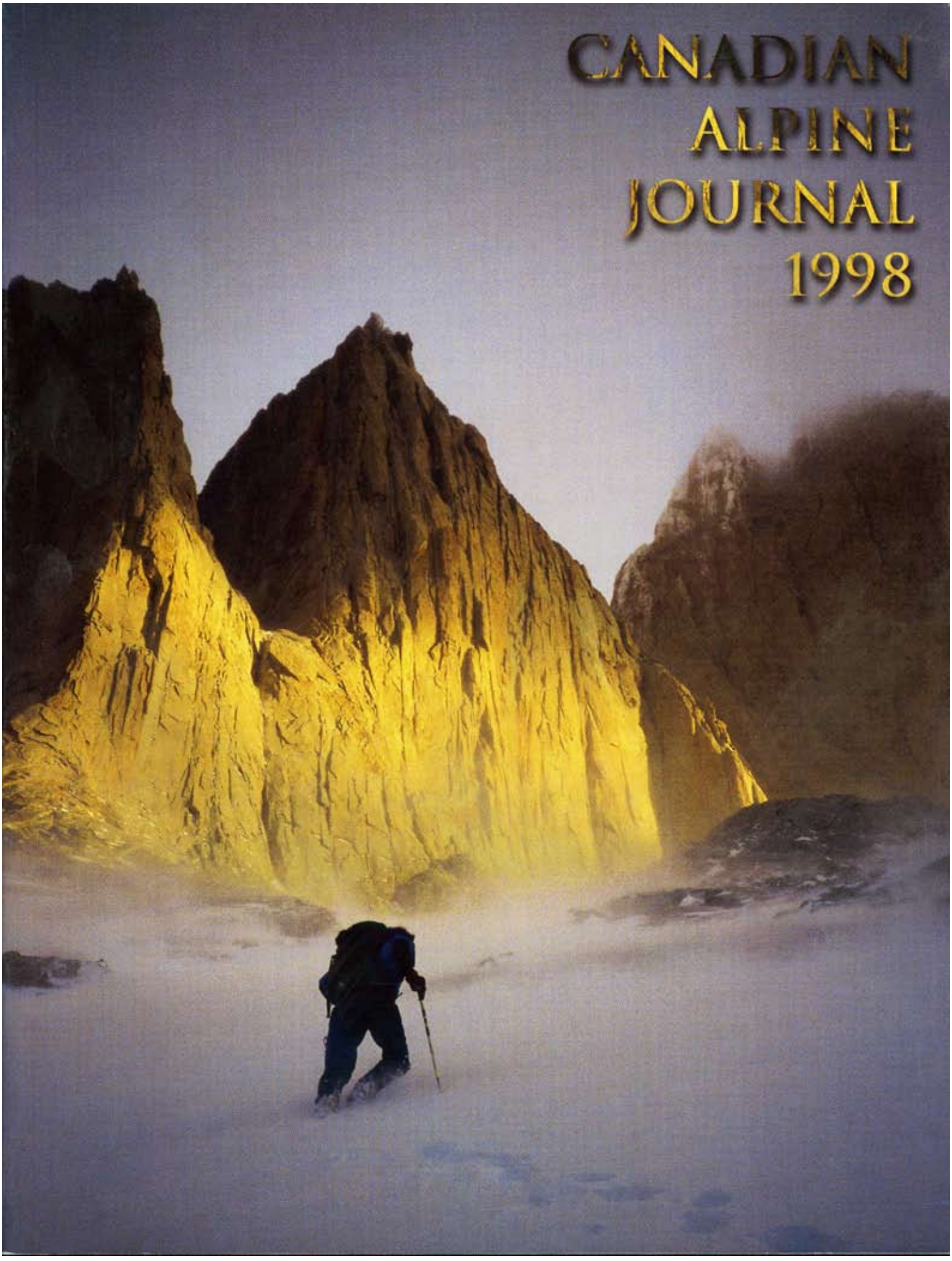
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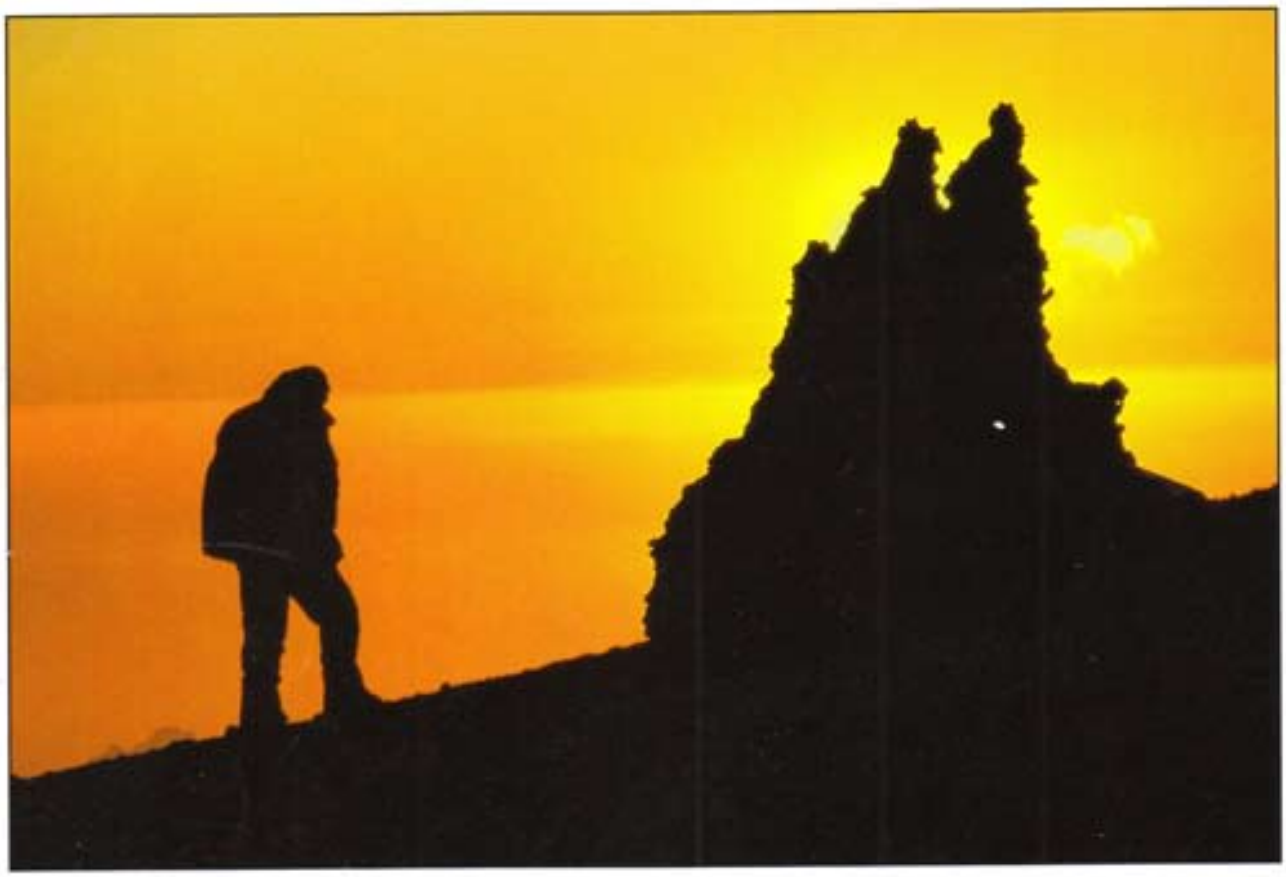

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Front cover. Approaching Torre Norte, Patagonia. Photo by Sean Isaac.
Page 2. Photo by Karl Nagy.
This page: Photo by Roger Laurilla.
Back cover. Rich Prohaska on Una's Tits, Antarctica. Photo by Jia Condon.

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Editorial — These %&!! Mountains

I was walking into one of my local crags with David Harris (the previous editor of the CAJ) shortly before he turned over the reins to me, when he gave the warning about the language letters. "You know," he said, "in the five years I've edited this rag, I've received surprisingly few venomous letters. Sure, the editor will always get contributors all wound up when he takes their masterpieces of writing and, well, edits, but you know where you see the real venom? — the swearing letters..." Forewarned, I waited. Sure enough, the pissed-off contributors lined up, threatening to never write again. But in five years I never received one of the castigations about the decline of the English language that David said he used to receive in droves along with terminations of lifelong memberships in the ACC.

At least until last year, when I printed Sean Easton's piece "Skullfuck". (Oh, jeez, I just did it again.) It was hardly the first piece during my tenure that was pockmarked with expletives but, given the title, it may have been the most obviously scarred. And so, that piece became the first target of my swearing letters. Some of the writers stated that they felt the language greatly distracted from the article, and many went on to question Sean's motivations for writing the thing in such a style, feeling that he was working overtime to show he was a "hard man" — "trying to prove he's done something great". Others went on to say that there had been articles in past volumes of the CAJ dealing with climbs that were probably "just as hard" as Sean's route at Squamish, yet these other writers "didn't have to try and show how tough they were". In fact, one writer suggested, "By keeping their darker emotions more private, I got a better sense of their strengths and dignity...." But I also received just as many comments from people who were in favour of the piece and the "reality it [brought] to the Journal".

It's an interesting dilemma for an editor. I ran the piece as it stood, because I feel my job is not to protect the gentle sensibilities of the readers but rather to try and help the writers capture whatever essence there is in climbing. And it is my sense that the essence of climbing is a blend of the strong, the glorious and the spiritual and often — when the chips are down or the going is desperate — of the world of the gutter. Go to a local crag and listen to the language of fear, or sit with a partner on a belay ledge in a lightning storm, and my guess is you'll hear the voice of Easton rather than that of Reverend Hudson. And even there I wonder: If you were sitting on a ledge that night on the Matterhorn and the Reverend went flying by into the abyss, what would he be screaming? And would I print it? The echo of terror and the snarl of anger are not polite, but they are part of climbing — and you will hear them both again in this year's CAJ.

I want to add a word of congratulations to Jack Roberts, whose article "Mount Kennedy Diary" was the recipient of last year's Best of the Journal award, accompanied by a generous $250 cheque from the Canadian Himalayan Foundation.

Geoff Powter

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

The Canadian Alpine Journal welcomes contributions from all interested readers, in either English or French. If possible, submit a 3.5" disk in a Macintosh or DOS format, with a hard copy included.

Submission deadline is January 15, 1999.

Photos are welcome, either as original slides, or prints from negatives. Include the negatives if you send prints. Clearly label and credit all photos.

Please send all submissions to:
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Asperity & Beyond

Story And Photos By Simon Richardson

"What's today like for flying, Mike?"

Hand steady on the controls and concentrating hard, Mike King stared straight ahead at the ragged hole of blue sky directly in front of us. "Pretty good, Simon. This is about as good as it gets. The weather in the Waddington Range is never settled for long." The helicopter hugged a boulder strewn slope as we slowly gained height. Suddenly we swept over a snowy ridge and a series of high peaks came into view, their summits tinged with the red of dawn. The intercom crackled back to life.

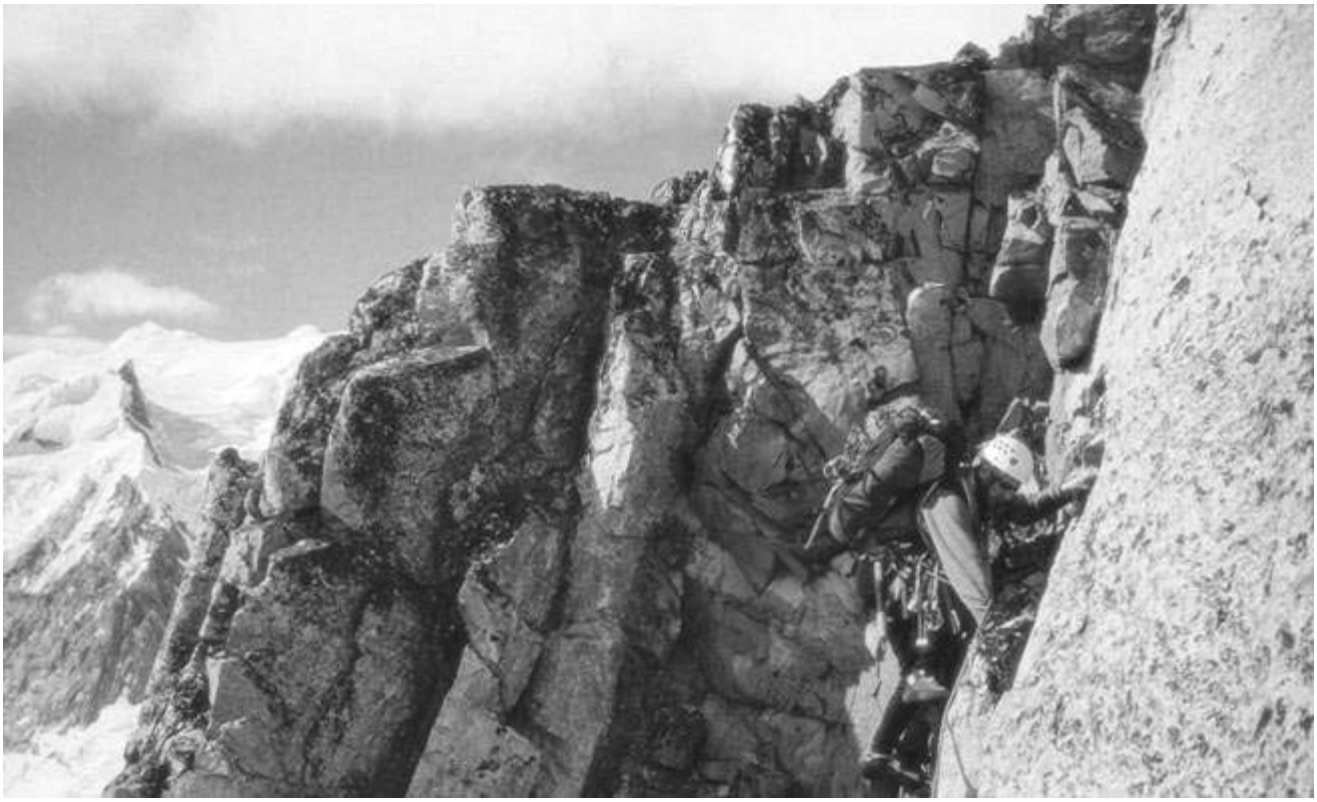
"That's Mount Tiedemann in front, with Waddington behind." A huge, fluted ice face filled the sky; behind we could just make out the summit tower of British Columbia's highest peak through a shroud of lenticular clouds. As we skimmed over a chain of rocky summits, the long Tiedemann Glacier revealed itself a thousand metres below. Mike pointed out a small patch of green as he banked the jet Ranger into a descent spiral. We were soon hovering above a tiny rock platform on the north bank of the glacier. A couple of minutes later we sprawled over our bags to stop them blowing away as Mike took off. Soon the helicopter was nothing more than a black dot in the sky.

I'm not exactly sure when my fascination with the Coast Range began. Perhaps it was Phyllis Munday's evocative shot of Waddington's icy central lower in fifty Classic Climbs. Or was it the photo of the South Ridge of Tiedemann which appeared in the 1985 issue of the British Alpine Journal? My interest was rekindled several years later, when a friend brought a copy of the Canadian Alpine Journal with him on a visit to Scotland. And there it was, Tiedemann again, and Carl Diedrich's inspiring account of a continuous ascent of the South Ridge. The acres of sun kissed granite and the seemingly endless vastness of the Coast Range mountains were like a siren — I knew that one day I would have to visit.

Dave Hesleden shared my fascination for the Canadian mountains, and once I showed him Carl's photos of Tiedemann he was hooked. Dave lives in Hong Kong, but Vancouver is conveniently halfway between there and Scotland, so we agreed to a two-week trip to the Coast Range for the summer of 1997. Throughout the winter, we collected all the information we could find on the Coast Range. Methodically we read through the CAJ; I tracked down a copy of the elusive Culbert guide in the Alpine Club library in London; and soon we became immersed in the writings of Munday, Serl, Baldwin and Diedrich. We dreamed of standing atop Waddington's icy spire and of long days padding up endless pitches of warm granite on the south side of Tiedemann. We were jolted back to reality by the common thread that shone through all the accounts, however, as again and again we read about the unreliability of the weather.

Our concern was well founded. We arrived at the White Saddle Ranch early one Saturday afternoon in July to a great welcome from the Kings, but also to tales of a poor climbing season. Heavy snowfall during the winter and unsettled weather during June and July meant that little climbing had been done; so far, Waddington hadn't received an ascent. Visibility was too poor to fly in that afternoon, so while Jen King fussed over us and made us feel at home we fretted over our gear and tight timetable.

We needn't have worried. A dawn takeoff the next morning saw us at Sunny Knob on the north side of the Tiedemann Glacier, and two days later Dave and I were standing below Waddington's summit tower. The sky was clear but the wind was strong; at times on the upper part of the East Ridge we were blown off our feet. The tower glistened white with huge ice feathers, and the air was full of wind blown ice stripped off the towering walls above.



Now was the moment of truth. It was time to play a Scottish winter climber's trick. We took off our rucksacks, pulled our hoods tight over our helmets and told each other it was no different to a wild day on Ben Nevis. Once across the bergschrund, we frontpointed three pitches of squeaky ice up the Wadd Hose to the Notch. The wind screamed as we looked up into the chimneys above. Narrow and steep, with a series of over hanging chockstones draped in icicles, they looked like a thinly iced version of Raven's Gully in Glen Coe. Fortunately, appearances were deceptive. The ice was like glue and the protection good, and two pitches later we were racing up the final mixed slopes to the dollop of curled snow that made the summit. One by one we gingerly strode across it and drank in the view of mile upon mile, peak upon peak of pristine wilderness.

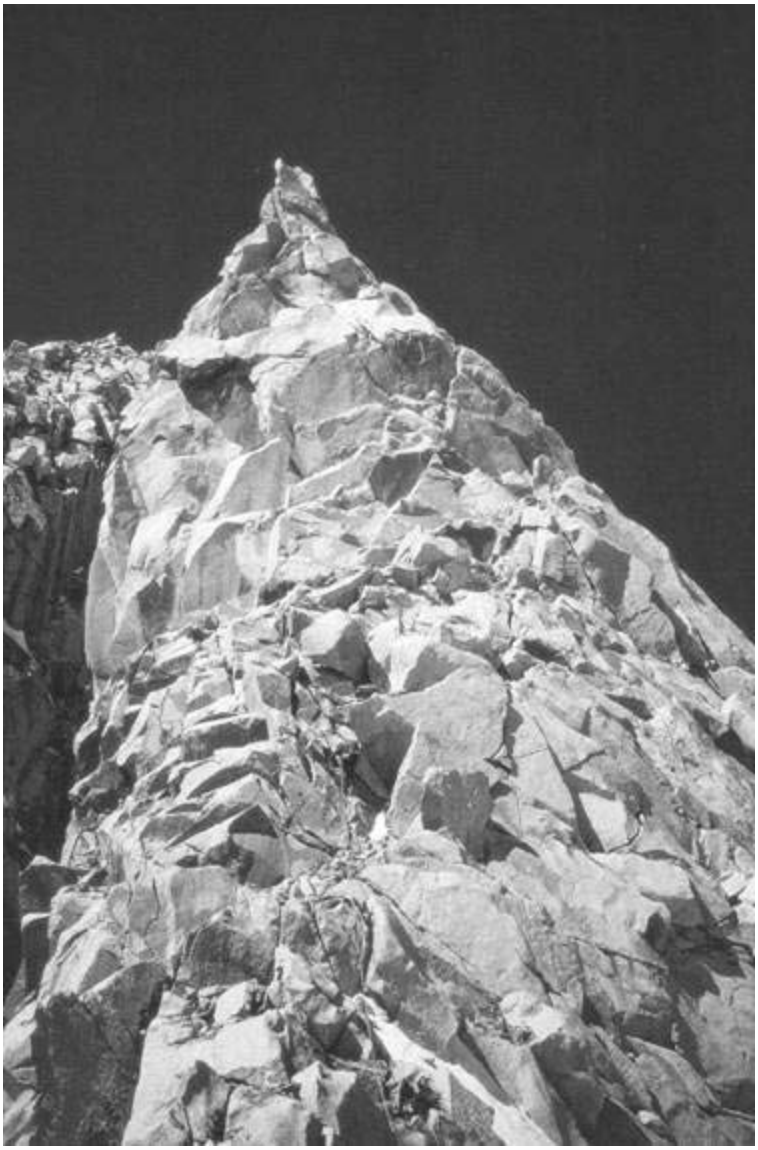
Once back down at Sunny Knob, we turned our attention to the mountains on the north side of the glacier. Without question, the South Ridge of Tiedemann was the plum line, but, after the snowy winter, descending the adjacent 1500 metre south facing couloir looked dangerous and avalanche prone. The descent from Mount Asperity down a mixed gully system on its east flank looked a safer bet, so we set about studying the unclimbed South Ridge through our binoculars. The ridge is complex and made up of four main towers separated by deep notches. In alpine terms it was reminiscent of the North Spur of Les Droites — only half as big again. All we knew about previous attempts was that they had stopped below the first tower, after concerns about the weather and complex route-finding above.

We left camp at 2 a.m. the next morning and crossed the bergschrund at dawn. I must admit to a little bit of cheating here, for we side stepped the low angled initial part of the ridge by taking a snow couloir which cuts into the right flank of the first tower. As we gained height, clouds swirled ominously around the second tower and we silently wondered whether our attempt would go the same way as so many other Coast Range projects and succumb to the dreaded weather. We were in luck, however; as we wound round into the notch behind the first tower in the early afternoon and jammed our way up perfect granite cracks and beautiful diedres above, the sky cleared. The top of the second tower was a fine horizontal blade of granite. Dave climbed it à cheval and then tiptoed down into the second notch. Above lay an overhanging wall; as the sky began to redden with dusk, I aided left across a break to reach easier ground and a perfect bivouac site.

We followed our instincts the next morning and spurned the steep crest of the third tower for the icy couloir to the left. Eventually the ice became too thin and the chockstone bulges too large, so we broke out left onto a great hanging slab which led up to a horizontal crest. For three pitches we trod this granite tightrope, with the spectacular backdrop of the Coast Mountains opening up behind us, to the top of the third tower. A free abseil into the notch below, and we were staring up at the imposing fourth tower. The line we had spotted through binoculars was steep and blank, but it was flanked on the right by a subsidiary ridge. A granite staircase of perfect rock led us sky-ward until we were below the final head wall, which was steep and smooth. It looked as if we had reached an impasse, but a narrow ramp led right. Heart in mouth, I pulled around a blind edge. There were holds — the route was in the bag! Two pitches later we were on the top of the tower, looking across onto the summit snow crest.

The mountain was not going to give in that easily, however, because the adjoining ridge thinned to a sliver of rock with smooth vertical walls to either side. At its narrowest point it was split by a sharp, deep notch. Outflanking it would have involved many abseils and a loss of precious height. While I cursed the obstacle, Dave quietly came up with the answer. From a high anchor, he pendulumed across the gap, then set up a Tyrolean traverse for me to follow. The way was now clear to the summit ridge and a bed for the night.

The next morning dawned fine yet again, and we eagerly scampered up easy mixed ground and along a fine snow arête to the summit. Spread out before us lay Waddington,



Munday, and peak after snowy peak stretching into the horizon below a deep blue sky. But this was no place to celebrate success — we had a more pressing problem.

"Simon, which way down?"

"The gully?"

"No way!"

"How about going over Tiedemann and Combatant?" I waved towards the three-kilometre-long mixed ridge-that snaked over the two great peaks to the west and eventually led down to the head of the Tiedemann Glacier.

"Too dangerous. We'll get wiped by the séracs coming off Wadd'."

Dave was right. Our climb over the past three days had been punctuated by avalanches coming off Waddington with such force that they ran right across the full width of the glacier. The Tiedemann descent couloir had also avalanched, which made us question the safety of our own descent gully. "It'll have to be the Serras, then!"

We looked behind us to the jagged group of granite-towers. Traversing these would lead to the Upper Tellot Glacier, which would take us on a slow, winding descent back to the Tiedemann Glacier and Sunny Knob. We knew that Peter Croft, Don Serl and Greg Foweraker had gone this way 12 years before on their momentous five-day traverse of the range. The Serra Peaks looked hard and menacing, but at least we would be on known ground.

The climb up the cold and icy north face of Serra V was a total contrast to the sunny rock climbing on Asperity, and after a handful of absorbing mixed pitches we emerged into sunshine and onto the exposed summit. We found the summit register inside a film canister jammed in a crack. The tiny scrap of paper recorded just three ascents but included many of the names we recognized as synonymous with Coast Range mountaineering. Culbert, Woodsworth, Croft, Foweraker, Serl, Diedrich and Davis — they were all there. We dearly wanted to add our names to the list, but we had no pencil. We scratched in our names with an ice screw and wryly noted that Carl and Guy, the last party there some eight years before, had recorded their ascent in blood.

Serra V was now about to bare its teeth. The east face of the tower drops vertically into the IV-V notch, a forbidding place where rotten gullies on either side of the divide meet. A long, diagonal abseil took us to the top of the wall, but as we stared down into the notch there was no sign of any ledge below. We thought of how committed the 1985 traverse team must have felt descending this wall unseen. Dave set off, and after an age there was a muffled shout for me to follow. I slid down the ropes to find him cocooned in a web of abseil tape that backed up one insecure-looking anchor with another. The second free abseil took us to an undercut stance consisting of a scalloped sheet of mudstone partially attached to the wall. The next abseil was blind, and we relied on the fact that others had gone this way before. Then the rope jammed. The prospect of continuing the traverse with just 10 metres of rope looked a real possibility, but Dave roped down with the slack, climbed across the IV-V notch and managed to pull it free from the other side.

It was a relief to leave steep rock behind and frontpoint up icy slopes on the other side of the col. As we traversed around Serra IV, the sun was setting behind us and we were tired. Below the summit block, we hacked away a knife edge snow ridge to pitch the tent, while clouds gathered in the west. We went to sleep praying that the weather would hold off for one more day. We were in luck, for the next morning dawned hazy but good. Corniced ridges and intricate mixed climbing led across to Serra III. We took a diagonal line up the north face to reach the summit, then downclimbed the ridge to the Serra II-III col. Three abseils and we were on the glacier; four hours of hard slogging through calf-deep snow saw us back down on the Tiedemann Glacier.

Our adventure was to finish as suddenly as it had begun. Back at the tent we succumbed to the temptation of the radio and an early pickup. Just after dawn the next morning, we heard the steady throb of Mike's Jet Ranger. Within minutes the icy peaks of the Waddington Range were nothing more than a perfect memory.

Mount Waddington (4019m) Wadd Hose/Southeast Chimneys. August 5, 1997.

Asperity Mountain (3716m) South Ridge 1400m. V, 5.9 Al WI3. F.A.: August 8-10, 1997.

Serra V (c. 3600m) North Face Variation 100m. III, 5.9 WI4. August 10, 1997.

Climbers: Simon Richardson, Dave Hesleden.

Wall Fiction 5.10c

Story & Photos By Warren Hollinger

With
Brad Jarrett
Wally Barker
John Rozecki

Soft lights, warm bed, nuzzling the nape of her neck. Oh, life is good; it's as if I never left. Now face to face, a gentle coo leaves her smile. Leaning over, she lays her body on mine. A whisper in my ear. "Whoosh," she murmurs.

"What was that?"

"WHOOSH!" She whispers a little louder, but I still can't quite make it out.

"WHAM!" I can't breathe. I slide onto my elbows, staring frantically for an answer. A chunk of ice lies on my chest. Slush and snow are sprayed about the ledge. John bolts upright; I gasp again for air. Brad tears open the fly. Am I okay? "I dunno." Rain and slush pour through the black, gaping hole. I just want air; at 18,000 feet, it's a chore to get it. I force a shallow breath — probably no ribs broken, but what the hell do we do now? We're in a raging storm, our bivi is breached and we're 1000 feet up the north face of the Nameless Tower.

But whoa, let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Our story actually started where most big wall adventures begin, in that dirt lot in the big ditch in central California. On this fateful day, I was looking for a way to Pakistan and Wally Barker just happened to be seeking out an insurance chip. As luck would have it, we both wanted the north face of the Great Trango Tower. Wally and his partners, Brad Jarrett and John Rozecki, already made up a smokin' team, yet they knew that in the big mountains losing a partner to illness or injury was a highly possible scenario. Backing his butt up was one more way he could help guarantee success. Our limiting factors? Brad never having climbed with Wally. And me, I'd never climbed with any of them. In fact, I barely even knew these guys, but I figured it was nothing that a heavy beer and spray

Brad Jarrett and Wally Barker on the summit.

The Baltoro; Uli Biaho just left of centre.

session couldn't cure.

The truth is, none of us would have likely even touched the PIA flight counter had it not been for Wally, our big-six accountant. He is the multi-task man who's already led multiple lives. As an engineer out of college, he made his way within a few years from river guiding to oil rigs in Alaska. Being the captain/owner of a small fishing fleet provided prosperity for a few years, until the industry, and subsequently his wife, went south. In search of a new and more challenging environment, he found himself camping out of bounds near UC Irvine while getting his accounting degree and making No. 1 in his class. Now — while dodging the question from his derelict friends: "How much DO you make?" - he pursues life and adventure with an intense fervour. Juggling a 70-plus-hour work week, he still managed to manoeuvre the team through Third World red tape and to auger his dilapidated van into Santa Cruz for our last minute packing:

John had picked me up from the airport earlier that day, and our main focus was to ensure that every piece of food, gear and equipment that couldn't be supplied in Pakistan was organized and stuffed into our 12 haul bags and five duffels. Somehow, between the cases of empty beers, mounds of gear and conversations of our hostess' favourite sexual positions. Brad managed to find his way to John's with only a handful of hours to spare before the flight. I was thinking Wally had a lot on his mind, yet Brad had issues in his life greater than all of our measly concerns combined. He was soon to be Daddy Jarrett. Could this be a bad thing? (I mean for the team, of course.) Two years earlier, the risk/reward balance of pushing limits versus having a baby had been heavily debated on my first trip to Baffin Island. And our new daddy/partner's commitment to the baby back home had won out. Would this be the case with the famous "Rad Brad"? Maybe not. He appeared to be "business as usual", except for the extra fawning over Heather. Brad has done first ascents of serious wall routes in Patagonia, Baffin Island and Yosemite and is known for his nerves of steel. A fairly reserved and quiet man, he grew up next to Yosemite, a force that had shaped this young man's life. We would all soon realize that nothing short of a calving sérac could tear the man from this mission.

If you've ever had to fly 12,000 miles, you know what a life sucking event it is. And if that flight touches down in Pakistan, beware of airport porters. One moment you've got your bags, the next they're ripped out of your hands and disappearing into the massive crowd. There is no way four guys can keep eight eyes on 17 bags. And the crowd knows it! Rest assured, though: the bags will be sitting safely at the curb. Pakistanis are an incredibly honest and hospitable people - just remember that they believe those who have are expected to give to those who don't. The Pakistanis are quite aware of the fact that North Americans have a whole lot. Materialistically speaking, this is quite true, yet it's hard to gauge their suffering when so many people wear ear-to ear-grins. Though they live in a country that apparently has so little, I imagine they may be richer in life than many "wealthy" people I know.

This doesn't preclude them, of course, from trying to make a buck. If a man picks up your bag and moves it ten feet — even in the wrong direction — he'll expect to be paid for his hospitality. Remember: you have, he doesn't.

