



ISLAND BUSHWHACKER

THE ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA • VANCOUVER ISLAND SECTION

2009 ANNUAL



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Cover: *Looking east from Springer Peak to Johnstone Strait, June 2009.* PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

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Message from the Chair

Cedric Zala



It has been another good year for the ACCVI. Lots of trips, a good educational program, monthly social events, and new faces all serve to keep the Club strong and active and maintain a high level of enthusiasm among its members. Some of the highlights for 2009 have been:

- **Our membership continues to grow at a healthy rate.** We currently have very nearly 300 members, and National ACC informs us that our growth rate (11%) is one of the highest among the Sections. We put this down to a schedule that accommodates a wide range of skill levels, an active educational program, a monthly slideshow/social evening, and members telling their friends that we're a good group to hang out with. While membership growth isn't an end in itself, it does provide for an increased number and variety of trips, and a larger talent pool of people to take on a leadership role, both with trips and on the executive.
- **Our financial health is excellent,** largely due to an outstanding year with the Banff Mountain Film Festival. Many thanks to outgoing organizer Lissa Zala for running this event for the last five years. The BMFF was sold out this year, and, with an impromptu performance from a member of a Tibetan singing group (who were featured in one of the films) it was a truly memorable and touching evening.
- **We have improved our Bushwhacker Newsletter,** with an informative front-page spread, lists of events and

trips coming up in the near future, articles of interest to members, and an ACCVI Section History column, all done up in an appealing coloured story-box format. Numerous people are now making contributions to this newsletter – why not join them!

- **Our monthly social evenings continue to be popular,** with good crowds coming to see the slideshows, which are usually presented by members. One highlight of these evenings was the presentation of a one-man play about Conrad Kain, produced by Parks Canada and acted by Philip Nugent. These monthly evenings have rapidly become the social pivot of the Club, and complement our annual events such as the end-of-summer barbecue and the photo contest.
- **Leadership training is being encouraged,** with a leadership evening having taken place in November. This was intended to encourage newer and/or younger members to acquire the skills and confidence to safely lead some ACCVI trips.
- **The summer camp at Tonquin Valley was successful,** and provided an opportunity for hiking, scrambling and climbing to suit all tastes. While the hike in was long (and extended further by a side trip to pick up more gear) the following days saw trips to the Fraser Glacier, Mt. Clitheroe, Mt. Maccarib and Thunderbolt Peak. There was also an attempt at Paragon Peak.
- **Safety has been increased** through the purchase of a personal locator beacon (PLB). Trip leaders are encouraged to take this along on their trips.
- **Two of our members received National ACC awards.** Peter Rothermel was awarded the Distinguished Service Award for his work toward achieving park status for Mt. Arrowsmith and Mike Hubbard was presented with the Don Forest Award for his many years of trip-leading and service to the Section.
- **We have extended our subsidy program** to increase its generality and accessibility. All subsidies are now 50%, and the previous requirement for at least one year of membership was eliminated. Also, ACC courses will have a 50% subsidy built in to their fees, so that it is no longer necessary to apply in order to benefit from the subsidy.
- **Our Memorial Fund received its first application.** A group of students have applied for ACCVI support for an ambitious project involving mountaineering activities in the Brooks Peninsula.

What next? Some of the events we are looking forward to in 2010 include:

- **A re-enactment of the 1910 Price Ellison expedition** from Campbell River to Port Alberni, which was a key factor in the establishment of Strathcona Park. This trip is being planned by Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee and BC Parks, and will include an ascent of Crown Mountain, a corner point of the park boundary.
- **Progress in establishing the Vancouver Island Spine Trail**, with ACCVI members organizing and participating in a relay along the entire length of the proposed route.
- **A new concept in summer camps.** As a change from staying in an alpine hut in the Rockies or the Selkirks, the Vancouver Island Section is actually planning this summer's camp to be on Vancouver Island! We'll be visiting the Alava Basin during three one-week periods from mid-July to early August. With the 42 available

spaces nearly all filled by time of writing (February 3), this is proving to be a popular event.

- **A centennial project.** With the centennial of the Vancouver Island Section coming up in 2012, we have started a project to scan and index all the available past issues of the Section's newsletters and make them available on-line. This will provide a valuable resource for those planning mountaineering trips in unfamiliar territory as well as providing access to interesting accounts of the Section's past activities.

In summary, the Section continues to be healthy, active and involved in many fronts. This is all made possible by the dedicated efforts of many, many volunteers, who not only do excellent work but who also are a pleasure to be around and work with. There are more than two dozen people in executive and support roles, and they all contribute their share and more. So this is a personal thank-you to everyone who has helped make the ACCVI such a fine organization.



Vancouver Island

Colonel Foster – On a Sunny Summer's Day

Christine Fordham
July 12, 2008

Charles, Randy and I left our camp before the stars faded, on what we knew would be a very long day ahead, climbing Mount Colonel Foster. It was hard to contain myself, as we made our way from our campsite to the bottom of the snowfield that led up the north gully. It looked like we were in luck and had timed it right this time and “The Colonel” just might let us pass today.

The snow was hard as our crampons bit into the kick step rhythm. About half way up, a very narrow snow bridge on the left gave passage over a large bergschrund that looked like it would only hold for a day or two. Past that was the deep bergschrund we had to pass on the rocks to the right. A little climbing, and we could get back onto the snow for the much steeper climb above. We knew we shouldn't go too high in the gully, but it seemed we did anyways. So a bit of down climbing and we hit the rock we needed to step off. Time to bring out the treasure map, “Tak's Map”, which Peter Rothermel had kindly emailed me before a previous attempt. “Tak's Map” is an excellent hand drawn map with a brief key style route description, and was invaluable for difficult route finding.

I followed my monkey like friends up a series of ledges and a notch, to where Tak's map said “end of roped climb”. The sun was higher in the sky and still blue; jackets came off, as we made our way through the rocks and up into a gully that led to the NW summit ridge. After following the knife like ridge, and after a discussion about which was the right way, we navigated around a rock rib to the top of an ugly scree gully. Just slow plodding down, keeping out of each other's way, as it was inevitable that we let some rocks slide.

At the bottom of that gully where the climb to the NE



Bergschrund below and snow bridge to the right. PHOTO: RANDY DAVIES

summit starts, is a very cool feature. A big chock stone perched in such a way that when you look through it you can see Landslide Lake. Underneath was a small patch of snow, one of the only ones we passed after climbing the gully.

From that col, we climbed more rock and scree to a big ledge and a detached block, a narrow chock stone that we crawled through. It was a tight squeeze with a big day pack. I glanced up at the blue sky, thinking how lucky this day was so far, and allowed just a hint more excitement to creep in. More scree and rock to the slabby NE summit. Such a variety of rock to navigate! We snacked, enjoyed a few Kodak moments and scoped out our route down, then up again to the main summit.

We passed right around a rib to yet another scree gully, then down to the col below the main summit. Still sunny, still early! Yes! Here we had a few route finding challenges, and we each went a different direction scoping it out. We chose the slabby rock face. Charles and Randy were already above the exposed step, so Charles dropped me

a very short quick belay. A bit of upward boulder crawling and ... was it really...when I heard the “Yahoo”..... I knew we had made it. What a thrill, the main summit of the colonel, on a beautiful summers day, and the whole of Vancouver Island in a 360 panorama! Well before noon to boot. Randy’s lucky day, he made it on his first attempt! All at the same time, I felt totally humbled, thrilled and delighted, and grateful to the Colonel for letting me pass this time. We sat in the sun for an hour, marveling at the views and the rest of the Colonel’s summits. We read the register, ate lunch, chomped up our digital cards, and after all this lollygagging, started the return journey. A rap off the slabs on the main summit, a few more slithers down the rope off the NW summit, many jogs around rocks and lots of up and down. We actually followed our breadcrumbs back, small rocks tied with flagging which were most helpful, as we didn’t often look backward on the way up. We dutifully picked them all up. Our only near miss was a “Rock” that flew past Charles face; somewhat like your life is reputed to do, when you leave this world.

We must have gotten somewhat cocky about the time, and started doddling somewhat. This included a brief ascent of the actual NW peak, which we passed under on the way. Finally – something Charles hadn’t climbed, as he had passed it by on his first ascent, many years ago. I guess a lightning storm, in the rain and the dark wasn’t really in the cards then. The sun was still out when we got back to the snow gully. Then it was repetitiously, “Kick - kick - plunging the axe” with the occasional look back at the most amazing sunset, god gives any mountaineer. The sun was a brilliant red with a laser-like aura around it. The angle was too scary to stop and reach for my camera, so it remains just etched in the brain. By the time we reached the rock step above the moat, it was dark, and we somehow missed the rap station entirely. Our cockiness about the time just caught up to us! After much looking for a suitable horn to rap off, which was easy to find in the morning, we opted to ignore our thirst and settle into the nice “sort of” soft heather. An unplanned bivy has long been something I’ve wanted to round out my mountaineering experiences. Beginners luck for me, my first bivy was warm and dry, the heather was soft, and there was enough wind to keep the bugs away. Not to mention a clear starry sky, to re-live the day, while drifting off into a happy sleep. However, my description may not be quite the tale my companions would tell. As morning’s colour crept into the sky, I mentally ticked off the bivy from my bucket list.

It was easy to find the well-used rappel station in the light of day. Two raps brought us back to the gully, over the ever narrowing snow bridge and we kicked stepped backwards to the col. We thanked the colonel, took off our crampons and headed back at the campsite. Our dehydrated bodies drank gallons of water,

devoured last night’s dinner for breakfast, and luxuriated in a short nap in the sun before the real work began.....the long hot slog down the scree gully and out the ERT!

Participants: Charles Turner, Randy Davies, and Christine Fordham

Mount Phillips from Arnica Lakes

Dave Campbell
January 17-18

Originally I had planned on doing a trip to Mount Myra, but after hearing stories of significant terrain traps en route, I decided to post-pone the trip to a later date. Mount Phillips seemed like a good destination, as the terrain up higher is pretty mellow, and the difficulties are lower down in the forest. The question became, whether to go on snowshoes, or skis.

A group of seven of us headed up on Saturday morning, and met at the parking lot at the minesite. The weather was clear, and we were in the midst of a big inversion. There was crazy big hoarfrost in the valley bottom, and we got a few glimpses of Mount Phillips from our ride in along Buttle Lake.

After introductions we donned packs and started the grunt up to Arnica Lakes. The group was roughly evenly split between skier and snowshoers. The snowpack was pretty limited (less than a metre in the forest), and we were more or less able to follow up along the trail, which switchbacks its way up steep forest. It took most of the day to slog our way up to Arnica Lakes (leaving about 11 a.m. from the cars and arriving at the lakes a little before 5 p.m.). The last stretch was in warm sunshine, and we had great views south to Mount Myra and Thelwood.

We camped on a knoll a little above the lake to avoid the cool air that we were expecting on the lake overnight. The evening was surprisingly warm (for January) and I was nearly sweating sitting around in my down-jacket while we cooked and ate dinner. We were treated to a lovely sunset, and spent a warm night in our sleeping bags.

I was told I wasn’t gung-ho enough rallying the troops early in the morning, and we made a later than desired start from camp off towards Mount Phillips. From Arnica Lake we went up to a faint col over into Phillips Creek, and then headed up over a sub-bump on the ridge above. We skirted the summit of this, as we needed to head over a bit east to drop down and back up to another sub-bump to get onto the South Ridge of Mount Phillips proper. Before heading off towards Phillips, we did a time check as we had reached our



Enjoying the spring-like conditions on Phillips Ridge PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

turn-around time, and we would not be able to make it to the summit and back to the cars in daylight. The crew seemed ok with the inconvenience of head-lamping part of the trail, so we decided to march on.

The weather was extremely warm, and felt a lot like a spring tour. I was worried about solar warming on the slopes, but we were able to follow the ridge up with minor exposure to avi slopes. From the top we were treated to some amazing views over to Mount Albert Edward to the east, Flower Ridge to the southeast, Myra and Thelwood to the south, the Golden Hinde, and Marble Meadows and Mount McBride to the north.

We had a nice lunch on top, and then started our way back down. We split into two parties going over the sub-peak beside Arnica Lake with one party going up and over, and the other party trying to take the “efficient” route by contouring (guess which way was faster?) Back at camp (nearly 4 p.m.) we quickly packed up and started our way down. The snow was hard, and was terrible for skiing. Most of the skiers finally gave up and decided to carry the skis. Halfway down it was getting dark and we had to don headlamps, but were still able to follow the trail and our tracks from the day previous. It wasn’t too bad of a hike down, and we were back at the cars a little after 7 p.m.. Overall a great outing, and lucky with the weather. Given the conditions, I would say snowshoes were the vehicle of choice.

Participants: Ryan Blacker, Dave Campbell, Mike Ford, Jesse Kao, Olivier Lardiere, Ronan O’Sullivan and Mark Thibodeau

Victoria Peak: First Winter Ascent

Curtis Lyon and John Waters

March 7-9

2006 First attempts:

Our first attempt on the first winter ascent of Victoria Peak ended before we even got on the mountain. Mike Waters’ ’86 Honda Civic slipped and slid in the snow up a few wrong turns before we eventually ended up on the correct logging road, but still a long ways from our objective. At the time we were unaware that another party of Aaron Hamilton, Keith Nelsen and Rob Grant were there with sights set on the first winter ascent. We decided to turn back and come again another time armed with skis to navigate the distance remaining to the base of the Victoria Peaks’ West Face.

A couple weeks later in February 2006 John and I were able to drive in 30 kilometres up the plowed roads of the White River main in my old white Subaru. The winter roads would normally have snow deep enough to stop even the most serious of 4x4’s, but were cleared due to active logging. The strategy was to drive in pretending like we were supposed to be there. Many loggers were still getting their boots on and gave the unlikely vehicle a double take as they finished the last sips of coffee in the dawning light. Back at home we had fashioned tow-in sleds from quality Canadian Tire kiddy sleds and random plumbing fixtures. I attached the contraption to my waist with scavenged 1” tube webbing, an uncomfortable alternative to John’s cannibalized hip belt from an old rucksack. Although better equipped this time the deep elk track ruts on the road tipped our sleds at every chance. After skiing 5 kilometres up the White River main we crossed the river, and continued sloggling another 5 kilometres up WR 380. The skis were ditched at the end of the switch-backs and were replaced with mountain boots. We followed the right side of the creek through open hemlock forest, only to pop out of trees with dusk approaching. Visibility was low and my memory of the area was fogging so we consulted the map. Fortunately John and his GPS were more accurate with the correct direction, and we continued up through excellent ski terrain with tired legs. We saw footprints of the previous party, as we pushed on snow started to fall. Finally making it to a boulder we dug out ledge for John’s bivvy tent. In the morning we were happy to find that we were directly below the start of the route. Not the smartest spot as it had potential to slide, but reasonably protected by our rock. Our alpine start was thwarted by early morning snow and our hourly alarm resets pushed our emergence from the warm tent to 8 a.m.. Since we were here, we might as well take a look above! The first 150m was nice Scottish grade



West face of Victoria peak – route followed obvious central gully PHOTO: JOHN WATERS

3 ice and snow which we soloed to a steep section of thinly ice covered rock and decide it might be time for the ropes. Light flurries, overcast skies, a late start and no indication of what lay ahead did give us some cause for concern. Spindrift started to fall in the narrow gully. During constant burials of spindrift we set a quick piton anchor and decided enough's, enough and rapped down using Aarons V-thread's, followed by a down-climb back to camp. The weather improved as we packed and the decision to turn tail was questionable as the sky slowly turned bluer. We hiked down, and skied out the White River main in darkness only to find my trusty Subaru blocked by an excavator. We pulled the bags out for a cold sleep in the Subaru. The early morning operator woke us as he started his machine. During the long drive home and we planned for another attempt.

2009 First Winter Ascent:

On this attempt we hoped like last time that we would be able to drive a good chunk of the approach road in the truck and then snowmobile the remainder of the logging roads. As all Vancouver Island alpine faithful's are aware most approaches here involve impediments, and this being a winter trip snow is often a hindrance. This time we were prepared with a snowmobile and skis. However, we were cautiously aware of our limited fuel supply though when the truck was halted by crusty snow only a few kilometres off the highway. With no active logging the road was not plowed, so John and I knew it would be a very long ride in.

Because we didn't have enough fuel or time to shuttle two passengers the 90 kilometre round trip up the White River, John volunteered to become the unfortunate one to be towed in on skis. Quickly we fashioned a tow line from an old climbing rope and a sacrificial Alder sapling for a handle, then John assumed his best water ski stance and we were off. Curtis soon realized carrying his loaded pack on his back was extremely awkward and we used more rope and bungees to strap it down on the back of the ski-doo. John describes holding on to the tow rope as, "easy on the arms but, really tiring on the legs," kind of like being towed down a mogul run for 45 kilometres! As the designated spotter I was responsible for checking that John was "OK" on the end of the line. This job was sometimes made impossible from having to simultaneously check for upcoming

trees or sled-eating elk ruts. After almost being clothes-lined by a fallen tree which hung up over the road I turned back to see only the rope and handle bouncing on the snow without a skier in sight. After convincing Louis that John could possibly be too far behind to skate to catch up, (due to my inattentive spotting) we pulled the sled around to retrieve the abandoned skier. John simply had to let go of the line occasionally, when an upcoming patch of ruts threatened to toss him off his skis, or when the ski-doo speed increased to a leg burning tear in open sections.

The White River main logging road seems to be a rutted winter highway for herds of elk. Louis (who owns the Polaris 900cc snowmobile) normally uses his sporty sled to shred the virgin powder in the open wilderness. Running a freight service in the confines of a rough logging road was taking its toll on man and machine. You could tell that like the sled, Louis temperature would reach the boiling point each time the machine slammed into or tipped over in the hardened elk ruts. John and I were so focused on looking for hazards that we were soon having trouble judging the distance we had traveled especially considering we were not used to these speeds. Still every few kilometres Louis would ask "how much farther?" John knowing the long distance that lie ahead would always respond in true minivan dad spirit, "It must only be a few more kilometres."

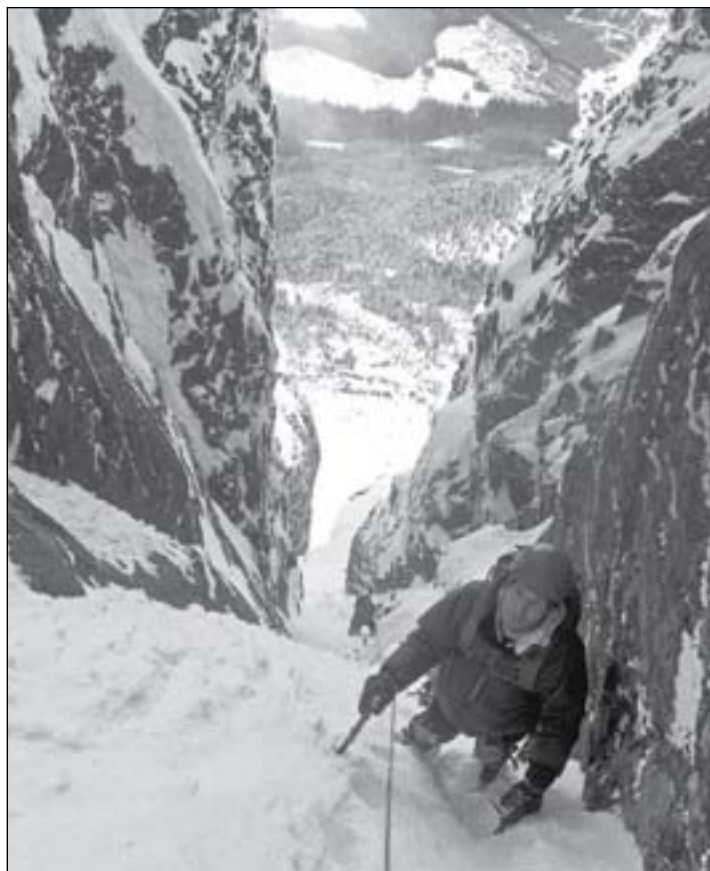
After 40 kilometres from the Island Highway we crossed a bridge over the White River and then continued up the WR 380. Heading up the switch-backs from the valley required shuttling on the sled, so Louis took John and I separately

the rest of the way to the end of the road at an elevation of about 830m. John and I remembered this spot from our previous trip where we dumped the sleds and switched to hiking mode. We hiked up the side of the stream just off the end of the road and broke through the timberline in less than an hour. I thought how amazing the ski terrain must be through the open forest here in good snow. It's not surprising how little traffic the entire Victoria Peak area gets in winter considering the difficult trip in, but those fortunate enough to own a snowmobile and have a bit of time on their hands have access to some of the best alpine ski terrain on the island!

It was late in the day by this point so we hiked a couple more hours and camped at 1,280m. This site was a much more comfortable spot than our previous camp near the base of the West Face. Looking back, the discomfort was probably from digging a snow ledge in pitch dark while near the point of exhaustion, than the spot itself. Less exposed, our home for the night would however require a longer approach in the morning. After stomping a suitable spot to pitch the tent we settled in to start the process of melting snow. Taking care not to relieve ourselves too close to the tent we simply had to stick a shovel into the darkness to retrieve our frozen water for rendering. Following dinner we decided on an alpine climbing rack consisting of five screws, six pins and a set of nuts. Judging from some older photos it is worthy to note that long sections of our intended route may be packed with blue water ice and could require more screws, although we did not expect much water ice this year.

The next day (March 8) with climbing packs it took one and a half hours to the base of the Sceptre, originally a summer rock-climbing route established by Phil Stone and myself [Curtis Lyon] in the summer of 1997. Soloing the first 100m up steep icy steps reinforced the sense of freedom alpine climbing gives. Curtis clutched his way up a short rocky bulge and loose snow to set the first anchor of the climb. Continuing up another 50m the gully narrows to 10m with steep side walls. John and I were forced off by spindrift at this point in February of 2006. Evidence of a previous attempt: our old rap pitons were still securely wedged in the rock. Clipping in to pull out the ropes, thoughts were on the technical challenges that lie ahead. The next 55m pitch was the crux. Climbing on the left side of the gully, John picked his way up through steep rock and patches of ice/snow "snice". Victoria's rock-climbing is characterized by decent holds on compact basalt with very few small cracks. The featureless nature of the rock and poor ice made the mountain seem unaccommodating.

This difficult, and at times run-out pitch would likely be graded WI 3 when the ice is fat, but in these trickier thin conditions, possibly Scottish grade 4. Protection was sparse, but John did get in a few stubby screws and some reasonable rock gear: maybe five pieces in the entire pitch to where he



Steep snow in the upper gully PHOTO: JOHN WATERS

established a single screw belay. When Louis and I reached the belay John worried, "hopefully we don't have too many hard pitches like this or it will take too long." From there we soloed snow and some narrow ice (1ft wide) runnels for a pitch to where Louis led a short awkward groove to a nice 10m grade 3 ice, 2ft wide runnel which proved to be the best (and maybe only continuous) ice climbing of the route. Louis, who is a strong ice climber definitely made this funky section look easier than it was. After the steep technical stuff was over, the climbing eased mostly to 70° which continued up to near the top. I then led up through one last short unprotected tricky rock band to more snow. We finished up the last section of snow in the main gully to crest the ridge. We topped out 30m from the summit on a ridge absent of any cornice. After seven hours climbing we excitedly followed the last bit to the summit. Huddled at the summit we fished around to find the summit registry. Unable to find the registry we read a metal plaque on the summit stone which said, "We hold the heights we won."

Generally the bottom half of the route was more challenging and the top half was steep snow. Originally we planned on descending by down-climbing the South Face/Ridge then doing a few rappels back to the west side and slog back to camp. Visibility was poor on the south side by now

but totally clear on the west where we had climbed. The tiny tent 900m below looked like a yellow pin head. Cautiously we decided to rappel the route... At least we knew the terrain and potential rappel points for the descent. Epics are not welcome late in the day on unfamiliar ground especially when coupled with poor visibility. It is however worthy to note that descending the South Ridge is a common option in summer. Getting down the route involved seven raps using nuts and pins and of course, lots of down-climbing. Later we realized rappelling this route may not be a bad idea even in good visibility. Our first rap was from a boulder on the summit ridge. It took us two hours to descend on single piece rappels to conserve the light alpine rack. In better ice conditions rappelling from V-threads would likely be the norm, (don't forget the hooker!) Excited to get back to camp we quickly plunged through the snow as we raced down. Dusk imminently approached as we arrived at the tent just as snow started to fall. Soon the stove was hissing and we feasted on most of the food we had left, replenishing our bodies as we dosed off to a good sleep.

We awoke to a few inches of fresh snow that fell over night and slowly emerge from our cocoon. It was a quick walk down to the snowmobile. John skied down to the White River from the sled and then waited for the long pull back down the main line to the truck. Gas was tight on the way out and was constantly on the mind of Louis who nervously poured the last of this precious resource into the tank from the reserve can. At least we had a pair of skis to get to the truck if we ran out completely. We decided to go for it and the sled overheated often. John was somewhat used to navigating around the elk ruts on skis by now. A keen eye still had to be trained on the unlucky skier while the jerky stops and starts from tipping in ruts, left John frequently stranded in our wake. Needless to say the constant engine overheating and worrying about the remaining fuel wore on our remaining energy reserves, so when the strut broke on the sled we were not in a good mood. We scrounged for tools and a tree branch, and attempted to splint the broken strut. The repair was marginal at best, but did allow us to limp back to the truck, even if we did have to lean hard to the right for the last 10 kilometres. I guess it's like they say "it's not over 'til it's over." Getting back is half the fun...Right?

Participants: John Waters, Curtis Lyon and Louis Monjo

Five Follicles on Big Baldy (Mountain that is)!

Lindsay Elms

June 13



Repeater tower is visible on the summit of Big Baldy PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

Anyone who lives in Victoria and wants to do a climb on the Island usually have to spend a bit of time driving to get to their destination, whereas those fortunate enough to live further up-island (Courtenay/Comox) have at least six hours less behind the wheel for the round trip. This was the second weekend in a row that Sandy Briggs had driven up-island (he would probably drive every weekend if he was an obsessive climber). The weekend before he had driven up late Friday afternoon with Andy Arts and they meet us in Comox where we then drove up and camped at the bottom of Jagged Mountain. The next day we climbed the mountain in beautiful weather which for Sandy and Andy made it worth the drive. However, the two then had the long drive back to Victoria that evening. This time Sandy drove up from Victoria with Val's daughter Caitlin, again late Friday afternoon, and again met us in Comox.

After loading the four of us into the Toyota Forerunner we then drove out to Cumberland and picked up John Waters. It was a tight squeeze with all the gear (we had extra stuff because we were car-camping) but by packing as much gear as we could into the Thule box on the roof meant we didn't have to nurse things on our laps except for the logging road map book. We then drove out to Gold River and took the road towards Tahsis. Our destination: the follicly challenged Big Baldy Mountain (1,610m). Just after crossing Magee Creek we turned left onto the Magee Main which we hoped to be able to drive all the way to the 910m (3,000ft) saddle to the west of Big Baldy Mountain.

Big Baldy Mountain is the peak directly behind the village of Gold River as you drive down the hill into town. On the balding summit in place of golden locks can be seen a repeater tower and below the tonsure are facial wrinkles switch-backing up the East Face but are now too overgrown to drive. In 2006 Val and I had driven to the top of the Magee Main on a good road but the weather didn't cooperate on that climbing trip. The mountain had just washed its hair and was drip-drying instead of using a big yellow hair dryer. We were hoping for better success on this trip!

This time after driving about 1.5 kilometres up the Magee Main we came across a huge washout which brought us to a halt. Obviously the mountain had caught a cold during the winter because it wasn't wearing a toque and had to sneeze! There was no way we were going to drive through this snot so it looked like we would have a long walk on the logging road the next morning. We put the tents up on the road, had a beer to moisten our parched throats then went to bed.

The next morning we stuck our noses out of the tents and sniffed the fresh air, delighted with the cloudless ceiling of the Sistine Chapel above! We started hiking up the road at 7:30 a.m. and reached the saddle at 8:55 after gaining 610m (2,000ft) in elevation over 5 kilometres. To break the monotony we attempted to photograph a herd of five elk that we startled on the road, however, they appeared to be camera shy and didn't let us get too close. Once on the saddle we took off our running shoes and hung them on a branch then put on our boots. The bush-whack then began!

Val and I had had been part way up the West Ridge before so we knew where to go to save some thrashing about but this didn't make the bush any less dense. The ridge eventually began to steepen and we could hear sniffing from behind (which we ignored) but then after 250m it eased off as we reached the crest of the ridge. By now we were on snow! We continued over the two bumps on the ridge then dropped down to the col at the bottom of the West Face. It looked like we would be able to connect up the patches of psoriasis on the lower part of the face and then the last 520m would be on continuous dandruff. Time to apply some Nizoral 30 sunblock!

There were no surprises along the way and about twenty minutes from the summit we had lunch beside a weeping pore. It was hot, thirsty work out in the sun and the head lice needed covering with their hats and sunnies! From here we could see everything to the west: from Conuma Peak in the foreground to Santiago Mountain, Tahsis Mountain and the Bate/Alava group in the distance. What we couldn't see was behind us to the east beyond the summit.

With lunch in our bellies we moved on up the snow and as we approach the summit ridge we could feel our pace pick up as the view to the east became imminent. We weren't disappointed as we stepped onto Big Baldy's nude nut. It really was a spectacular view point! The whole of Strathcona Park was laid

out before us: from Crown Mountain to the Golden Hinde and beyond. Big Baldy's chrome dome unfortunately was adorned with two repeater towers, a heli-pad and another structure with solar panels, but no dreadlocks.

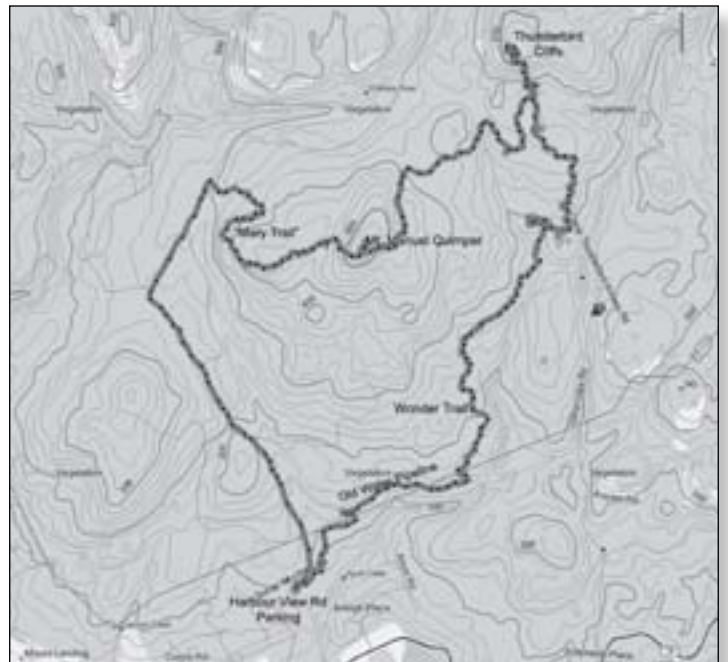
We wiggled-out on the summit for nearly an hour and then retreated down our ascent route back to the saddle between Magee Creek and McCurdy Creek. Then we just had the long road walk/descent back to the vehicle arriving at 6:45 p.m.. We had successfully polished its summit, brushed its moustache and left it all shiny and smooth for the next climbers! A very nice day!

Participants: Sandy Briggs, John Waters, Val Wootton, Caitlin O'Neill and Lindsay Elms

Rambling in the South Island: The Wonder Trail to Thunderbird and Mount Manuel Quimper

Mary Sanseverino
June 27

For many of us in the Victoria area, the land in the Sooke Hills around Mount Manuel Quimper, the Thunderbird Cliffs and Ragged Mountain has become a regular feature for weekend rambles. The area has a lot to offer, interesting and unofficial "trails" that require a bit of map reading skill, amazing shows of spring and summer flowers, and some of the best views in the Victoria and Sooke region.





Hikers contour the side of Mt. Manuel Quimper PHOTO: MARY SANSEVERINO

This summer Mike and I were busy showing Tom, a Victoria newcomer, the local hiking scene (yes, we've had him out on an ACCVI adventure to Lomas Lake – hopefully he'll join!) We quickly powered through some of the old favourites and on June 27 we decided it was time to try something with bigger views and some scrambly bits.

Taking advantage of the long daylight we started our walk at a "civilized" hour. We pulled into the car park at Harbour View Road and were on our way by 9:30 a.m.. Our route took us to the top of the Thunderbird Cliffs, back down, and over to Manuel Quimper. Here we went up the northeast side and came down the "Mary Trail" (named after yours truly) on Quimper's western flank. Then we followed the Harbour Road trail back to the car.

The distance was not long, 14 kilometres in total, so we took an enjoyable but leisurely eight hours to complete the

trip. The hike does go up and down a bit, and of course bushwhacking is a given, especially in the gully between Thunderbird and Quimper with the last twenty minutes on the western-facing "Mary Trail". There are other trails that involve less bushwhacking particularly on Quimper. But the western flank is little travelled, especially by mountain bikers, making it prime for flower viewing in spring and summer.

The highlight of this trip is the scramble up the Thunderbird Cliffs, truly one of the premier view hikes in the area. For newcomers especially, this trip lets hikers get the lay of the land around the Victoria/Sooke Basin area.

The Sea to Sea Regional Park Reserve and the bigger Sea to Sea Blue Green Belt is not particularly "tamed," that is not a lot of maintained trails, published trail maps, or sign posts. Mike and I, along with many of our friends, have spent time wandering around in this area using a combination of topo and compass, very old maps, twenty year old hiking books and now a GPS. We've been inventive in hunting down information too; once I even phoned a real estate agent claiming to be interested in purchasing the top of Ragged Mountain, and asking for a map so we could "see for ourselves". (Hey, I'd buy it if I had a spare million!) We've bushwhacked and barged our way through low spots and blow down, followed promising flagging to nowhere, pussy-footed through delicate Garry Oak habitat and scrambled up the rocky bits always happy to get out and explore, but always looking for "lifers" (new places to hike).

Our first success on putting together Thunderbird with Quimper happened some ten years ago when we first gained the top of Quimper and discovered a map posted in the fire lookout. It pointed us to the Wonder Trail, a connecting route through the area between Harbour View and Glinz Lake. Stitching together bits of trail, overgrown logging roads, and using the old water main pipe that threads through this area, the Wonder Trail makes a great entry point for Thunderbird especially. If you haven't been in already, why not tug on the hiking boots and give it a try!

If you know more about the history of the Wonder Trail, or of any other route in the Quimper/Thunderbird/Ragged area, please get in touch - msanseve@gmail.com - I'd love to learn more about this wilderness area so close to Victoria.

Participants: Mary Sanseverino, Mike Whitney, Tom Whitesides, Lisa Spellacy and John Ballentyne

Rambler Peak, and Next Year El Piveto

John Young
July 1-5

July 2 dawned clear as we crunched our way across the crisp snow up towards Elk River Pass in Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island. We then traversed the scree/snow slope south of Rambler Peak as the sun broke the horizon, heading for the “Spiral Staircase” route. We debated about which was the “prominent Lower East Gully” referred to by Philip Stone in *Island Alpine*, before deciding that it must be the intimidating south-facing gully. Mort and Warren both suggested that we ‘give it a go,’ and as I was the leader, I swallowed my fears and cramponed up towards the nearly vertical looking slope. I told myself that slopes always look steeper from a distance, and when we reached it I was relieved to find I was right. Probably about 40 degrees, and the snow was hard and the gully reached up towards the sky.

Initially, I could kick steps, albeit not terribly deep, and plunge my axe into the hard snow with one hand; however, after a while I could hardly dent the surface with my big boots, and had to hold the axe in the horizontal position, trying to drive the pick into the crust. Ryan and Josh were not too far behind me. I wasn’t worried about Ryan. He’d been up Denali and had plastic mountaineering boots and a robust axe, the right equipment for these conditions. I was more worried about Josh, though, as I wasn’t too sure about his experience in these conditions. We coached him along and he did great. Warren, Linda and Mort were further down, and Mort was short-roping Linda, and the three of them were progressing steadily.

The snow softened again in the top third of the gully and I removed my crampons when I came to a rocky section. The others ducked down behind an overhang as I made my way to the Rambler Glacier. We grouped up in the full sunshine, snacked, took some photos, and headed up towards the main summit.

The upper gully was snow-covered for the lower portion, and then was bare, with lots of loose rock. Mort and Warren were slightly ahead of me, and when they came to the first steep rock, they pulled out one of the ropes and Warren belayed as Mort climbed. I didn’t think it looked too difficult, so I soloed it, a bit to the right of where Mort went. The others all seemed grateful for the belay, so it looked like the right decision. Lucky thing we camped at the pass, I thought, as using a rope on the way up is really going to slow us down. I knew of other groups who had only used a rope to rappel.

Without any incidents, we reached the top of the gully and reached the final summit tower by 12:30. We relaxed on



Down-climbing the Spiral Staircase PHOTO: JOHN YOUNG

the small summit for an hour, basking in the sunshine and marvelling at the views of Strathcona Park and beyond.

We finally tore ourselves away and headed down. We rappelled down the upper gully and nobody got hit by any of the loose rocks that frequently cascaded down. We crossed the glacier again, and when we came to the big lower gully, “the Spiral Staircase” route, we found that the snow had softened significantly, too much, in some cases, as it was a sodden mass. I started off plunge-stepping, but soon lost my nerve and down-climbed, trying to kick good steps in the snow. About half-way down Warren and Mort decided to set up a rappel on three pitons with our two 30m ropes. I continued down-climbing, and after what seemed like an eternity Ryan and Josh caught up to me. It seemed to be taking forever to get down, and I finally asked Ryan if he would take over the lead. It seemed much easier with him kicking the steps!

It was taking Mort and Warren a long time, and when Linda joined us she told us that one of the ropes had jammed when they tried to pull them, and Mort had had to climb back up to retrieve it. (Turns out one of the labels on the end of the rope had snagged in a crack!) By then we were out on the slope below the gully, and awed at the sight of Mort and Warren down-climbing, with our steps extending way

up the gully. We stumbled back into camp about 6:30, just as the sun was disappearing behind Slocomb Peak. A long day!

The next day, we had a relaxed start, but still reached the top of Slocomb by about eleven. A most enjoyable hike with a nice scramble to the top. We wandered around for a while, admiring the views of Mount Colonel Foster, Landslide Lake, and the other mountains down the valley, and returned to camp just after two. We lounged in the sun before heading to bed early, as the next day we planned to try and make El Piveto Mountain.

Why El Piveto? Well, if you're into "ticking lists," El Piveto is on the list of Island six-thousand footers, along with forty or fifty others, depending on whose list you are going by. We had eyed it from Rambler, and it looked like a fairly ambitious undertaking, even from where we were camped. I myself was feeling fatigued, after having just come back from an injury, and really doubted if I'd be up to it.

Anyway, we started off early again, but this time the snow had not frozen overnight, so no crampons were needed until we reached the slope at the top of the pass. We traversed around Rambler, and down to the narrow pass leading to Cervus Mountain. We then had a bushy, round-about hike up Cervus, and finally reached it four and a half hours after starting. And El Piveto, although now much closer, still looked about four hours return from where we were. I thought I could probably do it, but knowing that injuries tend to happen when one is tired, and since it was the group's consensus, we called Cervus our summit for the day.

When we reached camp about four, exhausted, I was really glad we hadn't gone for El Piveto. It'll still be there next year, I thought. Still, all in all, another great trip in the mountains of Vancouver Island!

Participants: Mort Allison, Warren Baker, Ryan Bartlett, Linda Berube, Josh McCullough and John Young

Pukka Ascent of Golden Hindi

Rick Hudson
July 3-6

Old story: Sandy recounts it as we drive the Island Highway. Two likely lads from out of province (OK, they were from Alberta) are on the ferry, boldly announcing with the help of a map they'd just picked out of the tourist pamphlet rack, that they are going to climb Vancouver Island's highest peak. Apparently, it's called the Golden Hindi.

