Arm, Chilko Lake

Dave Campbell

June 30 – July 9

I don't know where my initial interest in Chilko Lake came from, but it seems as if it has always been near the top of my list of places I needed to go to. Every description of the lake that I have seen suggests that it is breath-taking and adding a canoe journey to a mountaineering trip always adds an extra element of adventure.

I perused the maps of the area, and one idea seemed to immediately stick out. Franklin Arm is the only major distraction to the long and narrow Chilko Lake. From near the south end of Chilko Lake, Franklin Arm heads out to the southwest from the main lake. Two main river systems, Nine Mile Creek and Deschamps Creek, feed into Franklin Arm. A natural horseshoe formed around Nine Mile Creek and Deschamps Creek; the divide could be gained on the north side of the Arm and continues around to Good Hope Creek (with an attempt of Good Hope Mountain of course.) The main obstacle of the route was fairly obvious. About half-way along the traverse stands Majestic Peak. The ridgelines all drop fairly dramatically towards the valleys in this area, such that the only practical route through is to either follow a long valley bushwhack down Nine Mile Creek and back up Deschamps Creek (defeating the purpose of a traverse, plus it is notoriously bad bush) or climb up and over Majestic Peak. On the map it looked like the Majestic route "might" go. While I was at the Air Photo Library in Victoria I had a look at the air photos and the route was still a question mark.

It seems that for anyone has never been to Chilko Lake (like myself) that there is no clear consensus as to whether canoeing the lake is a reasonable thing to do or not. The official BC Parks stance is that the lake is so windy that canoeing on the lake is downright foolish. Articles I had read suggested that canoeing on Chilko is a sane proposition, just be

careful. That said, the lake is pretty damned windy and it seems like this is the case most of the time. It can be calm in the mornings, but this is not always the case. Following the shoreline can be pretty safe (there aren't many great landing sites but it is certainly possible to pull ashore at most places in an emergency) and the major challenge can be getting across the lake which is about three kilometres wide at its narrowest. Expect to be shore-bound for days.

In preparation for the winds, I spent the week before the trip building a spray skirt for my canoe. I used some blue tarpaulin I had and duct tape which I later sewed up since it didn't fare to well in the wet. I drilled a bunch of attachment holes in the side of the canoe and I just sort of eyed-up the depth. Once I had finished drilling, I became fairly paranoid that I had drilled them too low and that they would leak. It seemed like a stupid thing to do (make a perfectly good canoe into a leaky bucket) particularly since ABS canoes are hard to patch. To make sure it would work okay, I took the canoe up to Westwood Lake with the family after work one day and loaded it up with about 600 lbs. Plenty of free-board so I was pretty happy.

I met up with Chris Michalak at the Horseshoe Bay ferry terminal in at the end of June. I needed to get the canoe and gear over on the ferry (on foot.) I managed to rig up the canoe onto my bike trailer. The main problem was that the canoe was too wide so I had to put the wheels near the stern of the canoe. With all the gear in the canoe, it was a pretty heavy since the weight was resting on my shoulder rather than on the wheels. I managed to get over without too many problems other than trying to negotiate the pedestrian area on the other side.

Chris met me on the other side and we loaded gear in the car and headed off for the Chilcotins. Although it isn't that far as the crow flies, it really seems like a long way around. We pulled into the campsite out of the Nemiah Valley on Chilko Lake. It was neat being in the Nemiah Valley for the first time too (I named my daughter after the valley.) It was about 7 p.m. and we had a look at the lake, which was still very windy, and decided to wait until morning. We spent

the evening packing up and going for a walk to a nice lookout over the lake.

We woke up pretty early and the lake was calm. We loaded up the car and headed off. Because the lake was so calm we made really good time. The views across the lake to the Capitol Group are amazing. In a few hours we were into Franklin Arm. About half-way down the arm the wind started to pick up a bit. By the time we pulled into the mouth of Good Hope Creek it was blowing fairly strong and it was a bit of a struggle to make headway. At Good Hope Creek we stashed extra food, an inflatable kayak (for getting back across the inlet at the end of the trip,) extra paddles and our lifejackets, as we figured it was best to have them for the inflatable kayak trip on the way back. Then we climbed back in the canoes and paddled to the other side of the arm where we stashed the canoe.

It was still early in the afternoon so we decided to get a bit of hiking in for the day. I was amazed by Chris's packing. He had brought a 40L pack for the seven days of the trip and had managed to fit it all (except for a package of his crackers that I carried.) It was pretty funny because the pack was super dense and it was a bit surprising how heavy it was for its size.

The bushwhacking began immediately! It was quite thick and our progress was pretty slow. We only made it about one and a half kilometres before we decided to stop for the evening. We found that because the bush was so thick, it was easiest to follow a line up though a number of rock outcrops that wound their way up to the alpine. We camped on one of the outcrops.

The next day we were up and back into the bush. The bush eased off a bit at about 5,500', and then we hit snowline. We worked our way up to the main divide and then started following the ridgeline to the west. By lunch we were at a small group of small lakes surrounded by huge moraines. Chris had a bit of a cold and wasn't feeling to well, so we decided that we would set up camp for the day. Just as we set up the tent, the rain began.

The next day was still raining so we sat around for most of it, but hummed and hawed about whether to make a move (it was wet but it wasn't horrible.) Chris has got himself a satellite phone just before this trip, so he decided to give it a test run, and called in for a weather forecast. The forecast was for rain for the rest of the day, and then blue-bird for the rest of the week. After getting the forecast, we didn't feel the need to jump to it too much, but later in the day it began to



Chris Michalak canoeing in a calmer moment on Chilko Lake PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

clear and we moved camp a few kilometres along the ridge. As it was clearing, we had amazing views over to Good Hope Mountain but the route over Majestic Peak was still partly obscured.

The next morning we made our way down to the Hamilton Glacier and then over to the Northwest Ridge on Majestic. As we worked our way up to the ridge we had our first view of the upper route on Majestic. I was pretty quickly convinced that the route was beyond what I wanted to get involved in. There was a lot of snow on the upper ridge which was starting to get pretty soft. My main objection was that the runout from the ridge was pretty bad and I wasn't convinced we could safely climb it.

Plan B involved going up the East Ridge of Majestic's Southeast Peak. Since it was getting on in the day, we decided that it would be best to tackle it the next day. We decided to spend the rest of the day exploring Regal Peak and Consort Peak. We climbed Regal Peak via its South Ridge and found no cairn on the summit. The views from the top were amazing. Across to the west were Queen Bess and peaks around the Nostetuko River. The 1:50,000 map is mapped incorrectly between Regal and Consort Peaks (there is a couple hundred foot unmapped gendarme in between, and Consort is probably a few hundred feet higher than mapped.) We continued along the ridge towards Consort but decided to call it a day when we hit 4th class terrain. We then headed down from the ridge between Consort and Regal and set up a camp on the Austen Glacier. The views from the camp up to Majestic were pretty neat.

The next morning we were off and up an open slope that headed up to the East Ridge on the Majestic sub-peak. The

ridge is fairly impenetrable other than at this spot. From the ridge we worked our way up along towards the sub-peak. We tended to stay on the rocks since it was usually more firm and not corniced. It was typically 3rd class. In a few spots we hit out onto the snow and even roped up and belayed at a couple of sections. The final stretch to the top of the sub-peak involved a traverse that was fairly exposed to the southeast side of the sub-peak (about a 4,000 foot drop into Nine Mile Creek.) I was pretty glad to have the rope on since the snow had really softened in the heat of the day, and I was sending sloughs off with nearly every step which were developing into fairly wide, shallow surface avalanches. I was glad to be able to be near enough to rock that I could sling a horn for protection rather than relying on pickets.

Once on the top of the Southeast Peak of Majestic I found I was pretty bagged emotionally from the climb. The traverse over to the main peak involved a steep descent to the col between the two peaks and about a kilometre of snow-covered rock ridge. Our route to carry on with the traverse involved similar snow covered steep rock, with one particularly burly looking section which left a few question marks to me as to whether it would go. I wasn't too keen on getting over committed on the mountain and having to backtrack, so I decided that it was going to be too much of a stress to try to force the route. Since there weren't too many alternatives to get around Majestic and finish the traverse (other than a long valley bushwhack,) and not much time, we decided to bail and follow our footsteps out the way we had come in.

We headed back down the ridge, and camped on the Austen Glacier where we had the night before. The next day we had a late start. The big elevation gain of the day was right at the start and we had to climb a gully up about 1,500' to gain the Hamilton Glacier. From there we made our way back to our second camp beside the moraine lakes.

From the top of the ridge above Franklin Arm, we could easily see how to piece together the rock outcrops (i.e. less bush) almost the entire way to the arm. These outcrops ended up being pretty tricky to negotiate in a couple of places (including one where we had to take our packs off) but it was way better than the bush. The last kilometre to the lake was the worst and this took quite a while. We finally made it down to the canoe and loaded our gear up and headed over to Good Hope Creek where we had stashed the rest of our gear. Chris managed to jump into the lake and convinced me to do the same. We set up camp and got ourselves ready for the morning.

The wind blew most of the night. We got up a little after 5:00. It wasn't too windy, but it wasn't calm. We loaded the canoe and starting the journey out. We made it out of Franklin Arm and then pulled ashore for a quick bit of food and

water. The wind had picked up a bit, but it was still manageable. We decided we would give the crossing of Chilko Lake a go. We hopped back in the canoe and started to head out from the shore. We got about 300m out when we really hit into the wind. The waves were high and we were really fighting to keep the canoe on track (not to mention I was getting sea-sick.) I was surprised because the wind was coming from the north, whereas it has always come from the south and west during the trip so far. We decided that the crossing was a bit much so we chose to head back to the west side of the lake and ride the waves along the shoreline.

We followed the west side of the lake until we hit the mouth of Tredcroft Creek. This made a logical place to hold up and wait for better weather since it was the last good open camp spot and is also the narrowest point for crossing Chilko Lake. It was about 9:30 a.m. when we pulled our canoe in and we proceeded to wait. Shortly after we arrived the winds began to blow even harder and stayed that way for the rest of the day. By 9:00 at night it was still blowing hard so we decided to camp and wait until morning (we only had a few kilometres left to go to the car.)

Again we woke up at a little after 5:00 a.m.. It was still a little windy, but it seemed reasonable to attempt a crossing. We loaded the canoe up and headed off. We headed more or less straight across the lake and then followed the eastern shore back to the campground and car. After about two hours we were at the campground; glad to be back safe and sound, and off for the long journey back home. On the return journey I managed to load the canoe better for carrying it onto and off of the ferry by loading all the weight over the wheels. It was so manageable that I decided to portage all the way back home (I live about one kilometre from the ferry terminal and my wife wasn't home to pick me up.) I did get a few strange looks from people coming off the ferry!

Chilko Lake definitely lives up to its reputation. It is a truly beautiful place, and it seems like a place that you could easily get wrapped up in exploring. It has a lot of terrain that is similar along the eastern fringes of the main ice-fields along the Coast Range like the Tchaikazan, Pantheon or Niut Ranges. The canoe approach adds an extra element which really enhances the character of a journey there. Park status further adds to its charm. As you paddle around the lake there is very little or no signs of human industrial development (we did see about three motorized boats the entire trip.) Despite not being successful on our original idea, this trip was truly a top-notch experience. I was keen on the idea of Chilko Lake before I had even been there and now that I have been there, I am itching for my next trip.

Participants: Chris Michalak and Dave Campbell.

A Day Out in the Coast Mountains: Mount Joffre's NE Couloir

Rick Hudson

July 7 - 8



From the Duffy Lake Rd, Mt Matier on the left and Mt Joffre on the right. PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

The Duffy Lake Road climbs away from Pemberton towards Lillooet, rising 800 metres from the valley as it crosses the Coast Range's watershed. This auto-assisted bonus has not been lost on those who favour wheeled, rather than bi-pedal, energy as a means to gain altitude quickly. Shortly before Duffy Lake itself, Cerisse Creek flows in from the south and, from the road, two magnificent peaks are seen. Mt. Matier (2,783m) is the highest in the area, and presents an impressive snow pyramid to the roadside observer. Slightly closer to the highway, Mt. Joffre (2,721m) shows its great north side, split by two snow and ice couloirs that drop from summit to glacier.

From the comfort of the road, Pete and I regarded the two vertical lines, white against the dark rock. They were still well filled (after an exceptional winter snowpack,) and although July would normally be a little late to consider them, they appeared to be in condition.

"The left one looks better," said Pete.

"But there's a humungous *bergschrund* at the bottom, and no snow bridge," I replied.

"Details, details," muttered my twenty something son. "Let's see what it looks like when we get there."

The summer track to the car park in Cerisse Creek is now completely bushed, with alder from the left meeting alder

from the right. No matter, when you have a beat-up Xterra and no paintwork, that's just another detail. We ploughed through the shrubbery, branches raking the sides, hoping we didn't meet any traffic coming down the green tunnel.

At the trailhead the bugs were bad, and we headed for the old growth as quickly as we could pack and get away. There, the shade reduced their constant attacks, and an hour and a quarter

later we reached Keith's Hut, where a metre of snow still lay on the ground. The air was hot, the weather forecast positive. Inside, we ate, played cards until twilight, and turned in just as a Japanese contingent arrived. They had taken eight hours to find the hut. They were hungry, tired and much bitten.

It was light at 5 o'clock, and we got away early, heading up the broad ridge that is the favoured route for skiing onto the Joffre-Matier col in winter. Ahead, Joffre's impressive East Ridge towered, its upper slopes vanishing into cloud. That reminded us - the weather didn't appear to be following the forecast. About half way up, it began to rain lightly.

"This is not quality," said Pete.

"Well, if the couloir turns out to be too wet, we can always do the East Ridge."

"No way. When those rocks get damp, they're like ice. Except, you can't use crampons."

I bowed to his knowledge - he'd done the ridge the previous year.

Getting to the start of our couloir (the left-hand one) was going to be a challenge. We wouldn't be able to see until the last minute whether there was reasonable access. The plan was to climb a snow slope to the left of the couloir, and then right-traverse in above the *bergschrund*. In steady mist, Pete led a full 60m run-out across the slope. The snow was OK, although he pushed in pickets dangerously easily, as the rope edged out. At the end of the pitch he kicked a small platform, buried an axe, and called me across.

We were still a rope length from the couloir, and much ground lay hidden. Passing him, I collected the gear and traversed on, driving both axe shafts into the steep snow as I continued right. A snow bulge passed. A rock outcrop was all that now blocked the view. Below, the couloir dropped away alarmingly over the *bergschrund* to the glacier below. A few more moves, and I was round. There was indeed access to the bottom of the chimney. "Looks good!" I yelled back, and started climbing up, rather than across.

A good thread-belay round a real chockstone (don't trust those snow stakes,) and Pete joined me in short order. Look-



Driving both axe shafts into the steep snow as Rick continued right. Rick at the start of the couloir. PHOTO: PETE HUDSON

ing up, the couloir appeared straightforward, except our visibility was limited to barely 20 metres. Beyond that, everything vanished into a world of gray and white. Pete gripped his axes and almost bounded up the slope – you’ve got to love the strength and confidence of youth! Some minutes later a “Secure!” from the mists above got me moving again, after standing too long and getting cold.

There followed seven pitches, each similar, each different. The snow was steep, but just soft enough to get a good purchase with crampons, and the ice underneath crunchy enough to take protection. There was also a happy absence of loose rock lying in the chute. Rubble on the surface is always a bad sign, especially when climbing mid-summer.

At the top of the 4th pitch, I tucked in under a rock island that split the snow couloir above. “Don’t remember this,” said Pete, when he reached me. “Which way, do you think?”

I stared into the gloom above. “No idea. Maybe stay left – it looks easier.” Pete disappeared upwards. The rope moved out steadily – reassuring when you can’t see the leader.

Nearing the top, we sensed rather than saw the skyline closing with us. It was Pete’s pitch. Dimly above, the snow ended and a short rock wall led to the ridge. The scotch mist had eased, but the cloud was thick, and in just a few metres Pete vanished into it. From above, there came much grunting. One or two rocks went sliding downslope. Finally, the line paid out smoothly. “I’m up,” came a disconnected voice from above. “Took my crampons off for the last couple of moves.”

The rope pulled tight, and I set off diagonally across a small amphitheatre toward his exit point. It was surprisingly steep. Despite the top rope, I was sweating, not least because the thin ice underfoot meant my crampons were scratching a steeply sloping rock slab underneath. Stepping up carefully, trying to distribute my weight evenly on three points, while moving the fourth, I finally reached the wall, and gratefully curled a wet glove round a friendly jug of granodiorite. Minutes later, we shook hands on the ridge. We’d been climbing for four hours.

Pete’s previous East Ridge experience now proved handy. Blind in the white-out, we followed the shape of the ridge towards the summit, before angling down to find the descent route.

“There’s only one snow chute on the south side,” shouted Pete cheerfully, and then added, “All the others bluff out.” That’s not what you want to hear in a white-out. “Ah, here’s the Aussie Couloir now,” he called. Far below, I just caught a glimpse of sunlight on the glacier.

Participants: Pete and Rick Hudson

ACC-VI Summer Camp 2007: Stanley Mitchell Hut

Cedric Zala
July 28 – August 3

The cry went up: there’s a moose outside! And sure enough, when we rushed out onto the ample porch of the Whiskyjack Lodge there was indeed a bull moose foraging just a stone’s throw away in the woods. It was an awesome sight, and as it turned out, a happy portent of a great week to come.

Our 2007 ACC-VI Summer Camp took place July 28 – Aug 3 and was based at the Stanley Mitchell Hut in Little Yoho Valley. Most of us drove up from Victoria on the Saturday and met up at the WhiskyJack Lodge opposite Takakkaw Falls in Yoho Valley. We had decided to hire porters to help us carry our food and equipment on our eleven kilometre



The Vice President and the President above Little Yoho valley PHOTO: CEDRIC ZALA

hike in to the hut, and I had budgeted for about 450 pounds, with some of our members sharing a porter. On the Sunday morning, sure enough, the porters arrived but it soon became clear that the amount of stuff we had in store for them was more than their carrying capacity – even with some of them putting in two round trips that day. With some food and personal effects still down at the WhiskyJack Lodge by dinner-time on Monday, we started to become a bit concerned.

Then, just at dusk, head porter Neil Baker arrived, to general acclaim. Neil had carried our remaining stuff (110 pounds worth) up that evening all by himself, after a day that included porting another load to a group south of Canmore, getting a flat tire on his bike on the way out, and being charged by a grizzly with cubs while running back along the trail carrying his bike! Bravo for Neil! Afterwards I found out that the total weight carried was actually 650 pounds, so no wonder there were so many trips involved. And this experience taught me that anyone using porters would be well advised to strictly control the weight that each member contributes to the carry.

Once up at the Hut, there were lots of options for hikes and climbs. There is a very well developed trail network in Yoho Valley, with the most scenic being the Iceline, an alternative route to the valley trail between the WhiskyJack and Stanley Mitchell. There are also trails below the Whaleback, over to the teahouse by Twin Falls, and to Celeste Lake. Most of us were content to hike while on the trails, but on one occasion we encountered Sandy Stewart dripping with sweat, running happily uphill from the teahouse up to the hut. There is also a good trail up to Kiwetinok Lake, a fine

place for a dip for cryophilic souls like our indomitable Mike Hubbard.

The mountains are spectacular, with the highest being the President and Vice-President to the south of the hut. Numerous of our group made the trek up the glacier and scrambled to the summit, with most doing the Vice-President as well, which added about an hour to the trip. The group that went up on Monday was so exhilarated that the guys formed a chorus line in the snow. Many others also made the climb, some of them thanks to Geoff and Rick having put on an introductory snow school for the benefit of those willing participants who did not previously have ice-axe/glacier-travel skills. (Many thanks to Geoff and Rick for doing this – it was much appreciated.)

There were also excellent trips to the mountains north of the hut, with three and even four peak days being achieved. The north mountains trip I was a member of followed a trail starting just outside the hut, horseshoed along a glacier to climb Isolated Peak, next doubled back and across the glacier to summit McArthur, and then went along a ridge to Pollinger. It was along that ridge that I was amazed by the changes in the surface – most of it was the usual Rockies debris, but there were some fairly extensive areas of fine deposits as soft as a foamy and a treat



(L to R) Sandy Stewart, Geoff Bennett, Cedric Zala, Rick Hudson, Ronan O'Sullivan, and Roger Painter on the summit of the President

PHOTO: GEOFF BENNETT



ACC-VI Summer Camp group at Stanley Mitchell Hut PHOTO: SANDY STEWART

to walk on. Once on Pollinger, four of the group (Rick, Sandy, Geoff and Patrick) then made it a four-peak day by climbing Kiwetinok, but I decided that that was enough for me for one day, and Mike and Roger and I went down via Kiwetinok Lake for a (very) quick dip and a sunbathe.

The Stanley Mitchell hut is a fine place to stay, with a large open meadow in front and a great view of the President range. It is also blessed with an assortment of wildlife, with ground squirrels in their holes just outside, pesky chipmunks running about inside, and a marmot living under the hut. The hut is also at the natural turning point for day-trippers from Takakkaw Falls, and there were often people wanting to take a look inside.

There was also the toilet paper saga – we had to bring our own, of course, and blithely divided the twenty-four rolls between the two outhouses on the Sunday. By the next day there were only twelve rolls left and at this rate there would be a major crisis in just one day's time. This was solved by taking the rolls inside, well out of the reach of the general public and folks in the adjacent campsite. Crisis averted!