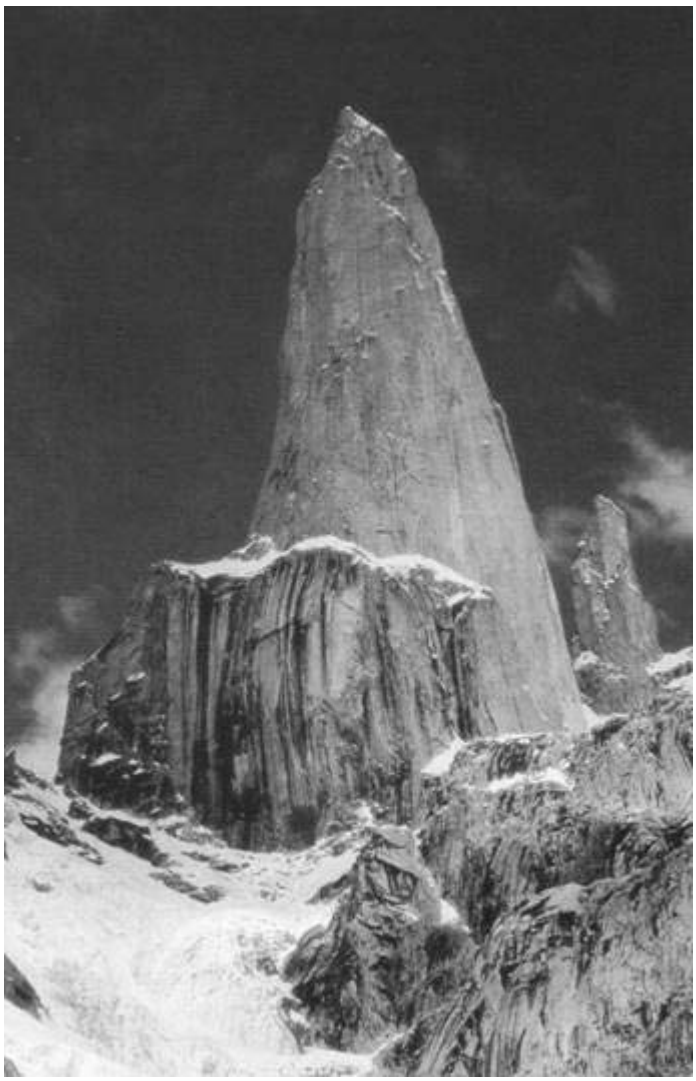
So in hindsight we shouldn't have been surprised when each airport porter wanted five dollars. With six bags grabbed and 15 guys claiming to have helped, that would be:

"Seventy-five dollars, my ass! Your shirt says the fee is 35 rupees [about a buck]! Hell, you only carried the bag fifty feet."

We shrewdly negotiated down to $20 (the smallest bill we had),

crawled into our bus and prayed a bed would be under us soon. The Flashman's Compound provided that bed — and, surprisingly, beer — and before we knew it our 48 hour day had passed and we were out cold.

Actually, "cold" is not a word one honestly uses in Rawalpindi in late June. In fact, "cold" may not even appear in the Urdu dictionary until one heads in search of Skardu, 24 hours north into the Karakoram. "Sweltering", on the other hand, is commonly used to define the average "'Pindi" day. Five days of red tape, local cuisine and sweltering had us baffled, draining from both ends and melting into submission. After the last piece of paper was shuffled and we all officially promised to be good boys and not take pictures of military installations, we were finally granted permission to seek out cold -well, cool-ish — Skardu.



North and east faces of the Trango Tower

Picture a road one and a half lanes wide, with every other turn a blind hairpin. The inside is a cut out cave which overhangs the road, and the outside is a 100-foot vertical drop into the raging Indus River below. Bring in a lead footed driver named Ali, who honks and accelerates around every turn. Add dump trucks and buses — Ali's kindred spirits — racing in from the opposite direction, and subtract any notion of guardrails. This little formula is the 24-hour Karakoram Highway E-ticket ride. My advice to you? Fly, fly, fly to Skardu. If you pay no heed, I hope you are adrenaline junkies who enjoy being totally out of control, 'cause your new mantra is "Insh'allah": It is Allah's Will. Your bus driver will inform you that it will be Allah's Will if you survive the ride. If you go flying off the cliff into the Indus, "Insh'allah". You've got it: the bus driver had nothing to do with that.

The next five days, which took us from Skardu to the Trango Glacier base camp, were comparatively uneventful. Sure, there were experiences such as innards being tossed during six hours of hard four-wheeling. And traversing along steep, wet cliffs with heavy packs. Even wild river crossings: rolling along cables while crouching in a rickety old box and holding on for dear life, with the roaring Indus licking at your toes. Yet all this was tame, now that we had left Ali's grasp and had a semblance of control over our fate.

The Trango Glacier offers a fantastic basecamp at 14,000 feet for attempts on the south sides of the Nameless and Great Trango towers. Though complete with an alpine-lake and running water, what it lacks is easy access and a view to these towers' north faces. We took a big gamble by planning to approach from the south up to the Little Trango Great Trango col at 18,500 feet and to rappel 1000 feet to the likely base of our route. Yet, from most accounts, the alternative — a 3000 foot, all ice approach from the Dungee Glacier — was suicidal at best. The harrowing tales of climbers almost buying it as they came up from the north and east sides of both these towers convinced us that the extra work humping loads would be well worth the extra years of life we hoped to retain. We committed to the approach, and all that was left was to scope out the route and hump the loads.

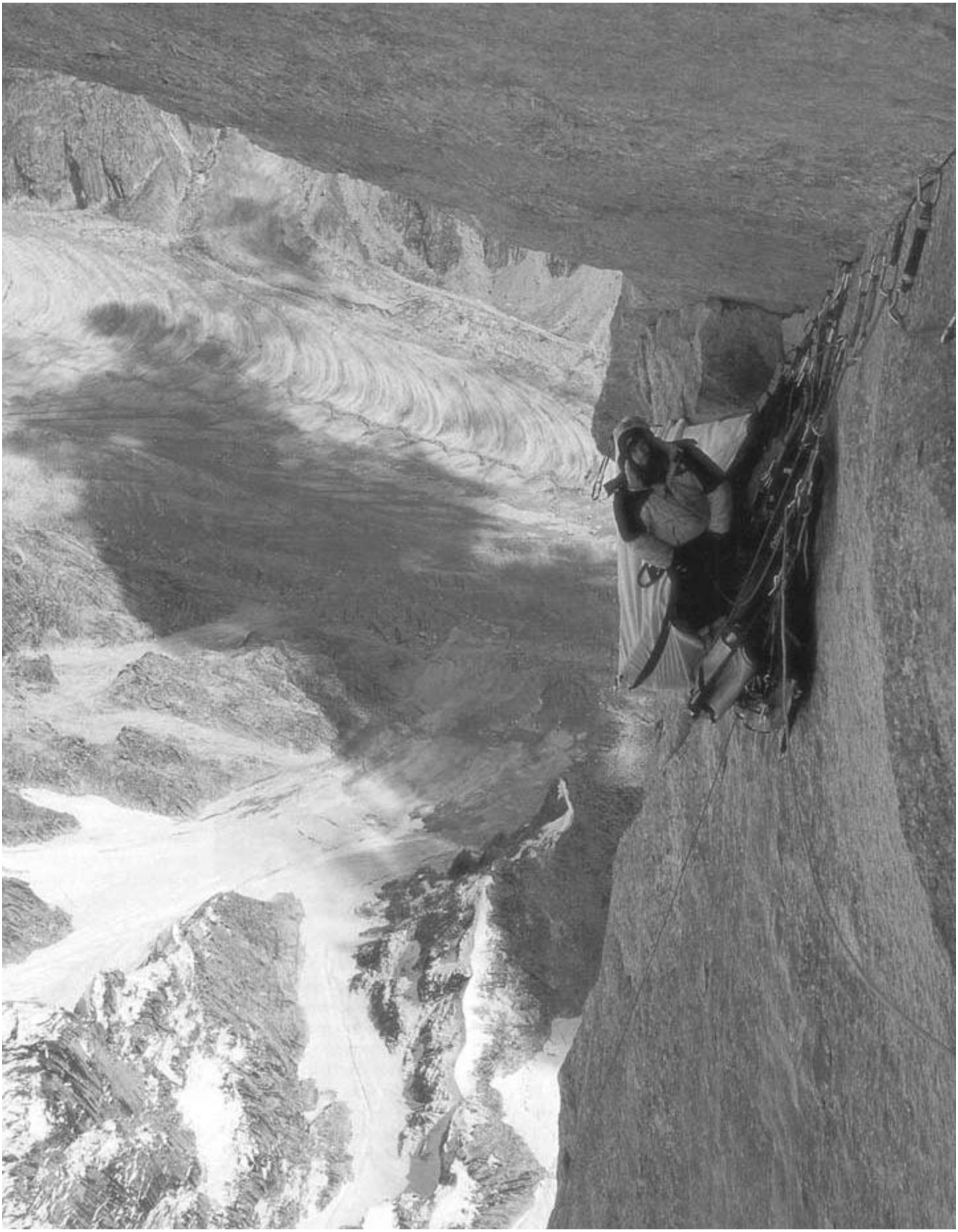
Six hours of sucking wind brought Brad and me onto the Dungee Glacier and into perfect view of the north face of the Great Trango Tower. As we stared up at this magnificent wall, three things came to mind: it wasn't quite as big or as steep as we had anticipated, but the overhanging séracs roofing the wall looked horrendous. Nevertheless, we'd travelled halfway around the world to climb this wall and our mission was to come back with a new route. Right? Brad and I pieced together what appeared to be an incredibly intricate line, letting our excitement at this prospect overcome our earlier reservations. As the topo was being drawn, Brad proclaimed an exit about three pitches long which meandered along a slab right below 200 foot high séracs. Was that our only way out? My day dream quickly faded and reality bit back with a vengeance, but Brad was still dreaming.

"Wake up, buddy," I insisted.

"No," he said, "it's gonna go!"

"Yeah, go all right—right through our heads." I was a bit worried; as we trudged back to Basecamp, I became lost in the consequences of this objective, all the while mentally sizing Brad for the perfect straitjacket. At camp the route and facts were laid out to the rest of the team and we were conclusively undecided. Whew! After hours of mental ping pong, I resigned myself to the fact that, if everyone was ready to step on board, I too would ride this asylum ascent.

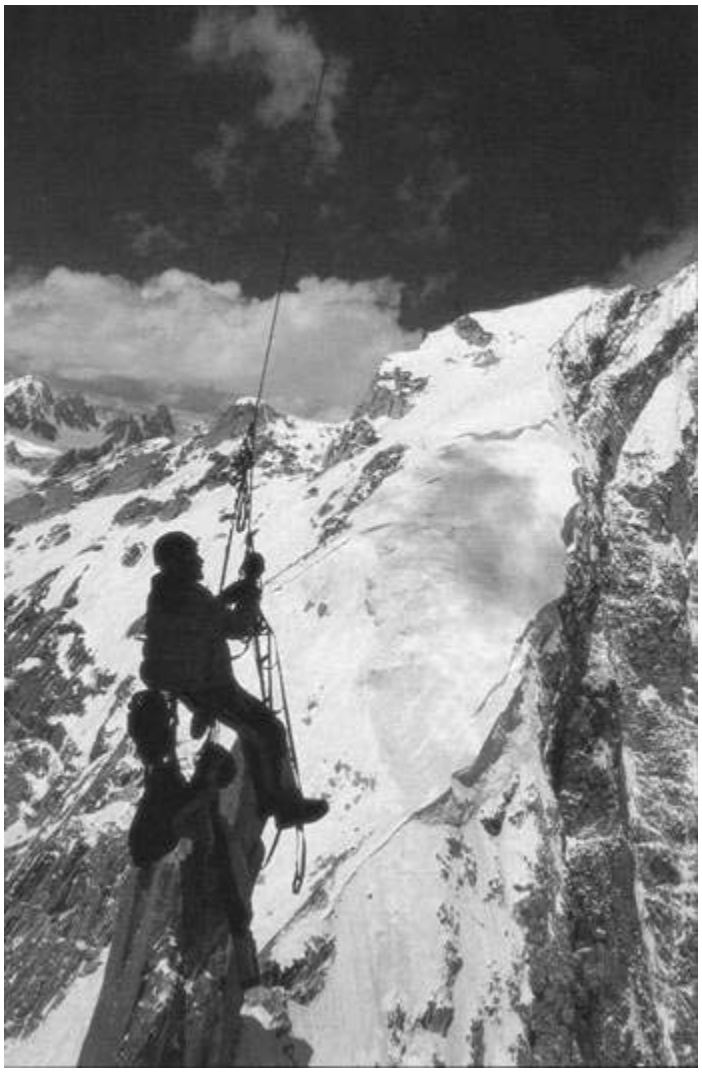
Two days later we reconned the wall from the Trango Glacier side, staring down at the face, all of the hazards up close and nasty. The team unanimously decided to shit-can the ascent. Smart buggers, weren't we? And what was our objective to be now? We were 20,000 dollars in the hole, with a scrubbed mission. Actually, the decision was a rather simple one. We just happened to be next door to one of the most coveted north faces in the world



Camp V

— the north face of the Nameless Tower. Each of us had secretly entertained the thought of a new route up this face; now our team had a new breath of motivation. We would need it to move our thirteen 20-kg loads (three weeks' worth) to the 18,000-foot col between the Trango Monk and the Nameless Tower.

Of course, there was one really burning question we hadn't answered up to this point: Was there a route on the north face to be climbed? We hadn't reconned this on our trip to the Dungee Glacier, naturally, and storms had pre vented us from getting a clearer look at the route by hiking up to the col in advance. As it happened, the day after all our loads were carried up we were able to back off the col onto the north side of the Trango Monk and glass a beautiful, thin line a thousand feet below us and a couple of hundred feet from what appeared to be the Book of Shadows route put up by Americans a couple of years before. The topo was etched; after a year of planning and five weeks in Pakistan, we were finally going to be doing what we had come here to do — climb!



Brad jugging fixed line, Day 10

The route was a myriad of incipient, discontinuous features, and the puzzle revealed itself slowly. A 10-hour pitch, a 12-hour pitch, a storm, an 8-hour pitch, another storm, and six days into the ascent we'd managed to lay only 600 feet of rope. The wall had dictated that we move into our new residence after Day 1; our home was perched 200 feet up the route under a three foot roof. Surely this was enough protection to save us from bombardment, but our ledge stuck out a foot and a half, and it was here that the trouble began.

The team has been oblivious to the nasty sleet storm churning outside. And then one enterprising shard hits our brittle window and explodes into my chest. As I gaze down, gasping for air, I fully anticipate seeing a hole through my chest into Wally's hammock below. Brad tears open the fly from his outside quarters and stares with John in disbelief at me and the serious breach in our bivi system. As air finally hits my lungs, I try to answer the barrage of questions: "I think I'm O.K." "No, my ribs are worked, but probably not broken." "It had to be ice—my bag is full of slush."" "I have no clue what we're gonna do about this hole!" The storm now seems entirely focused on my berth, and I develop a very personal interest in sealing this breach. "No, tomorrow WON'T do. We need a solution NOW!" Duct tape, we find, doesn't actually cure the world, and an ensolite pad strung tightly over the fly will have to do. With time and a fully cranked stove, everything ultimately dries. Though my position isn't completely impervious to the storm, my bivi will be adequate until morning. When the next chunk hits the ledge, I dive over John for the wall's security, and it is quite obvious that the greatest damage incurred is not the hole in the fly but the one in my head. The knowledge that at any moment I could be snuffed out starts working my nerves. This will grind my psyche for the next few days, until an adequate roof can be reached.

Reaching that roof proves to be a serious challenge. But we remind ourselves continuously that this is the reason we came here in the first place: long leads with a plethora of hooks. 'heads, 'beaks, 'blades and loose flakes are our rewards for the massive effort we are exerting to stick to this wall. We wanted adventure, remoteness, intensity, high stakes and the ability to seek out our limits; in this we are not disappointed. But four men on one 3000-foot wall means you only lead a quarter of the route. And that is way too much free time to be freezing your butt off, thinking about places you'd rather be.

Honestly, there are too many moments that really don't seem all that enjoyable until you're sharing them with a few of your closest buds in the local pub. It is only then that the suffering seems to have dissipated, leaving the high points to linger in the aftermath.

But we can't enjoy that aftermath yet; hell, we haven't even reached a safe roof. Brad takes off from Camp II into a blank sea of apparently useless features. The rope slowly feeds out from the fly, disappearing into the hanging fog outside. "Tap, tap, tap." That's what we expect to hear, but rivets are always our last resort and Brad has nothing more on his mind than to sneak in another three feet without a hole. Foot after foot, hour after hour, we endure the silence.

"How 's everything up there?"

"Oh, fine."

Gee, that summed it up nicely. Never a man to waste-words.

After 12 hours we hear the anchor go in. I clean the pitch, and soon enough we're all back hanging in the ghetto. Invariably the subject of difficulty is brought up. This is always a subjective concept, giving rise to varying opinions, yet these guys have their system dialed in. When in doubt, sandbag. As the cleaner, you actually have the best perspective of how difficult the pitch really was. Would that #3 'head or tied-off knife blade actually have-held a fifty footer? A one hundred footer? It's still not definitive, but learning the leader's frame of mind is always of interest. Eighty to

ninety continuous feet of Brad's pitch was worthless scrap.

"What are you rating that one?"

"Hell, I don't know. It seemed pretty straightforward."

"You got a number you wanna throw out?"

"Hard to say. A2, maybe. Did you see the way those seams connected — it was like blah, blah, blah."

"Yeah, right, I cleaned it. We're calling it A4!"

"Whatever."

I clean a 200-foot pitch of loose, crumbling features, with the only possible piece that might save a fall a few rivet hangers down low.

"Whad'ya think of that one, Johnny?"

"Definitely a choss pitch. Never quite sure where it was going until it was over."

"And the rating?"

"I dunno. Maybe A2?"

"Uh huh — right!"

"So, Wally, how was your pitch?"

"Uh, some hooks and 'heads. Got some 'blades in at the top."

"Sounds great. What should we call it?"

"So you had some Al hooks to some Al 'heads!?"

He cracks a smile: "Yeah, sure."

Oh, these evil boys. Well, it's all in fun, anyway, isn't it?

Wally takes off on what appears to be a straightforward pitch and stretches it 280 feet into sanctuary — our first real roof. A one ton piece of ice with apparently no points of adhesion has loomed in the corner over his head for three hours; there was no way in hell he was going to stop until he was out of its destructive path. Our new, 15 foot roof is now more than adequate protection from all gravity-prone projectiles. Twelve days and halfway up this wall, we breathe a collective sigh of relief at this prospect of relative safety, at least for a few days.

On average most of our pitches have run in the eight to ten hour range, and the next half of the wall will be no exception. John leaves the roof, blindly shooting for a snow ledge drawn on our topo. What does that actually mean, though? Can we be sure we are where we think we are? John has three choices of lines: one might work and the other two will take us somewhere we haven't charted. That's a whole lot of pressure, and John needs to rise to the challenge. We speak rarely of intuition in the climbing community, yet this is a moment when loads of experience —coupled with that inner navigational system, the one that guides your life — had better make your thinking exceptionally acute. Luckily for us, John is a man relatively in tune with himself and his purpose. He has spent years on the road, honing his rock-climbing skills and, maybe more importantly, thinking more deeply into the meaning of existence then most. Quick, sharp and witty, John's a man you want on your side unless you enjoy the surgeon's cut of sarcasm caning you up. He is precise, to the point and, thank God, trusts his inner guidance system. This is not the place to get lost.

"Are you sure you're going the right way?"

"No, I think we're all gonna die."

"Oh, OK, I guess you got it under control."

Two hundred feet out, and we're still not sure where he's taken us, but his job is done for the day. Brad's up next, and forty feet out he hits the ledge. We've got snow for water, and John is never questioned again.

At the end of Brad's pitch, our choices are once again not simple. Directly above, in a giant dihedral, the path looks like straightforward ground, yet this ground may have already been covered by the Book of Shadows team. Worse, there may be a large snow bowl right above our heads. There is a corner seventy feet to the right, but there are no cracks or seams leading anywhere near it. Opinions fly, but it doesn't matter since I've already decided we're heading for the right corner. What gives me the power to make an executive decision in a camp full of CEOs? Well, it's my lead, of course.

I faceclimb 70 degrees out from the belay. Thirty feet out, two equalized cams set up a pendulum to some back cleaned aid. A #1 Camalot in a loose flake, and it's a world of free at 19,000 feet. The rock is 85 degrees of I(x>se, decomposing crap. The handholds creak as my feet crust away each foothold, and I'm forty feet out from the cam. It starts to snow, my wooden fingers are petrifying, and a brief whimper seems to slip from my lips. Not even a rivet will hold in this choss, and now my only way out is to go deeper into this mess.

I'm reminded afterword that these are the moments that live with me forever — the reason why I climb to begin with. To activate that eternally optimistic faith in yourself and in your abilities to control your fear and solve any problem at hand no matter how complicated, no matter what the consequences. At these moments every nerve in my body is alive! I am alive more than at any other moment in my life. All I need to do now is stay alive so that one day I can savour this moment. I layback a crumbling flake, lean out for a sidepull and finally undercling the half-inch expanding granite flake I've been eye balling for the last forty minutes. I stuff two cams in, equalize, and step into my stirrups. Ah! Now we're back into my game. A tension past 'blades into a three inch expanding roof for thirty more feet, and all is blank. I pop in the rivet. I'm a pendulum away from the corner, five hours into this lead, and freezing my butt off in the swirling maelstrom around me. When I finally get my double boots on, I concede — at least for the day. Rapping back from my rivet, I'm exhausted yet content with the decision to choose this direction. We've strayed from merging routes, kept our line action-packed, and avoided obvious punishment from the upper snow field. Any dangers we face now can only be self inflicted.

Did I say self inflicted? Let's put it this way: Coming to Pakistan was self inflicted. Being on the north face of a big wall at altitude was self-inflicted. But being stuck in a storm at 19,500 feet at night without headlamps, trying to erect Camp IV — well, that's just masochism, pure and simple. Never mind the details; they're just too embarrassing. Let's just say that the four popsicles find their head lamps at the bottom of each haul bag at 11 p.m., and, not too soon after, their rime coated bodies are put to bed without supper.

The schooled rookies wake up to the storm. It's not furious enough to prevent a day's work, and Wally's out the door by noon. He lays out half the rope and surrenders after six hours. We're almost out of water, again. Rationing at altitude sucks. We each get a spare quart of water a day until we hit snow. I cringe as I visualize the syrup sludging in my veins.

It's two more days until we're within striking distance of snow. I belay as Brad takes off from under the roof that will hopefully be our short stay at Camp IV. The pitch is steep: Brad's haul line dangles twenty feet from the belay. There is only a light snow coming down, and visibility is quite decent. The expo sure is fantastic. The Dungee Glacier seems an incomprehensible distance away. It feels as though we're nearing the height of summits around us. There can't be much more of this wall left. Brad hits the snow and fires in an anchor. I slog up 300 feet of slope to a 100 foot long

mixed ice smear. Bad call! Brad comes up to belay; I get myself way out on half-inch-thick, vertical ice, and it isn't going to go. At least not for me, today. I want it bad, but not bad enough to risk it all at 20,000 feet. I'm scared shitless, but rationalize that it's for the team and shakily back off the pitch. My mind is fried and my body's spent! Eighty feet of traversing puts us at the base of an easy crack. I rappel in a dream, down to the roof. I'm exhausted. Everyone is pissing me off. "Why aren't the bags up here?" "What do you mean, Wally's sick?" "You only had to pull the bags three pitches!" I'm losing it. Dangling in my harness from the anchor, I lean my head into the wall and rock back and forth autistically. I just want out of my harness, now! John quickly intervenes, offering the last of his water. I swallow hungrily. The effects are quite rapid, and life becomes bearable once more. I don't think anyone is actually aware of what was on my mind. Probably best that way. The bags hit the roof, and the ghetto is up again. The night is spent rehydrating.

Today is summit day — it better be. We've been on this wall for 21 days and all agree that there really can't be much left after the hundred-foot section of vertical rock. I'm not sick of this route, honestly. Seeing that snowfield just naturally caused my body to produce those summit-fever endorphins, which have been building up for the last year. The day looks like it's turning to shit, but nothing is going to stop us now. Wally pulls over the top and we jug up close behind. There is 300 feet of steep ridge between us and what appears to be the highest point. Johnny takes off, content to run two ropes together to the top. We're staring into a world choked in clouds. The cold is biting; we're exposed to all winds and don't care that there isn't much to see. Let's just tag the top and go home. John's gone as far as this mountain goes. One at a time, we work our way towards the end.

It's finally over, at least the uphill part. We take a moment to quietly reflect on what this summit means. Peaks start appearing through the clouds. Great Trango, Uli Biaho, Masherbrum, Mustagh Peak: they're all there. Is that the Trango Glacier 7000 feet below us? The moment is surreal. We linger for thirty minutes, waiting for the show. Mountaintops for as far as the eye can see extend in every direction. I'm elated. I'm exhausted. I'm vulnerable. Very vulnerable. This is my first chance to actually see how deep in the mountains we are. I am so far from the ones I love, I may as well be on the moon. Home, home is where my heart is now. We gather our gear and memories and scum off the top. We've got what we came for. Let's just make it home to tell this tale. Insh'allah.

A tired Wally Barker

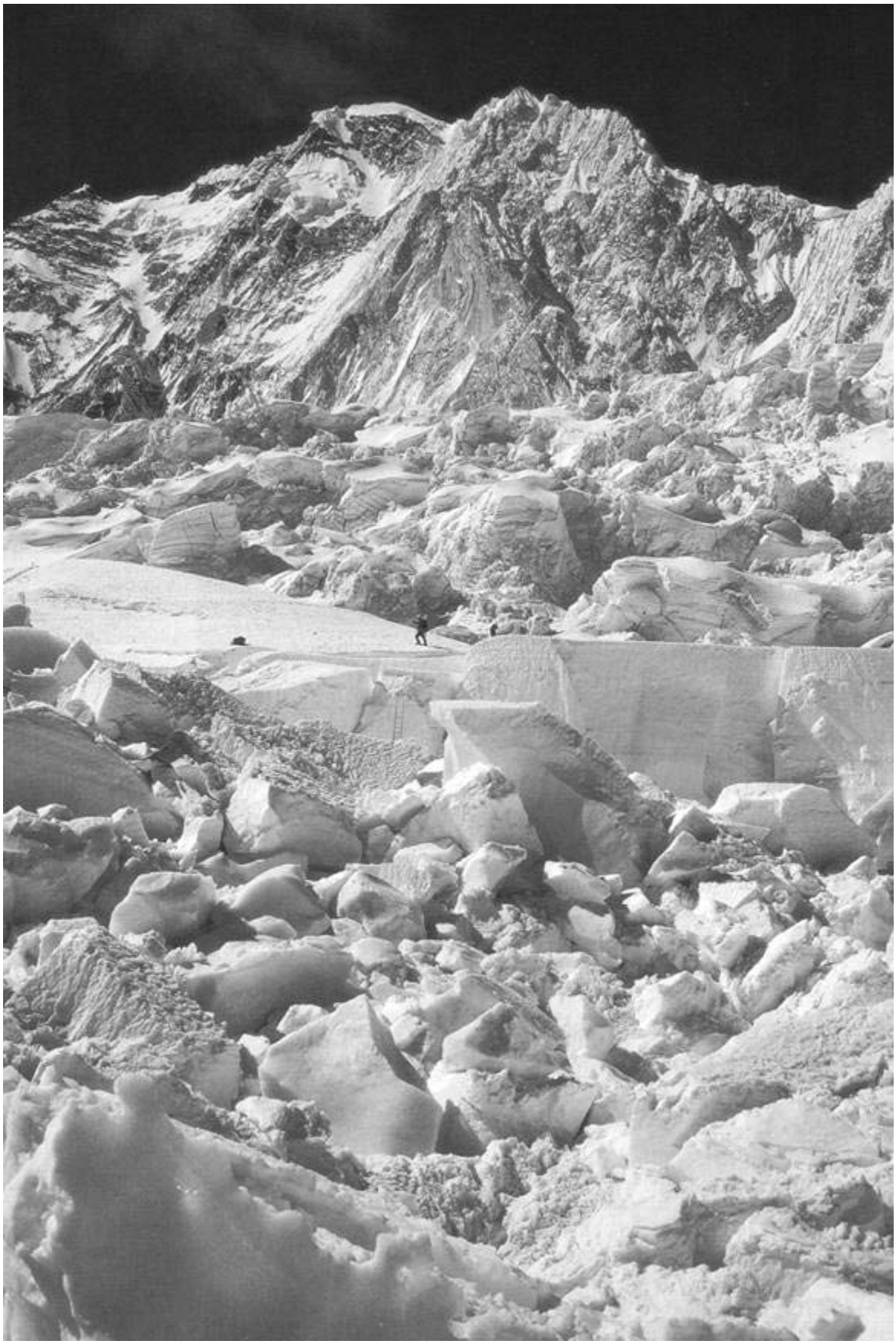
Lhotse 97

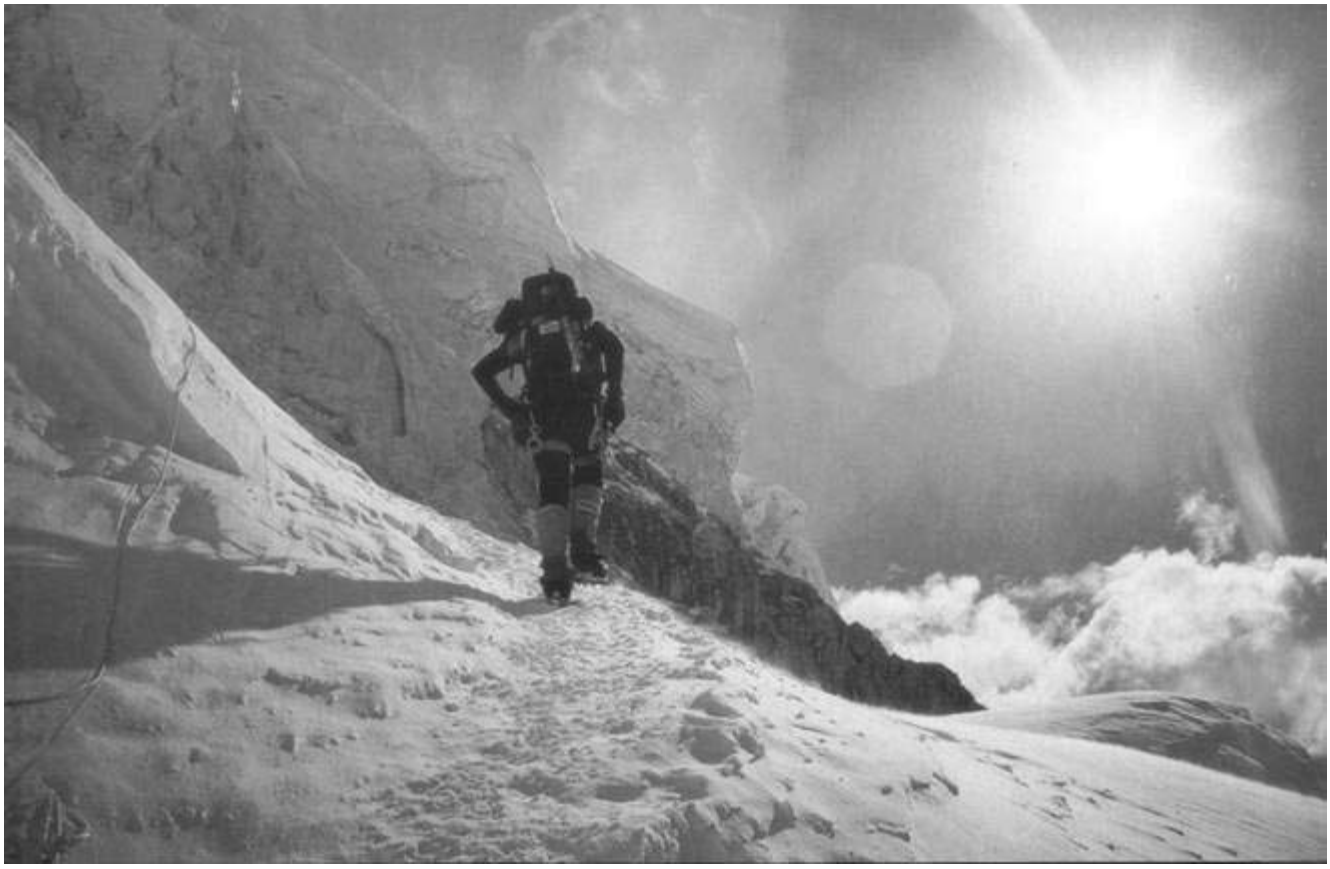
Text And Photos By Karl Nagy

God this feels like work…

That thought ran through my mind as I plodded up through the Solu Khumbu to Namche Bazaar. I was kicking myself for not resting enough after a busy season of guiding. I had arrived in Kathmandu only three days before, and I didn't want to ruin it for myself by being tired. Only four months previously, a friend had told me about an inexpensive trip to Lhotse that I could get onto at the last minute. Without a pause, 1 had said that I was keen. What I didn't know was that Lhotse, at 8500 metres the fourth highest mountain in the world, is the least frequently climbed 8000 metre peak, with around forty ascents. It didn't matter. I had only a short time to get all of my stuff together, find some sponsors, and rest. Already, on the hike in, I was keen to eat hamburgers, watch videos while drinking beer, and sleep. I was tired, and the trip had only just begun.