We too are off to climb the Hindi. Getting to the peak (for those who haven't done it) is a difficult thing to grasp. It's

been done from the car park (and back) in under 22 hours, which suggests it isn't very far. Don't believe it. Other reports indicate a round trip of 7-8 days. On my last trip in there, we took 3 full days car to car, but it felt like much more than that. Whatever measuring stick you use, it's basically too far.

On a sweltering evening, with the thermometer hovering around 30 degrees, we shoulder our packs and start the long, long hike to Arnica Lake, up 75 switchbacks (I counted them). The trail is shaded under old growth, and a light breeze makes everything bearable. Along the way I see a bear cub run across the trail between Sandy and me. Where's the mother? Two and half hours from the start we reach the tent platforms, where we're happy to drop our loads, and then cool feet in a nearby stream. Well, that's the first 800m of height gained.

Saturday dawns clear and warm and we leave early, heading west along Phillips Ridge. The trail is initially dry, but gradually disappears under patches of snow that expand until we were mostly on ice, with little path visible. Another black bear bolts at our passing. The cairns keep us on track as we gain 500m of elevation over 6.5 kilometres where for the first time we see our quarry, the Golden Hindi, still looking as though it's a long way away. Which, in all respects, it is.

Beyond, we turn north along an undulating ridge that from a distance always appears to be flatter than it actually is. The trail may only rise and fall a few tens of metres, but it does so continuously, and I'm put in mind of a T-shirt seen often in the Kathmandu tourist markets: "NEPAL. A little bit up. A little bit down." Still, the weather is wonderfully clear, and the geology would keep anyone occupied – strange contact zones between volcanics and limestones, wonderfully fluted dolomites, and contorted granites and basalts.

On the advice of many, we plan to drop off the ridge and head for the south end of Carter Lake. Just before the turnoff, the ridge trail descends into a deep notch, so it's no hardship to avoid the next steep climb up the ridge, and instead descend west, dropping 250m of elevation down a long and bushy gully on a faint trail (moderately flagged) to the Carter Lake outflow. There, the trail crosses to the west side and we begin the cheerful task of regaining much of the height we have just lost, reaching Carter Lake after a climb of 100m.

The track leads round the left hand side (west) of the lake and we follow, but any suggestion that a trail next to a lake is level would be misleading. It wanders up and down, weaving through slide alder and around little cliffs or steep ledges, and we two, now seven hours into the day's hike, are beginning to feel the effects. Nearing the lake's end, Sandy suddenly loses his grip on a branch, and topples unceremoniously into the water. Uncertain whether to laugh or run to his aid, I watch as he bobs to the surface, then leaves the lake with a speed I assume has something to do with the snow-



Sandy Stewart on new route on Golden Hinde PHOTO: RICK HUDSON

fields that drain into it! There's no water damage in his pack, but the camera in a pouch on his belt has taken a hit.

It's a good enough excuse to call a much-needed halt. While he dries out in the sun, we wolf down food and console ourselves that it's probably only a couple more hours of hard slogging. What we don't know is the real grunt is shortly to come. Crossing a boulder field on the west side of Schjelderup Lake, we encounter tenuous snow bridges between giant blocks. A tense time is spent crossing, like crevasse country.

Beyond, the trail winds up and down along the shore's edge, then more snowfields covered in late season rubble, and finally the lake's end. From there, another 200m of elevation gain takes us oh so slowly under the north end of Mount Burman, the rock slabs running melt water, the snow patches icy in the chill of the mountain's north side. As 5:30 p.m. rolls around, we top out on the ridge and turn our weary legs downhill towards Burman Lake and a campsite. It's been a long day. When we finally dump packs at the ponds, we are both bagged in the way that only an eleven-hour day can bag you. Sandy is kind enough to cook. Later, we crawl into bed with the sun still an hour above the horizon, and with little ceremony, drop into a grateful sleep.

The dawn is hazy, and there's a feeling the weather may be changing. We're gone before 6 o'clock, dropping 150m in elevation to the Burman Lake slot, before climbing up the far side. What is it about this trip? The grades just never let up. Finding just 50m of level trail is a treat to be savoured, before the inevitable thigh straining up, or knee jarring down.

By 7:30 we are under the South Face of the Golden Hinde, and our objective, the South Ridge, fills the right hand skyline. It doesn't look too bad. Just let the weather hold. It's sunny, but hazy as we cross next to the frozen lake and start up the talus. At the wrong gully we cut up right, and get

bogged down in small cliffs that require a rope, and then we are back in the morning sunshine and slogging up to the foot of the ridge, craning our necks to see what sort of line exists.

I've been looking at this ridge since 2004 when, on the West Ridge, I thought it had potential. The heather ledges steepen as we scramble as high as we can, aiming for an open book that looks like a good place to start. Puffing onto a ledge, Sandy uncoils the ropes and I hunt around for protection. There's not much. That's to be the routine for much of the climb – lots of great rock, but not many anchors.

There's something almost restful about climbing a roped pitch, after the effort of scrambling. I move up nice dry rock, albeit bushy in spots, and end at a broad ledge with a couple of dwarf firs that make a good belay. Sandy follows easily, and thereafter there are a variety of pitches, some not more than grass gullies, others on clean hard rock. At what we think is about half way, we come across a piece of rappel tape around a rock, and a possible descent line into a snow-filled gully on the right. Where did they come from, and how did they get down?

Sometime before, while looking at photographs, I'd noticed a prominent gendarme about half way up the ridge. At the time, I'd wondered whether we might rappel off or climb down its uphill side. Or would we have to traverse around the thing? These thoughts come to mind when I reach a spectacular rock edge. In front, the mountain disappears 100m down into a gully, and then soars up again in an impressive face. This has to be the gendarme. What now?

Together we peer over the yawning precipice. The sky has clouded over, and a cool wind is blowing up the rock. It's an impressive position, with nothing too obvious to follow. Wait, a series of well fractured blocks lead to the right, up the gendarme's edge, and I follow them, hoping that something less exposed may materialize at the top. After 25m I reach the gendarme's top and peer over – a well-cracked spur drops to a saddle! Tension drains away. This is going to be a cake-walk. Down-climbing the spur to a broad ledge, I fix a belay. In short order, Sandy appears and down-climbs to the stance too. We're both grinning.

A few paces right, and a steep gully leads up to a face, which in turn leads to a saddle of jagged white granite blocks. We are converging with a prominent snow couloir to our right that sweeps up the face, levels off just opposite us, and then steepens above again. From where we now are, I recognize the last pitch of the West Ridge not far above. "Almost there! Let's move onto the snow."

We coil the ropes. Sandy kicks good buckets in the steepening snow. Minutes later the slope begins to ease and we sense we're near the top. Sandy angles away to the right onto the summit rocks. A short scramble and I join him there, where we shake hands. The route goes - not particularly elegantly, but it gets the job done at 5.5, with some impressive stances.



Rick Hudson ready for lunch on the top of Vancouver Island

PHOTO: SANDY STEWART

There follows a lazy half hour on the summit, to sign the register, take in the view, drink and eat. Then we start the descent of the SE Gullies, the snow steep but firm. Finally we are on easier ground. The hazy horizon has changed to dark clouds in the west, and the whole mood of the place, from being friendly and sunny in the morning, is beginning to feel ominous. We hurry down, descending to the snow bowl on the south side of the mountain, and picking up the track to Burman Lake. At the lowest point in the trail, the air is humid, stifling, and thick with bugs. The long clamber up to camp is the worst bit of the track – steep, muddy, slippery, and demanding caution. We're tired, and this is when accidents happen.

At camp, there's the sweet prospect of relishing what we've just done, and taking it easy. But Sandy is made of sterner stuff. "Let's try to get part-way back," he cajoles, "at least as far as Schjelderup Lake." "C'mon, Sandy, I'm bagged." But he throws in the clincher. "It could rain tonight. The more dry ground we cover now, the less wet tomorrow."

I reluctantly start packing, knowing the 200m climb up the north flank of Mount Burman, under a full pack, and feeling the way I am just then, is going to be ugly. Yet

strangely, once packed and ready, the old sack doesn't seem too bad, and we make Schjelderup Lake in under an hour. In fact, I'm feeling so good that we push on, finally stopping on level grass at the north end of Carter Lake. Along the way, we look back at our peak, only to see its upper half hidden by dark swirling clouds. In the distance, faint thunder rumbles. The air at Carter Lake is still and brooding.

Supper, and then welcome sleep, but at 10 o'clock a thunderstorm breaks above us with extraordinary fury. Lightning flashes and thunder rolls, quickly followed by waves of rain that pour out of the dark sky. Then comes hail. We lie in our dry sleeping bags and listened to the cacophony of sound, all promising great wetness, and silently cross our fingers that the tent survives.

The storm rages much of the night, easing in the early hours. The lightning becomes less intense, and the rain quieter. I wake at 5:30 a.m. to the roar of the stove. Sandy is up, with a brew already going. In the dim dawn we survey the damage – the surrounding area (we can only see a short distance because of low cloud) is soaked, every branch dripping, little creeks running where no creeks have a right to be.

We pack hastily. Miraculously, the rain holds off until we're moving. Always nice to pack in the dry, even if the hike itself is going to be wet. At the far end of Carter Lake the trail drops into the trees, and we pushed our way through damp undergrowth, icy droplets splashing as we pass. Across the river, there's the slow, wet, sliding scramble 250m up to the ridge.

The only way to tackle a homeward route as long as this, is to divide it into mental sections – get to the ridge, get to the high-point where we turn east, then get to the traverse around the next high-point. Then the malachite-copper deposit showing, then the descent to the lower snow patches, then the dry trail near Arnica Lake, and then, shoulders aching, Arnica Lake itself. Finally, the delicious prospect of merely descending all those interminable switchbacks in a shuffling gait, our backs, hips and feet so chaffed, so tired, so screaming to stop, that when we do, the relief is almost audible. We're back at the car almost exactly three days after we left.

Participants: Sandy Stewart and Rick Hudson

Note: The story of the two young Albertan's quest for the Golden Hindi was related to me by ACC-VI section members Jim Swan and Scott McElroy, who had encountered these hapless fellows entering Strathcona Park. Since then, I can't help but chuckle a little whenever I think about this mountain.
– Sandy Stewart

Mount Rosseau: Climbing With Mister Arrowsmith

Peter Rothermel
July 3-6

Ever since I first heard of this man named Ralph Rosseau, after my first climb on Mount Arrowsmith, I wished that I could have met him and at that time never knowing the bond that I would end up having with this mountain, just as he had. On that hot August day in 1970, I started from the Alberni Highway, just west of Cathedral Grove and hiked up the Rosseau Trail that was established in the 1940's. When I got up out of the Cameron Valley and at a view point, I could see in the distance the cabin that Ralph and his friends had built, carrying logs for hours uphill and even packing in a cast iron stove, from the highway. As I stood there mesmerized, a pickup truck roared by the cabin, raising a cloud of dust and shattering my spell. I hadn't realized that roads were pushed up the mountain in the mid 1960's, that in effect would be the death knell for the Rosseau Chalet, allowing vandals easy access. If I were a few years earlier I would have seen the cabin in all of its glory. If I were there sixteen years earlier, I might have met Ralph Rosseau, although, I would have only been about four years old.

Ralph was an avid mountaineer from Port Alberni, a school teacher, devoted husband, a scout master and a person of boundless energy. He spent much of his spare time exploring and guiding people into the Islands mountains. Once, a long time ACC member nicknamed me "Mr. Arrowsmith", for my efforts to get protected status for the Massif, but in my mind Ralph will always be the real Mr. Arrowsmith. He died at the age of twenty-eight, in July of 1954, in a crevasse fall, in the Septimus Range. The highest peak in that range is now officially named Mount Rosseau.

I don't doubt that if Ralph Rosseau had lived to this day, Mount Arrowsmith would have long ago been a Provincial Park and our island mountain and outdoor culture would be much more richer.

So, I have had an obsession to reach the peak named Rosseau, not so much because of its size, or where it is, but more so to pay homage to the man it is named for. My footsteps have crossed his on the Septimus Range and on the Arrowsmith Massif and likely on many other island mountains. Never having met the man, yet, I feel a bond of brotherhood. For me, to touch the rock he had, is much like shaking his hand through time.

My first attempt at reaching the summit of Mount Rosseau was with Tak Ogasawara and Tom Carter in August 2005 and after going up two rotten dead end gullies and



Ralph Rosseau on Mt. Arrowsmith PHOTO: ALBERNI VALLEY MUSEUM ARCHIVES

while forgetting to bring my helmet, I gave up on the third one, full of loose rock.

This year Tom organized a club scheduled trip to Mount Rosseau in July and as Roger and Peggy Taylor were wanting to do a five day trip with me into that area, we teamed up with Toms group for their three day trip. Then Rog, Peg and I planned to amuse ourselves for the next two days on some other nearby mountain.

Hiking in through to the Bedwell Lakes and over to Cream Lake took about seven hours, leaving ample time to make camp and relax. Cream Lake was clear of ice, (just) and was pretty cold for swimming. The bugs weren't bad and the evening's sleep was deep.

We got off at about 6:30 the next morning and hiked our way up the Septimus Glacier, which was still filled in with snow and easy traveling and topped out at the pass towards Love Lake. Crossing the 30 degree scree and snow slope below Septimus and above Love Lake is always a chore and feels like forever.

Scrambling up the gullies, we were forced to keep close together, due to rockfall. There were a few reachy steps that were feeling like they almost needed a belay, but everyone went up fine and we reached the summit at about 12:30, or in about six hours from our Cream Lake camp, with an elevation gain of about 700m. There was a register tube with a missing lid, so I replaced it with a new one, including a new waterproof book. The old register went back quite a few

years and was still in good shape so we put it back into the new tube. Oddly enough, about half of all the entries in the old book were by Heathens and why not... What a beautiful place to be, with mountain eye candy all around and an actual perch of a summit block.

We had brought a pair of 7.5mm X 40m twin ropes and everybody had harnesses and helmets. For our retreat we did, I think, two rappels and that of course slowed the whole process down a bit and we got back to camp at 5:30, in about five hours after leaving the summit.

The next day we all packed up and hiked to Bedwell Lake, where Roger, Peggy and I bid the group farewell, as we were planning to do another two days. We had decided against camping on the ridge above Little Jim Lake and going up Big Interior, because we would have to be camping on snow and only had summer sleeping gear. We instead decided to make use of the developed camp sites at Bedwell Lake and have a look up the "Southeast" Ridge of Mount Tom Taylor. After making our camp, we took a recy trip down the Bedwell River Valley, to get around the hump at the end of Big Bedwell Lake, but found we were losing far too much elevation, so back we went. From camp, we then traversed along the southern shore of Bedwell Lake, finding a faint game trail and finally turning back at the lake's outfall, figuring we had the approach figured out. The plan was to spend the next day getting as high as we could on the "Southeast" Ridge and maybe even summit Tom Taylor.

That night we had a thunder and lightning storm that lasted from about 10:00 at night, until 5:00 in the morning, then it started to rain really hard. Peggy, the hero of the trip, went out in the middle of the storm and rigged up a tarp between our tents, while Roger and I snored away. Next morning it was still a bit drizzly, but we had a dry place between our tents to eat breakfast. While eating, we discussed what to do and since we didn't have a weather forecast, regarding more storms and as the ridge up Tom Taylor was totally socked in cloud, we decided to pull the plug and go home a day early.

The hike out was dampish, but otherwise pleasant. Dinner at the Royal Coachman (a C/3 eatery) in Campbell River was a fine topping for another great trip.

Participants: Tom Carter, Tim Turray, Ron Burlison, Shane Johnson, Roger and Peggy Taylor, and Peter Rothermel

The Limestone Twins

Lindsay Elms

July 9-10

In June 1993 seven members of the ACCVI set off in poor conditions from the end of the logging road between Pogo Peak and Steamboat Mountain with the intention of climbing the Limestone Twins on the northwestern side of Steamboat Mountain. The party, after several false leads, eventually found the well-worn cavers trail that existed at the time to the Clayoquot Plateau. Conditions never improved and as they got higher their spirits dropped as the drizzle increased. Of the seven who began it ended up becoming a party of three (Rick Eppler and Rob Macdonald who had probably done more exploring of this part of Vancouver Island than anybody else, and Doug Goodman) as visibility dropped, at times down to 30 metres. They continued moving up a shallow break in the wall filled by a snow slope angling up to who knew where. Staring mystified into the mist they had no idea where the high point was so they just kept moving south along the ridge until confronted by a substantial drop. "Could this be one of the elusive Limestone Twins we were seeking?"

They tried recalling aerial photographs of the mountain and seemed to remember a substantial bump between their perceived position and where they wanted to be so of they headed off to find what they could not see. The bump proved to be an entertaining scramble and soon they were sitting on top of another with an even steeper, nastier looking drop below their feet. This was their last kick at the summit as the weather was not good, it was getting on in the day and they were postulating that they should think about catching up with the others. Just then there was a little break in the mist. Eppler wrote:

"A couple of quick knowing glances and without a word we were off down a grotty, steep, slimy, loose class 3 gully into the gap, chasing that almighty elusive glimpse. With equal zeal we kicked up the steep snow to the base of the first tower. Traversing out onto the North Face away from the imposing East Face proved to be the key to a couple of easy class 3-4 grooves to the summit.

Hah! Who says blind ignorance doesn't pay off? A faint view of the other Twin showed it to be lower, with an intricate-looking and time-gobbling gap to get there, so leaving nothing but our names in a film canister and a pile of rocks we disappeared into the mist from where we had come."

Knowing the others would be feeling miserable and dejected, while they were leaping amongst the clouds elated at having summited, the chase was on. There must have been



View of the Limestone Twins from Steamboat Mountain

PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

something to that as although the others had an hour and a half start on them they caught up with them at the edge of the forest 200 metres from the vehicles.

Since that time the logging road has become overgrown and impassable as well as the cavers trail. Hence no one goes in that way any more.

In 2008 I was scanning through a list of peaks on the government website and behold I found that the Limestone Twins were an officially designated name for these summits. All of a sudden my interest was piqued and I decided I had to climb the Limestone Twins.

A phone call from Peter Ravensbergen intimated that he had some time for a trip while his family was in England. Having undertaken many trips with Peter and knowing that he is up to a good bushwhack, I quickly suggest Steamboat Mountain and the Limestone Twins. It didn't take long for him to say sure! Then I told him what the climb entailed!

Thursday morning saw us on the road to Port Alberni and beyond. We found the gate on the logging road open so we went in but decided it might not be a good idea to park down the road because if the gate was locked while we were climbing we'd be stuck since we didn't have a gas torch with us. We unloaded the packs then Pete parked the car outside the gate to be safe. It had been three years since I had last been up Steamboat and the logging road and initial part of the trail had become quite overgrown. Martin Smith had warned me about the road and trail and had asked me to

keep an eye out for his GPS which some sneaky bush had nabbed on his descent.

After an hour on the road we climbed into the creek-bed and followed that up for fifteen minutes then got onto the trail. We immediately began climbing over all the blow-downs but after another twenty minutes it became a bit friendlier and we made good progress up the steep trail. We crested the ridge and dropped down to the lake then beat around the right-hand side to the big gully which heads up to the summit ridge. Here we had lunch while we looked across at some of the spectacular wave-like limestone formations.

By now mist was beginning to swirl in and the higher we got the less visibility we had (it seemed like we were getting the same weather as the Eppler/Macdonald/Goodman party). Although above us we could see glimpses of blue sky it never cleared for the rest of the day. After another hour of hiking we reached the summit ridge and angled across to an obvious notch where we knew was the best location for descending off Steamboat Mountain to the lakes below to the north. As we descended we could hear running water below out to our left as well as further to our right so we aimed to stay between the sounds as we hoped this would put us on the narrow bench between the two lakes. Our navigation was good and we managed to avoid several bluffs and then the angle began to level off and there, twenty metres in front of us, was one of the lakes. As we came onto the gravel beach we could see bluffs out to our left but further around to our right we could see another gravel beach and thought this might be the way to go. To make a long story short we ended up thrashing around the lake to the right through thick bush and then climbed up and down, and up and down, to avoid bluffs for an hour and a half to get to the end of the lake which we thought should have taken us twenty minutes. We found a site to put the tent up and then realized we didn't have the fuel bottle for the stove. Peter silently resigned himself to a cold supper but I was determined to get the damp wood ignited and have something hot. I won out much to Peters chagrin and he admitted he is never going to doubt me again!

The mist kept us socked in throughout the evening but we were confident that it would burn off by the morning and sure enough at 5 a.m. when my alarm went off it was clear out. We had a quick breakfast and then just as quickly climbed to the crest of the ridge behind our camp to get a view of where we had to go. Again going by the map we had thought that the mountain shouldn't be far off but in reality it was a bit further, however, it didn't look difficult.

The ridge rolled along for about 1.5 kilometres and then began to climb up towards a col to the east of the Limestone Twins. Looking out to the right I could see the two bumps that the Eppler et al party had encountered on their climb in the mist. From the col we angled around onto the north side

of the highest Twin and looked for a route. The glaring ridge was the East Ridge which looked steep but the rock appeared firm. Upon closer inspection we determined that without a rope it would be foolhardy so we dropped back down and traversed around to the north. I knew that the first ascent was up class 3-4 rock so there had to be a route. I soon found a steep angled dihedral that led up to a relatively easy angled route on the North Face. Ten minutes later we were standing on the summit next to the cairn looking for the film canister we knew should be there, however, all that we could find was a broken stub of pencil.

We spent fifteen minutes on the summit enjoying the view before we began the hike back to the tent. Camp was dismantled and we looked at the ridge between the two lakes. This time instead of an hour and a half to get to the opposite end of the lake it took us ten minutes. The difference of having clear visibility! We plugged away at the 400 metre ascent back up on to the ridge of Steamboat Mountain and then quickly deked up to tag the summit. Around us all the alpine flowers were in bloom and looked beautiful as they grew tenaciously out of the weathered limestone.

On the descent we were surprised to see a helicopter come around the end of the summit ridge then land on one of the benches about 200 metres below the summit. The chopper came to a complete stop and two people got out one carrying a box. We were unable to confirm their intention and later back home I contacted BC Parks and they passed our information on but we never heard anything back. The most likely scenario was they were releasing Vancouver Island marmots but it didn't appear to be the right habitat to us. Anyway, we continued the descent and arrived back at the vehicle about 3 p.m. and although the gate looked locked upon closer inspection we found it hadn't been padlocked so in reality we could have driven to the end of the road and parked but I am sure Murphy's Law would have had something to say about that.

Participants: Peter Ravensbergen and Lindsay Elms

The area encompassing the Limestone Twins and Steamboat Mountain is characterized by areas of massive limestone intrusions belonging to the Quatsino Formation, laid down during the Upper Triassic period. The limestone has weathered into fantastic wave-like shapes but is also interspersed by extensive cave systems. This whole area (3,155 hectares) is now known as **Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park** and was established on July 12, 1995. The primary role of Clayoquot Plateau Provincial Park is to protect an undisturbed and unique high elevation karst/cave landscape and associated ecosystem. The park features a high elevation plateau with several small lakes. The Clayoquot Plateau area was originally proposed for ecological reserve status as it is considered

to be one of the best examples of a self-contained coastal karst system in a completely undisturbed condition, and it contains outstanding karst surface features of textbook quality. The area is superior to other karst areas for its diversity of landforms, geological and vegetative features. The park protects a complete altitudinal cross-section of forest and other plant communities from lowland to alpine levels, and a large number of disjunct plant occurrences and unusual plant combinations as well as pristine old growth forest. Twenty-nine rare plant species have been recorded in the park, six of which are blue listed. As a secondary role the park protects cultural features as there is a prehistoric processing site where aboriginal peoples used to hunt marmots and other mammals for pelts. A discovery of bones from 13 Vancouver Island Marmots in one of the caves has provided important historical information about the area. The bones were found to be 2,600 years old and some had fine cut marks on the surface resulting from sharp stone tools. This finding provides insight into the prehistoric range of the Vancouver Island Marmot, which was more widespread in the past, and contributes to answering speculations on the demise of this highly endangered species.

Survey Mission: Golden Hinde

Nadja Steiner
July 9-12

It is early July and the grandmas just arrived from Germany, bringing with them the promise of five days of freedom. Latter was already well planned for a mountaineering trip without kids: for once going your own speed, just carrying your own stuff...what a prospect. A Thursday afternoon in mid July saw us on our way, bags readily packed and the weather forecast promising. One quick stop on the way to get a new flash card for the camera and some not to be recommended fast food and then off to the Arnica Lake trail head.

From there we went up the trail with a good pace. Soon we came to a beautiful little waterfall calling for the first foto-op. But what is this, the camera doesn't work, Harry did you...??? The realization, that the flash card was still in Harry's jeans which had been replaced by his hiking pants was quite a bummer.... Refusing to go on this trip without a camera! I practiced running in big hiking boots, urgh!! (From now on I will be appreciating light runners even more). Without any further issues we followed the seemingly never ending switchbacks up to the meadows. Despite the late afternoon and the shelter of the trees it was very hot and



The Golden Hinde from basecamp at Schjelderup Lake PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

we thanked the kids for lending us their water packs. (Something we would appreciate even more over the next few days). We found the quite and pristine Arnica Lake in its beautiful setting with the last hour of daylight. I was surprised to find such a nice camp site up there. Only one other platform was occupied, and we never did find the bear cache.

The other three campers were visitors from Germany, chatting about the amazing Canadian wilderness (we certainly had to agree). They were not planning on going any further and we would spend the next five days on our own. Despite the rather large amount of mosquitoes a late night dip in the lake was mandatory. We tried to rise early the next morning, which worked reasonably well, and headed off towards Phillips Ridge. The aim for the night was Schjelderup Lake. The day was long but the landscape amazing. It was great to come out in the open and enjoy the view, even catch an occasional glimpse of the Golden Hinde. We had decided to take the higher route along the ridge, since we were warned of the huge amount of bushwhacking on the lower route. The “along the ridge route” turned out to be a “cross three mountains” route and was certainly not easy. Lots of hands were needed, especially on one of the down climbs. But the view and the surroundings definitely made up for it. The weather was fantastic, blue sky and sun all day long. Again we were fascinated by the changing rock formations and varied colors of the wild flowers. One time we crossed downwards over a huge field of what looked like sherds. Maybe some giants had a fight over who was going to do the dishes? The rocks were so sharp, they reminded me of shark teeth; falling or

slipping here was not an option. It was so hot we were drinking more or less continuously, occasionally throwing in some minerals to make up for the sweating. We drank about seven litres of water each day and not much turned yellow. For food we had the usual fruit-energy-bar, nut and jerky combination (not to forget the chocolate).

The occasional snow patch was used to replenish the cooling system under my hat and I was glad to have brought a bandana to keep my neck cool and sun sheltered. It was getting late in the afternoon when we reached the summit on our ridge traverse and we could see Schjelderup Lake as well as the majestic Golden Hinde we were aiming for. The descent to the lake turned out to be rather nasty, we couldn’t find any markers, and the GPS route wasn’t really clear. We ended up following what looked like the most

natural line. I was probably not terrible wrong, but not very nice either. I was astonished about the total lack of snow. I had expected much more, and thought it would even be a bit early to go in mid July. Rather than having a few soft and easy descents over snowfields, we encountered a lot of rubble and loose rock. We were definitely getting tired (and hungry) and, by the time we hit the bushwhacking height level, fairly annoyed. Harry got especially grumpy when he noticed that he had lost the lowest part of his hiking pole in the bush. When we reached the lake we were not happy at all to find out that we had to go back up again. This was definitely not Durrance Lake, with a nice running trail around it.

After thirteen hours of hiking we decided to give it a rest and gave up on the idea of reaching our base camp at the other side of the lake that night. Instead we set up camp, found the most sophisticated natural bear cache, ignored the fact that snowfields ended up in the lake and a lonesome ice flow not too far away, and jumped. I was definitely quicker out than in and ready for some food. The water was boiling and the Mountain House kitchen quite ready. We decided to shift the ascent to the summit to a day later, and take our rest day the next day. I would have preferred to have our only rest day without taking down and pitching up tent, but oh well, variety enriches life. We took our time, but eventually we got on our way. I admit the little hike around Schjelderup Lake wasn’t my favorite part. First it took a while to get back on the right track then the trail was leading us up and down, over roots and under tree trunks, across big boulders and half melted snowfields. But as usual, the surroundings made



Harry and his GPS, Golden Hinde summit PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

up for the drag. The campsite at the other side was fantastic, right next to a small river which ended up in a rather impressive waterfall plunging into the valley, and the Golden Hinde as a most impressive backdrop. The rest of the day was spend hanging out, bathing in the upper part of the water fall and the unperturbed sun, taking pictures, a little bit of exploring, a lot of resting our feet and then, of course, preparing for the long day tomorrow.

We did get going early and the sun started rising, when we got up to the ridge. The summit was still far away and we knew that we had to descend all the way to Burman Lake before the real ascent would start. It did go down pretty steep and we had to make good use of our hands again, holding on to roots and branches. But at least the path was clear and the backpacks quite a bit lighter. We did, however (since we were so used to heavy loads), carry as extra weight a 2kg high precision GPS from the Integrated Land Management Bureau, Harrys bread giver. Why???, well, once a surveyor - always a surveyor, Harry was planning to resurvey the Golden Hinde and I was part of his mission. I was glad when we finally passed Burman Lake. By now it had gotten quite hot and we had to stop frequently under one of the sparse tree branches for a drink and/or refill our water supplies. Again, the sky was clear and almost cloudless. We crossed over a frozen lake and surrounding huge blocks of dark rock with beautiful quartz inlays. Along a snowfield and onto the huge rubble field under the face of the Golden Hinde. I looked up and down and realized the first time I can remember a feeling of vertigo and I didn't like it. We stopped to replenish our energy reserves and I tried to ignore the idea that all those blocks might start moving and we could follow them tumbling down the edge. Luckily, it worked (the powerbar probably helped, too); I was feeling much better and we continued

on, again astounded about the lack of snow. We went as far as we could on the shrunken snowfield making good use of our ice axes. For the last 100m of climbing on the big blocks we decided to use a rope. It was more time consuming, but safer and more comforting at that height. We also had the feeling that we hadn't found the easiest route for that last stretch. We had reached the second summit and needed to cross over to the main summit. At 3 p.m. We found ourselves on top of the island.

The view was breathtaking. The place itself admittedly a bit disappointing! This momentous mountain, which looks so solid from afar, is a pile of rubble! I admit the individual rubble pieces are rather large, large enough to make use of the mosquito free environment and do some sun bathing, but you don't want to drop anything valuable in between. Harry was busy setting up the GPS. Now we had to wait at least an hour for it to get enough measurements. We were hoping, or actually rather convinced, to get some cell phone coverage on the top, to inform the grandmas and kids that we were safe and well. But, unfortunately the connection didn't even hold long enough to send a text message. That was a bit disconcerting, not necessarily for us (although the "what if" thought came up as well), but for the ones at home. We didn't want them to worry and if we couldn't get hold of them on the summit, we won't be able to call until we are in the car back home. But no use, it didn't work. We did decide at that point to buy a SPOT upon our return (we did so by now, and I am glad we did, it is so much nicer to just check the e-mail and know, rather than worry). We found the summit book with only two entries from that year. One from two ACC mountaineers we knew and one just a week earlier from two guys who wrote something like: "We made it, even though we have never done anything like this before and we don't really know how to read a map....", I had to wonder! Some serious rumbling woke us from the relaxed atmosphere. A lonely storm cloud coming from who knows where was moving towards us. It did look like it would move passed us and we wouldn't need to worry, but it definitely didn't sound like that. We had one hour worth of measurements and it was time to go anyway, so we didn't think about it twice and packed up.

For the way down we decided to use a slightly different route, which would probably also have been easier to come up. We encountered a lot of loose rock and severely declined snowfields (they don't even deserve the name anymore). For safety we kept us on the rope until we got into better terrain. The way back went rather fast, but it was getting late and we still had to go down all the way to Burman Lake and back up again. The storm cloud has moved to Buttle Lake and left us in peace and we watched a beautiful sunset hiking back up the ridge above Schjelderup Lake. The light left us about forty minutes before we reached the tent and we had to get the

headlights out. Luckily we didn't have any trouble finding the trail and after fourteen hours we were back at the tent. We did skip the bath that night and focused on food intake and the imminent threat of taking off Harrys shoes. He insists on hiking in his plastic mountaineering boots, even though his shins turn into open sores every time he goes for an extended trip. But at least his ankles are safe and after a mistreated climbing accident many years ago that has priority. Luckily our medical equipment is rather good and the bringing of a good amount of Mepore Pro had been a good move. I had to deal with my own foot issues, as well, although they looked a lot less serious. My ganglion in my rather new Glacier boots was getting quite painful. But, oh well, tomorrow.

Day 5 meant another long day and after bandaging our foot injuries we set out again, curious that this was the first day with clouds coming in. During breakfast the valley slowly started to fill up with puffy white mist and by the time we were ready and packed, the Golden Hinde had disappeared from our view. The sight was clear in the other direction and that's where we wanted to go. The struggle around Schjelderup Lake I wasn't particularly looking forward to, especially when we started having trouble finding the proper trail and ended up with worse bushwhacking than before. It didn't help that Harrys second pole broke on the way (good, the kids were not there to hear all that swearing). With one pole each we continued. We were planning to take the same route back, however were hoping to find a better marked route up to the ridge chain. But no such luck, we ended up going back very much the same way we came in. But, maybe this is it. It's not like Mount Albert Edward, visitors and trail makers are sparse. It cleared up again and the view from the ridge was spectacular. With the occasional cairn it turned into something of a "Lord of the Rings" atmosphere. I would have loved to stop and set up tent right there, just sit, watch and breath in all the energy around us. But we were pretty limited in time and had to go on. The up and down over one after the other ridge crest, wasn't easier this way, than it was on the way in and our legs were even more tired. The last stretch from Phillips Ridge to Arnica Lake seemed to find no end. We were thinking of making camp earlier, but didn't see anything inspiring. Also the clouds had been moving in and out all day and finally settled into an even grey around us. My ganglion was trying to kill me with regular knife stitches on every step. I didn't know about Harrys feet, he doesn't whine as much as me (although, who knows, my whining mostly replayed in my brain), but I figured they were not happy either. It was getting dark when we finally reached Arnica Lake and this time we did not give up on the plunge.

The next morning found us at the end of our trip. We were on our own, apart from a black bear who visited the meadow in the morning. It was one of the most beautiful trips I'd ever done, but probably also the most strenuous. A

nice breakfast, relaxed packing and three more hours of trying to ignore our feet brought us back to the car. Exhausted but happy we drove home. Of course we had to stop for a swim in Buttle Lake on the way. The trip would keep us energized for quite a while. I wouldn't mind having that free-time every year. It is just too bad that these grandmas are so hard to come by..... The official results of our survey mission show the Golden Hinde at 2196.818m which shows it to be 0.734m lower in elevation than initially measured at the last survey in 1976.

Participants: Nadja and Harry Steiner

Springer Peak and Hkusam Mountain

Dave Campbell

July 18

After a few years of excuses, I figured this was the year for me to have a crack at the Kusam Klimb in Sayward. For some reason I had always thought that the race went up and over the top of Hkusam Mountain proper, however after checking out the route on the race map I realized that it only went to a pass on the shoulder between it and "Stowe Peak". In order to remedy the lack of summit on the run itself, I decided to post a club trip to go and have a look.

A couple of weeks prior to the Kusam Klimb, I did a practice run up Bill's Trail and then Springer Peak. Under evening light, the views from the top along Johnstone Strait and out to the Coast Mountains and Mount Waddington were sublime. A few weeks later, I found myself again slog-ging up the trail as part of the race. I had my head down the whole time I didn't really get a chance to even get a look at Hkusam Mountain, and the route I was planning on taking on the club trip later.

Nearly a month after the race, I found myself heading up Bill's Trail for the third time this season. Joining me this time were Wes, Heather and Alex. Heather, Alex and I all work together, and we joked how it took an ACC trip for us to actually get organized to get out hiking together.

Wes was having a bit of an "off" day, and decided to bow out of the trip a short ways up the trail. Heather decided to continue along with Alex and me. I suggested that we head up Springer Peak together, and then Heather could get back down to Wes earlier, and Alex and I could carry on to Hkusam Mountain.

Bill's Trail is steep, but well defined (if only BC Parks could maintain their trails as well! Amazing what volunteer work can accomplish). The trail is direct and efficient, and we



Hkusam Mountain from the Stowe Creek trail. Route takes obvious snow-filled gully PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

quickly gained elevation. The trail hits a nice lookout (with views over to Victoria Peak) and then starts to traverse east towards a small lake. Part way along the traverse, a marked route leads off to Springer Peak. This is definitely less distinct than the Kusam Trail, but is easy enough to follow. We kept the hike up interesting by staying as far left as possible, which kept us along the ridge crest of a fairly precipitous gully (it is easier keeping to the right of this). Once again, the views from the top were spectacular and give the full coastal “Island” experience.

Alex and I bade farewell to Heather, and then continued along Bill’s Trail to the pass over into Stowe Creek. From the pass we stayed on the trail, and then dropped down about 300 feet before contouring into the basin below the north side of Hkusam Mountain (it might have been better to drop a little bit further). From the basin we worked our way into the obvious gully that works its way up to the peak. The gully still had some snow in it (both a helmet and ice axe are useful) and overall was loose Class 3.

More great views from the summit! The south side of the mountain has quite a different atmosphere. The area was burned several decades ago, and is a bit of a moonscape. Alex had wanted to run the Kusam Klimb this year, but was unable to due to timing. He was keen on doing it, so we decided to do a traverse of the mountain, and hook up with the final leg of the Kusam Klimb route out roads from Stowe Creek (so essentially we did the Kusam Klimb route plus Springer Peak and the Hkusam traverse).

We headed down the south slopes and then hooked up to the ridge above Stowe Creek. At the small notch we descended into a steep gully (Lyle’s Trail) which led down the gully and into an old clear cut. From the clear-cut we headed

back north along a deactivated (re-contoured) logging road back to the Stowe Creek road. Then it was just a long 14 kilometre hump out along the road back to the car. From the Stowe Creek Road we followed “Ryans Trail” (essentially the former Ryans Road) back to Bill’s Trail and then back the few hundred metres to the car.

Great day out! Other than the Kusam Klimb, the range doesn’t seem to fall on the radar for a mountain destination. However traverse of Hkusam is highly recommended and the trip up Springer Peak is also excellent, and probably provides better views out to Johnstone Strait. For a shorter variation, you can drive a fair ways up Stowe Creek (4wd) and do the loop from there rather than going from Bill’s Trail.

Participants: Heather Klassen, Wes Klassen, Alex Koiter and Dave Campbell

Triple Peak or Twenty-Eight Bee Stings but We’ll Live

Mike Springer
July 18-19



Triple Peak group on the summit PHOTO: MIKE SPRINGER

Triple Peak is an awesome little mountain and is easily doable in a day. Access is up Marion Main and the trail once you find it is in good condition. The majority of the trail criss-crosses the cascading waterfalls and river up to the lake where the best place to camp is on the flat rock at the south side of the lake.

We elected to do Triple Peak the first day and have a look at the possibility of The Cats Ears on Sunday. From the lake we headed towards the mountain across the snow-fields (crampons and an axe come in handy). Finding the exact route up was a little difficult; some steeper rock and a couple of exposed areas were negotiated with a rope. Stay right on the center massif and if you come across a chock stone you're on the right path. Our day was partially cloudy but otherwise good. Not too hot and not too cold with just enough breeze to keep the mosquitoes away. Great views were had from the summit.

Sunday morning we humped it up to the second lake which is quite a bit higher and got a good look at The Cats Ears. Climbing it from this side is not impossible but I would recommend a route from Cat's Ears or Canoe Creek.

All in all a great weekend trip with a kool bunch of chicks and dudes.