The meals were tasty and hearty, with appetizers served at 5:30 SHARP (after a vigorous debate and vote on timing during the first evening), a main course (sometimes with the mellowing influence of wine) and dessert. Some evenings there was a bit of music, too, since there was a twelve string guitar with six remaining strings, which was enough to accompany some singing. A favourite tune was a John Denver song which we morphed into "Yoho Valley Rocky Mountain High", and we sometimes sang "Morningtown" as a prelude to the night's sleep.

The last night turned out to be performance night, with Rick reciting a humorous ballad about a contest between two climbers for the hand of a fair maiden, Lissa and Geoff presenting *The Cremation of Sam McGee* (with audience participation), Sandy reciting a poem with a message, and Cedric singing *The Song of the Woad*.

The time flew by, the peaks fell one by one, and all too soon it was time to leave. For me the week was a really wonderful experience, with an atmosphere of great camaraderie. Thanks to everyone who attended for helping make it such a good time.

Participants: Geoff Bennett, Patrick Donker, Kari Frazer, Terry Gagne, Mike Hubbard, Phee Hudson, Rick Hudson, Daphne Kessel, Graham Maddocks, Ann Mais, Manuel Marechal, Sylvia Moser, Brenda Moysey, Brenda O'Sullivan, Ronan O'Sullivan, Roger Painter, Anja Pakendorf, Karen Payie, Claire Shaw, Gerta Smythe, Sandy Stewart, Jules Thomson, Liz Turner, Liz Williams, Cedric and Lissa Zala.

Tonquin Valley: Pixels for Paragon

Russ Moir
August 3

Sometimes getting up a mountain is like walking up a steep sidewalk. Route options are limited, navigation could almost be done with one eye closed and decisions are often straightforward. Paragon Southeast Ridge, on the surface, looked somewhat of a simple track. Yes, it is a steep, well-defined pyramid of granite and, as from the guide book, the classic ridge seemed pretty obvious, if you ignored the fact of having to navigate somehow onto the castellated ridge and then up several rock bluffs. Getting on to the ridge at the right point was obviously a key and the foreshortened view from the Waites-Gibson Hut was a bit sketchy.

But Rudi has a simple approach to life; "OK, no problem," is a standard response to situations and this wasn't going to be an exception. Along with Doug Hurrell the two of us had been exploring and climbing around the south side of the Ramparts, a bold, defined wall of rocky pinnacles on the south side of the Tonquin Valley in the Rockies. We'd previously gone up MacDonell (bit of a plod) and had spied out Paragon from our more exhilarating climb up "Centennial Peak", which is the West Peak of Outpost's twin summits. "Centennial" is the name we found in the summit register, the only entry being the Centennial climb by the Rocky Mountain Section to celebrate the ACC's birthday, so we took that as gospel.



Tonquin Peaks: Paragon and Redoubt PHOTO: RUSS MOIR

Paragon itself lies across from Centennial, at the south-east end of the Ramparts chain, next to the imposing fangs of Dungeon and Redoubt. We *sort of knew* the route we wanted but when you actually rub noses with a steep peak, much sense of perspective vanishes and you're left to grope through a maze of possible ways. Getting to the notch on the main ridge was going to be critical.

For me, a novel *intervention* came about while we were talking ourselves into the climb at the hut. On arrival we had met and chatted to Peter Amman, a well known Rockies guide. He'd just led a client up Paragon and extolled its virtues of sound rock, fine climbing and great positions. When we asked him for *details*, he started off with the usual 'mind-map' approach, along with generous use of hand gestures. Then he stopped, went to his pack and pulled out a small digital camera. "Wait a sec and I'll show you". On the tiny screen Paragon appeared - we could see just as good a view from the hut.

With a flick of his finger he zoomed in. I was amazed, just as I am when I Google Earth!

The ridge got closer and closer; gullies appeared, blocks jumped out from the frame. At some stage he stopped the zoom and he began to point with his stubby finger at a blow-by-blow route description, especially on the access to the main ridge.

With this midjet gadget he'd stuck the route in our face, clearly seen in high definition. I did ask that modern 'dumb question' - "How many pixels does this thing have?" The figure he mentioned was more than any I'd ever seen. I was impressed; I'd seen *the future!* The days of groping around fol-

lowing an obscure dotted line in a guide book are numbered. All you'll need is a download of some JPG and you're away to the races. Just get enough pixels and zoom in, keep your eyes on the screen! Needless to say, that's oversimplifying things.

On the day of the climb, Rudi and I set off early in promising dawn light, heading over several low moraines and up a daunting slope of perched blocks. Doug had opted to have a rest day. We did at least know better now just where we needed to head for. The going was sweaty, but no big problems cropped up as we reached the well defined notch to the left of a series of teetering rock pinnacles.

The sun shone and the rock felt warm and solid; lovely progress. We had a joyful trog up the narrow edge, only occasionally having to step onto the deep void hanging over the

Tonquin valley across from Dungeon Peak. The guide book suggests "go right when faced with difficulties." Occasionally we spotted rap slings and I had the haughty thought of them as being superfluous climbing junk.

As we scrambled up the blocky summit we felt elated. We'd hardly stopped on the ascent, roped up only one mid 5th wall and enjoyed sound quartzite rock the whole way up the ridge. The views over the Tonquin Valley across towards Mount Edith Cavell and over to Bennington were delightful. We nibbled and drank happily, though wary of the changing



Rudi Brugger descends Paragon PHOTO: RUSS MOIR

skies. Clouds were building up from the west and occasional bangs warned of an approaching storm.

On the long descent I learned the story behind the rap slings. Sleet, which overtook us, turned the secure slabs into skid pans. The greasy lichen made a mockery of my earlier confidence. We rapped several long lengths back to the notch where our previous easy scramble seemed now an exposed wet rubble heap. The thunder across on Bennington was an ominous backcloth.

Traversing carefully on a diagonal slant we huddled under dripping overhangs setting up rappels and was soon down to our last loops, but we felt no guilt. Cold wet hands and slick holds made us cautious on slopes we'd ascended so easily in the dry morning.

By the time we were back on the moraines the rain had ceased, though now we were wet enough for me not to notice too much when I skidded off a wet boulder and slopped full length into the river, which drains the corrie tarn below the clouded ridges.

It was two soggy but satisfied souls who slouched back into the warm hut as evening set in. A great day!

PS. I could show you a great shot of our route on Paragon, but *my pixels aren't up to much*.

Participants: Rudi Brugger, Doug Hurrell and Russ Moir.

Grandparents Day on Bugaboo Spire

Chris Ruttan
September 9

To start a tale such as this we must return to an earlier time, a time when life was simpler and I thought simple thoughts like “wouldn't it be fun to be the Conrad Kain Hut custodian for a season.” And so it happened that I, Grandpa to my four grandchildren, came to be one of the two custodians at Kain Hut for the summer of 2007.

What started as a curious opportunity to see the Bugaboo Mountains and Kain Hut turned into a passion for making that hut my own and as welcoming a place for the visitors as it could be. That conviction to the job precluded any significant chance to climb for me but I was as happy as a clam. I did manage to do a lot of exploring relatively close to the hut and away from the glaciers which I had to avoid rather than travel alone. I made two trips to the summit of Eastpost Spire, each from opposite sides as well as a trip to the summit of Crescent Spire, both peaks easy scrambles. My favorite

trip during my time as custodian was a day trip over to Cobalt Lake with its beautiful setting and wonderful geology.

Custodians have responsibility for two adjacent campsites as well as the hut. One kilometre further on the trail from the hut and 200 metres higher in elevation is Applebea Dome Camp which has no real restriction on the number of campers and one busy stretch during a shift of mine we had forty-eight tents for a few days. There are also ten campsites just below the hut in the trees called Boulder Camp but few campers use it due to the extra distance to the climbs which, after all, is the focus of most visitors to the park. Many people make their way past Conrad Kain Hut and up the steep moraine to Applebea Camp where they can stay for only five dollars per night and also be considerably closer to the popular climbs. Between the two campgrounds, the hut and the many day hikers I met literally hundreds of people, many of whom I got to know reasonably well and some I came to count as friends, Tay Hanson, a BC Parks Ranger assigned to Bugaboo Park was one of those friends. Over the season Tay and I had engaged in many conversations about the climbs he partook of on every occasion possible and I came to learn he is an accomplished climber. It was clear to me if I was ever to get out on a real climb here Tay would likely be my best choice as partner. As it happened he said he was willing to do that but as the season progressed I began to wonder if it would happen until my last shift, the first two weeks of September. Tay had arrived on a snowy day, September 6 with a climbing partner, Todd Nichols to spend one last break from work before the season was over. The weather hadn't been too bad and the snow that Friday was light and only really stuck on the higher ground. Tay announced that he and Todd would take me on a climb on Sunday which was looking to be an excellent weather day.

Now I had heard stories of people being cowed by some of the routes commonly climbed in the park but the route most often noted for shaking up its challengers was the Northeast Ridge of Bugaboo Spire. People had been forced to overnight there and many came back with a keen respect for the commitment of the climb. Imagine my surprise when Tay said that would be our objective for Sunday. After a stunned silence I commenced to enumerate the problems I could see; the days were much shorter now late in the season; I had only ever done one other serious multi-pitch climb; we had a recent dusting of snow and both of my partners were out of their minds. I could make no headway, however, in my attempts to dissuade them and in fact they seemed to only become more delighted with this obviously flawed plan. I got silly grins and such heartening encouragements as “don't worry it's a piece of cake” “you'll be surprised at how easy it is” etc. I just assumed these two had climbed it so many times it was second nature and they had chosen it for that reason, not quite the case however.



Tay Hanson and Chris Ruttan on the Bugaboo-Crescent col, with the NE ridge of Bugaboo Spire behind PHOTO: CHRIS RUTTAN

We left the hut at 6 a.m. under twinkling starlight and made our way up the familiar trail to Applebea Camp which was empty on that particular day, one reason why I could leave my duties for a day. From there the long trudge across to the Crescent Glacier which we skirted around below Crescent Spire till we reached the base of the wall below the Bugaboo/Crescent Col. A stiff fourth class climb up onto the col proper then up finally to the ledge where it was time for reality to set her teeth. Once again I probed those young minds for any semblance of sanity but it was in vain.

The first pitch is the highest rating on the climb and my young companions assured me if my fifty-five year old carcass could negotiate this pitch the rest would go, no problem. The sun was up now and on the face, it was 8:30 a.m. when we started the climb. Tay led the first pitch and then swapped with Todd for the rest of the day each one leading alternate pitches.

I had no trouble with the first pitch with exception of suspecting that my huge pack was going to be a problem, I began to relax a bit. The next two pitches went with no serious issues and though it was chilly there was promise of warmth

in the rising sun, little did I know what was literally around the corner. On the rest of the pitches we faced the reality of the Northeast Ridge, snow on every ledge, in every crack and point of purchase and the sun was blocked from us. The long pitches of chimney climbing that would have been so easy without the snow became a serious trial with frozen fingers and hands jamming cracks, feet slowly becoming more and more senseless and that cursed huge pack hanging me up again and again. All about us as far as we could see the harsh teeth of the seemingly endless mountains in the chill light of a blue sky day, awesome as long as those teeth don't chew you up. How I longed for that last pitch and what I imagined would be a relief from the tension and strain of working our way up that cruel edge, poor old fool. It was 4:30 p.m. when we topped out at the North Summit but we didn't linger for a minute, we hadn't eaten, other than a quick snack and the only breaks we had were waiting for our lead to complete the pitch and establish an anchor so we could move again and forget the cold. When I saw the traverse from the North to South Summit I realized the eight hours we had spent so far was just a drop in the bucket and the possibility of being trapped on the mountain took one giant step closer. Tay was still optimistic and determined we would not be stuck overnight so we began an intense rush to cover as much ground as we could while we still had light, at least we were in the sun again.

The traverse involves a fair bit of travel on a knife-edge ridge where a slip would involve a terrifying pendulum over the edge over a two thousand foot drop to the Crescent Glacier on one side and the Vowell on the other, you would hope the rope would catch you. I made damned sure that didn't happen, I hadn't taken a fall yet and I had no intention of taking one at all. We had a nasty time crossing the big down sloping slab near the south summit due to the plaster of snow covering it but once past it we could start the descent. A series of rappels with scrambles in between finally resolved into the loose, block scattered slopes and we were rushing headlong pushing our tired bodies in a final attempt to reach the treacherous Bugaboo/Snowpatch Col before dark. It was no use, we reached the top of the col at 8:30 p.m. twelve hours after starting the actual climb and the dark was moving in inexorably as we quickly put our crampons on and pulled axes and ropes for the long descent. It was pitch black by the time we began our rappel off the first anchor we could find in the dark and our headlamps seemed so weak. We used two ropes tied together for the longest possible rappel but getting down is a long and serious business anytime. We couldn't find the next rap station so we slung a boulder and got down to just past the bergshroud with the second rappel. From the end of the rope we were able to descend into the moat between the glacier and the rock and work our way around a bit till we could chop out a bollard



Todd Nichols near the top of Bugaboo Spire PHOTO: CHRIS RUTTAN

from the ice to hang a sling on. This gave us one last rappel out onto the rock hard blue glacial ice about sixty metres or so above the crevasses which we couldn't see. With no one carrying ice screws we were out of options so we began a slow backward descent using crampons and axes carefully setting each step by step. At the crevasse we discovered we had ended up in the best place to get through due to the tons of ice and rock that have slid down and collected over time forming plugs that we could slide into then climb out the other side. Once past the crevasses we were able to turn around and heel our way down the last thirty or forty metres

to relative safety after so many hours of tension, it was 10:30 p.m.. That was when Tay and I spotted the bear tracks, obviously fresh and arcing across the glacier up to the bottom of the col then curving away towards Snowpatch but our headlamps showed no eyes glowing in the dark and we had to just hope that it was long enough ago that we wouldn't run into him on the trail down. When Todd caught up to us and we were off the ice we shifted into high gear again moving down the trail to Kain Hut and warmth as fast as we could still move. We arrived back at the hut at eleven-thirty PM, seventeen and a half hours after we had set out. The hut was dark and cold because the generator had shut down at some point during the day due probably to low water flow so I went quickly down to the generator and got it going again. We started making something to eat after an entire day with only a few snacks and while my dinner cooked I picked up my calendar to perform my nightly ritual of marking off the days when I noticed it was Grandparents Day (USA) and I thought "how fitting these two youngsters would pick today of all days to try to kill me."

I have never been so emotionally and physically drained in my life nor so charged with conflict over doing something so brash at my age but as I shoveled down whatever it was I had cooked up I felt a growing sense of pride and accomplishment fill me. "You see" says Tay, "I told you it was a piece of cake." That's when I realized I too had lost my mind and the Bugaboos owned my soul. Perhaps I'll see you on the glacier some day.

Participants: Chris Ruttan, Tay Hansen and Todd Nichols.

2007 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



Mountain Portrait Winner

Charles Turner on Mt Jutland Photo: Sandy Briggs



Mountain Humour Winner

Brave. Very Brave!!! Photo: Stan Marcus



Vancouver Island Mountain Scenery Winner

Mt Taylor from Bedwell Lake Photo: Doug Hurrell

2007 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



Nature Winner

Owl in Prairie Grass Photo: Leslie Gordon



Mountain Scenery Winner

Sunrise on Ramparts in Jasper National Park Photo: Doug Hurrell



Mountain Activity Winner

Ice and Skiers on Mt Albert Edward Photo: Torge Schuemann

South of the Border

Black Butte and Castle Dome

Martin Smith
May 1 & 7

At the end of April I went down south to watch my son compete in a triathlon in central California. Naturally, I just had to work in a number of hikes along the way, two of which I considered worth reporting on.

Everyone who's driven I5 is familiar with the views of Mt. Shasta. It dominates everything around from Redding in the south to the Siskou Pass in the north. But have you ever noticed the little cinder cone to its west? You must have, in that the freeway crosses its western flanks. This is "Black Butte". Often seen but little regarded. So I thought I'd pop up there on this trip.

Fifteen minutes south of Mt. Shasta City, near Dunsmuir, drivers who happen to be looking to their right at just the right moment, get a fleeting glimpse of a series of rocky spires towering above. This is Castle Crags State Park. Therein lies Castle Dome, an imposing domed tower with climbing up to 5.10 on its east side but with a nice 4th Class scramble on the west aspect.

A rainy morning on May 1st on my route south made the choice of the day's objective an easy one. An exposed scramble, solo, on wet rock didn't seem too sensible so I headed for Black Butte.

For such an isolated and obvious hill it's quite hard to get to. Although there is a trailhead and a well-established route, there's nothing in the immediate area that tells you how to get there. Fortunately I'd researched the approach before leaving home and found the start of the way up without too much trouble. From Mt. Shasta City drive up the Everett Memorial Parkway as if heading up to the Mt. Shasta trailhead at Bunny Flat. As you cross the railway track just north of the school set your odometer to 0. Drive 2.7 kilometres and watch for a brown National Forest sign for



Castle Dome and Mt Shasta PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

"Spring Hill Plantation" on the right side of the road. Turn left onto the dirt road opposite the sign. Follow the road towards and then to the north of the mountain, ignoring the lesser roads that turn off the main track. There are occasional diamond signs on trees to show the way at critical junctions – although the correct turn is always pretty obvious. The road ends at the trailhead where there is a turn-round loop and plenty of parking. The official "Black Butte Trail" sign is just up the obvious path that runs out of the south side of the parking area.

Any route finding difficulties ended at the parking lot. In spite of the fact that Black Butte is for the most part a large pile of loose volcanic scree, this being the US, they've built a wide, well-graded and easy to follow trail to within two minutes of the summit.

Until the rain got going in earnest there was plenty to see along the way. Black Butte looks like an almost symmetrical cone from I5. Once on it, however, you soon get a sense of a pretty complex structure as the path spirals south, east, north and then south again in and out amongst what are obviously

sub-craters and explosion vents from long ago.

I arrived at the end of the trail after about 700 metres of steady climbing in just under ninety minutes. The summit was a minute or two's easy scramble away and was pleasingly sharp and exposed. The trail builders have also been kind enough to construct a nice windbreak right on the top. By this time the weather had gone completely to pot and the promised "in-your-face" views of Shasta were non-existent. The best I could do was a view south down I5 to Mt. Shasta City.

After a pleasant lunch on the summit I was soon back down at my truck and heading south once more.

The weather improved considerably over the next few days and by the time I passed through the area on my way back north, was ideal for the scramble up Castle Dome.

This one is much easier to find than Black Butte. Simply take the "Castella" exit from I5 ten kilometres south of Dunsmuir and drive two minutes west to the Castle Crags Park entrance (and pony up your \$6). The trailhead for the crags is through the camping area and left up a steep hill.

Another well signed, benched and graded trail took me to the base of Castle Dome in ninety minutes. There's nowhere to get lost along the way. Once the trail passes the Indian Springs junction, it breaks out of the trees and you can see the crags ahead of you. Castle Dome is on the right and Mt. Hubris aka "The Ogre" on the left.

The seventy to eighty metres scramble to the top of Castle Dome can be divided into four parts (I'd hesitate to call them pitches).

Up a Class 3 slab trending right up a quartz weakness.

Walk around the shoulder on the right skyline and across "The Dish". This is a shallow declivity in the rock. Easy climbing but big exposure down the east side of the dome if you cross it too low.

Turn left above the dish up a sandy Class 2 gully.

The final Class 4 section to the top. There are two options here. "The Stairs", a blocky fault line directly ahead of the line up the sandy gully or a thin slab to climber's right. The former is easier but very exposed. I took the slab both up and down and found it very reasonable for soloing. A couple of friction moves were interesting, particularly on the way down, but there are plenty of ledges along the way to plan your next moves and considerably less exposure to unnerve you.

Moving carefully, the summit block took me about an hour and a half to climb and reverse. The clear conditions offered superb views of Shasta. Not as in-your-face as Black Butte would have been but very rewarding nonetheless.

If you're heading up or down I5, have a half-day spare and fancy a bit of a break on your journey, both of the above are worthwhile and enjoyable objectives.

Mount Rainer – Liberty Ridge

Jain Alcock White
May 29 – June 3

After a few months of tossing thoughts of Liberty Ridge around, my friend Pete and I finally found ourselves on the phone discussing the finer details of the trip planned for the end of May. Pete recruited his friend Blue as our third and headed off on a climbing/hiking road trip, while I was stuck at work, worried that I would be sorely out of shape when May 29 arrived.

On the 29th I drove to Enumclaw where I met Pete and Blue, and then together we rolled into the White River Ranger's Station at about noon where the park info guy confirmed our suspicions of spectacular weather. In the parking lot, we sorted and divided gear and weighed our packs – they were well over the maximum of 30 pounds we had allocated.

At 14:30 we took our first steps on the Glacier Basin trail, 4,400' (I started my morning at sea level while Pete and Blue had left Nevada at 6,500'.) We'd heard rumours that the November 2006 flood had completely demolished the trail and that hiking conditions were at best, a bushwhack. Being from Vancouver Island, I felt quite at home scrambling across downed logs and fording the occasional creek. We arrived at St. Elmo's Pass, 7,400' at 18:30. After dinner and a spectacular sunset over the Winthrop glacier, we drifted off to sleep.