Yet after a day of rest in Namche, a beer and a hike to Khumjung, I knew why I was here. It was wonderful to be in the mountains again without the stressful responsibility of looking after others. I could enjoy my favourite environment on my terms by realizing how beautiful a place I was in. The peaks visible from the trail between Khumjung and Namche were wild looking and left me rubbernecking. Time meant nothing, and the days passed quickly as I hiked through Panghoche, Thyangboche (with the famous monastery) and Pheriche (with the medical clinic). Finally, at





Lobuche, I could feel the altitude a bit. I was wiped out.

It had always been one of my dreams to go to a big 8000er at some point in my life, and this was clearly my chance. I joined a British expedition to Lhotse in the spring of 1997. Few expeditions these days are made up of a traditional team chosen by an organizer. Rarely can a small group of friends (an ideal scenario) afford the cost or time to organize a trip to an 8000er. Instead, interested people or small teams share the permit, logistics and camp services with larger teams. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't convince any of my friends to come to Lhotse with me on such short notice, so I went alone.

Our patched together team consisted of 24 diverse people. There were 16 Westerners on an Everest or Lhotse permit: four Americans; four Brits; two Latvians; one Dane; one Mexican; two Norwegians; an Italian; and me, the token Canuck. In addition, we also had five high-altitude Sherpas, two cooks and one sirdar. Some of these people would climb on their own; some were just on the permit for formality and totally on their own; one was a guide with his own client. Several had little experience, while others had many Himalayan successes behind them. I was the Himalayan rookie here, but I had an idea of how I might do. I had enough successful trips up high—Denali, Aconcagua, and Logan several times — but none above 7000 metres.

Everyone wants the special secret answer to high altitude climbing: eat garlic, avoid coffee, drink water till your eyeballs bug out, train, try this drug, shove that suppository up your bum, blah, blah, blah... Thing is, if you're looking for that secret answer, you'll never find it. All you need is to have lungs, legs and a go for it attitude. If you constantly worry about getting sick, you will. Forget the training, unless you live in Saskatchewan or sit at a desk.

I was the last member of our group to arrive in Basecamp. After hiking in with Simon and Henry Todd, the "leader" of our trip, I spent an extra day resting in Lobuche and made it into Basecamp on April 12, seven days after arriving in Lukla. It was great to finally be there. The views of Everest and the Khumbu were inspirational. I was feeling strong and psyched and didn't feel the altitude as much as I had thought I would. The only problem I had was an incredibly sharp pain in my chest. Yuri, the Mexican team doctor, whom I later grew to really like, diagnosed it as gastritis; a day later it was gone, thanks to his treatment.

Basecamp for our Lhotse expedition was the same camp as for the standard route up Everest. Everyone had his or her own personal tent to live in for the next two months, squeezed in between those of the other three hundred or so people. The whole scene was that of a village, including the "who's who" of the commercial Everest world: David Breashears, Pete Athans, Anatoly Boukreev and Guy Cotter (taking over from the late Rob Hall), to name a few. The energy amongst everyone was quite strange. Naturally, each individual had his or her own lofty goals. But as a conglomerate of people, satellite dishes, generators, solar panel chargers, laptops, SAT phones, e-mail services and web sites, the whole Basecamp scene reeked of money. Corporate sponsorship was the key. The legitimacy of each expedition in Basecamp seemed to be based on how much sponsorship it had and how big its budget was, not on the team's abilities or previous successes. People wore their label and badge covered jackets with pride. It was quite a contrast to anything I had ever seen in the mountains before. I had to curb my self-righteousness since, after all, I suppose was a part of it all too.

Often, interesting stories would pass through camp, for instance, about the Japanese expedition having fresh chicken flown into camp regularly, or about the political implications of the presence of both the Indonesian and Malaysian teams. Basecamp would be

home for a while, so people did what they could to make it comfort able for themselves. For the first few days there, I just slept and ate, trying to get my energy back. At first the food seemed to be a bit of a turn off, but within three days I was sleeping normally and eating my normal heaps once again. The usual fare was cabbage with "some thing": cabbage with dal bhat, cabbage with rice, or cabbage pizza. This, of course, was quite entertaining, because you end up farting through the night. The worst is when your friend has gas and some stomach bug as well. You end up feeling really sorry for the poor guy, who spends most of the evening sitting over the outhouse hole with explosive diarrhea.

After several days of rest, I made my first trip through the Khumbu Ice fall. Travelling through it was spectacular and, at the same time, nerve-wracking. My heart would skip every time I heard a noise. There were Sherpas carrying loads and other groups moving through the ice-fall that same day. It was extremely weird to be travelling in such a dangerous place when everyone seemed to be so cavalier about it. On the other hand, it was just great to move at my own speed in such an awe inspiring and significant place for the first time. The weather was fantastic, and I felt almost normal.

Anywhere else in the world, on any other mountain, the Khumbu Icefall would be a non-route. But here, on Everest and Lhotse, one could see up to eighty people a day travelling through the chaos. I was initially surprised by how small and narrow the icefall actually was. In one kilometre the ice descends 700 metres into the Khumbu valley, creating a massive jumble of blocks, séracs and crevasses. The first half of the route through the icefall went over many bridges and ladders. Every few days, ladders would get twisted or damaged by collapses and would have to be replaced by the Icefall Doctor, Ang Nema, who kept it open throughout the season with his crew. He did a reasonable job, but at a lower standard of safety than what one might expect. Ice screws were never screwed in all the way. Most snow pickets were loose. Clipping into the fixed line through the icefall was no guarantee of security. All the line really did was mark the route.

Given that two hundred or so people travelled through the icefall during the spring season, it was surprising that no one was killed. Only one mishap occurred, involving a Sherpa who hadn't clipped into the fixed line before crossing a ladder. Somehow he slipped and fell into the bottom of the crevasse, smashing his face on the ladder along the way. This resulted in a rescue by several Canadians attempting Everest who happened to be at that crevasse at the same time. The Sherpa's injuries were ugly half of his face was ripped off, from his tear duct to his mouth to his ear. The doctor from the Canadian team did a miraculous job of stitching his face back on.

It took me several hours to get to Camp I, just beyond the worst of it all. I had enough energy to drop my pack and continue up to Camp II for additional acclimatization at 6400 metres. Even though there were people around, I was travelling by myself in the Western Cwm. The north face of Nuptse was unbelievable. Off to the west I could see Pumori, and Cho Oyu in the distance. I was right beside Everest when I finally got my first view of the west face of Lhotse, and our route to the summit. It looked great. I felt content and psyched about how I had felt making it to Camp II on my first trip up from Basecamp, and slept okay during my first night at Camp I.

It was interesting to watch the Sherpas move through the terrain. A Westerner would be foolish to try and keep up to them, unless he or she was more acclimatized. They always moved fast, with good walking skills, but had no sense of pacing. Many of the Sherpas would just go for it, then stop and heave over their ski poles. Occasionally I would catch up to a hyperventilating Sherpa only to see him sprint off again. There were cairns of barf everywhere, mostly from Sherpas. To them climbing was just money. Pemba,

In the Western Cwm with Lhotse Face behind.

one of our Sherpas, said to me that they would not climb for the joy of it, and that at the end of an expedition they either come back to their homes covered in money, or they are forever covered in snow...

After several days' rest in Basecamp, Michael, from Denmark, and I carried gear up to Camp II with the intention of spending the night. Camp II was on the edge of an old lateral moraine up against the southwest face of Everest. It was located three quarters of the way up the cwm and offered amazing views of Nuptse and the best view of the Lhotse Face. As strange as it seemed, Everest and Lhotse didn't look as big or as imposing as I had imagined, even as I stood beside them.

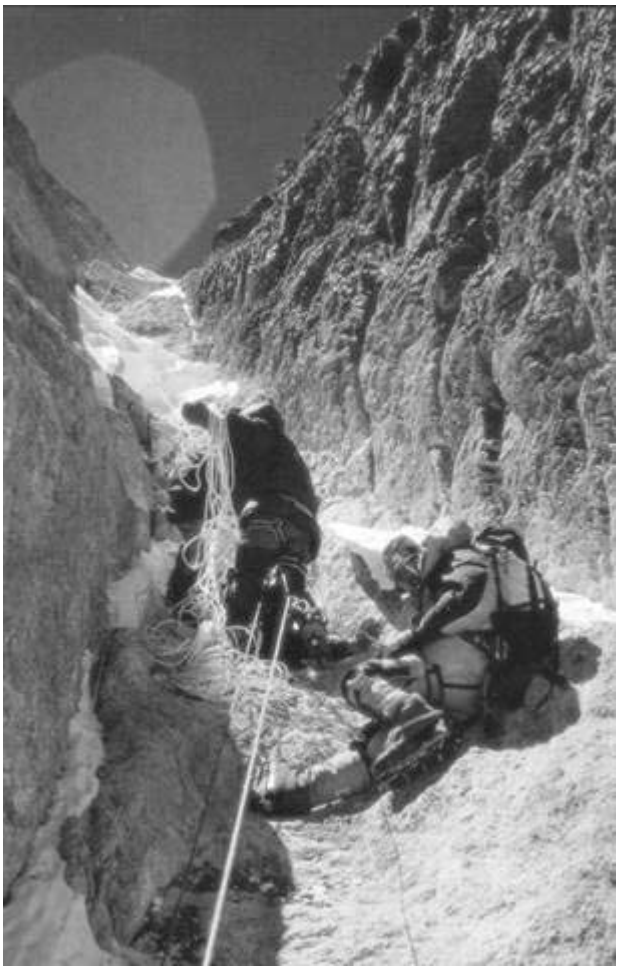
After another rest day in Camp II, Michael, Simon and I headed up to Camp III (7300 metres) for even more acclimatization. Finally the route had some measure of steepness. The Lhotse Face was big and consistently high-angled. It started at the 'schrund and didn't end until the summit, more than 2000 metres higher up. Most of it was around 40 degrees, with steeper sections. The surface was bulletproof ice in places and otherwise rock hard snow. At Camp III, in the middle of the face, small platforms had been dug out among the crevasses and séracs. A slip anywhere, even from the tent door, would be fatal; one would end up at the bottom of the face. Such was the case for an unfortunate Sherpa when he tripped and fell from somewhere near Camp III. The Sherpas hated this camp and never slept there. My first trip to Camp III went well, with the exception of hallucinations the night afterward back in Camp II. It was a terrifying night; I thought I was losing my mind. Thankfully, it only happened one night on the whole trip.

Another tragic and odd event occurred when I arrived back in Basecamp to find out that the leader of a commercial group, Mal Duff, had died in his sleep. I had got to know him a bit during the expedition and through spending some time with him drinking beer in Namche. Reality check...

Over the following three weeks, various members of our group carried loads up to Camp III and slept there for acclimatization. We could never go any higher because of the jet stream winds. For three weeks straight, the winds could be seen whipping off the Lhotse Face. At times one could even hear them from Basecamp. It sounded ominous and heart wrenching, like a jet flying overhead. We spent our time eating, resting, hiking, or recuperating down in Dingboche. All we could do was stare at the blue skies above. Yet over Everest and Lhotse the jet stream winds howled. News travelled into our camp via radio that there had been several deaths on the north side of Everest. A German guide went missing in a windstorm, and Kazakhis were dropping like flies. On May 16, a fierce windstorm hit Camp II and many teams' tents were damaged or lost. We could hear Sherpas on radios saying that tents were flying away. The waiting game took its toll on everyone in Basecamp. One can only imagine 200 people impatiently waiting for three weeks, many of them high paying clients used to getting their own way. Some people started writing e-mails home. Others turned to drinking. I remember seeing a Finnish climber with a mickey in his pocket fishing in a glacial pond beside his tent. Those of us with only slightly more sanity could only watch and chuckle. The luckiest climbers had a girlfriend (or boyfriend!), much to the dissatisfaction of the Sherpas, who felt that this was courting disaster with the gods.

Finally, the forecasts began to look promising. Satellite weather imagery accessed via SAT phone and the Internet showed the monsoon moving north and thus pushing the jet stream winds off the Himalayan chain. This would bring one final (albeit short) weather window for a realistic summit attempt. All of the Everest veterans were counting on this one last predictable opportunity. Everyone was running out of time and patience. Many people were already leaving Basecamp and their expedition. The Nepali Everest season was officially over on June 1, when everyone's permits would end; it was now May 20. Five people had already left our team. At best, there would only be enough time for one summit chance per person.

In order to be in the right place at the right time, Illi, Yuri and I left Basecamp on the 19th for a summit attempt on the 23rd. Other parties turned back because of a massive collapse in the icefall. We found our own way through the chaos, not relying on the "rope trail" that everyone had become so accustomed to trust. En route we passed Ang Nema busily rerouting the fixed lines. We were surprised at the changes caused by the collapse. A whole 150 by 200 metre section of the route was gone. Ladders were gone, as were house sized blocks that we had



Basket weaving —fixing rope on the rock pitch, 8300 metres

previously walked on. It was wild. Since the icefall had just collapsed and was less likely to do so again in the near future, we felt that the hazard had been reduced.

While resting in Camp II the following day, a helicopter bringing in supplies to the Malaysians crashed near the Canadian team's basecamp. There was always something going on...

Finally, it was time for action. Already several teams had succeeded on Everest, but none yet on Lhotse. The Russians, who were attempting the first traverse from Lhotse main to Lhotse Shar, were close to reaching the summit. On the 21st, I arrived at Camp III, where I joined Michael and Simon. Our plan was to go up to Camp IV (at 7800 metres) the next day and to attempt the summit the day after. Just as we were leaving, I found out that Camp IV was not set up as expected and that there was only one tent there. Pissed off, I decided to stay at Camp III, planning to just leave earlier and catch up to Simon and Michael the next morning. This suited me fine, as I wasn't keen on sleeping at Camp IV and also felt that it would be a huge waste of energy to chop out a high camp and go for the summit all in the same push.

So at eleven thirty on the night of the 22nd, I left Camp III alone and climbed past the Yellow Band towards the Geneva Spur and the South Col of Everest to meet up with Simon and Michael. It was a wonderful night: the stars were out, the moon was out, and it was relatively warm and calm. For several hours I climbed without a hat and with only thin Polypro gloves. It was totally magical. Often I would turn my headlamp off and climb in the moonlight. Even though I couldn't see it, I could feel the exposure growing below my feet. It was a constant slope to the bottom of the face for 5000 feet. I had to be careful: this was no place to trip. I could see everyone's headlamps moving around on the South Col. I knew that two people there were friends of mine from Calgary, on their way to the top of the world. I was excited for them — and for myself, too.

I had planned this day for a long time and had my systems worked out. I went totally light, without a pack. The only things I carried were two litres of water, some Power Gel, a chocolate bar, a headlamp and my Leica camera, all shoved into the pockets of my down suit. I felt that it was the only way to travel above 8000 metres on summit day. Many of the people who had climbed Lhotse had used oxygen. Lhotse is only 350 metres lower than Everest, so oxygen was an option on our trip, too. All of our Everest people were going to use it. About half of our Lhotse team was planning not to use it. I didn't like Henry's attitude when he said, "Oh, Karl, just go for the 'tick" and use it. You'll want to succeed." It was important for me to climb Lhotse on my own terms and in a style that I felt was reasonable, even if this reduced my chance of success. I also figured that since there had been no reason for me to use it before, I had no reason to start now. I hadn't had so much as a headache. I knew that I could walk above 8000 metres, but I was a bit worried about whether I could "climb" above 8000 metres. Lhotse isn't considered easy, since the crux of the peak is the final summit couloir, which involves steep snow, ice and rock.

At 3:30 a.m., I finally arrived at Camp IV, which had been chopped out on a small ledge beside "the Turtle" at the bottom of the Lhotse couloir. I was expecting Simon and Michael to be keen and ready. On the contrary, it had been a tough night for them. Simon had barfed all night and neither of them had slept. I felt that I had made the right decision by coming from Camp III. The Russians were also leaving the camp, in order to finish fixing rope up the couloir and, hopefully, make it to the summit, too. Simon decided to stay behind and rest (whatever that means when you're camping at 7800 metres), so Michael and I left together for the couloir. At 8000 metres we entered the couloir itself, where the angle steepened even more. The sun's first light was just touching the biggest peaks of the world; it was awesome. Michael and I could only communicate using sporadic words between deep gasps of air. Swinging my ice axe was exhausting. Occasionally I wished that it wasn't so steep, that I could just walk. I could look down and see the South Col, with all its history and significance. Neither Michael nor I was using gas, but in several hours we had caught up to the Russians, who were on gas and fixing rope in the couloir. I was pissed off that we were stuck behind them. It wasn't as if we could easily pass, either. We had come to know them well during the trip, and we were obliged to help them fix rope through these tricky, mixed pitches.

Just after the rock pitch, one of the Russians handed me the spool and said, "Take... fix rope." No minced words here, at 8300 metres. After 50 metres and much untangling of their rope basket, I said, "You take... fix rope — you on oxygen!" Something didn't seem right: we were fixing rope for them, while they were on gas. Michael and I just wanted to climb the route. The strangest thing was watching one of them turn off his regulator at the belay and light up a cigarette. It seemed to me that we were getting nowhere fast. During all that time of Neanderthal grunting and basket weaving at 8300 metres, another Brit on gas caught up to us. So there we were — two Russians, a Brit, a Dane and I inside this warm couloir, moving like alcoholic, middle-aged ballroom dancers. The climbing was great: mostly mixed climbing, with

HUGE air below. I was getting worried about time. My altimeter said 8350 metres, but I could see that the summit was a long way off, and it was 1 p.m. I had been climbing upward for 13 hours already, and biviing was NOT an option. I had no Camp IV to go back to, and I wasn't going to cram myself into someone else's occupied two-man tent; nor was I on gas. I was also beginning to wonder if I would have the strength to downclimb what I had already come up. So I turned around 150 metres below the top.

In retrospect, I could have continued. Maybe I should have. Michael made it to the summit that day at 3 p.m. with the Russians, becoming the first Dane to climb Lhotse. It was his third 8000-metre peak and the Russians' fifth. This would have been my first. As it turned out, I had enough time and energy that day to make it all the way back down to Advanced Basecamp with no ill effects.

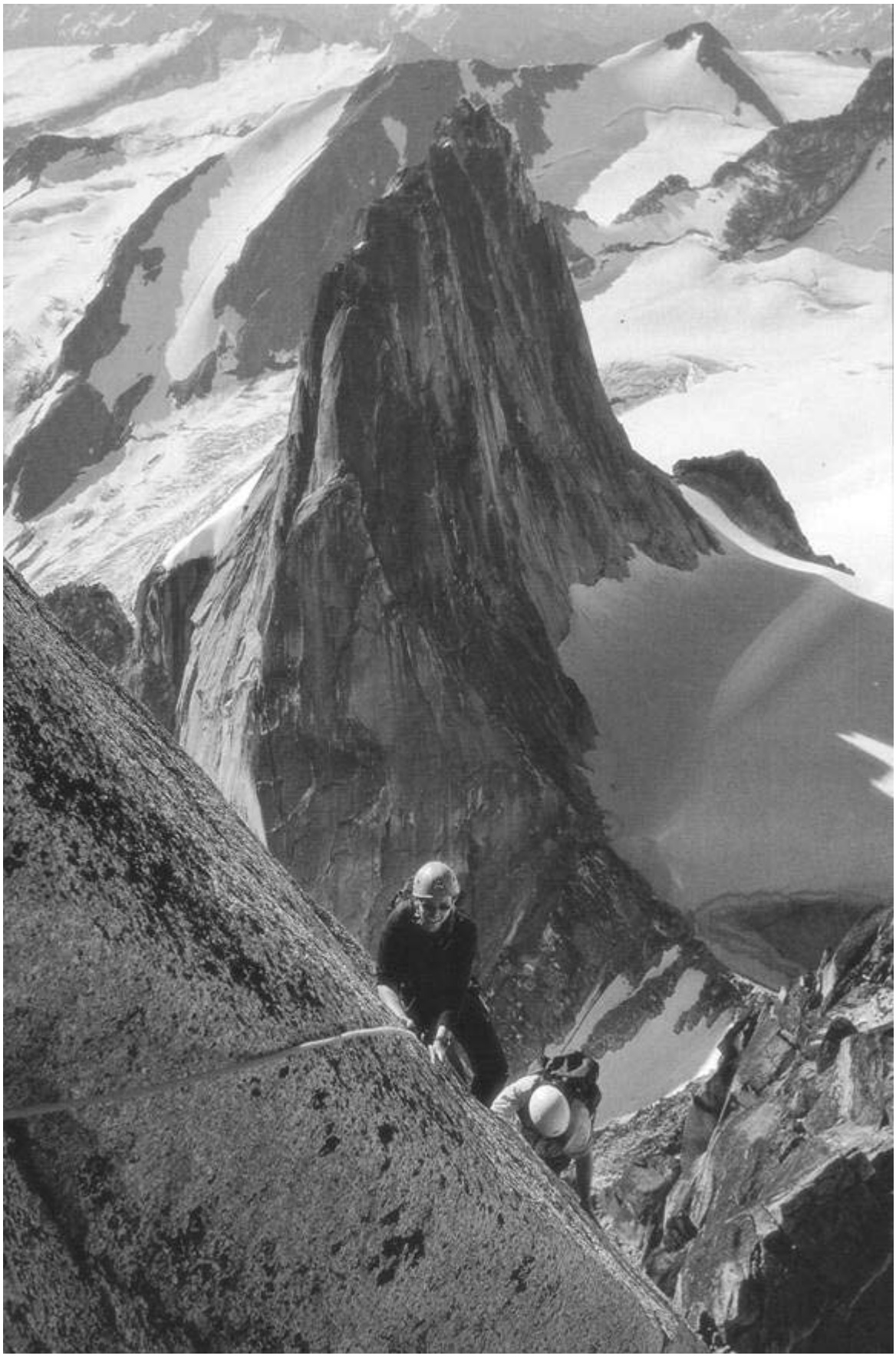
Another reality check happened on a later summit day when another Russian from the team collapsed and died at the bottom of the couloir after making it to the summit without gas. He was somewhat of a Russian climbing icon, with eight or so 8000 metre peaks to his credit.

In the end, I came away from the trip having had an awesome time climbing in one of the wildest places on earth with a great group of people. I'll be forever changed because of the people I encountered. Despite the crowds, and the "buy anything" generation of Himalayan climbers, Nepal was a wonderful place for me. The cultures of the developed world could learn a few things from the Nepalese. I certainly did. I'll never forget the man I met who was begging on the streets of Thamel. He seemed happier than many people I know in Canada, yet he had no legs.

Two of our team members made it to the top of Lhotse — one without gas and one with. Two others in our group made it up Everest. As far as Lhotse is concerned, I don't really care that I was so close without making it to the true summit. I do know that I could go a lot higher without gas. I'll be back. We'll just have to see...

This expedition couldn't have happened without support from: Alpine Club of Canada, Canadian Himalayan Foundation, Canadian Mountain Holidays Heli-skiing, Kindermann/Leica Canada, Hans Peter Stettler, Austria Alpin Stubaital, Ambler Mountain Works, Intuition Liners, Mironuck Pharmacy, Powerbar, Mark's Work Warehouse, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Arc'teryx, Salomon Canada Sports Ltd., 40° Below, Roots

Nikolai Cherni at 8300 metres



The 1997 GMC; Bugaboo Spire, the Kain Pitch. Photo: Karl Nagy

Mal Tiempo - A Patagonian Journey

By Sean Isaac

THIS LAND OF SURREAL GRANITE SPIRES, the land of the ominous, invisible force — El Viento (the wind), the land of the mythical dog-headed creature — Patagon. Patagonia could easily pass for a magical mountain range from Tolkien's fantasy book Lord of the Rings. Yet these majestic towers are not a figment of one's imagination, but are very much real in all their grandeur and awe-inspiring beauty. From all over the world, climbers travel to the tip of South America to attempt their incredible, storm -wrought flanks...

Journal Entry —January 17, 1997

Well, Guy and I climbed our first Patagonian peak, and by a probable new route to boot. Not without suffering, though. It was cold — I mean damn cold. I was wearing all the regular garb that I use on a winter day ice climbing in the Rockies. I remember that before leaving a friend had told me that on good days you could wear T-shirts on the climbs and that it was like a Yosemite with bad weather. BAD WEATHER? — no shit'. And that was the best day we have had yet. I had "screaming barfies" in my hands at every belay from jamming them into frosty cracks while the wind made hideous snarling sounds. The endless raps back down in a full f@# ing blizzard had me longing for the lazy camp days as ropes snagged and wet snow soaked us to the skin. I guess this was a typical day of Patagonian cragging.*

When I began climbing, I immediately fell in love with these infamous, fabled formations: Cerro Torre, Fitzroy, Fortaleza and Torres del Paine. These names conjured up images of extreme adventure in a remote land, and of heroic deeds accomplished by heroic men. I devoured any and all literature regarding my dream mountains, hoping to one day scale their looming, ice encrusted walls and stand upon their seldom-visited, shapely summits. I wished to imitate the Patagonian hardmen of lore: Terray, Maestri, Honrouge and Ferrari. As far as I was concerned, these individuals could endure anything nature had to offer: verglassed off widths, contorted snow mushrooms, wicked winds (strong enough to pick me up and set me on my ass with a fully loaded pack) and stormy, marathon descents.

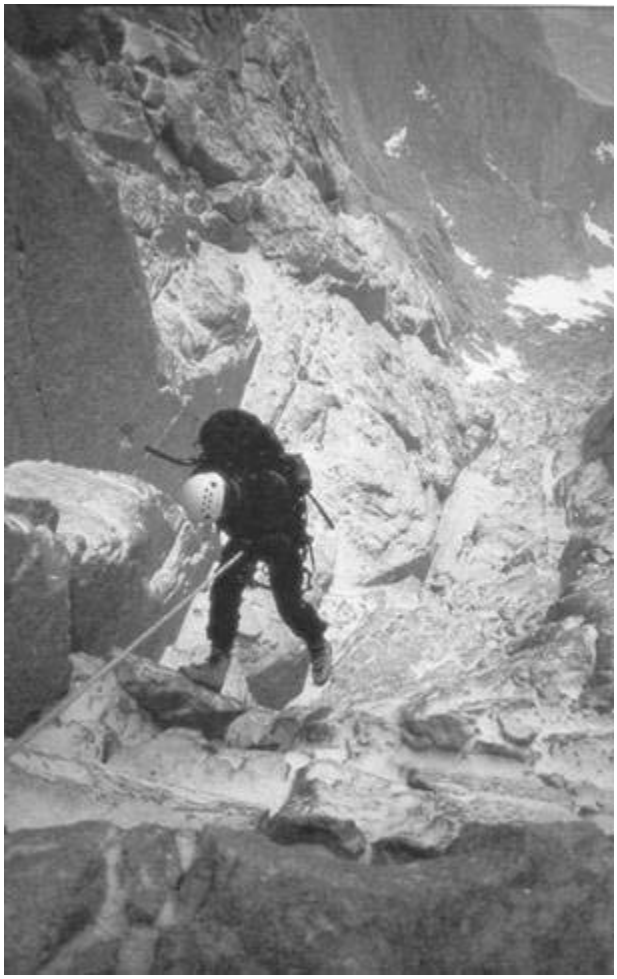
It is the descents which are particularly dangerous, because an ambitious team can be tricked by a spell of settled weather lasting just long enough to lure them halfway up or even to the top of a tower, only to be faced with the fearful task of retreating into a fast approaching storm. Rappelling in a Patagonian tempest is like being dealt a hand of poker: it's a gamble. In my mind, these were key elements of a classic Patagonian epic.

Journal Entry — February 8, 1997

Unbelievable! We burnt down the basecamp hut! I awoke in the middle of the night to a beautiful orange glow illuminating our tent, sleepily passing it off for sunrise. Soon, the unmistakable sound of crackling timber and exploding kerosene canisters snapped me out of my dreamy state as I panicked to escape our tent. What a harrowing sight as I was confronted with tall flames licking at the treetops while much of our precious food and gear was quickly being incinerated. Our first Patagonian epic began as we frantically ran back and forth from the river with pot after pot of water to douse the blazing inferno, all the while dodging flaming airborne MSR stoves as they rocketed into the midnight air. What an ordeal!. Around dawn we collapsed onto the ground around the extinguished wreckage and smouldering ashes when Strappo, a climber from England, summed it all up in true British understatement by saying, "Climbing seems very insignificant in our lives down here." He would know, if anyone, as it was only the week before at Base camp that a huge tree branch had collapsed from the night's snowstorm, slicing his tent in half and missing his sleeping body by mere inches.

My tales are quite different from the adventures I had fantasized about as a young lad. Indeed, we managed to climb a couple of superb routes on spectacular spires and had our own encounters with ice glazed cracks and rope shredding winds, but most of my memories revolve around endless days brooding in a wet, fetid tent at high camp or gluttonizing ourselves on grotesque amounts of pancakes and chocolate at Basecamp while the ever-present clouds relentlessly discharged rain and snow.

Day-to-day life at our international basecamp of Brits, Brazilians, Swiss, Poles and Japanese was a three-ring- circus of bread making, cloth washing, card playing and barometer watching — anything to help the dismal days of lethargy pass more quickly. The only thing that kept us sane was the copious quantities of cheap Chilean vino tinto.



Guy hastily retreating during a full Patigonian storm

THIS LAND OF SURREAL GRANITE SPIRES, the land of the ominous, invisible force — El Viento (the wind), the land of the mythical dog-headed creature — Patagon. Patagonia could easily pass for a magical mountain range from Tolkien's fantasy book Lord of the Rings. *Yet these majestic towers are not a figment of one's imagination, but are very much real in all their grandeur and awe-inspiring beauty. From all over the world, climbers travel to the tip of South America to attempt their incredible, storm-wrought flanks...*

The east face of Torres del Paine. The team climbed the two formations on the right.

Journal Entry — February 21, 1997

What a joke! Totally disillusioned with the Chilean summer. No beaches, no bikinis and absolutely no sun! Not to mention we're almost out of food, completely out of booze, and Guy is complaining again about finding hair balls (courtesy of yours truly's long, matted, unkempt hair) in our pot of "chokemeal", which, to our gullets' distaste, we have plenty of. Being stuck at Basecamp for almost three weeks now with zero climbing has taken its toll on our motivation and nerves. Guy constantly moans about missing his girlfriend, and I must admit that I'm far from being a perfect replacement, hair balls and all.

Patagonia is an intensely dramatic region that is a must to visit in order to view its stunning panoramas, explore its remote cirques and experience its rich culture. A word of warning, though: One should not underestimate the Mai Tiempo, which fiercely guards these slender, phallic formations. Go to trek, go to take photographs, and even go to boulder; but go somewhere else if climbing and summits are your main goals. Still, I must shamefully admit that I'm already in the process of planning another expedition to these dream peaks.

Patagonian mountaineering is a potent drug, and I believe I'm addicted

Peineta, Southwest Buttress, Duraznos para Don Quixote IV, 5.10+ Al. F.A.: Guy Edwards, Sean Isaac. January 17, 1997.

North Tower of Paine (Torre Norte), South Ridge, Monzino Route. IV, 5.10. First Canadian ascent: Guy Edwards, Sean Isaac. January 23, 1997.

North Tower of Paine, North Summit, West Face. Unsuccessful attempt at a new route to within four pitches of the rarely visited north summit. V, 5.9 A2 to our high point. Steve Normandin, Sean Isaac. February 14-27, 1997.

Special thanks to the John Lauchlan Award and the Canadian Himalayan Foundation for their generous support.

Partner From Hell

Story And Photos By Seamus O'Hooligan

"But it is on the final ridge to the glorious summit that the truth and the beauty of a climb finds its form. With the effort of those last steps to the top, the world below is forgotten, the partnership of the rope is forever sealed, and every hard-won battle seems to have been worth it... "

C. Edward Hope, The Call of the Hills, 1937

Oh, come now, C. Edward. If you believe the last few feet of a climb make up for all that has gone before, then, by God, you have never been to the Himalaya. If it's ultimate beauty you find on the snow capped peaks, then you, Mr. Hope, have never spit up your lungs or heard your brain cells pop on your way to a "glorious summit". And if you and your partners get forever joined by a climb, then you certainly never spent five weeks in Nepal with the pig headed, booze swilling, foul-smelling, culture-destroying, testosterone poisoned racist bastard who was the third man on our rope last fall. Come along, C. Edward, and see if any of these hard won battles were worth it...