Participants: Linda, Peggy, David, Mike, Yan, Rory, Jen, and the incomparable Mr. Ken Wong

Paradise Lake, Velella Peak, Rhino Peak and Little Eiger

Lindsay Elms
July 22-26

It seems that over the years, in certain parts of Vancouver Island, I have been following in the footsteps of the dynamic duo of Rick Eppler and Rob Macdonald up a number of mountains. In reading back over their climbing reports in the *Island Bushwhacker* for the last twenty-five years I have been inspired to repeat many of their climbs which in numerous instances were first ascents. I can look back fondly and see that I have followed them up The Cats Ears, Steamboat Mountain, Fifty-forty Peak, The Limestone Twins and Triple Peak which are in the Port Alberni to Tofino corridor, and then up north in the Bates/Alava sanctuary. One thing that all these climbs have in common is that they demand the climber to be comfortable with a good-old, off-trail, Island bushwhack. They have used terms such as "another hit on the thrash parade" and "the mother of all bushwhacks" to describe some of their trips through the verdant west coast bush. I know this turns some people off but my eyes light up when I read this, my skin starts to tingle and I feel the adrenalin begin to flow through my veins and I haven't even got into the bush yet! While others are cursing and swearing at the tangled shrubbery I feel "alive" and "at home" in the luxuriant undergrowth – the cuts and bruises, lashes and

whippings, gashes and gouges are just part of the perverse experience associated with these trips. The philosophy of this type of climbing was well articulated in Sandy Briggs's thoughtful piece entitled "Climbing on Vancouver Island: Bushwhacking as Ethos" (*Canadian Alpine Journal* 2006). However, there was still a couple of mountains that they had climbed which were on my ever-expanding "to do" list.

In the autumn 1985 *Island Bushwhacker* in a report titled "First Ascent of Velella Peak", Rob wrote about a fly-in trip to Paradise Lake with Rick Eppler, Andrew Macdonald and Anne Denman, where they made the first ascents of Velella Peak and Rhino Peak. Of course this piqued not only my interest but Frank Wille's. Frank had been talking to me for the last couple of years about a trip to this area but there was always other peak's to climb then all of a sudden in the middle of July the dice was rolled and on short notice a trip was planned to visit this area. Vancouver Island, and all of British Columbia, was in a huge high pressure system and there appeared to be no change in the weather for an extended period. This is what we required if we were going to fly in and out of the lake. I booked Tofino Air's Beaver to fly us into Paradise Lake on the afternoon of July 22 and then return to pick us up on the afternoon of the 26th.

On the Saturday afternoon we meet Frank at the Tofino wharf, unloaded our packs and then searched around for a place to leave our vehicles for the next four days. No longer can you just park on the side of the road as it is all 2 hour parking so we had to find somewhere to park 'n pay. We grumbled about the \$40 it cost each of us but as soon as we were in the air looking down on Clayoquot Sound we forgot about the charge. Fifteen minutes later we were approaching the lake and hoping that the floatplane had good brakes as the lake appeared rather small. Because it was surrounded by mountains there was no way the pilot could just lift-off again if the lake was too short to come to a quick stop. Fortunately, he had flown into the lake in the morning to check it out before he took his paying passengers in. The Beaver taxied up to a gravel beach at the head of the lake where we unloaded our kit and then he turned around and was gone. Ah, the quiet serenity of being in the mountains - we were in Paradise!

After taking a few minutes to bask in the beauty of our location we finally put the packs on our backs and headed into the bush beside the creek. A few minutes later we broke out of the bush and into an alpine meadow where all the alpine flowers were out in bloom. It was a beautiful location but too soon to camp – we wanted to get either on the ridge above or somewhere close to it. From the head of the meadows there didn't look to be any easy route above to the next meadow so we deked into the bush to the left of the creek. The bush was thick and the terrain steep but we found a route through and half an hour later we were in the next meadow. Initially I had considered going up to the ridge to the left by Rhino Peak but

there was a nice open bench angling up to the right. After another twenty minutes we came across a good size pond that we thought might be nice to cool off in each day when we got back to camp but also nearby was running water. The ridge was only another ten minutes on and we couldn't see the point in going any further so we set up camp. It was a great location, however, the bugs were bad and the sun didn't set behind the ridge until after 8:30 which meant we didn't have any shade to hide in to get out of the sun. It was also too hot in the tent but thankfully there was THE POND! Once we did climb into the tent we merely laid on top of the sleeping bag all night.

Next morning we were up at 6 a.m. and away by 7. Our destination was Velella Peak. Already the day was warming up and once we were on the ridge we knew there wouldn't be much shade throughout the day – we would just have to deal with it and remain well hydrated. Ahead of us was a horseshoe shaped ridge that we had to follow to get to Velella Peak and a couple of saddles that we had to descend to. After traveling along the ridge northeast of Paradise Lake for two hours we had to drop down to the head of Bulson Creek and then over another small hump and then down to a saddle between Bulson Creek and Thunderbird Creek. It was then a 670 metre climb up the Southeast Ridge to the top of Velella. By now the heat was getting to Val and she wasn't feeling too good but after a dip in one of the tarns on the ridge she felt somewhat revived and managed to continue on. Just below the summit of Velella we climbed a short gully into a notch then deeked around onto the west side and up to the summit. It was 1:15 so we knew that it was going to be a long day, in the sun, to get back to camp.

On the summit we found a manmade cairn and inside the cairn we found a summit register. After opening the register we drained the water out and found only one entry in the book and that was from July 6, 1985, when Eppler, Macdonald et al had made the first ascent of the peak. It had taken just over twenty-four years for us to make the second ascent of the mountain; however, hopefully it won't take that long again for the next ascent. As usual the views were incredible as we were seeing everything from a different angle including Nine Peaks.

The return trip to camp was laborious especially for Val as she was really feeling the heat now but she was determined to keep moving. Later Frank admitted that he was struggling with the heat but didn't say anything. Eventually we arrived back in camp after twelve hours and the first thing we did was jump in the pond to cool off. We didn't have a thermometer with us but the temperature all day had to be in the mid 30's. By the time we crawled into the sauna, I mean tents, we were all feeling quite drained from the heat.

Since the sun didn't hit us early in the morning we decided to take things a bit easy in the morning. Originally our plan was to climb Little Eiger on the second day but instead

we chose to climb Rhino Peak. We knew that to climb Little Eiger would be another long day whereas Rhino Peak was much closer and therefore wouldn't be such a strenuous day. This would allow us, especially Val, time to recover somewhat before tackling Little Eiger the following day.

After having an easy morning we hiked back down the slope to the meadow below then we picked a line through the bush and angled up to the Northeast Ridge of Rhino Peak. It was another hot day and felt warmer than the day before, so by the time we reached the ridge Val was again feeling bad and just wanted to curl up in the shade. With reluctance this is what she did while Frank and I then continued up the ridge to the top of Rhino Peak. From the top of Rhino Peak we descended the ridge for a few minutes and then scrambled up the Rhino's Horn. Later, in an exchange of emails with Rob Macdonald, I tried to figure out how they came about calling it Rhino Peak as there was no evidence of Rhino fossils in the rock. Rob said that it was Rick Eppler who gave the peak its name and that he could see the outline of a Rhino's head and horn. It takes a bit of imagining but so be it! In the emails I also asked about Velella and Rob wrote: "I have a picture at home somewhere of Velella taken from somewhere on the traverse from Mount Tom Taylor to Mariner Mountain where the peak looks almost perfectly like a "by the wind sailor" [jellyfish] - and since it was from Mariner that we were viewing it, Velella seemed highly appropriate". It appears that Rob has a vivid imagination as well (chortle)! As for Little Eiger, at least all three of us could see a realistic resemblance to the famed Eiger Mountain in Switzerland.

Val struggled back to camp and only just managed to get her boots off before she slumped into the pond but this time it didn't feel like it was having the desired affect she was seeking. The shade the umbrella offered while propped above her head didn't alleviate the heat that everything around the camp appeared to be exuding (and then there was still the bugs)! At the same time the interior of the tent felt like the inside of a microwave oven so we all felt like we were slowly cooking from the inside out. For the rest of the afternoon/evening we behaved like sloths and the only time our heart rate went up was when we had to go and fill our water bottles up from the diminishing trickle. That night we set our alarm for 5 a.m. as we wanted to get away while the temperatures were a bit cooler in the morning.

The next morning we all made our way up onto the ridge but Val very quickly realized that she would not be able to keep going all day as she was still feeling exhausted so she resigned herself to spending the day around camp. Frank and I continued along the ridge until we came to a draw that angled down for 400 metres to the saddle at the head of the Kennedy River. A rocky bench then led us across to the confusing bluff system that we had to find a way through to the upper aspect of Little Eiger. Two days ago we had eyed up a



Val Wootton with Velella Peak prominent in the background PHOTO: LINDSAY ELMS

couple of different options for getting through the bluffs but know that we were rubbing our noses up against them the direct route seemed the most feasible. In a couple of places the bush got steep and the rock ribs starting getting a little more exposed but it always eased off just when it needed to. Two snow-patches help orientate us while amongst the bluffs and eventually we found ourselves on a heather bench that angled up onto the West Ridge. Here we had a first break at a pond and took on some much needed water. Again the temperatures felt as if it had jacked up another couple of degrees from the last two days.

For the next half an hour travel was easy and we angled up the face to the ridge where it steepened before the final headwall. This was the wall that looked like a miniature Eiger North Face hence the name Little Eiger. From the ridge we looked over the back hoping to see an easy route to the top but we soon saw that this route was not an option. We would have to cross the snowfields of the North Face and then deek around onto the North Ridge or around the back of that and find a way up. Once at the base of the North Ridge we could see that this ridge was too steep for us so we angled around onto the scree slopes under the eastern aspect. This side of the mountain was quite different from the side we had been viewing and was very loose and broken. The rock didn't look very appealing but dividing the wall was a steep vegetated gully that appeared as if it went up to the summit ridge. At the bottom of it we dropped our packs and began scrambling up. In a couple of places we had to make a few tenuous moves but nothing too

extreme. I don't think we un-crossed our fingers the whole way up. After pulling up on a few stunted alders the angled eased off and we stepped onto the summit ridge. Five minutes later we were standing on the summit taking in the 360 degree view. There was no cairn and no sign of anyone having been on the top. This was one summit that I had beaten Eppler and Macdonald to the top of so Frank and I could probably claim a first ascent.

After half an hour on the summit Frank and I tore ourselves away and began the descent. Again a few tricky moves in a couple of places but we were soon back at our packs. We made short work of the snowfield and were soon back at the pond where we had taken our first break. Since it was noon we decided it was a good time to have our lunch and inject some energy into our veins. The heat was sapping our reserves but we were driven to get back to camp

where we could savor the climb over a cup-a-tea and a dip in the pond. We managed to find our way down the bluffs without too much trouble and were soon on the rocky bench ready to make the ascent up to the ridge. Two half hour stints with a ten minute cool down in between put us on the ridge and then another twenty minutes to where we could look down upon the tents and see Val sitting in the pond. After nine hours we were back at camp pumped at having achieved all our objectives. Although we had a few more hours of sitting in the sun at least there was a faint whiff of a breeze that would blow the bugs away and let us have a little peace for a few minutes.

That evening the inside of the tent felt like the inside of a Kangaroo's pouch! For the life of me I couldn't understand why we carried our sleeping bags up the mountain!

The last morning saw us moving relatively slowly but then we didn't need to rush as we had plenty of time to make our way back down to Paradise Lake for a swim and the pick-up at 2 p.m.. Later that afternoon back in Tofino we were told that it had been a record 41 degrees in Port Alberni and that there were a number of forest fires burning on the island but we just found a nice little restaurant with air-conditioning where we had a cold beer to cool our blood down. Nice!

Participants: Frank Wille Jr., Val Wootton and Lindsay Elms

The primary role of the 298.6 hectare **Tranquil Creek Provincial Park** is to protect a scenic and pristine high elevation sub alpine lake and the steep forested slopes and alpine

meadows that surround it. The park encompasses Paradise Lake and the headwaters of a tributary to Tranquil Creek, which drains into the north side of Tofino Inlet eight kilometres downstream. Unfortunately Velella Peak and Little Eiger are not incorporated in the park but Rhino Peak is. Tranquil Creek is an important drainage for spawning salmon, especially chinook, and the Paradise tributary is important for Dolly Varden char. The park has a secondary role which is to provide wilderness recreation opportunities in the form of rustic camping, hiking, swimming, climbing and nature appreciation. The park, which was established in 2003, is in a remote road less area with no facilities provided. Access is limited to foot (very difficult) or air.

Mt. Alston

Tony Vaughn
July 28

It's a dark and stormy night; as I sit looking out of the window at a wet and miserable evening, thinking back a mere four months ago. At how hot it had been when Martin Smith and I climbed Mt. Alston.

Mt. Alston is a 1,743m (5,720ft) peak, located north of Gold River, between the Nimkish Valley and the headwaters of the White River. It is easily reached driving north from Gold River on the Nimkish Main, then taking Alston Road and driving as high as possible on the SW ridge. If this sounds just like city driving, don't be fooled, you need good clearance and four wheel drive to get up Alston Road.

The weather was remarkably hot the week we climbed in this area, temperatures in the mid thirties. We had just climbed Sutton peak and realized how enervating and exhausting it was to put in a 12 hour day above tree line with ambient temperatures this high.

Having no idea what the route was like on Alston or how long it would take us. We decided on an early start the next day to avoid the heat and get as high as possible before the sun reached us.

The previous day we had driven the logging roads trying to get as high as possible on the SW ridge. After a couple of roads to nowhere we settled on a road at 1,000m on the SE flank of the mountain and concluded that that was as good as it was going to get. So we settled in for an early night and an early start the next morning. As dinner was cooking Martin went for a stroll along the road, to look for a suitable elk trail that would get us up through the logging slash, with the least amount of pain to the top of the SW ridge. While making his search he noticed a large pile of logging debris up above,



Martin Smith is framed by the ice cave on Mt. Alston PHOTO: TONY VAUGHN

which led him to believe there may be another road higher up. He was right; in fact there were two roads above us, one of which ended right on the SW ridge. Following our climb, later that day we checked out these roads, and sure enough it is possible with good clearance and four wheel drive to get within approximately 100 metres of the trees on the ridge top.

Next morning we rose at first light and headed up through the fireweed and logging slash, following good elk trails until we reached the ridge crest and entered the mature forest. To our surprise we came across a trail which we followed up to tree line. We first thought the trail was a well worn game trail, but on finding refuse further on we concluded it was probably a hunters trail. On leaving the trees we broke out into a spectacular hanging valley, a regular Shangri La, with Tarns, streams and waterfalls, at the head of which was the col between Alston and the Alston Fin.

To continue on up the SW ridge, as described in the guide book, looking decidedly more like the SW face to us, and more difficult than traversing across to the NW ridge and following it to the summit. So that was our route of choice, which put us on the top, without difficulty by 9 a.m., finding a collapsed cairn which we rebuilt and no summit register. Approximately 250 metres to the south and slightly lower we could see a surveyors tripod, having lots of time to spare we went over and confirmed that it was a survey marker.

On the way down from the summit we followed the NW ridge down to the col between Alston and The Fin. Here we found a fantastic ice cave, formed by a stream leaving the col and flowing through the snow field on the North side of Alston. It is in fact the headwaters of one of the tributaries leading into the White River. Sometime was spent here cool-

ing off in the cave and exploring the hanging valley. It was here we found evidence of hunting activity, on the hillside overlooking the valley(toilet paper and food cans) an ideal spot to sit and wait for game to come to the tarns to drink.

We were back at the vehicle by 1 p.m. after an uneventful hike out, and back in Gold River by 3 p.m. for coffee and apple pie a la mode in 36 degree heat.

Participants: Martin Smith and Tony Vaughn

El Piveto Yellow-jackets, Guardians Of The Peaks

Peter Rothermel
July 31-Aug 3

I guess because it's such an obscure peak, it's just not on many climbers radar, yet El Piveto Mountain was on both Tom Carter's and my own tick lists, so when Tom put it on the club schedule, I was in. There was only one other taker, Simon Bolger, who was visiting from Ireland and thought he'd like to try some Island mountain climbing. We were going to a peak called El Piveto... Translated as "The Middle"... Ya, the middle of nowhere! Well, Simon got a pretty good introduction to Island mountaineering on this trip.

We left from Qualicum Beach just after noon and reached the Elk River trail head at about 3:30 and hiked along in that "ERT trance" state of mind that one comes to acquire after having been up that trail a dozen or more times. The only thing of note to wake us from our "trance", other than the beauty of the place, were the yellow-jackets. Both Tom and Simon got stung several times each and I commented how lucky I was to have not got stung this year. I should know better than to say something like that aloud and anger the deities. After some hours, we arrived at the upper gravel flats camp and stayed the night.

The next day we headed up river and soon were in the East Branch of the Elk River. The usual pile of logs deposited by past winters avalanches were all swept downstream, making the dry riverbed an easy hike to the patch of big trees. Past there is the big slide alder area, "Hells Kitchen" and we made it through okay, but a couple we met that were looking for their way through, turned back, rather than follow us. There's one spot further along in the forest where it gets a bit steep and you ascend two tiers of tree roots, much like going up a couple of ladders. Nearly at the top rung of this root system is where I finally met Ms Yellow-jacket, who stung me on my forehead. I had to sprint up the last metre, right over top of the nest and got stung several more times on my legs.

It's pretty hard to run up a ladder with a 50 pound pack on, but stinging wasps are a good incentive.

We reached the Elk Pass by about noon and set up our camp by one of the tarns. Tom's plan was to arrive early enough to make a quick dash to the summit of Slocomb and that's what he and Simon did. I had already been up that peak a few years before and opted out to stay in camp and rest up for the next day. Once and a while, I do the right thing and this was one of those rare times.

That evening we were talking about wasps and I remarked that while they must have a place in the order of living things, it's hard to not wish them all dead and extinct, while one is being stung. Yellow-jackets can be especially nasty, since they don't die after one sting, like bees do, but can sting repeatedly. Also the first stinging wasp sends a pheromone signal to the others to go on the attack. A thrashing human probably sends a pretty good signal too. As well, the queen is the only Mrs Wasp in the hive and Mr Wasps don't sting, so it's the Ms Wasps that defend the nest. They do serve us a purpose in that they prey on other insects that we might consider harmful, such as termites and carpenter ants. In turn, I suppose wasps are preyed upon by birds and bears for their larva. "At least", Tom said, "there are no yellow-jackets above treeline, in the open alpine." - as we swatted mosquitos and horse flies.

We were up early the next morning and hiking by 6:00. Our route took us up about 440m in elevation and around the south shoulder of Rambler Peak, then down about 320m to the Rambler/Cervus Col and back up about 280m to Cervus Peak and along it's ridge. There was a forest fire in the Wolf River Valley and the smoke was obscuring our view of our mountain goal. From there we had to drop down another 280m to the Cervus/ El Piveto Col to start our 560m ascent, with me getting stung again along the way, as we passed through a patch of yellow cedar forest.

Straight up from the col is a prominent bluffy forested ridge and an open apron to its right (South), leading to a snow filled basin, which we aimed for. Once there we had a choice of chimneys directly above us, taking us to the north end of the mountain, or a couple of gullies further to the south that would take us to the southern end of the mountain and its highest point. Of the two gullies, we chose the one on the climbers left and it turned out to be a fairly easy scramble, that brought us out onto a plateau and the summit point. Tom was a few steps ahead of me and when I reached him, he said, "You won't believe it, but there's a yellow-jacket nest in the summit cairn." Sure enough, the little buggers were swarming all around. Don't they realize that they don't live in the open alpine? Maybe they really are the "Guardians Of The Peaks!"

I was resigned to just not get to read the summit register, but Tom braved it up and tiptoed over and snatched the tube.



A tired Tom Carter on the summit of El Piveto PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

Inside were Sandy Briggs 1989 note book, with about a half a dozen other summiting notes, including Phil Stone, Charles Turner, Lindsay Elms, some Heathens and the Willie brothers. We replaced the old tube with a more durable one, including a waterproof book and put the old book inside, since it was still in good shape. Tom somehow got the tube back into the cairn without getting stung.

Time to head back and do the 1,600m of elevation loss and gain all over again. What a brutal way to end a day. At camp, after a 12 hour day, a tarn never looked so good to jump in to. Col camp to summit of El Piveto about 7 hours, summit back to camp about 5 hours. Getting into my sleeping bag and having dinner in bed was blissful.

Tom needed to catch a ferry the next day and was going to scoot out fast. We figured that if we were down to the vehicle by noon, he would make his connection. I told Tom that if I wasn't down in time to just leave and I'd hitch hike home. We left at 6:00 that morning and I lost sight of Tom and Simon down where the forest began and where the yellow-jacket gauntlet began. This time I had my own antenna tuned in. I knew where the top of the ladder nest was and spotted two other places where bits of paper nest were on the ground and so avoided their underground nests. Ever notice when there's a broken up paper nest on the ground, that there's often a nest underground? Is it part of the wasps life cycle to transition from a paper to a ground nest? Or are ground wasps predators of paper wasps? Still I did get one more sting on the way out. Score - yellow-jackets 7/ Peter zero.

I got out at about 12:20 and missed Tom, but we pre-arranged for him to leave my change of clothes stashed behind the outhouse. After rinsing off with a couple of litres of water, I changed into my clean clothes, so I'd be presentable

for hitching a ride, which I hadn't done since I was in my twenties - hitch hiking that is, not bathing. As I exited the outhouse there was a young woman waiting her turn. She asked, "Aren't you Peter? I'm Katrina, an ACC member and I've been on a couple of your past trips." She had just come back from a Golden Hinde trip, with a group of friends and was passing right by my place in Qualicum. So it was a good ending for a damn tough trip.

Participants: Tom Carter, Simon Bolger and Peter Rothermel

East Face of Mount Colonel Foster Northeast Peak Buttress - 5.9

John Waters
August 5 and 17

First Attempt, August 5

Mike and I had not visited the Colonel for three years and thought if we went back we may as well put up a new route. There are still many good lines to be climbed on the East Face, so after inspecting our many photos we decided to try a new route up a steep buttress on the Northeast Peak. A forest fire about 10 kilometres east of Mount Colonel Foster in the Wolf River valley had been burning for a few weeks and the smoke was so thick that Kings Peak was not visible from the highway. The four hour hike in was uneventful except for a close encounter with a young black bear peering though the thorny leaves of some devil's club and salmon berry. We were happy to find that there was just (only) a haze of smoke up at Landslide Lake.

We awoke early and started to climb easy rock (3rd class) up the lower slopes of the Northwest Peak to the expected start of our new route just above a small snow patch. Rene Monjo and I (John) had previously climbed a new route up the Northwest Peak in August 2003 so we were familiar with the initial section. Looking up, the route appeared to get steeper and steeper the closer we got. By the time we reached the small snow patch the route seemed too steep, and without much discussion we decided that it was not going to get climbed that day. We were both unmotivated and a little intimidated after having been absent from the 'Colonel' for a few years. We decided to 'do a recce' and check out higher sections of our route by continuing up the fairly easy rock on the Northwest Peak route. We scrambled to about 1,400m where there is a good vantage point adjacent to the proposed line. After contemplating the new route at length, we determined that it really would be climbable, but with not enough time remaining in the day we headed back down. Not to write the whole day off

we climbed a two pitch crack route (5.10-) at the base of the North Tower (East Face). The rest of the day was spent looking through binoculars and planning where the route would go, and we promised to ourselves to return as soon as we could. On the following day before hiking out we climbed to the top of the steep ridge east of Foster Lake to get better views and scope out more lines on the East Face.

Participants: John and Mike Waters

First Ascent, August 17

A couple of weeks later we found ourselves once again on the trail to Mount Colonel Foster. We had recruited Grant McCartney to help us on our new route. We all had a good night's rest and were up at 5 a.m. to start the new route. We were confident everything would work this time. The snowfield at the base was quite hard, so for the first time (ever?) we needed crampons to reach the rock on the 'Colonel.' We scrambled up easy 3rd class rock on the Northwest Peak route to just above the small snow patch on the left side of the gully. John tied in and climbed a steep right-slanting flake and then traversed leftward away from the gully and onto the ramp (5.9). We put the ropes away and continued scrambling (~250m) on fine rock up the right-trending ramp to the big ledge system (some steep 5.6, lots of 4th). With some exposure we traversed left 30m on ledges to a nice tree platform below the steep headwall (alt. 1,600m). It was 9 a.m. and we felt confident that we would have time to make the summit unless the next 400m became very difficult. We scrambled up about 50m to the short chimney and obvious crack system that split the upper buttress. We roped up and got ready for what we suspected would be the most challenging part of the route. Mike led up the steep chimney that is easier than it looks and continued up a steep but thankfully short face to the main cracks/grooves of the buttress. The next two pitches climbed straight up steep cracks/grooves (5.9) toward the boomerang-shaped lichen patch on the roof above. This is some of the most sustained climbing we have done on Mount Colonel Foster. Solid rock, good gear and nice big belay ledges. We belayed two easier pitches up cracks and finished on an easy gully to a wide right-slanting ledge. A short section (50m) of 3rd class led to a perfect corner. John led the last roped pitch up the fun corner to a small notch on the top of the buttress. We put the ropes away and traversed left for about 25m then finish up 3rd class rock to the top of the Northeast Peak. Nine hours from Foster Lake to Northeast Peak! To our surprise we spotted two climbers on the Northwest Peak. This was the first time we have ever seen other climbers on the mountain. After John yelled a big hello to the fellow climbers, they gave us a greeting and asked if we had done the traverse and where they should be rappelling? We tried with difficulty to give them a short

answer then waved good bye. Hopefully they would figure it out and make it down safely! Having traversed the mountain a few times from different peaks we moved quickly across to the main summit. We signed the summit register, basked in the sun and rested our legs for the descent. We continued south along the precarious and exposed ridge then down to the south col. We wobbled down the main gully toward Foster Lake. Our normal glissade down the snow slope was cut short due to a huge crevasse which looked to have recently opened. Finally, back at camp, we could each have a swig of the celebratory whiskey Grant had brought for the occasion. Terrible stuff, really! It took us fifteen hours for the round trip. We lazed around the stove, told climbing stories and proceeded to eat all our food except a few packs of oatmeal for the morning. Had the climbers on the traverse made it down already and past our camp, or were they somewhere up on the 'Colonel.' Later that evening while we were recuperating, our questions were answered when two tired but excited climbers arrived. They made it down just as the last light seeped from the evening sky. They had bivied the previous night near the summit of Mount Colonel Foster and were continuing down to there main camp at the gravel flats. On this successful trip we spied some more lines up the East Face that need to be climbed. We will return for further adventures on Mount Colonel Foster!

Participants: John and Mike Waters, Grant McCartney

Getting Lucky on Elkhorn

Mike Springer

August 21-22

My first mistake was driving up Friday afternoon intending on having a leisurely evening at the lake. My second mistake was opening up the twelve pack of lucky that I had brought for our victory drink when we got out. Never, I mean never try to hike up Elkhorn with a Lucky hangover. I had forgotten how nasty the trail was since I'd climbed Elkhorn ten years before. It's pretty unrelenting especially when you're wishing you were dead. After a lot of moaning and groaning we reached our camp up on the rocky plateau. Victoria Peak and Warden were clearly visible and there were some impressive views of Mount Colonel Foster on the way up. The weather did its usual thing; rain, clear spot, overcast more rain typical Vancouver Island mountain weather.

Up and at 'em at around 5 a.m. and feeling 100% better! The trail to the scree slopes is well defined and we made good time until I led the group a little too far up one gully. Back down we went where I found my obvious mistake. We were

on the usual route now as I recognized the features like the big chock stone and the tunnel going up. It was at about this time that we were having some problems with rock fall. It was a constant barrage from above and from other climbers. As we were coming up the second to last hump to get onto the summit block, my worst fears were realized. One of the team members loosened a rock the size of an engine block and I watched it roll down into the group. Luckily we were bunched up and the rock only rolled a few metres before hitting Dave square in the leg and then rolling not as violently into Linda. My first thoughts were broken leg, then evac, then search and rescue and then 442 squadron. Luckily Dave is a tough guy and he came away with only superficial cuts and scrapes. Hopefully no long lasting damage other than an irrational fear of elk horns - the ACC pays for therapy right?



The group bunches up in a rocky gully on Elkhorn PHOTO: MIKE SPRINGER

Needless to say our next move was to head down and get out of there in case Dave had some hidden damages to tendons or ligaments. Lucky on Elkhorn means that if that rock had picked up a little more speed someone could have been seriously hurt. We were lucky we were travelling in a tight group rather than spread out.

We'll be back Elkhorn, we'll be back.

Participants: Dave *I'm a Stud* Nichols, Mark *The Steel Guy* Thibideau, Peggy *Smiley* Taylor, Linda *Shake-It-Baby* Berube, Mike *Lucky* Springer, and The Johns

Tzela Peak: Is it Heart or just Hard?

Peter Rothermel

August 22 -27

Tzela Peak is a rarely climbed mountain, in the Cliffe Glacier area. Access to this area is kind of tough, from all points of the compass, Comox Glacier, Rees Ridge, Flower Ridge, Shepherd Ridge and Ash River. Tzela is said to be a First Nations word, meaning "heart", as the namesake lake is Heart-shaped. Tak Ogasawara and I both having been up

the Red Pillar, Argus Mountain and Mount Harmston in the past, had this last peak in the area on our tick lists.

Tak and I chose to go in from the south and on our first day paddled up Oshinow Lake, which is an easy paddle of about forty-five minutes in calm weather. At the end of the lake were a couple of canoes and no sooner had we stashed our own boat and started hiking, when we ran into Henrik Hinkkala and his brother Andreas, who were just returning from Mount Harmston. The last few years or so, Henrik has steadily been ticking off Island Qualifiers, including a traverse of Mount Colonel Foster. Having read many of each others accounts in Bivouac, an online mountaineering forum, it was nice to finally meet him face to face. A few minutes hiking further, we ran into Dave Campbell and Tim Turray, who were returning from climbing Harmston, Argus and Red Pillar, but I'll let them tell their own story. I know them both through the VI Section of the ACC and Dave is also racking up IQ's. Running into this many people on this fairly remote route was tantamount to a traffic jamb, but it was sure nice to get first hand route conditions. Our most recent reports were that there was a lot of windthrow across the trail, making passage tedious.- and it was.- but not as bad as I had anticipated.

My first trip into this area was in 2004, on a route pioneered by Steve Rogers. This was before the trail had been worked on by volunteers from Port Alberni. Unknown to these trail builders, the area had been changed from a Wilderness Recreation zone, to Wilderness Conservation zone, without consideration or consultation with the local area people. When BC Parks found out about the trail work, they shut it down. With Wilderness Recreation Zoning, trail building is not allowed. It's a shame that this trail couldn't be kept up in my opinion. It is the gateway to access many summits and through hike traverses, and represents the only reasonable access to Strathcona Park from the South.

Once we broke out above tree line and were on the Southeast Ridge of The Red Pillar, we searched out the nearest water and set up camp. Dave had told us of a better site and tarn further up the ridge on the 1,712m bump's northeast side, but after five and a half hours of steep forest hiking with about 1,000m elevation gain, with heavy packs, we were knackered.

If you run into bad weather on this ridge, another option might be to drop down to Esther Lake. There appeared to be a cairned route off the ridge, leading to the northeast side of the lake, but would require about a 200m elevation loss.

On our second day, we packed up camp and headed for the col between Harmston and Tzela, hoping that there would be water to be found, when we arrived. From our Ridge Camp we continued up the ridge, dropping to a col before The Red Pillar and scaring up a bear that was traversing through the pass. The bruin didn't hesitate and never



Seldom visited Tzela Peak PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

stopped running until it was around the corner and out of sight. A scared bear is a good thing and will help keep itself safe from human problems. We continued on Steve's original 1,800m contour route until we reached the west shoulder of The Red Pillar, where there's a beautiful overview of Tzela Lake, Cliffe Glacier, Tzela Peak, Harmston and Argus.

We dropped down to the Cliffe Glacier and of the three other trips I have done to this area, I had never seen the crevasses so opened up. With this past winters snowpack so thin, with a low water equivalent and a long hot summer on top of that, the glacier was bare bones. Crossing from the upper to the lower glacier, we realized they were separated by rock and running water. Still we encountered no problems getting off the upper or getting onto the lower glaciers. The large crevasses and moulins were easy to avoid and work our way around.

From the toe of the glacier, we gained some glacier-polished rock ledges that led upwards to our Col Camp, between Tzela and Harmston, at about 1,600m elevation. From our Ridge Camp to our Col Camp, it took about seven hours of travel. Keep in mind, a younger party would likely shave some time off of our numbers.

We were happy to note that there were tarns and good tenting spots at the col and the tarn in the photo that Lindsay Elms took from Harmston's summit and sent me, was actually more like a glacier fed lake, but not easy to camp along side. The tarns and gravelly area, at the low spot at the col where we set up our tent at were more than adequate, but later we discovered a better spot on the first bump above and west towards Tzela Peak from the col. It has twin tarns and a heathery flat spot big enough for a tent and some scrub trees to break the wind. An added bonus is that it gets morning sun about an hour earlier than does the col.

I had a fitful sleep, worrying that our good weather luck had run out, while the rain drummed down on our tent all night long, but on day three we woke to mostly sunny skies with the odd low cloud scudding through.

Knowing that the mountain wasn't technical and that we only had about 300m of elevation to climb, we lazed around a bit in the morning, waiting for the clouds to dissipate. At about 10:00 we left camp and were on the summit by 1:30. Sounds easy? It wasn't! Usually mountain routes look steeper and more difficult from a distance, than when one is nose to rock. Tzela struck me as just the opposite. Maybe it's not "heart" mountain, but rather "hard" mountain!

We went over a few unexpected bumps gaining and losing elevation, that we might have more easily traversed around. As Sandy Briggs once noted, "It's not the lines on the topo that count so much as what's in between them!" Our easy looking Southeast Ridge became a bit of a route finding problem, as the rock steepened to a grippy angle, while we tried different ledges, finally getting it right. (Note: there are two pieces of yellow flagging that we couldn't retrieve on our return. If you find them, please take them down and try another route. The right route is very close by.) Finally around the corner and - a nasty set of gullies to pick from. Enny, meeny, miney, moe? Just look for the one that has the deer tracks in it. This is an ungulate that can do 4th class moves. Above the chimney is flat ground between the southerly false summit and the northerly main summit. Still, to reach the main summit there is an exposed low 5th class step of maybe 4m and after follows another exposed 4th class step of about 10m. Not being a rock jock, I managed to grovel and whimper my way up, but it wasn't a pretty picture. Beyond that you are on a broad summit, but mark your return route, as it's easy to lose your bearings of where to drop off on this convoluted peak.

We reached the summit cairn, but the register was a half a cream cheese container, brittle and broken from UV degradation and there was no register book to be found. I placed a new PVC tube and waterproof book and Tak and I signed in.

We retreated to a windless hollow and ate lunch. It got chilly and Tak noted that a big black rain cloud was approaching. As we packed up it started to rain and then hail and I was thinking of the 4th and 5th class down climbing we would need to do on wet rock.

Looking for our exit point, we got a bit confused, because we hadn't clearly marked where we topped out. Looking downside everything looked like a sheer drop. Finally we found the route and very carefully down-climbed on wet holds. Past this white knuckle bit we still had to get down the chimney and find our ledges down. Tak, with a bit of exploring, found a good way down the ledges, as the rain finally quit and the sun broke out. Our ascent time was about three



Cliffe Glacier revealed PHOTO: PETER ROTHERMEL

and a half hours and our descent time was about two hours, so we still had a relaxing evening, with plenty of time to eat and rehydrate.

Day four, we left our Col Camp a bit after 9:00 and arrived at the lower glacier a little after 10:00. We traversed up the glacier and were at The Red Pillar shoulder by 12:20 for lunch. Finally by about 4:30, we were back at our Ridge Camp. That night it rained a bit off and on, but our good weather held.

Our final day five, we leisurely had breakfast and packed up. With my pack being about ten pounds lighter, it felt like it was a day pack.- at first. We spent about an hour looking for the right way downslope and backtracking upslope. Tak and I argued about what to do, but in the end we eventually found the right route down and after a very tiring four hours hike downslope and through the blow downs, we reached the lake and did the forty-five minute paddle back to the truck.

I have to acknowledge that without the adventurous spirit of getting to obscure peaks and the very patient attitude that my good friend Tak takes towards me, I would likely never get to half of the summits that I do.

Participants: Tak Ogasawara and Peter Rothermel

The Lady in the Clouds

Kent Krauza

August 29-30

"She had many admirable qualities, which were none the less admirable being hidden from the casual view."

– Burley, expedition member,

The Ascent of Rum Doodle, by W.E. Bowman.

While this classic example of dry British wit from 'The Ascent of Rum Doodle' was a climber describing his fiancée, it could also be applied to the hidden charms of Mount Schoen. As the northernmost 6,000 footer on Vancouver Island, Mount Schoen doesn't get many suitors. She sits alone in the clouds, while her more popular sibling Schoen Lake receives the affections of hundreds of fishermen every year. Once you lay eyes on her spectacular form, however, you will fall under her spell.

In the summer of 2008, Rob Ciarniello and I had fleeting glimpses of Mount Schoen from the cloud covered summit of Mount Sutton. Obscured and from a distance, she did not impress, but there was something captivating about her silhouette. We simply had to meet her.

Schoen Lake Park was established as a Class A park in 1977, encompassing Schoen Lake, Mount Schoen and the Nisnak Lake and Meadows and surrounding areas. Back in the 1920's and 1930's, a German trapper named Otto Schoen trapped in the area, and the mountain, lake and Provincial Park were named after him. Access to the mountain was traditionally from the east via the upper Adam Road, but in the late 1980's, Canfor was granted a Park Use Permit to construct a road along Schoen Lake and Schoen Creek to gain access to the timber in the upper Schoen Creek drainage. More recently, this road was extended to the east side of Schoen Creek, along the flanks of Mount Adam, creating a much faster alternate access to Mount Schoen. In August 2009, based mostly on a trip report from Islandhikes.com, we chose this approach for our courtship with the Lady in the Clouds.

It is a long and familiar drive for many Vancouver Island mountaineers to access the peaks that lie beyond Campbell River on Highway 19. To access Mount Schoen via the South Ridge/Schoen Creek approach, drive approximately 120 kilometres north of Campbell River and turn left onto Nimpkish Main (signage for Schoen Lake Provincial Park and Mount Cain Ski Hill). After less than one kilometre, stay to the right at an intersection (do not take the road to Schoen Lake Campground) and cross the Davie River. Pass Mud Lake on your left, then shortly after take a connector road on



Kent Krauza on Mt. Schoen PHOTO: ROB CIARNIELLO

the left, just before you reach Lower Klalakama Lake. This connector is well signed, indicating access to Schoen Road, which will eventually lead to the trailhead. Follow Schoen Road for about 18 kilometres, at which time Schoen Lake will appear on your left. The road will veer right and go up the Schoen Creek valley. On the opposite side of the valley, you will see a large boulder slide. Take a small branch road that drops into the middle of the valley, cross the creek and double back heading north until you are directly under the slide. Park here (preferably not in the slide path!)

The logging roads are all fairly clear but heavily potholed, demanding a slow speed. At one point, my ever faithful Toyota Tacoma began to sputter and spurt, but a quick inspection under the hood revealed it was nothing more than the air intake duct bouncing loose from the aforementioned potholes. Having reattached the duct and tightened the hose clamp, we continued bouncing down the dusty road, albeit at an even slower pace.

As we looked across the valley at the 1,000m boulder slide, we wondered if it might not be easier to climb up the obvious gulley to the left that leads directly into the Mount Schoen-Mount Adam Col. After weighing our options, we chose to take the forest just to the climber's right of the gulley. We planned to hike up the steep forest until we were above the steep headwall a third of the way up the gulley, then cut into the gulley and follow it up directly into the col.

After crossing a small clearcut slash, we entered the very steep forest. Although there were signs of heli-logging on the steep side slope, the forest was generally clear of

undergrowth. The higher up we went, the steeper it got, and it was becoming obvious that the headwall we saw in the open gulley likely extended into the forest, as well. After some 4th class scrambling on mossy bluffs, we emerged onto a plateau in the forest. We deduced that we were likely now above the cliffl portion of the gulley, so we headed north towards the gulley clearing. We emerged from the forest to find that we were indeed above the headwall, but the gulley was badly choked with snags and slide debris. We watered up in the gulley and headed for the far (north) side of the gulley, as the going looked far better. The north side of the gulley was indeed much easier, and we made good time heading up the forest slopes, finally entering the gulley when we reached the tree line. A final push up the heart of the gulley brought us to the Mount

Schoen-Mount Adam Col.