A couple guys from Alaska passed by us the next morning, heading for Thumb Rock, as were we (despite having been scheduled to camp at Curtis Ridge.) The weather was too good not to head straight for Thumb Rock. Part way across the Winthrop Glacier, we saw a party of three descend from Camp Schurman and cut ahead of the Alaskans, alas, it appeared that Thumb Rock was getting busier than ever!

The Winthrop Glacier was in great conditions: there were no overwhelming crevasses to navigate around and the boot track were easy to follow. Even though it was still fairly early in the day, the sun was blazing and the heat was almost unbearable.

The view of the Carbon Glacier from Curtis Ridge was breathtaking and although most of the glacier was snow-covered, the crevasses underneath were unmistakable. The high end of Curtis Ridge was framed by steep cliffs of loose rock that continually let loose; it was quite unnerving to get too close to the edge.

As we neared Liberty Ridge, seracs began peeling off of the Liberty Wall, causing impressive avalanches. Willis Wall, however, was strangely silent - we had expected quite a show, having read many trip reports detailing close calls.

We took lunch before reaching the base of Liberty Ridge as the team of three climbing above the Alaskans were initiating significant rock fall. When the team of three was mostly out of the way, we joined the Alaskans and waited on a tongue of snow, separated from the Ridge proper by a small bergshroud on one side and separated from the rest of the glacier by a crevasse that joined up with the bergshroud. Needless to say, we did not have a lot of safe space to rest on.

The Alaskans had brewed up some water and graciously gave us almost a full litre before they headed up to Thumb Rock. Then it was our turn to wait. We sat, gazing up at the huge seracs on Liberty Wall, pondering the climb ahead.



Liberty Wall lets loose, a little too close for comfort PHOTO: JAIN ALCOCK-WHITE

Mid-way through our thoughts, Liberty Wall decided to really let loose. Pete and Blue jumped up and started yelling and I jumped up in time to see the powder cloud descending upon us. Then it hit, at least 60 km/h winds, and tiny shards of snow and ice; I hid my head behind my pack and held my breath. It passed in about one minute and we were fine, stunned, but fine.

We unroped for the climb up Liberty Ridge as the snow conditions made it easy to self arrest, if need be. The climb to Thumb Rock was easy, with the exception of having to cross sections of loose volcanic rock (while wearing crampons.) The higher I got, the slower things went. It was hot and I began feeling nauseated. I attributed it to eating too much dried fruit and not drinking enough water.

It was 16:30 when we arrived at Thumb Rock and found it a busy place. All semi-flat spots were taken up so we had

to start digging. Before long, we had a nice big platform and had our camp set up. The evening was spent melting snow, cooking dinner and laying in the tent trying to feel cool. Teams made plans for the following day and drifted off to their respective tents. The first team was slated to begin the climb at 4:00. We planned to leave by 5:00.

I got up at about 2:00 to use the 'facilities' and was amazed by the view. The sky was black and clear with a sprinkling of stars and far down below was a long twinkling sea of city lights – looking much more beautiful from above than from within.

By 5:00 all the teams had left but ours. The Russians had left a large bag of food beside Thumb Rock in an attempt to lighten their loads, however, the crows found it first, but I scared them away and snaffled the Snickers bars. Pete and Blue left camp at 5:15 and I followed at 5:30.

The angle of the Ridge steepened rapidly but the going was surprisingly easy and enjoyable. There were a few hard icy patches that required extra caution but most of the travel was through soft snow. The higher we climbed, the softer the snow became until I was relying solely on my ice tools; my crampons had transformed into heavy snow-laden platform boots.

When we approached the base of the ice cap we roped up to ford the remaining crevasses. We had only four ice screws so decided to follow below the Alaskans along an ice shelf where the angle was less and the ice appeared to be more like heavily consolidated snow. Pete led the route and set up a belay. Blue seconded, removed the gear

and then threw the rope down to me. I climbed straight up on the harder ice at what was my usual climbing pace, a pace that lasted about ten metres when I realized that climbing with a heavy pack at 14,000' was exhausting. I ended up traversing to the left where the angle relaxed and made my way to the belay. We had another short pitch on easier terrain and then roped back up for the short trek to the summit of Liberty Cap at 14,122'.

The exhilaration of being on the Cap was lessened by the fact that the true summit, Columbia Crest, was still a long ways away - along a ridge and down to a pass and then up the long flank of the Crest. Going down to the pass was easy but distances were deceiving and we realized that we had a good two hour journey to get to the summit. Although we started up the flank roped, we soon abandoned that effort as hazards were low and we were zoning out into our own little worlds.



At the top of the first pitch, high on Liberty Ridge, Mt Rainier

PHOTO: JAIN ALCOCK-WHITE

Tension had begun to develop in our group by this time as we all had different ideas on our descent options. I wanted to head down the Emmons Glacier soon after summiting, while Pete and Blue wanted to camp on the summit and head down the following morning (a friend of Pete's mother's had died descending the Emmons Glacier.) I was not completely opposed to the idea, but I felt I had been left out of the decision making process.

Our arrival on the summit was somewhat jaded by this tension. We only took a couple photos and not one group photo. Pete and Blue wandered off and I stood bundled up, pondering the wind and high spaces. The views were amazing all around. The summit crater was a massive flat expanse, edged by steaming fumaroles and melted out snow tunnels. A slight smell of sulphur pulled it all together.

We ended up camping on the summit, I was too tired to argue and decided that I just wanted to set up the tent and lie down. Camp was made quickly and we all crawled into the tent to nap. By this time, two other teams had summited and set up camp in the crater. We chatted with the girl from the Russian team. She had led the pitch up Liberty Cap and told us it was her first lead!

Before bed, I walked over to the far side of the crater and climbed the edge. The sun was setting at my back, casting a shadow of Mt. Rainier far out in front of me. The landscape below was darkened by the perfect volcanic cone. I wished for my camera but was not motivated enough to cross the crater again to retrieve it. My memory will hold onto that image.

Morning came far too soon, but we organized quickly and were out of camp by 7:30; behind the Russians and ahead of the Americans. I took the lead and tried to follow the Russian's tracks. Things went well for the first ten minutes until the tracks began going nearly straight down the steep glacier.

I stopped in front of a crevasse that Pete could not see, listening to him tell me to keep going. I hung my axe down the crevasse and asked if he really wanted me to continue. He changed his mind. The glacier was proving difficult.

We reversed direction and discussed our options. My choice was to go climber's left and skirt around a bulge in the glacier. Pete and Blue were undecided but seemed to think that we could find a route straight down. At this point the Americans caught up with us and began their discussions. Minutes later they mobilized, Pete called up and asked them which way they were going; they described the same route I had suggested and headed off. Pete and Blue then decided that we, too, should go that way.

After we rounded the bulge, we began traversing back climber's right. There in front of us, dangling deep in one of the crevasses we'd been trying to avoid was one of the Russians. Another Russian was above the crevasse, perched next to their "bomber" belay station (a single axe) and the third Russian was on the downhill side of the crevasse. About forty metres inside the crevasse was a pack, which was the object of their mission. The scene left much to be desired and caused my group to halt. We had another discussion and decided to change direction again.

We circled around and continued on climber's right until we met a wanded path. We could not agree on where the path originated from. Blue had a few ideas, having been on the mountain before although he noted that things had changed since his last visit. It was about this time that we ran into an ascending party. Being on the front of the rope, I took the opportunity to ask what route they were on. Just as they were telling me that they had left Camp Muir that morning, Blue hollered out that we had to have a pow-wow, now!

I tried to talk to the other party a bit longer but Blue kept hollering about the pow-wow so I thanked the climbers and joined Pete and Blue. I won't divulge the contents of the pow-wow but I will say that we didn't come to any great resolutions regarding asking for outside information versus working within the team.

We turned around and began our descent down the Muir route in silence. It was a pretty mundane descent broken by the occasional spectacularly huge crevasse and impressive bands of crumbling boulders. The weather remained as beautiful as ever but I found it hard to enjoy as the pain in my knees increased with every downhill step.

It took a couple hours to get to Ingraham Flats – a nice flat area with some amazing views and good photo-ops of the tents lined up against Little Tahoma Peak. Beyond Ingraham Flats we ran into some penatentes I was thrilled! They weren't nearly as spectacular as the twelve foot ones Pete and Blue had encountered on Aconcagua, but they were penatentes all the same.

Eventually we arrive at Camp Muir and took a lunch break and disposed of our blue poo-bags. I hoped that my

knees would benefit from the reduction in my pack weight, however small. The Muir snowfield was smooth sailing, no crevasses and no need to rope up. The only problem was the postholing; the glacier was similar to a giant melting snow cone. I was hard not to be envious of the day trippers zooming by on their skis and boards.

Pete, Blue and I arrived at the Paradise Parking area at different times and in different locations. We managed to find each other and went to the visitor centre to inquire about getting back to White River. We discovered that the November storms had completely destroyed many roads; instead of the usual forty-five minute drive to White River, we were faced with a three hour journey, without a car.

We ended up hitchhiking and were lucky enough to be offered a ride by a park interpreter, who drove us all the way back to Enumclaw - a full one and a half hours past his house. We then made our way back at the White River parking lot and witnessed the three Russians walked off the trail who informed us that the Americans had also had a successful, although arduous descent down the Emmons Glacier.

After this I said my good byes and rolled out of the parking lot at 21:00. The solitary drive home was very long and confusing. I fell asleep in a parking lot somewhere along the way and woke up thinking that I had crashed and died. I made it to my sister's house in Vancouver at 3:30.

The trip was well worth every effort, aided by good weather and a great team (despite some frustration and the occasional outburst).



Climbers look down the north face of North Twin Sister, WA

PHOTO: TONY VAUGHN

North Twin Sister

Tony Vaughn

June 2 - 3

The promise of the best weekend weather this year fortunately coincided with a planned trip to climb the West Ridge of North Twin Sister, located in the North Cascades.

Three of us had boarded the 9 a.m. ferry to Tsawassen and by 1:10 p.m., after an uneventful drive south, we reached the locked gate at the bridge crossing the Middle Nooksack River.

This was the end of the driven road for us. Without bikes it was to be an uphill grunt on a hot sunny afternoon for four hours, to our campsite at the start of the west ridge. The hike in was on gravel roadway of varying condition, the first part being well maintained due to it being a mine access road, the latter part blocked to vehicular traffic. It became mostly a boot track along an old disused road, although there were

signs that it may be reactivated for logging in the near future. It was just after 4:00 p.m. when we met our first day tripper on his way down by bike. Skis were lashed onto his crossbar and he was travelling at about 40 KPH.

We set up camp, rehydrated and chatted with people coming down about the route, both up and down. Half of them had skied the North Face. We cooked up dinner and were looking forward to a pleasant evening sitting around the campsite, drinking tea and relaxing. Alas, this was not to be, for the mosquitoes had by now located us in their billions, leaving us feeling like we were their first meal of the year. By 8:30 p.m. we had turned into our tightly zipped up tents with alarms set for 5:00 a.m.. We were up before the alarms went off, and, by 6:10 a.m. we left camp, leaving behind pickets and crampons, as it was obvious we wouldn't be needing them that day.

Following about forty-five minutes of hiking through slash and trees, we reached the start of the climbing as the ridge narrowed. It was mostly easy scrambling on the right side of the ridge top. By 8:00 a.m. we reached a gendarme known as

the Obelisk on the Ridge. By then we were on solid 3rd class rock, but, being of dunnite, it was remarkably grippy with lots of handholds. We had been advised to take work gloves, due to the sharpness of the rock. These certainly turned out to be a blessing for preventing nicks and cuts to the hands, but didn't do much for my nice new lightweight pack.

We worked our way along the ridge, mostly on the right of the ridge crest, which resulted in us going off route in places. This required us to do some harder 4th maybe low 5th class climbing to get back on the described route, but never anything hard enough to require getting out the rope. On reaching the false summit, we chose to follow Becky's alternative route, as opposed to Matt Gunn's (Scrambles in S.W. British Columbia.) It seemed the obvious way due to the snow on the north side of the ridge. It did, however, require travelling over more difficult and exposed terrain, but not severe enough to require a rope. Looking back up towards the ridge line, we could see the obvious light yellow rock comb as described by Becky but not mentioned in Scrambles, though the prominent notch is mentioned and is the likely point to aim for. Back on the ridge crest our route required passage through a narrow cleft (a real fat man's squeeze) then out onto easy rock and snow to the summit which we reached at 10:55 a.m..

The beautiful weather allowed for great views all around, with Baker to the North and South Twin clearly visible to the south. This was the scene of Rick's bergschrund accident this time last year (see Bushwhacker Annual '06.)

Our route down was to be the North Face which looked quite intimidating with its sixty plus degree slope. However the snow was quite soft so downclimbing was not a problem. Once off the steepest snow, a glissade soon had us down. A traverse over avalanche debris and around the mountain had us back onto the bottom of the west ridge and back at camp by 2:15 p.m..

It was interesting to note that although there were at least fourteen people on the mountain on Saturday, on Sunday we had the place to ourselves, only finding out at the end of the trip that there was a party of three a few hours behind us. They had bikes and so overtook us just before the bridge on the way out.

The hike out to the vehicles seemed like a never ending plod. But it finally came to an end at 5:45 p.m.. By 6:30 p.m. we were back on the road making the usual dash for the last ferry to the island. What a shock we received upon reaching the border, to find a line up longer than any of us had ever seen before. However, with a bit of creative driving by Martin we made the 9 p.m. sailing and got our money's worth out of the buffet.

Participants. Don Morton, Martin Smith and Tony Vaughn

Mounts Shasta and McLaughlin

Martin Smith

June 28 – July 3

A trip up the standard Avalanche Gulch route on Mt. Shasta is nothing new. However, in a low snow year such as we had in 2006/2007 the route offers unique hazards and challenges not normally to be expected.

While down there we also decided to add Mt. McLaughlin to the itinerary. It's on my list of "I5's" (the volcanoes you can see from the freeway) and after the grunt up Shasta, makes a lovely mellow wind-down day that lets you look back south to your achievement on Shasta as well as north to many more of the Cascade volcanoes.

Finally there is a wealth of history and culture in the southern Oregon/Northern California area that we took the opportunity to sample while down there and that, if you haven't already, you might find interesting to note for your next trip.

June 28

Graham Bennett and I left Victoria on the first Coho sailing on June 28 and arrived hardly at all the worse for wear in Mount Shasta City at 6:15 p.m. and just over 1000 kilometres later. Lots of time to clean up, have a leisurely dinner and then get a long nights sleep before the big effort over the coming couple of days.

June 29; to Lake Helen

The standard first day on any two day trip up Shasta is mostly about hauling a big pack up to the 50:50 or Lake Helen campsites for the night. We'd done the same in 2005 on snow right from the car at Bunny Flat. What a contrast two years on! An easy trail to Horse Camp and not much more in the way of effort thereafter. Normally I'd rather climb snow than dirt but this trail was well laid out, contoured and was mostly firm underfoot. What volcanic scree there was was very user friendly.

As we progressed beyond Horse Camp it soon became apparent how different things were from our 2005 trip. As mentioned, we'd done this entirely on snow and, eventually, turned round in high winds and a whiteout just below the Red Banks. Now there was almost no snow to Lake Helen and for at least 300 vertical metres above it, the "Heart" was huge and the passage through the Red Banks was confined to the one chute that offered continuous snow.

We left Bunny at 12:30 having enjoyed a leisurely morning in Mt. Shasta and pulled into Lake Helen at 5 p.m. feel-

ing tired but a long way from exhausted. The usual “head rushes” followed any abrupt movements but were not too bad considering we’d come almost directly from sea level to 3,200 metres.

We set up camp on dirt right at the west end of the camping area and were immediately successful in finding flowing water just a few metres further to the west. So all the extra fuel I’d hauled up for melting snow was for naught. Oh well.... Our campsite was right next to a large boulder and this served to hang food from to isolate it from the attentions of the hoards of voracious mice up there.

The rest of the evening was spent eating, drinking, marvelling at the difference in conditions from our last visit and watching folk sliding down the glissade chute which appeared to comprise half the width of the remaining snow on climber’s right of the Heart. We were in bed well before 9 p.m..

June 30; Lake Helen to summit to Bunny

As always before summit day, I slept poorly and was awake well before the alarm went off at 3 a.m.. We got up to crystal clear conditions, temperatures right on the freeing point and hardly a breath of wind.

An inauspicious start to the day, however, as one of the thieving mice was making off with some of my breakfast, I aimed a half-hearted kick after it. You can never catch these little beggars, right? Wrong! I booted it cleanly through the goalposts of life into the mouse-hereafter and immediately felt like s**t, convinced that somewhere in the next 1,200 metres up and 2,400 down, the Almighty was gonna get me for that. After a quick funeral service in the hopes of placating whoever was listening, we were off across the still frozen Lake Helen by headlight at 4:30 a.m..

As we’d observed from below, the first 300 vertical metres above camp were on dirt. A route on snow was being taken by others from the east end of Helen but involved a considerable detour. We chose the more direct route and prepared to do battle with loose choss. In fact it wasn’t too bad at all and we were soon able to don crampons and take to the snow just below the base of the Heart. We chose to go to the right at this point.

Climbing conditions were ideal. The snow was frozen and firm. However, since there was so little snow left, the sun cups were huge and when combined with the equally huge footprints of the hundreds who had gone before, made for quite unpleasant going with much side hilling. Added to this was the fact that something I’d ingested had disagreed with me. I had continuous stomach cramps and felt like throwing up most of the time. It was about then that I began to wonder about that flowing water near our campsite at Lake Helen. Finally at about 8 a.m. and just below the Banks a lone boulder in the Heart offered privacy and I cramponed across ten



Graham Bennett and the summit block of Mt Shasta PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

metres of 30° volcanic sand to reach it. Thereafter, my world got a whole lot better. At this point we had surpassed our 2005 high point and this also contributed to my newfound sense of well-being.

We were at the base of the Red Banks a few minutes later and were soon up the one icy chute that offered continuous passage. The angle eased off and we plodded on, still on snow and in increasing winds up to the base of Misery Hill by 9:30. Here the snow ended so we took off and stashed the crampons, put the axes on the packs and took out the poles once more.

Misery Hill wasn’t. Pleasant scree might sound like an oxymoron but, in this case, it wasn’t either. A contoured path and firm footing soon had us at the top with the summit tower in full view but with the winds now gusting up to 80 kph.

Across the summit plateau – exposed ice in places – up the last scree hill and we joined the crowds on top at 11:40 a.m.. You almost have to reserve your spot on the summit for handshakes and photos. No complaints about the views though. Towering over everything for hundreds of miles around, as it does, Shasta is the paradigm of the expression “360° views”. Just fabulous!

Having had our moment in the sun, as it were, we dropped down a few metres out of the wind and had a well-earned lunch while continuing to enjoy said views.

We set off down just after 12:15 and reached the tent at Lake Helen at exactly 4 p.m.. For the most part the descent was the straightforward reverse of what we’d climbed. We faced-in twice briefly going through the Red Banks and we also walked down Avy Gulch rather than glissading. The sting in the tail was the last 300 metres of choss to the tent. At 4:30 a.m. it had been frozen in place. Now it was loose, sharp, and unpleasant and cost a lot of effort.

A quick brew, this time with well-boiled and treated water, pack up and we were off down to the car at 5:45. Horse Camp

came into view very quickly but it seemed to take ages to reach it. We reached Bunny at 9:05 just as it was getting dark.

Eschewing the charms of the pricey local accommodation, we went a few miles up I5 to Weed, whose Chamber of Commerce seems to be a bit less parochial and which, therefore, has name brand hotels for half the price of Mt. Shasta. The Motel 6 welcomed us with open arms. The problem with Weed, however, is that it – the whole town that is – closes at 9 p.m.. So if you stay there, make sure you arrive early, or keep a freeze-dried dinner or something in reserve.

After a twenty hour day to this point, unconsciousness arrived shortly after 11 and persisted for many hours thereafter.

July 01 (Canada Day); Steam and Shakespeare - Weed to Ashland, OR

This was to be our rest day.

Having traveled through it many times, I've long been fascinated with the area around Yreka and this was my chance to explore it further. In particular, and having grown up in the era of steam in the UK, I love old railroads. In 1873, The Central Pacific Railroad surveyed the region with the intention of building a subsidiary railroad in order to bring the rails through the city of Yreka and assure the continued growth and prosperity of the city. As big companies often do, they soon decided to walk away from the deal and left Yreka in the lurch, seven miles from the main line in Montague. Not to be deterred, the citizens of Yreka decided to build their own spur line to connect with the CPR in Montague and, by dint of much hard work and dedication, they had accomplished this by 1889. Today the railroad operates as a tourist attraction covering the seven miles between Yreka and Montague in just over an hour. It takes just under ten minutes to drive, but that's not the point.

I can't imagine a nicer way to enjoy a rest day than Graham and I did. Sitting in the garden of Miss Lynn's Tearoom in Montague watching the YWRR steam in, sipping tea and chowing down on crumpets and scones.

After drinking our fill at this historical fountain, we shot off down to Yreka (beating the train by fifty minutes of course) re-supplied at Ray's Supermarket and shot off again over the state line and up to Ashland, Oregon.

For those who don't know, Ashland is the site of one of the best-known Shakespearean festivals anywhere in the world outside the UK. It boasts an open air Elizabethan stage that is, supposedly, a faithful re-creation of the original Globe theatre in London. I've long wanted to go there and now was my chance.