Even the most pathetic of adventures begins with glorious ambition, and ambition we had in spadefuls, but

ambition alone is never enough. Perhaps you know the story: everyone wants to climb, but life just gets so damned complicated. We were a team of eight, filled with beer and great plans, then we were a team of six, then four; soon we were just two bitter fools sitting in the bar, whining that our trip might never happen. And that was when he appeared.

Tuchas was moaning on about the prohibitive cost of the trip now that we'd be bearing the permit alone, when a seedy character at the next table lowered his newspaper, smirked over the top and said "Sounds like you guys fucked up again." Tuchas turned slowly in his chair. Although an utterly benign elf most of the time, Tuchas has a less-known rancid side to him, fermented through years in outdoor gear retail. With a snarling lip and one eyebrow arched menacingly, he turned on the intruder. "And who the hell do you think you are?"

The man cocked his head, as though astonished that we didn't recognize him, put the paper down with a tired sigh and drew a business card from his shirt pocket. He tossed it towards us; it looped through the air like an ill conceived paper air plane. Tuchas swiped it off the table, said "Oh, Christ," with disgust and passed it on to me. Embossed in gold was an arabesque of ornate letters:

Herbert K. Podrej 8000-metre Summiteer Grade VII Ice 5.13c Rock, Way Sick Big-Wall Nailer. This Podrej picked at a hangnail with a nauseating little smile. I was utterly baffled as to how to respond to the ridiculous card, but Tuchas took up the gauntlet. "Oh yeah," he said, "I know this guy. I get guys like this in the store all the time. Big-Wall Nailer. What a bunch of bullshit." Podrej shrugged without looking, letting us know his hangnail was far more important than our opinion of him. He extended his hand, examining the manicure, then glued his eyes on Tuchas and me in slow sequence. "If you arses are going to climb, what you need," he said in all earnestness, "is me."

Tuchas and I blurted out "Hah!!" in unison. "We don't even know you. Why in the world would we have you come on a trip to the Himalaya? Tuchas said.

Podrej moved impossibly fast out of his chair, straddling an astonished Tuchas. He pushed his head six inches away from my poor friend and put a throaty edge into his voice. "Oh, you know me. I am the man who is going to get you up the mountain. I am the one who will give you the guns to continue, who will keep you two from screwing everything up. Without me, you are going to end up on some pansy assed trekkers' peaks wishing you had the guts to be somewhere else." He ruffled Tuchas" hair. "Boys, I'm the fucking future of climbing and I'm your ticket to glory."

Tuchas was squirming uselessly in his seat, trying to get out of range of Podrej's beery breath. He squeaked out his rebuttal, "We couldn't care less about your hard man bull shit. We're just going to go on our vacation and have a good time and..."

Podrej interrupted him mid sentence with a roar. "Vacation? Good time?!! How dare you!!" he screamed. "You bastards are climbers! You have an obligation! You are going to climb, not have a good time! If you don't kick butt as soon as your feet leave the ground, you're a god damn fraud. Jesus, you two obviously ain't getting up nothing without me."

He stood up, then fell back into his chair with drama, apparently exhausted by the effort of educating us. Tuchas slowly rose, chugged the last of his mineral water and attempted to match Podrej's glare. "And you will never, ever, come on a trip with us," he said with a trembling authority. We headed for the door.

Podrej waved a hearty goodbye. "We'll see about that!"

I turned, ready to jump back into the ludicrous exchange, then thought the better of it. We stepped through the door, certain we had seen the last of Mr. Podrej.

But as the pub door closed we heard him roar a last laugh. "See you in Kathmandu!"

At the best of times, the sensory assault that is Kathmandu turns you inside out; the noise, the smells and the chaos leaving you raw and ragged edged. If you were wide awake and full of energy, arriving in Kathmandu would still feel like the bum hours of a bad acid trip, but it's all the worse when we Westerners come in punch-drunk with jet lag and poisoned by airline food.

We melted out of our plane into a sick monsoon sweat, delirious after five flights and hours in airports along the way. Tuchas had refused to take sleeping pills, and had a screaming headache from an in-flight movie marathon — half of which he didn't seem to have noticed was in Cantonese. I, on the other hand, had been chewing Halcion like bubblegum, and by Kathmandu couldn't form coherent sentences. We stumbled onto the tarmac, with the rest of the tourists from the plane swarming past us to get through customs.

Tuchas asked me to pose for a minute so he could get a photo of our noble arrival, but he slowly lowered the camera while looking through the viewfinder, "Oh, no," he said, pale and wide eyed. "He's the fucking Antichrist..."

I looked over my shoulder, and turned as cold as Tuchas.

There he was, on the tarmac of the airport: the Welcome Wagon from Hell. Podrej wore an enormous grin and an impossibly fluorescent yellow jacket, with the words "1997 Canadian Hard Man Expedition" emblazoned across the breast. He flung his arms wide, forcing the flood of tourists to part around him. "This is going to be unbe-fucking-lievably great, you guys. We are gonna smoke up these mountains, we are gonna kick Himalayan ass! Look out Nepal!!"

Tuchas and I were paralyzed as he ran up and embraced us, nearly lifting us off the ground. He grabbed a nearby tourist by the shirt sleeve, passed him Tuchas' camera and demanded that a picture be taken of "him and his team". The

Tuchas approaching the Tashi Labsta col.

terrified tourist followed Podrej's stage-directions for the photo, then skittered away.

"God, I love this place!" Podrej bellowed at no one in particular. "Now," he said, poking me in the chest, "let's get our asses through customs. Lucky for you gins, I speak fluent Nepali." He pushed us towards Customs.

Tuchas turned to me and whispered, "Jesus Christ, Seamus, let's get the hell out of here!"

Podrej butted in and leaned over conspiratorially. "You're right, we've got to get out of here. It's absurd for us to have to wait, and these porch monkeys will take all day to process us." He turned, sun eyed the huge crowd and let out a piercing whistle.

"Excuse me!!" he screamed. The room went silent. He pointed at the two of us. "My two friends here are on a mountaineering expedition. Would any of you who are only trekking please move out of the way so they can get to the front of the line."

Everyone was staring at us wide eyed; I felt faint. No one moved. "Aw, Christ," said Podrej, "let's just do it ourselves." He grabbed Tuchas and me by our backpacks and pushed us stumbling ahead of him, plowing our way to the front. All the way up the line, people were bumped out of the way, while we muttered helpless apologies.

At the customs desk, Podrej winked at the clerk, who just scowled back. "You must wait in line, you people can not jump line," he said, motioning us back. But the demon shook his head slowly and refused to budge.

"Podrej, what the hell are you trying to do" asked Tuchas under his breath.

"Give me a hundred bucks," whispered Podrej anxiously, "or you're gonna screw this up." The people-behind us were starting to grumble.

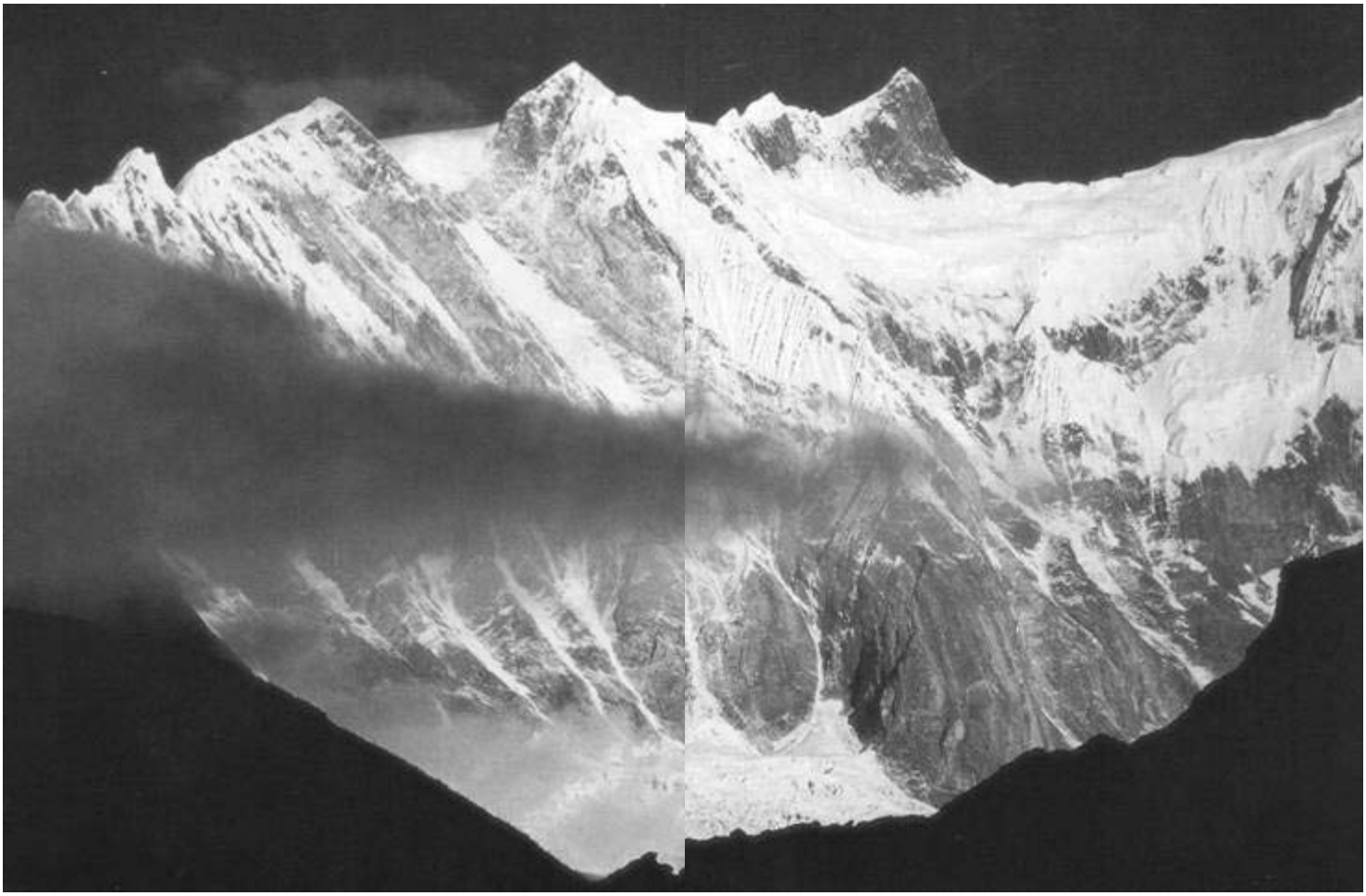
"I'm not going to give you a hundred bloody dollars," I said, hoping the clerk understood we didn't have any thing to do with this lunatic.

"Aw, shit," said Podrej, drawing a bill from his pocket, "Look, I'll pay now and you pay me back later." Podrej turned to the clerk and broke into his "fluent" Nepali, which turned out to be a stew of bad Nepali and perhaps worse English, all delivered in an embarrassing attempt at an East Indian accent. I, too, was developing a headache. Remarkably, the hundred dollars actually allowed the clerk to forget that he and his entire country were being slandered by the buffoon in the yellow coat, and we emerged with visas in hand a few minutes later.

Tuchas saw our chance to escape. "Look, Podrej," he said, "we'll see you outside."

We came out the door into the hell of Kathmandu Arrivals, where hundreds of shouting children began the struggle to rip the bags from our arms and carry them to their uncle's waiting taxi. Thankfully, off to one side our friend Mingma Sherpa, who was going to act as our sirdar waved with a life-saving smile, and we ran up for a quick greeting, demanding that he get us the hell out of the airport. With him running tackle through the clawing crowd, we made our way out to the street. Tuchas glanced around frantically, hurriedly dumped our duffel bags into the taxi Mingma had arranged and told the driver to get going. With no sign of the demon, we kicked up a rooster comb of dirt, swerved around a cow on the road, then sped off to the hotel. If we kept low, Podrej would never find us.

When we arrived at our "secret" hotel, Podrej was, of course, sitting in the lobby. "Thank God," he boomed as we, stunned, entered the lobby. "I was beginning to worry your driver didn't know where this place was!" He pointed out the door to another



Annapurna South and the Fang from Macchapuchhare Base

taxi. "His brother seemed to know a shortcut, though."

He called over to the reception desk. "Hey, Ramesh!" The clerk looked up with a big smile. "These are my friends from the expedition!"

Ramesh scurried over to us. "Very much pleasure to meet you. Sirs." he said, shaking our hands effusively, "It is honour to have Mount Everest climbers in our hotel."

Tuchas closed his eyes, slowly shaking his head, quietly mouthing "No, no, no..." Podrej saw me about to correct the clerk's mad idea about Mount Everest and gave me a quick, excruciatingly painful elbow to the ribs. "Don't wreck this," he whispered, "we're getting the royal treatment out of the Everest thing..."

"Thanks, Pal," he said to Ramesh, "now how about that free dinner?"

"Oh yes," Ramesh beamed, "in the Himalaya dining room, with the football team." He skittered off into the dining room to make sure everything was ready for an apparently impending feast.

"Right on!" said Podrej, turning to us. "You're gonna love these soccer guys. What a party we had last night!" To explain who his new-found friends were, he pointed up to an enormous sign hanging from the ceiling of the lobby that we had somehow managed to miss. In garish letters the banner read: "Manaslu Hotel (Pvt.) Welcome Canada Mount Everest Expedition and Ex-Bangladeshi National Football Champions!"

Ex-Bangladeshi- My mind was reeling. I felt nauseated from the Halcion, from the fact it was somewhere around 3 a.m. for us, from the utterly Nepali absurdity of the moment, but most of all because of this glaring yellow terror beside me, bellowing on about God knows what.

"Ahmed!" Podrej boomed, as an enormous, bellied dark man in a shimmering green track suit approached. The two began a mysterious, complicated handshake filled with slaps, hip twists and finger dances, the completion of which was greeted with roars of approval from a huge crowd of men wearing the same disgusting green suit. The shake, I assumed, was the secret salute of the Ex-Bangladeshi Football Champions, and these, without a doubt, were they.

Ahmed turned from his embrace of Podrej and grabbed us by the shoulders. "So," he said, "you two are, like us, athletes! A climb of Mount Everest is a very great achievement for your country! You are fortunate to have such a man as Herbert to guide you." Tuchas sputtered "Guide??" and Ahmed continued. "As Herbert showed last night during the fire walk,"— there were murmurs of confirmation from the crowd — "he is a man without fear. Come," he pointed to the dining room, "we must eat together as sportsmen." He and Podrej joined hands and led a procession into the dining hall.

Tuchas looked as though he had been touched by the hand of death and steadied himself on the edge of the desk. "You would like your room. Sirs, before dinner?" asked Ramesh, now back at his post. Tuchas gave an unsteady nod of assent.

So up we went to the Maharajah Room, a three bed room suite that, Podrej had, of course, arranged for the Mount Everest climbers. We fell asleep that night without a word between us and with the drunken strains of ex-Bangladeshi folk songs wafting up from the garden below. Our sorry expedition had taken yet another

hallucinogenic turn, and I believe Tuchas cried himself to sleep.

The airport scene; the hotel debacle—they marked what was really wrong with Podrej. It was not that he was simply an unremitting, unapologetic arse; what was far worse was that he actually helped us. Despite plowing through Nepal's land, people and customs like a drunken water buffalo, he managed to get things done better and faster than we did; despite his rude buffoonery, his insults and his sarcasm towards the locals, he collected clusters of victims willing to listen to him. And, although we were struggling to be rid of him at every corner, his snarling, blustery loathsomeness produced permits and airline tickets and bargains in the market place. He made it plain he would be on the trail wherever we went — but what about when we set off to climb? What tricks up his sleeves then?

Tuchas on the Tent Peak approach.

We had already decided that we were going to try to mount two separate trips: the first into the Annapurna Sanctuary, the second into the western Khumbu. Mingma showed up at the hotel our second morning in Kathmandu, happily — and rather unbelievably — waving our first peak permit; Podrej, however, was furious.

"I can only assume that this Tent Peak permit is a ploy," he said, grabbing one of our rare chocolate bars and killing half of it in one bite.

"What do you mean?" said Tuchas, feigning disinterest but fearing yet another battle with the madman.

"The way I figure it," said Podrej, "you can't have come 12,000 miles to climb a goddamn trekking peak. So you must have gotten the permit just to get into the area cheap, but you're planning to pirate something worthwhile. The South Face of Annapurna, maybe."

Tuchas and I just looked at each other.

"Good," said Podrej, satisfied with his altogether wrong conclusion. "Then I'm going to go for a run. If we're going to do the South Face of Annapurna, someone has to be in shape, and it obviously isn't going to be either of you." He left us in peace.

"What a putz," said Tuchas.

We settled back into packing, happily entertaining thoughts of how rageful Podrej would be when we arrived in the Sanctuary and started up the easiest peak. It kept us smiling for days.

Anyone who assumes that climbing is the dangerous part of a trip to the Himalaya has never travelled around Nepal in a taxi. After an uneventful flight to Pokhara — save for Podrej haranguing the poor passengers for not knowing the names and climbing history of all the peaks on the way — we hopped into a taxi to get to the beginning of the trek.

Glad to be on our way, we didn't understand that we had just put ourselves into the greasy little hands of a maniacal driver who made Podrej look positively stable.

Stuffed in the back seat with enormous packs and duffel bags thankfully blocking at least some of the terrifying view, Tuchas and I muttered prayers while Podrej spewed a steady stream of invective at the insane driver.

The crux of our ride came when the madman decided that practising his English was insufficiently excruciating, and that he would enrich us with a natural history lesson. While taking one corner at enormously high speed, he pointed out the window and screamed "Look, monkey!" The rest of us grabbed for window sills as the tires screeched around the bend, but the driver lost his grip on the steering wheel and, with an understandably surprised look on his face, fell out the suddenly opening door of the taxi and rolled into the bushes. It took the rest of us a hundred metres to glide to a stop, driverless and terrified. Podrej jumped from the cab, ran back to the driver, who was limping sheepishly to the vehicle, and beat him to within an inch of his life, all the while screaming, "I'll show you a fucking monkey!" The drive, if not Podrej, calmed down somewhat from that point.

On our four-day trek into the Annapurna Sanctuary, Tuchas and I settled quickly into the peaceful rhythm of walking, disappointed only slightly by the regular rain. The climb into the Sanctuary has to be one of the world's most spectacular and moving mountain treks, but from the first step Podrej was in an execrable mood, treating the hike, and especially the trekkers, as a burden remarkably unfair for him to have to bear. He was there to climb, not to be leech bait in a tropical jungle shared with mere hikers.

Podrej saw the weather as a personal affront that was spoiling his well-deserved chance at greater glory, and let us know that the speed of our travel with the porters was an embarrassment unparalleled in mountain history. The only high point of any of his days was the opportunity to proclaim to everyone in the teahouses that he had bettered their time on the daily walk by several hours. We hid in the corner and hoped no one thought we were with him.

After four days' walk and, more to the point, after months of thinking about this damn trip, it was finally time to leave the trail and head up a mountain. Podrej was bouncing around, virtually useless as we did all the work, and spouting a veritable fountain of the worst kind of motivational homilies: ''It's do or die time, boys!" he walked around shouting. "Now we're going to find out what we're made of!"

We left excess gear at the final teahouse, took five days' food and headed into the fog across the South Annapurna Glacier. Podrej

was so busy nattering about the "bitchin' line" he wanted to do on the south face of Annapurna that he didn't seem to catch on that we were heading completely in the wrong direction. Even when the clouds cleared that evening, giving stunning sunset views of the entire Sanctuary, he was so filled with his plans for glory that he didn't notice our basecamp was in fact at the foot of Tent Peak, nowhere near Annapurna.

When we awoke the following morning, however, we were faced with a thoroughly wretched Podrej. Not only had he spotted Annapurna in the misty distance, he swore he had been intentionally given the worst spot in the tent to sleep, producing what he said was assuredly the beginning of a paralysis of his back. Tuchas was quick to offer that the fool didn't have to come on the climb; this only confirmed Podrej's certainty that we were trying to sabotage his chances of making the summit.

A glorious day of ridge walking took us to our high camp. Glorious, that was, except for Podrej. Our mountain hero, faced with the inevitable fact of climbing such an insignificant peak, was dramatically abject. The day's ascent up a grassy moraine was a bit of a grunt for all of us, but Podrej was swearing, slipping and stumbling, demanding that we take some of his "heaviest" load and claiming that he had developed every sign of altitude sickness. By comparison, the simply weak and slow Tuchas and me seemed positively noble and heroic. Tired but happy, we settled into our tent below the summit ridge in a light sleet; Podrej took two Demerol and disappeared into the night.

Before first light the next day, a suddenly re-energized Podrej burst into our tent shouting that he had discovered we could avoid Tent Peak entirely, climb to the north and gain the shoulder of the much harder Singu Chuli. I had a splitting headache, and was about to suggest that we were going nowhere near the bigger peak, when Tuchas winked at me, shrugged his shoulders at Podrej and said, "Sure. We'll do whatever you want."

Podrej jumped out of the tent, singing "Zippity Do Dah" at the top of his lungs. Tuchas turned to me, saying, "He couldn't get up Singu Chuli on a fucking escalator. Let's just humour him."

Which we did. Predictably, the weather socked in completely at nine-thirty, and we couldn't even see our feet by ten o'clock. The route climbed a face, then moved right to join a long summit ridge. Podrej volunteered his services for the crux gully pitches, until he realized that the snow was waist deep crap, at which point his back "began to go out again". In good weather the climb would probably be spectacular, 50 degree snow and ice on the face, then a knife-edge ridge surrounded by riveting scenery — but our trip through the whiteout was more an internal journey: silent, tenuous tool placements, invisible partners and uncertain steps in the flat light, punctuated only by Podrej's foul curses drifting up out of the fog.

The top was, expectedly, less than C. Edward Hope's "glorious moment". Just Tuchas and me, probing blindly with axes, trying to decide if there was any more up. Despite all the whinging below, Podrej arrived on top with victory in his eyes, and, hugging us like the great friends he knew we were, screamed into the wind, "Singu Chuli, you bastard, consider yourself conquered'.'."

Tuchas said, "What a putz."

Later that afternoon, when it took two hours to free a stuck rap rope in a biting, spindrift filled snowstorm, Podrej was, of course, once again the whining, simpering toad we had come to love so dearly.

A day later, back in the eye of his adoring public, Podrej the Flaccid was miraculously self-transformed back into Podrej the Magnificent, and on the trail out we spent hours listening to his stirring, if completely self aggrandizing accounts of the terrors during his daring ascent of a new route on "Singu Chuli". With every telling the climb became steeper, the ice thinner and Tuchas and I were relegated to less and less competent roles. The crescendo of his success came the last night of the trek out, during a private recounting to an apparently enraptured young Israeli thing. In this, the bravest version, Tuchas and I disappeared from the mountain altogether, and Podrej heroically slew a trembling peak that was simply no match for his mountain skill. All the way back to Kathmandu Podrej was tediously clear that his evening with the poor young girl had ended with an equally remarkable ascent.

It wasn't until we pulled up the driveway of the hotel in Kathmandu that I even considered that we were going to have to deal with Podrej's ridiculous story about our climbing Mount Everest all over again. I was scrambling, trying to imagine what we would tell Ramesh and the rest of the staff; after all, we couldn't possibly have climbed Everest — we'd only been gone ten days. But I had, of course, forgotten that Podrej was involved.

Podrej had spent only five minutes on the phone in Pokhara, but that, it seemed, had been more than enough time to work his evil. As we pulled up to the portico of the Kathmandu hotel, there were Ramesh and the boys, waving proudly at us, accompanied by a brass band in all its finery. As soon as we stepped from the taxi, the band struck up a welcoming rendition of "O Canada", the cacophony of which sounded, according to Tuchas, precisely like "a cat being sodomized with a pineapple". I was not about to explore that expertise any further.

Ramesh, at one end of the line, signalled to Vijay at the other, and the two unfurled between them a new banner, this time proclaiming the hotel's pride in hosting "World's Speed Record Holder Kathmandu to Kathmandu Mount Everest Expedition". I do believe Ramesh had a tear in his eye as he dropped the banner and ran up to congratulate us. He announced, in very serious tones, that All Nepal Television would be coming to the hotel at six o'clock. He suggested we might want to shave.

"Ramesh," said Podrej, taking the small man under his arm, "The press! What a great idea. But why don't you buy me a drink, and I'll tell you the story of the climb first." Podrej turned, gave us a look that clearly meant "get lost", and escorted a beaming Ramesh towards the bar. And we did get lost — in alcohol.

By now Tuchas had a firm hold on how to work Podrej, so when Podrej arrived at our room the following day, ecstatic about his media debut but looking miserable and stinking of Khukri rum, I let Tuchas run with the ball.

"What have you two bastards arranged next?" asked the green and shaky Podrej.

Where I might have risked the truth and explained that Mingma was out arranging a permit for another of the trekking peaks, Tuchas leaned towards Podrej as if passing on a great secret and said, "Tengi Ragi Tau," emphasizing each word as though it contained considerable, coded meaning.

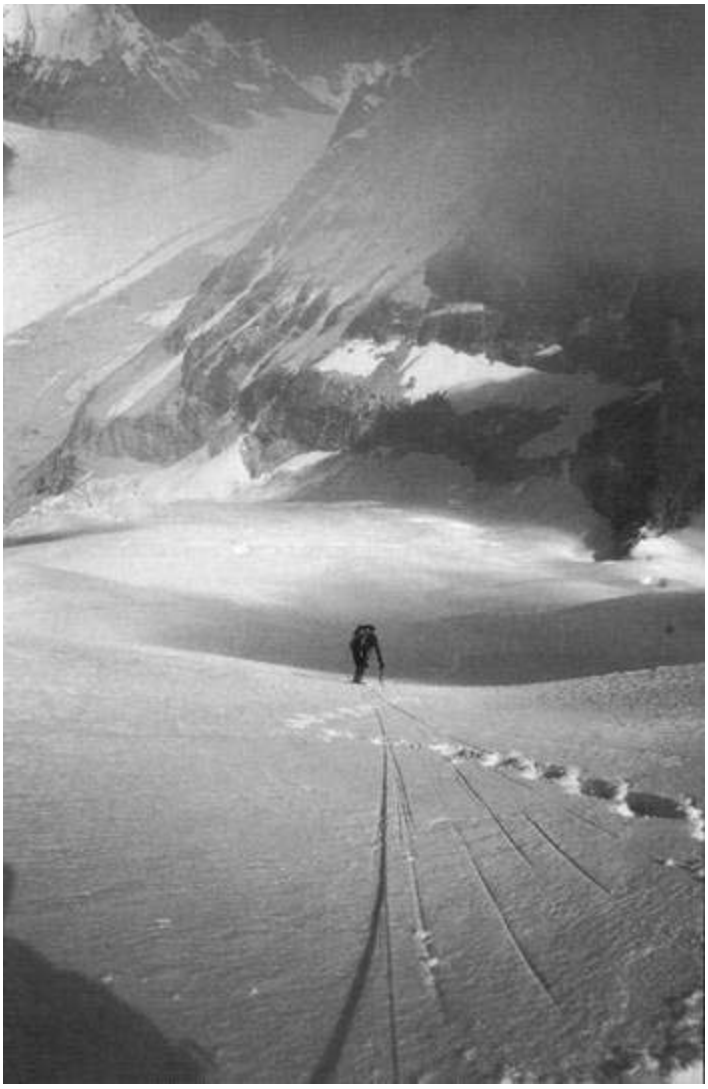
"Huh?" said Podrej, his head appearing to clear a little.

"Sure," said an encouraged Tuchas, "we really liked your performance on Tent Peak..."

Podrej raised an eyebrow.

"He means Singu Chuli," I interrupted.

"Yeah, Singu Chuli, whatever." Tuchas went on, "Anyways, we think it's time we got together on some thing a little more



Descending Parchamo towards the Tashi Labsta

challenging. Tengi Ragi Tau: an unclimbed ridge in the western Khumbu." Tuchas didn't happen to mention it was connected to Parchamo, where we were actually headed.

"Unclimbed?" said Podrej. We both nodded. "Big?" asked Podrej. "Big!" we both said.

"Fucking-A," said Podrej. "Wait till I tell the television guys..." He sprang from the room to telephone his new found biographers, and managed to avoid packing yet again.

Once more, the magical permit appeared in impossible time, and we were out of Kathmandu the next day. In a bit better shape this time, acclimatized high, we went torqueing up the trail from Lukla into the Khumbu, and keeping us at that pace became Podrej's personal cause. In every village, there he was — pacing like a demented coach, pointing at his watch, then storming off without a word, utterly betrayed by our pathetic performance. Not only were we going to do the much-feared Tengi Ragi Tau, he reminded us that we had to get there and back in record time; after all, we had just climbed Everest in... well, you get the picture. No one was getting in Podrej's way.

Especially not the German. Our first evening up the Khumbu, Podrej stormed into our lodge after having gone for a walk, and was boiling about some German whose acrophobia had gotten the better of him on one of the ratty suspension bridges over the Dudh Kosi.

"But that damn Kraut bastard better not get in front of me and pull that shit tomorrow. We," he reminded everyone loudly, "have a mountain to climb."

The following day, the feared — and of course inevitable — confrontation with the German happened in the worst possible way. As we approached the last bridge over the river, at the foot of the notorious Namche Bazaar hill, we came upon a rather serious-looking yak and porter jam. The previous night Podrej got himself involved in a rakshi soaked debate with some unfortunate locals about the Namche hill speed record, and had actually set a bet that we would get up it in less than 37 minutes. The yak jam was going to cost him money, and Podrej simply wouldn't countenance that. His patience at the delay lasted less than a minute, then he burst through the pack and headed for the bridge. Understandably fearing an international crisis, we followed him past grumbling porters and the swinging horns of some pretty pissed off yaks.

There, halfway across the last and highest of the trail's bridges, was who I guessed to be Podrej's Teuton. Terrified, the poor bugger was on his hands and knees, bleating in German, grabbing guy wires and swearing, I imagine, that he could not continue. At either end of the bridge, the locals were yelling at the man to get on with it, losing even their famed patience because they were having a great deal of difficulty controlling what was now a herd of fifty yaks on either side of the bridge.

Podrej, without any reputation of patience, dealt with the matter in his own unique terms. He turned for a second, and, having spotted one of our porters, grabbed the sorry fellow by his load and began rifling through it with fire in his eyes. He found what he was looking for, pushed through to the end of the bridge and let go with a roar that silenced even the yaks.

"Hey, schwemhundt!!"

The German on the bridge froze, stifled his whimpering and slowly raised his teary eyes.

"Yeah, you!" Podrej sneered.

Podrej started to stroll across the bridge, getting halfway to the fear stricken man on the span before pulling out the largest hypodermic needle I have ever seen. Podrej had obviously found our rather ridiculously overequipped medical kit.

He brandished the needle with relish and, moving slowly forward, said, "Hermann, or Adolf, or whatever your fucking name is, I have here a nuclear warhead filled with 20 mg of Largactil, a foul and completely debilitating anti-psychotic drug," - he paused reflectively for a moment — "and I should know. Anyways, you've got a choice. Either you stand up and haul your sorry Euro Kiester off this bridge, or I'm going to launch this bastard into your fat arse, and you're going to get carried off."

The sight of that German, running full speed off the end of that sickeninglv swinging bridge, chased by a rabid Dr. Podrej, cheered by hundreds of grinning Shepas, was perhaps Podrej's greatest moment of glory.

We joined the thoroughly satisfied Podrej in Namche.

That Podrej was far more subdued over the following two days can only be attributed, I think, to his having actually seen the understandably unclimbed Tengi Ragi Tau. The ridge we were to be "attempting" appeared, even from two days' distance, to be an insurmountable pillar of marbled choss, and beads of sweat were pimpling Podrej's forehead miles from the face. This time, instead of a paralyzed back, Podrej began to develop symptoms of Kathmandu Quickstep.

"The first pitch is going to be yours, man," said a smirking Tuchas, and Podrej's march slowed yet again. When we reached Basecamp, Podrej demanded a team meeting.

Look, you guys," said Podrej, glancing nervously over our shoulders at the hulking monster called Tengi Ragi Tau, "my gut just isn't right."