It took us three and a half hours to ascend 2,800 vertical feet and reach the col using our route, with full overnight packs. Having never taken the boulder slide approach, we cannot compare the two. The gulley is a more direct route than the boulder slide, which requires climbing to the top of a sub-peak of Mount Adam, then descending down into the col, however our route involved some dicey work on moss covered bluffs and scrambling our way across the slide debris in the gulley. Pick your poison. Either way, like some over-protective father, the approach will try to discourage you from reaching the object of your desires.

The col itself makes a picturesque campsite. We had the luxury of a soft grassy area for the tent, and a good water source. By the look of it, the col could also be accessed from the Nisnak Meadows side, and the summit register later confirmed previous parties had done just that.

The next morning was brisk and clear. We began hiking at 7 a.m., heading up the narrow foot of the South Ridge. We immediately encountered a rock band (no, AC/DC have not become alpinists, although come to think of it, wouldn't it be cool to see Aerosmith on Arrowsmith?) Angling right along the steep ledge at the base of the bluff, we eventually found a weakness in the rock band and scrambled up and left to the ridge crest. The ridge opens up into a small meadow, above which looms a second, much larger set of bluffs. After exploring several possibilities, the easier going was found to the right, with a series of benches and gullies leading to the top, just below the South Summit. At this point, a full and

unobstructed view of Mount Schoen and the South Ridge approach can be seen. The ridge is boomerang shaped, wrapping around the East Cirque, dropping in elevation to a col just at the foot of the main summit.

Being able to see the full length of the South Ridge allowed us to spy out a line. Island Alpine suggests dropping onto the snowfield in the East Cirque to bypass some of the small pinnacles along the ridge crest. We decided to stick to the ridge crest, and were very happy we did. With some minimal exposure and fun moves on nothing harder than 4th class rock, we made our way along the South Ridge. The view down into the East Cirque of Mount Schoen is nothing short of breathtaking. It is of a similar scale to the North Cirque on Big Interior Mountain, however it is almost completely devoid of snow. The evidence of ancient glaciation, numerous waterfalls and a large volcanic cone make for a spectacular alpine situation. The beauty of Nisnak Meadows as a backdrop just added to the scene. The view to the west was also impressive, as the Schoen Lake valley had filled in with a morning fog, the top of which was highlighted by the orange glow of sunrise.

From the col at the base of the mountain, it is a short scramble on a series of ledges to the right leading to the surprisingly flat summit. The register indicates an average of less than one party per year. She is lonely, indeed. Looking back to the south, we were also able to see the haze hanging over Victoria and Warden Peaks, from the fires that were ravaging the forests around Gold River at the time. Thankfully, the air this far north was clean and pure. The summit also afforded us a better view of the impressive volcanic cone that stands near the north end of the cirque. It is similar in character to Warden Peak, and looks to have a number of interesting climbing lines. Has it been climbed? There's only one way to find out - next year!

Like a summer romance from our youth, our time at the summit with our Lady in the Clouds ended too soon. We had to get back to the trailhead and make the long drive home. We returned to the vehicle ten hours after we had begun hiking that morning. While this could be tackled as a long day trip, the long drive each way made us quite happy we took it as a more leisurely overnigher. Besides, nobody likes the "love 'em and leave 'em" type.

Participants: Rob Ciarniello and Kent Krauza

Mount Olsen and Mount Parsons

Lindsay Elms

September 27-28

I hadn't consciously been thinking about where I would go climbing on my next days off as at this time of the year I usually wait until the last minute to see what the weather is doing and then decide. However, this time a story I heard on the CBC news after getting back from the Comox Glacier re-kindled a spark and got me thinking about a couple of peaks I hadn't climbed and were down (way down) on my "to-do" list. The story was about the retirement of the fourteen year veteran NHL'er "Olie the Goalie" (Olaf) Kolzig, the Washington Capitals goalkeeper. Olie was from Union Bay just south of Courtenay and his parents owned the store on the water front that I used to stop at occasionally when driving the old Island Highway. Living not far from Union Bay (Royston), periodically I would also go to the little pub in Union Bay when Olie was playing just to see how raucous the locals could get about their hometown hero. It got quite loud in there at times! Anyway, it was hearing his name that reminded me of Mount Olsen, a 1,200 and something metre peak between Port Alberni and Bamfield. I know it is a tenuous connection but if that is what it takes then so be it! The other peak I wanted to climb was Mount Parsons which is next to Mount Grey above the Franklyn Camp.

I had previously climbed on peaks near to both mountains: In July 2000 I had gone up the Corrigan Main and climbed Logan Peak and then later in the day McKinlay Peak on the McLaughlin Ridge off the Cameron Main. Then in October 2006 I had driven up Coleman Creek and climbed Mount Grey. Sasha Kubicek and Craig (Quagger) Wagnell had the previous year climbed Mount Grey and it was there account on www.islandhikes.com that I read and followed their route description. Quagger had also been in to Mount Olsen and written up his account on his website and the same goes for Mount Parsons. I re-read both of his accounts so on the morning of September 27 I had all the beta I needed.

The weather was great as I drove through Port Alberni and then down the gravel road towards Bamfield. I turned up the Corrigan Main and could see Mount Olsen looming up in front of me: The steep bluffs that from this angle made the mountain look unclimbable! Behind it was Logan Peak. For about 11 kilometres the road was in good shape then there was a 100 metre section that was very rough and bouldery but I managed to get through it without needing to go into 4 wheel drive. Another 1.5 kilometres and then I pulled over and parked. Although the road continued a little further I decided to walk it as it ascended towards the Olsen/Spencer Saddle below the

East Ridge of Mount Olsen. From the saddle it was only a 300 metre ascent to the top of the mountain. Although there were a few bluffs, none of them hindered my progress and in a short time I was on the summit sitting next to the summit cairn eating my lunch. In the adjacent valley (north branch of the Corrigan) chainsaws were screaming away cutting down trees as fast as they could. To the southwest I could see Mounts Grey and Parsons, to the south Logan Peak, and Mount Hooper to the east while to the north Mount Spencer and Mount McQuillan. In the distance I could see Clayoquot Sound. Although Mount Olsen is not a “big” mountain the feeling I got while climbing its slopes and while sitting on the summit was no different from any other mountain so it was all worth it.

The descent to my vehicle didn’t take long and I was soon driving back down the Corrigan Main. At the main road I turned left and headed towards Bamfield, however, just before entering the Franklyn Camp I turned left onto a logging road up Coleman Creek. About 1 kilometre in I took another right onto a road which was heavily overgrown but driveable. As I wasn’t concerned about the paint work I just let the broom and alders scrap against the vehicle; the benefit of having an older vehicle. At a large boulder on the road I turned around and parked. Beside the road was a huge pile of dry cedar off-cuts so when the sun disappeared behind the ridge I lit a fire and kept it stoked up until I climbed into my sleeping bag. That night the stars above shone as though they were competing with the glow from the fire!

In the morning there was no dew so the bushes that had overgrown the road were dry. The old road gradually deteriorated the further up it I walked to the point where for the last half a kilometre it was a mess. The surrounding second growth was about 3 metres high and would have been hell to climb through if I hadn’t found a small creekbed that I was able to crawl up. Once out of the new growth I found the old growth was very open and a breeze to climb through. I was aiming for the West Ridge of Mount Parsons but because the bush was so open there was no hurry for me to get across to it so I only gradually traversed over. At the point where I did hit the ridge I knew I was getting close to the summit because of the rock bluffs which I had seen from below. In a couple of places the ridge became steep and narrow but nothing too heinous. By the time I arrived on the summit, the visibility was zero (I had been watching the clouds and mist building up as the morning went on) so I didn’t hang around for long. I again found the descent easy because of the open bush and as I dropped down I broke through the clouds, however, it looked like rain was on its way so I didn’t linger. Once back at my vehicle I felt satisfied with the two ascents and happy to have climbed another couple of rarely climbed peaks. Time to head home!

Participant: Lindsay Elms

Steamboat Mountain and the Prow

Dave Campbell

October 3-4

“Your path to glory will be rocky, but rewarding”

– Golden Dragon Fortune Cookie Proverb
from the post-trip buffet in Port Alberni

I had put Steamboat Mountain on the club schedule a while ago, and after getting views over to the peak from Pogo Mountain the week previous, I was getting pretty excited about the trip. Steamboat Mountain is known for its collection of limestone karst topography, and it is an important area amongst the caving community. As such, access to the area is somewhat “secretive.” This theme came up a number of times throughout the trip—the access in, despite being an established “route”, is straight up, and a real bush thrash prompting many members of our party to jest “Is this place really going to get that popular?” Rumour is that approaches from other sides of the mountain are much worse.

We hiked up to a lake below Steamboat Mountain and set up camp. From camp we had a good view of both Steamboat Mountain and the Prow. Originally we had thought we would climb Steamboat on the same day as we went up, but the approach “thrash” took longer than expected, and we resigned ourselves to recce the approach to the alpine on the mountain. From the gully south of the peak we got up and close with karst features, which were quite spectacular.

An early start on the second day, and our scouting the previous day paid off as we made quick time to the gully and up into the alpine. As we neared the summit of Steamboat we worked our way out into a broad limestone karst area, with spectacular sinkholes and other features everywhere.

On the summit ridge, the wind was howling and we only spent a short bit of time on the summit. I brought along a summit register and we signed into it and put it in the cairn on top. We then hunkered down just below the summit to gain a bit of refuge from the wind.

From Steamboat we got a clear view along the ridge towards the Prow. It looked a bit more intimidating from this angle. Originally we figured it would take about an hour to get over to it from the main summit, but from our vantage point it looked really far away, and we thought it would take much longer.

Martin and Josh decided to relax and enjoy the sunshine on Steamboat, while the remaining three headed off for a look at the Prow. Surprising we found getting there much faster than anticipated, and in about twenty-five minutes we were at the top of a sub-bump next to the top of the Prow



The return trip from the Prow on Steamboat PHOTO: DAVE CAMPBELL

proper. From where we were at it looked like about half a rope length, first traversing out a “catwalk”, then down-climbing a ledge to a deep notch below the summit tower. From there it was a blank wall for about 6m before hitting another faint ledge system which brought you to the summit.

To be honest the blank face section looked a bit intimidating, as there was clearly no protection once you left the notch. “So I guess since I’m the trip leader this is my lead, right?” I ask the group. It was really an offer for someone else who might be keen to lead it to step up, but the response was “If you want it”. I guess I’m not getting out of this one.

We set up a belay in some cedar bushes, and I headed off along the catwalk, and then dropped down onto a ledge to the left. At this spot the slopes below are vertical, if not overhanging, and the exposure is fantastic. I then cross over to the right and down the ledge traverse, throwing in some gear for the benefit of protecting the traverse. At the notch, I am able to get in a nut (for my benefit this time) on the side of the notch I have just come down. I headed off up the blank section. A few faint features for the feet, and crimps for the hands-feels a bit like cragging at Crest Creek. In a few moves, the crux is over and I am up. I set up an anchor off a boulder, and belay the others over.

We spent a short bit on top, and then back down, lowering one at a time, and then climbing out from the notch.

We head back down to camp, and meet up with the others. The round trip took a little longer than anticipated and it is starting to become a long-ish day. Back down the route, more jokes about the future “popularity” of the bush thrash, and back to the cars just before sunset.

Participants: Tim Turay, Martin Hoffman, Josh Slakoff, Patrick Vincentine and Dave Campbell

Hannah Mountain

Lindsay Elms
October 5

For the second day in a row I was driving through Port Alberni and following McCoy Lake Road to the Stirling Arm of Sproat Lake. The day before I had hiked the Brook George Trail on Mount Klitsa with some friends while today, Quagger and I were heading to Hannah Mountain. Situated at the far end of the Nahmint River just a few kilometres before it flows into Alberni Inlet, Hannah Mountain has a spot height of 1,251 metres. Not all that big but because it is the highest in the area it would have a great view over the west coast. Quagger had climbed this peak once before and was more than happy to make a return trip.

Driving down beside the Alberni Inlet we encountered the morning fog which hadn’t lifted yet but by the time we reached Nahmint Bay we were out of the fog and in the sunshine. We then proceeded up the Nahmint River a few kilometres and at the first left cut down to the river and crossed it onto the Danylon Main. Ahead of us we could see Hannah Mountain with the repeater tower on the summit. We could also see roads up on the North Face of the mountain but Quagger thought vehicle access to them was not possible anymore because of a bridge washout lower down. We found the road Quagger had driven last time which was now heavily overgrown so we parked on a pull-out just off the mainline. As we stepped out of his vehicle we heard a faint hissing sound and after inspecting the tires we found a leak so we completed a quick repair job and hoped it would be still inflated when we got back.

Fortunately for us the bush was dry as we had quite a thrash for the next hour and a half. Instead of going to the washed out bridge (the way Quagger had gone previously) we followed the switch-backed road until we decided that by heading straight up through the thick undergrowth we could access the open roads higher up more quickly. In typical west coast fashion, the speed of our ascent decreased as the thickness of the bush increased. You’ve got to love west

coast bush! Anyway, Quagger made a couple of wise-cracks about the dense undergrowth (as we were untangling the bush from our packs and clothing) that made us laugh and point out that this wouldn't last forever and we would soon be in more "eco-friendly" territory. Twenty minutes later we stepped out onto a "highway."

Fresh vehicle tracks could be seen on the road which meant that we probably could have accessed this road from further down the Danylon Main. Dumb us for not checking! We continued up to the end of the road and then deeked into the bush ahead of us. In places we encountered thick undergrowth but in general travel was fairly easy. After about an hour we arrived below the headwall and veered around to our right. Last time Quagger was here this area was under several feet of snow and he remembered a steep gully that gave access to the ridge above. As we rounded the corner, ahead of us we could see the steep, narrow gully that now comprised of loose, friable rock. We scrambled up it one at a time and emerged on the ridge to the northwest of the summit. The summit was not far away and although we could have found an easier route around to our right we decided to climb up some low 5th class rock that looked and felt enticing. Fifteen minutes later we were standing beside the green repeater on the summit admiring the spectacular 3600 view, especially those out to the west coast. While looking down on the roads we had come up we could see a vehicle near the top of the good road which confirmed our suspicion that we could have driven higher if we had searched.

After 45 minutes on top we began the descent. At the gully we pulled out a rope that we found on the summit (it wasn't a "real" climbing rope but would suffice) and set up a quick rappel off a small but secure sapling. Although we could have easily down-climbed it we decided to use the rope just to speed our descent. Once below that we made quick progress down through the bush to the logging road. We followed the road down and could sense that we would have to walk and extra 4 or 5 kilometres but we decided it beat thrashing through the bush. It probably would add an extra half an hour to our return time! As we descended the vehicle we had seen from above came by and offered us a lift. As we jumped in the rear box we saw two shotguns in the front seat and asked what they were hunting - grouse they told us - and they had been lucky! Anyway, their lift saved us that half an hour of extra walking!

The tire was still inflated so we headed back to Port Alberni with crossed fingers. Just a couple of kilometres from Highway 4 we heard another loud hissing noise and found that another tire had received a puncture. A quick repair job that slowed the leak down managed to get us to Tawney's place where we abandoned Quagger's vehicle. Quagger vowed that within the next few days he would get higher ply-

rating tires all around on the vehicle. Half an hour later at a sushi restaurant we excitedly went over our adventure with Tawney having had another beautiful day in the mountains.

Participants: Craig (Quagger) Wagnell and Lindsay Elms

When Kids Go Wild... (Gummy) Bears Go In Hiding!

Nadja Steiner

With contributions from Finn Steiner, Anna-Lena Steiner, Iain Sou and Harald Steiner

Mt. Finlayson, April 20-21

We started the Mountaineering with kids year again with a hike up Mt. Finlayson in April. The weather wasn't quite convincing and the group small, but we still had a nice picnic on the summit. It was good to be out again and planning for the "Mountaineering school" at Mt. Arrowsmith in June was on its way.

Mt. Arrowsmith, June 20-21

The Father's Day weekend found as well equipped with ropes, harnesses and helmets on our way up to the saddle between Mt. Cokely and Mt. Arrowsmith. It was overcast but dry as we started hiking up the trail. The snow had retreated quite a bit in the gully below the saddle and we could walk most of it on the trail. We got camp set up on the snow just in time before the rain. Despite the weather almost everybody came along for repelling practice, (kids and adults). Dinner cooking was a wet issue and after that we huddled under Davids little red tarp, eating cake for dessert and wondering what in the world could have convinced all those dads to come out in this weather rather than having breakfast in a nice comfy bed at home. The answer came the next morning. Blue sky and sun promised a wonderful day. The kids had written "Happy Fathers day" with colored water on the snow and some dads even got their bacon and eggs..... We paired every kid with an adult, connected with a short rope to their partner and started up to the gendarmes. We found a nice little rock wall on the way to set up a top rope and let everybody climb up. Even though it took a while, it was a lot of fun and good food for the camera. The ones waiting for their turn were building inukshuks. We continued a bit further to the summit of one of the gendarmes where we settled down for a nice lunch with Mt. Arrowsmith posing as proper backdrop. Back down we went the same way, this time our rock wall served for repelling practice. (It seemed



Piper Battersby rappels off Mt. Arrowsmith PHOTO: KEITH BATTERSBY

the kids would have been perfectly fine climbing up and repelling down all day...). Before we reached camp Harry had one other fun practice planned. As soon as we reached the snow again, he secured himself with snow anchors and everybody got one or more changes to slide down and stop themselves on the snow (safely on the rope of course). It was a great day and after taking down the tents we head back to the cars and the well deserved ice cream at the Whiskey creek gas station.

Participants: Dave, Brandon, Keith, Piper, Arno, Cees, Johnny, Derek, Iain, Harry, Nadja, Finn and Anna-Lena, Norman

Already on the next weekend we had a climbing camp at Goldstream Park scheduled. Since I spend that weekend on a kid free-girls kayak trip I'll leave the forum to Harry:

Goldstream Park, June 27-28

by Harry (no age provided :-)

We met Friday night at the Goldstream campground and I was surprised how many tents fit in two small sites! As soon as the first bunch of kids showed up, the camp site was definitely "alive"! We had a nice campfire that night and I spent some time to go over safety procedures with a lot of good response and input from the adults. With such a large

number of kids it is important to set some basic rules: e.g. wearing helmets all the time, checking harnesses and other equipment before individual climbs, a reminder that loose rocks follow the gravity line and that Mt. Wells is not made to jump off cliffs - just because it's cool! But hey, what can I say? Most kids had already done other climbs with us, especially the Mt. Arrowsmith rock climb, and showed excellent behavior and acted as great role models. Practising in the mountains has made them aware that helmets and frequent gear checks are as important as tying your shoes and I was very pleased to see that the kids themselves reminded each other of safety checks even without the adults telling them! But how was the climbing? Excellent! I cannot say why, but kids are made for this! Doesn't matter the age or experience, they just do it! Best example here is our very junior mountaineer Cees, with barely 6 years of age. I asked him if he would like to climb a large, slightly overhanging crack (~5.9), he nodded and climbed the route even faster than his dad Arno! There was no limit in terms of belaying kids that afternoon and we adults could get in a few climbs as well. Saturday passed and after a great dinner, a few people had to leave. Sunday morning started with another great climb after a quick breakfast and thanks to Sue, Martin, Josh and Arno, the top ropes were put in faster than you can say "I am hungry -Dad/Mom!" (which we heard a lot during that day)... It is also worth while mentioning that a few youngsters climbed in "leading mode" exploring the meaning of nuts, cams and hexs for a climber. Looks like top-rope is outdated soon, Golden Hinde I am coming ... Anyway, a great weekend overall! For the 2010 climbing, I would like to split the groups into two different camps. It looks like that the youngsters of 13 years and older need more challenges, maybe the nose at Mt. Arrowsmith or the Red Pillar?

Latter might be a bit hard to get to, but I am sure we'll find something suitable.

Participants: Keith, Piper, Sue, Raven, Arno, Cees, Derek, Tessa, Iain, Evelyn, Harry, Jenny, Liam, Josh, Eryn, Finn, Anna-Lena, Martin, Tashi and her two cousins, Eva and Thomas, from France, Friday campfire only: Nadja, Dave, Brandon, Christine, Kylie

The long - and hot - weekend in August we spend hiking (or should I say swimming?) to Mt. Albert Edward. With 9 adults, 10 kids and one dog, we certainly had the largest group so far, the most splash and swim breaks and the largest consumption of gummy bears...

Mt. Albert Edward, August 1-3

Mt. Albert Edward (by Finn, 10)

We started at the trail head on Forbidden Plateau, on Friday, in the sun, where we met the others. We hiked to Lake Helen Mackenzie, had lunch there – with the whiskey jacks - and went swimming (the water was crystal clear, I could see five metres deep). Some of us swam out to the island, while I tried my luck at fishing from my favorite rock (I have been here several times before). As I expected, or “as usual”, no luck! Even though I managed to attract three trout fingerlings - and lost a spinner :-(. From there we hiked, stopping only for gummy bears and chocolate breaks (yum!). We waited for the other part of the group at the Rangers Cabin, then stopped for another swim at Baby Hairtrigger Lake - as we decided to call it - and continued through the beautiful alpine meadows, playing hiking games and with Piper, the dog. At about 4:30 we reached Circlet Lake and put up our tents. I have to add here, that the camp site was so crowded as I have ever seen it before (I also haven't been here with such amazing weather yet) and with a group of about 7 tents, even though small ones, we had trouble finding spots even at the overflow site. I once again tried my luck at fishing, nothing... Then it was time for dinner, Mountain House's turkey terrazini had never tasted so good. Again, we played, went swimming (that was cold!) and I almost caught my first trout of the trip... My mum and me went for a walk around the camp site before I went into our tent and slept till morning (I wonder if that rather annoying fighting with big sister was just all a dream???). The sun dawned and woke us, we got ready to ascent Albert Edward (after oat meal and fruit loops of course). We put on our packs (actually, I didn't have to carry anything that day, but my parents did!). We turned off before Moat Lake, where my mum's friend once got lost and then up and out of the forest. From there we went up the ridge and had lunch. It was beautiful with an unobstructed view of the mountains. Me, Raven and Eryn decided to stop earlier (with my mum) rather than continue up to the summit and we built a tiny landscape with rocks, snow, dirt and a few greens. The rest went on and we radioed each other. When it was getting late they told us not to wait, but start heading down. We made it back, had dinner and disappeared in the tent (We did have time and sun light for a dip in the lake before). Next morning we left Circlet Lake, once again



The Gummy Bear Crew on Albert Edward PHOTO: NADJA STEINER

lunch and swim at Lake Helen Mackenzie then back to the trail head, down Mt. Washington and down the highway... to be continued). Well the weather certainly was amazing for mountaineering this year. We did see some signs of smoke though and the view from the top had been obscured in the direction of the fire.

Participants: Ron, Wendy, Daniel, Hailey, Raven, Sue, Jenny, Liam, Eryn, Arno, Laurie, Johnny Ceas, dog Piper, Derek, Iain, Harry, Nadja, Finn, Anna-Lena

King's Peak, October 10

The hardest trip of the year was to Kings Peak, where we only took experienced kids 10 and older.

We had to postpone the trip to the long Thanksgiving weekend, which got us quite late into the season.

We set out on Saturday with fairly decent weather. The well packed backpacks definitely slowed us down a bit, especially on those really steep parts. Nonetheless none of the kids sat out at the nice waterfall... The gully was a bit of a challenge, but all mastered it well. We put in a fixed rope at one point, which was a great help. As usual Brandon and Dave where at the camp first followed by Derek and Iain. By the time my kids trickled in, the others had made themselves already comfortable. Since we had an early start planned, we didn't hang out too long. The next morning still with nice weather, we head up for the summit. The view was great, especially when we started to see Elkhorn, though the ascent was long and the group stretched out quite a bit. Nonetheless maybe slow but persistent everybody made it to the top, unfortunately right in time with a rather large cloud which took not only the view, but also the warmth. Our stay at the

summit was thus quite short, the cold made it just too uncomfortable, oh well, can't get lucky every time....Descending is so much less strenuous especially if its warm again. Also, the kids thought those few snow flakes would be quite exciting. Imagine, if it would snow tonight????? By the time we reached camp not only the kids legs were tired. All adults were ready to put their legs up and have a warm dinner as well. The snow wish got granted the very next day:

By Finn (10)

Second Morning exceeded my wildest expectations, there is only one word to describe it. White. Completely white. I eagerly put on my boots and started throwing snowballs at everything I could see That was, until my hands were freakishly cold. Just then my mum reminded me to put on my gloves.

- And a jacket I have too add...The 5-10cm snow layer certainly was a surprise and not everybody was quite prepared for it. I once again realized how important it is to have a nice warm sleeping bag, water and wind proof clothes and boots, and not to forget those gloves and toque. In the end I think we could call it the four seasons trip, or in Anna-Lenas words:

by Anna-Lena (13)

The weatherman's worst nightmare,

The Kings Peak trip was probably one of my favorites. On the way up there were some super sized UFO mushrooms. the weather was so nice, you would not expect for winter to be so soon. It was steep, with several interesting root structures. Setting out from base camp the next day we summited the peak. Of course, we had amazing weather-until we got to the top. after a short (cold) lunch break, we were fed up with the lack of view (again, cold) and made our way down again. Naturally, when we were back at camp, the summit was clear once more. And.... then it rained. So, being the wonderful children we are, we helped prepare dinner while the adults set up tarps. After dinner some of us watched Eragon on the mini DVD-player we had lugged up there (compliments of moi). The kids slowly trickled away until it was just Brandon and I huddled under a tarp with a gas lantern (the adults were long since snoring, really, they were, you could hear them from were we sat) until the movie was over. We then hit the sleeping bags, asleep before we touched the ground. the

next morning we woke to a white world. snow! we rushed out of our tents, some of us forgetting half our clothing (ahem, Finn) for a morning snowball fight. After a quick breakfast, we set off again. it was a long and slippery trip but we made it in one piece to find that it was sunny at the bottom of the mountain. Huh. Fancy that. Well, all I can say is, bring gear for all weather. And enjoy!!!!

We definitely tried to hurry up that morning, since the cold was creeping in, especially with snowball wet hands. A kid foot slipping in the creek didn't help for warm feet either. Still it took a while, we did have to clean the tents of the snow first, and I hate to pack wet gear....The way down was hard, especially before fingers and feet had warmed up. It was snowing again, and concentration required to step properly.

The kids did an absolutely amazing job! There wasn't much talking anymore and everybody was relieved when we were out of the gully and down at the waterfall jokes and laughter came back. Not everybody enjoyed that morning, as we can see from this short recap of the trip.

by Iain (10)

I woke up at 6am, ate breakfast, got dressed, grabbed my pack and left at 7am. Me and my dad drove to Campbell River that took about 3 hours. Then we took another half an hour drive on a windy road. I got car sick. When we got to the parking lot, we got ready to face Kings Peak. We got started it was crazy the rocks and roots were slippery. It took us five to six hours to get to base camp. The wildlife was exotic and the mushrooms were huge. My backpack was heavy. It was so cold the first night. When we got up we summited Kings Peak it took us about 11 to 12 hours up and down. When we were finished I said that I don't want to climb Kings peak again.

Well, I had to swallow hard when I read that, but I do have quite a few pictures with Iain smiling and he has been asking already for upcoming trips. I do admit however, Kings Peak was a tough one. I guess we would still do it again with kids, although not quite that late in the year.

We do already have some ideas for the coming season, although maybe a bit reduced, since summer will find our family on some via ferrata in the Swiss Alps this year (after the mandatory family visits of course ...).

Participants: Dave, Brandon, Derek, Iain, Harry, Nadja, Finn, Anna-Lena

Coast Range, Interior and the Rockies

Garibaldi Neve

Mike Springer
March 28-30



Garibaldi Neve ski approach PHOTO: MIKE SPRINGER

Ever since my first attempt on Atwell Peak I have wanted to ski the Neve, the view of it from Atwell ridge is fantastic. This trip is a must do for anyone with a pair of skis and skins. Attempting to organize any trip is a pain in the ass this one was particularly nasty because of the car shuttle nightmare, the ferry, the usual cancellations and is there still room? one day before, not to mention paying for park access. The worst thing this time however was the high avalanche risk, everyone was panicking and questioning the trip. Finally an organizer just has to say are you coming or not these are the dates and this is the plan take it or leave it. The final group turned out to be a great bunch.

We spent the first night in Port Coquitlam at a former ACC VI members house, Greg Gordon. Greg and I go back a long, long way. We all met up at his place and spent the night socializing over a few drinks and a dip in the hot tub. We even watched one of Gregs old videos of an earlier neve

trip which included club veterans like: Greg Gordon, Claire Ebindinger, Barb Brooks, Gerta Smythe, Charles Turner, Gerhardt Lepp, Chris Holm and Valario (circa 1972!!)

Saturday was leisurely, breakfast at Whitespot and a nice drive to Squamish, the car shuffle and the ski in to Elfin Lakes Hut, there were there usual fifty people crammed into the hut all sweating, swearing and snoring.

Sunday came and it was time to get onto the Neve, the plan was to hopefully make it to Garibaldi Lake. Due to the high avalanche hazard the first part of the day was slightly tense. We crossed some large slide areas very carefully and gingerly picked our way down to the creek crossing. After that it was all up hill, we were breaking trail all the way we had the whole Neve to ourselves.

The best thing about the day was in my opinion the weather it was one of those perfect days bright and clear yet crisp and great for skiing. Sky Pilot was visible to the South. Tut Peak, Mount Luxor, Isosceles Peak and Mt. Davidson among others were visible to the North East. We were covering a lot of distance and making great time, eventually we came to the heavily crevassed area underneath Mt. Garibaldi. Greg found us an easy way through and we were off to the Lake. Some of the interesting features of the trip are the place names like the Shark Fin and The Table. Distinctive names for distinctive features on the route.

We were all getting a little tired when the lake finally came into view, we had some tenting gear but my plan was to use the glaciological huts at the end of the lake. After a precipitous slide down to lake level we were done for the day. Whew!

We were all cramming food into our faces as night fell upon the place. Greg and Lynn snoring like a couple of bull moose were the last sounds I heard or I should say felt as I froze my ass off sleeping on the floor.

The difference between one day and another is amazing sometimes; we woke up to howling winds, blowing snow and very low vis'. We beat the crappy weather by one day otherwise we would have never left Elfin Lake. The ski out

across Garibaldi Lake seemed to take forever. It was short compared to the ski out down the trail to Rubble Creek.

This trip is awesome the views were incredible the risks were really minimal. I'm not trying to discredit the avalanche, crevasse and whiteout hazard but with a bit of care you can reduce the risk.

I highly recommend it to anyone contemplating this trip.

Participants: Heather *I NEED A COFFEE!* Milligan, Greg Dubba G Gordon, Mark *I'm a 49er* Thibideau, Mike *Which Way?* Springer, Jon *I Have a Fan in My Goggles* Clarke and Lynn *I Need a Defibrillator* Wilson

I almost forgot there was another participant on the first day Julien *Jack Daniels* Hancock, a great guy who looked good in tights.

Intro to Mountaineering

Tawney Lem

May 2-3 and July 31-August 3

Part 1

The annual Intro to Mountaineering course was held over two weekends: part one (Snow School) was held at Mount Arrowsmith on May 2-3; and part two was held at Wedgemount Lake in Garibaldi Provincial Park, July 31-August 3.

The first part of the course began with a zillion emails bouncing between Sandy Briggs and the numerous participants regarding scheduling, the agenda, necessary gear, and carpooling. There were people coming from various parts of the Island; some coming for the whole weekend while others were only coming for one day, and some were camping while others were not. The complexity of the logistics was astounding, but Sandy carried it off like a veteran. Forget chemistry, his true calling may be in event or wedding planning!

Despite all efforts, the weekend got off to a shaky start as one person was accidentally left behind in Victoria. Then, with the regular access road to Arrowsmith being closed due to active logging, it took some guiding via cellular phone to gather everyone at the alternate Hump entrance route. All appeared to be back on track until Sandy's vehicle got VERY stuck in the snow between the rock cut and the Saddle Route parking area. There was pushing, and pulling, and rocking, and bouncing. There was revving and braking, going forward and back. But instead of getting any further ahead, the car only sunk until it was completely high centered. Then Sandy demonstrated great ice axe technique trying to dig



Crevasse rescue school on the "Hump" PHOTO: SANDY STEWART

the car out. However, it was all to no avail. Just when we all thought Sandy's car might have to be abandoned until the snow melted later in the season, a group heading to Johnny's cabin came along with two large 4x4 trucks and joined in the effort. With some towing and levering the car was finally freed. The cheering promptly ended though when the owners of both trucks (thinking they had enough clearance to get through), proceeded to get stuck. And so the process was repeated until the 4x4s were on their way.

At the ripe hour of 1:00 p.m., we were ready to start the snow school in earnest, and trekked our way up the Saddle. The remainder of Saturday was spent learning to set up various types of snow anchors, and practicing self-arrest. Sunday's agenda was full with discussions on roping up for glacier travel, and running through crevasse rescue systems. For some participants this course was a refresher, and some of their time was spent both learning and sharing alternate techniques. For other participants, crevasse rescue was all or nearly brand new. I fell in this latter category, and it quickly became evident to me that I should have taken a university elective in physics versus French literature. I had seen similar systems set up once before during a cave rescue course, but demonstrated my total inability to figure it out again. Pulleys and calculations of mechanical advantage.... tie this here, but whatever you do don't unclip that... "Umm, sorry, but you're going to have to show that to me one more time." Sandy and fellow instructor Rick Johnson showed great patience guiding the group through the curriculum. One could understand their patience while we were graced with the sun, but more impressively, they maintained this through the cold wind, rain and snow that was also dished out.

By the end of the weekend we all left with more knowledge than we started with. And for those of us whose knowledge was a little less solidified, we were encouraged to lay out the ropes in our backyards and keep practicing.

Part 2

As the second weekend grew closer, I grew more anxious. I had successfully set up an ice screw anchor in my lawn, backed it up with some sling around the Japanese maple, and rescued my boot that was hanging over the street curb, but would I actually remember anything once my feet hit a glacier for the first time?

Dave Campbell was spearheading the instruction for the course, backed by Russ Moir. To kick things off, the list of required gear list was circulated which included a warning that the trail up to Wedgemount Lake was a “notorious grind”. A SummitPost entry goes so far as to call the trail “brutal”. So, the practice packing began well in advance in an attempt to get the pack down to a manageable weight. The participant list underwent several iterations, but by July 30, rides were organized, meals were coordinated and we were all headed off the Rock on our way to the Mainland. The Wedgemount Lake trailhead parking lot was our meeting place, and cars arrived until late in the night depending on what ferry people caught. It wasn’t until morning that we were able to take stock of who had (and had not arrived). One participant was on the email list, but was nowhere to be found. After ascertaining that the person hadn’t arranged a ride, versus was accidentally left behind, the weekend began in earnest. We hit the trail early to beat the heat, but there was no escaping the smoke from the forest fires burning nearby. While the trail has a bit of elevation gain to it (1,200m), this is stretched out over 7 kilometres. Despite the heavy packs and some rooty sections, I don’t know that any of us really found the trail to be a grind. Any minor complaints dissipated immediately upon seeing the gorgeous turquoise colored lake surrounded by the choice of mountaineering objectives. Camp was quickly established on the available “front row view” platforms.

The balance of the day, and the bulk of the next two, was spent working through our curriculum of setting up snow anchors, knot review, glacier travel (roping up, route finding, hazard recognition and group travel), and crevasse rescue systems. We got out on the Wedgemount Glacier three days in a row, each day progressively building upon the skills reviewed the day prior. As it turned out, the participants for Part 2 were almost completely different from those attending Part 1. And, glacier travel and crevasse rescue was new territory to many of them. Therefore, much of the curriculum addressed in May was repeated again over the course of the weekend. The third time was the charm for me – this pulley

stuff was finally starting to sink in.

Spending time on the glacier was not only a great way to stay cool during the heat wave that BC was having, but it was also a truly exciting experience. The glacier was essentially bare of snow, and the crevasses were all (or mostly) open. We zigzagged our way around or stepped over the crevasses, and marveled at the some of their depths and colors. On our third day, we had successfully navigated our way across and to the edge of the glacier, with the intent of heading up a snow slope to a col that accesses the North Arete of Wedge. There was a solid looking snowy patch between the glacier and the snow slope where we decided to unrope. As the group advanced across the patch, our path was dissected by a few longer, but very narrow (2-3 inch wide) openings. To avoid the openings, part of the group headed left while the rest headed right. Within a split second, Dave N., who was traveling with the group to the right, dropped into a crevasse up to his waist. With his legs dangling into space, his wedged pack prevented him from falling in any further. Without hesitation, Rory dropped down, set up an anchor and tossed a rope to Dave. Calm as can be, Dave’s only comment was, “Hey, can someone get a picture of me in here”? With Dave safely back up, we continued on with some trepidation to the base of the slope.

Having had a distant look at the arête, Dave and Russ judged that the snow was not in good form and instead of making any sort of attempt at summiting Wedge we would maximize our time working on skills. So, we headed up to the col, which gave us a great view of Wedge, as well as access to a great slope on which to practice rappelling and prussiking. Anchors were set up with ice screws, and one by one we rappelled, or were belayed down the slope. At the bottom, there was a boulder pile that afforded us a decent area for setting up some rock anchors. After a sunny lunch on the rocks, we each prussiked up the slope and then made our final trek back to camp. All in all, the weekend allowed for a relaxed pace of learning and reviewing some necessary skills.

Summarizing a weekend trip though is not complete without a few comments about camp life. With plush tent pads, a stunning view, and the hut all to our own for storing gear away from the sharp and eager teeth of resident four legged critters, overall we had it good! The forest fire burning near Pemberton didn’t affect air quality as much as the after effects of the veggie chili that one of our campers ate. There was the usual fare of boil-in-the bag meals served up each night (some actually very good), and various concoctions involving ramen noodles. With almost all but a few scraps of chocolate left behind given the heat, the enviable moment was when Rory produced a whole jar of Nutella from his pack. The only injury of the trip occurred one night when Linda had a painful, but luckily non-permanently damaging, run in with her pot of boiling water. After three and a

half days of consuming too much dried fruit, dehydrated meat, reconstituted beverages, processed meal replacement bars and energy goos, several of us celebrated the weekend by binging on hops and burgers at the Howe Sound Brew Pub on our way home.

Many thanks to Dave Campbell and Russ Moir for sharing their knowledge, time, humor and tents to this group of fledgling mountaineers.

Climbing with Sharon Wood

Geoff Bennett

June 26-30

The night before we climbed Ha Ling I was sick to my stomach. For over thirty years, back when it was still called Chinaman, I had stared up at its baleful limestone face. Its intimidating scale and exposure, along with its 5.7 rating, had always scared me away. None of my climbing buddies were keen on leading it either. Last winter, while visiting friends in Canmore, I whined in my usual tiresome way about growing old and never being able to climb Ha Ling. They interrupted, "Why don't you ask our neighbour, Sharon Wood, to take you?" I was shocked. "You mean put my money where my mouth is?" And then, "Sharon Wood is your neighbour?!"

Sharon Wood is famous for being the first North American woman to climb Mount Everest. Twenty-three years after her successful ascent of the West Ridge I gave her a call. Over the phone she was friendly and enthusiastic, and she queried me carefully before deciding to take me on. We made a date in late June to climb both Ha Ling and Guide's Route on the East End of Rundle (EEOR).

And so, just before dawn on a perfectly fine day in the Rockies, I staggered over to her house feeling sleepless and wretched. She quickly set me at ease and within an hour we were roping up at the base of the climb. The climb started off easily with three pitches of gently angled slabs and then gradually became more serious. Nine more pitches led to the summit, becoming steeper and thinner, mostly 5.6 with some airy 5.7 moves. It was fantastic!