Performances start at 8:30 p.m. and at 7:30 any remaining tickets go on sale for half price. We snagged two for Romeo and Juliet. Not my favourite work by the bard but you can't have everything. Note also the pleasing symmetry of

the "Montague" theme. Now all I have to do is find a "Capulet" in the area.

I wouldn't exactly say I was disappointed with the experience but I have to say it left something to be desired. The stage management was wonderful and the lavishness of the production undeniable but I like my Shakespeare to be as unadulterated as possible. I could handle the mixed traditional and modern costumes without too much trouble but began to bristle a bit at the occasional lapses from what I consider to be the true dialogue. But what really got my goat were the modern "rap" gestures that the cast seemed to be prone to. A real audience pleaser to be sure and maybe the bard himself may have approved – but not for me.

These small peccadilloes notwithstanding it was a super day and left us raring to get back into the mountains on the 'morrow – as Will himself might have said.

July 02; Mt McLaughlin

Up at 6:15 a.m., we bade goodbye to the Ashland Super 8 at 7:45 and were at the trailhead and ready to go by 9:15.

In future, when I think of Mt McLaughlin, one word will spring to mind before all else. MOSQUITOES. Just one or two more of the little sods and they wouldn't have to bite you on the spot. There'd be enough to pick you up, carry you off to wherever it is that mosquitoes go and have their way with you at leisure. I hate the buggers!!

So, it was out of the car, on with the deet, on with the sunscreen and then on with another layer of deet. Didn't stop them biting though. However, it did get us moving in pretty short order.

I have only one tiny complaint about the excellent day that followed – apart from the mosquitoes (have I mentioned how much I hate them?) Out of 1,200 metres of ascent, 750 metres are in the trees with little in the way of views. The trees section was soon accomplished, however, on excellent trail and we were at the "sandy saddle" at the bottom of the open section of the East Ridge at 12:00 or so with some nice exposure down the north face to our right and the summit in full view ahead. The day was cloudless and windless. Marvellous!

The trail continued all the way to the summit mostly on climber's left of the ridge crest. Sometimes we took it; sometimes we walked right on the edge overlooking the north face. There were a couple of residual snow patches to cross and we finally arrived on a sunny summit at 1:30 p.m. to be greeted by scores of butterflies.

Great views all round. To Shasta to the south, of course but also north to Thielsen, Diamond and even South Sister as well as a host of lesser summits. For once we had the whole thing to ourselves and enjoyed a quiet hour over lunch, photos and even a brief nap.

We left the summit at 2:30, went down the exact way we came up and were at the car at 6 pm. The last hour to the car was accomplished at a near run as we got low enough for the damned mozzies to home in on us once again.

Three hours later and it was pizza and beer time in Roseburg.

Thanks to the Coho, our final leg home the next day was a short one. No need to worry about all the Independence Day eve traffic around Seattle. We even had time to drop a few hundred dollars at gloriously sales tax and GST free REI in Tualatin.

This article originally appeared on the SummitPost website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/312705/Culture-Amongst-The-Cascade-Volcanoes.html> for the original article and lots more photos.

Participants, Graham Bennett and Martin Smith.

Cinderella's Ugly (Oregon) Sisters: North and Middle Sisters.

Martin Smith

July 29 – August 1

Someone was shaking me by the shoulder. It was barely light yet and I woke up reluctantly. On either side of my sleeping bag two tiny, perfect mannequins dressed in the latest medieval fashion looked down at me expectantly. One had in his hand a tiny, perfect climbing boot. "Cinderella" said he "the prince commands you to try this on". "Cheeky monkey" I thought, but did as I was told nevertheless. Needless to say, I could barely get the thing over my big toe let alone my foot. "You're not Cinderella" said my visitor "and you shall NOT go to the ball. And while we're on the subject of balls, you're quite likely to get two of your own hung out to dry if you're seriously thinking of trying to climb yonder pile of choss today". And with that a regal fanfare smote the air and my friends disappeared.

All nonsense of course – not to mention artistic license – but the fanfare at least was real. Graham Bennett, my tentmate, was using his nose trumpet in order to wake up the dead and sleep for the night was clearly over. Just beyond our campsite the first tongue of the Collier Glacier beckoned and beyond that North Sister looked no less frightening than she had when we arrived the previous evening.

Three years previously I had enjoyed a pleasant solo outing on South Sister. Tales of horrible volcanic scree had proved almost groundless and the southernmost of the girls

had turned out to be a lovely outing. Some cinders below the crater rim to be sure, but nothing to get too upset about. A real Cinderella of a mountain in fact. However, no self-respecting climber could possibly look beyond that (or any other) summit and not immediately want to climb all that he or she can see. In this case Middle and North Sister each crooked a seductive finger and begged me to put them on my dance card. Ever prey to female charms – I had no choice in the matter.

Injury and other obstacles prevented an immediate return to the area but this year proved auspicious and I was able to co-opt Graham as well as fellow volcano enthusiast Tony Vaughn for the trip.

We left Victoria on the Coho on July 29 and were happily ensconced in a nice hotel in Bend by 3:30 p.m. Lots of time to relax, prep gear, have a nice dinner and most importantly, get a really good nights sleep prior to the trip.

July 30; to camp below the Collier

Since our intention was to climb both Middle and North Sisters, a camp convenient for both was called for and we decided to place this in the vicinity of the lower Collier Glacier. We didn't anticipate a long approach (as proved to be the case) and so were able to enjoy a leisurely morning before heading off to the Obsidian Trailhead at about 10:30.

A brief visit to the ranger station in Sisters provided a recent report from a Mazama who had summited North Sis the previous week. He reported no snow anywhere on the SW ridge route, "horrible scree on the dirty traverses" and not much else apart from good rapp slings in place at the top of the Bowling Alley.

By 11:15 we were under way. It's a steady climb through the forest to the first notable point along the way, the Jerry Lava Field. We were soon across this on excellent trail before breaking for lunch at Sunshine Meadows at about 12:30. Aptly named, the sun shone down from cloudless skies, the stream burbled, the alpine flowers dazzled the senses of sight and smell and, best of all, the mozzies had gone on vacation. Just a month previously, I had been nearly eaten alive on Mt. McLaughlin and expected the same here. All was truly right with the world!

On then up to the junction with the PCT and then straight on up the climbers trail with both Sisters now in view. The alpine meadows were now even more spectacular than those at Sunshine. Beyond the meadows the first loose scree appeared but we continued to make steady progress in spite of our heavy packs.

At about 3:45 we could see that we were approaching the first snow tongues coming off the Collier and, having knocked off over 1,000 metres out of the 1,650 we needed to summit either Middle or North, decided to call it a day. An

idyllic campsite presented itself almost immediately. A sheltered bench with views of both objectives as well as Washington, Three Fingered Jack, Jefferson and even Hood. A drip coming off the snow for water, two ready cleared tent spots and at a point where we could put crampons on pretty well from the off the next day. There was not another thing we could ask for. Altitude at camp was ~2,400 metres.

The evening passed pleasantly re-hydrating, eating, chatting and pretty soon afterwards, in lots of sleeping.

June 31; North Sister Summit Day

My imagined visitors notwithstanding and as always before summit day, I slept poorly and was awake well before the alarm went off at 5:30 a.m.. We got up to crystal clear conditions, temperatures just above freezing and not a breath of wind. Breakfast, gear prep – packs thankfully a lot lighter than yesterday – and we were under way right on the stroke of 7.

As anticipated the position of our camp was ideal and we were able to put crampons on two minutes up-slope on perfect, hard snow.

Our approach to North Sis took us east and then south-east across the Collier, twice having to remove crampons to negotiate scree/shale ridges. The extremely loose friable character of the rock became immediately apparent. On this day, crevasse hazard was manageable without roping up. We were satisfied that, on this course at least, the slots were open and avoidable.

Our chosen course took us right to the foot of the SW ridge where the Hayden Glacier comes up from the east to meet the head of the Collier at a narrow col. With hindsight this was a mistake. Later in the day we spotted a climbers path starting further northwest of the col and going more directly up the west face towards the first gendarme that bars access to the summit block. For better or worse, however, we made our choice, stashed the crampons, put on the helmets and started up the cinders.

The first thirty minutes was a classic three steps forward, two steps back battle. Unlike South Sis, this was really serious scree. Legs whirling madly, hit the anaerobic threshold, recover, start again. Ugh! Eventually the terrain got a bit more stable but then we discovered that we were confronted by a bluff that none of us felt happy about downclimbing. The alternative was to detour down to the west and climb back up fifty more metres of 30° volcanic sand to the ridge, north of the obstruction. This was where we started to make our first serious contributions to the debris on the Collier now 200 vertical metres below. We checked constantly for parties below but there were none. On this, and probably most days, we had North Sis and her charms all to ourselves. Needless to say, had we spotted the more direct route noted above, we would have been spared this effort.

Back on the ridge once more we had relatively firm going until a bit more mad scrabbling for decent footing just before the first gendarme. Yet more loose rock accompanied the traverses down, up and around the three gendarmes going first west then east and finally west again to the start of the “Terrible Traverse” all the while kicking stuff off by the ton. Epic fun – just not at the time it was happening.

The TT wasn’t too bad at all and certainly no worse than what had gone before. Some exposure and loose as hell to be sure but with no snow you probably weren’t going too far if you fell. Interestingly enough, here, as elsewhere on the mountain, we never saw a rock fall that we did not kick off ourselves. The whole thing seemed to be in perfect, if precarious, equilibrium with us as the only perturbation.

Once across the TT we made our second and worst mistake. The entrance to the “Bowling Alley” is not a continuation of the TT – although boot tracks lead that way. Instead the route into the Alley makes an abrupt right turn up a rock step. We noticed no marking for this but did mark it with a cairn it on the way down. Instead we went only slightly right and onto the worst and steepest scree in my experience. In hindsight, we were on the way up Glissan Peak or to the North Ridge of North Sister but at the time I didn’t care. We were on serious, unprotectable ground, way out of our depth and all three of us knew it. Moving one at a time we backed off carefully, dislodging more stuff in the ten minutes we spent on the exercise than the rest of the day combined. Never again do I want to be on ground like that. The only consolation was that we were able to spot the entrance to the Bowling Alley from above and could head that way with purpose. One tricky step-up had us in and onto the Class 3 ground at the bottom of the Alley. This was loose but a paved highway compared to ten minutes earlier. It was soon behind us and we could see the rapp slings at the top of the 4th Class pitch above. We soloed this perfectly comfortably on bomber rock, exited right to the saddle between the true summit and the South Horn, walked left around the saddle and up the nice solid Class 3 wall to the summit, arriving at 12:50 p.m..

We estimate that we lost an hour in total on the down-climb on the lower ridge and by our false start on the Bowling Alley. No matter. We were up and our reward lay all around. The air was clear and full of butterflies. The other Sisters and their cousins to the south and beyond in the distance, Diamond Peak and Mt. Thielsen. To the northwest the same volcanoes we had been able to see all the way up from camp but looking much diminished from our present height. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the vista taken as a whole, however, were the rotten and crumbling arêtes and ridges falling away in all directions. We were on top of one enormous pile of volcanic junk!

The summit of North Sister is rewardingly small. Perfect for hero shots but not for lunch. So after the obligatory photo

session we dropped down to a ledge just below the summit for a well-deserved bite to eat.

We set off down after just over half an hour on top at 1:25 p.m.. We rapped the Class 4 section of the Bowling Alley, slithered down the rest and were off the Terrible Traverse by 2:15. Once we'd finished traversing the gendarmes, the rest of the descent was not that unpleasant. Lots more contributions to the junk on the Collier as we slid down but we felt sure enough that no one was in harms way and we punctuated each rockslide with top-of-the-lungs warnings to be on the safe side. We put the crampons back on at the foot of the ridge at 3:25 and rolled into camp exactly two hours later.

Later that evening after we'd got our breath back a bit, we began to wonder exactly what had taken over ten hours to climb and reverse just over 650 vertical metres. There was a fair bit of map distance to cover between our camp and the foot of the route but what really used up the time was all that slipping and sliding. North Sister guards her virtue well. Any aspiring suitor should allow lots of time to woo her artfully and should make every step along the way count.

Our evening was an exact replica of the previous one and we were in the land of nod well before 9 p.m..

August 01; To Middle Sister Summit and out

Summit day nerves were not a fraction as bad as those preceding North Sister and I slept well. No imagined morning visitors manifested themselves, although Graham's trumpet call to action sounded right on time at 5:30. We anticipated no major problems today so took our time over breakfast and only left the tents at 7:15.

Anyone familiar with the British tradition of the Christmas pantomime knows that, of Cinderella's two ugly sisters, one is always a real horror show, whereas the other, with a touch of makeup here and some modern underwear there, might not be too bad. In fact a guy in drag with several days worth of stubble usually plays the senior harridan. A fair analogy for North Sister, I thought, so let's hope it holds for her slightly prettier sister.

Our course across the Collier took us over yesterday's ground for the first hour. We then began to trend further south towards the base of Middle's north ridge. We hadn't brought the rope today, so, naturally, Graham soon punched through a crevasse with his pole. This forced an end run and recourse to travel on a safe rock feature before one last snowfield gave way to a boulder field, a grassy "meadow" clearly used for camping and finally the saddle at the base of the north ridge at 9:45. Here we ran into the first people we'd seen since leaving Sisters two days before.

The pantomime analogy held true to its promise. The north ridge of Middle Sister does have some very loose passages and is certainly harder than South Sister but she turned

out to be a lot mellower than the guy in drag across the way. We walked onto the summit at 10:55, less than an hour after leaving the saddle.

Middle offers a spectacular panorama of Broken Top, Batchelor, South Sister and the more distant volcanoes to the south. To the north and west our old and familiar friends of the last three days greeted us across a cloudless space. Literally hundreds of butterflies surrounded us, far more than on the previous day. They provided that touch of makeup that the second sister needs to make her desirable. Sweetheart, you can dance with me any time you want, I thought.

An early lunch and we were scree-sliding back down at 11:30. Only thirty-five minutes later and we'd recovered our crampons and were happily back on snow. We reached camp at 1:20 for just over six hours total. A quick brew, pack up and we were on a beer-focused forced march down to the car at 2:30.

In fact, now that the pressure was off, even thoughts of beer couldn't stop us lingering in the meadows above the PCT to take photo after photo of the glorious scenes there. In my long experience I have been in fewer, if any, more lovely places.

Eventually we tore ourselves away and resumed the descent. I have to say that the last five or six kilometres over the lava field and down through the forest seemed to take forever. Knees and feet whose complaints couldn't afford to be heard in the last three days now began to insist that we listen. In fact they soon became a screaming cacophony. No amount of reasoning with them worked. They even threatened us with strike action. But we skillfully persevered with the negotiations and just when they'd realized we were only stalling, Tony's truck came into view at 5:50. Fooled the stupid buggers!

By 8 p.m. we were once more in our nice hotel, showered and the first of many beers was about to appear.

Many thanks to Graham and Tony for their companionship on this excellent trip. Both great climbers with outstanding mountain sense. A privilege to share the experience with you guys!

A Few Closing Words

North Sister is truly a brute of a mountain in these conditions and should be taken very seriously. Move slowly and quietly up the SW ridge and along the traverses and maybe she won't notice you're there and throw stuff at you. The upper section of the Bowling Alley is fine but I still tested every handhold thoroughly. I felt that the final Class 3 section to the summit offered the only trustworthy rock on the mountain.

Like Cinders' second sister, Middle Sis aspires to loveliness and just about makes it. The scree slog up the north ridge is not much harder or looser than Cinderella herself to the south, but unlike South, Middle is better guarded by a glacier approach and this makes her a more serious prospect.

And finally to everyone's real reason for bagging all

three girls. Who wouldn't want to have inscribed on their tombstone or have as part of their eulogy; "One of so-and-so's most noteworthy achievements was to climb three sisters in Oregon, two of them right after each other". Who cares if the real reason gets lost in the passage of time.....

This article originally appeared on the SummitPost website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/324143/Cinderella-s-Ugly-Oregon-Sisters-.html> for the original article and lots more photos.

Participants: Graham Bennett, Martin Smith and Tony Vaughn.

Mount Thielsen

Tony Vaughn
August 3

Considering it was August 3rd, it was a chilly morning down in Chemult, a small town on Highway 97 in Southern Oregon. We had arrived the day before, after a successful climb of North and Middle Sisters in Central Oregon. We planned to climb Mt. Thielsen, a 9,182 foot volcano known as the "Lightning Rod of the Cascades" because its summit horn stands so high. It is struck by lightning more often than any other Cascade summit, hence the warning "If thunder clouds appear, get down as quickly as possible." By 7:45 a.m. we had arrived at the trailhead, a parking area just off Highway 138 near Diamond Lake.

Viewed from a distance with its impressive summit spire, Mt. Thielsen is quite intimidating. It was quite surprising, therefore, to see a large number of people heading up the trail. The majority of them were young people from a Baptist Church in Oakland, Oregon, none of whom were dressed for climbing a 9,000 foot mountain, even though it was shaping up to be a warm sunny day.

Shortly after 8 a.m. we started up the nicely graded and well built trail through forests of lodge pole pine for the first mile or so, gradually changing to hemlock as we got higher. The trail meandered upwards for about three miles where it crossed the Pacific Crest Trail at about 7,000 feet. From here spectacular views of Mt. Thielsen began to appear. As we hiked upward we were continually passing and being passed by members of the other party who had yet to learn that slow and steady gets you to the top far better and sooner than crash and burn tactics. This was a far different experience from a couple of days earlier when climbing North Sister where we had the mountain to ourselves.



Mt Thielsen summit tower PHOTO: TONY VAUGHN

After crossing the Pacific Crest Trail and getting above timberline the trail disappeared leaving us with several boot tracks in the scree. We chose the least traveled track so as to avoid the other party which Keith had christened "The God Botherers". We didn't want to spend time avoiding rocks kicked down from above. As the going got steeper, Patsy and Keith decided to stop and wait at a beautiful viewpoint overlooking Diamond Lake. The rest of us continued on up the West Ridge to the South East base of the summit horn which we reached at 11:40 a.m.. There were several people ahead of us who appeared apprehensive about climbing the final 100 ft of 4th class rock to the summit. We decided not to hang around and end up below them, so dropped our packs and went ahead rapidly climbing up fairly solid rock to the small summit.

The views were spectacular and there was ample evidence of the many lightning strikes this summit receives. After ten minutes of so of admiring the views and taking the obligatory summit photos, we down-climbed the summit horn and stopped for lunch on the ledge below. Here we were entertained by the "god botherers" who were attempting to climb the summit tower. They were using a rope loosely tied around the waist of the climber with a belayer below casually holding the rope while admiring the views around him. Assuredly their methods relied a great deal on faith. We did not see any of their party reach the summit.

After lunch we commenced our return trip, still in great sunny weather, and picked up Patsy and Keith on our way down. The hike down was uneventful, as usual it seemed to go on forever. We arrived back at the vehicles at 3:35 p.m.. This was our final climb on this trip. Leaving Mt. Thielsen behind, we drove the scenic 138 over to the I5 and Roseburg where we spent the night. We returned home the following day on the last sailing on the Coho ferry.

Participants : Graham Bennett, Martin Smith, Patsy and Keith (Martin's relatives from England) and Tony Vaughn.

Distant Places

Mount Harston and the Falkland Islands: December 2005

Martin Smith
December 2005

On Vancouver Island we have the good fortune to enjoy our climbing and hiking in relatively solitary conditions. However, if you've lined up to get on to your route in the Alps, struggled to find somewhere to pitch your tent on Mt. Shasta, rubbed elbows with the hordes on the packed trails of New Zealand's "Great Walks", drunk at the bars of the Refugios in Torres del Paine, Patagonia, looked up the path towards Everest amazed at the hundreds of people and animals in view – and the list does go on – you've doubtless wondered; exactly what happened to what we used to call wilderness. Before they enter the same realm (and they will,) consider a trip to the wild and wonderful Falkland Islands.

Barren, windswept, treeless, remote, the Islands are part of the dwindling number of truly remote places on the planet. And if, like me, you like to really get away from people, go spend some time on Saunders Island, climb Mount Harston and marvel at the local wildlife. At 436m Harston isn't high (the highest point on the Islands is only 705m) nor does it offer even the hint of a technical challenge but it's wonderfully remote, the marine location is breathtaking and even the complete barrenness of the setting is compulsively attractive. All this before even mentioning the wildlife. Four species of penguin (gentoo, rockhopper, magellanic and a small colony of kings), black browed albatross, dolphins, elephant seals, cormorants and more varieties of seabird than I can name call Harston, its neighbour Rookery Mountain and the connecting spit of land between them, "The Neck", home. The penguins have no land-based predators and, if you sit quietly, will stroll up to you and regard you with as much curiosity as you regard them. The best time to go is early to mid December when the birds are nesting and when the



Hiking up Mt Harston, Falkland Islands PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

weather is "mild". In the Falklands this means 8-12 Celsius and this doesn't take into account the ever present and substantial Antarctic wind chill. Weather patterns can change for the worse in minutes and even an easy walk like Harston can become an epic if one is not properly dressed.