"Uh, huh," said Tuchas.

"So what I'm thinking is, we know we can do this thing, right? And we've come all this way, so why should we let a little problem with the trots get in the way of our well-deserved fame. Why not just, you know... why not just say we did it?"

Tuchas twisted his face into a grimace.

"Oh, all right, all right." Podrej's eyes drifted off across the horizon and then steeled with a flicker of hope on Parchamo. "Hey, what about that peak there? That looks pretty good." He beamed.

"Ah, I don't know,'" I said. "We have our hearts pretty set on Tengi. Why don't you just stay here..."

"No," said Podrej emphatically, "it wouldn't be right for us to split up, and my gut just won't let us get up Tengi. Besides, that peak's a beauty..."

"Maybe he's right," said a theatrically pensive Tuchas. "Podrej has a pretty good eye for a line, you know..."

"Well," I said, "who am I to argue? Parchamo, it is." Podrej smiled, safe now that we'd backed down.

The climb itself was uneventful. The only low point, other than Podrej's continual moaning and the inevitable whiteout through the afternoon, was the condition of the snow. The windpack was excremental, with slabs jigsawing and sloughing around us throughout the day, keeping nerves and commitment on edge. Podrej was a jellied mass, giving loud squeals whenever the snow would whoomph nearby. The top third of the climb was a swim through waist-deep hoar, and the exhausted and frustrated Podrej simply gave up the charge below the summit. He was utterly despondent, and we actually felt guilty when he refused to move and we had to leave him behind.

Upon our return a half hour later, we too were exhausted by the effort, but Podrej was downright terrified. Finding him unable to speak and incapable of moving, I first thought we might have to resort to some of the injectable motivation he had prescribed for the German, but he spontaneously sputtered to life and began screeching at us: "We're all going to die!!!"

"Podrej, let's get moving," said an enraged Tuchas.

"No, no," cried Podrej, "we have to figure out what to do..."

"You," I said, "are going to get up — now — and get off this mountain with us. It is simply not OK for us to stay on this snow and talk."

It really was that simple: we just needed to move and get off the mountain. No great drama, no great meaning, no life changing revelations, no glory — we just made our way slowly downhill, dragging a frightened, incompetent Podrej with us. He said nothing when we crested the glacier and unroped; he just started to lag further and further behind while Tuchas and I walked on ahead, breathing our sighs of relief at getting off the bad snow. Podrej avoided our eyes.

We skittered down the scree to our camp at the edge of the lower glacier. Mingma had been waiting patiently for us there, and we packed up the tents and the gear in silence, recognizing that the trip, for the most part, was over. Everything from now would be backtracking.

Podrej stayed out of the way, off to the side. He seemed to be looking for some way to help us, to stay involved, but I think it was clear that there really wasn't room left for him.

The spectacular, unclimbed north face of Teng Kang Poche

He finally spoke first. "Crazy trip, huh?"

Tuchas nodded with a bit of a smile.

"But it was fun, wasn't it? A few laughs? The taxis? The German?" Podrej asked, with some hope in his voice.

"You know , Podrej, in the end, it was," I said.

It struck me then that I knew what was wrong with C. Howard Hope's mountains, at least for me. My climbing trips have been filled with Podrej moments more often than with moments of Hope, and they, I realized, are really the times in climbing I have enjoyed the most: the brazen, adolescent idiocy; the swaggering bullshit of the climber; the bawdy, careless romp through beautiful places around the world; the manic swing between certainty of purpose, hubris in trusting your talents and the terror of screwing up; the self aggrandizing insistence that we and what we do are somehow special. And it occurred to me that at the end of any trip it's those moments and those attitudes that are the hardest things to leave behind, because they are the furthest thing from the daily grind of the real world back home.

"I guess that's the end then, huh?" Podrej said.

Tuchas nodded, for old times' sake called Podrej a putz, then said it was time for us to be going.

Podrej said "See you next time!"

Tuchas, Mingma and I shouldered our packs, checked the site, imagined our mountain hidden in the cloud, and then set off. After

a few feet I looked back and saw Podrej fading into the mist, and I gave a little wave. Seeing the look on his face, with its sadness at being left behind or, worse, being forgotten entirely, it was hard not to worn that I might never see him again.

We would like to thank the Canadian Himalayan Foundation for its generous sponsorship of our trip, and I would dearly like to thank my friend Tuckergi, without whom Podrej would not half exist.

The Dark Tower

Sean Easton

Two figures travel through the shadows that live before daybreak the dangers a strong sun brings in the mountains in the soft grey tones of twilight serves another, subtler purpose. The shadows offer a place for the mind to hide from the searching doubts and fears that can end life's great adventures before they even see the light of day.

Daylight finally comes while they slip through a notch in the Dragon's Back and step out onto the 1000-watt glacier. Scorched by the sun's light, they anxiously wind their way through frozen structures to the base of the Dark Tower. As they approach, it grows in size, grows until it fills their vision, leaving no room for earth or sky, no space left for anything but all it can offer and take away. And this only a dark, crumbling tower.

Awakening at the base, the line from white to black is crossed and the urge to ascend is fully given into.

A pause during the heat of day to look down and watch séracs crumble and bridges fall reveals there was no really safe passage across the glacier, only the good fortune of time.

The route above lies on the face of the tower, through fractured rock and jagged lines, often following the division of shadow and light that reveals the way ahead. Days pass struggling upward, sometimes awash in fear, sometime struggling, then pausing, hanging serene, content, forgetting and having been forgotten.

Reaching the ledge. Time for a celebration. Yelling and jumping, trundling, rocks given over to gravity, free to rip the air and crash, releasing the dizzying smell of destruction. A wicked good place for a birthday.

The days melt away and the two cannot help but progress upward. Bodies ache, resist and then yield for a day, to blow smoke and go goofy in a crazy place.

Far below, the glacier spends the night in anguish, cutting itself and scouring stone. In the morning, it still wails and gnashes, oblivious of the two hanging high above looking and laughing at its rage. Terminally, it breaks; wave after wave of snow and ice crumble; large towers crash and flow; the glacier liquefies and runs, disintegrating and reforming. The air shakes, surrounding and filling them with its energy. Time has left, and there is only the pull and tear of a glacier finally fully alive only as it dies, ripping across the bedrock on its journey to the valley floor.

Afterward, in the silence, God is replaced by something quieter, and age creeps across the faces of the two, settling in the wrinkles on their skin. Time has returned, richly, on to a place that is deep and wide, and always waiting

At last they arrive at the roof that cuts a skyline, capping upward vision. This point was accepted as the summit from below; it was too hard to conceive of the face being any higher. Now unobstructed vision shows that they are only halfway up.

The roof is hanging with knives threatening passage — to slice the fibre that all climbers' lives hang on. A beast howls and swipes at the anchor in passing and falls past. A horror thankfully passed beyond. Tap, tap, tap: the drill burrows into the rock like a parasite digging into its host's flesh. Oddly, strange thoughts of peril offer anxious distractions. Silence, then a very human scream as one tumbles and falls, too far, too far. Again silence — a body hangs at the end of the rope, blood running from its finger, then it rises and again climbs upward. The pitches and dread fall away beneath them while spirits and anticipation rise. The cliffscape changes into the belief that there is a summit close above in the clouds. A mountain is being climbed now, the stark exposure of the lower face giving way to the grooves and ledges that comfort the mind in high places.

Sean Easton cleaning high on the Dark Tower.
Note the missing pocket glacier on the left side of the photo.

Awakening early, awakening from heaviness and lethargy which threaten cold bones. Bodies and minds fuse with the surroundings. The sun turns streaks of water into thin vapours which swirl in the sky; the two break through the notch and attain the summit ridge. To finally drop everything, and race to the summit, and dance in the setting sun.

At some point a rainbow is captured in a falling water drop which splinters on the rock, and some of the new drops become the words on this page.

An account of a new route on the east face of Mount Slesse, Coast Mountains. VI, 5.9 A3. 23 pitches in a "beautiful setting with little loose rock". F.A.: Sean Easton, Dave Edgar.

Le Jour Le Plus Long

Text et Photographes Jean-Pillippe Villemaire

La Montagne n'est en fait qu'un outil qui permet de mieux se connaître, sans les masques qui accompagnent la sécurité et le confort de la civilisation. C'est 1'essentiel de la leçon que j'ai retenue de mes six semaines en Terre de Baffin. Pendant plus d'un mois nous avons arpenté la vallée Weasel dans le cercle arctique à la recherche de l'aventure et du contact intime avec la nature dans toute sa splendeur.

Baffin est une immense ile située dans l'Arctique canadien. Sur son territoire se trouvent quelques-unes des plus belles parois rocheuses au monde. Depuis quelques années les grimpeurs de pointe redécouvrent le potentiel à peine exploité pour l'escalade de grandes parois que cette région possède. Deux secteurs ont été principalement explores: Sam Ford fjord sur la côte est et la vallée Weasel dans le parc Auyuittuq, le dernier-né des parcs canadiens. Ce dernier renferme les deux montagnes les plus connues de Baffin: Asgard et Thor. Dans l'ombre de ces géants se trouvent des parois qui ne possèdent même pas encore de nom et qui feront les délices des prochaines générations.

En 1972, Doug Scott et d'autres grimpeurs britanniques ont occupé la vallée à la recherche de lignes naturelles. Leur plus belle réalisation fut sans nul doute le pilier nord-est du mont Asgard, avec plus de 1200 mètres de paroi. La ligne devint avec le temps une des grandes classiques en style libre de la planète: 35 longueurs de granit partait qui mènent à un sommet complètement plat, grand comme un terrain de football. C'est un peu pour répéter l'histoire et pour vivre au rythme de cet océan de rocher que nous avons décidé de partir au pays des Inuits durant le mois de juin 1997. Louis-Philippe Blanchette, mon partenaire d'escalade depuis plusieurs années, et moi étions d'attaque pour relever le défi de ces cathédrales de pierre.

Après plus d'un an de préparations, de levées de fonds et de rêves, nous étions enfin à Pangnirtung, petit village inuit qui marque l'entrée du fjord qui mène au parc Auyuittuq. Dès la première nuit nous sentions bien tout 1'exotisme de cet endroit: à minuit les enfants sont encore dehors et s'amusent sous un ciel aussi clair qu'en plein jour. Nous étions anxieux d'en terminer avec ce marathon et de nous retrouver enfin seuls avec nos bagages pour pouvoir commencer l'expédition. Le fjord étant gelé, c'est en motoneige que nous avons franchi les 30 kilometres jus qu'au refuge Overlord sous la montagne du même nom. Notre première rencontre fut avec un couple de Montréal qui venait de passer leur lime de miel dans la vallée.

The mountains are really just a tool; they allow you to get to know yourself better, removing the masks that often accompany the security and comfort of civilization. This is the essence of what I learned during my six week stay on Baffin Island last year. For more than a month we wandered along the Weasel Valley, north of the Arctic Circle, in search of adventure and an intimate connection with nature in all its splendour.

Situated in the Canadian Arctic, Baffin Island's immense territory is home to some of the world's most beautiful rock walls. Over the past few years, elite climbers have been rediscovering the barely exploited potential for big wall climbs in this region. Two areas have received the most attention: Sam Ford Fjord on the east coast, and the Weasel Valley in the Auyuittuq Park Reserve, the most recent Canadian national park. Auyuittuq contains two of Baffin Island's most well known mountains: Asgard and Thor. In the shadows of these giants stand walls as yet unnamed which will be the delight of future generations.

In 1972, Doug Scott and other British climbers visited the valley in search of natural lines. Their best achievement was without a doubt Mount Asgard's Northeast Pillar, over 1200 metres high. Over time this line has become one of the planet's freeclimbing classics: 35 pitches of perfect granite lead to a completely flat summit as large as a football field. It was partly to relive that history, and to climb according to the rhythm of this ocean of rock that we decided to leave for the land of the Inuit in June 1997. Louis-Philippe Blanchette, my climbing partner of many years, and I felt ready to take on the challenge of these rock cathedrals.

After more than a year of dreams, fund raising and preparations, we finally reached Pangnirtung, a small Inuit village at the entrance of the fjord leading to Auyuittuq National Park. Right from our first night there the place felt exotic: at midnight kids were still outside, playing under a sky as bright as at midday. We were anxious to be done with our marathon of preparations, and to finally get on with our expedition. Because the fjord was frozen, we used a snowmobile to cover the 30 kilometres to the Overlord hut, located below the mountain of the same-name. Our first encounter in the Baffin wilderness was with a couple from Montreal who had just spent their honeymoon in the valley.

Overlord

Our first morning, not wanting to waste a day of good weather, we headed out to climb an attractive pyramid on the west face of Mount Overlord. Our little excursion, which was supposed to be over by late afternoon, lasted well into the night, with more than

Overlord

Le lendemain matin, ne voulant gaspiller aucune journée de beau temps, nous sommes partis a l'assaut d'une jolie pyramide dans la face ouest du mont Overlord. Notre petite sortie, qui devait se terminer en fin d'après midi, se poursuivit jusqu'a tard dans la nuit après plus de 800 mètres d'escalade soutenue sur du rocher pas toujours propre. Cette ascension nous mis en appétit pour les six semaines qui nous attendaient.

Après quelques jours de repos nous avons commencé les portages entre les abris d'urgence qui sont érigés dans la vallée a environ tous les 10 kilomètres. Le beau temps a tenu encore pendant plus d'une semaine, et il n'était pas rare que nous avancions en culottes courtes et en T-shirts. Les seuls occupants du parc étaient les oies sauvages, qui nous saluaient au passage. Nous prenions du repos quand notre corps nous le réclamait, n'étant pas soumis au cycle de la lune et du soleil.

Thor

Une fois au pied de Thor, nous avons pris quelques jours de vacances à contempler cette gigantesque paroi qui occupe la moitié de l'horizon. Nous ne pouvions nous empêcher de scruter cette face pour une ligne de faiblesse qui pourrait taire l'objet d'un prochain voyage. Nous sentions sa présence sans même lever les yeux et nous n'avons pu résister à la tentation de nous tenir à son sommet. Nous sommes alors partis pour attaquer l'immense arête sud-ouest qui mène directement au sommet principal. La majeure partie de cette ascension se déroule sur du terrain de niveau IV; nous n'avons eu besoin des cordes que pour les derniers 300 mètres. Le temps était extrêmement brumeux, donc nous n'avons pas eu la joie de pouvoir nous pencher au-dessus de la face ouest. Après 19 heures de travail, nous étions de retour au camp de base. Nous croyions avoir atteint les limites de notre endurance...

800 metres of steady climbing on rock that wasn't always clean. Still, this ascent whetted our appetite for the six weeks that lay ahead.

After a few days' rest, we started carrying loads between the emergency shelters located every ten kilometres along the valley. The good weather continued to hold for more than a week, and it wasn't uncommon for us to travel in shorts and T-shirts. The only other occupants of the park were the wild geese that greeted us as they flew by. We rested whenever our bodies demanded it, not being subject to the cycles of the moon and the sun.

Thor

Once at the base of Thor, we took a few rest days to contemplate this gigantic wall, which took up half the horizon. We couldn't help scrutinizing the face for a weak line that might provide an objective for a future trip. We could feel its presence without even lifting our eyes, and we could not resist the temptation to stand on its summit. And so we left to tackle the huge southwest ridge that leads directly to the main summit. Most of the route is on 4th-class terrain; we only needed the ropes for the last 300 metres. The weather was extremely foggy, so we didn't have the pleasure of leaning out over the west face. After 19 hours of hard work, we made it back to Basecamp. We had reached the perceived limits of our endurance...

The days following allowed us to regain our strength and to focus on the trip's objective: Asgard. It was now past mid June, and the park was starting to fill up with trekkers from all over the world: Germany, Spain, France, Canada and the United States. This new human presence comforted us and gave us the opportunity to share our common experiences. Each encounter gave rise to a celebration — a potluck supper where we tried to learn about each other and to understand what had brought us together in this place

Les jours suivants nous permirent de retrouver nos forces et de nous concentrer sur 1'objectif du voyage: Asgard. Nous avions maintenant dépassé la mi-juin, et le parc commençait à se peupler de randonneurs de tous les pays: Allemagne, Espagne, France, Canada, États-Unis, etc. Cette nouvelle présence humaine nous réconfortait et nous permettait de partager notre expérience commune. Chaque rencontre donnait lieu à une fête: un souper communautaire où 1'on essaye de découvrir l'autre et de comprendre ce qui nous a amené au même endroit, a l'autre bout du monde.

Asgard

Enfin nous étions au lac Summit, an milieu de l'ile de Baffin, à moins de six kilomètres de Asgard. Le test que nous recherchions se trouvait à portée de main; nous savions que tout restait à faire. Notre stratégie était d'aller établir un camp avance an pied de la face avec environ cinq jours de nourriture et tout l'équipement technique, pour ensuite revenir à l'abri d'urgence pour attendre le beau temps. Pendant trois jours nous avons profité du confort de l'abri pour refaire nos forces, bien manger et nous préparer mentalement pour le défi qui nous attendait. Le 24 juin au matin, toute la vallée était recouverte d'un manteau de neige et nous voyions tranquillement le peu de temps qui nous restait nous filer entre les doigts. Un petit appel en fin d'après-midi au garde du parc nous laissait un mince espoir: nous pouvions compter sur un minimum de 24 heures de beau temps.

C'était la chance dont nous avions besoin. Après le souper nous sommes montés sur le glacier Caribou pour aller dormir dans la tente. Le lendemain à cinq heures nous étions prêts à nous attaquer au géant. Le ciel était complètement dégagé et nous pouvions contempler la voie grandiose qui se présentait devant nos yeux ébahis. Nous avons rapidement adopté une bonne cadence; les longueurs se succédaient sans répit, chacune plus belle que 1'autre. Le rocher impeccable, facile à protéger, justifiait à lui seul le but de route 1'expédition. Quand le soleil disparut derrière la montagne, nous avions gravi plus de la moitié de la paroi.

Le froid commença tranquillement à s'installer; chaque longueur se terminait par une onglée. Nous avons du abandonner les chaussons, enfiler tous les vêtements que nous avions apportés et ralentir notre vitesse à celle de l'escalade artificielle. Quand le jour se pointa le nez, toute la montagne était enveloppée d'un épais manteau de brouillard et la poudrerie commençait à nous fouetter au visage. Nous avançions d'un pas de tortue, et la fatigue s'installait dans notre corps et notre esprit. Une fois la corde fixée au relais, le premier de cordée jouissait d'un quart d'heure pour fermer les yeux et rêver des plages du sud et d'un lit douillet. Nous étions obliges de continuer; redescendre aurait duré une éternité.

Le 26 juin, à neuf heures du soir, nous avons atteint le plateau sommital du mont Asgard. Nous n'étions plus que l'ombre de nous mêmes; une seule pensée occupait notre esprit: manger et dormir. Après avoir traversé le sommet nous nous sommes lancés en rappel un peu avant la voie normale ouverte par une équipe suisse. Chaque rappel était un pas vers l'inconnu; nous devions improviser à chaque fois un nouveau moyen de s'ancrer à la paroi recouverte de glace.

L'aventure se termina neuf heures plus tard dans notre tente, qui nous attendait patiemment sur le glacier. Nous sommes tombés dans un profond sommeil pour plus de 20 heures. Au réveil notre abri était recouvert de neige et nous n'avions aucune idée de la journée. Une seule chose importait: nous avions réussi et nous étions de retour pour partager notre expérience.

Le retour à la civilisation nous permit d'apprécier toute at the far end of the world.

Asgard

Finally we reached Summit Lake, in the middle of Baffin Island and less than six kilometres from Asgard. The test we were seeking was at our fingertips; we knew that everything still lay ahead. Our strategy was to establish an advance basecamp at the foot of the wall and supply it with about five days of food and all the technical equipment, then return to the emergency shelter to wait for good weather. For three days we took advantage of the comfort of the shelter to regain our strength, eat well and prepare ourselves mentally for the challenge awaiting us. Yet by the morning of June 24, the whole valley lay covered under a blanket of fresh snow and we could see the little time we had left slipping through our fingers. A quick call to the park ranger in the late afternoon gave us a sliver of hope: we could count on at least 24 hours of good weather.

It was the chance we needed. After supper we went up on the Caribou Glacier to spend the night in our tent. At five o'clock the next morning, we were ready to tackle the giant. The sky was completely clear and we gazed dumb-foundedly at the imposing route that rose before us. We quickly adopted a good pace; pitch followed pitch continuously, each one more beautiful than the last. Easy to protect, the impeccable rock alone made the whole expedition worthwhile. By the time the sun had disappeared behind the mountain, we had climbed more than half of the wall.

Slowly the cold started to settle in; our fingers were numb after each pitch. We had to change out of our climbing shoes, put on all

Jean-Phillipe durant l'ascension d'Asgard

l'ampleur du défi que nous venions de relever. Nos derniers jours sur Baffin furent consacrés a la découverte de la culture inuit. La chasse ayant été bonne, nos nouveaux amis nous firent goûter à des spécialités locales: béluga, caribou et phoque. C'est avec regret que nous quittèrent Baffin le 11 juillet avec la ferme intention d'y revenir dans un proche futur.

Sur la montagne tout est si simple; chaque action est dirigée en fonction de la réussite de l'objectif. Il n'y a aucune place pour le mensonge et on se relève sans aucun artifice. C'est dans ces moments de pure innocence que cette conquête de 1'inutile prend tout son sens. La montagne n'est qu'un outil...

the clothes we had brought and slow down to aid climbing speed. At daybreak the whole mountain was enveloped in a thick mantle of fog, and blowing snow started whipping our faces. We were moving at a snail's pace; exhaustion was overtaking our bodies and minds. Once the leader had reached the belay and fixed the rope, he could close his eyes for 15 minutes and dream of southern beaches and a cosy, warm bed. We had no choice but to continue: backing off would have taken forever.

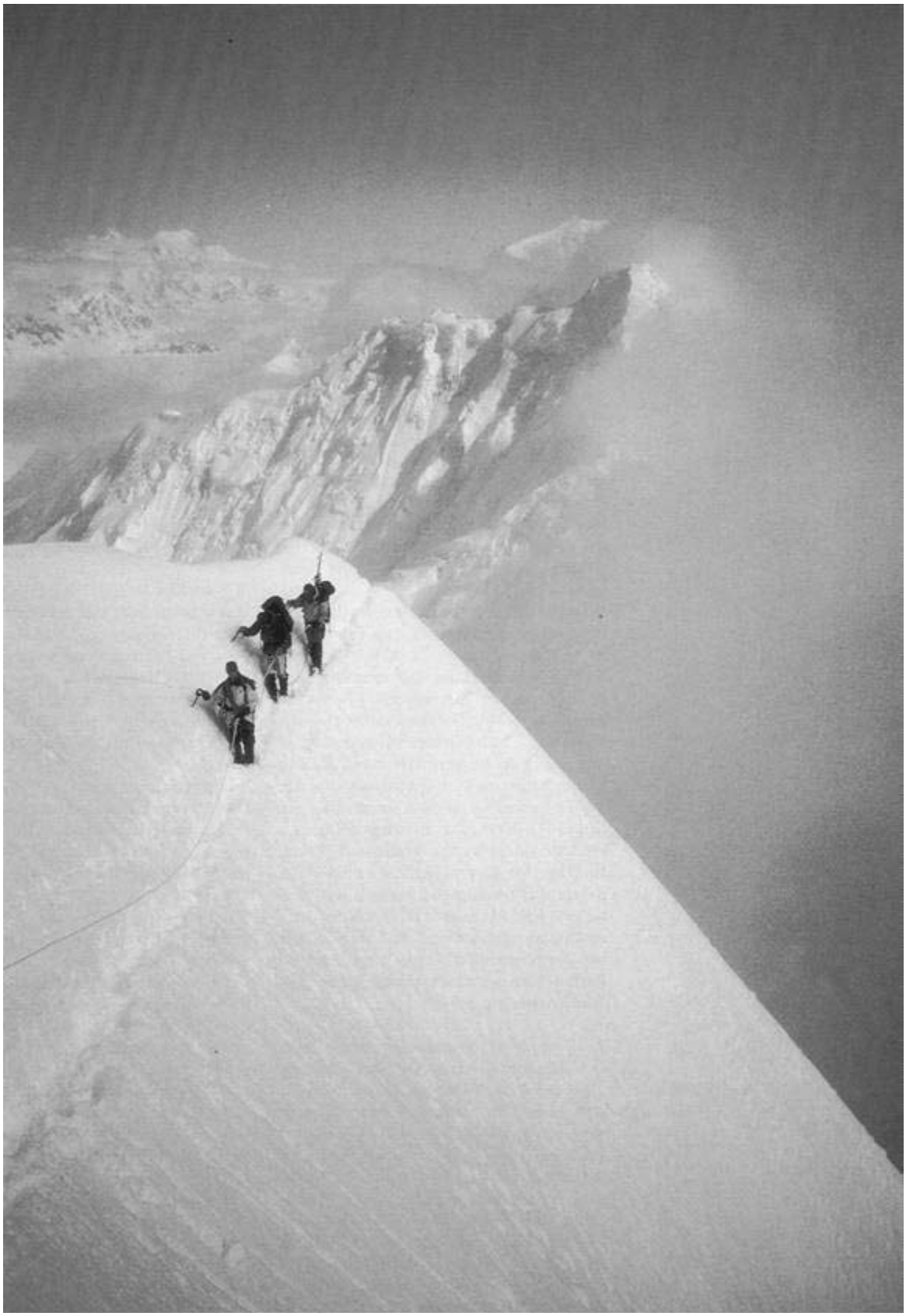
At nine o'clock in the evening of June 26, we reached the summit plateau of Mount Asgard, mere shadows of our former selves. Only one thought occupied our minds: eating and sleeping. After traversing the summit, we began rappelling just short of the top of the regular route, which was put up by a Swiss team. Each rappel was a step towards the unknown which invoked improvising a new way to anchor ourselves to the ice-covered wall.

The adventure came to an end nine hours later at our tent, patiently awaiting us on the glacier. We fell into a deep sleep for more than 20 hours. When we woke up, our shelter was covered with snow and we didn't have a clue what day it was. Only one thing mattered: we had succeeded and had made it back to share our experience.

Louis-Philippe durant la marche de retour

Returning to civilization allowed us to appreciate the magnitude of the challenge we had taken on. We devoted our last days on Baffin Island to the discovery of Inuit culture. The hunting had been good, so our new friends treated us to some local specialties: beluga, caribou and seal. We left Baffin Island regretfully on July 11, with the firm intention of returning in the near future.

In the mountains everything is so simple; each action is directed towards achieving a specific goal. There is no room for lies or artifice. It is in these moments of pure innocence that this conquest of the useless takes on all of its meaning. The mountains are really just a tool...



Climbers on the East Ridge of Mt. Logan. Photo Grant Statham

The East End Boys

Steve Demaio

June 1986

My '74 Nova roared as, late on my way to the job site, I raced down Macleod Trail. While I drove I pulled my head, one arm and then the other through my paint-covered College Pro Painters T shirt. My nostrils twitched at the odour of paint and sweat imbedded in the fabric. As I rolled down the window, the car's roar intensified and I made a mental note to buy some canned soup for dinner and to pick up some coat hangers. The soup tins and hangers would be useful for fixing the holes in my exhaust system. The suspension bottomed out hard when I hit a slight rise in the road. I cringed at the vibration in my feet as it hammered through the rusted steel floor. When the rattling subsided, I found I had to hold the steering wheel at a 90-degree angle to make the car go straight. No problem — just one more nuance...

Steve DeMaio and the infamous '74 Nova

A hundred and fifty feet further, the front end lurched upward until I could not see the road anymore. It came down in a nose dive, screeching and squealing as I skidded to a halt. Jumping out, I found the wheel on its side, wedged under the car. Hmmmm. The ball joints had ripped out. I was going to be very late now. Rifling through my pack, I found my camera. Traffic backed up behind me. Setting the camera up on the nearby bridge, I crouched next to the wheel and posed, smiling, for several self-timer shots. A parade of frowning and agitated suit-and-tie guys wheeled around the bottleneck created by my photo shoot. As I ambled over to a pay phone to call a tow truck, I relived Pitch 4 from our climb of Yamnuska's East End Boys the day before:

Near the top of the gently impending crack, both fists began to creep out simultaneously. There was a reasonable jam down at the level of my shins. I knew that if I removed either of my two hands the other would pull. After a quick assessment of the situation. I decided my only option was to do a kind of downward lunge to the lower jam. I knew I would take a shorty onto the #4 Friend if I missed it. I poised myself for the effort. My taped hands crept toward the outside of the crack half a millimetre at a time. I had only seconds to attempt this with any control.

"Watch us here. Bill." I went for it. And missed. Bill recollects: "I felt the rope come tight and then go slack. I knew at that moment that the piece had pulled. I'd never seen anyone fall past me before and I braced myself to see it for the first time. I locked my eyes open and my hand on the Sticht plate. The rope came tight with a violence I didn't expect, and I was slammed upward against a small roof. Steve was upside down beside me. The gear clanked as he righted himself. My back was bleeding. Steve and I stared at each other. I had only known Steve for a week and was unsure how he would respond after an eighty-foot screamer..."

"You OK. Bill?"

"I'm OK. Are you OK?"

"I'm OK..." Steve glanced down and unclipped the Friend from the rope at his waist. "The Friend pulled." He glanced back up at the high point. "Guess I better get back up there before I get scared..."

East End Boys 5.11 A3: A quintessential creation from that era of my life. Right after the first ascent, I had wanted to go back and attempt a free ascent. For a few years I was distracted by other projects; in 1990, however, I more or less lost interest in hard climbing. The fire died — and with it the passion for pushing my limits on rock.

In retrospect, it was at around that time that I became closed emotionally and that my penchant for intimate relationships disappeared. Both are forms of passion; both involve intimacy and risk. Shutting down emotionally and compartmentalizing pain, fear and insecurity became a crutch that helped me through some tough times. As much as I wanted my primal instincts to overwhelm my psyche and provide me with an intellectual, physical and emotional focus, they never returned. I would commit neither to a climbing training regime for a project nor to an open and intimate relationship. It seemed I needed the escape-route — that bolt I could lower off from at a moment's notice — in case things did not work out. The issues for which I had created these crutches were long in the past. The crutches, however, remained. The skin on my hands was calloused. Under my arms it was raw. Where once they helped, now they hindered. Like direct aid on very steep limestone, these crutches were not so easy to be rid of.

In January '97, I found myself climbing recreationally in Thailand. I was doing more climbing than I had done since 1990. I started thinking about the possibility of a free East End Boys daily. I mentioned it to no one. My passion was delicate, I knew. It was not possible to force it; however, if I nurtured it, it might grow — like a fragile plant. Or is passion just the physical manifestation of naiveté and lack of judgement? Will a wise man never fully commit himself with no backup? Passion, almost by definition, implies commitment — and risk. When I was a younger man, I was passionate and committed in every aspect of my life. I took some big falls. Sometimes I got hurt. I learned to be risk averse: conservative and closed. Was this wisdom? Or fear? Is this a wise man exercising good judgement, or drastically negating new life experiences? I did not have these answers. But I could feel a desire welling within me — I chortled at the re-acquaintance — though I feared another painful estrangement. Soon I would unveil the secrets that East End Boys had been keeping for over a decade.

By March I was back in Calgary. I bought a member ship at the local sport gym and began silently training for East End Boys. My fitness level was terrible. I was 30 pounds heavier than I had been in '86. I rationalized this by convincing myself that I was just a "bigger" guy than I used to be. At the gym I ran into Andy Genereux. I knew Andy would be an excellent partner for East

End Boys. I had climbed with him in '88 on the north face of Lougheed. He was tough, talented and tenacious — veritable "climbing pitbull". The lead line, like a dog's leash, always strained for more rope as Andy practically dragged his partners up routes. He was also a big guy; climbing with him, I would get fewer comments regarding my own relative girth. I casually suggested that we go and "have a look" at freeing the route. Within weeks we were at the base for our first sniff

The second bolt on Pitch 2 seemed a long way off. I made two apprehensive moves towards it. My windbreakcr chafed noisily on the rock as I shuffled into an awkward layback position. A snow-flake melted on my glasses. I felt old. And fat. I was still 35 ft. from the spot where I had used the one point of aid on this pitch 11 years earlier. I whacked a small 'blade into a tight seam and pulled up on it to reach the bolt, muttering, "I've already freeclimbed this part."