Sharon was superb, an expert guide and a cheerful companion. But high on the face she reached into her pack to take another shot and – horrors! – she fumbled the camera and watched it plummet all the way down to the belay stance at the top of the third pitch. Silver shards glanced off the rocks and gleamed in the sunshine. She was inconsolable – a new camera with dozens of photos of Olympic athletes whom she had recently guided up the same route.



Sharon Wood at the belay stance on Ha Ling PHOTO: GEOFF BENNETT

We reached the wind-blasted summit a mere four hours after roping up, thanks of course to Sharon's expert leadership. "I hate the wind," she said – this from an Everest climber! On the way down the back side she teased me for being a sandbagger and suggested that we climb Reprobate next. "You'll find Guide's Route too boring," she said. I was horrified. "I can't climb Reprobate – it's 5.8 with aid." "Yes you can," she replied firmly.

The next morning I stood at the base of the first pitch and watched Sharon thrutch up a nasty 5.6 chimney. The happy buzz from Ha Ling had quickly turned to dread. Reprobate is one of those routes that real rock climbers do, not mere mortals like me. But the rope has its own imperative. I watched mesmerized as the coils disappeared. High above a strong female voice commanded, "Climb on!"

This was no romp – thirteen pitches of sustained 5.7 with lots of 5.8 and a desperate overhanging aid move. I asked for tension several times and wondered what she would do if I couldn't make it. The steepness and exposure was terrifying. Eight hours later – twice as long as Ha Ling – we crested the ridge on Rundle. "You did it," she said, knowing that she had pushed me beyond my limit. Then she smiled and said more reassuringly, "It was hard for me too."

The weather was so good that we decided to do one more climb, this one technically harder than Reprobate but more sporty and less desperate. Gooseberry on Tunnel Mountain is 7 pitches of solid 5.8. The line has been cleaned, straightened and well protected in recent years and is now one of Banff's most popular climbs. The steep upper part is traversed by a series of chert lenses and nodules that look almost like fossils. Without their sharp little edges I would have found the cliff impossible to climb. As it was I could hardly believe that I was spidering up this vertical wall. "One inch at a time..."

don't look down," I whispered. What a great end to a fantastic three days with one of Canada's premier mountaineers.

A few days later, we walked over to Sharon's house with a CD in hand. When she came to the door she guessed right away, clutched the handrail in surprise and sat down on the step. "How did you do it?" she asked. My friends had posted a "lost camera" notice on the web. A climber on Ha Ling had glanced at the ground while he belayed his partner up the fourth pitch. A shiny piece of copper caught his eye – the XD chip from Sharon's camera. He posted a "found" notice on the web and another person connected the two messages. The climber came to our door with the chip and I plugged it into the computer. Lo and behold – 77 photos of Olympic athletes and our day on Ha Ling. This photo of Sharon was the last one on the chip.

Participants: Geoff Bennett and Sharon Wood (Guide)

Yamnuska Mountain Skills Semester

Andrew Pape-Salmon

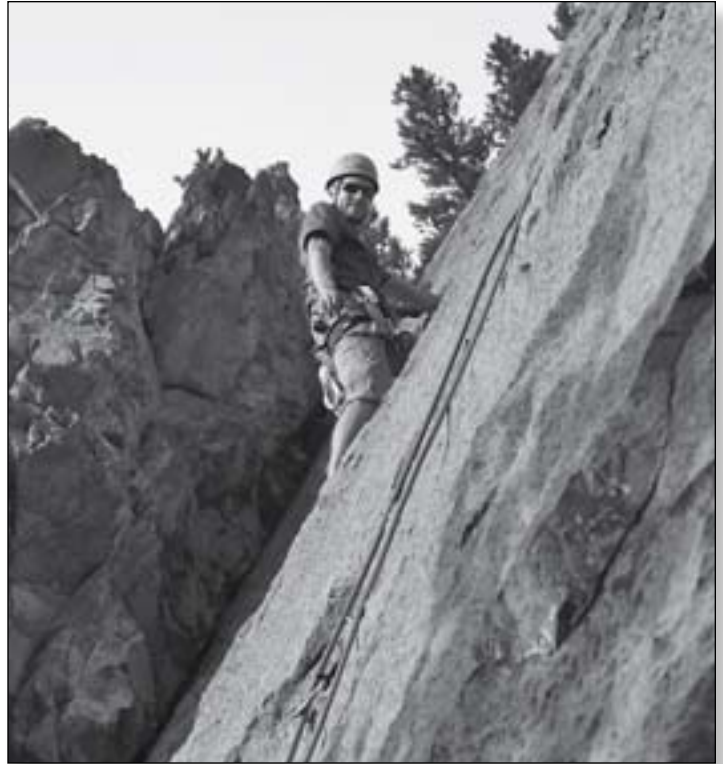
September 14 - December 5

How many different techniques can you use to climb a mountain? My purview used to be limited to hiking and scrambling, but during a three month course offered by Yamnuska Mountain Adventures, I discovered numerous possibilities that I had never tried before. The semester included instruction, practice and leadership development in nine "sections".

During a year off of work (sabbatical) with the BC Government, I made the decision to travel to the Rockies to experience continental snow, tall peaks and the mountaineering culture of Canmore. There were six people in the program from Austria, Denmark, Detroit, Edmonton, Sweden and myself from Victoria. The age range was from mid-20s to late 40s.

The trekking section focused on navigation, route finding skills and no trace camping near Canmore. For the rock climbing section, I was one of two novices, while the other four were sport climbing experts and had experience doing lead and trad climbing. The highlight was a multi-pitch ascent of "Kid Goat" next to the Yamnuska rock, the first mountain you pass when travelling from Calgary to Banff. This climb was on good quality limestone, but I generally preferred the more "positive" holds of quartzite at the back of Lake Louise during the section.

Winter set in very quickly in early October for our glacier section at the Columbia Icefields in Jasper. I wore plas-



The author doing his first "lead" climb at Wasootch Slabs

PHOTO: A. PAPE-SALMON COLLECTION

tic boots to deal with the -17 highs as we learned to "walk like John Wayne" with crampons downhill (keeping the feet wide and stay low) and pull somebody out of a crevasse with ropes and pulleys. We summited Mount Wilcox (2,884m) after a challenging scramble on snow and ice with "short roping" for protection. The rescue section that followed at the base of Mount Rundle included some nifty techniques such as "block and tackle" to raise or lower somebody.

Many of our skills came together during the week of October 19th as we did our mountaineering expedition in the south Kananaskas region, near Mount Joffre. It was not only physically demanding with my 75lb pack, but also mentally challenging due to a lack of sunshine the whole week. Through deep snow and across small glaciers we summited Warrior and Marlborough mountains (elevation, 2,973m) and explored an unnamed peak next to Aster Lake but didn't summit due to "considerable" avalanche risk on the east facing slope that had developed some wind slab.

Prior to a 5 day course break, we completed an 80 hour wilderness first aid course, learning protocols for dealing with health issues more than 2 hours from definitive medical care. My wife Sara visited me in Banff where we relaxed, did some trail running and took in the Banff Mountain Film Fest.

After the break, we began the Avalanche Skills Training (AST) level 2 course and headed to the ACC Bow and Peyto Huts in the Wapta Icefields for the glacier ski section. The wind was extreme and the avalanche risk went from "con-



Ski descent of Mount Gordon PHOTO: ANDREW PAPE-SALMON

siderable” to “high” due to the development of a wind slab on top of a weak facet layer, among other factors. During the week, we summited Mount Gordon (elevation 3,203m) in the sun and practiced white-out compass navigation with limited “hand rails” to travel between the huts. During the section, we spent several hours discussing group dynamics, communication skills and leadership styles, partly in response to a mini-crisis of differing goals and personal styles.

The ice climbing section was one of my favourites – a surprise to me, as I had never aspired to climb on frozen waterfalls. The Rockies offer some of the best ice climbing in the world and we located ourselves at Rampart Creek Hostel near dozens of formed climbs. I prefer ice climbing over rock climbing because each move has four good holds, except for those occasions installing or removing an ice screw or taking a photo. I seconded a seven rope pitch, ~200 metre climb on Murchison Falls near Saskatchewan River crossing, rated at a WI 4+ difficulty. Yamnuska normally provides a 2:1 student-guide ratio for all multi pitch climbs (rock and ice), but I had a guide to myself because one of the participants was injured during the course break. This climb was one of the most mentally challenging activities I have ever experienced, but the feeling of achievement was enormous. We also frequented the dryer “Kootenay Plains” for climbs on “2 O’Clock Falls” and “SARs on Ice” and climbed “Balfour Wall” and dry tooled rock in “Bullshit Canyon” near Jasper.

The five day, Roger’s Pass ski tour and avalanche skills section included incredible powder of ~ 1.5m depth, challenging route finding and hazard avoidance, steep downhill technique and construction of snow caves. After one night of camping, we stayed three nights at the ACC Wheeler Hut. In addition to receiving AST2 certification, the Roger’s Pass tour provided valuable skills for my goal of leading ACC and Strathcona Nordics ski trips on Vancouver Island later this season.

Throughout the semester we learned a lot about the guiding industry from our teachers/leaders. The ultimate guiding achievement is to become an Association of Canadian Mountain Guides’ certified “mountain guide” which requires alpine, ski and assistant rock guide status. I think I will pursue the less intensive Hiking Guide certification to support my interest of leading kids into the mountains of southern and central Vancouver Island, generally not involving glaciers and snow.

Through the 11 week semester, I experienced many different ways of climbing a mountain – hiking with leather boots; scrambling with short rope protection; mountaineering on glaciers with crampons, ice axe and rope team; rock climbing on vertical walls; backcountry skiing; and ice climbing. The Yamnuska Mountain Skills semester taught me to get to the summit in the most efficient and safe manner given my level of technical skill. I can now confidently pursue some of the great peaks of Vancouver Island and hopefully of western North America over the next few years.

You can see all my photos and commentary at:
<http://papesalmon.smugmug.com>

Summer Camp 2009 – Tonquin Valley Trip

Graham Maddocks

(with some extensions by Cedric Zala)

August 23-30

Day-by-Day

My guidebook states that Doctor J Monroe Thorington, a well-known mountaineer and historian who has devoted many years of his life to rambling about the Canadian Rockies, writes eloquently of the Tonquin Valley and how its “unique combination of lake, precipice, and ice ... presents itself with a singular beauty almost unequalled in the alpine regions of North America.” For anyone who has visited this area after a spell of good weather and particularly late in the year when the crowds have dispersed and the air is crisp and clear, it would be hard to dispute that this is one of the truly spectacular hiking areas in the mountain west. That pretty much says it all about this beautiful area.

On the first day, August 23, we did the 17 kilometre pack in to the Wates-Gibson Hut, and the horse party (with 600 pounds of our gear) did the pack in to the lodge on Amethyst Lake, about 5 kilometre to the north. An aquatically adventurous party (Mike, David, Krista and Cedric) hiked to the lodge and rowed the packs from the lodge to the south end of the lake for a double pack in by the group.



Lunch time on the summit of Thunderbolt PHOTO: GEOFF BENNETT

Some even did a triple pack in and it felt like being a Nepalese porter without the 60 rupees pay. The modest elevation gain on the route in was more than compensated for by a thunderstorm which also dumped an inch or two of snow on us. But this too soon passed and the tired group eventually enjoyed the comforts of a warm hut and a welcome meal.

Day 2: Geoff Bennett led a party up Mount Clitheroe, while others of us rowed the boats back to the horse camp. There the handler gave us fresh coffee and lots of information about the area, including the fact that a month earlier the mosquitoes had been so bad that they had to put insect repellent on the horses. Following Geoff's footsteps later in the day we (Cedric, Mike, Peter and Graham) then climbed Clitheroe for spectacular views of the Ramparts. Clitheroe reminded me of Elkhorn, a great big rockpile. Amy and Lissa spent a more leisurely day, hiking up to Amethyst Lake and enjoying the sun.

Day 3: A group led by Geoff Bennett made an attempt at Outpost, but they were turned back by high winds and threatening conditions before heading up on the ice. Mike led a trip along Penstock Creek to the col beside Outpost and met the returning group while on the way up. A couple of parties wandered through Eremite Valley, and Geoff and Sylvia later climbed on Surprise Peak. David Lemon packed a lot of stuff part-way out that the horses had brought in.

Day 4: Twelve people climbed Thunderbolt in good weather. In the final section, some went up the rock and some donned crampons and went up an increasingly steep

ice slope. I chose the crampon route and by the time I got to the top felt that it was very unwise to do it without a rope and when it wasn't necessary anyway. The mentality of "I have brought my crampons so I am going to use them" is not a well thought-out plan. We saw a bull moose in the meadow in the morning. Another group took a trip up to the meadows below Mount Clitheroe and visited the ranger cabin and, using a scope at the cabin, was just able to see the Thunderbolt party on the summit.

Day 5: Geoff Bennett and David got an alpine start for an attempt on Paragon Peak in the Ramparts, returning in the late evening having gotten a long way but still several hours short of the peak. In another trip, Mike led nine of us up the Fraser glacier on two ropes and we passed very close to a horrible crevasse that

Mike later described as "bus swallowing". The views from the top were spectacular. A third group, with Cedric, Lissa and Liz, hiked up the Eremite Valley to beyond Arrowhead Lake and enjoyed the views.

Day 6: I walked around the lake to the horse camp and met two professional photographers who told me they had seen a grizzly that morning heading past the horse camp going up the valley. They were probably tracking the scent of the kipper sandwiches carried by Mike Hubbard, who was leading a group up the valley towards Maccarib (this trip is described in the following article). Another group (Jim, Sonia, Roger and Geoff Smith) spent the day in the Eremite Valley, while Liz and Amy enjoyed their time in the meadows below Surprise Peak. On the last night of the camp, we followed tradition and had a party with stories, performances and recitations by members of the group. Geoff Bennett directed an Oscar-worthy performance of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* (starring Mike), Mike and Liz Williams performed the Monty Python *Twin Peaks* of Kilimanjaro skit, Krista recited *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, Lissa recited a new poem *The Biggest Ice Screw in the World*, and Roger gave a memorable account of the first ascent of Mount Robson by Curly Phillips and George Kinney. There were also songs (as there were on previous nights as well) accompanied by a portable guitar which Peter packed all the way in.

Day 7: Roger, his daughter Amy and I were last to leave and at the parking lot they told me they had seen a grizzly close to the path on the way out (I missed it). The story

that Roger recounted about Curly Phillips climbing Mount Robson was written up in the local newspaper in Jasper with photos of Roger and the commemoration party at the Mount Robson campground. I mailed him a copy.

Participants: Geoff Bennett, Sonia Brown, Mike Hubbard, David Lemon, Graham Maddocks, Jim Melling, Sylvia Moser, Roger Painter, Peter Rogers, Amy Smirl, Geoff Smith, Doug and Liz Turner, Liz Williams, Cedric and Lissa Zala, and Krista Zala

Mount Maccarib Horseshoe

Cedric Zala
August 28

This Friday journey actually had its origins on the Monday, just after a group of us returned the boats to the lodge. Our destination then was Mount Clitheroe, but as soon as I came out onto the meadows above Amethyst Lake, and saw the smooth open bowl to the right of Mount Clitheroe, and the inviting ridge surrounding it, I knew I had to walk that ridge.

We finally got our chance on the Friday, and tromped along the now very familiar 3.5 kilometre stretch from the hut to the bridge spanning the outlet stream from Amethyst Lake, pausing only for a picture. Keeping on the path until it met up with the horse trail, we then turned right until a path headed up to the left. This quickly led us up into broken sub-alpine meadow, then into the magnificent smooth open bowl. We headed directly to Mt. Maccarib, and up the scree, which was much firmer than that for Clitheroe. With Clitheroe, it seemed that not a single rock was stable, no matter what size or how long it had been there, and every step led to a wobble of one kind or another. The Maccarib scree was much kinder, and we were able to easily scramble up the talus and occasional outcrop to the summit ridge, and thence to the top. From there was a spectacular view of the Ramparts, and the peaks surrounding the Eremite Valley, but most imposing to my eye was Oldhorn – like something out of Tolkien with its vast arrays of decaying towers and impregnable walls.

All during lunch at the summit, the horseshoe ridge lay below us, beckoning. When we descended to the first col below, though, the outcroppings on the next peak that looked so benign from above were suddenly intimidating from below and it took some encouragement before I was up-and-at-'em and as it turned out, hey, no problem!

That had to be the most beautiful ridge hike I've ever experienced – surrounded by magnificent peaks and diversely featured valleys, the ridge slopes showing numerous



The Mount Maccarib climbers PHOTO: U. N. OWEN

wildlife trails, the cols having shallow hollows where wild-life had rested watchfully, and the micro-geology constantly changing. In one area, there would be large flat shale plates, then grotesquely long spears of slate, followed by beds of tiny rock slivers that were actually soft as a bed to walk on, and slopes that cried out “boot-ski!”

The boots tromped on, the time passed, and the ridge gradually merged into a series of gently rolling hills with scrubby trees, and the party spread out a bit. Well, actually, Peter and I inadvertently got separated from the group, showing how easily this can happen even in largely open country. We eventually formed up again at Amethyst Lake, where Mike and Sylvia braved the frigid waters. What a great place and what a great day!

Participants: Cedric Zala, Krista Zala, Mike Hubbard, Peter Rogers, Sylvia Moser, Doug and Liz Turner and David Lemon

Into the Tantalus

Chris Ruttan
August 23-28

On August 23, I walked into the Whitespot in Squamish for a breakfast meeting with a group of people I had never met but who would be my hut mates for the next seven days. I was signed up for an ACC climbing camp in the Tantalus Range based out of Haberl Hut. Our guide for this adventure was Jim Gudjonson, a name I had seen before in the ACC camps brochures and fairly easy to pick out of the group

when I found the table where they had gathered. Kory Fawcett was the camp cook and head bottle washer, an amiable, curly headed young fellow and his wife Carolyn Kelly-Smith was also along. Our international roster included John Leedale from the UK and a young woman from the Seattle area who works for Boeing named Eileen Kutscha. Karla Stephens from Kelowna was also signed up but was unable to be at the first day marshalling due to personal issues and she would fly in on her own on the 24th. The last person though certainly not the least was Sandy Walker, a young woman from the main ACC club house in Canmore who I had met once at Conrad Kain Hut when I was custodian there. Sandy had joined the trip when a fellow from Eastern Canada had backed out. We had breakfast and a conversation about the details of the trip, our flight and various climbs we may be able to do if the weather were to cooperate. Once through the meeting we gathered at Black Tusk Helicopter to sort out gear and plan loads for the flight in to Haberl Hut.

What an incredible flight it was in across the Squamish River Valley then into the giant amphitheatre containing Lake Lovelywater and Tantalus Hut. We flew into the valley and then used the updrafts to climb higher describing huge circles above the lake until we had enough elevation to flash through the Ionia/Serratus Col and around the back to the hut. I swear that flight was almost worth the money for the whole trip.

Haberl Hut, completed in June of 2006 and located near the original location of the Red Tit Hut in the Serratus/Dione col is a wonderful, comfortable hut with only a lack of water to dim its allure. With room for twelve to sleep it's a nice size for a party of eight and we were able to spread out a bit for our week long stay. The Hut was constructed as a memorial for Jim Haberl, recipient of the Governor Generals Meritorious Service Award and a well known, internationally renowned Canadian climber. Jim Haberl and Dan Culver were the first Canadians to summit K2. Dan Culver died on the descent from that summit and Jim Haberl was killed in an avalanche in Alaska on May 6, 1999.

Once we had settled in and had lunch we went out for a brief afternoon run through of various skills refreshers such as crevasse rescue, ice axe arrest and crampon travel and safety. That was sufficient to keen our appetites for dinner and we returned to the hut with clearing skies for our supper



The long return across the Dione Glacier PHOTO: CHRIS RUTTAN

and discussions for the next days activities, it was decided that we would try for Mount Dione the next day.

At first light we left the hut and began a long traverse below the Dione Glacier on the west side of the long ridge running out to Dione. After traversing about half the way on the rock we moved up onto the glacier weaving through a band of crevasses onto a huge bulge that once across left us pretty well below the peak. By this time we had seen the helicopter that was bringing Karla Stephens in stop at the hut to drop her gear and pick up Kory who would lead her up to join us after the machine had dropped them as close as possible.

We waited under beautiful blue skies for our climbing partners and when they finally arrived we packed up and began to climb the steep glacier looking for a route onto the spine of the ridge. We bypassed a couple of possible sites and ended up stepping right from the ice onto the ridge where we removed our crampons and began to follow the spine of the ridge north towards Dione. We short roped along the ridge with some marvelous exposure and a couple lowers and climb ups as we came to faults. The rock was mostly okay and other than the discomfort of being tied to a rather clumsy partner I enjoyed it. As we moved we had the Rumbling Glacier directly below us with the massive Squamish/Cheakamus River Valleys to the east while on the west the Dione Glacier and the Clowhom River Valley.

We stayed on the ridge crest pretty much the whole way till we reached the summit block and moved out onto a small pocket glacier. The normal route up steps off this glacier onto a steep three or four pitch climb to the summit but not this



Haberl Hut from Mt. Serratus PHOTO: CHRIS RUTTAN

time, the moat was two metres across and impassable. We moved down to the base of the ice and tried to find an alternative route but it was beyond our ability so we turned back and headed off the other team. We found a wonderfully warm cozy spot in the sun to stop and have lunch and enjoyed a rest before turning back the way we came. At the spot where we had come off the main glacier and started onto the ridge we changed from our earlier approach and returned to the hut by staying at the top of the Dione Glacier after climbing down a rock band from the ridge. This got us back to the hut in much better time and with easier travelling. We spent the evening watching the sun burn its way down through the smoke on the horizon with spectacular results.

August 25: We woke to fog and light rain after a windy night and that meant a day off, I couldn't handle it so I began wandering around the area looking for interesting rocks and trying to keep busy. After a couple hours I headed back for a quick lunch then out again for more exploring when I then discovered the fog had lifted a bit and it was clear about twenty metres below the hut. The rain had stopped so I hiked down far enough to check out the great meadows down below to the West. I decided there must be a way to get down there for a hike at some point and began to brew a plot.

August 26: Another bluebird day and we set off in three small teams to climb Mount Serratus. We traversed a short way across to the base of the West Face but instead of using the West Face Couloir Jim found an alternative way that looked like it would go and we worked our way up in the sun shine. There was a lot of loose rock to be cautious of but things went well and we made the summit in a few hours, unfortunately Jim was not going to let us tarry and we were

soon climbing back down past the other teams as they made their way to the top. Karla and I were with Jim and we down climbed a ways then changed to the West Face Couloir for a bit but Jim didn't like it and we came out onto the face where Jim lowered us onto a ledge then went to find the others and make sure they came the same way. An hour and a half later we heard voices as they finally caught up and we were able to continue down and return to the hut for dinner, another banner day.

In the evening after dinner I innocently mentioned to Jim that I was going to opt out of the next days climb for a hike down into the meadows to the west, I had no idea I would cause a full blown mutiny as Carolyn, Eileen, John and Karla all elected to join me on the hike rather than climb. Jim decided he, Kory and Sandy would spend the day checking out the route over the Serratus/Ionia Col for our final days climb to Mount Alpha.

August 27: We had a lazy start but still made reasonable time working down to the meadows since I had already checked it out. We stopped at a small lake piled high with snow at one end and Carolyn and I went in for a very quick swim which actually felt pretty good after four days without a shower. I was really excited about the minerals I saw all around the lake area and I would love to go back and explore further some day. Still a little farther below down a gentle slope a flower filled meadow spread out into a large flat that several streams converged into before pouring over a headwall. We hiked through the meadow picking blueberries and huckleberries as we went until we came to the place where the stream plunged down the face and flowed into yet another lake before flowing away into the Clowhom River system.

From there we followed back up the creek to a large waterfall where we stopped for lunch and a break in the sun before finally turning around and beginning the trek back up the rocks to the hut. We took a different way back up following a fault in the mountain that leads up to the hut and were back in plenty of time to help with dinner and strategize for the next day.

August 28: This was our last full day and after a long discussion the previous evening it had been determined that Kory and Carolyn would remain at the hut while the rest of us set out for Mount Alpha. Kory had already been up Alpha and Carolyn was not keen on the long hike so they would stay behind to move out our already packed bags for the flight out a day early. We would not return to the hut but instead we had arranged for the helicopter to pick us up in a location known as the Russian Campground on the other side of the mountain at the end of our day. Our trip took us from the hut around and below the West Face of Serratus then up a pocket glacier to the Serratus/Ionia Col, over the col and past a nasty bergschrund onto another small glacier.

From here began a long traverse over steep, loose scree as we made our way to the base of the rock wall below the Serratus/Alpha Col. Karla decided that she had had enough by then and since it was nice and warm she would wait for us there. The rest of us climbed a pitch with the rope then were able to continue all the way to the top a couple hours scramble away. Once again we had only a few minutes to linger to ensure we would be on time for the ride out so we were on our way down almost before we knew we were on top. It was indeed a long trip down to our rendezvous point but a really nice if sometimes steep hike. Karla joined us again of course on the way down.

The Russian Campground was great with lots of flowers to keep me busy and wonderful scenes all around to enjoy. What a great place and well worth returning to some day. Our flight out was almost as good as coming in but the shock of the return back to normal life was chilling. After a shower and a nice dinner together at the pub downtown we said our farewells and parted company till the next trip. What great weather and a great trip all around.



The intrepid young mountaineers make their way up Abbot Pass

PHOTO: WENDY SWAN

Summer Scrambles Around Lake O'Hara

Wendy Swan
August 23-26

Lake O'Hara. Abbot Pass. These two places had a habit of popping up periodically in our lives. I'd heard stories from my parents about the times they'd spent there – particularly from my Dad, who'd been a park warden in Banff in the 60's (most of those stories are unprintable!) My husband, Jim, spent much of his growing up exploring the parks in Alberta, hiking and climbing when he could, and we kept discovering that some of our closest friends had worked at the lodge at Lake O'Hara as teenagers, or had fond memories of being there in summers with grandparents, exploring while their grandparents painted, or friends who had done the trip in the time "B.C." (before children). We knew someday we would go there, "When the children got older".

Then we came across an ACC article about two families who had taken their kids there and had made it up to the Abbot Hut. As soon as we read it, we knew it was our next destination so we made plans, along with our good friends, to spend four days at the Elizabeth Parker Hut. Our children were seven, nine and twelve, and their son was six. We planned all the trails we wanted to hike during that time and, if the weather was good, feet were not sore, and all other things being better than equal, then our family was going to try to get up to the Abbot Hut.

Day One was spectacular and after quickly dumping most of our gear and re-packing lunches and basic supplies, we hiked up to Lake McArthur for the afternoon. The kids were excited and energetic and we had beautiful weather. They were buoyed even further by the views, the animals, and the colour of the water. That evening at the hut we met folks from Osoyoos, the "Innkeeper" and a couple of his friends, and a fantastic Irish family of about 14 (three generations) who had traveled from various cities and towns across Canada to hike together. Everyone shared their stories and laughter and food – it was such a fantastic experience for us all!

Day Two took our two families out to Opabin Lake where we had a picnic lunch on the shore of what looks like a lake made from electric blue jello. Although the pictures do capture the colour of that lake, they somehow still do not quite do it justice. The surrounding meadow, wandering mountain goats, scurrying picas and squirrels somehow don't translate into pictures, either. You have to experience it to understand. The paths and steps en-route made us repeatedly stop with wonder – what an architectural triumph! We met older ladies from Alberta who were taking their time and marveling at how much easier the hike has been made because of the trail system that is in place. It truly does allow much better access for those of any fitness level. We were glad to see everyone respecting the 'rules of the road' thereby preserving these trails for generations to come.

Evening took the kids down to Lake O'Hara for some catch and release fishing, and brought more card games and stories back at the Hut. Given the scheduled weather conditions (high pressure, and a high of 27°) our family



Almost there! PHOTO: WENDY SWAN

decided to start preparations for Abbot Pass and leave in the morning.

We awoke very early on Day Three (sorry, fellow hikers) and had a quick breakfast of our camping staple – Red River cereal and hot tea, and then with toques and gloves on, we pulled our packs off the frost covered picnic tables and started on our way. We traveled along the far side of Lake O'Hara and hiked up to Lake Oesa which, honestly, we didn't pay fair praise to, as our sights were set just a little higher. We downed some power food, donned our helmets, and started the traverse up the scree slopes. At the first big moraine, we powered up again, then started across to the big scree/boulder gully that would, ultimately, lead us up to the Pass. The kids had their gortex jackets on, as the wind was quite strong, but the sky was clear blue and the views were incredible. Part way up the boulder field, the kids started to panic and, to be fair, so did I. However, we held it together and encouraged each other and slowly, but surely, kept making progress. What a slog! It was much harder than we had anticipated and although we knew there was no real danger of anyone falling "off" the mountain, it was pretty hairy nonetheless. I can honestly say it was the most challenging thing I have ever done and with the added pressure of having to encourage the kids along, it was emotionally draining. The two oldest, both girls, carried their own backpack with sleeping bag, water and warm clothes. Our son, only seven, did not carry a pack, but he was The Leader and chugged along find-

ing the route marks on the rocks, climbing up, waiting for us, finding the next mark and so on. His energy really kept us going at times.

About half way up, we met a guide and his client coming down. He told us the hut was in good shape, but "I leave you no wood, and no water." Excellent! We couldn't believe he actually said that to us! The anger my husband felt gave him added 'energy' and we were quickly off again, on the endless slope.

After many water breaks, and what seemed like hours (actually it was,) we still had not seen the Abbot Hut. The kids were worried that we were on the wrong gully but we knew we were right, just couldn't wait to set our sights on it. We had the sticks – just needed a carrot!

Finally, after four and a half hours of scree/boulder climbing (six hours from the EP Hut), I saw the chimney and yelled for joy! A few minutes later, we rounded the corner and there was the hut – just like in the books! I have never felt such relief and I have never been so proud of my kids or myself!

We went inside and while the kids took their packs upstairs and changed into warmer clothes, Jim took the pails out to the glacier to get snow ("I leave you no water") and I organized the kitchen supplies and started to get the wood stove ready. Once the stock pots were filled with snow, Jim chopped wood ("I leave you no wood") and the kids and I hauled it in and got the woodstove going. What a difference! Hot tea in hand, we chatted with the only other occupant, an O.R. nurse from Banff, and learned of his stories, and his ambitions. While he was out trying the face of Lefroy, an older gentleman with a very thick accent came in. Then his friend! And then the son-in-law, who is also a guide. These two mountain veterans had been up there many times in their lifetimes and had decided on "one last time to Abbot and Mount Victoria." They were both in their 70's, which was very humbling indeed. Small world that it is, they both know my parents, and I went to school in Banff with their kids. What of the chances of running into acquaintances in a small hut at 10,000 feet?

A short time later, a boy of thirteen walked in, took off his pack, and went back out. I told him the outhouse was around to the right ("don't turn left!!") but he replied that he was going back down to help his Mom. As I choked back maternal tears, our children were quick to assure me that they would never have done that!

Shortly after he left, his sister and their Dad arrived, and then the boy returned with his Mom. They felt like we did – exhausted, amazed, exhausted, awed, and, um, exhausted. A few hours later, we all agreed that we couldn't believe we had done it, we couldn't believe the kids had all done it, and we were all pretty happy. Until someone pointed out we had to go back down the next day. Ugh.

My daughter and the other Mom were trying to figure out what emergency they could 'fake' to call down to the lodge and have a helicopter sent up for 'rescue'. But there was a sign on the emergency phone on the wall of the hut that said, "Out of order. In case of emergency, send someone to lodge." What irony. Drat.

We had a wonderful night listening to stories from George and Guenther's younger days, and all the mishaps they had encountered (and survived!) over the years. We also heard of others' travels from different parts of Canada and beyond, and shared some of our own from previous trips. When you connect with people in a setting like that, chances are pretty good that you will have done similar trips in the past, or have them on your plan for the future. Whether it's kayaking in the Broken Islands, canoeing in Moraine Lake, hiking in the Tonquin Valley or on Baffin Island – there were enough similarities that we could all relate.

The next morning at the crack of dawn, or perhaps slightly before, Greg was up making tea and breakfast for his crew and at 6:30 the three of them left to summit Victoria before heading back down to catch the 4:30 bus back home. Amazing! Typical day, apparently, when you're in your 70's. We can only hope. Rob left at about the same time to solo Mount Lefroy. We let the kids sleep while we kept the fire going and made tea and breakfast. Our family was the next to leave, but we made sure to get our 'trophy' family pictures before we left – walking outside again in the morning, and watching the sun rise on those peaks, made us really appreciate our surroundings.

The descent was not as easy as we had hoped. The scree was not good and the 'skiing' we had hoped to do, really didn't happen. Instead, we picked our way down through endless boulder avalanches, trying our best not to cascade rocks down on to other family members. It was nerve wracking. Jim grabbed James's hand and pulled him behind, and told him to keep lifting his feet, which he did, and the two made it down in relatively good shape. The girls had to be coaxed a bit more, it was tough going and they were getting showered with rocks continuously. I managed to slide, fall, skid, and get pulled in a hundred ways until I was at the bottom of the slope with more bruises and cuts than I've ever had; and what my family now refers to as 'Abbot Ass'. It took us four and a half hours to get back down to Oesa, and we were practically running when we got there. The kids raced back to the hut in record time; and I managed not to collapse on the way back either. It was a tough haul. I was glad we had done it, but also pretty sure I wouldn't do it again.

Arriving back at the EP Hut, we looked back up to Mount Victoria and couldn't believe where we had just come from! We celebrated with a Koala Springs each from Le Relais Hut, and then got cleaned up and, as our 'reward', we started up to the Lodge for High Tea. Along the road,

we met up with the family we'd stayed with up at the Pass, and they joined us for High Tea – a perfect way to share our stories and toast each other in our accomplishments! We compared bruises, pictures (the joy of the digital camera), and stories of our descent and we shared cookies, fruit, tea and exchanged addresses.

We spent our last evening hearing where our friends from home had been hiking for the past two days, and sharing with them what we had done. We all felt that we had done more than we thought we could, and had enjoyed ourselves thoroughly in the process. We loved the two ACC huts at Lake O'Hara and promised to return again one day, perhaps with our children and grandchildren – what a wonderful idea!

Our last morning we got final pictures at Lake O'Hara and although we were sad to leave, we were also looking forward to the next portion of our trip – the Moms and Kids were going camping and relaxing to Kootenay Lake, Ainsworth Hot Springs and Christina Lake – the Dads were off to the Kokanee Glacier for five days of hiking there.

What a summer!

A Date with Edith

Geoff Bennett
August 23-30

On a cloudy Sunday morning that promised rain, we hiked into the Tonquin Valley. As we shouldered our packs for the six hour walk and crossed the bridge over Edith Cavell Lake, we looked up, way up – one vertical mile – to the summit and the imposing north face of Jasper's most famous peak. I had a date with Edith the following Sunday and I wasn't the least bit confident that I would soon be standing on that summit. Seven years earlier, Paul Clements and I had stared in dismay at her snow-covered quartzite ledges. One week earlier, a helicopter had plucked a pair of stranded climbers off the howling East Ridge. Both Sylvia Forest and Peter Amann had warned me that an otherwise long and easy scramble on sun-warmed rock could quickly degenerate into an all-night epic.

But first – a jolly week with friends at the Wates-Gibson Hut in Tonquin Valley, the site in 2002 of our Section's first summer camp since the eighties. We encountered our first technical challenge at the door to the hut. The code failed to open the lock. I have to admit to a feeling of childish glee as I wriggled through the only unlocked window, found a wrench and removed the lock from the door.

On Monday a group of us hiked through the beautiful rolling meadows above Amethyst Lake and scrambled up the southwest slope of Clitheroe. Rising 800 metres above the lake, this peak offers the best view of the Tonquin Valley and the steep wall of the Ramparts. Among the bristling towers, Paragon Peak called to me – another unattainable, unfulfilled love from seven years ago.

The weather on Tuesday began poorly and threatened worse, then eventually chased us off the western slopes of Outpost Peak. Back in the hut at lunchtime, Sylvia and I munched our trail food and stared morosely out the window. This is no life for an accomplished mountaineer like Sylvia so I suggested that we climb “Surprise!” – a fine little pyramid on the east slope of Paragon. In the spirit of Conrad Kain, who climbed Mount Louis during an afternoon picnic, we set off with a jaunty air and a bit of rope. The traverse from north to south is a steep scramble on firm rock. A rope provides comfort but is barely necessary until the final puzzle – how to descend into the scree couloir on the south slope. We elected to rappel off a stout sling although it is possible to climb down. But note that a plaque in the hut commemorates a Japanese climber who fell on this route. Five hundred metres of rough scree took us down to the boggy meadow, where we leaped in glee from one soggy tussock to another. If you run fast enough you don’t get wet.

On Wednesday I promised the gang an easy climb up a snowy ramp in the sky to the summit of Thunderbolt. However, I didn’t promise a rose garden, as several people noted during the circuitous bushwhack through scrubby trees and deadfall. Above the trees the views in all directions were splendid, although the slog through quartzite boulders seemed endless. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the hike occurred during the descent, when the group split into three. The “cooks” headed back the tried and true route from whence we came; Roger lend a band south into the Arrowhead Lakes; and the rest of us chose a line down the prominent west ridge pointing to the cabin. Below the cliff band at about 2,000m we stumbled upon a veritable caribou highway, trending straight as an arrow northwest to Chrome Lake. Except for one spot where the caribou must have tied into ropes, the path guided us effortlessly back to the waterfall above the lake.

That night, David Lemon and I plotted our route up Paragon. We awoke in the wee hours and headed up the trail



Geoff Bennett and nephew Robin Bennett on Mt. Edith Cavell

PHOTO: MARK STEWART

at 4 a.m. But that morning I felt uncharacteristically old and sick. I threatened to bail at every dismal rock pile, willow grove and creek crossing that blocked our path. I stumbled in the unsteady lurid glow of the headlamp. David kindly waited while I rested every few steps up 600m of miserable scree. When we reached the gargoyles of the lower ridge in sunshine I felt much better. But the going was loose and tricky, including a hair-raising traverse across the top of an icy couloir. Luckily we had brought crampons and ice axes for this supposed rock climb. Beyond the notch we still had another heartbreaking hour of slogging through scree before we reached the ridge proper and the beautiful quartzite staircase. At this point it was 9 a.m., five hours from the hut. I realized that in my condition there was no way we could go for the summit. So we relaxed, ate some food, then roped up and climbed the first few pitches including the crux. The rest of the climb would have been a straightforward scramble on such a sunny day but we decided to turn around. A couple of dramatic rappels led us back to the notch and the way home. We returned to the hut in time for supper, which we earned by singing a rousing rendition to the tune of Tipperary – “It’s a Long Way to Paragon Peak!” I was so tired. And my feet hurt. I thought about Edith Cavell, just two days away.

A welcome day of rest on Friday included a sunny shower, cooking the “Last Supper,” and an evening of skits and hilarity. As usual, the hike out on Saturday was a bit sad and anticlimactic. We bade each other farewell in the dusty parking lot and I watched the last car disappear down the

mountain. As I stood in awe beneath Edith, I thought about my sore feet and how much I hated my new boots, still unbroken after weeks on the trail.

Robin Bennett, my nephew, and Mark Stewart, our guide, joined me in the hostel that night. Needing an experienced partner and unwilling to chance a big mountain with my brother's son, I had contacted Peter Amann a few months earlier. Peter was unavailable but he recommended Mark, who was first class. Robin earned his keep by barbecuing steaks and potatoes, a fitting meal for the big day ahead. The weather forecast was spectacular.

We hit the trail below Angel Glacier by 4 a.m. The two younger gentlemen chatted happily in front while I quietly wheezed behind. A word to the wise – this popular area is rife with meandering trails through the moraine. It would be a good idea to scout the correct approach route in daylight. The trail leads to the col at the base of the East Ridge, from whence the route up the mountain is obvious.

There ensued as fine a day in the mountains as I've ever enjoyed: sunshine, good company, warm rock, an endless succession of firm quartzite steps interspersed with airy ridge walks and constant breathtaking views down the steep north face. On a good day the East Ridge is reputed to be one of the best climbs in the Rockies. Mark led the climb with grace and panache, sauntering up the cliff in his running shoes. According to the rules he had to short-rope us, but it wasn't really necessary on such a warm and windless day.