How to get there

The continued unspoiled state of the Falklands owes everything to their remoteness. Since the 1982 conflict with Argentina, travel to the Islands is easier but by no means convenient. It's also not cheap. The RAF flies six times a month from RAF Brize Norton via Ascension Island and LAN Chile <http://www.lan.com/index.html> goes every Saturday from Santiago with stops in Puerto Montt and Punta Arenas. This means, of course, that stays are quantised in weekly aliquots. Both flights arrive at the new Mount Pleasant airport about eighty kilometres south west of the capital, Stanley.

Onward travel to Saunders Island and, indeed most inter-island travel within the Islands is on FIGAS (Falkland Islands Government Air Service). This can be arranged independently

but it's much easier, since you're sure to want to go to places other than Saunders Island, to let one of the local agencies look after everything. International Tours & Travel Ltd <http://www.falklandstravel.com/> and Stanley Services Ltd <http://www.stanley-services.co.fk/> will prepare a customized itinerary for wherever you want to go, including transfers, flights and accommodation. Note that FIGAS has a strict limitation on luggage weight at 14kg/person. More is allowed but at the discretion of the pilot and at a surcharge.

Having got to Saunders, you're not quite there yet. Mt. Harston lies approximately fifteen kilometres northwest of the settlement over a jeep track of sorts. The owners of the Island will drive you out there in a little over an hour for about £40 or you can walk. I recommend you have everything pre-arranged via one of the above agencies.

Entry into the Falklands is as for the UK. For most nationalities this means a passport but a visa is required for nationals of some countries. A condition of landing on the Islands is that you have a return ticket, funds to cover your expenses whilst there and accommodation reserved for at least the first two or three nights of your stay. In practice, if you arrive without a reservation, the nice immigration people phone around Stanley until they find someone with a bed available before letting you out of the airport.

Like almost all land in the Falklands, Saunders Island is privately owned. Any activities you undertake on the island must be with the permission of the Pole-Evans family. Unless you decide to walk out to the Neck, Dave, Susan, Carol or Biffo will be your driver. You can discuss planned activities at that time.

It goes without saying that photographing any of the military installations around the islands is strictly forbidden. In case anyone is foolish enough to consider otherwise, entering a marked minefield is illegal and carries a heavy fine (or worse!)

The Route

From "The Neck", the isthmus of sand connecting Mt. Harston and Rookery Mountain you walk northwest up the broad open slopes of the mountain. There is no trail, nor do you need one. The harshness of the environment means that ground cover is sparse and the going easy and open. Be careful not to disturb the magellanic penguins in their burrows on the lower slopes. About an hour of easy walking gets you onto an open



At Saunders Island - the Neck, with penguins, Falkland Islands PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

ridge with views down to the sea east and west and with the "stone man" summit cairn in view. Another fifteen minutes gets you to the top. The views in all directions are spectacular. If the weather looks promising I particularly recommend walking up in the evening for the light quality. At this hour of the day, the views north to Carcass Island and beyond to the Jason Islands beggar description. You can make the walk a round trip by descending from the summit northwards towards Elephant Point. This is possible along the upland ridges to the north before they run down to the sea at the Point or by dropping down any of the hanging valleys off the ridges to intersect the coast south of the Point. As you approach the coast watch out for dive-bombing skua gulls. Skuas are fond of raiding other birds' nests but protect their own aggressively. Wear a hat and wave your arms a lot! Approach any sea elephants at the Point with extreme caution. Return to the Neck southwards along the seashore or back over Harston to enjoy those views once more. The round trip walk takes a leisurely four to five hours.

Camping/Accommodation

Some visitors do go out to the Neck and Mt. Harston as a day trip from the settlement on Saunders. However, I recommend spending at least three nights there. There can be few places in the world as accessible (well relatively) as this, where you can be lulled to sleep by the sound of the gentle piping of hundreds of gentoos above the crashing of the ocean. This is truly a magical place and one where one feels privileged to be.

With the permission of the Pole-Evans, it is possible to camp, although shelter from the ever-present wind and the

proximity of fresh water are issues to be considered. The best place is under a rock overhang on the lower slopes of Mt. Harston known as the “Swiss Hotel” – so called after its use by a group of Swiss photographers from a few years back. It even has a very artistic metal sign. Much better, however, is the portakabin installed and equipped by the Pole-Evans. This is basic but offers surprising comfort for such a remote spot. It has two bunkrooms, each sleeping four, a communal kitchen and a bathroom with a real bath. Power is 12V solar; there is no facility to recharge camera batteries, so be prepared. Food is available for purchase from the small store in the settlement. This is important because of FIGAS’ strict limit on luggage weight. Again, I recommend making all bookings and payment in advance via one of the Stanley agencies.

Useful Links

If you’re making the long trip down to the Falklands, you’ll certainly want to see more than just Saunders Island and Mt. Harston. An excellent website to begin your research is run by Horizon, the Island’s Cable and Wireless company, internet provider etc. Visit their Falkland Islands website at <http://www.horizon.co.fk/index.html>

For more details and pictures of Saunders Island visit <http://www.ladatco.com/fk-sdr.htm>

This article originally appeared on the SummitPost website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/mountain/rock/191485/Mt-Harston-Falkland-Islands-.html> for the original article and lots more photos.

Participants: Martin and Gwen Smith.

Roraima, 2,810 metres - Venezuela

Graham Maddocks

December 7 – 14, 2006

Roraima is the highest of the flat topped table mountains that are spread along the Venezuela, Brazil and Guyana border. This mountain is part of Venezuela’s Canaima National Park, one of the largest national parks in the world. These distinct table top mountains are characterized by sheer rock walls and are called “Tepuis”, a Pemon Indian word meaning mountain. Roraima means the “Mother of all waters” in Pemon because its cascading waterfalls feed into three great river systems; the Orinoco in Venezuela, the Amazon in Brazil and the Essequibo in Guyana. The highest waterfall in the world, Angel Falls, is located within the park, which cascades

979 metres from the top of Auyantepui. Close by Roraima is Kukenan Tepui, another massive sheer tepui which has the second highest recorded drop at 610 metres.

Roraima is encircled by sheer cliffs in excess of 500 metres but can be climbed at one point where a diagonal ramp runs across the rock face. The forty-five square kilometres of Roraima’s table top contains one of the oldest and most unique ecosystems in the world. The flora and fauna developed in complete isolation and bear more similarities with species found in Africa than in South America, suggesting Roraima was part of the ancient super continent Gondwana before continental drift.

Early reports of this isolated ecosystem inspired Arthur Conan Doyle to write his novel *The Lost World*, in which dinosaurs were still living on top of a remote plateau in the Amazon.

A Pemon Indian guide was hired in Santa Elena, a small town on the Venezuelan border with Brazil. Santa Elena, a center for the street sale of illegally mined gold and diamonds from the area was bustling with covert activity fueled by wads of US dollars.

We then traveled by dirt road to the Pemon village of Paraitepui where porters were hired. On the first day we approached on foot through rolling savannah called Gran Sabana and crossed the Rio Tek and Rio Kukenan when they were at their lowest in late afternoon, December being the dry season. Both rivers were full of very slippery boulders and could easily become impossible to cross during rain. We camped after crossing the rivers. During the night it rained hard, rendering the rivers impassable.

On day two we climbed steadily through grassland under the shadow of the massive rock walls of Kukenan Tepui, (2,600 metres) where waterfalls cascaded down the sheer faces. Kukenan was first climbed by a party of British mountaineers in 1963. That night we camped at the base of the rock wall of Roraima. During the night it rained hard again and howling winds flattened the tent and blew rubber sandals away. By 04.00 it had stopped and at 06.00 the first rays of the sun were striking the rock faces of Kukenan.

On the third day we ascended the steep rocky trail across Roraima’s face. This route was discovered by botanist Henry Perkins in 1884; it is unknown if the Pemon had ever climbed to the plateau. The route climbs through lush endemic tropical vegetation and waterfalls in mystic green grottos with many small birds. The trail is along the foot of a vertical rock wall and under waterfalls to finally reach the heavily eroded top of the plateau at 2,700 metres.

The guide soon found a tiny black frog (*Oreophrynella*) that crawls and cannot hop. This creature’s primitive traits have been extensively studied and are more closely related to similar species in Africa, as are unique plants (*Stegolepis Guianensis*) suggesting this ancient link to Gondwana. Thirty species of orchid are found on Roraima, all of which



The massif of Kukenan PHOTO: GRAHAM MADDOCKS

grow nowhere else. The rocks are eroded into fantastic shapes and are some of the oldest in the world, formed 3.6 billion years ago; they were the western section of Gondwana, which began to break up 150 million years ago. The lack of fossils indicates a Pre-Cambrian origin for these rock strata before life appeared on planet earth. I took a bath in eroded rock pools that were lined with quartz crystal gravel and contained many fine specimens.

Heavy rain forced our camp into a series of caves set high up on a rock pillar where we rigged hammocks, with great views of Gran Sabana's grassland, Roraima's plateau and neighboring Kukenan. It rained hard all night, but at daybreak we had great views from our rocky perch over the plateau swirling with wind and mist. To the north the "Prow", the overhanging rock wall, plunges over 400 metres into the jungles of Guyana. This wall was also first climbed by a British party in 1971.

On the fourth day we reached the summit on an eroded rock pillar at 2,810 metres. The summit of Roraima experiences a climate of extremes, often very hot with intense radiation during the day, punctuated by cool, moist, swirling cloud cover. At night the temperature can drop almost to freezing. Being tropical the day length varies little throughout the year.

The guide pointed out several species of unique carnivorous plants (*Heliamphora*) that have evolved to trap insects for nutrition to survive while growing on the rock. Botanical research has found roughly 2,000 plant species on top of these tepuis, half of which are endemic (grow nowhere else.) This is almost the highest percentage of endemic flora found anywhere in the world.

One could feel the intense radiation reflecting off the rock, frying your skin. It rained hard again that night and a

waterfall cascaded off the rock in front of our cave leading to some apprehension about river crossings on the return trip. However, again the rain ceased at 04.00 and by 06.00 the first sun was striking the faces of Kukenan. We packed up and left early for the long descent. Ten hours through beautiful lush jungle and savannah put us on the other side of the Rio Tek, where we camped. I bathed in the river and was attacked by a cloud of blackflies known locally and justifiably as *la plaga* (the plague..). At dusk large flocks of green parrots screeched over, flying in distinct pairs on their way to their roosts in the jungles of Brazil. They repeated this flyover at dawn on the way back to their feeding grounds on the savannah.

The place we camped was home to an extended Indian family living in a collection of mud shacks. A woman was spinning cotton by hand from cotton balls that grow wild in this area. That night we were shown an incredible night sky, full of stars only possible in a place uncontaminated by artificial light.

Day six dawned clear, signaling a very hot day for the walk out. By 07.00 it was scorching and it took almost the rest of the day to reach Paraitepui and pay off and tip the porters. We ate a meal of chicken and flat round casabe bread made from manioc; it was served with a sauce made from termites and a side order of roasted "big ass" ants. The termite sauce was spicy and the ants were, well, big, crunchy and tasty. The casabe bread was as hard as iron even when washed down with warm beer.

Ecuador

Tony Vaughn
January 2 – 30

Ecuador, land of high mountains, dense jungles, exotic wildlife and buried Inca treasure was a fascinating location to spend the month of January away from the cold and damp of Vancouver Island.

For three of us the whole month of January was to be spent in Ecuador while the other four would vary their time, dependent on commitments at home.

After a year of planning, we left Victoria on an early morning flight and by 10:15 p.m. we were swooping low over Pinchincha Mountain with the glowing lights of Quito below us. Almost touching the statue of the virgin on El Panecillo in the heart of the city, we landed at Quito's Mariscal Sucre airport.

Our party of seven consisted of Mike, Sylvia, Russ, Charles, Anita, Susan and myself. The advance party of

Anita, Susan, Mike and myself, spent the first week seeing the sights of Quito and surrounding area. Mike and Susan took a horse trek for a few days into the Pululahua Reserve. On Saturday night Russ arrived in town. We spent a lovely day cruising around old Quito on Sunday stopping at stalls in the market. Monday morning Charles and Sylvia arrived following a problematic journey which got them in twelve hours late.

Tuesday morning Anita and Susan left us for the bus journey to the coast, where they planned to go to language school and enjoy the beach. The rest of us prepared our gear for two weeks climbing amongst the volcanoes of Ecuador's central valley.

Our driver for the next two weeks was Adrian, the son of Ishmael, who owned the hacienda that we would base out of. He picked us up in Quito at 11:30 a.m. and by 1 p.m. we had arrived at our base for the next couple of weeks. This was the hacienda Cuello de Luna, located near the entrance to Cotapaxi Park. Once moved in we took a hike up to 11,980ft in the company of the hacienda's three dogs, and so started the second phase of our acclimatization, step one being spending time in Quito at 9,226ft {2,850m}.

On rising the next morning at 6:00 a.m. and looking out of the window, it was hard to believe that we were only a few miles south of the equator. I thought I had been transported to North Wales during the night. It was cold, damp and misty. We soon found, however, that this was normal and by driving twenty minutes from the hacienda we would be in bright sunshine. The first day we planned to climb Pasachoa, a 13,800ft extinct volcano thirty kilometres south of Quito. By 9:00 a.m. we had started up the trail on the northwest flank of the mountain passing through bamboo forest, humid Andean cloud forest, and finally onto the paramo, which is tussock clad grassland. By then we were on the ridge between the volcanic cauldron on our right and quebrada (ravine) Canari on our left. Following the ridge we finally reached a steep cliff. From here the trail continued to the right of the cliff but, as quoted from the guide book, "...it is very steep and surrounded by abysses, the surface is unstable, so continuing is dangerous and not recommended." This we could later attest to. However, not having read this bit, we climbed up the bluff over the top, onto a ridge and down the other side. Here we connected with the normal hiking route to the summit which we reached at 2:30 p.m.. It was unfortunate but Mike was unable to continue beyond the cliff as he had injured his knee coming down Arrowsmith on New Years day. He still couldn't walk without the aid of a pole and then only very slowly. He decided to return to the vehicle while the rest of us continued on. On the way down from the summit we decided that, without a rope, downclimbing the cliff was not a good option. Therefore we bushwhacked across the ravine and through the forest just like true islanders. We

finally caught with Mike and arrived back at the vehicle at 7:00 p.m. in the dark and rain.

On our rest day following our day on Pasachoa, we visited Sasquili, a small town half an hour's drive away. We went to see the Indian market which takes place weekly and caters for the inhabitants of the remote villages. This is a truly indigenous market and not geared towards tourists, although there are some crafts sold. Just about everything you can imagine is sold here in eight plazas, each dedicated to a different purpose. We started at the livestock market and worked our way through groceries, hardware, handicrafts etc., until we had seen it all and bought a few souvenirs. It was a fine insight into life in the high Andes.

Mike decided to leave us and go to the Galapagos Islands, as there is no way he could climb with his injured knee. The next morning, on our way to climb Corazon at 4,782m, we dropped him off at the bus for the trip back to Quito while we continued on to the road head at 3,716m. Climbing over the locked gate we preceded upwards in sunny warm weather along the road to a point that appeared to give access to the base of the mountain's Northeast Ridge. From here we headed across the paramo and onto the ridge which we followed up to the summit. The weather changed just before reaching the ridge and became quite cold, windy and foggy, hence we had no views from the top. Once back down the ridge, visibility returned. After a quick cross country hike we were back on the road and down at the roadhead by 4:20 p.m. for our ride back to the hacienda and dinner.

On day four we climbed the central peak of Ruminahui 15,203ft (4,634m.) We had planned on climbing both the central and north peaks, both of which are accessed from Lake Limpiopunga in Cotapaxi Park, and can be climbed easily in one day. After climbing the central peak, stopping for lunch



Ilíniza Norte PHOTO BY UNNAMED BASQUE

and having a very long early afternoon nap in the sunshine, we found it was getting late and we didn't feel like bashing up another scree slope. We slowly ambled back across the paramo for our pick up by the lake. The approach to Ruminahui is quite beautiful, but the climb itself, with scree and loose rock was not particularly pleasant.

On January 14th we were bound for Iliniza Norte 16,817ft (5,126m.) the only climb for which we had to work on the approach, although this was good for acclimatizing. We were required to carry all our gear for two and a half hours up to the refugio which is located at the top of a moraine, close to the saddle between Iliniza Norte and Iliniza Sur at 15,250ft (4,650m.) There were two other parties at the refugio, three Basques and a French/Spanish couple, all planning on climbing Iliniza Norte the following day. Once it got dark we found that there were visitors wandering around outside. These were the local Lobo de Paramo. Although they are called wolves they are really foxes. They didn't bother us as they were just scavenging, but it was a bit of a surprise to go outside and see the glow of their eyes watching from the darkness.

Next morning we left for the climb a half hour behind the other two parties. We crossed a scree slope to gain the Southeast Ridge which we climbed on firm 3rd and 4th class rock as far as a tower, where we were forced over to the north side and onto a traverse known as "El Paso de la Muerte" (Passage of the Dead.) Fortunately for us it wasn't quite as scary as it sounds. At the start of the traverse, which was covered in snow and ice, we came across one of the Basques waiting for his friends to return, as he wasn't prepared to cross the traverse without an iceaxe and crampons. Russ and Charles quickly set up a handline and the Basque joined us for the rest of the climb. It was a straightforward scramble up a rock filled gully from the end of the traverse, rated at 5.3, 70 degrees in the guide book. It certainly didn't seem like it, thank goodness, as I wasn't looking forward to that level of climbing at almost 17,000 ft. One incident that nearly brought the whole climb to a rapid conclusion was when the French/Spanish couple climbing above us kicked off a large rock that narrowly missed Sylvia. This resulted in a lot of lively yelling and shouting in an attempt to get them to stay still until we had passed out of their line of fire. We spent a half hour on the summit under sunny skies and then it was down and back to the refugio. We were soon down at the roadhead snoozing in the sunshine waiting for our ride back to the hacienda.

For the past seven days everywhere we went our eyes had been drawn to the massive bulk of what many people consider one of the most beautiful mountains in the world: the 19,347 ft (5897m) high and twenty-two kilometre wide Cotopaxi. It was time for us to give it a try, so by 3 p.m. we com-



The trail and glacier on the ascent of Cotopaxi, Ecuador

PHOTO: CHARLES TURNER

menced the forty-five minute hike from the parking area up to the refugio at 15,750ft (4,800m.) It was a large and busy hut, well equipped with lots of bunks, lockers and two kitchens. It was so busy there that sleep was literally just a dream. We were up by 11 p.m., and packed and ready to leave by 12:30 a.m.. We left under a cold and clear sky with a myriad of stars shining down on us. The snow was frozen solid and there was a clear boot track zigzagging relentlessly upwards over slopes varying from 35 to 55 degrees. After an hour or so we roped up, figuring that by then we must be off the snow and on the glacier. Gradually in the bitter cold we puffed and gasped our way upwards, each of us lost in thought behind our own small circle of light from our headlamps. Slowly the eastern sky started to brighten as the dawn approached and still we were plodding upwards. Eventually we could go no higher, at 7:50 a.m., in bright sunshine we joined a party of Russians on the summit, and were able to look down into the huge (2,600ft diameter) crater of this majestic volcano. Following an hour on the summit we retraced our steps back down to the refugio reaching it just as the clouds rolled in, blocking out all views of the mountain.

Our sixth and final climb was to be Chimborazo, the highest of Ecuador's mountains at 20,702 ft (6,310m.) It was not to be. Tiredness, eighteen derailments on a train journey we took which cost us half a day's time, and reports of bad conditions on the mountain, resulted in a group decision to bail on Chimborazo and be satisfied with the five mountains we had successfully summited.

Participants: Susan Eyres, Anita Vaughn (The Beach,) Mike Hubbard (The Galapagos Islands,) Russ Moir, Sylvia Moser, Charles Turner and Tony Vaughn.

Ciudad Perdida - Colombia

Graham Maddocks

February 14 – 21

Ciudad Perdida (The Lost City) is one of the largest pre-Columbian towns discovered in the Americas. Known by its indigenous name of Teyuna, it was built by the Tayrona Indians and was probably their largest urban center.

Ciudad Perdida lies on the steep slopes of the upper Rio Buritaca, in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the northern coastal mountains of Colombia. This mountain range rises from the Caribbean Sea to craggy, snow capped peaks. It is the world's highest coastal mountain range and its twin summits of Simon Bolivar and Cristobal Colon (both 5,775 metres) are the highest in Colombia.

The city was built between the 11th and 14th centuries, though its origins are much older, going back to perhaps the 7th century. Spreading over an area of about two square kilometres, it is the largest Tayrona city found so far, and it appears to be their major political and economic centre. Some 2,000 to 4,000 people are believed to have lived here. The central part of the city is at an altitude of between 950 metres and 1,300 metres, set on a ridge from which various stone paths lead to other sectors on the slopes. Although the wooden houses of the Tayrona's are long gone, the stone structures, including terraces and stairways, remain in remarkably good shape. There are about 150 terraces, most of which once served as foundations for the houses. The largest terraces are set on a central ridge and were used for ritual ceremonies. Today the city is quite overgrown, which gives it a somewhat mysterious air.

During the Conquest, the Spaniards wiped out the Tayrona's and their settlements disappeared without a trace under the lush tropical vegetation. So did Ciudad Perdida for four centuries, until its discovery by *guaqueros* (treasure hunters) in 1975.