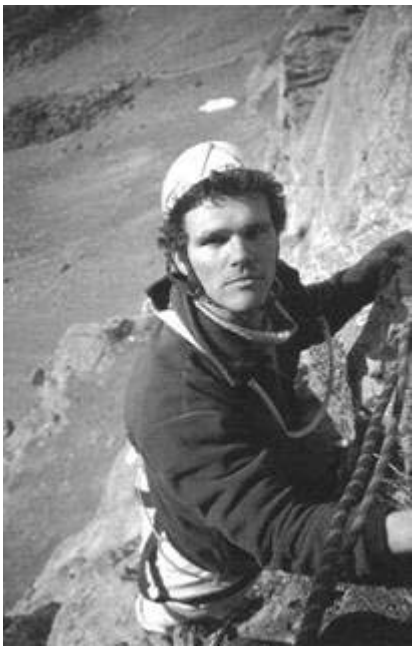
The #2 Friend placement I had used for aid in the roof was gone. The blocks had fallen away. I placed a #3 behind another block and gave it a cursory tug. The block shifted, then fell to the scree below, leasing the Friend in my hand. Hmmmm. Definitely looser than I remembered.

I managed to make a baby angle stick in some stacked blocks on the lip. I would have run it out thirty feet on this piece in the '80s. Now I was concerned that if I fell on it the blocks would pull loose and then land on me. I lowered off into swirling snowflakes and Andy pulled me in to the station.

With the rope to my high point, Andy slung his battery-operated buddy over his shoulder and started up. The sound of the drill sent a jolt through my spine as if I were belaying from an electric chair. We were power drilling on East End Boys. Was I making a mistake? Power drills were the norm for building routes nowadays — top down and ground-up. I could see how it would definitely make things safer: you could hang off face holds to drill, whereas in the '80s you had to hang off a hook to complete the same task. Ironically, having to place hooks in order to drill made running it out a safer option in many cases A bolt drilling session during which I had hung from two hooks tied off in equal tension 30 ft. off the station with no other gear in, above a leg-breaking ramp, in the dark, on Quantum Leap, coincided with my going into retirement in '90. The power drill would eliminate situations like-that. Andy finished the pitch and we rapped on one rope to the ground, landing at a point 25 ft. out from the base of the wall.

On our next effort I aided up the short bolt ladder, made a few more moves of aid above and hand drilled a bolt. I had not expected to have to drill many more bolts on the route, so we had left the power drill in the car. I lowered off, cleaning a few flakes as I went, got rid of the rack and shook out for an attempt to free the bolt ladder while top-roped by the bolt above. This would be my first time rehearsing moves on Yam' with this solely gymnastic focus. It was only a 15-ft. overhanging section, but holds were conspicuous only by their absence. Was this style and advancement, or a regression? It was certainly safer. As I rehearsed the moves, loose flakes broke off, changing the nature of the gym nasties required. The final sequence, once I had it figured out, involved a drop knee at the roof lip, then a dead point to a sloper. I was quite proud of myself, as I had only just recently learned the drop knee technique, not to mention the terminology.

I carried on past the bolt ladder to terrain that I had freeclimbed during the first ascent. A big, loose block formed another small overhang above. The cracks were rotten. The sides of the crack crumbled slightly as I tapped a wire in with my hammer. I tapped in another and got a pin. All were barely better than body-weight placements. In the old days, stringing a pitch together with pro' that would only hold a slip was common. I mumbled my old adage: "If you don't put it in, it definitely won't hold."



Big Bill Betts

I climbed up under the horrifying block. It was rotten, V shaped, about the size of a microwave oven and wedged in a slot formed by the corner below. I had put a Friend behind that? Now I hardly wanted to touch it. I placed a body-weight stopper in a small crack in the corner below. You had to use the block. But if it blew with the gear placed in a plumb line underneath it, it might cut the ropes. Was I wiser now or just more timid? I weighted the wire and cleaned off bow1 after bowl of limestone cornflakes from the block. I hung there. Another bolt? If I drilled it out to the right, it would at least keep the ropes clear if the block cut loose. But that would be three bolts on a pitch that had been climbed without them — albeit by me. My ethics were such that you had to ask the first secessionist if you ever wanted to add bolts to a pitch that had already been climbed. I wanted another bolt. But I was not particularly willing to give myself permission.

I glanced over and was startled by the sight of a set of crutches leaning in the corner. Beside them was a large fellow sitting in plain view — in a wheel chair. He looked astonishingly familiar. His voice was husky: "You're not as tough as you used to be, Steve. Two hundred pounds. Fat. Weak, physically and mentally. And now drilling on one of your greatest creations — this is akin to da Vinci spray painting fluorescent orange on the Mona Lisa. Drill another bolt and you'll dream of the days when all you needed was a set of crutches. Face it: you can't handle it. You don't even trust yourself anymore, do you?"

Andy was patiently belaying below. The sun was gone again; I knew he would be frozen. Was I less of a man to want a bolt here? Eleven years ago I would not have entertained the idea — indeed would have frowned upon it. I caressed the block with my hands. So innocent. But so potentially deadly. The man in the wheel chair grunted and we stared at each other for a while. He smiled when he realized I would not commit. He tilted his head back and cackled evilly because he knew that was why she had left. I felt cold sweat on my back. The rugosities in the limestone blurred into a placid grey. My fingers found the bolt kit. I could not ignore my intuition and experience.

Once the bolt was in, I felt drained. I watched a large snow flake sink into my pile jacket like a hot air balloon deflates

into the grass.

"I'm thrashed, Andy."

"Whatever you want to do, man. It's a touch chilly."

"OK. Watch me here. I'm going to have one more solid look at it."

Soon I was struggling up the corner. I pulled onto the ledge; the wall opened up here. The Big Roof was a hundred feet above me. I looked out left. Bill had been sitting right here when he held my eighty-foot fall. I had landed right down here beside him. We had intended to be back soon for another visit.

I ventured onto Pitch 4 with some trepidation. The pitch had spanked me hard when I was at the top of my game 130 months earlier. I climbed anxiously up to the off-hands crack and yelled down, "Hey, Andy, this is where I fell off last time."

Soon I was at the aid section right below the roof. The rock and protection were excellent here. After working all the moves, I was spread-eagled in a big stem, staring at the single belay bolt on the wall. It was a tad rusty. I recalled arriving here over 4000 days before:

I placed seven small wires and clipped them all in to the rope in equal tension. Bill followed and took out the pro' in between renditions of "And there she was, just a walkin' down the street, singing doo waa zee.... I'm hers, she's mine, wedding bells are going to chime..." He would stop, look up and say "Jimmy! Good lead, Jimmy! This is the hardest fucking rock climb I've ever been on". I appreciated his enthusiasm. It was also apparent that he was openly having fun while he was climbing. This was a new concept to me. Soon I was caught up in Bill's chortles, hoots and howls and in return calling him the affectionate "Jimmy". I enjoyed the light-heartedness in the face of adversity. I am sure that it helped our effort. Bill and I did not know each other well. We had only climbed once before together; only later did we each admit to independently wondering at the end of every pitch whether the other would want to retreat. The drive, however, was only upward. Unspoken between us was the shared feeling that the route was worth a bivouac if necessary.

Once the change-over was complete at the station. Bill looked at my seven wires and at the roof again, considered — / am sure — the eighty-foot whipper I had taken not an hour earlier, and suggested that we drill a bolt. I was totally confident in the station and did not think that we needed one. I also did not want to waste the 15 minutes it would take to drill it. At the same time, I was cognizant of the delicate nature of the climbing partnership, not to mention the fragile nature of the head space required to climb on hard new ground. "Sure, Bill. If you want to."

Big Bill Betts blasted in the bolt in minutes. I watched as Bill took a quickdraw, clipped the bolt with a seemingly exaggerated motion and then clipped the other 'biner directly to his harness. He looked at me and said, "I'm happy now'."

Bill recalls: "Yeah, and then you deftly — and without any hesitation — removed two of the wires and put them back on the rack'. I couldn't say a word... "

I clipped Bill's old bolt and placed a few wires. The station looked meagre, even with the bolt.

"Andy, tie on the drill — I'm going to drill another bolt at this station."

Andy seconded the pitch, commenting that the climbing would actually be really good if he weren't so "farting gripped". At this belay we were about 40 ft. out from the base — with a 10-ft. roof above our heads. His only comment as he climbed was about having to take out all my pro": "I'm trashing my hands more than I would on a wall route." And then with a smile: "I'm going to take that hammer of yours away so you can't tap your wires in!"

"Well, Andy, experience has taught me that protection doesn't do you any good when it ends up dangling around your ankles, hanging from the rope at your waist, after you fall off." This became pan of our regular banter on the route. We both knew the potential consequences of the game we were playing.

Andy came up, took a look at the station and said, "Usually I like to have three bolts at stations like this..."

As Andy racked up, I thought back to my lead around the roof:

You're on belay, Jimmy." "Cool, man." And I was off, tapping and tying off knife blades in behind expanding flakes and bottoming cracks. The aid was tricky, and I had a rather crude system of aid in those days. Bill recalls: "You were probably the only guy who was strong enough to make your system work, but you made it work — and you were fast at it."

The system involved basing three or more "biners clipped into one piece at times and alternately weighting each one. As a consequence, the 'biners would periodically jump around, making a sharp, snapping sound as they jockeyed for position. I was used to this; Bill was not. I could sense Bill flinching and locking off the rope every time the 'biners jumped.

I watched in fascination as Andy climbed. With the power drill, he could tension off a piece below and reach to the limit of his extension in order to drill the next bolt. This was fully three feet higher than would have been possible from the same piece with a hand drill. Of course, from a bolt it was possible to top step aggressively and even exert an outward force on the bolt — as opposed to having to hang from a manky, tied-off blade placed behind suspect flakes. He was through this section in what seemed like minutes. I was startled by how easy the gun made it.

Andy placed three bolts on the aid section. This was the one portion of the route where I had expected to have to add bolts. He then lowered down, dropped off the drill and prepared to try it free on a top rope.

I was concerned about the Big Roof. I had always thought this would be the crux. I knew everything else was freeclimbable. But the Big Roof... What if it was 5.13? Andy and I did not climb at that grade. Yet we had done all the work down low. If it was 5.13, then some "stick man" could come along and bag the free ascent.

In disbelief, I watched as Andy effortlessly floated up the pitch to the top bolt.

"Andy! How hard is it?"

"Well, it's 5.8...or 5.11."

"Really? You ran up it!"

"Well, I knew where all the holds were — some of the hollow flakes I knocked off left jugs underneath."

I was ecstatic. We had it. It was bagged. The hard climbing was over. Our next effort would cinch it And the Big Roof was a jug tug!

Soon we returned for the free attempt. The large fellow in the wheel chair followed close on my heels up the trail. This guy could get anywhere in that damn wheel chair. "You think you can climb two hard routes over two days on Y'am? You're already tired, aren't you? Blew your wad yesterday — and this climb is harder. And—" He chuckled, popped a wheely in his chair and, balancing on two wheels, made a quick spin while shrieking: "And you can't fall off today, or hang. It doesn't count if you do." He continued his two-wheeled spin and began to chant like a little kid in time with his rotations: "You're going to hang, you're going to hang..."

Andy was raring to go. He pegged the redpoint on Pitch 2. To save my jam for the leads, I followed on jumars and rigged up for the 12a pitch. I got the microhold, made the drop knee but blew off on the sloper. The man in the wheel chair squealed as the rope came tight, and grinned as he nudged the pair of crutches in the corner a little closer to me. I hung, shook out and completed the pitch. Andy seconded flawlessly and tired up Pitch 4. At the off-hands crack, he greased off and took a shorn. He was back on instantly and sent the aid section to the station. I again followed on the jumars.

My friend in the chair was further delighted when I dogged my way over the Big Root. At least it was only a hundred feet of 5.7 to the station — or so I recalled. I fought for a half-hour to get through a loose 5.10 section above the roof which completely took me by surprise. I had previously graded this section 5.7.

Pitch 6 was the last bit of aid yet to be freed. It was Andy's lead. I stared up at it as I belayed, and recalled:

I was getting tired and retorted to Bill, "Do you ever notice how the climb is never over when you want it to be"."

Bill chuckled "What? Have you had enough?" as he grabbed the rack and started up the pitch. With no other protection in. Bill leapfrogged #4 Friends on aid up the wide, overhanging crack. I lay sprawled on the sloping ledge below. I started to attention when I heard the sound of a Friend ripping across limestone and the clatter of gear. As I looked up, my mind shot to the integrity of our belay station. A Friend had pulled and Bill had fallen onto the lower one, but the rope had not come tight. His cowtail sling had held the fall. Bill instantly plugged in the other Friend and quickly freeclimbed for another 30 ft. to a ledge on the left, where he began ferreting out a station. The sound of iron on iron rang out into the afternoon as Big Bill Betts pounded in a solid belay. I jumared past the overhanging crack, racked up and continued to below another small roof. "You know. Bill, every pitch on this route is either overhanging or has an overhang in it." Bill concurred as he directed my attention briefly to the bent carabiner on his harness: "I had to open the gate with my hammer…"'

"Hey, Andy, get some gear in before the wide crack, will you." Andy expertly manipulated the wide crack to his advantage. He was climbing strongly and with confidence as he gave me a full running commentary of the moves. For a brief instant it felt as if we were totally in control, just finishing off a fun-in-the sun rock climb.

Andy's tone alerted me before I could comprehend the words. "Steve! Rock!"

A shower of toaster-sized howitzers tilled the sky. I hugged the wall, still totally exposed, hunching my shoulders and bull-dogging my neck, Crack! Thud! One on the helmet, one on the shoulder. I heard Andy's concerned voice as a background to the fireworks in front of my eves. I shook my head and felt my shoulder and collar bone. Nothing broken — just numb.

"I'm okay!" And then muttered to myself, "This is still a very serious game'"

A cloud of dust extended in a plume

Andy Genereux

behind us as we drove into the Yam parking lot. It was early and the parking lot was empty save one person: the man in the wheel chair. He sat there, waiting, and glowered at me over his coffee mug. As we got out of the truck, he tossed a pair of crutches in my general direction. They fell to the ground with a clatter. "You don't feel good, do you? Mentally waxed? Emotionally drained? Things are not great at home right now, are they? You think you can redpoint a 5.12 pitch today?" He chortled: "You've never redpointed a 5.12 and you think you can pull it off three pitches off the deck on Yam'?" I squared off momentarily and prepared to butt heads, but then backed off; save it for the route...

Andy resent Pitch 2 in minutes. After following again on the jumars, I quietly ate an Eatmore bar and had a drink as I selected the rack for the pitch: no hammer, no pins, a few wires, and some bigger stuff for up high. I clipped the first bolts. Begin with the two-finger layback to the sharp microhold, then drop-knee and slap for the sloper... got it. Okay, stay low on it so you don't barn door off. I brought my left foot above the roof and began to stand. The flake it was on snapped off, but my arms took the weight and I held on. I had nanoseconds to respond or I would be off. Andy pointed: "Foothold!" Just under the lip there was a hidden foothold that I could not see. It made the difference. I armed my way up to the pseudo-rest. I had done it — finally pulled the crux without blowing off. Now there was only the "easy" 5.11 section past the loose block. Andy shouted encouragement from below. It went, and soon I clipped the belay bolts and let out a howl. I hadn't let out a howl on the crag in a long time... The large man fidgeted in his chair.

Andy seconded, refusing the offer of the jumars. He fired his pitch to the Big Roof, this time by passing the wide crack on some face holds on the right. Two red points down — one to go.

Now for the Big Roof. I made the moves past all three bolts and was into the overhanging flare above. There was a good stopper crack right in front of my nose. Do I stop and put one in? Or keep going to the rest? My arms and legs burned from the contorted stem position. As I was getting arranged, my left hold blew. I swung right, but resisted with my stem.

"You alright?" I was out of Andy's view.

"Yeah! Hold popped but I didn't fall!"

The exposure pulled at my heels. My butt was now 50 ft. out from the base of the wall. The rocks were landing outside the trail at the base

I got the stopper in and climbed another 4 ft. higher. Two more moves to the rest. Once again the rock on my left tore away in my hands. I was off. My legs swung wildly into space. But the hold on the right was good. I dug deep into my psyche: 11 years into the past, when I was an East End Wildboy; when the healthy dissatisfaction that I lived with daily spurred me on to bigger, better and increasingly more improbable projects; when I roared on protectionless pitches and howled at the face of adversity. I became that person — again. The doors blew off every compartment I had ever created. I felt all. My body pulsed as new blood surged. The crutches turned to ash in the corner. My feet darted to new positions. My eyes squinted, then focused like laser beams on

the remaining holds, almost burning holes in the rock. The piece at my shins swung ever so gently. The man in the wheel chair stood up in disbelief

A few moves higher, at the rest, I got some pro' in, quickly shrunk back to my timid self and made my way slowly and methodically to the station. The man in the wheel chair sat back down, magically produced another pair of crutches and gently, tauntingly placed them in the corner. Our eyes locked once more. I hissed, "Only if I need them, you bastard!"

East End Boys was free. Me? Well, I'm working on it...

My 17 year-old Toyota Tercel roared down 16th Avenue towards downtown. My body had that pleasant soreness from the effort on the climb the day before. As I pulled over and stepped out to pick up some soup cans from a recycling box at the roadside, I realized that the suit I was wearing was worth more than the car. I ate out a lot and did not like canned soup anymore. I would, however, need these tins to cover the holes in my exhaust system. I tossed the shiny cans into the back with a clatter, readjusted my silk tie and buckled up. You never know when a wheel might fall off...

Walking The Whaleback With Henry David Thoreau

Stephen Legault

"I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness..."

— Henry David Thoreau, "Walking"

The words Whaleback, walking and wilderness should, in the language of every Albertan, be synonymous. Each of us might at least once step over the crown of a windswept ridge above Camp Creek or Bob Creek and face into the gale that blows steadily from the west. We could stand there, leaning — as Sid Marty might suggest — into the wind and feel it buoy us. We might choose to hike upward on that ridge until the foothills burn the respect reserved for mountains into our thighs and calves, and then, at its apogee, we could sit as still as possible in that wind and merely watch. We could sit and look out over distance, a distance in all directions not possible anywhere else in the province.

If each of us did that, at a time spaced well apart from other Albertans so that we might also taste solitude, then there would never again be a question of the Whaleback's worth. Never again would the Alberta Government — whose only interest is short-term economic gain — consider letting oil and gas companies and loggers pillage in the Whaleback. There would be no debate, because the people of Alberta would have tasted a place wild and free.

But the people of Alberta will not come. And, I'll admit as I hoist a pack from the tailgate of the truck onto my too-thin back, that suits me just fine. I'll enjoy it for them. Somebody's got to do it.

I tighten the waist belt with several sharp tugs and feel the weight of the pack transfer from my back to my hips, also too thin, and only marginally stronger than my shoulders. I tug also on the shoulder straps, snugging the pack into my body where it will not throw me off balance on the walk ahead. Although it is July, this is the first time this summer that I've put on anything more than a day pack. I haven't even taken a step and I feel as though I might fall over.

My companions are likewise shouldering packs, adjusting caps and sunglasses and otherwise making ready for a tour-day "saunter" in the Whaleback. There are five of us together here on the flats beside a bend in Camp Creek: four of us standing — Jim Wood, Margaret Scaia, Jack Loustaunau and I — and one of us tucked into the outside pocket of my backpack and wrapped protectively in a zip lock bag. Though dead for some one hundred years, the fifth member of our hiking troupe is very much alive in the spirit of this landscape. In the pocket of my pack is an abridged version of Henry David Thoreau's essay "Walking", bound neatly in a volume no larger than a pocket calculator.

And so the five of us set off, stepping gingerly across Camp Creek where it takes a tight bend below a steep ridge. The water is clear and cool, in places a foot deep but no more. We step from rock to rock, but not before submerging, in a quiet backwater eddy, four bottles of beer. This is one pleasure I could not forsake: the joy of finishing a hike and returning to creek-cooled

beer. The brown bottles are submerged in the water — noses upstream like fat, brown trout — and large flat stones are placed on top to prevent them from floating down stream. Only four? Well, Henry David will have to forgo this pleasure; history has it that he was never much of a drinker, any way.

The creek curls around the submerged hot ties, carrying on towards the Oldman River beyond. We cross the creek and start up the steep hill beyond it. Henry David pipes up:

He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is not more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while seditiously seeking the shortest course to the sea. This righteous indignation is easily ignored as the four living, breathing, panting members of this expedition plod like draft horses up the steep grade of the ridge. We follow a seldom-used track that appears to have been first constructed for ranch work, but has now been abandoned to the weeds and the wilderness. Hardly a saunter by Thoreau's standards. Henry David hastens to add: For every walk is a sort of crusade.... It is true, we are but faint-hearted crusaders, even the walkers, nowadays, who undertake no preserving, never-ending tours, and come round again at evening to the old hearthside from which we set out. We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return, prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. If you are ready to leave father and mother, brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again — if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man — then you are ready for a walk.

As for justification for coming round again at evening, I can only say that the creek-cooled beer is reason enough. As for Henry David's demands for earthly abdications prior to setting forth on "the shortest walk in the spirit of undying adventure", I must insist that the very act of walking itself creates the freedom so dear to Thoreau. With each step we take, we pace out the distance between our daily "affairs" and the freedom so beloved by the man immortalized in the zip-lock in my pack.

Panting, we reach the top of the rise and, thrashing our way through a dense stand of tangled shrubs, gain our first view of the earth beyond. And here we come face to face with the crusade to which Thoreau was alluding. Here we see the earth spread out, vast, wide and open. We huddle a moment among a few giant Douglas fir, looking west over the valley of the Oldman River where it splits the spine of the Livingstone Range and snakes across the nearly level plain between foothill ridgelines. The crusade is the thirst to know this place — the desire to understand, by walking over this land of all up or all down, the secrets and treasures of this landscape.

From the grove of Douglas fir, we angle up the ridge — a long, undulating and nearly bald extension of Livingstone Ridge — which creates a clean break between the Front Ranges of the Rocky Mountains and the foothills and prairie to the east. While the going is certainly not difficult in the technical sense, the ridge is steep in places, and my pack — overloaded as is my custom with camera, lens, tripod and film — feels as if I am carrying a cow up this path. But this is no excuse, and the truth of the matter is, I'm falling out of shape. I have allowed myself to become chained to desk and computer and have seldom taken a walk this summer, except for my daily stroll around the woods behind my home, just for the pleasure of the motion. Henry David would not approve.

I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least — and it is commonly more than that — sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all wordy engagements.

Photos: Stephen Legault

Sauntering, of course, is Henry David's own favourite pastime, the word having been derived "from idle people who roved about the country".

I, who cannot stay in my chamber for a single day without acquiring some— rust, and when sometimes I have stolen forth for a walk at the eleventh hour, or four o'clock in the afternoon, too late to redeem the day, when the shades of night were already beginning to be mingled with the daylight, have felt as if I had committed some sin to be atoned for...

Thoreau knew well the powers of healing that come with a walk in the woods, and he took to the woods every day for their medicinal powers. I too have looked up from the heaps of papers, files, articles, reports and press releases on my desk from time to time and — seeking relief from this stew of bureaucracy and insanity — taken refuge in the woods. But for Thoreau the woods were a means of preserving his sanity, not only restoring it. If we wait until we need to go to the woods for health and mental clarity, it is, I would argue. already too late.

Late in the afternoon, we reach the crest of the ridge. The sun, obscured by cloud for most of the day, sinks low in the west, casting long, soft rays of light across the rolling hills.

On a previous walk along this ridge the sun shone bright, and at this apex I looked out across a world bathed in light thick as honey. That light curled around the hills and pooled in the meadows as Camp Creek curled around river stones, worn smooth with time and the creek's endless patience.

Now, as then, we can look far out to the east and see the humpbacked spine of the Whaleback itself. What I call the Whaleback is in fact an area which extends from the Whaleback Ridge west across three or four rows of foothill ridge lines, and their corresponding meadows and creeks, and ends at Livingstone Ridge in the west. It reaches from the Oldman River in the south to Chaffen Ridge in the north. It is a region that for thirty years hunters, guide-outfitters and other conservationists have worked to protect.

The Whaleback Ridge derives its name from its form: 30 km long, it is a series of humps that resemble the vertebrae of a whale's spine. Each rise is shadowed to the east with open stands of Douglas fir. In the dales between each undulating rise are thick groves of aspen. The windward slopes are bare, having been pounded by winter winds and Chinooks for time eternal.

Beyond the Whaleback to the east are the Porcupine Hills. These rounded domes are flowered with a combination of mountain and prairie species and are not foothills at all but the gentle swell of prairie sediments that have bulged as the great tectonic forces that crumpled the Rocky Mountains pushed from the west. The Porcupine Hills, cut into two halves by Willow Creek, are unique, but also have characteristics that are painfully common in Alberta. What makes them unique is that ecologically they represent a union between the prairies and the mountains. Looking south from my vantage point high in the foothills, the Porcupine Hills trail off into the distance, the furthest humps appearing as a pod of whales might in the diminishing distance.

What makes them common is that, like the Whaleback region — and almost every single square inch of provincial land in Alberta — they are under threat from the oil and gas industry and logging interests, and from overgrazing.

It was in and around these hills that 14 wolves from the Livingstone Gap pack were slaughtered in 1994-1995. Accused of killing cattle, the wolves were legally trapped, shot, and poisoned with strychnine. Alberta Fish and Wildlife assisted with the killing. Though one or two wolves might have been guilty of this crime, the whole Livingstone Gap pack and several others were nearly eradicated.

We rest while a cold wind trips across the crest of Livingstone Ridge, only a kilometre to the west, and spills down its eastern slope and over our perch. On the summit of that ridge is a fire lookout — closed, as an inspection with binoculars shows. What a view the lookout must have had: the rugged Continental Divide and Tornado Mountain to the west, and this hopelessly beautiful sea of folded stone and sky to the east.

After a day of nearly constant sidehill walking (to keep out of the cold wind) and uphill plodding, I am beginning to feel my "affairs" slip away, whisked from me by the wind. But even sitting here in the lee of a twisted and tormented whitebark pine, with half of southwestern Alberta open to my view, I find that my mind drifts back to "syphasization".

Henry David has some advice on this: *...the walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called, as the sick take medicine at stated hours.... Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking. When a traveler asked Wordsworth's*

servant to show him her master's study, she answered "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors."

But it would seem that, despite Thoreau's best intentions in his daily jaunts, he too suffered occasionally from distraction:

...I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot easily shake off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is.

Maybe Henry David was thinking of some farm he hoped to buy or some piece of lane) he had spent his morning surveying. Or maybe he was distracted by the family's pencil-making business. Whatever it was, Henry David Thoreau was not immune to the distractions of society. But, of course, he has council on this matter too: "In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods?"

And so, shouldering my pack for the steep descent through tangled shrubs and dense stands of spruce and fir. I too return to my senses. That is what a place like the Whaleback can do for us. That is one of its many enduring values.

In the evening, we make camp in the south fork of Miles Coulee. In a grove of Douglas fir and spruce, we pitch tents against the possibility of rain. I sleep open to the night under a Douglas fir until about two o'clock in the morning, when thick drops of rain chase me into the tent. It takes Jim so long to untangle himself from a makeshift mosquito net that I am soaked by the time I crawl back into my sleeping bag.

Morning comes, and with it sunshine. We take a leisurely breakfast and, after filtering water for our bottles from tiny Miles Creek, walk down the valley.

It should be stated that we have no definite plan for our hike. Our maps are opened regularly and our plans changed nearly every hour. Our only intent is to see as much country as we can in the four days we have. Henri David explains his position on our directionlessness:

My vicinity affords many good walks; and though for so many years I have walked almost every day, and sometimes for several days together, I have not yet exhausted them. An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness, and I can still get this every afternoon. Two or three hours walking will earn me into as strange a country as I expect ever to see.

The world of Concord, Massachusetts, of Walden Pond, where Thoreau took residence for two years and two months, and of New England in general in Henry David's time, was a much different world than what we walk through today. From the late 1840s through the early 1860s (Thoreau died at the age of 44 in 1862), New England still contained a good deal of wildness. And, though not the rugged mountain wilderness of Alberta and British Columbia, it offered a man of Thoreau's inclination an opportunity to, each day of his life, examine untouched country. For Thoreau that could mean walking the same trail through the woods many days running, and seeing it differently each time. It was a familiarity with country that is not common at the close of the 20th century.

The necessity of open country — and the gift of the opportunity to explore it, as Thoreau did in the wild west of Walden and as we are doing in the Whaleback — is the true measure of wealth. Richness is not a provincial budget surplus bolstered by the sale of oil and gas leases; it is open country with all its endemic species still intact. Wealth is the exaltation that accompanies exploration — on foot, and for no other purpose than the discovery of the land's own beauty and majesty.

From Miles Coolie we angle north again, up another ridge, which ends near tree line in a saddle between two buttes, each severed through by slanting limestone crumbling in upon itself. The day is bright and sunny, but the wind is strong, forcing us to lean into its cold bite. We find a place between the two buttes, sheltered from the gusts that threaten to topple us, and eat lunch.

Thoreau said that wilderness, and wildness, were tonics — better than any medicine we could take to prevent, and cure, the ills of society. What Henry David Thoreau so gently warned of so long ago, we are coming face to face with today.

Did we listen to the bard of Walden Pond? It would appear, across much of the North America, that we did not.

In Alberta less than 1% of lands held by the province have received protection. The national parks — Banff, Jasper, Waterton, Wood Buffalo and Elk Island — inflate the percentage of land protected to around 9%. But many of these lands are not protected at ill. The ills of Banff and Jasper national parks are well known. Those ills are knocking at the door of Waterton Lakes National Park. Parks Canada, the federal agency responsible for national parks, seems more than willing to open that door. Elk Island National Park, east of Edmonton, is too small to offer anything but zoo-like protection to the elk and bison that make their homes there. And Wood Buffalo, massive and certainly significant, has fallen prey to logging — inside the park boundary — and the harmful effects of upstream dams on the Peace River.

In Alberta, the province has set aside-natural areas as one classification of protection, but development inside those protected areas occurs three times faster than on lands adjacent to them. No piece of earth is safe in Alberta from the tentacles of the oil and gas industry. No sooner is a protected area established, such as the recent case of Fort Assiniboine in central Alberta, than the provincial government issues or renews permits to build oil and gas pipelines, drill for petrochemicals or harvest timber. Protection — Alberta style.

Nowadays, almost all of man's so-called improvements, such as the building of houses and the cutting down of trees, simply deform the landscape and make it more and more tame and cheap. A people who would begin by burning the fences and letting the forest stand...! At present in this vicinity, the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom. But possibly the day will come when it will be partitioned off...

The earth I look out over from our lunch stop is mostly public land, and, thanks to the ranchers and private-landowners surrounding it, access to this public domain is still relatively simple. But in other places in Alberta, ranchers who own grazing leases have been known to bar access to "trespassers" on public land, sparking a debate as to who has the legal right to use lands owned by all Albertans but leased by a few .

After lunch we drop from the ridge, out of the wind and into the woods at the headwaters of Jackknife Coulee. Here we walk along a valley floor which opens into a broad meadow of grasses with cow parsnip six feet tall along the creek. We thread our way along the creek for several kilometres, watching for sign of moose or black bear. We find a good deal of scat and tracks and

remember that the Whaleback region offers the last large expanse of "intact" Montane grasslands and forests in Canada.

This ecosystem attracts vast numbers of wildlife. Warm winds blow throughout the year (though the chill in this July air seems to suggest otherwise), brushing the winter pasture of elk, moose and deer — and the wolves that hunt them — clear of snow. It is a melting pot of vegetation, a transition zone between mountains and prairies. As a result, it attracts songbirds in droves. In short, it is a national treasure, one that all Canadians should be proud to call part of our true national heritage — one that every Canadian should defend.

We make camp in a grove of aspens and lodgepole pine, bordered by a fine meadow of tall grasses, on the banks of an arm of Jackknife Creek. Late in the afternoon, we light the stoves and brew hot tea, and in the liquid light of summer I sit with my back to an aspen and converse with Henry David about this troubled West. A West, it would seem, that Henry David dreamed of often, but never saw. A West, it would seem, that Thoreau, for all his vision, could not have foreseen. Speaking of the direction he prefers to walk in — west — he says: "The future lies this way to me, and the earth seems more unexhausted and richer on that side. Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free."