Nevertheless the frequent sight of not-very-old rappel slings reminded me that the rope was critical.

To my complete surprise, we romped up the ridge and reached the summit before 11 a.m., seven hours after leaving the car. The whole world lay below us, like a mini-Everest moment. Mount Robson hovered dimly in the smoke haze to the north. The register lay within a cairn formed by strange plant fossils from the Cambrian. We enjoyed a leisurely one-hour lunch in the amazing warmth and stillness, rarely found on a peak over 11,000 feet. Then we headed down the West Ridge.

Within two hours we reached the meadows of Verdant Pass, but not before struggling down 1,000 metres of loose rock. Why anyone would want to ascend the West Ridge is beyond me. The trail down Verdant Creek to the Astoria River is long but straightforward. Two more hours of easy hiking led us back to Cavell Lake. Twelve hours up one side of Edith Cavell and down the other – a satisfying day for an old geezer with sore feet. Lucky. Robin and I thanked Mark profusely. In high spirits, we drove down to Jasper for a well-earned night of burgers and beer.

Peaks: Clitheroe, Surprise, Thunderbolt, Paragon (the hard bits but not the best bits), Edith Cavell

Participants on Edith Cavell: Geoff and Robin Bennett, Mark Stewart (guide)

2009 PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



Vancouver Island
Mountain Scenery Winner
Triple Peak Glory
Photo: Ken Wong



Mountain Scenery Winner
*View of Victoria and Elder
from Elkhorn*
Photo: Tom Roozendaal



Mountain Portrait Winner
*Martin Hoffman having
a ball at Kokanee*
Photo: John Young



Mountain Humour Winner
Graham the Aquatic Ostrich
 in Tonquin Valley
 Photo: Cedric Zala

Mountain Activity Winner
Climbing in the Monte Rosa group
 Photo: Rory O'Connell



Nature Winner
Bald eagle in the Sooke Hills
 Photo: Catrin Brown



South of the Border

A Diamond, a Broken Top and a Bust

Tony Vaughn

June 27 – July 3

We continue the ongoing saga of climbing the major volcanoes of the North Cascade Range. This year brought us to three of the lesser known ones, all located within the state of Oregon. These were Diamond Peak, although not in Jeff Smoots Guide it is still a major volcano at 8,744ft.(2,673m) followed by Broken Top at 9,175ft (2,797m) and Three Fingered Jack at 7,841ft (2,390m).

The 10:30 Coho ferry deposited us safely at Port Angeles, in beautiful sunny weather for the start of the long drive to southern Oregon State. Turning off I-5 onto highway 58, we reached a rugal (cheap) we chose not to pay for a campsite, choosing instead to park up a side road at a perfect flat area adjacent to a small concrete building. A bit of a mistake this, as it turned out the building contained a generator that supplied power for the closest campgrounds water system. No sooner had we turned in than there was this almighty roar, as the generator started up and proceeded to run, undisturbed for about an hour, eliminating all hope of sleep. Once silence had returned we slept until around 5 a.m. when once more we were greeted by the engine restarting, to satisfy the needs of the paying public down in the campground. No point in trying to sleep any longer. So it was up, breakfast and away in search of the Corrigan Lake trailhead for Diamond Peak. Passing lots of beautiful camping spots on our way to mosquito hell.

By 8:30 am, coated with deet, and Martin and Graham shrouded in head nets, we took off up the trail for 2 km to Corrigan Lake being chased all the way by hordes of starving mosquitoes. A kilometre or so passed the lake now on the Pioneer Gulch trail, still pursued by the hungry blood sucking hordes, we decided to leave the trail behind and climb



Diamond Peak approaching the Summit PHOTO: TONY VAUGHN

up to the ridge in a north easterly direction. Passing through open forest and gaining the ridge within a half-hour. As we gained elevation we gradually left the mosquitoes behind, moving through scrubby pines until we were out onto the open rocky ridge. The ridge was easily followed up to a point above the col between the NW ridge and the main summit. At this point we split up, Martin and Graham, not wanting to lose any elevation, stayed high and went across to the main summit block at the high point of the col. While I went in a straight line, dropping down onto the snow in the col and up the scree on the other side of what turned out to be the false summit, the main summit being about 500 ft further east. Once reunited with the other pair we took off for the true summit arriving at 1:35 p.m.

Retracing our steps following a brief break on top, we reached the vehicle at 5:20 p.m. Not wishing to be completely drained of blood before we got back to civilization, we lit-

erally threw our packs and boots in the back, leapt into the vehicle and drove away, killing those mosquitoes that had managed to get past our defenses as we went. One of the most memorable things of the day were the mosquitoes, which we were assured by the outdoor store proprietor in Oakville was that the mosquitoes in the Diamond Peak area were classified as Alaskan grade, were the worst in Oregon and that this year they were worse than usual, facts that we would totally agree with.

Our next objective being Broken Top required us to drive north into central Oregon and a campsite at Sparks Lake, close to the trail head. Subsequently 7 a.m. next morning found us plodding up the Falls Creek trail towards our objective. By 8 a.m. the trail had disappeared beneath snow and we lost it, resulting in us getting caught between the Newberry Lava flow and the roaring Falls creek. Fortunately after a bit of searching up and down the creek we found a way across on a downed tree, and back onto the East side of the creek. On the way back we found our error, although the map showed one creek crossing, there were in fact two bridges as the creek split into two channels. Not knowing this we crossed the first bridge and then turned north, leaving the main stream still to the east of us. Picking up the trail again between snow patches, we soon left the trees behind and before long we reached Green Lakes with the North ridge of Broken Top clearly visible in the near distance. At this point we moved in a direct line over snow and scree slopes towards the obvious saddle on the N.W. Ridge as described in the guide book, reaching it without difficulty as we followed a worn boot track in the scree, thus making route finding easy. Here we stopped for a much needed break before starting the tedious climb up the ridge towards the summit block, following a fairly well worn track in the cinders and moving from side to side of the ridge top as dictated by obstacles on the ridge. Once below the summit block we dropped our packs, put on harness and helmets and got out the rope for the short rock pitch that took us on to the ledge traverse, known as the catwalk. Although the pitch was easy climbing the consequences of a fall were quite serious so it was a wise decision to protect this pitch. Once on the catwalk it was a short distance to the final scramble up rotten, crumbly rock up to the summit, which we reached at 2:10 p.m. Following a very brief stay on top, we left the summit and traversed back



Upper catwalk on Broken Top PHOTO: TONY VAUGHN

down the catwalk, bypassing the rock step by a rappel down to our stashed gear at the base of the summit block. Here we stopped for lunch before retracing our steps down the ridge. The hike out was long and tiring, once off the ridge we went across country over snowfields that had softened up during the day, and which were ridged across our line of travel by two foot deep troughs, making for very hard going. But like everything in life these came to an end and we found a boot track in the snow which led us back to the proper trail and out to the vehicle by 7:10 p.m. Another long twelve hour day, but with the satisfaction of completing another volcano, and that is more than can be said for our next objective.

We had considered camping at the trail head, prior to attempting our next climb, but the thought of the mosquitoes and noisy traffic drove us to spend \$16 on a campsite at Suttle Lake, a short drive down the road. Never the less we were off up the Pacific crest trail by 6:55 a.m. the next morning, once again in great sunny weather, going north toward Three Fingered Jack. Conditions on the trail were similar to the trail in to Broken Top, after about an hours hiking we were into snow, plodding along in search of a large cairn, which was supposed to be marking a climbers trail into the mountain. However once the mountain came into view it appeared that with the snow cover and the visibility we had the easiest approach would be to go across country directly to the South Ridge saddle. Once on the ridge there were ample signs of travel which we followed, going up the crumbly cinders of the south ridge. At a point about 300 ft vertical from

the summit I decided I'd had enough, not only did the final 300 ft look uninviting, consisting of a pile of rotten crumbling blocks of friable cinders ("So lowly regarded is the rock on 3 Fingered Jack that the summit pinnacle is said to vibrate in high winds") I was feeling low in energy and fed up with climbing on rotten rock, so I decided to stop and have lunch while Martin and Graham continued on to the top. No sooner had I settled down for a much needed rest than Martin called down to say that they were at the crawl, a feature that bypassed a gendarme on the ridge and was the crux of the climb, just 200 ft from the summit. So I packed up my gear and went up to join them and watch them climb up the last stretch to the top. Unfortunately the rotten nature of the rock got the better of them and they were soon back to join me for lunch. In the meantime a couple of local lads, comfortably dressed in shorts, T-shirts and light boots (helmets, harness and rope included) passed us by and made short work of getting to the top and back. The only excuse I can make for our failure compared to their success, was that they had done the climb many times before, therefore knew the route and were 30-40 years younger than us. (Those added years make a big difference) Lunch finished we slunk off the mountain and back to the trailhead and our return home. It was still a great trip even though we didn't make all three; the last one will still be there for another try in the future.

Participants: Martin Smith, Graham Bennett, Tony Vaughn

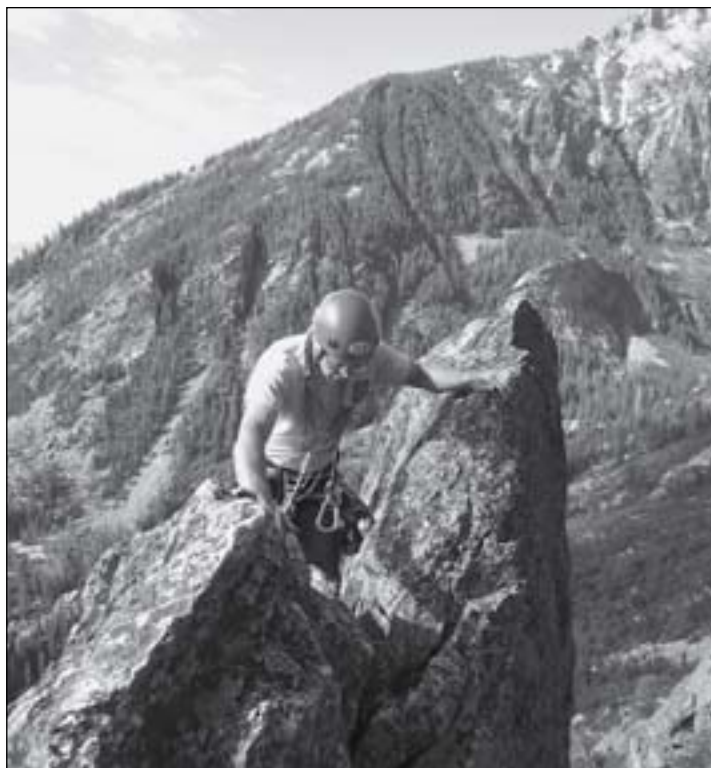
Grand Teton and Longs Peak

John Pratt

July 8-11, August 31

In Kansas, there is little to do in the way of mountaineering (once one has scaled - without oxygen of course - all the state's fourteen 8,000m peaks): just a lot of yellow brick roads, cornfields, endless steppe, big skies and violent weather. This summer, we had a whole week of 40 C plus heat - and that was 40 C in the shade (although one is not obliged to remain in the shade). I really loved our new house in this small university town and ever since coming here in December, to a harsh Kansas winter, I had been fully occupied with a combination of settling in, looking after our two small boys and trying to knock the large garden into shape, as well as busying myself with my research work.

It had been my intention to come to British Columbia in the summer to get back to some of those things I was missing, like the annual Great Walk, the Hkusam Klimb and, above all, to a settling of accounts with some of those Brit-



John Pratt arriving at the summit of Baxter's Pinnacle PHOTO: BILL ANDERSON

ish Columbia summits still on my list. Due, however, to the red tape associated with my application for Permanent Resident status here, this was not "possible"; a letter in the clogged bureaucratic style so beloved of these officials informed me that, should I leave the country while my application was pending, I might not be allowed back in. An offer, as they say, that I could not refuse.

Thus it was that I decided to do a few guided climbs somewhere - anywhere - in some area of the United States with which, from a climbing point of view, I was unfamiliar; which apart from Washington State, meant all the "lower 48." So where? Well, of course, as the Germans probably don't say, that one was a Keinhirner: the obvious answer was the Tetons. A quick air-trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming followed.

On July 8, I met up with my guide, Bill Anderson of Exum Mountain Guides, and we did a try-out climb on a pinnacle called Baxter's Needle. We began bright and early at the dock on Jenny Lake and took the ferry across to the landing on the other side, accompanied by casual tourists, dogs, bawling infants and super-sized families, as well as other fit, tanned and muscular climbers - the usual cross-section of society to be seen in any popular and easily accessible mountain area. The climb was an agreeable half-hour uphill walk followed by five or six pitches of 5.8 or so, with one 5.9+ move (horribly exposed) up to a spectacular and overhanging summit block. The idea of the try-out climb was of course to let the guide know what sort of shape, technically and aerobically, I

was in and to match that to a suitable route on the “Grand.” I must have impressed him a little more than I’d intended to, as I finished Baxter’s in fine style and in half the time normally allocated for it. Accordingly, Bill suggested the Direct Exum Ridge (the one in “Fifty Classic Climbs”) which of course includes the popular upper half accessed from “Wall Street,” the prominent ledge that runs along the South Face, but also the far harder lower section, which looks intimidating from a distance, but which, close up, looks even more intimidating.

I spent the night of July 9-10 in a tent up at the Lower Saddle (3,590m), the col between the Grand and Middle Teton. It was a cold and windswept place. We got going at 6:10 the next morning, at which time it was still pitch black. It began to lighten just before we arrived at the base of the ridge itself. The first pitch, while not at all difficult, was gloomy, verglas-covered and distinctly unpleasant. The rock steepened, but the verglas stopped and the holds were at least reasonable, and so it went for the next (maybe) five or six pitches. I should add that I was climbing with a pack in which were my heavy climbing boots, spare clothes, water bottles, food and ice axe, and on my feet I had some of their sticky-rubber-soled “approach shoes,” a sort of hybrid of classic leather mountaineering boots and rock shoes. Personally, I would recommend taking actual rock shoes and changing into them where necessary; on one of the pitches (the one below the Black Face), I felt my footing on the 5.9 rock to be very tenuous indeed. To be honest, I lost count of all the pitches - for the whole ridge I’d estimate 20 or at least not much change out of 20; although some were quite small, a few were the full rope-length for sure. The outstanding pitch is the 80 degree Black Face and it was here I actually began to enjoy myself.

We finally arrived at “Wall Street” and the hard part was behind us. The Upper Ridge is pleasant, middle-fifth and interrupted at intervals by snow patches. The “friction pitch” takes some care and “Unsold’s lieback” gives one the unpleasant feeling of being about to swing out over a yawning void, but after the rigours of the Lower Ridge, they are fairly easily handled. We arrived on the 4,196m summit at 1:15 p.m. and spent a half hour enjoying the view, which is everything one would expect from this lovely peak. Descent to the camp at the Upper Saddle was via the classic Owen-Spalding Route, with its enjoyable 40m rappel, the lower 20m of which is free-hanging! Back at camp around 4 p.m., we packed up and began the hike out to the trailhead, which we reached with daylight to spare.

A couple of days later, rested up, Bill and I (together with Weston, a young guide-in-training, along as an observer) went to the classic CMC Route on Mount Moran (3,842m) in the Northern Teton. This massive mountain is approached via two canoe rides, one up String Lake, followed by a 15 minute portage and another, longer, one across Leigh Lake to where a prominent creek comes down from the East Face. We



John Pratt on the Black Face, Lower Exum Ridge PHOTO: BILL ANDERSON

cached the canoes here and then hiked for three hours or so up a rough trail to the delightfully situated CMC campsite at about 3,000m. There we brewed up some coffee and watched the lengthening shadow of Mount Moran projected onto the flatlands to the east by the lowering sun. That night, we sat out two thunderstorms which caused me to fear for my summit chances. By 4 a.m., however, some stars had begun to appear; a good sign, as we all know. So after a quick brew-up, we set off up through the talus and cliff-bands. It was quite light when we reached our first objective, the summit of a tower called Drizzlepuss (so called because wet conditions attended its first ascent) from which an impressive view of the actual CMC route was gained. It looked pretty awful, like smooth, high-angled slabs, but we knew it was one of those foreshortening phenomena and that it was a good deal easier than its dreadful appearance suggested. We rappelled off the Drizzlepuss and then began the actual pitches. These were somewhat reminiscent of the “friction pitch” of the Upper Exum and certainly nowhere near as difficult - or numerous - as those of the Lower Exum. We passed close by the prominent black basalt dike and topped out on the face, reaching the football-field-sized summit at 9:07 a.m.. The climbing crux of the CMC route is, paradoxically, on the descent and is the upward climb (5.7) of Drizzlepuss. Once back on top of that tower, all serious difficulties are over and the descent to camp, though tedious, was straightforward and after packing up and resting, we descended the 1000 vertical metres to the canoe arriving there late in the afternoon. Once again, we’d been very fast which was good, as it left time for some serious beer-drinking in the small, nearby community of Moose.

At the end of August, I took off once more, this time to Colorado and made my base camp the tacky little tourist town of

Estes Park, a less than two hour drive from Denver. My selected climb was Kiener's Route on Longs Peak (4,345m), which goes up the East face to the left of the famous "Diamond." However, this route was menaced by high winds and frequent rockfall, so I instead ended up doing the North Face (5.4). My guide, Joe Thompson, and I set off from the trailhead, by flashlight, at 2:07 a.m. and hiked up through the dry pine forest, then out onto the vast, undulating scree and boulder-fields. This went on, it seemed, forever and was both unpleasant and unedifying, but eventually it began to lighten and just as the sun came up, a dull orange ball in the hazy sky, we reached a spot called "Chasm View," which had a dramatic, side-on view of the Diamond (5.10, by the so-called "Casual Route" - but remember it is at 4,000m). Here, the North Face proper (this is to the right of the Diamond) began and we roped up. Oddly enough, I felt the altitude rather strongly and even some of the small, easy pitches were a bit of a trial. However, if I am good at anything, it is gritting my teeth and keeping going, so I did and we made quite good progress. Only a couple of the pitches were at all serious and we arrived on top at 10:20 a.m.. The view from the summit of Longs is, I'm afraid, rather uninspiring, or at least it was the day I was there. There was almost no snow, the sky was hazy and the mountains seemed just rounded and lumpy. Of course, one could tell one was very high up, but it fell far short of the experience of being atop the Grand Teton. Descent was via the easy (but interesting) "Keyhole" route, so named from a dramatic overhanging cleft in the mountain's West Ridge. I would certainly recommend the area for rock-climbing, however, and the famous Petit Grepon has just had the honour of being officially placed on my "hit list."

Mount Baker

Sam Brown
July 12-14

Back in 2008 my mother decided that for my 16th birthday she would pack me off to visit my Auntie Catrin on Vancouver Island for a couple of weeks of outdoor adventures. It sounded a great idea, but I decided it would be a good idea to get my father some exercise too, so on July 4, we both landed in Swartz Bay where we were warmly greeted by a very excited aunt, a contrast to our knackered selves.

Catrin had been busy planning an active time for us and so the first week was taken up with a couple of days training followed by a four-day sea kayak trip to the Broken Group Islands. Neither of us had ever done anything like that before so it was quite an experience and adventure. On the long drive up to the west coast where we were to cast off we were



Ready for action in the wee hours of the morning PHOTO: BROWN COLLECTION

joined by a great group of Catrin's friends. We all shared a mixture of torrential rain and disappointing fog but persistence prevailed and on the last couple of days we experienced some glorious sunshine with some wonderful memories (including my dad deciding to test the stability of his kayak. He soon learned his lesson).

The focus and target for the second week was climbing Mount Baker. Catrin had lined up a suitable list of friends to help make the assault possible, so it was on the July 12, we set off to the mainland in a group of seven. I had never climbed anything more than 3,000 feet before and my father had not attempted anything this high for at least twenty years, so the prospect of climbing to over 10,000 ft was quite daunting! But we took the ferry over in high spirits and good weather.

As we drove south (the northerly route was washed out) we saw Mount Baker for the first time, standing high and mighty before us, but soon disappearing ahead as the weather closed in. Undaunted we parked and set off to base camp just below the glacier. The weather was mixed but we had a good sunset that evening and so we were hopeful of better weather still to come.

The next morning however, we woke to a disheartening blanket of cloud and mist. The day was intended to be a training day as neither my dad nor I had ever used ropes or been on a glacier with crampons before. Russ and Karun lead the training with much help from the other members of the group offering valid and crucial advice that could later be used to save our lives in a case of an emergency. They were great teachers. As we were a party of seven we agreed to have two ropes, one with the younger members, and one with the older team. Of course I was on the young rope with Arno

and Karun (who later on displayed his fitness level that clearly qualified him for the “young” rope!) Dad was on the older rope with his sister Catrin, Russ and Mike.

So after a few hours of training and plodding around a misty glacier, where visibility got to the point where you could not see the man two places ahead on the same rope, we moved back down to our base camp feeling ready to attack the mountain the next day, not really convinced that we needed to or could possibly get up at 3 a.m. the next morning! The evening passed surprisingly quickly. The mist came down and we were beginning to accept that the poor weather was here to stay for the night and an ascent may not be possible. We spent quite a bit of time negotiating with Karun at exactly what time we had to wake up. I think Karun grudgingly agreed to 4 a.m.

Nevertheless, soon after 3 a.m. the alarm rang somewhere in another tent and people started moving around (although all very sluggishly and quietly). From other tents (including our own) there were groans and protestations about just about everything from the weather to what we were going to eat. But Karun’s persistence and enthusiasm kept us all going in the right direction to getting up.

We finally left the camp at about 4:30 a.m. and set off into the mist lit only by head torchlight. We were not hopeful that it would clear, but we plodded on feeling a certain déjà vu (as this was the same ground we covered yesterday) and a collective but unspoken expectation of futility given the thick mist. But on we tramped for over an hour. We turned off the torches as it got lighter through the cloud that we were in, but we still couldn’t see much beyond the person in front. There was an eerie silence amongst the group as we all kept thinking that it was getting clearer before being plunged back into the thick of it. Each of us not daring to speak of turning around after getting what seemed so far (little did we realise the great climb we still had ahead of ourselves). But there came no call from our leaders Russ/Karun who stayed silent until we suddenly emerged from thick fog into a beautiful blue sky where we could see for miles. At that point we all let out a huge sigh of relief and joy. The emotions running through my head were a fantastic mix of shock and awe at the marvellous views (both across the sea of cloud and up towards the peak), and a sense of realisation at what we were about to attempt. On we went, talking and laughing. Crampons, ropes, all seemed almost natural after our whole half-day of intense training.

And so the two straggling ropes made their way slowly but continuously towards the top. It wasn’t fast, but it was kept at a steady pace. No one wanted to be the one lagging on the rope holding the others back and so we all kept going. Every now and then we would come across the opportunity to look straight down a crevasse that soon made it apparent why we were on ropes. A bottomless chasm that never



Above the clouds and on the way to the top PHOTO: BROWN COLLECTION

seemed to end doesn’t sound like the way we wanted to go. After exactly eight hours of walking, there we were, on the top! Looking down at the ocean of cloud with famous jagged points sticking out, of which we soon learnt the names and recounted some of the epic adventures that others in the group had gotten first hand experience in, making Mount Baker sound like a small round hill in comparison (definitely not how it seemed to my dad and me). From here we could look down at the volcano slightly on the side, spewing out sulphurous clouds that could be smelled from a long way off, tarnishing the perfectly white landscape with a yellow mess. On the way down it was pointed out to me why there were some small holes in the deep snow/ice. I foolishly thought that they may be due to some sort of bird or animal before realising I hadn’t seen life (apart from ourselves and other climbers) much beyond the start of the glacier, but was told that they were shards of hot rock that were still erupting from the dormant volcano. A worrying thought considering where we were standing.

Eight hours up. Four hours back down. Towards the bottom the snow was really slushy and slippery, but we were passed caring, overjoyed at what we had achieved. We slid back into base camp with beaming smiles from ear to ear. I don’t think I have ever been so tired, but it was the most satisfying tiredness I had ever felt.

Very special thanks to Catrin and the whole team: Russ, Karun, Mike and Arno (and Mum and Dad).



Distant Places

Camino Real: Panama

Graham Maddocks
November 22-27, 2008

This is not the story of an alpine trek, however, it did involve a lot of rain, mud, river crossings and thrashing through dense, wet undergrowth, elements that I know are close to the hearts of the Vancouver Island Section of the A.C.C

The Camino Real in present day Panama was the most important thoroughfare in the Americas of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Gold, silver and the riches of the Pacific coast of the Americas and the Orient were loaded onto mules to cross the isthmus from Panama City on the Pacific Coast to Portobello on the Caribbean Coast for transport to Spain by sea. The Camino Real was abandoned more than 250 years ago to be reclaimed by the tropical jungle.

The trail of the Camino de Cruces originally led from the settlement of Old Panama on the Pacific coast to the settlement of Venta de Cruces on the Chagres River, close to the present day Panama canal and the high artificial Lago Gatun. Cargo was then transported by river to the shores of Largo Alhajuela and then by mule train to Nombre de Dios on the Caribbean coast.

The gold and wealth of goods attracted the attention of English pirates operating in the Caribbean attacking Spanish interests in the New World. In 1573 Francis Drake sacked Nombre de Dios and a new Camino was cut to Portobello on a sheltered bay to the west, where several large forts were built to protect the Customs house.

A much larger fort was constructed at San Lorenzo at the mouth of the Chagres River. In 1671 buccaneer Henry Morgan took the fort at San Lorenzo and sailed up the Chagres River. After crossing the isthmus of the continent on foot, Morgan attacked the city of Panama and made off with

its treasure, arriving back on the Caribbean coast with two hundred mules loaded with gold.

British privateering didn't cease with the destruction of Old Panama City. In 1739 Admiral Edward Vernon destroyed the fortress of Portobello and sacked the town and its Customs house. A third of the gold in the known world had passed through the Customs house at Portobello.

Robbed of their greatest defenses, the Spanish abandoned the Panamanian crossing in favor of sailing the long way around Cape Horn to the west coast of South America.

Most of the area of the original trail is now encompassed by Parque Nacional Chagres, which is in the watershed of the Panama Canal. Some 14,000 ships pass through the canal each year, every time the locks are operated a staggering fifty-two million gallons of fresh water is released into the ocean.

A guide was hired and we traveled by motorized dugout canoe to an indigenous Embera village on the shore of Largo Alhajuela. Despite living relatively close to Western style civilization, the indigenous people live a traditional subsistence lifestyle in raised thatch huts, and adorn themselves with black body paint made from the juice of the jagua fruit. The dye from this fruit is believed to have health giving properties, and it has the added bonus of warding off insects. They fish the river from huge, sturdy dugout canoes made from the kapok tree and grow manioc, sugar cane and pineapples in the poor tropical rainforest soil.

The only sign of the presence of the outside world was a battered black and white TV connected to a car battery. We spent the night at the village, dining on river fish and plantains.

A second guide was hired; a mature man aged forty-five, and four young men to act as porters. The indigenous people are small in stature, wiry and smiling. All wore very uncomfortable looking rubber boots as the area is home to the deadly fer de lance snake.

This time of the year would normally be the end of the wet season and river levels would be dropping, but as soon as we started our trek to find the Camino Real we were hit by

almost continuous, unprecedented tropical rain. This produced high river levels, making crossings difficult without the aid of trekking poles. It also produced endless calf deep, red, oozing warm mud.

The indigenous guide El Jefe (the boss), carried a machete the size of a cutlass and when he paused staring at the jungle, I would ask the way, and he would reply that he didn't know. This was no cause for alarm and is a similar experience to seeing an Inuit staring at a vast expanse of ice. He isn't lost, he is just thinking.

At night the porters cleared an area of jungle and rigged a tarp under which we pitched the tents. On our third night of camping and no evidence that we had found the Camino Real the Panamanian guide decided to move the camp uphill in case the river came up as the rain was torrential. Late at night the guide called me out as the river was still rising, the indigenous guide joined us and said that it had never been this high before. So the decision was made to move the camp again. By now it was pitch black and the slope to the higher ground was a river of liquid mud. We thrashed and bushwhacked uphill through dense jungle, pitching a tent was now out of the question, but some area was cleared and the tarp was rigged, under which we huddled for a long, wet night, sitting in the warm mud. By now the presence of the venomous fer de lance and poisonous scorpions were forgotten.

On the trek we found a fer de lance (known by its indigenous name mapana) dead in the mud, although they can swim, the porters said this small snake had drowned after being caught in a torrent of water. The usual victim's of this snake's bite are indigenous people tending their crop growing plots. Because they are superstitious of it, in Colombia the indigenous people will not help anyone who has been bitten, for fear of touching the victim. The Panamanian guide told me he once killed a large fer de lance to experience eating it, later the indigenous porters refused to eat from the pot the snake had been cooked in.

The continual immersion had caused my skin to come off in chunks, compensated for by the fact the rain kept the mosquitoes down. On the fourth day we were skirting around a waterfall when we found unmistakable evidence of the original trail, cut stone steps with a cut drainage channel ascended the slippery rock, worn smooth by countless skinny mules and their bullion loads. How the Spanish traversed the trail in the heat, humidity, rain and mud in leather boots and armour will have to remain one of life mysteries.

We saw several troops of howler monkeys, who roared like lions at dusk, with babies clinging to their backs, and many peccary, a small wire haired relative of the pig, nosing their snouts happily through the mud and coatimundi, a racoon like animal. The jungle was full of brightly coloured tropical birds, the Isthmus of Panama being the most bird species rich area in the world. The porters showed me

a small bright green mottled frog, known as a poison dart frog. When stressed, the frog excretes a lethal toxin through its skin, which the indigenous people used to smear on their blowgun darts. El Jefe showed me a freshwater crab with one huge pincer called a jiva, which he had picked up. I asked him why he was keeping it and he gave me an incredulous look, and said that he was going to eat it.

Although heavily overgrown, the trail was discerned again as we crossed the continental divide where the path descended in several different trails up to 1.5 metres deep as the mule trains sought to avoid the ruts and mud of one descent route.

Cut stone steps and drainage channels were found around waterfalls on the Caribbean side, and evidence of a wider cobblestone path as we neared Portobello. On squelching into the first roadside restaurant, beers and fried fish were ordered, and the indigenous guide and porters were tipped for their cheerful and knowledgeable service on this six day trek.

I spent the night in a beach front guest house in Portobello to soak up the atmosphere of this historic old town, still ringed with ruined forts. I had hoped to dry out on the beach, but the rain continued relentlessly, filling the beautiful bay of Portobello with mud.

Cerro Chirripo: Costa Rica

Graham Maddocks
January 1-4

At 3,820 metres Cerro Chirripo is Central America's highest peak and the main attraction of a beautiful national park set in the rugged Cordillera de Talamanca of Costa Rica. Lush cloud forest, high alpine lakes and bare paramo (grassland above the tree line) define the landscape.

The access point for the park is the bucolic mountain town of San Gerardo de Rivas set in the cool coffee growing region of southern Costa Rica. There is a ranger station in the town where park entry permits can be obtained and reservations made for the Refugio Centro Ambientista El Paramo. Guides, porters and packhorses can also be hired in the village.

The steep 19 kilometres approach trail goes through the constantly changing vegetation of a swirling misty cloud forest, where I saw white faced capuchin monkeys, monster beetles and many tropical birds including toucanets, trogons and many species of miniature humming birds, so tiny they can hardly qualify as birds.

Seven kilometres from the trail head is a shelter, Refugio Llano Bonito (locked) and the first water as the trail passes

into dwarf cloud forest adorned with old man's beard. The whole area is characterized by large boulders and U shaped valleys formed by the last ice age 20,000 years ago. It is apparently the only area in Central America where this glacial evidence is visible. The trail is steep and slippery and has been ground up by packhorses; trekking poles are useful.

The refugio has a permanent warden with a radio telephone and a solar powered satellite internet. There are also cold water showers and solar lighting for two hours in the evening. There are several other peaks in the area and some high alpine hiking trails.

Given the section's membership penchant for a thorough thrashing, the climb of Cerro Chirripo can be done as an overnigher, leaving the refugio at 3.00 a.m. to summit and descend to San Gerardo de Rivas the same day.

I hired a boney horse and an arriero (horse handler) to carry my pack and spent three nights at the refugio. I climbed Cerro Chirripo 3,820m on the first day and Cerro Ventisqueros 3,812m on the second. Both climbs were made in mist, rain and cold wind and the alleged view of both oceans, the Pacific and the Caribbean, were not seen. Neither climb is technical and both have a well defined trail. Although I was unable to obtain a trail map of the area at the ranger station a guide is not really necessary. From certain angles Cerro Chirripo resembles Mount Arrowsmith.

Apparently the name Chirripo means "place of the enchanted waters" in the indigenous Talamancan language (there are several waterfalls in the area) and was a sacred site where rituals were performed on the summit.

The constantly changing mountain weather of mist, rain and cold wind and the near zero temperatures at night require full mountain clothing. The wind chill factor is said to push temperatures to -5°C.

There is another two day approach to Cerro Chirripo from the village of Herradura, 4 kilometres from San Gerardo de Rivas, through the Cordillera de Tamanca climbing Cerro Uran 3,664m, Cerro Cupula 3,699m and Cerro Nudo 3,762m, on the way. This would require a guide and tents although I did hear a rumour of a shelter somewhere on the route. There is reported to be another more rustic shelter on the northern side of Chirripo in the Valle de Las Morenas.

I am now in possession of a park map if any members are contemplating this climb.

Peak Bagging in New Zealand

Martin Smith
Feb/March 2009

Aotearoa - "The Land of the Long White Cloud" - my second favourite place on the planet and a great place to visit in the middle of a rainy Vancouver Island winter.

This was my third trip to New Zealand. Earlier trips, as is often the case, were spent learning the ropes. I spent far too much time on the overhyped and overcrowded "Great Walks" and not enough on the many splendid and, more importantly, solitary alternatives that the country has to offer. I also had several pieces of unfinished business from those earlier trips.

February 12/13, Mount Ngauruhoe, 2,287 metres

Ever the volcano enthusiast, I hiked the "Tongariro Northern Crossing" in 2002 in order to see that splendid eruptive ground for myself. The only disappointing aspect of the day was that neither time nor weather permitted an ascent of the lovely symmetrical cone of Mt. Ngauruhoe en route. I arrived, therefore, in Turangi on February 11 determined to change that.

The weather next day was so bad that the shuttle bus fleet running the hordes out to the Mangatepopo trailhead for the Northern Crossing cancelled all services. Being self-propelled I went anyway. I took it as a good omen that the only other vehicle at the trailhead was a cop car.

The NZ Department of Conservation (DoC) had obviously spent millions on the trail since my last visit. Benched track, boardwalk and finally staircases (!) took me east and up to the Mangatepopo saddle below Ngauruhoe in scarcely more than 2 hours. Unfortunately, the weather changed from bad to dangerous during my walk up the valley and I retreated in the face of high winds and zero visibility just above the saddle.

A clearing trend set in overnight so back I went the next morning to give it another go. This time the buses were running and, on the return trip to the saddle, I had to endure crowds of the sort of people I usually make a lot of effort trying to avoid. Happily they were all doing the crossing and from the saddle I headed due south to the summit alone.

As I flogged my way up 45 degree volcanic sand and cinders the lovely cone above vanished into cloud where there had been only blue skies before. I arrived on the crater rim two hours up from the saddle in a frigid wind and 20 metres visibility. Peering over the edge, the seething mass below looked more than faintly malevolent in the murk. I headed



Mt Ngauruhoe from Mangatepopo Saddle PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

down after an hour waiting in vain for the clouds to clear.

All that unfriendly sand on the way up now became my instant best buddy as I literally ran down it to the saddle in what seemed like a few minutes but was closer to an hour. Naturally, I was halfway down when the skies cleared and wonderful views over the whole volcanic plateau to the northeast opened up.

February 15, Mt. Egmont/Taranaki, 2,518 metres

Politically correctly double named Egmont/Taranaki had been another weather victim on one of my earlier trips. Not surprising given that it sits in splendid isolation just 25 km from the Tasman Sea and is frequently subject to bad weather.

After spending the night in New Plymouth I arrived at the standard North Egmont trailhead at 7:30 a.m. to find the summit towering overhead framed against a perfect blue sky and looking truly mouthwatering.

Off I went at 7:45, up the “transmitter road” to the Taurangi Hut just after 9 and onwards up the Hingis Valley. To counter erosion DoC have built stairs up the Hingis to almost 1,800 metres but there was plenty of scree flogging left to do before I got to the “Lizard” at about 2,000 metres just as cloud began to obscure the summit. The Lizard is a rock ridge that runs right up to the summit crater and you can choose any route you like up it. I chose some nice scrambly lines as I headed up into the increasing clag. In fact I climbed right through the murk and arrived at the crater entrance at about 12:15 to blue skies above and a sea of clouds below.

A brief walk across the snow filled crater and a final loose scramble saw me on top at 12:30. Over 120 km to the east Mt. Ruapehu, at 2,796 m the highest summit on the North

Island, was the only ground high enough to poke its nose above the sea of clouds all round.

I lingered over lunch in the hope of clearing but once again it was not to be and I set off down just after 1:30. An uneventful return journey saw me at the car at 4:30 with a previously spotted Indian restaurant in New Plymouth very much on my mind.

February 19/20, Mt. Arthur, 1,795 metres

Sandy Briggs was on sabbatical in NZ at the same time as my visit and once I’d crossed over Cook Strait to the South Island we arranged to get together for a hike. I recommended Mt. Arthur in Kahurangi NP as a nice objective. It’s in the north part of the Island and at the centre of the country’s principal area of limestone.

Having last seen Sandy in Victoria it seemed oddly surreal to see him next on a country road in an obscure river valley half a world away. We needed to be on the other side of the river and so met near the most convenient bridge which didn’t happen to be near anywhere else.

Having crossed over (so to speak) we drove up the Graham River valley and on up the bumpy gravel road that leads to the Flora Saddle carpark at about 1,000 metres elevation. The weather looked none too promising and the weatherman promised that it would get quickly worse but we packed up anyway and headed out on the well marked trail to the Arthur Hut at about 2 p.m. Chatting away we enjoyed the lovely forest walk up to the nice little hut – right at treeline - and arrived there only a little over an hour later.

The hour was early and the weather threatening, so we dropped most of the gear at the hut and headed off to Mt. Arthur.

We were out onto a snow grass covered ridge 10 minutes above the hut with our objective in full view. Thereafter we simply followed the well worn path southwest and then west towards the col between the main peak and Winter Peak to its east where we turned north. Once under the summit ridge the path took us west once more to a convenient gully up to the ridge and then it was 200 metres north to the summit trig which we reached at exactly 5 p.m.

A cold wind kept our visit brief but, for once, there were at least partial summit views to admire, particularly SW to the bald domes of the limestone Twins and east to Tasman Bay. A flock of keas, the mischievous alpine parrot, dived and swooped over the summit and dark cloud from the incoming front swirled overhead. As Sandy observed – a real New Zealand moment.

The weather continued to hold during our descent to the hut and we took the opportunity to admire several impressive sinkholes in the limestone not too far from the path.

We arrived at the hut at 6:45 p.m. to find that no-one else



Sandy Briggs with Mt Arthur summit ridge behind PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

had arrived and that we had it all to ourselves. The rest of the evening passed pleasantly over dinner and endless discussions on the many and various merits of our home mountains.

The promised front duly arrived just after we turned in and it rained in torrents all night. Neither had it passed by morning and our walk out was wet but thankfully brief. We certainly made the right call to head directly for the summit on the previous day.

February 22-25, Mt. Angelus, 2,075 metres

Mt. Angelus is a short but spectacular objective from the Angelus Hut in the Nelson Lakes area of the South Island. Many folk visit it as part of the Travers/Sabine circuit. Far fewer people, however, make the trip up Angelus and my intention was to use the hut as base to climb the mountain and then return to St Arnaud along the high, scenic Roberts Ridge route.

Sandy had hoped to accompany me at least part way but we lost February 21st to the continuing storm and thereafter he had to get back to Christchurch.