Archeological digs have uncovered Tayrona objects (fortunately the *quaqueros* didn't manage to take every thing), mainly various kinds of pottery (both ceremonial and utilitarian), gold work and unique necklaces made of semi-precious stones. Some of these objects are on display in the magnificent gold museum in Bogota.

In the past, the site was dangerous to visit due to Colombia's ongoing guerrilla insurgency; people visiting the site have been kidnapped and there has been fighting and deaths between the *guaqueros*. At the present time, the area has been taken over for large scale coca leaf production and is firmly in the control of illegal, armed paramilitary groups who provide protection from the guerrillas for the coca farmers and cocaine production facilities.

I made the trek to Ciudad Perdida in the company of Colombian friends from Bogota who assured me that the paramilitaries respect the law of contract and that, once they have been paid for their protection, if anything happens to you, retribution is swift without any Charter Rights. In 2003, several people at the site were kidnapped by thirty guerrillas from the E.L.N group (National Liberation Army). The paramilitaries negotiated their release and then killed all the guerrillas involved. Having firmly established their credentials, the site is now relatively safe.

A guide was hired in Santa Marta, a pleasant old colonial town on the coast, founded in 1525; it is the oldest surviving colonial city in Colombia. We then drove along the coast road for three hours before turning off onto a dirt access road to the Sierra. We signed in at the Colombian army checkpoint, who, after searching us and the vehicle, waved us through. We bounced along a climbing mud road for a couple of hours before encountering the paramilitary checkpoint, who apart from the lack of insignia appeared similar in camouflage clothing and weaponry to the Colombian army. The paramilitaries are usually ex-soldiers and are known for their ruthless "death squad" activities and have grown out of the reaction to the terrorism of the guerrilla groups.

After a discussion, they too waved us through and we arrived in the small mountain town of El Mamey, which apart from the presence of armed men in the streets, appeared to be a typically sleepy agricultural settlement. Our guide met with a representative of the paramilitaries to arrange safe conduct and to hire four mules for the packs.

On the first day, we set off in scorching heat, climbing steadily with a view of the snow-capped peaks of the Sierra. That night we camped in hammocks beside a pristine mountain river with a deep swimming hole surrounded by giant tropical hardwood trees. During the day, we had passed several mule trains carrying sacks of coca leaf on its way to being processed into Colombia's most famous export. Large tracts of the forest had been cleared by slash and burn technique and planted with coca leaf bushes. The guide told me that the area had been sprayed by herbicide twenty years ago to kill the coca crop, but that it had destroyed all the crops and the only thing to come back was the hardy coca bush. He showed me a cacao pod (used to make chocolate) taken from a tree, when he broke it open the inside was rotten and black. The United States is giving a great deal of financial aid to Plan Colombia to introduce alternative crops for the farmer but, as the guide explained, these alternatives, such as tomatoes, require a lot of attention and irrigation, whereas the hardy coca bush, like marijuana and the opium poppy is resilient to drought and require very little maintenance once planted.

On the second day, we visited a *campesino* (farmer) operating a small scale, one family cocaine production fa-

cility. He told me that he had three hectares of coca leaf from which he produces one kilogram of cocaine a month using very crude methods. He then sells this kilo for about US\$1,000 to a designated buyer who pays the paramilitaries for his protection. Even when the costs of his production (chemicals and gasoline) are deducted, this is far more than he can make with any other crop. His manufacturing methods included using an adapted weed whacker to mulch the leaves. His children mix the mulched leaves and chemicals with their feet.

We continued climbing slowly through more coca fields and jungle in blast furnace heat and camped for the night near an indigenous Indian village. The Indians were living a very traditional lifestyle in conical mud and thatch huts in somewhat poor conditions, living on subsistence farming. Small and wiry, all the men carried a bag of coca leaf and a gourd container of lime made from burnt sea shells which they apply to the inside of their cheek with a stick while chewing coca leaf. The chemical reaction releases the active ingredient and is common among the coca-consuming indigenous cultures of the Andes. The women do not consume the coca. The guide told me that they rely on the shaman and traditional medicine, but that if a doctor is required, the paramilitaries would escort him in and evacuate anyone who needed it. There was no school and he said that the Indians only want their children to learn what is necessary for their culture and do not want any contact with the outside world. Given their history since European discovery, this isn't surprising. We left our mules at the village and hired some Indian men as porters.

On the third day we crossed and re-crossed the Rio Buri-taca many times through dense, lush tropical jungle until we came to a staircase of cut stone climbing directly from the river up to Ciudad Perdida. Soon, stone terraces were visible in the undergrowth and a large ceremonial platform cleared of trees giving magnificent views of the surrounding Sierra and jungle. There were ritual purification baths, a large stone frog, a priest's ceremonial chair on the largest platform and a rock carved with what may have been a map of the site. The stonework is in remarkably good shape due to cut stone drainage channels that have prevented erosion. Given its isolation and views, the site has a powerful spiritual air and its ceremonial purpose was obvious. The guide told me that the Indians no longer come here, considering the site cursed.

At dusk the air was filled with many brightly coloured tropical birds including toucans, macaws and parrots. Other wildlife included a scorpion found in a hammock and a venomous snake in the camp, a deadly Mapanare, both of which met the same fate from the guide. We camped two nights at the site to absorb the spirituality and calm. At night there was an incredible display of the stars far from artificial light.

On the fifth day, we descended to the Indian village and collected our mules and traded cookies with the children for

delicious fresh pineapple and banana. We then continued down for a long hot day punctuated by many dips in the river to our first campsite, passing several small scale cocaine processing facilities on the way.

Day six brought us back to El Mamey, where we had beers and exchanged pleasantries with the paramilitaries, who were obviously loaded for bear, and returned the mules. A descent of the dirt road brought us back into the relative safety of the Colombian army checkpoint for another thorough search. They waved us through onto the coast road where a large sack of cold beer was purchased.

Heilbronner Weg: A classic tour in the Bavarian Alps

Albert Hestler
June 13 – 15

Every five years I visit my hometown of Giengen/Brenz in Germany for a class re-union. These gatherings are scheduled to coincide with certain benchmarks of advancing age, i.e. 50, 55, 60 years, and so on. 2007 was the year when my class of 1932/33 celebrated the 75th anniversary of our respective (I wished I could say illustrious) births.

Following my old principle of doing other noteworthy things 'while in the neighbourhood,' I enquired from several old buddies whether they would be interested in joining me on some outdoor venture beyond the customary afternoon walk in the woods or, if really adventurous, a full day's hike. Some had legitimate excuses such as health problems, but most were simply out of shape or had given in to the presumption that old age required a certain amount of leisure in the rocking chair.

However, the gods must have been kindly disposed to my predicament because things worked out well in the end, though in a rather roundabout way, as I shall illustrate.

A few years ago my friend Johannes, who now lives in Stuttgart, sent me an article about a group of people who were climbing Mount Ararat in Turkey. He noted especially a paragraph which I shall try to translate as best I can: "*Ararat had also been a longed-for destination of Hans. This gentleman from Giengen came as a fugitive to Southern Germany when he was still a child. It was a time when the future looked bleak and only dreams could roam freely. He marked in his school atlas all the many places which he hoped to see one day. It was a wish list which only became possible after the 'German economic miracle'. That's why this passionate alpinist, already having climbed fourteen 5000-metre peaks, booked for this climb of Ararat.*"



Success on the Heilbronner Weg, Bavaria PHOTO: ALBERT HESTLER

The question was whether I knew this mysterious Hans. I didn't. Intrigued by the description I asked my old friend Willy, who still lives in Giengen, whether he could shed some light on the subject. Yes, indeed, he could. As a matter of fact he was having lunch with Hans and a few other friends every Wednesday in one of the local watering holes. Well, I'll be ... Willy told my story to Hans Brandt and, as a result, Hans and I started e-mailing each other. As it turned out he, too, is a member of the Alpine Club and regularly leads trips in the Alps. More importantly, he invited me to let him know when I would be next in Germany and we could then do some hiking together in an area of my choosing.

He wasn't interested in my suggestion to hike the Tour du Mont Blanc together (too tame, I guess). In turn he proposed that we do the 'Heilbronner Weg' in the Bavarian Alps. I fairly jumped at this opportunity because it is the oldest and best-known high-alpine tour in this corner of the Alps, and requires (according to guide books) experience in mountaineering, guaranteed sure footing, and total absence of dizziness. The route was named after the town of Heilbronn in Wuerttemberg because it was the Heilbronner Section of the German Alpine Club which first undertook to build the route in 1895. Now, for everybody who was born in Wuerttemberg (like myself), having done the Heilbronner Weg is a mark of distinction, which had eluded me so far. No wonder I was excited about the prospect of correcting this deplorable oversight.

Hans and I left Giengen by car on June 13th and reached Oberstdorf around noon. From there we took a bus to Birgsau (956m) and started our hike up the valley to Einoedsbach, then across alpine meadows to the Enzian Hut, and

finally the Rappensee Hut (2,091m) which took about four hours. One may not whole-heartedly embrace the European hut system, but there are definitely some advantages. With the number of people wandering around the mountains, camping in the meadows is simply not an option. It is also very nice to have the opportunity to clean up at the end of the day, then adjourn to the common room and have a fully prepared meal as well as refreshing alcoholic beverages (which we used liberally). It also allows for light traveling. We were lucky because we were early in the season and not too many people were in the huts or on the route.

The next day dawned bright and we started early into the high mountains. The route first winds its way up the north side of a ridge. It is surprisingly steep, hence the warning about dizziness. A misstep could easily result in a quick slide down a scree slope or, at this time of year, a slippery snow field. Higher up in the rock, the more difficult sections are secured by fixed steel ropes. At one point a steel ladder ascends a formidable rock face and a steel bridge spans a cleft which would be difficult to circumnavigate. The route then follows the exposed ridge, leading in a series of saddles and high points (Steinschartenkopf, Bockkarkopf – all over 2,600m) to the final descent on the south side and finally to the Kemptner Hut (1,844m.) Another wonderful surprise happened on the way down when we encountered a group of ibex who eyed us curiously, but went about their business of head-butting unperturbed.

The whole day was one of those rare occasions when the air is clear as a bell and one can see the farthest points in sharp detail. For this reason, Hans had suggested that we make a short detour and climb the Hohe Licht as well (literally: High Light – and the high point at 2,651m.) The 360 degree view was simply stunning. Sitting there under the summit cross, I was reminded of the words spoken by the psalmist: *"I lift my eyes to the mountains, from whence cometh my salvation"*. After a heart bypass operation less than a year before it felt great to have made it that far, good to be alive.

The day's ups and downs took altogether ten and a half hours. I am sure that Hans could have made it in less time, but he was kind enough to slow his pace to mine. While pampering our weary bones on the terrace of the Kemptner Hut he said that he would gladly take me along on any of his trips scheduled for later that summer. This was a welcome boost to my confidence and alleviated my doubts whether I could (or should) pursue the next goal on my wish list, i.e. to hike the Tour du Mont Blanc.

On the third day we descended the Trettach valley and were on a paved road two and a half hours later. We picked up a bus in Spielsmannsau and our car in Oberstdorf, and were back in Giengen late that afternoon. That's European style climbing.

Tour du Mont Blanc

Albert Hestler

June 22 – July 1



Albert in the Val Ferret with Mt Blanc behind PHOTO: ALBERT HESTLER

To quote from the Lonely Planet's edition 'Walking in the Alps': "The Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) is one of the world's classic walks – a truly international route with sections in France, Italy and Switzerland. Circumnavigating the highest and most spectacular mountain massif in Western Europe, the TMB takes walkers right to the foot of the towering rock faces and glaciers where alpinism was born. The views in good weather are unsurpassed in the Alps and compare favourably to the mountain scenery of higher ranges such as the Himalaya. On lower sections the route wanders amidst the gentle sights and sounds of the Alps: traditional wooden chalets with their window boxes of geraniums, the rushing of clear meltwater streams and the ever-present tinkling of cowbells."

Who could resist the lure of such an experience! It certainly intrigued me and had been on my list of 'things to do' for quite some time. Because I was scheduled to be in Germany anyway for a class reunion in late May, it seemed a great idea to add a few weeks and spend some time hiking in the Alps. Why not the TMB? Reading some available material (notably the above-mentioned Lonely Planet book and the Guide 'Tour of Mont Blanc' by Kev Reynolds, published by Cicerone Press), I gleaned the following facts:

The tour circumnavigating the Mont Blanc Massif may be thought of as looking something like a rectangle, stretching in southwesterly-northeasterly direction. To the northwest, the outline is defined by the deep slash of the

Vallee de l'Arve, stretching from Le Tour to Les Houches (the usual starting point of the TMB) and beyond. Also in this valley lies Chamonix, the undisputed centre of French alpinism, hence the reference to 'the French side' of Mont Blanc. To the southeast, there are the valleys of Val Veni and Val Ferret which join at a T-junction near Courmayeur to send their combined waters down the valley of Val D'Aosta into Italy – hence the reference to 'the Italian side' of Mont Blanc.

On either end of the rectangular route, one has to cross from one valley into the next by crossing numerous high spurs and passes. On the western end there are Col de Voza, Col du Bonhomme and Col de la Seigne (the French/Italian border). On the eastern end there are Grand Col Ferret (the Italian/Swiss border), Alp Bovine and Col de Balme (the Swiss/French border). The highest points are respectively on the alternate routes (only recommended in good weather) via Col du Fours and Fenetre d'Arpete, both at 2,665m. For comparison, Chamonix lies at 1,055m and Courmayeur at 1,225m.

To make the walk more interesting, the TMB doesn't follow these valleys on the valley floor but leads up onto the ridges opposite the Mont Blanc Massif. It thereby provides beautiful ridge walks and wonderful views over the mountains. To quote from the Cicerone Guide: "Mont Blanc does not stand alone, however, and the large number of attendant peaks and aiguilles, savage rock walls, ridges and tumbling glaciers, rather than detract from the grandeur, simply add to it with their own individuality – courtiers whose impressive company would grace any massif anywhere in the world. The Grand Jorasses, Aiguille Noire, the Verte and Drus, Aiguille du Midi, Mont Maudit and Mont Dolent, on which the borders of three countries meet, each of these (and there are many more) would stand out in any mountain crowd. Here they attend court, subdued only by altitude." For reference, Mont Blanc at 4,807m is the highest mountain in the Alps, but there are some 400 separate summits (twenty-six over 4,000m) and over forty glaciers.

There is a cable car connecting Chamonix with Courmayeur via the Aiguille du Midi (3,842m) and Punta Helbronner (3,462m) which has often been described as the eighth wonder of the world and is certainly worthwhile doing. There is also an automobile tunnel between these two towns. This has prompted certain persons (mostly those who are liable to question the sanity of mountain climbers anyway) to rephrase the classic question "why do we climb mountains?" into the variation "why walk around a mountain when one can drive through it?" I think that the description in the previous paragraph may provide as good an answer as any.

All the guide books I have read propose a walk in anti-clockwise direction. All agree that a reasonable schedule

would take nine days from Les Houches to Le Tour, and two more days to complete the circle via the Grand Balcon Sud opposite Chamonix, for a total of about 170 kilometres. Hiking times were never supposed to exceed eight hours in any given day. However, the routing of the walk makes for plenty of ascents and descents, sometimes involving over 1,000m up and down in one day. As a result, the total elevation gain (and subsequent loss) could amount to over 10,000m, i.e. exceeding the height of Mount Everest.

For reasons of age, health and physical condition, I decided to spread the walk from Les Houches to Le Tour over 10 days, which worked out just fine. The maximum distance I walked in one day was nineteen kilometres which, however, only took six hours as it was mostly on level ground. The longest day was nine hours (excluding breaks) - that was the day from Refuge de la Croix du Bonhomme to Rifugio Elisabetta when I hit two high passes of 2,665m and 2,516m respectively, ascended/descended +950/-1,100m, and covered seventeen kilometres. I was exceptionally lucky in that I experienced six days of clear skies and sunshine, which allowed great views of Mont Blanc from every angle and the valleys from one end to the other. The other days were overcast, but only one day was downright wet.

I had originally planned to do the last two stages as day trips from Chamonix (where I had booked overnight stays at the Youth Hostel,) but the weather turned and it became cold, wet and windy. I took the cable car to La Flegere, but because there wasn't any visibility, I quickly returned to the valley and reverted to being an average tourist. Here then the final statistics of my walk around Mont Blanc: ten days, 140 kilometres, +6,630m/-7,020m cumulative elevation gain/loss.

There are a few other important points which I should like to mention. There are plenty of huts along the way so that tent camping isn't necessary. This makes it possible to travel very light which, I feel, is a very important consideration. I met quite a few people who aborted their hike because they were carrying too much weight. I carried a backpack weighing about 11kg/25lbs to which were added the daily ration of water and a midday snack (bread, cheese, chocolate). The huts provided 'demi-pension' packages which included dormitory accommodation, a full-course meal in the evening and breakfast. The cost would fluctuate between 30 and 40 Euros (about Cdn.\$48 - 64). Of course, a mug of beer at day's end (strictly to re-hydrate) and some wine with the meal later (to aid the digestion and promote sound sleep) would be added extra. Hiking in Europe is definitely very civilized!

The best times to hike the TMB are late June (the huts open on the 15th) and early September (the huts close with the first major snow fall). July and August are definitely to be avoided as literally hundreds of hikers are doing this most popular tour. I traveled alone and without any reservations because it gave me the flexibility to stop whenever I wanted to. I also understood that, as a member of the ACC, these huts could not refuse my staying overnight. However, many of the huts are run privately (not by the CAF, CAI or CAS, i.e. Club Alpin Francais/Italiano/Suisse) hence are not bound by this rule. Still, I had no trouble getting accommodation every night, the one exception being in the Rifugio Elisabetta where I had to sleep on the floor in the common room. As it turned out, I had more room on the air mattress provided than the other people who were packed in the dormitories like sardines. It would seem prudent if not imperative, therefore, to make reservations at these huts when traveling in July and August or the number of people in the group warrants that accommodation is guaranteed.

I would definitely argue that staying in alpine huts is part of the experience. Hikers are after all a fraternity of like-minded people and I always find it interesting to share their company. Already on the second night I met a group of five people from New Zealand who, it turned out, were of my vintage and had pretty much the same itinerary as I. We mostly set our own pace and daily goal, so it was more co-incidence than planning that we often ended up at the same hut. It was not surprising to me, therefore, that on the final day we saw each other again, though sitting in different trains at the station in Chamonix. We waved good-bye while their train left for Geneva and mine headed to Martigny.

Though I speak hardly any French, and my German proved totally useless, I found that our different languages posed no problems. If anything, it added to the fun. Also, English is becoming more and more the 'lingua franca' of Europe. At one point I met five Japanese hikers puffing up a pass and I greeted them with one of my few remaining Japanese greetings "konichi wa". This opened the door to a friendly exchange of words. One of the hikers, obviously a bit old in the tooth, asked me outright how old I was. When I told him that I was seventy-four, he proudly pointed at himself, grinned and declared "seventy-seven." Later that evening, we found ourselves sitting at the same table over supper. Next to me sat a French woman and her son. When I finally managed to convey the fact that the Japanese gentleman at the end of the table was seventy-seven, the son volunteered the information that his mother was seventy-three years old. I must say that I felt in very good company - and proud of it, too.

Pyrenees

Judith Holm

July 9 - 24



Pyrenees - looking east from summit of Pic Carlit, 2921 m, Judith and Shannon. PHOTO: JUDITH HOLM

French: *Pyrénées*; Spanish: *Pirineos*; Catalan: *Pirineus*; Occitan: *Piren Pus*; Arogonese: *Perinés*; Basque: *Pirinioak*

I am fortunate to have a daughter-in-law who invited me to hike and camp with her in the Pyrenees.. Equally good is that Shannon and I both had a wonderful time, filled with adventures! There is a Haute Route of the Pyrenees which runs west-east roughly along the crest of this natural border between France and Spain, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. The mid section of this mountaineering route, at least at the time of writing, has glaciers. There are many points of access to the HRP. We hiked the parts of this route that most interested us during our loop of the eastern half of the Pyrenees, from France westward through Andorra and Spain to about the middle and then eastward on the French side. There are also parallel long distance trails on the French (GR10) and Spanish (GR11) sides; these trails are designed so you can drop down to a village each night. The HRP has a hut system but if you can it is probably better to bring your tent which gives you more freedom.

Shannon and I met up in Latour de Carol, a pretty village along a railway line, near the junction of Andorra, France and Spain. In this general area the sun shines, temperatures are warm, mountain's are not as steep as in the central Pyrenees and the people welcome you.

The Eyne Valley Reserve, more than half of which is alpine

meadow, has a special microclimate; there are Atlantic, Continental and Mediterranean influences all in the one valley. The Eyne Valley is internationally known for its great biodiversity of plants and insects. You can hike up through several ecosystems to top out at the 2,683m col where you can cross through to Spain or continue east-west along the HRP. We had our tent and slept part way up. Because we were carefully looking at the flowers, others with a similar interest shared their discoveries with us and one lady invited us to her home in another village; we also met a thru-hiker who knew her flowers. It was all very special.. At dinner in the picturesque Cal Pai gîte/hostel in Eyne, we had such fun with some new French friends who had also been photographing the alpine flora. Eyne itself is quiet and rural, with no shops, it is not turistic, most of the people we met were naturalists, scientists and hikers.