Here Henry David adds a crucial word or two about his notion of the West and comes as near as any writer has to encapsulating the notion of the necessity of nature to the human soul: "The west of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World." Late in the afternoon, the light already slipping down the shoulders of foothills and ridge lines. Jack and I walk up the creek, then take a steep climb over rocks and through meadows to the summit of a ridge. From our vantage we look far out over the prairies, and back at the mountains, and watch clouds whose bellies are flat and dark drift lazily over the earth. The sun tickles the tall grass in which we lounge, and the wind blows steadily. We cast our eye over what is left of the West, and wonder what Henry David would say of the state of the preservation of the human link between our soul and all that is wild. He said:

Life consists with wildness. The most alive is the wildest. How near to flood is what is wild'. Give me for my friends and neighbors wild men, not tame ones. Here is this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Mature, lying all around, with such beauty and affection for her children. Give me a wildness whose glance no civilization can endure.

Jack and I return to camp, light a small fire out of the wind and prepare our dinner. In the dusk that drifts in, my thoughts return to the high ridge above and the sweeping view of earth and sky. Here I am reminded abruptly of the connection between our regard for a wild place like the Whaleback, the health of humanity, and the gentle affection a New England bard had for the fine art of walking. If we cast these things away and leave in their wake only a civilized world, then what makes us most human — our relationship with the land — will be lost. And with it, our humanity.

I sleep with my face to the stars, the wind tilling my dreams with hope.

On the third day of our walk, I finally return to the present. Each walk I take I resolve, again and again, not to become consumed by the conflicts of protecting wilderness. And each walk I take reminds me of the need to work tirelessly to preserve what I love. "Above all, we cannot afford not to live in the present. He is blessed over all mortals who loses no moment of the passing life in remembering the past."

Very true, Henry, but what about the lessons the past has taught us? My first trip into the Whaleback was only four years ago. I had learned of the threat by Amoco — a huge oil and gas company from the U.S. — and their plan to drill 20 gas wells in the Montane of the Whaleback I learned also of the band of local ranchers, craftsmen, hunters and anglers who had stopped them. I came to the Whaleback for a few days of walking to see what it was people like Judy Huntlev and James Tweedie were fighting so valiantly for. When I left I vowed that if the bulldozers ever returned so would I. It is this remembered past, the insults and defilements, that we must recall in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such threats.

The day is cold and windy. We cross the divide between two forks of Jackknife Coulee and, after dropping our packs in a meadow where we will camp the night, wander north to the banks of White Creek and look into the Chaffen Ridge region. More wind-blown foothills, more deep forests of fir and pine and aspen. More wildness. More threats. Nothing in this day and age of Alberta is safe from exploitation. Nothing valued by those who choose wildness as sacred is safe from those who choose as sacred the dollar.

Evening again — dinner and a fire. The air temperature is around 5 C this July night. The sun dips again below the ridge, casting long shadows from the grove of aspen in which we camp. We sit up, talking and laughing, telling stories and filling our bellies with hot food and drink. Henry David retells this tale:

We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold, gray day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest, brightest morning sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the stems of the trees in the opposite horizon and on the leaves of the shrub oaks on the hillside, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward.... It was a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen forever and ever, an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child walking there, it was more glorious still.

Unable to decide whether or not it will rain, I sleep half in and half out of the tent, my face pressed against the roof of the world, my body snug inside lavers of down. Morning comes, bright and clear, and windy still. The wind never stops a moment, and I wonder how it is the sky could blow relentlessly without stopping even for a breath? Today is the last day of our walk; we four and Henry David can feel civilization lurking beyond the hills.

We follow Miles Coulee downstream, crossing the creek in places where the banks have been severely eroded and in others where some fool with a four wheel drive has driven along the stream, tearing up the riparian edge so valued by plants, animals and fish. The closer we come to civilization, the greater the degree of stupidity we see.

When we reach the wide, rolling valley of Camp Creek, the trees gently pull back and hills open up and are bare. We see a lone horseman in the distance. We see two red tailed hawks high overhead, circling, calling, hunting. We see fences and barbed wire and gates. We see small herds of cows, persistently munching the grassy meadows.

Although the walk from here to the trucks is along a flat valley bottom. Jack and I choose to climb a bald ridge for one-last view. After a thousand foot gain, we sit in the wind, looking over the country that we've travelled for the past four days. We can see in the distance Thunder Mountain, always on the horizon these past days, dark now in the shadow of clouds. Below us is the serpentine course of Camp Creek, twisting through meadows and groves of aspen which shudder in the wind. That creek will lead us back to the trucks, which will carry us back to the work week, to responsibility and the fight to protect this sacred and holy place. Camp Creek holds as corollary for this four cold bottles of beer and the promise that, thanks to the ongoing efforts of a few dedicated locals, it will be here when we need to return to it. At least for one more year.

If I could I would stay here, Every time I walk this landscape of foothills I think I should never leave. So far, I always do. Coming into this country is like coming home. And though home means many things to me, this place is certainly one of them. Sometimes we have to walk a long way to find our true home. Sometimes it's right under our noses. Maybe someday I'll stay.

Jack drops off the ridge, but I linger awhile, and read the last few lines of "Walking" by Henry David Thoreau. He says:

> *So we saunter towards the Holy land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on the bankside in autumn.*

The winds blows. The clouds cast drifting shadows over the sensuous curses of the hills shouldering Camp Creek. With Thoreau's words in my mind and heart, I begin the walk home.

In short, all good things are wild and free.

Climbing With Nadia And Alik

Reinhard Berg

It probably started on the "curly slide" in our local playground. Nadia, then 15 months old, had been walking for about 6 months. I put her into the bottom of it — and she laybacked right to the top! Thereafter I took her to playgrounds, trees, building walls, etc. whenever I could. At home, like all normal one-year olds, she was all over the counters, on top of the piano, etc., etc.

On one playground visit — she was now 3 or 4 — she asked me whether it would be possible to shinny up one of the struts holding up the swings. I replied that this was surely impossible. Well, within a week she proved me wrong. Over the next couple of years she developed great facility in this, shinnying up laundry poles, flagpoles, and the rope in gymnastics class. Her feet were small enough to grasp the pole like little hands.

In the winter we would go tobogganing in the ravine, "bum sliding" where it was too steep for sleds, then try to kick steps back up the slope. I recall her trying to climb up the overhanging bank of the creek by pulling on the roots hanging over the edge.

In the summers we would do the usual thing at Rundle Rock, the slab of which she was soon padding up unroped I ("Daddy, this is easy'"). On a trip to Long Beach she had a great time balancing on logs across surge gullies and clambering up the basalt cliffs. I myself was split between pride and trepidation, a duality of feeling I gradually learned to live with.

At home, as her legs grew longer, she learned to bridge between the corridor walls up to the open beams of our upstairs living room. Soon she was inviting friends to join her up there; they had a little haul bag for hauling up snacks, and would pass notes to each other on the ceiling fan. The beams were connected with webbing, and the friend would get belayed up and across, placing protection at each beam.

In the meantime Alik, two years younger, initially shows little predilection for sports. Even at the tobogganing hill he'd "rather just stand and watch". Both children have their first roped experience at around three years of age. Both immediately climb at around a 5.5 level, providing the holds are not too widely spaced, and both remain at that level for several years.

Everything, including indoor walls, is done in bare feet. We hike King's Canyon in the Opals, we climb and descend the north ridge of Mount Rundle — all in bare feet. Then, in 1996 — Nadia is 10, Alik 8 — we attempt Unnamed on Yamnuska and discover that the toe jam at the start of the second pitch is pretty painful without shoes. The next day we climb Calgary Route (in sneakers) and get into our biggest adventure to date. I find it surprisingly difficult, though I free-soloed it 10 years earlier (am I getting old, or have the chimney walls become more slippery?) My shins get quite bruised, but the kids are able to comfortably bridge and chimney, crawling through the squeeze holes with ease. Due to our late start, we have to spend the night at the back of the last chimney, forty feet below the top. No water, Alik in shorts. We squat on the sloping scree "choo-choo train" style, Nadia and Alik taking turns being the caboose and getting a cold back. Both children keep their cool in the most remarkable way. As soon as we're settled in, Alik asks, "Daddy, may I go to sleep now?" "Yes, Alik, you can sleep now." Within 10 seconds he is blissfully snoring away! The next spring Nadia asks, "Can we do Calgary again, and have another bivouac?" Later that same summer, we spend a week in Squamish, pad barefooted up Banana Peel and, during an afternoon at Bog Wall, discover (a) that 5.9 is not really that hard, and (b) that granite jam cracks really do require shoes still sneakers, for them). On the drive back home, I leave a Yamnuska guidebook on the back seat of the car; by the time we reach Edmonton, Alik has learned by heart the names of all the routes, their ratings, who did the first ascent and when.

Now it is Alik who takes the lead as family climbing enthusiast. During the winter, he devours and memorizes much of my

guidebook collection and also plans our next summer's climbing. On the underside of our open staircase he establishes several routes — free, leading and aid — and practices them almost daily. He also does more age appropriate things, such as building a Lego climbing wall, writing climbing stories for school and producing suitable art work. Five foot boulders become Grade VI north walls, every eight inches a bivouac.

The following summer, he and I spend a week alone at Squamish, and Alik clearly establishes his superiority over me in sport climbing, cracking the 5.11 barrier (now in climbing shoes.) On our first day, in Octopus' Garden, I keep my long-standing promise and allow him to lead. On his second lead, a 5.8, he pops out of his jam crack, tails over backward and ends up hanging upside down on the rope. He vows to try no more leading, but by the time we do Diedre two days later he has regained his confidence (on removing his pro' while following, however, I lose a good deal of mine!) We continue up above Broadway for two more exploratory pitches — a gloriously satisfying day.

The kids have a marvelous time, the father enjoys himself even more, we take reasonable safety precautions — surely it is all innocent fun? Or am I trying to vicariously project my unfulfilled ambitions onto my children? Am I being a good father, or am I being selfish: Am I endangering their lives so that I can have something to brag about? Or am I letting them grow by meeting challenges? I think the answer for a parent is the same as for childless climbers: if you try to eliminate all possibility of danger from your life, it ceases to become the adventure it can and should be. And, living this adventure, hanging from our tiny holds, we can share it fully because we are all equal. I can no longer fully participate in all my children's games, in all the nooks and crannies of their fantasy lives. But on a climbing holiday, our lives touch and we open to one another in a way that is a joy and a marvel to behold.

Crossing With Liam

David Harrap

We left the Twin Falls campground at around 10:30 a.m. on a cold, wet day in August. Clouds floated up from the valley and clung to the mountains as if they'd been drawn by magnets. The Indian hellebore alongside the trail dripped with the rain, their panicles of flowers bent to the ground, weeping.

All the way up the switchbacks to the top of Twin Falls, we looked for a break in the cliffbands and an excuse for a shortcut. At one rock fall we left our packs by the trail and scrambled up to the base of the cliffs. Liam stayed in the protection of the cliffs as I headed up a gully. Rocks came away in my hand and clattered down, flying well clear of Liam's blue helmet and heading for the hiking trail. "What about it. Dad?" "There is a way," I yelled, "but with heavy packs it's too hard."

We went back down to the packs, then reluctantly followed the trail to the Falls. Sitting by the edge of the 180-m-high cliffs and enjoying a late lunch, we were harassed constantly by attacking chipmunks. Liam flipped a chunk of bread towards the brink; it was quickly snapped up by a chipmunk who certainly didn't suffer from vertigo!

As we went to look at the falls, it started raining heavily.

Twin Falls Creek drains the Waterfall valley, originating as meltwater from the Glacier des Poilus. It's a swift-moving torrent as it thunders through two clefts on the rim of the cliff face to plunge headlong in its race to the valley and an appointment with the Yoho River. Clouds hugged the mountains in a dismal display; the heavy rain and the creek fizzled and roared. The thought occurred to me that this was a nice afternoon to be snug in front of a fire at the Stanley Mitchell hut, recalling good days on the mountains, and not on some daft two-man expedition consisting of an eight year-old and an old Dad who would soon qualify for Freedom 55.

We pulled our hoods over our helmets in a vain attempt to keep the rain and the rawness of the day out, crossed the suspension bridge and, instead of heading up the hiking trail, turned to the right in order to tramp up the northwest flanks of Whaleback Mountain, aiming for a hill that rose from the creek, and the ridge beyond.

It was two days before, on the summit of Yoho Peak, that we had first seen the possibility of crossing the Whaleback. "As long as that ridge to the east of the cirque below Isolated Col goes," I remarked as I looked through binoculars, "we should land bang on the top of the Whaleback." Liam was far too busy cleaning up broken bits of glass beneath the cairn to offer more than an uninterested "Oh!"

On our way down, I was about to skirt a patch of corniced snow. "Come on. Dad, through the middle. We don't go around them — remember?" Liam was in for the Whaleback crossing, all right.

Traversing gently upward, we gained height, heading for our ridge. Liam was a little behind, lost in thought, probably making up the next recipe for cream buns to sell at school — a fund raiser towards our year 2000 goal: Disneyland and "Africa under Our Boots", an ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro.

I spent the afternoon looking at patches of still-blooming alpine plants imperiously snubbing their noses at the weather and poor location, or imagining that I was slogging up the Western Cwm — "Valley of Silence", as the Swiss named it — and that the massive peaks on either side were hurling derision at me. I started running...

The moraine, the glacier, the tumbling streams, the vastness — this place had the feel of a Himalayan valley, all right. Over my shoulder I could just make out the hiking trail twisting over the eastern flanks of the Whaleback. No one was on it; they were all in front of the fire at the hut.

It started to rain even harder. I looked again and the hiking trail had disappeared, swallowed up by low clouds which had drifted up the valley behind us. Our beacon for finding the ridge. Isolated Peak, vanished as if it had never been there at all.

A shiver, not entirely due to the cold, ran down my sweat- and rain-soaked back.

By the time I reached the mud slope leading to the ridge. Liam had caught up, wanting to know the names of the two dogs in The Aristocrats.

"Napoleon and Lafayette."

"What's your favourite. Dad?"

"Favourite what?"

"Dog."

"The one that says, 'Hush your mouth! I'm the leader.' Which one's that?"

"Napoleon. Or is it Lafayette?"

"Let's get up this slope," I told Liam.

"Is that the ridge we want Dad?"

"I think so. We should try and make it before the weather gets any worse. It looks like snow."

The slope steepened as we scrambled higher; rocks set in the mud crumbled in our hands, and our boots slithered as we tried for a good purchase.

Three years before, we had got stuck on similar terrain while scrambling on Mount Niblock. In the end, I had tied Liam to me with webbing and we had backed down, bashing footholds in the mud with a rock and looking back the whole time at the parking lot at the Chateau, wishing that was where we were.

We were relieved to eventually gain the ridge and look down at the cirque with its meltwater tarns and patches of snow.

The clouds had thinned a little, and Isolated Peak, to the northwest of the cirque, appeared through the mist like a ghostly galleon floating in solitude. We could make out Mount Niles down the valley and, directly across from us, Yoho Peak.

As if we had been permitted to see too much, heavier clouds swept in and made our world invisible. Were we even in the mountains? It started snowing.

"Might as well drop our packs and see if it clears. We need to see Isolated Peak, since I'm not too sure this ridge will go. I've a sneaking suspicion that our way is barred by cliff bands. I thought I noticed them as we came up the valley. I don't want to lug heavy packs up the ridge only to come back down."

Liam needed no persuading. He'd already dropped his pack and was testing the gravity of the slope we'd come up by rolling rocks down. "We don't roll rocks down, remember?"

"But there's nobody here. We're the only crazy ones, Dad!"

"Maybe. But remember the rules: No rolling rocks down. Ever."

I had to admit that rocks, mountains and little boys make for quite a temptation.

"Want to play chess. Dad?"

"OK."

It was just after 5 p.m. and snowing hard but, thankfully, not settling, and we were playing chess. Considering you couldn't see any mountains anywhere, we could have been having this game in the middle of the Prairies. The fact that we were halfway up Whaleback Mountain was purely academic.

"Check!"

"You can't move the knight three spaces diagonally, Liam."

"Oh."

"And pawns can't jump pieces. This isn't checkers."

Invisible rocks crashed down invisible cliffs, momentarily distracting us. "I think that's checkmate!"

"Oh Want another game. Dad?"

"Maybe later. When we get to the campground. Let's put the chess set away."

"That's our first chess game on a mountain, isn't it. Dad?"

"Do you remember when we played tick-tack-toe on the cornice, when we climbed that mountain overlooking Mosquito Creek?"

"Yes. You won every time."

"And then there was the time we were playing "kings in the corner" on the summit of Eiffel Peak and that couple arrived. Remember how surprised they were. Dad?"

"And the queen of diamonds blew away, probably landing on the head of a tourist walking around Lake Louise, who now believes in lucky omens. Liam, I'm getting really cold. Let's give it till six and see if it clears. If not we'll go back down and camp in the valley."

You can spend a lot of time on mountains, just waiting. We had. There was the time on Amber Mountain, two hours had died under a tarpaulin, waiting for a fierce September blizzard to quit; Ingraham Glacier, Mount Rainier, waiting in the tent for the wind to drop so we could have a crack at the summit; West Ridge, Mount Edith Cavell, waiting to make a retreat down avalanche threatened slopes. Yes, waiting's all part of the game. It was 5:40 p.m., and the clouds still held us in a freeze frame of monochrome. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea; we'd have been at the hut by now, relaxing.

A couple of years before, Liam and I had come up with the Harrap mountain motto: We don't go around them, we go over them.

It had started with puddles, then snow-banks around town, and now here we were on Whaleback Mountain, freezing to death' "Damn! I'm too old for this nonsense."

"What's that. Dad?" Liam didn't wait for the answer; he was too busy building a miniature cairn out of small slivers of shale. More rocks crashed down into an invisible cirque.

Without warning, Yoho Peak slid into view, then just as quickly disappeared. At ten to six. Isolated Peak with its crumbling spires loomed up before us like a ship in the fog, only to vanish just as quickly — a mere will o' the wisp. The mountains were playing games with us.

It was six o'clock, and the mountains were still in a shroud of milky grey mist. "Tell you what. Let's give it one last shot. We'll leave the packs here, climb all the way up the ridge and see if it sets us on the summit. Right now I don't fancy lugging the packs back down, either."

My climbing buddy was in agreement, so to the top it was.

We followed our noses up the ridge, wended our way between small bands of rock and skirted slab covered with a slick veneer of melted snow and treacherous pebbles. Without packs the going was easy, however.

We climbed through the clouds, the land below us becoming a void of nothingness. The sky brightened a little, and our view confirmed that the ridge was connected to the summit, for we could make out a small cornice in the distance.

Rocks crumbled to purplish clay beneath our boots as we thrashed through a primordial concoction more fitting for a building site than for a mountain We seemed stuck in molasses — two steps forward, one back. But then we were clear.

Faced with two tricky rock bands, we gingerly pulled ourselves up on rocks that were as secure as a portfolio full of Bre-X shares. I suggested tying Liam in with the webbing, but he declined the offer, then nimbly moved ahead

Passing to the east of the cornice, we finally gained the summit ridge of Whaleback Mountain. It was as if we had climbed out of a murky dream and were standing in the clarity of a brave new world. The mist and clouds, held in abeyance by the mountain, staved at our backs; ahead and far below

lay the Little Yoho Valley, with its gentle greenness and tumbling streams. We could even make out the roof of the composting toilet at the campground! A quick swig of water as elation flowed over us. It's always a neat feeling to have your route work out as you figured; and you don't have to be on the great mountains of the world for this to be the case.

To the northwest, however. Isolated Peak seemed to look down with cold indifference, jarring us to the reality of the situation: we were only halfway, night was coming, the packs needed to be fetched, and we had to get off this mountain.

The cloud was so thick as we descended to get the packs that we almost missed spotting them. The climb back up wasn't too bad, apart from the trickiness of the rock bands close to the cornice.

The light was failing as we ate a granola bar and watched five goats nonchalantly grazing below us. It would be dark in an hour. There were several cairns marking the summit ridge — an indication that this spot was not entirely unknown to humans. Just as discarded oxygen bottles at the South Col provide a similar clue, however, the knowledge is not of much comfort at the time; we were alone, and we knew it.

Above the mountains to the west, beyond the President Range, Kiwetinok Pass and the Amiskwi River, the clouds were in commotion and shafts of silver light pierced the sky, burnishing the peaks to a cruel beauty. Not for the first time did I feel that constant companion, fear, awake from slumber.

The map indicated that the best way to avoid the steep cliff bands guarding the south flanks of Whaleback Mountain was to descend the summit ridge towards Isolated Col, then head down easy slopes to the moraines on the south side of the col. Yet, as I looked past where the goats were grazing, it appeared that the cliffs angled down to the right behind a fold in the summit slope.

"Pretty sure we can get down that way.

We'll follow the angle of the cliff bands till we arrive at the moraine." But mountain features don't conform to standard progressions of straight lines and curves. My directions were based purely on hope, and I knew it.

Our spirits were high as we sailed down the slope — the first time all day with a full load to be going downhill. The goats ignored our ebullience; the topography of the mountain didn't. Instead of angling downward, the cliff bands stretched all the way to the col, even angling back upward. We traversed to the right, hoping to spot a gully we could take.

The slab just under the surface made the scree extremely treacherous; we both had the feeling of being inexorably pulled to the brink of the cliff's.

"We have to go back up, Liam." He didn't say anything, but I knew he must be tired; I certainly was. The hood on his jacket flapped in the wind, which had just picked up.

Then I dropped my wooden hiking stick, the one we'd found on the beach on the Olympic Peninsula. We watched in silent horror as it quickly slid over the cliffs. "We can look for it when we're down. We've still got the ice axe, haven't we Dad!"

To the southeast, where the monarchs of Lake O'Hara and Lake Louise stood guard, was a savagely wild jumble of peaks set in a firmament of flaming red and orange and yellow. On either side of this collage the mountains were already imprinted with night. We felt as if we were watching the sunset through a tunnel' It was a frightening sky, in keeping with our predicament.

We turned our backs on this glory and on weary legs lurched up the mountain once again, heading for the crest.

The light had almost gone from the mountain, and with every passing minute we were being turned into struggling silhouettes. I thought. What the hell are we doing? We could have gone via the trail and been there hours ago.

As we continued up the slope, we passed a flat spot. "Look, if we don't find a way down soon we'll camp the night here. Is it a deal?" I would have been quite happy to put the tent up right then and there. What a place to see the sun come up, I thought.

Liam, however, had different plans. He wanted to make it to the hut, and it didn't matter to him if it took all night. Nothing wrong with camping on mountains — we did it all the time — but to Liam, huts were a real treat. We reached the summit ridge and walked towards the col, anxiously looking to our left for a safe way down. It had started to snow lightly.

Just before we reached a very steep drop-off where the ridge ended above the col, we noticed through the gloom a faint trail in the scree to our left. "There's the way," shouted Liam excitedly, and he immediately headed down.

In a race against the darkness now, we made our way down to the knife-edge moraines, which we skirted, then hurried through a jumble of boulders, scree, and snow patches. Shadowy scarps rose before us, then swiftly fell under our boots as we passed by. All was silent save the sound of tumbling water coming from the glacier.

To our left, above us, we saw the outline of the cliffs.

"Do you want to go and look for my hiking stick?" (After I had lost it, Liam had claimed ownership.)

"Definitely not!" I spluttered, aghast at the very thought. "God, where does the boy get his energy?" I mumbled out loud.

"What's that Dad?"

"Er... nothing."

The crossing of the stream running from the glacier and of another stream which dropped from a high lake presented no problems. We scrambled up a bank and reached a worn path that went through meadows and down into the trees.

Although there wasn't a moon that night, we could see quite well until we reached the trees. The trail was slick with mud and wet roots, and by then it was pitch black. Liam led the way with his headlamp, but both of us tripped and fell often. Ghostly shapes reared up around us, then just as quickly disappeared.

Nothing stirred.

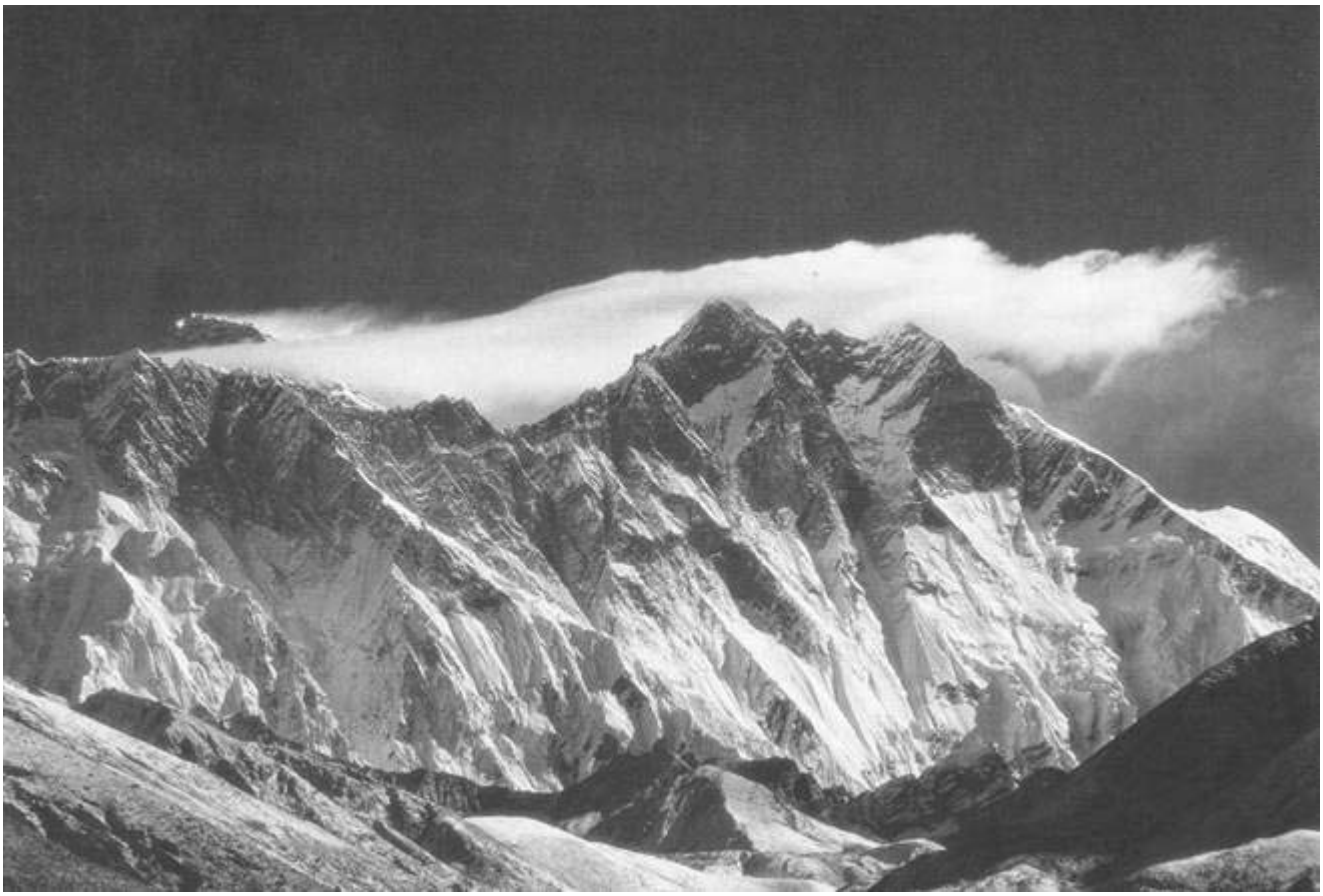
High up in the valley, we had smelled smoke as we crossed the moraine. Now, through the trees, we saw a light — the Stanley Mitchell hut, source of the smoke! "Just about there," shouted Liam excitedly. Then we almost collided with the privy. In Liam's euphoria, it probably wouldn't have mattered to him if he had fallen in!

A lady stepped outside from the hut. "Have you been hiking all this time?" she asked, surprised.

"Yes we've come over the Whaleback from Twin Falls."

"Then you must come inside and warm up by the fire."

Turning to me with a grin as big as the backpack he'd been lugging all day, Liam whispered, "We were hoping that's what they'd say. Isn't that right Dad!"



A fatal storm building over Mount Everest, viewed from Pangboche. Photo: Geoff Powter

Who Owns Mountaineering? The Corporatization Of Adventure

R.W. Sandford

Jon Krakauer was in a rage. As the author of the bestseller Into Thin Air, he was familiar with the events that surrounded the 1996 disaster on Mount Everest. In this instance Krakauer was more than just a journalist covering the story; he was there. There was, however, a difference of opinion concerning the details of some of the events that took place on the mountain. On November 1, 1997, Jon Krakauer sent a blistering fax to Weston DeWalt. The opening sentence of the fax — right after "Dear Weston" — charged journalist DeWalt and climber Anatoli Boukreev with riddling their book on the Everest incident with "misinformation, careless research, and apparently deliberate attempts to distort the truth". The fax went on for five pages, outlining in detail the errors in accuracy and interpretation in the Boukreev account of the disaster.

At the end of the fax, Krakauer made it clear that, while he respected Boukreev's remarkable abilities as a climber, he considered his judgment as a guide questionable. In conclusion Krakauer berated Boukreev for his arrogance, which he held to be dangerous enough in a climber but unforgivable in a Himalayan guide.

The fax was copied to a number of people in the mountaineering community, including organizers of the Banff Mountain Book Festival, at which Boukreev was scheduled to speak later that month. Hostility between Krakauer and Boukreev over interpretation of fact on the Everest expedition became an undercurrent boiling beneath the respectable calm of the festival. On one side of the issue was Krakauer, the climber-reporter; on the other Boukreev, the climber-guide. In the middle was the rest of the mountaineering community and a morbidly curious public.

The festival did not prove an appropriate ground upon which to resolve the conflict. It was too public a venue, and the issue was too complex for most to understand. Heated debate over who is right and who is wrong in any given climbing situation can be futile, especially in circumstances as complicated as the fiasco that happened on Everest. The only thing the debate proved was that it was easy to be led by dramatic details away from the singular significance of the larger event.

We will never know exactly what happened on the mountain and we can only conjecture what we might have done in similar circumstances — if, indeed, that is even within the realm of our imagination. You didn't have to be there, however, to realize that what happened on Everest in 1996 signalled that, at one of its leading edges at least, climbing had once again changed direction.

To understand the full dimensions of that change in direction, it may be instructive to examine the Everest incident from a larger perspective. In examining the history of exploration, we may find that some of the developments taking place with respect to adventure are cyclical through history and that we have arrived back at a place where we have been before.

The first ascent of Everest in 1953 created enormous potential for celebrity. Almost overnight a rangy New Zealander named Edmund Hillary unwittingly became the embodiment of a new mountaineering ideal. Here was the new image of the modern: a man of action and a man of fame. The celebrity of the great climbers overflowed onto mountaineering itself.

Climbing was legitimized as a mechanism for achieving notoriety. And with fame, we all know, comes wealth.