February 22nd didn't look that great either as I shouldered my pack in the St Arnaud carpark and prepared to make the 10 km walk south down the east shore of Lake Rotoiti to the Lakehead Hut from where the Travers River may be crossed to its west bank, the one I needed to be on. Just as I was about to leave, however, I could see that a water taxi was about to leave also and that it wasn't full. Bottom line: \$15 got me to the Coldwater Hut at the end of the lake and on the correct west bank. Good job – the river was too high to cross at the Lakehead Hut and DoC was advising everyone to cross on the bridge 5 km upstream. What a stroke of luck!

Feeling suitably pleased with myself the walk down to the junction of the Travers and Cascade Tracks passed in a flash and I was soon headed west on the latter as it followed the rushing Hukere Stream up the valley towards Lake Angelus.

The weather had been better than expected up to this point and the sun had even made a couple of brief appearances but as I neared tree line the temperature dropped and the heavens opened. At noon I had a brief and soggy lunch in the last trees before starting the long plod up to the alpine basin above. After an hour my gortex armour was showing a few weaknesses and if I stopped I got seriously cold. How relieved I was now to have happened across that water taxi. About an hour below the hut things got quite serious. The track crossed the Hukere Stream at the only feasible point below the lake and whereas it wasn't exactly a whirling maelstrom, it was certainly a very dangerous crossing, right above a 10 metres high waterfall. In better conditions I would probably have turned back but with shelter less than an hour away, I decided that the risk was worth it, put on my tevas and stepped gingerly into the flood. The current was as strong as expected but I inched my way carefully across and was soon on the other side. A bit more uphill plodding followed until the hut finally appeared through the sheets of rain. I stepped gratefully inside to find a roaring stove and plenty of spare bunks.

The evening passed with all the usual hut bonhomie. I was inveigled into a game of Scrabble, soon established my usual hand of 6 A's and a Q and slunk off to bed soon after. It was snowing when I got up to answer nature's call at 3 am.

Next morning dawned to pouring rain and zero vis and I resigned myself to a hut day. By late afternoon a few breaks appeared and I could finally see what a lovely location the hut was in – right by the lake and ringed by alpine ridges. There seemed to be better prospects for the following day, although the hut warden thought not.

In fact the morning of the 24th dawned crystal clear and frosty and there, finally, was Mt. Angelus to the south mirrored beautifully in the lake.

By 8 a.m. I was off along with chance-met Sarah from the UK. We made short work of the approach SW down to the Hinapouri Tarn and onwards on the same line up towards Sunset Saddle. Rather than go all the way into the saddle, however, we traversed off to the south to intersect the west ridge of Angelus and continued up this with a little Class 3 here and there to the top. Long before we got there, however – you guessed it – down came the clag and gone were the summit views. Have you spotted the recurring theme yet? A glimpse or two of the Travers River over 1,200 metres below appeared and that was about it.

After half an hour waiting for clearing we gave up and headed off down the northeast ridge briefly before dropping

off the ridge north and down friendly scree slopes directly to Hinapouri Tarn and on to the hut.

On my final day I got up to a spectacular sunrise and was already hiking well before anyone else was up. My return route took me northwards along high Roberts Ridge west of Lake Rotoiti with wonderful views in all directions. About 2 hours along the ridge I stopped for a break and sat down facing south. There before me was the sort of view of Mt. Angelus that people wait for years to photograph! I dropped my water bottle, grabbed my camera, brought it up to my face and looked through the viewfinder. CLOUD – just bloody CLOUD. And that was it. I completed the rest of the hike in the mist until finally dropping out of it in the last hour. From the Roberts Ridge trailhead I bummed a ride round to St Arnaud from a friendly group of Kiwis (are Kiwis ever anything else but friendly?) and reached my car at noon.

March 07, Mt. Ollivier, 1,933 metres

Between Mt. Angelus and my trip up Mt. Ollivier I'd hiked the Caples/Greenstone loop (and enjoyed perfect weather) and started out on Ollivier slightly the worse for wear having been persuaded to attend a post hike celebration by yet more ever-friendly Kiwis met along the trail.

Mt. Ollivier was the first peak that Ed Hillary climbed that he reckoned was a real mountain and the trip up there was more about paying tribute to the great man than it was about getting to the top. Nowadays there's even a luxurious hut just 100 vertical metres below the summit.

It wasn't just me not looking too good that morning. Neither was the weather. But what else is new? So I hung around until the Mt. Cook DoC office opened up and posted the forecast. Hmm....winds gusting to over 100 kph in the alpine but only a slight chance of precip. Best advice was not to go up there. But I'm an idiot, so I went anyway ignoring the fact that my altimeter was reading 200m high as I left the village.

By Sealy Tarns I had to duck regularly behind rock outcrops to avoid being plucked off the mountainside and when I finally got out onto the open ridge above I really was lifted off my feet and deposited on my backside – twice. It's usually an hour from the tarns to the hut but today it took me nearly two as I handed my way from rock to rock along the ridge. Below me I could see 4 girls equipped with the best garbage bag raingear that money can buy inching their way up but I was pretty sure they'd come to their senses soon and head down.

The summit was out of the question and I was grateful for the shelter of the hut. The warden looked at me somewhat askance but in true Kiwi fashion, kept his counsel.

Ten minutes after I'd settled in for lunch, in trooped the 4 girls all looking quite frightened. The warden continued to

hold his peace. A brief muttered discussion took place before a spokeswoman approached and asked if I'd mind if they went down with me. Well, I may be an idiot but apparently I don't look the part. So, suitably flattered, I agreed and off we all went in due course. Bless their hearts; as soon as we were off the ridge and out of the worst of the wind, they took off like hares leaving this old man in their dust. Ah, to be young again....

March 09, Mt. Somers, 1,688 metres

Mt. Somers is an ancient rhyolite dome volcano situated right on the western edge of the Canterbury Plains. The mountain's northern and southern aspects present steep, jagged andesite and rhyolite cliffs in interesting contrast to the beech forest and tussock of the east and west sides respectively.

Not too many tourists head this way and those that do head for the "Mt. Somers Sub-Alpine Walkway". A hike taking in the opposite (south) side of the range to the Walkway offers solitude and is the standard approach for those wishing to bag the summit of the area's signature peak. The shortest and usual approach is from Sharplin Falls to the east. However, a relatively new track starting in the west and traversing across the south face of the massif allows for a point to point walk with a side trip to the summit if desired.

After dropping my car at the east end of the route, my landlady from "Glenview Farmstay" ferried me over to the Woolshed Creek carpark to the west and I was off in perfect weather at 8:30 a.m.

From the carpark the Rhyolite Ridge Track crossed Woolshed Creek and soon cleared the bush as it made its way northeast, climbing steadily before swinging north across open tussock to the junction of the Mt. Somers South Face track and that to the Woolshed Creek Hut - about an hour from the start.

From the track junction the South Face Route lost an immediate 100 metres of altitude before it began to contour south and east across open tussock and flax slopes with the south face of Mt. Somers above. Two hours into the trip, cloud began to build from the north.

Three hours after leaving the car I arrived at the new DoC Acland day shelter, more or less at the end of the S Face traverse and at the bottom of the climb up to the saddle between Staveley Hill and Mt. Somers. It was a steady 200 vertical metres in 1.4 km from the shelter to the saddle.

From the saddle the route contoured a further 800 metres to the east across two marked avalanche paths before turning north and meeting the eastern approach at the DoC sign for the summit route. At this point the sun finally gave up the ghost and that cold New Zealand mist descended from the heights above and clasped me once more in its clammy embrace.

From the DoC sign I headed due north and up to the summit ridge in ever thickening clag. The last of the flax/tussock vegetation fell behind after 10 minutes or so and thereafter the track ran up broken rock and heather slopes to a large cairn right on the ridge crest. I was only 20 metres from the cairn when I spotted it in the murk and to add insult to injury it began to snow lightly. From the cairn I turned west and walked along the open ridge for 500 metres to the trig which I reached at 3 p.m. in 10 metres visibility.

Hunkered down against the snow and cold I settled in for my usual futile wait for clearing. None came and I set off down at 3:30 gratefully following my GPS up-track. By 4:35 I was back at the track junction where I turned left and followed the well worn path over Hookey Knob and down to Sharplin Falls and my vehicle at 6:15 p.m.

March 15, Mt. Ruapehu, 2,796 metres

Heading back to Auckland and my flight home, I unexpectedly found myself with a spare day and diverted quickly over to Mt. Ruapehu. With nothing in the way of preparation or a guidebook I just popped into the DoC office in Whakapapa village and got the gen from them. There's nothing in the way of an officially recognised route. Just follow the ski fields up and keep going south they said. It sounded a bit like Mt. Hood.

So that's precisely what I did. Off at 9 a.m. on my usual perfect weather start, the (by now) expected cloud rolled in about 11 and I was soon in a complete white-out following the compass up nice friendly snow and resigned to yet another addition to my extensive summits-in-the-clag album. An hour of this and suddenly, miracle of miracles, I broke through the cloud and found I was on quite a sharp snow ridge (which I found out later is called Dome Ridge) with the summit plateau below to my left.

Cresting the ridge, I walked right to its end to the shelter there and sat down for lunch. Ruapehu is really a series of fractured summits around a large plateau. The highest point is Taurangi and this faced me now about 2 km away across the famous crater lake. It was a breach in the headwall of this lake during the 1953 eruption that sent a lahar all the way down the mountain where it washed out the Tangiwai rail bridge across the Whangaehu River as a train was approaching. In the resulting disaster, 151 people lost their lives.

As I learned later, DoC had sent me up a route not usually used to approach the true summit of Ruapehu. Anne



Taurangi Point, the highest point on the North Island, from the top of Dome Ridge. Crater Lake below. PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

from Mount Manganui was worried about finding her way down alone in the mist and asked to come with me (this was becoming a habit). I had to be in Auckland in time for dinner. All in all, I thought I'd better call the top of Dome Ridge it and we headed back down through the cloud, glad to have a GPS track to follow.

Unlike the four girls on Mt. Ollivier, Anne very kindly bought me a coffee after we reached the cars. At least old fashioned politeness survives in our generation!

Perhaps I should have called this "Summit Clagging" rather than "Summit Bagging" in New Zealand. The weather notwithstanding it was a wonderful trip. Kiwi weather is Kiwi weather. It's part of the fabric of the place and if you go there, it's what you're invariably going to get. Personally I think it's a small price to pay to visit a country which truly has something for everyone.

Several of the above mountains feature on my Summit-Post pages. For more details and lots more pictures see:
<http://www.summitpost.org/mountain/rock/264900/Mt-Ngauruhoe.html>
<http://www.summitpost.org/mountain/rock/187971/mt-arthur.html>
<http://www.summitpost.org/mountain/rock/508015/mt-somers.html>
<http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/595491/Mt-Angelus-Trip-Report.html>

Participants:

Mt. Arthur: Sandy Briggs and Martin Smith
 Mt. Angelus: Sarah Gardiner and Martin Smith
 All the rest: Martin Smith solo

Ten Days in the Land of the Thunder Dragon

Geoff Bennett

March 21-30

When my son phoned me from Bhutan and invited me to join him on the Jomolhari Trek, I hesitated. All that expense, disruption, hardship... After a brief pause I said "Yes, of course!"

From Bangkok I flew into Bhutan's airstrip on one of only two commercial planes that are allowed into this remote and mountainous country. The descent into Paro is a white-knuckle affair, twisting through clouds and skimming over the ridges. Bhutan is slightly larger than Vancouver Island, both in terms of area and population, and has only one tiny valley flat enough for a runway. The elevation range is extreme: from the southern tropical forest at 100m to the summit of Kula Kangri at 7,553m. The whimsical local name for Bhutan is Druk Yul – the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

I joined Andrew, his girlfriend Caley and her father Ron, on the trip of a lifetime. They were living and working last winter in the capital city, Thimphu, at an elevation of 2,300m. Coming from sea level, the elevation difference was a major problem for me, but they were all fully acclimatized. Andrew suggested a little "warmup" to get me in shape. At first he beguiled me with a pleasant downhill hike from Dochula Pass at 3,150m, passing through a forest filled with exotic birds and scented with jasmine. Although the temperature hovered just above freezing, magnolia trees were in full bloom.

The next day he and Caley tempted me with a visit to a beautiful monastery on the slope of Tango – a 4,100m ridge with a 1,600m elevation gain followed by a bushwhacking epic through a chaos of bamboo and rhododendrons (not your nice Butchart Garden variety.) After an eleven hour round trip I was exhausted and my legs felt like wooden pegs. But a few hot mugs of the local arak revived me. I felt much better and resolved to begin our expedition the following morning.

The Jomolhari Trek is perhaps the second-most famous route in Bhutan, topped only by the legendary, longer, and more arduous Snowman Trek. The route follows the Paro River upstream from the airport, enters the Jigme Dorji National Park, crosses two high passes, and returns via the Thimphu watershed to the capital city. The length is 133 kilometres with a high point at 5,100m and a net elevation gain of about 4,000m. The highlight is a view of Jomolhari (7,314m) and Jicchu Drake (6,794m). Like all tourist visits to Bhutan, the trek was organized by a local operator. For the four of us, Karma Tshering provided two guides, two cooks, two horsemen, eleven mules and ponies, tents, gear and food. I only had to carry my binoculars and bird guide. We brought extra



Andrew, Geoff, Ron, Caley with Jomolhari PHOTO: GEOFF BENNETT

arak, a popular addition to our convivial gatherings around the campfire.

After three days on the trail we reached the Jomolhari campsite. Cloud obscured the mountain and fresh snow lay on the ground. Undaunted, we hiked through the clouds to the promised spectacular viewpoint at 5,000m. At 4,500m the guide announced that this was it. After a little discussion about altimeters, he learned that you actually had to adjust the reference elevation now and then. I felt a bit cheated and so I proposed that we head further up the slippery rocky ridge to the real 5,000m. The guide was a little worried by this foray into genuine mountaineering but Andrew and I jollied him along. We did indeed reach the magic number of 5,000m – the high point of my life! – and we saw nothing but clouds.

The next morning at six o'clock, once again engulfed in cloud and snow and somewhat disappointed, we made



Jicchu Drake rises majestic against a blue sky PHOTO: GEOFF BENNETT

ready to break camp. Surprise! Within minutes the clouds parted, blue sky appeared, and Jomolhari stood before us in magnificent shining splendour. Its glaciated east face towered 3,000m above us. An hour later, we turned a corner on the trail and were staggered to see yet another giant – Jicchu Drake – a fantasy vision of a white Himalayan peak silhouetted against the blue sky. Both peaks have been climbed but only a very few times. A team led by Doug Scott did the first and only ascent of Jicchu Drake. Most of Bhutan's highest – and most sacred – summits are off-limits to mountaineers.

The next two days involved grueling ascents of two passes over 5,000m, where the amount of oxygen is about half that of sea level. Throughout the trip I felt cold and tired, no doubt owing to my rapid ascent from the coast – although a little voice told me that I must be getting on. For the first time in my life I was the oldest and slowest member of an expedition. But the company was wonderful, the scenery stupendous, and the trails uncluttered. Unlike other parts of the Himalayas, there are very few trekkers in Bhutan. After the first day we saw only one other tourist. A huge bonus for me was the birdlife – the rare and improbable Ibisbill, the monstrous Himalayan Griffon and Lammergeier Vulture, the incredibly colourful Monal and Blood Pheasants, and the electric blue Grandala that lives only in the highest wildest passes. In fact, I have to admit that for me this was a superb bird-watching trip with some very fine mountains.

After crossing the steep and snowy Yale La Pass, we rested an extra day in the next campsite. All but one of the six Bhutanese men had suffered snow blindness, despite our offers of spare sunglasses. The day before, when the guide had accompanied Andrew and Caley on a mission to plant prayer flags on a nearby summit, he had become disoriented in the whiteout. Although he had recently learned about Z,

he hadn't quite figured out the X and the Y. Fortunately, Andrew had taken compass bearings and brought everyone back down safely. It would appear that UIAA certification hasn't quite reached the valleys of Bhutan. However, the guide did redeem himself by preventing a mutiny among the horsemen. Never a dull moment.

Two days later we were back in the land of hot showers, pizza and beer. What an adventure! For those who are interested in planning a trip to Bhutan, consult the trekker's guidebook that Andrew donated to the ACC-VI library, check the web for licensed tour operators and budget a minimum of \$200 a day. Bhutan doesn't welcome low-budget backpackers. Take time to acclimatize – and bring a compass and altimeter!

Participants: Andrew and Geoff Bennett, Caley and Ron Mulholland

Mt. Yarigadake (Spear Mountain) in the Japanese Alps

Tak Ogasawara
August 5-9

Mt. Yarigadake is one of the most famous mountains in the Japanese Alps. However, ascending Mt. Yarigadake is not really that difficult except for the North Ridge (Kitakama-One).

August 5, Tokyo-Nagano-Ariake Trailhead

I left Tokyo early in the morning on a bus for Nagano. Rather than taking the train as usual I decided to take a 3 hour ride and I was looking forward to the hike as the weather forecast predicted that it would be reasonable for my hike. I arrived in Nagano around noon and transferred to the local railway bound for Ariake. I was planning on visiting my cousin whom I hadn't seen for close to 40 years. Luckily my cousin lived near the trailhead. She met me at the Ariake station and I visited at her house over tea and exchange many good old memories.

After a long talk, my cousin offered me a ride to a lodge near the trailhead where I was staying tonight. It was a narrow winding road that took about 1 hour to get there. Luckily there was a hot spring at the lodge so my cousin and her partner were able to have a bath before heading home. I thanked them for the ride and promised to see them again preferably sooner than 40 years! I had supper and a relaxing dip in the hot spring before bed. Is there anything better?



Otensho Hut appears from out of the clouds PHOTO: TAK OGASAWARA

August 6, Ariake Trailhead – Otensho Hut

At 4:00 a.m. I left the lodge and headed up to the trailhead. The weather was reasonably fine, just a little bit of thin cloud in the sky. Once I reached the trailhead I saw that there were quite a few people there already. We all greeted each other and started to hike up the steep trail to the ridge crest.

Including a couple of rest stops it took me about three and half hours to get ridge crest. I could see a huge mountain hut on the ridge crest in the fog. Once I got there I left my pack at the hut and headed up Mt. Tsubakuro (Swallow Mt.)

After I descended from Tsubakuro, I retrieved my pack and hiked on the ridge crest to the next hut where I planned to stay the night. The trail on the ridge was relatively flat. This is one of the most popular trails in the Japanese Alps. During the good weather this trail is packed with hikers.

I took my time stopping often to take pictures of wild flowers and ptarmigans that showed up along the trail. However, soon I noticed that the sky started darken and saw big clouds approaching rapidly from the southeastern horizon. This could only mean rain and very soon. So I started to run on the trail trying to reach the hut before the rain started. After about 4 hours of hiking and running I saw the hut a couple hundred metres below from the ridge top. Just then I started to feel raindrops on my face. I ran down the steep trail and made it to the hut before heavy rain started.

August 7, Otensho Hut – Yarigadake Hut

It was supposed to be the highlight of the trip, the climb up the North Ridge (Kitakama-One) to Yarigadake. However, when I woke up at 4:00 in the morning, rain was beating

down on the tin roof of the hut and thick fog blanketed all around us. I could not see anything. Despite the bad weather I left the hut at five o'clock to find the point where I had to go down to the other valley. After about a half an hour I found the faint signpost beside the trail. This was the point where I had to go down. It was called Poor Man Gully.

At that point the rain eased and fog lifted a bit and I was able to catch a glimpse of the lower section of the route. Fighting thick brush I started down the gully. After about 15 minute I reached a snow covered narrow canyon. At that point it started to rain and the fog descended once more. I dug out my tent sack from the pack, put it over my head and sat on a big rock and hoped for the weather to turn. However, it got worse. The rain got heavier and heavier and I knew that this was not good. This was one route that I had not completed when I was living in Japan 40 years ago. Although my heart I wanted to continue, my head reasoned that since I was alone and the route was long and complicated, I should give up. It was a hard decision to turn back but I did.

I bushwhacked back up to the main trail and continued on to the next hut, Yarigadakesanso.

August 8, Yarigadake Hut – Kitaho Hut

Again the weather was uncertain, light rain and fog all around. Every once in a while the fog would part and I could see a peek of the top of Yarigadake. So before heading to the next hut I decided to climb to the top. After about 30 minutes of scrambling up wet rock I reached the summit and stayed there for about 15 minutes. I hurried back down to the hut, retrieved my backpack and started towards Hodakadake.

Usually a lot of people would be on this ridge but not today. It seemed that most of the people had taken the easy way down the valley because of the inclement weather. The trail I followed had many ups and downs as well as quite a few exposed sections along the way. Halfway along the ridge I looked down on Takidani (Fall Canyon). This is actually one of the premier rock climbing areas in the Japan. Despite the bad weather I enjoyed this ridge walk because it brought me back a lot of old memories.

Four hours later I saw a small hut high upon the mountaintop. This is the highest mountain hut in the Japanese Alps situated on the summit of Kitahodakadake.

I settled in the hut and looked around the hut.

Around 4:00 p.m. I experienced a sudden mountain thunderstorm. Lightning flashed all around mountains and loud thunder shocked the hut. It was quite the show that lasted about 2 hours.

August 9, Kitaho Hut – Kanikuchi – Nagano – Tokyo

Most people come here to the summit early in the morning to wait for the sunrise. Around 5:00 a.m. the sun started



Climbers work their way up Yarigadake PHOTO: TAK OGASAWARA

to show on eastern horizon. Everybody on the summit started to pray. This is the Japanese tradition, praying at sunrise to wish for happiness. After sunrise I started to go down to the Karasawa Basin that I could see far below.

The weather finally improved and to the southeast horizon I was able to see Mt. Fuji very clearly. The Karasawa Basin is a very busy place. This was no exception. There are three huts and this time there were hundreds of tents crammed into this small place and people were everywhere, both coming and going. From there I took the Panorama route that crosses the lowest point of the North Ridge of Maehodaka rather than the regular route to Kamikouchi.

I had used this route quite an often when I climbed around this area. Back then, I recalled that the route was a very faint trail through heavy brush but now it is quite a nice trail. I crossed the lowest point of the North Ridge and continued down to Matashiro Canyon where the Maehodaka East Face climbing area route branched out. I wasn't able to see much of the East Face as fog was covering much of it. I existed from Matashiro Canyon to the main trail where the Azusa River joins. From there among the crowd of people I hiked down to the bus station in Kamikouchi I reached it at about noon. It wasn't the most ideal trip. I wasn't able to make it up the North Ridge as I had planned, but I enjoyed hike and reminiscing about my younger days high up in these mountains.

Trekking the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu

Don Morton

August 16-20

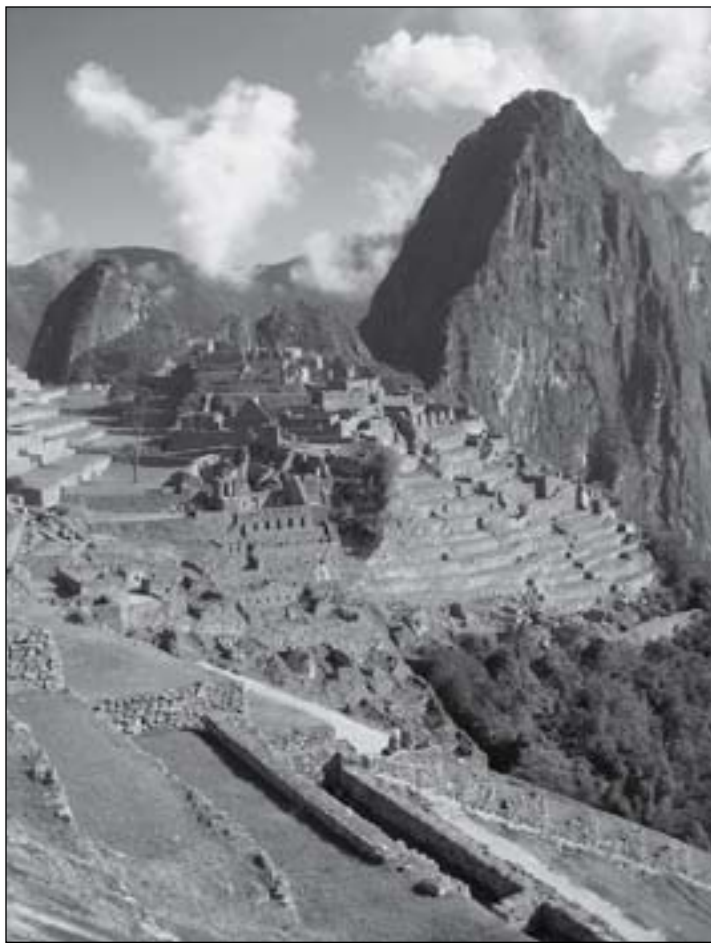
Although I have travelled to South America many times, neither for astronomy or climbing, I had never visited the famous Inca site of Machu Picchu in Peru. One can reach the site by train from Cuzco or by bus part way followed by a three-day hike on an Inca Trail. Of course I chose the latter. This was not the main trail system used by the Incas to govern from Ecuador to central Chile and parts of adjacent areas, but a side road to the secluded royal retreat. Unfortunately the trek has become so popular that the authorities have had to enforce strict regulations. To secure a place one must sign up several months in advance, pay the fees, and appear on the specific day with a passport that has the same number as the one you had when you paid. There is no private trekking and camping. Every visitor must join a group with an approved guide, cooking team and porters, and each porter is limited to 25 kg, which is checked at the entrance. These arrangements are not my preferred way for trekking or climbing, but they are necessary for the preservation of this famous route and they provide local employment.

After contacting several tour organizations on the internet I contracted with Peru Gateway Travel based in Lima and paid US \$490. This included two nights in a modest Cuzco hotel, the trail fee, meals and three nights in a tent on the trail, the Machu Picchu entrance fee, the train back to Cuzco, and airport transfers - all with excellent service.

I flew into Cuzco at 3,400 m from sea-level Lima and spent a day and a half acclimatizing and touring Inca ruins and colonial buildings. Cuzco was the capital of the Inca kingdom until Pizarro and his Spanish soldiers captured the ruling Inca, Atahualpa, held him for ransom, and then killed him in 1533 when his subjects could produce no more gold. Local places to see include Qorikancha, a Catholic church and convent built on the exquisite stone walls of an Inca temple, and Sacsayhuaman, the huge fortress that overlooks the city.

Early on the first day of the trek I departed Cuzco on a bus with a young couple from Austria, who formed the rest of our small party, and our knowledgeable guide named Washington. We drove west and north across a high plateau and down into the sacred valley of the Urubamba River, also known as Rio Vilcanota. At the town of Ollantaytambo we collected a cook, porters, food and gear for the trek. There was time to see a little of the extensive Inca fortress here.

The bus left us at Kilometre 42 on the railway, where we showed our passports at the check point and crossed the



The ancient Incan sanctuary of Machu Picchu PHOTO: DON MORTON

Urubamba on a sturdy pedestrian suspension bridge. Our altitude was about 2,700 m. We followed the south side of the river for about 5 km on an easy trail with views of snow-topped peaks of the Cordillera Urubamba behind us. Then we climbed steeply and turned south along the tributary Rio Kusichaca, passing through the Willkarakay stone fortress. Far below were the extensive ruins of Llastapata (Town on a Hillside). We had a long stop for a cooked lunch and later another hot meal for dinner at a grassy campsite at 2,900m. There was notable evidence that this last site also provided grazing for local cattle.

Early on the second day we turned south again and began the long steady climb up the trail to Abra Warmiwanusqa, also known as Dead Woman's Pass, at 4,200m. Most of the trail has been rebuilt since Inca times to cope with the heavy traffic, but this section had some steps cut in the rock that may have been original. We descended to a crowded Paq'aymayo campsite at 3,600m without passing any other evidence of Inca engineering.

However the third day, with passes at 3,924m and 3,625m, included archeological stops at the fortresses of Runkurakay (Basket-Shaped Building), Sayaqmarka (Dominant Town),

and Phuyupatamarca (Town Above the Clouds) guarding the approach to Machu Picchu. At two different places the trail goes through natural tunnels in the rock. Our third camp called Winaywayna at 2,650 m was even more crowded than the previous ones because two-day trekkers can take the train to kilometre 104 and climb to this site.

We started early on the final day and passed the check point soon after it opened at 5 a.m. so we could reach Intipunku (Sun Gate) above Machu Picchu at sunrise. This was the last fort before the main site. However, for trekkers that day there was no sunrise illumination. Clouds obscured the area below.

By the time we had descended 150m of zigzags and reached some of the upper ceremonial sites we began to see the details of this amazing Inca sanctuary. Pizarro and his successors did not learn about Machu Picchu, so it lay unexplored until the American politician and climber Hiram Bingham discovered it in 1911. The various structures have modern names like Royal Palace, House of the High Priest, Temple of the Sun, and Sacred Rock but no one knows the true purpose of Machu Picchu or when it was constructed. The name means *Old Peak* after the 3,051m mountain to the south above Intipunku.

One of my goals was to climb the 2,634m pyramid of Huayna Picchu (Young Peak) at the north end, so often featured in pictures of Machu Picchu, but that climb was not part of the trek. To do so I arranged to stay that night in Aguas Calientes, the automobile-free town on Rio Urubamba, and return to Cuzco on the train the following evening. The cost of a bus up and back down and the entrance fee was about US \$56, with no extra charge for the peak climb. However, with thousands of tourists visiting the site each day, the real challenge of this ascent was to obtain one of the 400 passes that limited the number of people on the steep trail.

There are three ways to be near the beginning of the queue when the Machu Picchu gate opens at 6 a.m. - pay for a room at the luxury hotel just outside the gate, hike the trail up 350m in the dark, or line up for the first bus at 5 a.m. I arrived at the bus station at 3:55 a.m. and found almost two busloads of people ahead of me and many more already at the gate when I arrived. However, I did obtain a pass for the second session at 10 a.m. and began the traverse to the base of Huayna Picchu and 200m up the switchbacks and steps. This side trip definitely was worth the effort. There was a lot of stone construction high on the peak and splendid views of the whole site and the Urubamba valley below.

Hiking in the Falkland Islands

Martin Smith

November 14-28 2009

The last two weeks of November saw my wife and me once again in the wild and wonderful Falkland Islands. A previous visit in 2005 was mostly to see the incomparable wildlife in the Islands whilst trying not to eat too much without offending the locals' incredible hospitality. We had plenty of opportunity to recognise, however, that with their open, trackless terrain the Islands would make a superb hiking destination and we accordingly made this the principle focus of our latest trip down there.

Falkland Island mountains are neither particularly high nor rugged. They're more like high heathland topped by ridge-like tors, not unlike Dartmoor in the UK or certain areas of Tasmania. What challenge is lost to simple lack of height, however, is more than made up for by the conditions. There are no trails. Risk of hypothermia is ever present. The constant frigid wind, uninterrupted on its passage from the Antarctic, can literally blow you off your feet. "Summer" weather includes sunshine one minute and a snowstorm/white-out the next. There are no trees and the mountainsides are mostly bare and open to the wind with limited possibilities for shelter in an emergency. Not, in the sparsely populated Falklands, that getting hold of anyone in an emergency would be likely anyway. On all hikes I carried clothing appropriate to climbing something more akin to Mt. Rainier and often used all of it.

A full report on all our hikes in the Falklands is beyond the scope of this august journal. However, I've selected three examples of what I regard as a good cross section for those who, one day, may want to venture down to this wild and beautiful place.

November 15, Mount Usborne

At 706 metres Mt. Usborne is the highest point in the Islands. It lies on the west/east arc of hills that run across the northern half of East Falkland Island roughly from San Carlos Water (the site of the British landing in the war of 1982) to Stanley, the Islands capital and only town of any size.

After spending the night at Kingsford Farm at the settlement at San Carlos our host, Terry, took us in his Land Rover back along the Mt. Pleasant road to the point where he thought he knew of a track up Usborne. It was difficult to say if he was right or not since we were into thick fog pretty well as soon as we'd left the settlement.

In any event we turned left off the road at the chosen spot and headed up into the murk. We then got to experi-



Mt. Usborne west aspect PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

ence the best of off-road driving that the Islands have to offer. On Vancouver Island, we think we're pretty hot stuff when it comes to getting up all those decommissioned logging roads. Let me tell you that even the worst of such roads are a freeway compared to driving the "wet camp" (boggy moorland) of the Falklands. I would have been walking long before, in the middle of a bog somewhere on the saddle between Usborne and Canterra Mountain to the west, Terry declared the track at an end (what track?!) and said we'd be walking from here.

Once clear of the bog it was straightforward hiking east up dry balsam bog and "diddle-dee" covered slopes to the seasonal snow line. Mt. Usborne has wonderful examples of what Islanders call "stone runs" on almost all of its slopes, although covered with snow, the broken, treacherous ground made for slow going. Once above this, however, the summit plateau soon came into view through the mist and snow and we followed the GPS across it to the high point. Apparently there's a summit register but it was buried in the snow. The 360 degree summit views extended for all of 10 metres from the cairn.

Although not as strong as usual, the wind and cold temperatures combined to make our visit a short one and after 5 minutes on top we headed down.

As I have mentioned, conditions in the Falklands are changeable in the extreme and we were almost at the Land Rover when the inevitable happened. The wind picked up, the fog blew away and there above us was a clear hillside framed by blue skies. This was a chance not to be missed and with an abrupt about-face up we went again, this time much faster in the perfect visibility.

So we finally got to see the view from the highest point in the Falklands and stunning it was too – at least 50 km across Falkland Sound to snow-capped Mt. Maria, the second highest point on West Falkland and third in the Falklands.

Outside of cruise ship visitors, not that many folk visit the Falklands and not too many of those venture up Mt. Usborne. We felt quite special, therefore, when a Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS) flight off in the distance made an abrupt left turn and made a pass over the summit to check out the rare visitors.

Back at the settlement that evening and over another huge and delicious Falklands dinner, Terry revealed that he hadn't been up Usborne for 30 years. He guessed that doing it twice in a day made up for that somewhat!

November 22, Saunders Island Traverse

Saunders Island is one of the largest islands to the north of West Falkland and we had been there to see the penguin colonies during our 2005 trip. Whilst there Gwen and I hiked over Mt.

Harston, the high point west of the cabin where we were staying. (*Bushwhacker Annual 2007*). From Mt. Harston it was readily apparent that an east/west traverse of the high ground down the length of the north part of the island should be feasible. A few minutes on the internet after we got home gave the identity of two of the eastern summits in our photographs: Rookery Mountain and Mt. Richards. Two further significant high points separating Mt. Richards from the "Neck", the sand isthmus at the base of Mt. Harston, were unnamed and probably regarded as satellites of Richards. The hike certainly went right to the top of the list for our second trip and to this end we arranged to stay at a new cabin at the eastern end of the chain of peaks that we'd seen from Mt. Harston.

The weather was very questionable on November 21st so we contented ourselves with short walks around the cabin. One of the best rockhopper penguin colonies in the Islands was just 10 minutes away at the foot of Rookery Mountain. Even more impressive, however, were the black-browed albatross colonies that populate every cliff down the length of the north coast of the island between Rookery and Mt. Harston. You could literally sit on the cliff edge in the flight path as the birds came and went just inches away.

November 22nd dawned windy but reasonably clear so I was up early and away from the cabin before 7. A long hike was in prospect so Gwen elected for another day visiting with the wildlife.

From the cabin I walked west until I could smell the rockhoppers and then struck southwest up to a low point in the



Mt Harston & the Neck from the slopes of the western satellite of Mt Richards. PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

ridgeline above where I turned right. Once on the ridge superb views south to West Falkland Island opened up and were with me for the rest of the day as long as I kept to the high ground. To the north was nothing but the wild South Atlantic.

The ridge had a few boggy spots but nothing to impede progress at almost trail speed as I headed up to the highest point I could find on Rookery Mountain, the first summit of the day. The top was the usual rock fin but it had a cairn on top and, to my surprise, a survey monument – and an unusual one. The brass plate was placed on behalf of the Hydrographic Dept, MoD Navy, Taunton by the crew of HMS Endurance in 1995. Endurance has a long history in the area having been the only significant British military presence in the South Atlantic in the years before the 1982 war with Argentina.

Even before I had reached the top of Rookery the weather had changed for the worse. The big seas to the north disappeared as the cloud came down and, at the same time, the wind rose to gale force. I took shelter in the lee of the summit, emerging on all fours a couple of times to take photos of the survey monument, and tried to be patient. Sure enough, after 20 minutes or so the squall passed and I could see Mt. Richards across a saddle to the southwest.

Bypassing a high point on the ridge I dropped 250 metres south then southwest down rather tedious balsam bog slopes to the grassy saddle and then regained the same elevation west to the top of Mt. Richards and another battle with the wind. Just the usual series of rocky fins this time, no cairn (so I built one) and certainly no survey monument. The two

unnamed high points ahead to the west looked every bit as high as the point I was on but at least visibility was now good and I could see where I was going.

Heading now northwest from Richards I dropped another 250 metres to another, much wider, saddle where I encountered a big cairn and a fence. I could see that the latter dropped right down the north side to the ocean below. My route, however, lay further west so up I went once more.

I knew that that I was approaching the last two high points before the final descent down to sea level to "The Neck" at the foot of Mt. Harston. So, instead of going right over the tops, I chose to start a descending traverse from about 50 metres below the first summit on a line that I reckoned would take me down to the sand and save a bit of unnecessary climbing. Big mistake! The line took me right into a steep stone run. Teetering across razor sharp unstable rock in 80 kph winds brought several unhappy thoughts to mind. Chief amongst them was that within the whole compass of all that I could see there was not one other human being. In fact, apart from my wife at the cabin and the people in the settlement, 10 miles away, considerably more than what I could see contained no human being. This was not a very sensible thing to be doing alone. An accident here didn't bear thinking about. So with sea cliffs below I did the only practical thing and headed carefully up and back into the wind and the safety of the ridge.

Now on the last high point and with the bulk of Harston over 6 km away, there was no shelter from the west wind which, once more, was blowing at gale force. Head down I trudged directly into the wind along the ridge and then down until, about 200 metres above the sand, I decided that honour had been satisfied and that I'd save a bit of energy for the return trip.

Once in the lee of a convenient outcrop I settled in for lunch and to take in everything around me. To the south, islands and islets without number in a bluer than blue ocean. To the north, the storm-wracked black South Atlantic. Brown, barren hillsides devastated by the winds of ages in all directions. Below, a white sand isthmus dotted with thousands of penguins. Fan-bloody-tastic. I got up, wedged my legs into a crevice in order to be able to stand upright and whooped and hollered my approval into the gale.

Heading back finally, with the wind now at my back, I stuck to the ridges until I reached the wide saddle below Richards where I headed north and down to the ocean. In the shelter of the ridge above everything was green. Pale Maiden (the Falklands national flower) and pink and white so-called Scurvy Flower were everywhere. I followed a flat bench above the ocean to its end at the foot of Rookery Mountain where further progress along the sea shore was barred by cliffs. Then up the north slopes of Rookery to a point where I could turn east above the cliffs and finally down to the rockhoppers and home.

What a day. My GPS showed 25 km covered with accumulated elevation gain of over 1,600 metres. And this was without going back over Richards and missing some of Rookery. So much for the small mountains of the Falklands.

November 27, Battlefields Hike

Argentina has long claimed sovereignty over the "Malvinas". Frustrated in efforts to negotiate a peaceful transfer of power - one which would require the unlikely agreement of the Islanders - and, some would argue, driven by the need to divert its citizens' attention from a brutally repressive military dictatorship and an economy on the verge of collapse, Argentina summarily invaded the Islands on April 02, 1982. The ruling junta was probably sure that Great Britain would, after suitable posturing to the contrary, eventually walk away from a colonial anachronism 8000 miles away in the middle of nowhere. Unfortunately for many young men and women on both sides, this didn't happen. The British equipped and dispatched a military task force in just a few days. The force eventually made a landing at San Carlos, fought its way overland via Goose Green and, by late May, was facing a largely conscript Argentine army in the low mountains to the west of Stanley. A series of short and violent engagements, fought mostly at night, culminated in the surrender of the Argentine forces on June 14.