With a little rented car, some creativity and the knowledge that it is permitted to set up your tent in the Pyrenees after 8 p.m.. as long as you take it down by 8 a.m., we found great places to camp all the way around our loop. In fact, our standard of free sites became quite high and we did not settle for less! We drove up many, many switchbacks to sleep at a trailhead above a tiny mountain village; camped in wild, aromatic Spanish hills that we accessed by a power line right-of-way; and by a French Alpine Club hut (at 2,005m) on the safe side of an electric fence where the cattle and horses grazing near the hut couldn't lick our tent.

Where the mountains are limestone, there are caves, and in some of these *grottes* there is evidence of the ancient Magdelenean culture.

During this trip, Shannon responded when we needed Spanish and I when we needed French. There was generally little use in trying English except with each other.

Viggo made this trip possible because he took good care of Kris and Shannon's dog, Brew, since Kris was also away, doing field work.

Climbing in Arctic Sweden

Don Morton

August 11 - 15

In planning an August 2007 trip to a scientific conference at Lund University at the southern end of Sweden, I wondered what interesting mountaineering might be included. A little research revealed a significant range of peaks and glaciers in the far north of the country, with Kebnekaise the highest at 2,111m. Here was a chance to visit Lapland and see the arctic in another part of the world.



An ice summit in arctic Sweden PHOTO: DON MORTON

So I flew 1500 kilometre from near Lund to the iron-mine town of Kiruna, 150 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. There is a bus twice a day traveling the sixty-five kilometres from Kiruna to the trailhead at Nikkaluokta. I arrived just as the final wave of hundreds of hikers departed on the annual classic 100 kilometre hike west past Kebnekaise and north to Abisko Park. Completion in two days warranted a gold medal, three days a silver one, four days for bronze.

I set off in the early evening at a slower pace carrying my axe, crampons, tent, stove, and enough food to wait out a couple of extra days in this rainy climate. The trail was excellent with boardwalks across swampy places and steel suspension bridges over tributary streams. Compared with Canada's tundra at similar latitudes and altitudes below 500, here small trees bordered the trail. It was evident that Sweden benefited from the warming of the Gulf Stream. After six kilometres I camped at no cost at Laddjujauri, the dock where one can save six kilometres of hiking with a boat ride along the parallel river and lake.

My early rising the next day did not fit the boat schedule so I hiked the nearly level thirteen kilometres to Kebnekaise Fjallstation at an altitude of 670m. Many climbers miss the pleasant hike along the valley by taking a helicopter this far and going for the summit after a night in the lodge. However, I continued another four and a half kilometres up the steep Kittlebacken side valley following red painted stones into the fog and a formidable stream crossing at 1,200m. The map indicated a bridge, but red paint on each side of the stream showed what one must do. Fortunately I had carried my running shoes so I was able to cross keeping my boots dry. I found a level spot for my tent.

The next day was clear, permitting an early start ahead of the many climbers who ascend this popular peak on the good days. The route goes over the 1,750m Vierranvarri bump and down 180m before the final ascent of Kebnekaise. I passed

two huts about 1,900m and then crossed a relatively level section towards the ice-capped summit. I put on my crampons and ascended the final forty metres to the top for a view of the surrounding peaks and glaciers.

On my way down I met a group that had done a more interesting roped ascent of a glacier and rock route, but it was not for a solo climber. I returned to my tent for the night and awoke to rain and fog. By the time I reached the lodge, the sun had appeared allowing some drying of my gear. On my return I took advantage of the boat ride and spent another night at the landing.

Back in Kiruna, the attractions include an underground tour of the LKAB iron mine, a visit to the wooden church Kiruna Kyrka, and a train ride across the north of Sweden followed by a descent to the fiords of Norway at Narvik.

Mount Fuji

Tak Ogasawara
September 14 - 15

The Facts of Mt. Fuji

The highest mountain in Japan (elevation: 3,775.6m)
The most well known scenery of Japan.

Opens to climbers for two months (July and August). During these two months about 350,000 people (6,000 a day) hike up the mountain. There are forty-four huts along the four climbing routes. On a clear day you can see the perfect triangular shape of Mt. Fuji on the western horizon from almost every corner in Tokyo.

Japanese people want to climb Mt. Fuji to see the sunrise as well as to celebrate their anniversaries such as weddings, birthdays and retirements.

When I started mountain climbing in my youth in Japan, I wasn't interested in or desired to go up this mountain especially in the summer time because I had heard so many horror stories. Some of which were about traffic congestion from the bottom to the top from daytime to nighttime, and that there was only standing room at the summit to see the sunrise.

I have seen Mt. Fuji so many times from airplanes and bullet trains. Whenever I saw it, Mt. Fuji looked very beautiful from every angle. It may have been that I am getting old and nostalgic because I started thinking of going up Mt. Fuji to see the sunrise and to see how I felt to climb the highest mountain in Japan.

While I was staying at my mother-law's house in Tokyo this September, I decided to climb Mt. Fuji. In September the mountain was officially closed for climbing but a couple of huts were still open until mid-September. My plan was the following: leave the house in the morning to take a train to the Lake Kawaguchi train station, where a bus takes me to the mountain's 5th station trailhead, then hike up to the 8th station and spend one night at a hut there. I would then start early the next morning to hike up to the summit to see the sunrise and hike down the same route.

It took me for two hours to get to the Lake Kawaguchi Station from Tachikawa Station in the Tokyo suburbs. While I was waiting for a bus at the bus stop I met Chris from England. He was alone and had the same plan as mine, so we decided to go together. We got to the 5th station trailhead at noon by bus and after buying a walking stick there we headed up to the 8th station of the mountain. Despite it being a weekday as well as off-season there were still lots of people on the trail. From the 5th station to the 6th station it was almost flat, but after that the trail steepened and I could see the wide winding trail up the mountain.

The vegetation changed quite dramatically from the 5th station. Below the 5th station there were lots of trees but above the 5th station there were no trees, just shrubs. The hut that we planned to stay the night at could be seen far above while Chris and I were walking. We stop frequently to look down and talk about Japan. It took us for three and a half hours to get the hut at the 8th station. After we checked in, we sat on the veranda at the front of the hut. The weather was cloudy so we could not see much but once in a while we saw Kawaguchi City far down below and Tokyo on the eastern horizon. Supper was served at 6 o'clock. There was only one menu served because of a shortage of cooking water. They could cook us only curry and rice which is an inexpensive Japanese everyday dish, but it was quite delicious. It cost us Can\$72 for a night including supper and next day's lunch.

We got up around 3 o'clock, got dressed, put headlamps on and started walking up the mountain. It was still dark but lots of people were already on the trail. We could see the continuous stream of head lamps lights from the down below to above us. Around 4:45 we got to the Southeast Summit at where everyone waited for the sunrise. It was quite cold and windy. We sat in front of the Shinto Shrine shivering and eagerly waited for the sun to rise. Around 5 o'clock the sky started brightens slightly in the eastern horizon, gradually turned from red to bright red. Finally between the clouds the golden sun showed up in the sky at 5:20 a.m.. Everybody cheered, raised their arms and after that started to pray. This was the moment that everyone was waiting for.

After praying, we hiked up towards the actual highest point of the mountain that was on the other side of the crater, about a forty-five minute - hike. We had reached Japan's

highest point! At the height point there is an old weather station that was abandoned quite few years ago. It is a quite a big facility and is still in good condition. I heard that the Japanese government plans to use this old weather station for a high altitude research centre in the near future. We did not see anybody while we were hiking around the crater. I wondered why nobody else was interested in going to the actual highest point of Mt. Fuji.

After hiking around the crater for an hour, we came back to the same place where we saw the sunrise. We started going down the mountain on the same trail as we came up. At the 6th station there were two trails, one heading to the 5th station bus stop and the other following to the old trail to the bottom of the mountain. Chris wanted to go back to Tokyo quickly, so he went to the bus stop at the 5th station. I had a lot of time, so I followed the old trail to the bottom.

The old trail showed me a lot about the history of Mt. Fuji. I stopped to see the abandoned huts, and prayed at the abandoned shrines and small stone statues along the trail. It was so quiet and peaceful. I did not see anybody on the trail, but I could see in my mind people in white robes with walking sticks chanting their prayers on their way up the trail. At the bottom of the mountain at the 1st station there is a big shrine. I stopped there and prayed for good health and peaceful mind for my family. Before I rode a train back to Tokyo, I stopped at a hot spring to wash away my two days of sweat.

It was quite an interesting, emotional and enjoyable two days.

Marooned in The Annapurna Wilderness

Martin Smith
October 21

Sunday, October 21, at about 12:15 p.m.. The group is climbing steep but routine terrain. Without warning, without a slip or a misstep, pain-like a knife blade in my left knee and I collapse in agony on the ground.

I knew immediately what it was. I'd torn my medial meniscus. I couldn't walk; I could barely even stand. Based on previous experience I was going to need surgery. Just another case of Murphy's law? Rather more than that I'm afraid. This particular dose of *merde* had chosen to make itself manifest at 4,300 metres halfway up to one of the most remote passes in the Himalaya, almost five days travel from the nearest village over some 5,500 metres of total ascent. There was no running away from the fact that this was a serious situation.

If we thought, however, that this was the limit of the day's bad news, we were soon to be proven horribly wrong.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me take you back to the beginning and tell you the whole story properly.

My old university friend Tony regularly organizes trips in Nepal that try to stay as far from the tourist routes as possible. The principal objective of his latest trip was Thorong Ri, a 6,000+ metres peak above the high pass, the Thorong La, on the Annapurna Circuit. Not for us though the standard approaches from Jomosom or Besisahar. Oh, no, we're much tougher than that. We would start from the tropical village of Khadarjung and make our way northeast over seldom travelled cowherd tracks or old trade routes which run roughly parallel, and to the south of the massifs of which Machhapuchhare and Lamjung Himal are the principal summits. Roughly a week's travel, gradually gaining altitude, would get us to the valley of the Miyardi Khola from where we would access the Namun Bhanjyang. The Namun is a high (5,560 metres) and difficult pass formerly used for migration and trade between Tibet and the Gurung (Ghurka) Nepalis of the region but now virtually unused by anyone other than the occasional trekking party. Once across the Namun, a long one to two day descent would put us on the tourist path at Timang and it would all be plain sailing from there.

Whichever way you look at it, it all looked like a damned good trip to me. So I duly signed up along with Alan, John, Rob and Taylor from the London Mountaineering Club, Mark from Midland, Michigan and, of course, our leader Tony. Every western member on the expedition had a duty over and above simply being out there and walking. Mine was first aid officer.

A local Kathmandu company, High Country Trekking, organised all the permits, transfers, porter hire etc. We had twenty or so porters led by Chandra, a kitchen staff of five headed by Birkha Tamang our cook, Krishna Tamang our trekking guide and, last but by no means least, Taschi and Phanden our climbing Sherpas. Phanden, as Sirdar, ran the whole thing. Like all good leaders, he did so by dint of experience – both he and Taschi are three-time Everest summiters – and by example, as we would find out.

I won't belabour the reader with too many details on the approach. Plenty of previous Bushwhacker articles have described typical Himalaya treks involving leech-infested jungle in the lower reaches with a gradual transition to bamboo forest,



Approaching the Miyardi Khola valley PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

rhododendron forest and, finally alpine as altitude is gained. Suffice to say that our approach was typical in all respects and, naturally, included a day of torrential rain just to make sure that leech activity was at as active a level as possible.

Over four days we climbed a total of about 5,000 metres northeast from Khadarjung to Ghalageon, Siklis and up a long ridge between the Gnach and Madi Khola watersheds to a high camp by a small lake at 4,000 metres right under Lamjung Himal. Just down the valley from the lake was the inevitable herdsman's hut and quite close to it the remains of a snowman. We paid this little mind at the time but later began to think of the snowman as a vital clue in what transpired later.

The Death March

I don't know which member of the expedition came up with this name but it certainly described the day accurately and was almost prescient in terms of what came later.

Our objective for the day was the Namun La base camp in the valley of the Miyardi Khola at about 4,000 metres – almost exactly the level we started. In between, however, was an un-named 4,500 metres pass that connected the valleys. There would be no water on the route other than what we carried from camp or obtained by melting snow.

We left the lake camp at 7:45 in cold, clear conditions and were soon climbing snow slopes towards an obvious shoulder that led out of our present valley.

Surprisingly, although by now we had reached a fairly remote spot, why was the trail, such as it was, strewn every-

where with paper garbage? And some of it looking remarkably fresh. To be sure there were still cowherd huts and other structures at almost every open spot but we're still talking just a handful of folk ever coming this way.

By 10 a.m. we had the pass in sight and were traversing a shallow bowl in blistering sun. Insufficient fluid intake and unaccustomed altitude had most of us in various degrees of pain during this phase.

By 1:15 we had summited the pass. Our efforts were rewarded by cloud, mist and light snow. Views back or ahead were now severely limited.

The day earned its name, however, by what followed. A long, long traverse at 4,500 metres, around the shoulder of the mountain to the head of the pass that gave access to the Miyardi Khola. By the time we had our objective in view it was getting on for 5 p.m. and the snow slopes down to the river had already turned icy and dangerous.

Everyone carefully inched their way down, heel-booting in and helping the porters whenever and wherever we could. Always leading by example, Phanden even took a porter-load from one kid who was having particular problems. As it was, we didn't get down to flat terrain until almost six and the last porters over an hour later. We surrendered our headlights as Phanden, Taschi, Chandra and Krishna brought the porters safely into camp.



Namun La from south bank of Miyardi Kola PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

Compensation for dehydration and tiredness was all around. The usual afternoon cloud had cleared during the descent from the pass and before it got dark we were treated to stupendous views of Manaslu and Peak 29 to the east and the Namun La across the river to our north. It looked difficult but not impossible. I did wonder, however, how we were going to get the porters over it.

Injury, Tragedy and Crisis

After the long day yesterday, we got up an hour later at 7 a.m. after the sun was on the tents. It was such a fine morning that we had breakfast in the sun outside the mess tent feasting on the views of Manaslu. We were camped at an interesting and historical spot. This was where Tibetans and Gurungs would meet to trade when the former came over the Namun with their salt and other goods. There was a stone hut there but this probably dated from more modern times.

Such a perfect start to what ended as anything other than a perfect day.

The first hint of problems on the horizon was Hari Tamang, one of the younger porters. Phanden brought him to me with "sore ankles". "Sore" turned out to be a ring of suppurating sores encircling his lower legs and causing him considerable pain. I'd never seen anything like it before. My first thought was some kind of parasitical infection picked up during the lower marches. Antibiotics administered by a westerner were not an option – we couldn't risk an allergic reaction. So I cleaned the area with disinfected water, treated it with iodine and isolated it with breathable dressings. I was not at all convinced that this would achieve anything. This guy needed to be evacuated. The quickest way out, however, lay over the pass ahead of us.

We moved off from camp at 9:15, initially west before turning north down the steep, eroded sides of the Miyardi Khola. The river at this point is braided and each branch is fast flowing but we were soon across with minimum difficulty and continued north directly towards the sheer cliffs that guard the Namun. As we got closer the route up revealed itself as a steep but eminently do-able ramp right under the cliffs. After a brief break at the bottom of the ramp, we headed up at about noon. The kitchen staff had gone on ahead and the porters were strung out behind us.

Fifteen minutes up-slope and for no apparent reason, my knee collapsed. I was in agony. I could bear no weight whatsoever. I was, in short, helpless. The crisis was upon us.

Tony's reaction was immediate and effective. Stop all movement on the mountain. Send someone up to bring the kitchen staff down. Get me down to somewhere horizontal. Set up a camp. In general, consolidate our position and ensure everyone's safety.

This was all relatively easily achieved except for moving me. However, even this was accomplished after an excruciating fifteen minutes being piggy-backed down steep snow by Phanden and Taschi in turn. Somehow we found room for all the tents on various degrees of slope and took stock.

We were at least five days away from the nearest village.

It was unlikely in the extreme that anyone else would come this way.

We were not carrying a satellite phone but Phanden had

a cellular phone that he had been able to use from the lake camp two days before.

We had five days supply of food left. Easily enough to cross the Namun and pick up supplies on the other side, as originally planned, but barely enough to reverse our outward route.

It was decided that Phanden would leave immediately for the summit of the Namun and determine if he could get cellular service from there. If so he would summon a helicopter to evacuate me as well as Hari. If only things had been that simple....

We watched Phanden climb up towards the cloud but then stop for a long conversation with Birkha who was on the way down. The reason for this became apparent as soon as Birkha reached us. The kitchen staff hadn't in fact received the instructions to come down. They'd turned round of their own volition. The rainstorm we had endured five days ago had fallen on the Namun as impassable levels of snow. But there was worse – much worse. There was a body on the route! A recent death. Birkha was far too upset to be that rational, so we just prayed that he was mistaken.

When Phanden returned several hours later, however, we had to accept the truth. Someone – a Nepali – had died just a few hundred metres above us. He was “buried” under stones. Another group had preceded us, had been caught in desperate conditions and one member had succumbed to the elements. Suddenly the fresh garbage on the trail and the snowman below lake camp began to take on extra significance.

As devastated as we were by this discovery, we forced ourselves to focus on the fact that we had a crisis of our own to manage. There was no prospect of crossing the pass. Neither had Phanden had been able to get a signal from the highest point he was able to reach. He was confident, however, that travelling light and fast, he could go down as far as the lake camp, make the call for a helicopter and return to where we were in a day. There really wasn't any option.

Marooned

Phanden had already left before any of us were awake the next day. My knee was excruciatingly painful. All I could do was lie in my tent or suffer the humiliation of having to be carried to the latrine or anywhere else for that matter.

I was also desperately worried about Hari. I was no longer able to get out to look after him and his sores needed redressing. Fortunately, Mark volunteered to take over my duties in this respect even though he'd had no formal first-aid training. So they both came to my tent and I showed Mark what to do and explained the necessity of breathable dressings. Between us, we would manage Hari's and others' injuries this way for the rest of the expedition.

After breakfast the whole group, along with Krishna and Taschi, went off to prospect for a landing site for a helicopter. They duly returned with the good news that they'd found, cleared and marked a site but that it was 200 vertical metres below and that I'd have to be carried down there.

This time, the Sherpas rigged up a sling on the same kind of tump-line that they use to carry loads and hauled me down there with the minimum of fuss and without any discomfort. Krishna took the last shift and while he was still carrying me I noticed that he had a bootlace undone – so rather than have him trip, I told him about it. With me on his back he just bent over and did it up. Krishna is about five foot four tall and all of 110 lbs!!

Again we set up camp wherever we could find flat spots close to the landing platform. Phanden returned just before dark. He'd contacted Ang Rita, the owner of High Country and the helicopter would arrive at 7 a.m.. He'd even spoken to the pilot. The nightmare was nearly over. The group began to make alternate plans for the remaining time following my evacuation and we all went to bed, if not happy, then content at least that we'd managed a potentially bad situation as well as possible.

With the pressure off, or at least reduced, thoughts again turned to the body on the pass and speculation as to what had happened was soon rife. Then, as now, we came up with no answers.

The morning dawned cold and clear. I was up at five to begin the slow business of packing my gear. Seven o'clock soon came around. Goodbyes were said, last photos were taken, my gear stood ready and we waited. And waited. And waited. By 11 a.m. the usual clouds rolled in, visibility went to near zero and it was obvious that rescue was not, after all, at hand. We made relative light of it – poor flying conditions from Kathmandu of course. Ang Rita will be moving heaven and earth by now. They'll definitely come tomorrow. But I could see Tony and Phanden in deep conversation.

Here was the quandary. What if suitable flying conditions never came about? Every day spent waiting was one more day of food consumed. At some point there would have to be snowstorm. Hadn't there been a deadly one already? Every day spent waiting in clear weather was one day closer to a storm. What if we had to get out by ourselves? We would already have to ration food if we had to go all the way back to Siklis. Phanden was all for starting on this the next day but Tony counseled patience. In the end it was agreed that we would wait where we were for the helicopter and that if none appeared in the morning, we would make the short trip across the Miyardi Khola to our previous camp at the old trading area and wait one more night there.

Already, however, thoughts were turning to the hard fact they we might simply have to manage the situation without outside help. Plans were already afoot, therefore, to devise the most



An injured Martin Smith is carried across the Miyardi Khola PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

feasible escape route. Yes, we could simply reverse the outward route as far as Siklis and re-supply there. But Chandra was confident that a route was possible along the high ground that ran east above and to the south of the Miyardi Khola and then south along high ridges before a descent of some 3,000 metres would become possible to the tourist path in the neighbourhood of Syange. He thought this would take us two days to cover. It was decided that in addition to the group moving across the river, Chandra, two porters and Krishna would go ahead and explore Chandra's escape option. We would need at least one place to camp *en route*. If they found something Krishna would return from there while Chandra and the porters would push on if they thought that the route continued to be viable. Once down to the tourist path, Chandra would seek help while the porters came back with the extra food we needed.

Food and medical supplies were running very low. We knew we were pushing our luck with the weather. The pressure was back on in full force. The option of a two versus five day escape plan was an easy sell for all of us.

Morning again dawned clear and, again, no helicopter appeared. Dismay was evident on everyone's faces. Mark and I re-dressed Hari's sores. They were visibly worse. This was a battle we were slowly losing. Any worse and we might have to risk giving him antibiotics. By now Mark had effectively adopted Hari and his concern was palpable.

By 9 a.m. we'd packed up and were ready to move. Carrying me was now a serious prospect. This phase would be short but the ground down to and across the river was serious. Three porters – Jitman Tamang, Lama Tamang and Ningma Sherpa - volunteered to carry me and Phanden, Taschi and Krishna would also share the task. Any fears I had that they

wouldn't be able to take my weight or might drop me on tricky ground were allayed within minutes. I could feel the heart of whoever was carrying me almost beating out of his chest – and yet their main concern was, was I comfortable enough? Was I OK? Did I need anything? What selflessness, what courage, what strength. I was deeply and unalterably humbled. And, although I didn't yet know it, I hadn't seen the half of it to this point. One thing I did know though. If it became necessary, these guys REALLY could carry me out of there.

Camp at the old trading area with all that flat ground felt positively luxurious. The afternoon became cold and cloudy and I soon crept into my tent thinking anxiously about the crucial days ahead.

Krishna returned about 4 p.m.. The route was viable as far as he had gone and looked to continue beyond there. Chandra and the porters had gone on from the point where they had found open ground and water. The gist of Krishna's comments was that the first two hours were on snow and then the route mellowed out.

Another crystal clear morning dawned with stunning views of lenticular clouds forming around the summits of Manaslu and Peak 29. But no helicopter. By 8:30 a.m. we were packed and ready to go. Lama walked up to me twirling the carrying sling round his head. "Lama helicopter" he said. We dissolved in laughter.

At 8:40 we walked out of camp and committed to Chandra's route.

The Escape Route

The path made by Krishna *et al* the previous day led east from camp. A pleasant stroll at first by a lake and up a mellow rise. The carrying crew were laughing and joking and hardly changing over at all. It was also quite obvious that this was a major route. In the few spots where the snow had melted a beaten path was evident.

Once over the first rise, however, and things changed rapidly. The route continued up steeply and the river gorge below began to offer some considerable exposure. The "helicopter boys" now had to change frequently as the grade steepened and the laughing and joking became considerably muted. It stopped completely when we topped out on this section and looked ahead. Before us was a steep snow filled cirque around which we would have to traverse to reach the

ridge crest ahead. I avoided looking at my companions but I could already feel the thoughts forming. "How the hell are we going to do this"? Honestly said, it looked hard enough just to walk around, never mind carrying 160lb on your back.

Phanden and Taschi assumed the duties on this section. One carried and one cleared and cut steps in the snow and ice. I just tried not to look. They inched along one step at a time, were over the difficult section in about ten minutes and grunted up to the high point at about 4,300 metres ten minutes after that. At no time did I feel unsafe. The guys made not a single slip and, once again, were more concerned about me than about themselves. Once on safe ground Phanden and I shook hands silently. Phanden, because he was out of breath. Me, because I couldn't trust myself to speak. It was an emotional, draining experience.

Guided by Krishna, we were off snow an hour later and found ourselves on the expected high ridge in heavy cloud. It was at this point that the pain involved in being carried really began to make itself felt. Think about it. This is exactly what they did to people when they tortured them on the rack. Limbs and joints stretched beyond normal limits hour after hour, my ribs crushed against the carrier's back. It was excruciating. But what could I do? Leave me here? Walk? Or suck it up? I sucked it up.

Everything faded to a pain induced blur as we traversed endlessly over the high ridge. The carrying crew changed regularly every ten or so minutes and I began to look forward to this more than I've ever looked forward to anything in my life. Occasionally we would have an extended break but it was never long enough. After a while I even developed carrying preferences. I fitted nicely into the contours of Jitman's or Ngima's backs but was a bit too small for Lama's. How selfish I thought. Here I am thinking this way while these guys are giving everything they've got for me. This is all my doing, not theirs. Berating myself, I slipped back into semi consciousness as the awful journey went on.

After what seemed like hours – and, in fact, was as long as it seemed – it became obvious to even my addled brain that we were descending steeply. This brought new pain both to my tortured back and to the porters' knees and legs, particularly Lama's, as they sometimes literally fought for secure footing. Compensation was at hand, however, as the first trees and then the sight of the first villages, far, far below came into sight.

We came down over 700 vertical metres from the high ridge and suddenly came across something man-made. A wooden frame and evidence of cultivation. Spirits soared. Another hour and there below us was the camp Krishna had found the previous day. Down again. Soon be there. But not soon enough. I'd had enough and begged the guys to put me down. They were reluctant but let me hobble a bit, supporting me on both sides. By this means, I hopped into camp twenty minutes or so later to find Birkha waiting with a chair and a cup of tea and Krish-

na and Phanden having just finished putting up my tent. Once again I couldn't trust myself to speak and just grasped hands all round in silent gratitude. It was 4 p.m..

The camp was on a spacious summer pasture with good water. After over a week above 4,000 metres, we were now at 3,300 and surrounded by big, ancient trees. It felt wonderful.

An hour later and it got even better. Into camp walked Chandra's two porters with food, the obvious deduction that the route ahead "went" and, of course, news.

Chandra had reached Bhulbhule and successfully contacted Ang Rita from there. Ang Rita was in Siklis and a helicopter was standing by in Pokhara. Ang Rita had even sent three porters up over our route from Siklis with food in case we retreated that way. The villagers in Bhulbhule knew all about the body on the Namun and, in fact, there were rumours that there were three bodies up there. This didn't bear thinking about but at the very least, rescue would appear to be at hand. The "helicopter boys", as they were now known by everyone, as well as Phanden, Taschi and Krishna had worked miracles today but I'm sure there was a profound look of relief on all six faces when we received this news.

Rescue

Morning revealed just how idyllic our camp was. A short walk/hop to the edge of the ridge and the mountainside dropped off precipitously to the valley 2,000 metres below. Looking north we could make out our route of the previous day. We had contoured the west side of Sundar. In fact with a summit altitude of 4,330 metres we must have been almost on top!

Morning also brought a helicopter!! Although we knew that it MUST come today, I think we were all quite surprised when it actually roared over the edge of the ridge. After one exploratory pass to pick out a landing site, the pilot set the machine down gently and out jumped a smiling Chandra to a hero's welcome. Everyone rushed around to get my gear together – but wait – the pilot's switched off. He wants a cup of coffee! And with that I knew I was as good as back in civilisation.

Hari and I were eventually loaded on board and at 8:30 we took off. Ten minutes later we were in Bhulbhule and there was Ang Rita. If I thought the emotional aspect of the experience was over, I couldn't have been more wrong. The whole village had turned out. I didn't flatter myself to think that this was on my behalf. More about the novelty of the helicopter I would have thought. But no; here came everyone with garlands of marigolds for Hari and me, given in gratitude for our deliverance from the mountains. Once again I struggled to keep my emotions in check.

After refueling we took off again at 9 a.m. and landed in Kathmandu at 9:30. By 10 a.m. we were being seen by a doctor in the Canadian clinic there and by 10:30 were all through. Hari had been diagnosed with impetigo, liberally dosed with

antibiotics and his sores cleaned and dressed (all paid for by Mark). A week later and they were almost completely healed. I was fitted with a (useless) knee brace. By 6:30 that evening I'd had an MRI done and was diagnosed. Surprise, surprise; they said I had torn my medial meniscus.

Aftermath

Four days later I flew back to Pokhara to re-join the group. It was obvious even before the helicopter finally arrived that all this was adrenaline enough for one trip. Everyone had already resolved to head out to Besisahar once Hari and I had been evacuated.

They had managed to descend all the way from our last camp to the Annapurna Circuit in a single day and walked out in two days from there. The universal opinion was that it would have taken two or three days to carry me down what turned out to be a steep and dangerous route IF an accident hadn't happened on the way. Ultimately, the appearance of a helicopter had been in the nick of time.

The porters who had been sent up from Siklis had been contacted and had already returned safely.

The next day Taylor and Mark left early. Taylor home to her new son in London and Mark to visit Hari and his family in their village. The rest of us enjoyed the delicious boredom of Pokhara before the long journey home. By this time I could hobble tolerably well but needed as much time as possible before the prospect of twenty-four hours on an aeroplane.

It's now just over a month since this incredible experience. I've already had successful surgery and am well on the way to a return to the hills next spring, if not before.

All in all, I think I got off pretty lightly.

Epilogue

The enforced idleness of recovery has given me tons of time for considered reflection. How do I feel about it now? I guess I could be angry at the way my body let me down. However, I was given the chance to experience something that we've long ago lost in the west. Genuine selflessness, real concern for another human being in distress, willingness to help no matter what the consequences and without thought of reward or what it cost in personal effort. We have much to learn from "primitive" societies such as Nepal – or should I say re-learn. I'll take the second option I think.

What of the body on the Namun Bhanjyang? At the time of writing we're no nearer to finding out the truth. In spite of the rumours in Bhulbhule, we're all convinced there really was only one up there. Of more than this we can't be sure. Various stories are circulating. One has a party of seventeen hiring porters in Siklis and failing to cross the pass. Another has a group of seven approaching from the north and cross-

ing the Namun before getting into trouble. Personally I don't buy this. Only the most heartless of westerners would build a snowman after losing a porter to hypothermia. Most likely whoever was involved approached and retreated the same way we did. Otherwise – and assuming they were caught in the same storm we were in Ghalageon – we would have met them coming down. We're still searching and will continue to search for answers.

This is an abbreviated version of an article that originally appeared on the SummitPost website. Follow the link <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/362627/marooned-in-the-annapurna-wilderness.html> for the full article, including a description of the approach, and lots more photos.

Snow Picnic on Mt Kenya

Rick Hudson

January 8 – 21, 2008

When I was a stripling lad, someone gave me a copy of *No Picnic on Mt Kenya* by Felice Benuzzi. Though not a mountaineer, I was captivated both by the tale, and the mountain on which the adventure occurred. To those who have not read it, the book recounts the experiences of three Italian prisoners of war who, in 1941, escaped their internment at the foot of Mt Kenya. Struggling through trackless jungle to the alpine, they succeeded in planting the Italian flag on the 3rd highest summit (Pt Lenana – 4,985m). Then, whimsically, they descended and broke back into the camp.

There was something about their effort amid the futility of war that appealed to me. Years later, as a university student, I climbed the two highest summits (Batian – 5,199m and Nelion – 5,188m) in the company of Ferdi, Martin and Basher, and my appreciation for what Benuzzi and his compatriots had done only increased.

Fast forward thirty-nine years. Ferdi and I have both recently turned sixty. And have nothing to prove. Martin is recovering from an undiagnosed disease, and is unavailable. Basher is entangled with his 3rd or possibly 4th wife – we are unsure which – but he too is unavailable. A week before we are due to arrive in Kenya, the country erupts into civil chaos after an election. Accusations fly, protesters march on the capital, police fire tear gas, and thirty people are burned to death in a church.

Undeterred, we proceed. I mean, what can happen once you're on the mountain? The party has grown. Bernhard is an old friend from Germany. Together, we three are the 'old-ies'. To counterbalance, Julia and Clinton are the 'youngies'.



On the left - Batian & Nelion - and the Lewis Glacier (which completely filled the valley 40 years ago)

PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

The latter are extreme rock climbers, but with limited experience on big mountains.

In short order our outfitter moves us four hours north of Nairobi to the mountain. The Mt. Kenya massif is a three million year old volcano, with a very broad cone that tapers from 4,500m to 2,500m. Much of the slope is a national park, home to a variety of big game (which was the main concern of the Italians when they set off on foot in 1941). We are luckier – a Land Rover transports us up a bad road to cottages (*bandas*) on the eastern flank, above the town of Chigoria.

The accommodation is situated where jungle and bamboo thin, and the tussock grass begins. In the evening, the cloud over the peaks dissipates and there are views of needles and spires to the west. Later, herds of buffalo and a large elephant come to drink at a waterhole nearby. We watch till the light fades suddenly, as it only does on the equator. Above, the stars are brilliant in a dark sky.

We spend two days acclimatizing (3,200m), hiking high, sleeping low. Then, when our eight porters are ready, we leave early one morning, following the trail towards the peaks. The trees thin, *erica* and *protaceae* fall behind, and we enter the world of blue skies and tussock grass, peppered with Mt. Kenya's unique giant *groundsels* and *lobelias*. In the distance, there are zebra, bushbuck and eland.

In the afternoon we reach Lake Michaelson, one of many lovely stretches of water on the upper mountain, this one hidden in a canyon with steep basalt walls. Tents are pitched

for the first time and the night is cool at 3,950m, with frost in the morning.

The 4,200m elevation line is where the alpine zone begins. Lobelia and groundsel vanish, and only the hardiest of shrubs cling to sheltered niches in an otherwise barren world of rock and gravel. We plod up the final slopes to Top Hut (also known as the Austrian Hut – 4,790m). There, we pay off the porters and re-sort gear, storing most of it in an adjacent shelter. Then, with two days of food, we climb over Pt Lenana (pausing to consider what the Italians achieved without maps, proper rations or decent climbing gear), and descend to Kami Camp on the north side of the mountain. It being January, this side of the peak is in the grip of winter. The gullies and ledges above are streaked with snow and ice, in stark contrast to the southern side, which is dry and warm.

There used to be a hut here, but like much of the infrastructure on the mountain, it has slowly crumbled from neglect until becoming unusable. At one time, the Mountain Club of Kenya maintained the huts, but once taken over by the Kenya Wildlife Service, the decline was rapid. Today, only the faint trace of a foundation shows where, in 1969, we visited an Austrian glaciologist, and sat in comfort eating birthday cake in front of the un-dreamed-of luxury of a gas heater. No more.

The following morning proffers a warning of what is to come. There is five centimetres of fresh snow on the tents, with more falling. This, despite it being the so-called “dry season”. The north sides of Nelion and Batian are plastered. By mid-morning it has eased, and by noon much has melted, as we continue our circumnavigation of the massif. Two passes follow, and we are round on the south side of the mountain again, where the aspect is snowy, but generally drier. From American Camp we gaze in awe at the walls of rock towering above, and pick out routes we did years ago.

Another day brings us back to Top Hut. We are generally pleased with our progress. We have been on the massif almost a week, have acclimatized, and the main peaks, Batian and Nelion, are in good condition. In the afternoon, we leave the hut, crossing a much diminished Lewis Glacier to the foot of the standard route.

This line runs first up the slightly lower Nelion, and from there across to Batian. The rock is a sharply cracked, solid grano-basalt, with well-defined feldspar crystals in



Equatorial snow in the dry season buries Top Hut at 4800m

PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

it. To the hand, it feels warm and inviting, and we stand at the foot of the twenty pitch route, gazing up into the late afternoon clouds, reminding ourselves of where the line goes. Although it has many pitches, in reality much of the route can be scrambled. There are only three rope lengths that demand attention, at about 5.6 - 5.7. A fast pair can reach the top of Nelion in four to five hours. There, a crucial decision must be made. Batian, the higher peak, is just 200m away and eleven metres higher, but between the two summits lies the Gate of the Mists – a narrow knife-edge that requires rappelling onto, and then crossing via an exposed line. To Batian and back can take as little as three hours, or more than six, depending on weather and rock conditions.

We are confident we can do both Nelion and Batian in a day, and that evening prepare accordingly. In the hut we sort gear and plan strategies about which pitches to scramble, simul-climb or rope. We are pumped for a 4 o'clock start.

At 3:00 a.m. there are ominous sounds outside. A wind is howling, and the headlamp reveals a windowpane plastered in white. Where did this come from? Ferdi confirms, when he returns from outside, that there's a snowstorm. I snuggle

gratefully back into my down bag and sleep till morning.

Two days later, after waiting impatiently for the route to dry, we are poised again for an early start. This time, however, there are four other parties, all guided, who have bunched up at Top Hut and are waiting a weather window too. We are determined to be first on the rock, but once again are thwarted. The now familiar sound of high winds and a glazed window are all it takes to confirm that another front has swept in from the Indian Ocean.

We have allowed ourselves almost a week to climb Batian – a more than generous allowance, considering global warming, and January being the dry season. After five days, we acknowledge the inevitable – even if it stopped snowing immediately, it would take another week for conditions to stabilize. Regretfully, we pack our gear and stagger down in a blizzard that only eases when we reach the groundsels in the valley below. It's over.

Notes:

There is a daily park fee to be on the mountain. In 2008 it was US\$25/day. See details on the Mountain Club of Kenya (MCK) or Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) websites. If you write to the KWS at least three months in advance, there may be ACC reciprocity discounts. Huts (US\$20/p/d) are booked and paid for when entering at any of the KWS gates. There is a US\$5/p/d fee if camping.

Fastest access up the mountain is the Naro Moro Route on the west side. The most scenic approach is from the east, via the Chigoria Route. Unlike Kilimanjaro, you do not need to employ a guide or porters (yet). If you need them, the MCK has a list of recommended people. Be wary of other opportunists. Our Kenyan expediter (Hiram Munuhe) arranged airport collection, hotels in Nairobi, transport to and from the mountain, and porters at about one third the cost of what you would pay a tour operator, and is highly recommended. He also acted as guide on the trek, and could have led us on the rock route, if requested.

Participants: Ferdi Fischer, Bernhard Steinbeis, Julia Wakeling, Clinton Martinengo and Rick Hudson.

Ode to a Banana Case

Lisa Zala

Some may be nuts and some may be knobby,
But everyone needs to have a good hobby.

You may want to keep it, or may want to lend it.
It comes ready formed so you don't have to bend it.

It fits in all places, and handles all sizes
The big and the small – it takes all the prizes.

It's large, but it's light. It's round and it's hard.
It's ready to use – it stands so on guard.

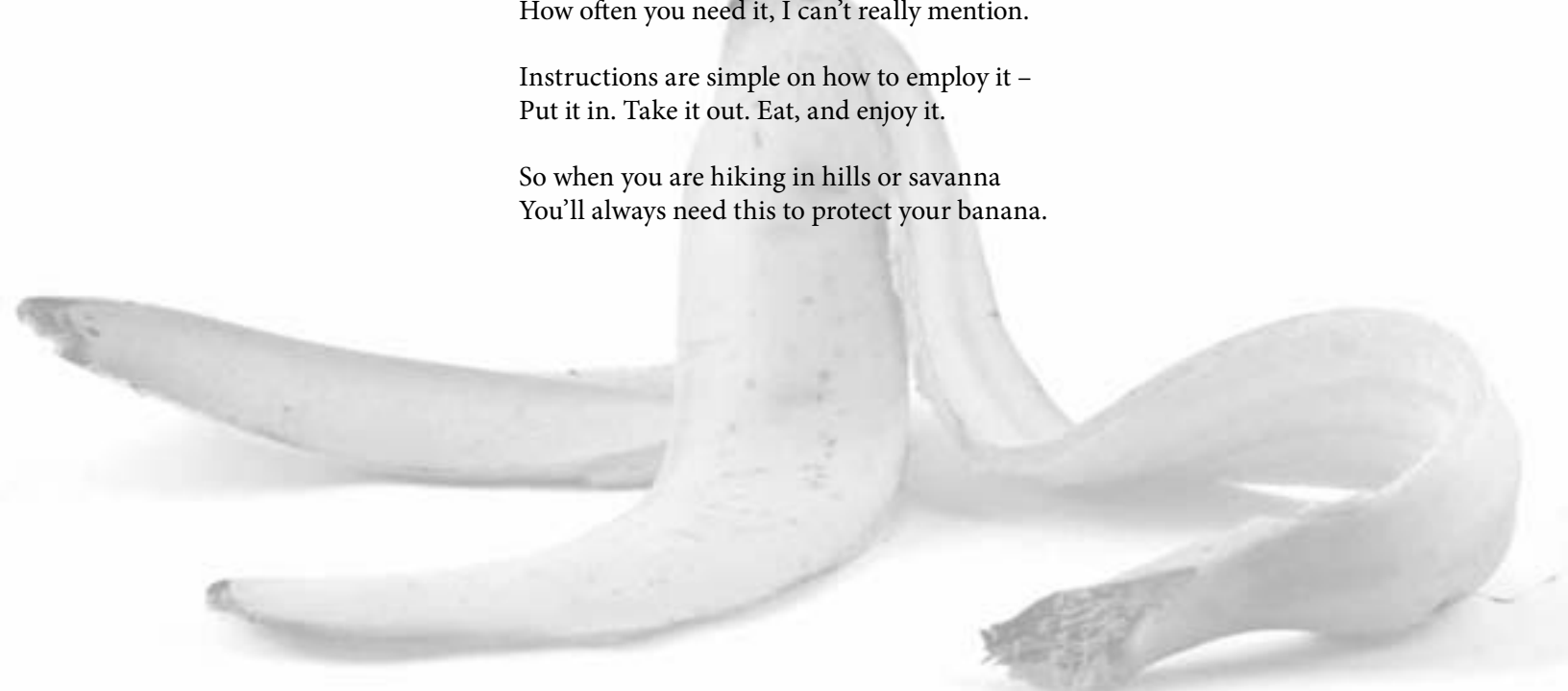
It can clamp to the pack, if you don't want to lose it,
Or hide from the children, so they won't abuse it.

It won't make you sick, and you won't become blind –
It's your mental health that we all have in mind.

It's nice and refreshing and keeps away tension.
How often you need it, I can't really mention.

Instructions are simple on how to employ it –
Put it in. Take it out. Eat, and enjoy it.

So when you are hiking in hills or savanna
You'll always need this to protect your banana.





The Alpine Club of Canada
Vancouver Island Section
www.accvi.ca