By the end of our stay in the Islands, I had a pretty good feeling for the terrain and attendant conditions in what passed for summer down there. I wondered, however, what it must have been like to fight a pitched battle over such ground in the middle of the antipodean winter. The only way to find out, of course, was to visit the ground myself. Our landlady in Stanley thought that this was a fine idea and very kindly dropped me off on the Port San Carlos road where it crosses the lower slopes of Mt. Kent.

At 460 metres, Mt. Kent is the highest ground on the western approaches to Stanley and was, therefore, the British army's primary initial objective as they sought to take the capital.

Starting my hike from the road, I headed west at first in order to get a good look at Kent. Nowadays there is a permanent military installation on the summit so I was careful to keep to the south side of the ridges that swing round to the top from that direction and took my photos from there. Thereafter I headed down into the valley between the ridge and the summit and started walking the 25 km back to town.

Keeping above the unfriendly stone-runs below, I took a lower parallel course back east towards the Port San Carlos Road. Crossing the road once more I continued east along the sharp ridge of Mt. Challenger and on towards Mt. Harriet with the Two Sisters to the north. Before I could reach Harriet, however, I was thwarted by a minefield across my



Mt Tumbledown (left) and Mt William (right) from Mt Harriet. The final battle of the Falklands War was fought here and was the scene of fierce hand to hand fighting. Stanley harbor and the town can be seen between the two peaks. PHOTO: MARTIN SMITH

intended line of travel. Unsure of how far this extended north, I exercised prudence and dropped south down to the Mt. Pleasant road and around that end of the marked area before resuming my easterly course towards Mt. Harriet.

The battle for Mt. Harriet and Goat Ridge to its east began on the night of May 30, 1982, but didn't reach its conclusion until June 11 and, even then, only after several heavy naval bombardments as well as "softening up" ground attacks. Accounts of the battle written by both sides belie the commonly held opinion that the Argentine conscripts were no match for the professional British forces opposing them. For nearly 2 weeks they held their positions on Mt. Harriet and fought bravely. In the end they were undone because they expected the British assault to come from the west. In fact the British walked through the minefield I encountered, around under the height of land and made their eventually successful attack from the east.

My course took me through what would have been the main Argentine line of defense. The battlefields have supposedly been thoroughly picked over in the intervening 28 years but I found detritus everywhere. Gun emplacements - all with the main fortifications pointing west - gun mounts, batteries, entrenching tools etc etc. What was surprising was the lack of obvious shell damage. The bombardment of Mt. Harriet was amongst the heaviest of the war and yet, with the exception of the various military bits and pieces, the countryside appeared unscarred and pristine.

From the gun emplacements I could see Stanley harbour to the west, still over 10 km away. How inviting it must have looked to the Argentine forces as they waited for weeks, enduring the privation and miserable winter and anticipating the inevitable appearance of the British.

With Two Sisters now on my left I headed down off Mt. Harriet with Goat Ridge on my right and then up to the saddle between Mts. Tumbledown and William.

The British attacked the long ridge of Mt. Tumbledown on the night of June 13th in two phases. A diversionary attack from the south at 8:30 p.m. ended up securing the high ground on Mt. William whilst the main advance started from the west near Goat Ridge at 9. The subsequent battle was amongst the fiercest of the war. After taking the west end of the ridge against minimal opposition, Scots Guards encountered stubborn resistance and it was only with the help of a naval bombardment and after hand to hand fighting that the Argentines were finally overwhelmed at about 3 a.m. on the 14th. At about the same time that Mt. Tumbledown was taken, the Parachute Regiment captured Wireless Ridge to the northeast.

This was the last significant fighting of the war. Opposition melted away and the defeated Argentine troops streamed back towards Stanley and their surrender that evening. I followed in their path now on the long trudge down from Mt. William towards Moody Brook and the town beyond thinking all the while of those brave men on both sides who endured simply because it was their duty. Three weeks short of the antipodean summer solstice, I had been buffeted all day by strong winds, sleet and rain. I had staggered through stone runs and squelched through bog after bog. What must it have been like to cover this ground in the middle of winter? And to do so under the constant threat of enemy fire? Even our most fevered imaginings can probably only touch the surface of what it must have been like and my trip was at best a parody compared to the suffering that these men endured. I hope, however, that in some small way it pays tribute to those who so richly deserve it.

This article originally appeared on my SummitPost pages. Visit <http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/594745/Hiking-in-the-Falkland-Islands.html> for the complete article with many more pictures.

Postscript

On our way down to the Islands we spent some time in Argentina. Buenos Aires was seething with demonstrations by Malvinas veterans who, 28 years on, have received neither sufficient recognition from their government nor pensions adequate to the service they gave and the suffering they endured. It seems that there are still plenty of reasons left to cry for Argentina.

Participants:

Mt. Osborne: Terry McFee, Gwen Smith, Martin Smith

Saunders Traverse: Martin Smith solo.

Battlefields Hike: Martin Smith solo



Mountain Air

Vancouver Island Spine Wilderness Trail

Gil Parker

If you have read the article about VI Spine in the ACC 2008 Annual, you will have seen the map and read about our lofty goals. Now I hope to outline some of the concrete results of our efforts.

In case you didn't read that article, the Vancouver Island Spine will be a single trail through the backcountry from Victoria to Cape Scott at the top of the Island. It will be through a varied terrain, sometimes mountainous, but periodically coming near to villages and towns where hikers can resupply, or get a meal or a shower. The popular use of similar trails in the United States and Europe is an indication of the commercial and social advantages the Spine would bring to Vancouver Island.

The construction of the VI Spine is an attractive project in this period of low demand for the Province's timber and the ready availability of skilled outdoor workers. The VI Spine will bring tourism and local recreation dollars to communities that are currently searching for ways to diversify their economies.

VI Spine now has a trail association, called VISTA, that directs the project. In late July, we incorporated a non-profit Society, with a six person Board, all from Victoria for improved communication and regular meetings. The previous Task Force members were distributed up the Island; this will be retained and expanded in the near future. These local representatives will become more important to monitor the local political scenes, and to oversee the essential trail routing work. In addition to that, our major initiative in 2010 will mimic the Olympic Torch Relay, with a "Backpackers' Relay" that will touch all the major centres along the Spine route.

VISTA now has a data base, thanks to volunteer Ann Harwood, of interested contacts, and an expanding membership list. In a very respectable time frame (only 2 1/2

months) the Canada Revenue Agency has granted VISTA the authority to issue tax deductible receipts for donations (including membership fees.) We have already received sizable donations, including a cash donation and invaluable website support from the Alpine Club. (Martin Hofmann is our web creator, Rick Hudson is a director.) We've received a major donation from Peter Berrang, who hopes to help jump start the VI Spine project. Donations have allowed us to employ Maia Green as a part-time communications director. Maia runs environmental camps for kids in Vancouver and Victoria and was a major spokesperson at the Copenhagen climate change conference.

Most of the recent newspaper publicity for VI Spine was initiated by media reporters, with articles in Port Alberni, Comox Valley and Victoria papers. Our website garnered 10,000 single page hits in September alone, and we are on Facebook. So far we aren't tweeting. During the year, we made presentations to several regional districts, to the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC) in Victoria, Tourism Victoria, and to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MoTCA) (Recreation Sites and Trails Branch) in Nanaimo. The Minister of Tourism has asked for more information; we will happily comply. While VISTA is associated with Hike BC and the National Hiking Trail, we have also received positive inquiries from the Trans Canada Trail Foundation and we will meet with their officials in early 2010.

When Jen Segger ran and biked from Cape Scott to Victoria last August, she completed her amazing Vancouver Island Quest in only four days. In her interviews, and on her website, she kindly mentioned the VI Spine. VISTA's current plan for 2010 is to repeat an odyssey of similar dimensions, but in a lot more reasonable time duration. ACC member Andrew Pape-Salmon will co-chair (with Maia Green) our "Backpackers' Relay", with a core group walking and camping the existing trails, and linking these segments by bike. We hope to include people from outdoor clubs, service clubs, school sport groups and even politicians, where appropriate, all with the objective of widening out list of supporters.



Tree bridge on the North Coast Trail PHOTO: GIL PARKER COLLECTION

The most common request we receive is, “When can I start? Do you need somebody to do trail work?” Unfortunately, the current answer is “No!” Most of the work is publicity, bringing the ‘stakeholders’ together, drafting agreements for crossing private, First Nations’ and Crown land, and defining the route on the ground. Of course, we are interested in members for VISTA, and donations of essential dollars.

Our brochure, with the cover shot of the North Coast Trail taken by the Tansley sisters last summer, is now in outdoor equipment stores up and down the Island; you can help us distribute them if you see a place they should be displayed. Your supportive comments on our Facebook site will help, too. Also, if you know of a politician or a group that needs to know about VI Spine and can be helpful in support of the project, we can arrange for a meeting or presentation.

Finally, and most urgent, we want persons familiar with their local terrain to take our Google Earth lines and verify their practicality on the ground, flagging and recording GPS coordinates for trail segments, noting where bridges, etc. will be needed. We realize that this can only be done by driving backroads to intersect VI Spine, then marking and photographing the topography. In some cases the route can be walked and marked. For Crown land this doesn’t require permission. Just pick the segment you can research and ask

us for the technical specifics needed by our mapping data base coordinator, Rob Pearlman. He’s ready to receive GPS tracks and coordinates. (In some areas, this function can be combined with our search for the Relay route and groups to support Relay participants.)

Already, there are two trail projects proceeding. From Langford to Shawnigan Lake, the CRD and CVRD have secured the land and are planning completion by 2011. From the Alberni Canal and east to Francis Lake, the Tse-shaht nation is spearheading the Runners’ Trail, named for a traditional First Nations route, also expected to open in 2011. And near Port Hardy, the Kwakiutl nation is examining the feasibility of a segment north of town. While there is progress, much remains to achieve a continuous hiking trail. But it will be done!

www.vispine.ca or email vispine@vispine.ca.

Kinney/Phillips Mount Robson Centennial 2009

Maureen Hoole

The Challenge

On September 8, 1909, the Manitoba Free Press carried a small article: ‘Clergyman Conquers Peak’, stating the Alpine Club of Canada had received a wire from Rev. Geo. Kinney claiming he had conquered “The highest and hitherto unassailable peak of the Rockies, Mt. Robson....August 13, 1909....”

As significant as the climb itself was the fact that Kinney and his climbing partner Donald ‘Curly’ Phillips were native-born Canadians. Only a handful of Canadians had been active in the relatively new alpine arena of the northern Rocky region, most as surveyors, engineers, outfitters and packers, earning their bread and butter. Most of the recorded first ascents up to that date were the trophies of European and American climbers who had experience of the Alps or the Himalayas. Most of the climbers were of a privileged class who had time and money to spend on travel and outfitting their adventures.

Kinney was neither ‘privileged’ or wealthy but he did have ready access and time. He was a newly ordained man of the Methodist cloth, which carried a certain respectability, and he was most fortunate to have spent some of his probationary appointments, prior to his ordination in 1905, close to the alpinist action in the Selkirk’s and Rockies. Although he did need to earn supplemental bread and butter during his summer respite from the duties of his ministry, he would



Robson Pass from north shoulder of Mt. Robson

PHOTO: G.R.B. KINNEY

have spent as much free time as he was able on the imposing mountain slopes.

At its founding in 1906 the Alpine Club of Canada decided that Mount Robson, at the time considered the highest peak in the Dominion (13,700ft), should be the feather in its new cap. Arthur P. Coleman, of Brown and Hooker explorations, a geologist at the University of Toronto and also a founding member of the ACC, was persuaded to mount an expedition to the massif in the summer of 1907. By a stroke of luck due to the cancellation of one of Coleman's colleagues, Kinney, also an original member of the ACC, was asked to join the outfit.

On August 3, 1907, Coleman, his brother Lucius, Kinney and packer Jack Boker headed north from Laggan (now Lake Louise) for a thirty-nine day approach to the south base of Moun Robson on the Grand Forks River (Robson River). A late start, windfalls, and poor weather defeated the expedition that season. In 1908 the Coleman's, Kinney and packer John Yates approached the mountain from Edmonton, ascending the Moose and Smoky Rivers to Robson Pass. Most of their exploratory work was on the east side of the mountain. Before they headed out in defeat again, Kinney made a solo attempt on the north and north-west side, attaining a height of 10,500ft.

It seems that Kinney was unaware Coleman had definite plans for a third attempt on the mountain in 1909. "I left the mountain that fall, believing that I had had my last try at

it. But by the time the spring of 1909 had come Mt. Robson had such a hold on me that I could not rest satisfied till I had had another try at it." In May of 1909, hearing that "foreign parties" had designs on the ACC's mountain, Kinney, with selfless and genuinely patriotic motive and steeled with confidence in his knowledge of the mountain, decided to mount his own expedition.

He started out from Edmonton June 11, 1909, at least six weeks earlier than Coleman had previously been able to do. From the get-go his plans were thwarted in one way or another. Risking life and limb on the old fur-freight trail from Edmonton and in the high flood-waters of the Athabasca, he finally arrived in the Jasper area at John Moberley's, July 10, 1909, desperate to find someone to accompany him in his goal. However, good fortune soon swept by.

Donald Phillips, a former Ontario trapper and hunting and fishing guide, wandered into camp the Sabbath evening of July 11. Knowing the grand plans of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway would draw tourists into the area, he had been out scouting the guiding potential. Kinney sized up the young, "blue-eyed, curly headed, clean-lived Canadian" as an athletic, competent, responsible fellow "perfectly fit for the undertaking I had in hand" and was able to persuade him to join the mission. His assessment was right on. 'Curly' proved to be an extremely able companion, much to Kinney's relief and joy. "I found in Phillips a very prince of the trail. Quick, handy, a splendid cook and bubbling over with good nature, he made a camp-mate that could not be excelled. Never in all the hard days that followed did he utter a word of discouragement, or falter in our undertaking, and though he had never climbed mountains before that summer, he proved to be a cool-headed and cautious climber. I have seldom seen his equal." (With Kinney's highest recommendation, Curly would be contracted by the ACC for outfitting in the years to follow.)

They laboured with their combined pack-train of five cayuses for twelve days up the Miette, the Moose and Smokey Rivers, arriving at the base of the north shoulder of Mt. Robson on July 24, 1909. Twenty days later, August 13, 1909, after four 2-day attempts, poor conditions and much hardship and privation Kinney bared his head and said "In the name of Almighty God, by whose strength I have climbed here, I capture this peak, Mt. Robson, for my own country, and for the Alpine Club of Canada."

After a short period of adulation, doubts started to sift into some of the minds of the ACC executive. After all, in those days of simple equipage, Kinney had basic equipment, but Curly lacked hob-nails on his boots, had only a wooden staff, and they carried just the one rope, making it a most remarkable and unbelievable feat. The doubters were fearful of anything that might mirror the 1906 scandal of Doctor F. Cook and Mount McKinley, tainting the fine reputation of

the robust young club. Kinney's claim was most curiously and quietly dismissed. A gentleman's word was no longer enough and in essence that was all Kinney had to offer. His card in the vial, wrapped in a Red Ensign flag and cached at the first opportunity climbing down was not rediscovered for fifty years, almost to the day, in 1959. By that time most of the key characters in the dismissal had died. The cache was exactly where Kinney said he had left it.

The Centennial

In August of 2009 the families of Reverend George Kinney and Curly Phillips gathered in the Fraser valley south of Mount Robson within the spirit of that first climb, to honour the duo's daring deed. The desire to have a 'reunion' grew from a six day hike to Berg Lake and environs in September of 2005, when my partner Roger Painter encouraged me to explore the landscape beyond the lake that was named after my grandfather. It was a wonderful, emotion-filled trek, identifying features and vistas that Reverend Kinney's camera had captured long ago.

In the fall of 2008 contact was made with the Phillips family, grand-daughter to grand-daughter (Lorri Maley-Bell), by courtesy of the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives. Would the Phillips like to join the Kinneys? Yes!

After a winter of organizational ups and downs with e-mail discussions, phone-calls, introductions, appended lists, accommodation searches, reservations, and finally a program, messages started to fly: "...at Napier Airport, waiting for my flight to Auckland... ..we will all be there soon!..... Getting excited! See you there.....little smoke and no major road construction.....Pack light, drive safely, fly high...."

"...August 12, dawned fine and clear." Actually, August 12, 2009 was overcast. But the rain held off while forty participants, Phillips, Kinneys and guest speakers, from Alberta, British Columbia, New Zealand and Australia, set out their show-and-tell displays and potluck luncheon specialties at the Robson Meadows picnic shelter. The group was very privileged to enjoy the presence of two of Curly's children: daughter Joy Maley, and son Sam Phillips. Short speeches were made, and Lorri gave a reading from one of her grandfather's trapper diaries.

Afterwards, all shifted over to the amphitheatre for special guest presentations. Chic Scott, of Pushing the Limits fame, had arrived that morning with a new publication under his arm, *Deep Powder and Steep Rock: The Life of Mountain Guide Hans Gmoser*. He led off with a most interesting analysis of the events leading up to and including the 1909 climb.

Chic also brought with him a University of Alberta historian, Zac Robinson. Zac is currently editing a soon-to-be published work on the translated letters of Conrad Kain.



Jerome Rozitis, Jacklin Hoole, Maureen Hoole, John and Carol Phillips, Roger Painter at Berg Lake PHOTO: M. HOOLE

He is an experienced climber and ski mountaineer who has actually climbed Mount Robson, and he gave the attentive audience the history of the massive rock (3,954m, 12,972ft.)

Next was a presentation on Arctomys Cave by Chas Yonge, a geologist and knowledgeable caver who runs guided tours of Rats Nest Cave near Canmore, Alberta. Kinney, while acting as assistant to the Alpine Club of Canada/Smithsonian expedition in 1911, discovered the Arctomys, which, at 536m (rated - 523, +13), is the deepest cave north of Mexico.

Finishing off, I gave a digital slide show of some of Reverend Kinney's collection of lantern slides, which included images of the first and second ACC mountaineering camps, of the 1907, 1908, and 1909 Robson expeditions, and the 1911 Alpine Club of Canada/Smithsonian expedition. All the speakers kindly agreed to present again at the Parks Canada evening program.

British Columbia had been burning. We had looked forward to an unstructured evening of typical campfire banter, but the province had not had enough rain the past couple of weeks to get the governmental gears in motion to lift the campfire ban. However, the weather had cleared, the mountain was a beautiful backdrop to the meadows and trees at

Mount Robson Lodge, and the skies poured forth with a fantastic meteor shower - just George and Curly doing their part. (The peak of the annual Perseid event.)

"...August 13, 1909, began fine." So too did August 13, 2009. Most members of the group donned their day-packs and headed up the trail for a leisurely 7 kilometre hike, with a lunch-stop at Kinney Lake shelter and beach before returning. 'Quite a contrast to the treacherous drama which unfolded more than 2,134m (7,000ft) above them one hundred years ago.

Time constraints in the 'real' world molded the plans of those who would trek into Berg Lake. John Phillips (Curly's grandson) and his wife Carol, from Perth Australia, got an early start this morning for a quick four-day hike. After the lunch break with the larger 'leisure' group, Jacklin Hoole (Kinney's great-grand-daughter) and her husband Jerome Rozitis from Victoria B.C., continued up the trail for five days, their first trip behind Mount Robson.

Friday, August 14, 2009, dawned exceptionally clear. Some of the Edmonton Phillips had hoped to helicopter in to Robson Pass on the Monday before the gathering and walk out, but poor weather grounded the machine. This day was perfect. After early morning goodbyes to those in the valley who would be departing for home and elsewhere, Roger and I shouldered our packs and started back up the Berg Lake trail, ears attuned, and eyes watching through the trees for the helicopter lifts into the pass. On the trail through George Kinney's "Valley Of A Thousand Falls," below the big shale cliffs, the great west shoulder, the knob, and highest-up camp, we met the Getz, the Fulfords, Lorri, and her sister-in-law Dorothy Yon in view of Mount Phillips, on their day-hike out.

There are very special times in your life when you chance upon people and places that are totally unplanned, yet are so appropriate to the mood of the day or event. At these times the notion is reinforced that you are moving within the right circles. Such things happened as Roger and I passed the next six days beneath the north and east gaze of the Monarch of the Rockies. In the Hargreaves shelter, which Curly had helped to build, we met Robin Marks from Jasper who had 'connections' with historians of that area, later proving helpful with my research of my grandfather's travels. A day was spent exploring the north slopes of the Robson Pass valley, hiking to the top of Steamboat Mountain scree, a shoulder of Mount Mumm. Another day we learned the location of

Curly's horse camp at the pass and spent a couple of hours meandering on the mossy site.

We heard that Parks Canada warden Chris Zimmerman was on duty at Robson Pass, and so we looked him up. Chris was one of the fortunate's in the extensive 1992 rescue in Arctomys Cave. We have a wonderful memory of meeting Chris, a grand-daughter and her mum along the upper Robson River. Chris was laden with an old, damp, dripping Trapper Nelson pack board. They had been to the toe of the Robson Glacier to cut some ice and were quickly heading back to the cabin to create home-made ice cream for his grandchildren.

The next day, as we hoofed it up the moraine on the east side of the "great East Glacier", I was chatting with a couple who were heading up to Snowbird Pass with their two young boys. Wow! They had one of Curly Phillip's outfitter saddles at home in their tack room! What a shame that John and Carol, who had struck camp two days before, were not with us to share their unique connection. Roger and I continued up the goat tracks to view the glaciers sweeping down from the Lynx Range.

Too soon, it was time to strike camp ourselves - at least Roger broke camp while I ran back to the pass to try and capture one last picture. And then we made our way down the valleys, images and memories of past and present tucked in amongst our gear and in our hearts.

In his day, the Reverend George Kinney may not have had the worldly influence he would have wished. It seemed, though, throughout those eleven days of August 2009, his influence from above was strong and we truly felt that his and Curly's capable spirits guided the rope for the duration. We were never "...short of food, living on birds and gophers..." a common occurrence on the plains and in the mountains one hundred years ago. We were honored to have 'elders', Joy and Sam, in our midst. Our speakers were most informative and well received. The weather proved acceptable and even great for the most part. We were 'showered' with surprising, meaningful memories. All participants of the gathering arrived safely to the mountain and safely home again.

We had gathered in respect of Reverend George Kinney's sincerity in his belief that he and Curly had reached the summit. We had gathered in recognition that their climb was significant - that they would not have achieved it were it not for a chance meeting and the combined strengths each offered to the quest.

Climbing Helmets

Lindsay Elms

A few years ago in one of the old Bushwhacker Updates, Peter Rothermel wrote: “So what’s in a helmet? ... hopefully your head, safe and sound!” It was a serious report on helmet use and it got me thinking about climbing helmets, however, it has taken up until now to put my own somewhat warped twist on the subject.

What would you think if you heard there is a relationship between a condom and a climbing helmet! I hear you chortling and rhetorically articulating “Who is this dick-head?” Of course there is no comparison in size between the two objects, however, there are some “real” men out there with big egos who brag about the size of a certain wiener that could fit into a climbing helmet!

Okay, let’s have a serious look at what both of these objects are used for!

1. A condom is a rubber sheath worn on the penis during sexual intercourse as a contraceptive device and is recommended by the National Health Board to be used to practise safe sex. A condom will help prevent infection from sexually transmitted diseases some of which can dramatically affect your lifestyle if not attended too.

2. A helmet is considered a protective device that is worn by soldiers, policemen, snowboarders, motor cyclists and mountaineers when there is danger of receiving a head injury or death, both of which can dramatically affect your lifestyle.

So we see that both a helmet and a condom can protect you from potentially life-threatening situations. Now what exactly is it that a helmet and a condom cover? You don’t need to be a brain surgeon to figure that out: one covers the skull that contains the brain while the other covers the penis, both of which are considered organs. So what is an organ?

From the Concise Oxford Dictionary:

or•gan |'ɔrgən| *noun*

a usu. self contained part of an organism having a specific vital function.

b esp. joc. the penis.

I’m not going to get into how many people would say that only the brain is a vital organ but if you ask any male his penis is pretty damn vital. In-fact, I have often heard said that a man’s brain can be found in his pants exactly where his penis is located! For woman, only one of these two organs is essential (you guess) but some get pleasure from the other (this information is supplied by Master and Johnson’s reports.) However, joking aside, both of these organs are im-



Two examples of protective coverage

PHOTO: CENTRE FOR WHIMSY & HARM REDUCTION

portant to the continuation of our species at this point in our scientific evolution.

Now the big question is: “Why are some people so averse to wearing these protective coverings?” I have seen many climbers over the years who shun the idea of wearing a helmet. Yes, helmets were once heavy and clunky but there is that macho attitude associated with them. Some males say only a sissy would wear a helmet! Often the same sentiment can be heard concerning the use of condoms. Nowadays, technological advances have made helmets much lighter in weight than their earlier predecessors and are anatomically designed for greater comfort. They even come in different colours to suit your personality, the colour of your spandex or the climb you’re doing. Condoms also come in different colours, shapes, textures, and flavours, depending on you’re partner at the time and you’re sexual preference.

So, if it is recommended that consenting adults use condoms to practice safe sex, then why shouldn’t mountaineers wear their climbing helmets to practice safe climbing! Next time you’re in your local mountaineering store check out the range of climbing helmets and I guarantee a pharmacy that sells condoms won’t be too far away. Remember, even seemingly minor head injuries can have lasting effects. Months, even years later symptoms such as loss of memory or aggressive behaviour may manifest themselves, even though the initial trauma did not seem severe. Of course the worst case scenario is death!

Mt. Arrowsmith Regional Park Inauguration

Barb Baker



Peter Rothermel prepares to cut the ribbon at the Mount Arrowsmith Regional Park dedication ceremony PHOTO: B. BAKER

After many years of lobbying, MOUNT ARROWSMITH REGIONAL PARK was dedicated Sept 18, 2009. The weather was more than tolerable at the big, usually abused parking area on Mt. Cokley. The view up the slope takes in the summit, well within the new park boundaries. More than 100 supporters made their way, some were bussed and some hiked from sea level, to witness a really moving and exciting inauguration. Old friends from different circles were happy to get together. A big aerial map had been set up to view the boundaries, trails and topography. More than enough great food offerings were available, including a silver bowl of punch. Many appreciative civic officials were in attendance, having worked and waited for this beautiful area to become a regional park. The speeches were brief but entertaining, after which a woven cedar ribbon was stretched out. Without preamble, the new Hupacasath chief councillor, Shanee Casavants, handed scissors to Peter Rothermel to make the ceremonial cut. This was a dramatic moment for all those who know the dedication he has had for this project and no doubt, a memorable one for him.

Peaks and Valleys

Judith Holm

With our shared humanity, perhaps you own a variation to the following theme?

This summer myself and I climbed the rarely travelled Mount Ole (east of Liard Hotsprings) in search of a special plant recorded in 1960 near the summit. The ranger knew I was going because I first asked him whether he knew of any problematic grizzlies in the area; he knew of no person who had been up Ole and indeed I found no human route on what was a logical line. It was a fine adventure! Despite a thorough search I didn't find the species, however in the described meadow my hopes were briefly raised by a plant of similar size and colouration.

A few days later myself and I scrambled up one of the peaks in the range that parallels the east side of Muncho Lake in the Northern Rockies. The climbing had a few third class moves and there was a bit of a gully system which I cairned for the descent. I collected and photographed some alpine plants, and returned, invigorated from this most interesting experience.

The year's third mountain adventure of this type was in searing 38 degree heat of late October when myself and I hiked up Mount Wassan, Saguaro NP, Arizona. We watched out for snakes, touched many kinds of spines and found that the umbrella's shade gave relief and was probably essential. Again, we found peace, natural beauty and much of great interest on the mountain and in the other days exploring this desert.

Since Viggo died in September 2007, myself and I have hiked together a lot. In my case, this is a sudden and fundamental change of company. What remains a comfortable, familiar habit is that it is easiest to feel peace and healing in nature and the hills. Myself and I have the greatest emotional pain of my life to share, a wide range of thoughts to process, and the need to listen to physical clues to help heal the injuries sustained in the car accident.

By "myself and I" I mean visualizing myself as an *observer* alongside who is struggling to steadily develop a more conscious, objective awareness of what is. This observer, myself, is sharing and supporting what can be lonely explorations of outer, but primarily inner, peaks and valleys. As a mountaineer, I wonder if you can relate to this approach?

The Vancouver Island Qualifiers: A Personal Odyssey 1989-2008

Rick Hudson

There are nine peaks for summit freaks, beneath a windswept sky.
I wouldn't stop to reach each top; at least, I planned to try.
For here's the rub, the Alpine Club, demands you scale them all
Before you claim your brush with fame. Oh, pride before the fall!

Rugged Mountain – August 1989

T'was well known that, both Briggs and Pratt had plans (that I'll abridge)
To climb a line so mighty fine up Rugged's Southeast Ridge.
Dark dawn's a curse, the bugs were worse. We scrambled to the start.
The southern face was not the place for those who're faint of heart.
Aye, black the walls, and steep the hauls before we cleared that face
A gendarme loomed – we thought we're doomed – we squeezed on past
that place.
On summit fair, we gulped for air, then started our descent
With thoughts we're done – we'd bare begun – and energy was spent.
We pushed on well, each led a spell. A short-cut would suffice
To make two rapps – much time elapsed – to reach a moat of ice.
The schrund was wide, and Sandy tried to cross a bridge too thin
To our dismay the arch gave way, unroped he tumbled in.
T'was late that night, bruised bad from fright, we made our camp at last.
But yet I knew my first IQ; and so the die were cast.

Mount Colonel Foster – July 1990

Months passed away, and then one day Briggs phoned me to cajole
To join a team – a hair-brained scheme – the Colonel was our goal.
July the first: Oh how we cursed, as on Elk River Trail
With all the pain of pouring rain, and lightning, even hail.
All damp and cold we camped, truth told, upon a frozen lake.
Seen from beneath, the Colonel's teeth set all our knees a-quake.
We were long gone before the dawn, though clouds were very low.
The couloir's rocks a slimy pox. It looked like it might snow.
The Northwest Summit came and went. Little of this we knew –
A sodden troupe within a soup that hid the ridge from view.
It's sometimes true, when things are blue, and all just seems the worst
That through the night a beam of light upon you then may burst.
Such was it then, at summit cairn, that Sandy loudly cried,
"There is no flag, but paper bag with six cold beers inside!"
We drank the health of unknown friends. We toasted absent sun.
We took just four, and left two more for host, or anyone.
But many's the slip twixt can and lip, as down we reeled our route:
One chanced to knock a blade of rock that punctured Newman's boot!
A grinding thud, then flecks of blood. No timing could be worse –
Just grin and bare (we're half way there) across the grand traverse.
With progress slow, cold winds would blow through every spire and hollow
While soaking clouds cast cloaking shrouds upon the route to follow.

So, tired and damp, we stopped to camp near Southern Summit's shoulder.
And cleared a site to pass the night, then dropped against a boulder.
With naught to eat, a rocky seat of flooded broken rubble,
And Don's bust foot and swollen boot – there seemed a host of trouble.
The night passed slow, but dawn's first glow revealed the clouds had
cleared.

We saw our line, and it looked fine. Though stiff, we stood and cheered!
A fast descent (we were hell-bent), with plans, there was no doubt,
To wolf our food as fast we could, before the long hike out.

The Golden Hinde – July 2004

Much time passed by before next try – the Golden Hinde now beckoned.
And once again we start in rain, but it would end, we reckoned.
With my son Pete, on flying feet, the best we could determine
It's 13 hours of rain and showers to reach the lake at Burman.
But dawn broke clear, the peak was near. Above, a blue sky heaven
At Glacier Lake we took a break. My watch read just past seven.
Let's change the plan: we think we can ascend the west ridge quicker
Without a rope, (or so we hope) the rocks can't be much slicker.
Below, the valley's choked with cloud; above, the slabs are streaming
As up we race, across the face, to gain the terrace gleaming,
Until just 90 minutes gone, we can't believe how lucky –
No summit log, nor summit fog, but there's a rubber ducky!
The weather's kind, but in our mind remains that thought eternal:
The home trail's steep (t'would make you weep) a twisting grind infernal.
So down we went, back to the tent. An hour of rested bliss an'
Twelve bush-whacking, hard back-packing hours to reach the Nissan.

Mount Septimus – July 2005

So time went by. In my mind's eye forgetful winds were blowing,
Till Torge called: Too long I'd stalled. To Septimus we're going.
At Cream Lake's shores we made a pause, to camp there our intent,
But not before bugs flocked galore, and we had brought no tent!
A restless night – a bug's delight – but gone before first call.
By eight o'clock, below the rock, we viewed the southern wall.
We found our form on faces warm, the sun as our spectator.
Hard and clean, the line a dream, and seven pitches later
A gentle stroll from near the col through slopes of alpine heather
To look around where views surround, and all in perfect weather.
There in an arc, Strathcona Park stretched to the far horizon
From lake to crest, it was the best that you could lay your eyes on.
But each ascent requires descent, and we were no exception.
On tiny ledges, tied to hedges, care and circumspection
Torge and I would deftly tie our anchors and then pause;
The other two declined the view, faced inward, clenching jaws!

Elkhorn Mountain – August 2006

A year or two, then plans anew to try with Fordham, Turner
The Northwest Ridge on Elkhorn's wedge. The up-trail's some calf burner!
Once camped up there, it dawned quite clear. Above, the gendarme hovered,
But Charles and Chris just called it bliss, and weren't the slightest bothered!
We quickly coped with cliffs un-rope'd, to reach the glacier chilly.
The guide said 'left', but climb that cleft looked cold and somewhat silly.
Off to the right Chris thought she might have seen past talus block wall
Around an edge, a tiny ledge that dodged the gendarme's rockfall.
We heaved a sigh when we got by – no place to play about in –
For it would take one small earthquake to sweep you off the mountain.
Above, the slope proffered more hope, and we could choose our routing
And scarce an hour beyond the tower the cairn was ours for booting.
A perfect day, the perfect way to gain the heady heights,
And all around the distant ground revealed such fair delights.
But all who climb that peak sublime take care and do not fail –
Though Elkhorn's horn you choose to scorn, watch out for Elkhorn's tail!
The gully deep descends so steep, the scariest of places,
As pebbles sail past heads like hail, and rattle off the faces.
The chock at last! Once there tied fast, with many upward glances
An airy rapp to reach the gap that leads to safer stances.
Back at the camp, the morning's damp still hung on alpine flowers.
We settled down on level ground and slept for many hours!
And that is all that I recall of Elkhorn's IQ tale
Though most were stung, when stopped among a wasp nest on the trail!

Nine Peaks – June 2008

So five were done, with four not won. In truth, it was poor timing.
They had presumed, and then consumed two decades of my climbing.
To escalate my summit rate, was now my stated object
Before dotage and ripe old age prohibited the project!
So Nine Peaks called. Too long I'd stalled, and left it on back-burner.
And off went we, in June with ski – t'was Hoffman, Campbell, Turner.
With much travail, the Bedwell trail was followed – it was dreadful –
There were no cures for long detours around the frequent deadfall.
But warm and dry, below BI we camped and hoped good weather;
If skis could stick, we planned a quick dash to Nine Peaks together.
Yes cold and clear, the dawn drew near, we climbed the glacier icy
But hard the slope, it gave scant hope, the edging very dicey.
Near BI's top, we paused to stop, and gain a true perspective:
Long ski descent, then more ascent, to reach that day's objective.
Best not to think, that skating rink, like us grew ever colder,
As edges chattered, skis all clattered, over icy shoulder.
Then Martin leapt, and down we swept off cornice into powder
And down we went, a long descent, though wind behind grew louder.

Through cloud obscured, we skied assured, there was no way we'd stop it.
The final chute we had to boot, before we stood atop it.
Alas, we knew the sky once blue, was now both gray and scowling
And as we skinned against the wind, it grew from strong to howling.
With flapping packs re-traced our tracks – our lifeline home that day –
The light had gone, and wind had blown much of their trace away.
With all our powers we climbed for hours to reach the summit shoulder
Of BI's flank, the view a blank, and still the wind grew colder.
Descent at last, but though we cast about for powder surface
The frozen slope gave not a hope for any skis to purchase.
There's no delight in losing height that has been gained so slowly
When forced to cling to anything, and curse that ice unholy.
Yet down we inched, with fingers pinched, our line just hopes and guesses
Where once we'd raced, this time we traced such slow and painful Ss.

Warden and Victoria Peaks – June 2008

In prior rain I'd failed to gain the top of Warden's summit.
So back again, through bush (a pain) to where the basalts plummet.
Christine and Charles and Tony too, to fail were not exempt
Though this I reckoned was my second, t'was Tony's fifth attempt!
The day was fair, the chute ran clear, that led us past the chockstone.
A traverse left beyond the cleft, to scramble up the block stone.
The height was ours, but in twelve hours I hoped to set my eyes on
Victoria, just over there, that filled the west horizon.
That Queen of Peaks, its north face reeks of plunging cliffs and rubble.
From Warden's side, walls high and wide, all smack of alpine trouble.
The southern slope does offer hope; a scramble route goes by it.
With Warden done, I was alone, but planned to go and try it.
Next morning's rays set rocks ablaze beside an icy column
As silence hung, and I among dark crags so cold and solemn.
Above, snow slope without a rope; below, dawn clouds were seething.
Just crunch of boot, and crampons mute, and sound of my deep breathing.
The ridge at last! And then to cast about through gaps and notches –
A bank of cloud began to shroud the mountain and approaches.
The route goes where? With rising fear I searched for trace of boot prints.
Then far below, upon the snow, I saw a line of footprints.
In such a place, that human trace such hope and comfort fed me
As down I ran with great élan, to follow where they lead me.
Through brooding crags and cloudy snags those tracks – some faint, some
hollowed –
Cut through cliffs blank, and snowy flank; those steps I gladly followed.
But pleasure's slight, to gain the height without a friend to share it.
And such was true when into view came cairn as I drew near it.
Who recommends a dearth of friends? It's better when you got 'em.
Then long descent, as homeward bent, to reach the valley bottom.

Mount Harmston – September 2008

*Just one to go! Christine also! And then we'll know we've done it.
The final thriller, past Red Pillar, up Harmston's distant summit.
But many bogs and fallen logs severely slowed our timing
With Charles and Sandy, Chris and Randy, five long hours of climbing.
Alpine at last! Around we cast for level spots to camp on
Then checked our gear, and what to wear, prepared both rope and crampon.
A pre-dawn start, all in good heart, and none the least despondent,
We worked to pass Red Pillar's mass, and reach the ice beyond it.
There, on a roll, an easy stroll across to Harmston's basement.
A gentle climb in bright sunshine – a final rocky casement –
And so t'was done, the final one. But all had given pleasure,
And though it's daft, we hugged and laughed, and grinned like cats from
Cheshire.
Those peaks were more than keeping score, like rosary or necklace,
For what we gained has now remained. It's more than some mere checklist.
It's not the bush, nor summit push, that forms the last impression
Nor yet the climb, but shared good time we hold in our possession.*

*There are nine peaks for summit freaks, beneath a windswept sky.
I wouldn't stop to reach each top; at least, I planned to try.
For here's the rub, the Alpine Club, demands you scale them all
Before you claim your brush with fame – the IQ siren's call!*

Once Upon a Mountain

Anna-Lena Steiner (age 13)

*Once upon a mountain
a little marmot stood,
and watched as pretty goldensun,
rose and threw her hood.
Squinting into rays of light,
he saw what came in overnight,
with triumphant joy he said
a group of kids lies straight ahead!
Oh, my! said goldensun, oh me!
can what you say truly be?
Why not? Sun, said he,
and down he raced to see.
But no kid there was having a ball,
in-fact, they weren't happy at all!
I think, said sun, but I don't know,
are they unhappy because of snow?
Oh yes, cried marmot, yes, yes, yes!
Sun, can you straighten out this mess?
Yes, said sun her eyes bright,
and she shone and shone with all her might.
As the clouds parted and the sun came out,
the children gave an almighty shout,
it's warm again, said Mike,
we want to go out and hike!
And so ends the story of marmot and sun,
now get out and have some fun.*