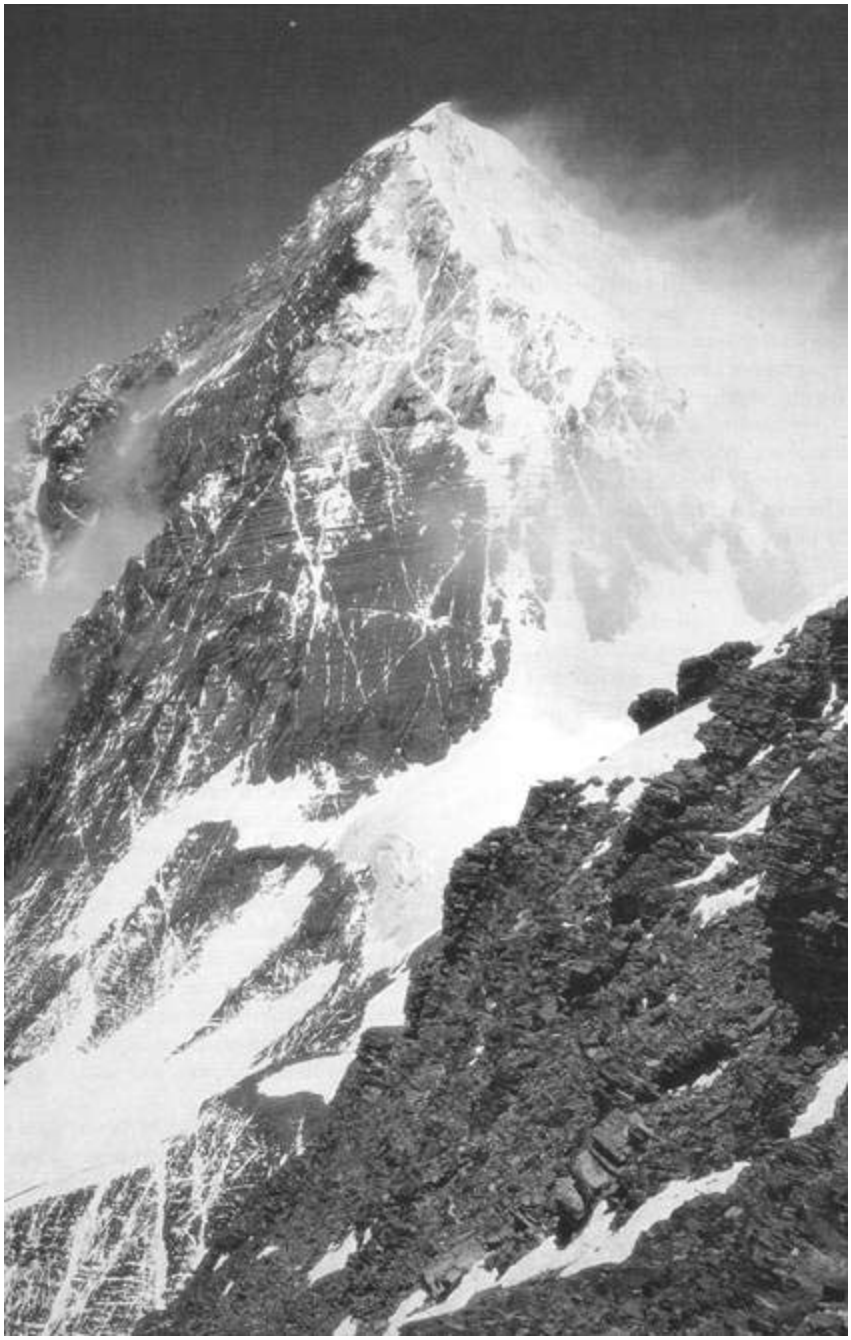
With this development, human appreciation of mountains came full circle. Making our way from the commercial interest of the Dark Ages, through periods of scientific and then Romantic relationships, to the peaks and on through a period of sensationalism, we have now returned to the commercial again.

Edmund Hillary was not blind to the impact that celebrity would have on his life. He was also genuinely concerned about the impacts that his fame, and the growing fame of mountaineering, might have on the mountain places he loved. Hillary particularly regretted the way his success on Everest had opened the door to Nepal. He knew that in his wake there would be other mountaineers, and that in their wake would be trekkers and then other tourists. He loved the tiny Himalayan kingdom and knew that his many friends there would be confused and troubled by the tourism invasion that was about to take place. He knew that they didn't understand the Western passion for their peaks.

Dawa Tenzing was the leader of the tented camp for the 1953 British Everest Expedition. In 1988, just before his death, he was made the subject of a Canadian-made documentary produced by Suzanne Cook and directed by Vic Sarin. The film, Solitary Journey, won an unprecedented three awards at the Banff Mountain Film Festival.

In the opening of the film, Tenzing describes the initial difficulty the Sherpa people had with the foreign concept of "conquering" mountains. When the British came to conquer Everest, he explains, the Sherpas were not interested in helping them climb Everest. The Sherpas felt themselves too much a part of the mountains to need to climb them. Where foreigners saw mountains, Tenzing observed, the Sherpas saw themselves. Mount Everest was not a challenge to be met through conquest but rather something that existed at the centre of their hearts.

At the end of his life, Tenzing grew bitter about what Himalayan mountaineering had become. After observing the behaviour of Western mountaineers for 35 years, this devout Buddhist could no longer hide his disgust. He felt the Sherpas were being pushed out of their own land, that they were becoming servants in their own house and that they were becoming slaves to the selfish ambitions of foreign climbers. He complained that Sherpas were forced to climb the same peaks again and again, risking everything for little gain. He could not understand why Westerners felt so driven to climb. "Are their lives so empty," Tenzing asked, pointing to the lonely cold of the peaks, "that they have to put their all at stake for this?"



The South Col route on Everest, from the Lhotse Face. Photo: Karl Nagy

The merely mindless search for meaning that Tenzing described before his death looks innocent compared to recent developments associated with the commercialization of Everest. What we have now is a combination of the least attractive aspects of corporatism and some of the least noble aspects of human character. Greed and vanity are flirting at the roof of the world.

It is hard to ignore that the impact of the Everest disaster is degrading to the traditions of mountaineering. In his new book, Dark Shadows Falling, a prescient Joe Simpson is unsparing in his criticism of the media. He quotes the chief photographer of a widely respected newspaper, who said that if he witnessed the involvement of members of the Royal Family in a serious car crash, he would take pictures first and help later. "Why bother helping?" the editor asked. "An exclusive photograph of a princess's dying moments would be worth a fortune, especially if her children are

involved." The Princess is dead now, and the media has proved as good as its word.

Simpson goes on to make disturbing observations concerning the tragic loss of humanity among Himalayan climbers and trekkers alike. He describes climbers dying in the snow outside the tents of expeditions that did not want to ruin their chances for an Everest ascent by being forced to help others. In reading his account, one wonders if commercialism and the media are highjacking the public perception of climbing, or if climbing itself is responsible for this perception.

That the successful 1953 expedition and the celebrity it generated should lead to the 1996 fiasco on Everest should surprise no one. What surprises is the general willingness to accept this direction and even contribute to it. At the beginning of their book, The Climb, Weston DeWalt and Anatoli Boukreev cite a now often quoted remark made by Christian Beckwith that was published in the preface to the 1997 edition of the American Alpine Journal.

"Climbing today is not only mainstream," Beckwith tells us, "it is business, and with that comes the rising tendency for climbing decisions — objectives as well as tactical decisions on the climb — to be business decisions as well. The up side of that is that now climbers — like skiers and sailors before them — can make a living from what they love to do. The down side can be seen in increased crowds at the crags, the proliferation of new regulations aimed at climbers, and today and evermore, the 'circus' at Everest Base Camp."

The appearance of this quote at the opening of The Climb is ironic. But so is everything else in this Everest story. Krakauer's Into Thin Air and DeWalt and Boukreev's The Climb are both important books, but not entirely for the reasons the authors or even the general public may suspect. In their efforts to redeem their own actions and the actions of others on the mountain, Krakauer and Boukreev have underscored a much more pressing problem. Not only do individual climbers and guides need to be redeemed after the Everest disaster; so, too, does climbing itself.

It is not the technical aspects of climbing which are in need of redemption, but aspects related to its purpose and to the role it can play in the transformation of those who look to it for their inspiration and identity. In their many and vigorous defensive statements, Krakauer and Boukreev point the way toward problems associated with growing corporatization, but their own involvement in that corporatization puts them too close to this reality to be able to put it into objective relief.

It may be time for us to admit that climbing is at a turning point. If we admit this, there are a number of directions that mountaineering can take in order to reform its internal and external image. For the purposes of stimulating debate, I offer seven ways to redeem mountaineering:

Repudiate Meaningless First Ascents First, mountaineering most repudiate meaningless first ascents as reasons for celebrating ambition. The value of the true first ascent of a mountain or a new route on a mountain by fair means is incontestable. It is the desire to achieve these ascents which continuously drives improvements in skills and techniques. Beyond that, however, the desire to achieve firsts in mountaineering has become a ludicrous joke. Mike Mortimer, President of the Alpine Club of Canada, hit the nail on the head regarding the idiocy of many mountaineering "firsts" when he offered to apply for an Everest permit so that he could be the first to take his Ford Explorer to the South Col.

How much abuse do our mountains have to take? The oldest man to climb Everest, the first 90-year-old, the oldest dog, the first naked man, the first unicyclist, the first midget to walk a tightrope between Everest and K2? Where will it end?

Restrain Corporatism The second prescription I propose for the redemption of mountaineering is to understand corporatism for the infection it can become. Fierce competition in business can co-opt values. Worse than that, it can make you part of an insular and self-reinforcing culture that loses sight of its own ethical foundations. You can wake up one morning and discover that you have become something you would prefer you were not.

Commercialism, even in mountaineering, is not intrinsically bad. It becomes bad, however, when corporate or individual self-interest is allowed to become the object of an expedition. Corporatism can also fatally infect climbing through thoughtless appropriation of its aesthetic. Once your founding aesthetic falls into alien hands, it is hard to get it back.

A case in point was a 1996 Canadian expedition to Everest. Following the successful climb, the expedition's corporate sponsors undertook a major promotional campaign. The large newspaper display ad featured a cursor pointing to the top of a mountain. Below the photograph were the words: "Been there, DONE that," implying cockily that this was how the reader should view the Everest accomplishment. There was one problem, however — the picture was not of Everest, but of Nuptse.

This leads one to wonder whether the corporate sponsors actually knew which mountain their climbers had ascended. Wendell Berry once said: "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are." What does this advertisement say about mountaineering?

Reaffirm the Value of Personal Experience The third prescription I propose for the redemption of mountaineering is to reaffirm personal experience as the foundation of the climbing ethic. It may be time to stop consecrating arrogance and ambition as inalienable qualities in mountaineers.

Why can't the desire to experience "a dizzyingly heightened sense of self-awareness, a sudden and acute vision of the scale of one's faculties" and "a peculiar mixture of self-affirmation and self-effacement" remain a central objective of mountaineering?

Why can't personal transformation remain a central part of the public image of mountaineering? Certainly there is a precedent in Canadian mountaineering history which celebrates grace as an outcome of a lifetime of mountain experience. If Glen Boles, Barry Blanchard, Pat Morrow and Sharon Wood can be used as examples, it is living and being which is at once self-affirming and self-effacing at the highest levels of success.

Restore Humanity to Mountaineering Can you imagine if we undertook any other human endeavour in the way we have undertaken expeditions to Everest? Would society accept one dead in four on a space mission? Joe Simpson's accounts in Dark Shadows Falling about how mountaineers and trekkers in the Everest area abandoned responsibility for one another and for their hosts indicate an unforgivable trend, not just in mountaineering, but in our relations with one another as humans.

We have to restore humanity to mountaineering. Mountaineering, even in its most extreme forms, must remain faithful to the needs of the injured and to the dignity of the dead.

The mountaineering community must also be more aware of its impact on other people and places. Unless climbing

becomes a little less self-centred, climbers will find themselves unwelcome. Climbers, like the media, can be demanding people. It is easy, when you are around them, to think that only their needs matter. It should be remembered that climbing is a pleasure, not an inalienable right.

Discourage Media Morbidity At one time in history, reticence was considered a desirable quality among mountaineers. The idea was that you simply didn't talk to outsiders about what happened on mountaineering adventures. If climbers did speak or write about mountaineering for the public, they did so in an understated, quiet manner. We now know what happens when the telling of your mountaineering experience becomes somebody else's livelihood, somebody else's business.

Still, it is far too easy to bash the media on this issue without making the mountaineering community assume some responsibility for the establishment of its own image. Monica Andreef of the Calgary Herald is a good journalist who is interested in mountaineering and who likes to write mountain stories. She begins her May 24, 1997, article on Andy Evans' ascent of Everest by telling readers that Evans "had to inch past the frozen bodies of three companions in the pre-dawn light" to achieve his lifelong goal. Monica is a reporter; she wasn't there. The focus on the dead must have been reported to her. But by whom?

The August 1996 issue of Life featured a full-page photograph of the decaying body of a Spanish climber who is apparently enjoying the benefits of a "sky burial" on Everest. With images like this in the mainstream media, it is difficult to convince the public that climbing is not a crackpot activity. The morbid parade of images associated with contemporary mountaineering makes it hard to believe that mountaineering can be safe or fun. Nowhere in these images does it suggest, for example, that over a period of 55 years Canadian Pacific mountain guides led climbs on thousands of peaks in the Rockies without incurring a single fatality. Nowhere does it suggest that you can go with a guide on any climb within the limits of your capability and come back not only alive but positively changed.

Reforming the public image of mountaineering will not be easy. People are attracted to mountaineering and to the community of people involved in it because they perceive it as a blood sport. Even climbers cultivate this image. If we want to break this spell, we have to encourage more climbers to write about the positive and transcendent aspects of mountaineering. The climbing community also has to work proactively with the media to underscore the fundamental values of mountaineering in its most refined forms, so that the media can go beyond sensationalism as the basis for providing climbing with a public image.

De-sanctify Everest as a Mountaineering Achievement There was a time when summiteers thanked God Almighty for the glory of their peak. As the influence of organized religion waned, they simply thanked God that they were so alive. This, too, was later shortened to a simple thanks.

In this spiritless age, however, even the thanks is gone, replaced with an audacious demand that the peak now do something for the climber — give him notoriety, fame, perhaps a comfortable living. But Everest is not a gym, and mountains should not be used as finishing schools for wannabe celebrities. There are some things you shouldn't be able to buy.

Unfortunately, however, Everest itself has become a celebrity, and all who touch its summit get to take some of that celebrity home with them. If the mountaineering community dared vocalize its deeply felt disillusionment with what is presently happening on Everest, word would get out that it is time to give Never-rest a rest. It is time to do it. As sport climbers and rock climbers graduate to the mountains, they will not want to pay the dues that earlier climbers paid in experience and effort to be worthy of the summit. Today's young climbers want the summit — and they want it now.

This past year the Alpine Club of Canada organized a centennial-celebration ascent of Mount Lefroy. In the Abbot Hut register, one "Chickenlegs McLain" left a manifesto. Tongue-in-cheek though it may be, poultry-pins says a lot about the direction climbing is taking next:

Yeah, I see the light!? I'm gonna sell my Boreal Stingers [rock shoes], my quickdraws, my chalk bag an' all my sport-climbing guidebooks for the western U.S. and Canada. ...No more clipping bolts and stuffing cams into perfect cracks for me. No way. No more sunny days at the Back of the Lake, Skaha, Red Rocks, the Valley, J-Tree, Penitente or Hueco for this born-again sport climber. ...The spots I saw in front of my eyes on the final scree slope was God talking to me, telling me to change my ways. I'm gonna buy some leather boots, an 80-litre pack and some flexible crampons and submit myself to the strongly pleasing monotony of trudging up 40-degree snow slopes and loose, never-ending scree. I know it's unbelievable, but oxygen deprivation has a certain twisted allure that I cannot resist.

It is horrifying to realize that the climbers Mr. Chickenlegs has caricatured in his spoof are real. They are heading straight for the Death Zone on Everest, and contemporary climbing is greasing their way there.

Reaffirm the Mountaineering Aesthetic My last prescription for the redemption of mountaineering calls for a reaffirmation of a common mountaineering aesthetic.

Though herding mountaineers is about as practical as herding cats, it is important for mountaineering to have some sort of common moral direction. The ultimate goal of mountaineering should not just be to do remarkable things in remarkable places. It should also be to stimulate the development of remarkable people who respect those places.

The common ideal to which mountaineers might aspire could include a more readily expressed appreciation for the integrity, beauty and health of mountain places and a more tangible embodiment of the respect that should accompany our use and enjoyment of them. We have to protect these important agendas from appropriation by self-interested others. We have to realize that in our love of mountain places we are all roped together. It is important that nobody falls.

Harrisons

Cyril Shokoples

Somewhere near Mica Dam, August 1980: "Bring your pack over here so we can weigh it." Did he say weigh it? I panic and begin stuffing things in my pockets to bring my pack weight under the limit. I think I have squeaked in under the wire —with 20 pounds of gear bulging from under my Gore-tex and pile jackets. Finally my turn comes; I jump into the helicopter and fly in to Clemenceau. My very first Alpine Club of Canada General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) is underway, and I'm going in as an amateur leader.

Little did I know at that time that this would be the start of nearly twenty years

of adventures in some of western Canada's wildest settings. What I began attending as an amateur leader I would continue to attend as an assistant guide and finally as a full mountain guide. Over the years, I would meet everyone from Everest summitters to total greenhorns, including some of the most fantastic characters of the mountains. Perhaps the most amazing people I would encounter, however, would be the Harrisons, particularly Bill and his son Brad.

The Harrisons have been associated with the GMCs since 1946, when Bill had his first contract with the ACC in the Bugaboos. It was here that Bill met the first two of an impressive list of well-known mountaineers he would encounter: Edmontonian Rex Gibson and Waddington pioneer Roger Neave. Both Rex and Roger would become long-time friends of Bill. In 1947, Bill again outfitted for the Alpine Club for the Glacier Station GMC near what is now Rogers Pass. This was before the Trans-Canada Highway ran through the pass; travel in that area was either by rail or by horse.

With the death of Bill Harrison in 1993, his youngest son Brad continued to manage and outfit these camps, which epitomized the spirit of the Alpine Club from its inception. In actual fact, Brad had been passed the torch years earlier when Bill's gradually failing health began to take its toll. This article is a tribute to these two great men, one now deceased but not forgotten and the other continuing to go where his father before him had gone — and well beyond. This is also a tribute to the entire Harrison family, who have carefully brought so many through rugged isolation into the heart of the mountain ramparts where we chose to climb and find our own special mountain experiences.

William Orton Harrison, known simply as "Bill", was born in Galena, B.C., on December 9, 1904. When I first met him, in 1980, he had already been guiding and outfitting for over fifty years. He had led pack trains into the true wilds of Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon with some of the most famous guides and mountaineers ever to ascend Canada's mountains. Among the many notable characters who rode alongside Bill were Conrad Kain, J. Munroe Thorington, the Feuz's, Christian Häsler, Lillian Guest and Lizzie Rummel.

To learn the ropes, while still attending school Bill worked for Walter Nixon, the well-established outfitter in the Columbia valley. They eventually became the best of friends and would take their own "packers' holidays" away from the dudes. Most of the hunting trips in those days were with U.S. hunters whose primary interest was in animal heads.

In 1924, he bought his own pack train and helped Walter Nixon guide people up to the Lake of the Hanging Glaciers in the Purcell Mountains. This was hardly the trip we would envision today, as it is quite likely that horses had rarely if ever been there before and few people had ever laid eyes on this most spectacular of mountain and glacial landscapes from the shores of the lake. The logging roads we use to aid in access today were still decades away; even now the trek to the lake is not to be taken lightly. In his Vancouver home Brad still proudly displays a black-and-white photo of his father's trip to this area.

Despite his close association with Alpine Club camps, the ACC was by no means the only group Bill worked for. He blazed many a trail over the more than half-century of his career. Beginning in the early years and continuing throughout his career, Bill guided and outfitted for mining, hunting, fishing and survey parties. Bill's work with topographical surveys was mostly with government horse parties in areas from Nordegg, Alberta, to Sicamous, British Columbia.

In 1930, Bill received his blacksmith's certificates and bought hunting territory on his own in the Upper Kootenay. Over the years, he rode and tramped the Kootenays most extensively and constantly took groups all over the Beavermouth, Quartz, Vowell, Big Bend and Spillimacheen creeks.

On April 26, 1936, Bill married Florence Isabel Smith in the Anglican Church in Edgewater, B.C. Bill continued his outfitting, and the couple had their first child, Doreen Elizabeth, in 1937. Their family continued to grow with the births of five additional children: Emily Marina in 1938, Gordon William in 1940, Stanley Neville in 1944 and Beverley Lorraine in 1945. In 1957, Bradley James was the last to be born, more than a decade after his siblings.

After helping to outfit the General Mountaineering Camps in 1946 and 1947, beginning in 1954 in the Goodsir Range, the Harrisons would be associated with every subsequent GMC to date. The camps of the 1940s and '50s were a far cry from the camps of the present. Environmental consciousness has changed the character of the camps from the gargantuan megacamps with a hundred or more people (up to 250!) to much smaller events with a maximum of 40 people. One of the hallmarks of a Harrison camp is the exceptional meals, and any GMC participant in the past 43 years can attest to this fact. Securing the best kitchen staff is a critical aspect of an outfitter's job!

When I spoke with Bill's wife Isabel, she recalled the kitchen crew cooking over wood-burning stoves and remembered having her jeans get so hot that she could not touch them. There were far too many people to feed in one sitting. This was when the wilderness was still truly wild and fires at night were an evening tradition. Campfire circles were large and part of the social scene. Tent sites were segregated into male, female and married areas. This was true adventure, and many of the mountaineering parties were the first to stand upon countless summits in far too many ranges to mention.

Setting up the camps in those days was a daunting proposition, with half the battle just being the transport of the requisite gear into the site. It was not unusual to have three to four tonnes of food and equipment to transport to a camp. Getting to camp could include cutting trails, negotiating river crossings, building rafts, swimming the horses, coping with swarms of insects and dealing with all manner of other trials and tribulations. Horses were the vehicle of choice for transporting this mass of food, canvas, stoves, wooden boxes and even hay. This was truly not a task for the faint of heart; it called for the talents of a smart and tough ranger and outfitter with a lot of "horse sense". Bill rose to this challenge time and again. By the late 1960s, the era of smaller camps and helicopters had begun, but Bill still preferred the pack trains.

In 1967, the Government of Canada conferred the Centennial Medal on Bill Harrison in recognition of his valuable service to the nation. Bill was involved in the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition that year and in 1997 was one of the few to be singled out for special mention during the 30th anniversary celebration at the Guides' Ball in Lake Louise.

In the late 1960s, Bill's youngest son, Brad, went to his first CMC. Brad was not yet in his teens, but already his love for the mountains was growing, along with his respect for his father. In 1976, Bill was awarded an honorary membership in

the Alpine Club of Canada, the only non-climbing member to ever receive such standing in the Club. The Club cited that it was "impossible to list all the ways in which Bill has helped the General Mountaineering Camp run smoothly".

All of the other Harrison family members were an integral part of the GMC scene through the decades, attending in various capacities. Over the years I had only met Bill, Brad, Gordon and Greg (Bill's nephew); they all had an uncompromising work ethic and the ability to work tirelessly in assembling or running the camps. I felt privileged to visit Isabel in 1996 on Vancouver Island, where she lives with her daughter Marina, another former GMC veteran. While there, various Harrisons told tales of the times they had spent in the numerous camps.

The hospitality I was shown during this visit made it more than evident why the Harrisons were so respected in conjunction with these events. It is only my poor memory which prevents recollecting the myriad other tales they recounted of the joys and hardships of camp life. They all spoke of Bill fondly; I came to know him through their eyes as a hard-working man true to the tradition of pioneering guides and outfitters of his day. I came away knowing I had experienced a special view back through the looking glass of time.

Brad's role in the GMC continued to grow after the 1980s, and it became increasingly evident with time that he would inherit the role of outfitter and camp manager when Bill eventually retired.

The inevitable occurred on March 11th, 1993, when Bill Harrison passed away. His funeral was held in Radium, B.C., and his eulogy was delivered by Brad. Even though I knew Brad far better than I knew Bill, I was deeply saddened to hear the news and mourned along with the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others he had touched over the years. I only realize now how special he was. Indeed, he was one of the finest of the "fine fellows".

An outdoor guide in his own right, Brad had already taken over as outfitter for the GMC years before. With his dad's passing, Brad has the distinction of spending more time at GMCs than any other person alive. In the last decade or more, he has in fact often spent five or more weeks per summer orchestrating the thousands of tasks that make such a camp run smoothly.

Pressures from various jurisdictions and from within the ACC itself have made Brad's role in the Alpine Club GMC increasingly difficult from the perspective of mitigating environmental impacts. Where once it was acceptable to have multiple large campfires, it is now unacceptable to have any ground fires at all. Electric fences around food storage have become a reality in some areas. Nylon has replaced canvas, and no wood for tent poles or any other purpose can be taken from most (if not all) areas.

Camps must now be self-contained, and everything must be done with an eye to minimizing the impact. In effect, they must be the model of a large camp that insofar as possible sets the standard for others. In the last two decades the changes have been remarkable and they are continuing. The Harrisons have been the ones who have had to ensure that any impacts are minimized or eliminated. Committees and officials can talk all they want — the Harrisons have to put the words into action. They were and are "where the rubber meets the road".

In the 1990s, new concerns about liability and profitability add more heat to the pressure cooker of the camp manager's duties. Like his father before him, Brad has risen to the challenge. Those who know him well know that his daily pace is frenetic; many are convinced that he sleeps only a few hours a day, if at all, during a GMC. He is the first to rise and often the last to go to bed. On some days he has been known to get up well before everyone else at 3 a.m., begin the process of preparing the early breakfast, wake those getting up for early breakfast (4 a.m.), prepare a massive breakfast for those assembled, take a group up a peak and return to camp in time for supper and to chair the evening climbing committee meeting, all the while managing the rest of the camp as well. I have been to camps where Brad has done the 4 a.m. breakfast for four continuous weeks without a break. Furthermore, even the initiated have little idea of all the tasks undertaken by Brad in the weeks before and after a GMC. It is all too easy to take such things for granted when the camps run so smoothly.

You only have to watch a camp being set up or taken down to realize that Brad's understanding of the logistics is the result of thirty years of experience, first as a young child watching his father and now as the conductor of the frenzied symphony. You have to remember only two things during set-up or take-down: follow directions and stay out of Brad's way!

His regular life in Vancouver is hardly any slower, and his air travels are the stuff of legends. His energy in promoting the camps and his other outdoor business activities is also truly fantastic. This is not to mention that he is part owner of Golden Alpine Holidays, which offers hut-to-hut ski touring and hiking. If you can believe it, he also holds down a "real" job with Canadian Airlines. He has indeed perfected the technique of being in two places at once. The Alpine Club recognized his many efforts in managing the club's largest camp by awarding him a special Service Award in the autumn of 1992.

Vancouver, October 1997: Listening to a tape recording, I hear Bill's booming voice fill the room and am at once transported in my mind to the fireside at Robson Pass. There are just two of us beside the glowing coals. I sit beside Bill Harrison, not thinking at all about the greatness of this man who knew the likes of Kain and Häsler and Feuz. He is simply "Bill". It is his voice reaching from the grave, recalling the many "fine men and ladies" he had the pleasure of sharing the wilderness with. His was a world of hardships and toil amidst the towering Columbias and Rockies in the days when a trip to the Bugaboos meant three days of hard packing from Spillimacheen through tangled bush and deadfall along old mining trails. He wouldn't have it any other way.

Brad Harrison and I sit absorbed in the interview. Hearing Bill's voice again triggers a full range of emotions in us both. It is evident that Brad has a fierce pride in his father — a man whose strength and integrity served as Brad's model for his own career in the mountains, a man whose family members show the same pride and are deserving of their own accolades. These are the Harrisons I have known; it has been my humble honour to share a few moments of their lives.

Rest easy, Bill.

Remembering An Innocence

Graeme Pole

The guard hairs flash gold, backlit by the sun. I am lead-footed, pack-laden, fleeing the nightmare bear that pursues me across the tundra of my dreams. This time, I am not dreaming. We are above tree line on Poboktan Pass. The grizzly bear is moving directly towards us.

Dry gullies cleave the trail. The bear disappears into one. We back away, begin

to move north. I look behind every ten metres or so. On this glance, the rolling terrain conceals the bear; on the next, the animal crests a rise, still approaching. It is more frightening not to see the bear, to wonder for a terrified moment if it has outflanked us with a sprint, than it is to see the animal steadily gaining.

The bear's instantaneous presence transforms mere habitat into domain. Primary relationships fall into order like a run of dominoes. Filters vanish from the senses. The clouds become more dimensional, their shadows more vivid, the tundra impossibly green. The north wind enfolds me in its chill. It is too cold for August.

The bear is doing to perfection what bears do: dominating. We reciprocate with what people do so well: second-guessing. For ten thrilling, perplexing, exhilarating and utterly draining minutes, we watch the animal hunt ground squirrels in the draw directly beneath us. Why ground squirrels, when the bear could have the three of us, plus a fourth reinforcement we have recruited? Are we, reeking of human frailty, too formidable? Not likely. Ground squirrels are more essential.

The bear's eventual departure, in which it avoided us and yet two more hikers, was a display of grace and tolerance as inspiring as it was humbling. Clearly, the squirrel hunting was to be better somewhere else.

Our seven-month-old daughter was with us that day. She spent a wealth of time outdoors in her first year: in a pulk on frozen rivers; in the cockpit of a kayak on quiet lakes; in her backpack on the trail, on windy ridges, beside summit cairns. Television is more of a novelty to her than is tundra. I studied the bear and my daughter during the encounter on Poboktan Pass. I cursed the predicament while marvelling at the little girl's good fortune. I wanted to be like her, helpless, oblivious, enthralled, happy in the moment. See the bear. See the clouds. See dad. See the hawk. See the bear again. But I could not.

As the episode concluded, I praised the bear for moving on, for being so wild that it could leave us, easy pickings, unscathed. In the time that the magnificent animal was before us, close to us, I prayed not for a safe outcome, but that some bear spirit would grow into my daughter's spirit, would embellish her with wildness, would bless her tender life with the directness and vitality of the world that was so evident that morning on Poboktan Pass. Ultimately, I wondered if perhaps some of the bear's spirit was already there, brought by my daughter into this world, or bestowed by the bear; otherwise, how had they met so soon?

I grasped innocence that morning: the ability to simply be, without the forces of will and experience — yours or someone else's - prevailing upon the moment. The wind that had shown our scent to the bear quickly flung that enlightenment beyond reach; transformed it into a shell of words that crumbles now when contemplated.

We were camping at Waterton in the first week of autumn. It was windy even for that place. Freight trains of wind, violent fists of wind, never-go-away wind, knock-you-down blasts of wind, swept from the gunmetal vault of the sky, careening down the lake, smashing into tents, rocking trucks and camper vans, dropping branches from trees bowed in supplication. We marvelled at the clouds of spray whipped from the crests of the blue-grey swells: water wind walls that soaked everything through. After eight hours of the performance, the wonder wore thin. I deplored the wind as it robbed us of a night's sleep, our daughter between us, tossing as the truck lurched, we in constant worry of the metal canopy ripping away, or the truck rolling over.

Earlier that evening, before a dinner of corn and spaghetti, I sat our daughter on a yellow blanket on the grass beside the picnic table, hoping she would entertain herself while we tended and ate the meal. Eventually, as we started on the corn, her curiosity took her to the edge of the boring blanket, where grass and twigs, cones and fallen leaves beckoned. I put down my plate and presented her a cottonwood leaf. Was it the pungency of poplar, the leaf's colour, its shape or its texture that captivated her? Probably all, but for a while she simply held the leaf at arm's length, running the fingers of her other hand over it, eyes beaming. What is it like to encounter something so leathery, so yellow, so cottonwood for the first time? What is it like to sec a bear before you know what a bear is?

Eventually, she put the leaf in her mouth, that great crucible of early childhood, so that the new object could teach her that, no, you do not eat poplar leaves. She smacked her lips with a sour face, still smiling. The wind swept the leaf away and blew a corner of yellow blanket onto her lap.

A week later, I was back in Waterton, alone. The wind was raging, as ever, although now it conjured winter. That leaf my daughter had played with, the one I wished I could have saved for her, could have presented to her as leathery, as butter-yellow and as bitter twenty years from now as it had been the previous week, was of course gone. And with it, the innocence of that moment. Other leaves had replaced it, falling like rain, filling the squalls. I knew that the special, now obliterated leaf would survive in my memory, but in hers? Will it bequeath a longing for a windswept patch of grass? Will amber be her favourite colour? Will she play with the butter on her plate? Will she love the sound of wind through the trees?

Winter has claimed the summits in the main ranges, an easy triumph, but the valley is yet to see significant snow. Only now in the second week of November does frost lace the flood plain and pan the hollows every night. Most of the slough is frozen, so I leave the kayak in the truck, chuckling at the optimism that begged me to bring it along. Fish swim beneath the skim of ice: two worlds separated by a looking glass. As I hop the highway guardrail to explore, a bald eagle glides over the river, perhaps the same bird I saw in May when last at this place. The eagle's two flights, its massive beating wings, encompass my daughter's first summer like book ends.

The sun is low and straight ahead. I stumble, half-blind in the wonderful light, filling my gumboots not with mud or water, but with seed heads, rose hips and twigs. My ankles prickle. Weathered stakes, perhaps a decade old, show where the trail was supposed to go. The rotting pegs outline some now-abandoned version of how to better manage this place. The park bureaucrats failed to grasp that this river-bank does not need people in numbers. It needs eagles and wolves, is supposed to be travelled by those things. It demands an innocence and a compassion akin to the grace of a grizzly bear.

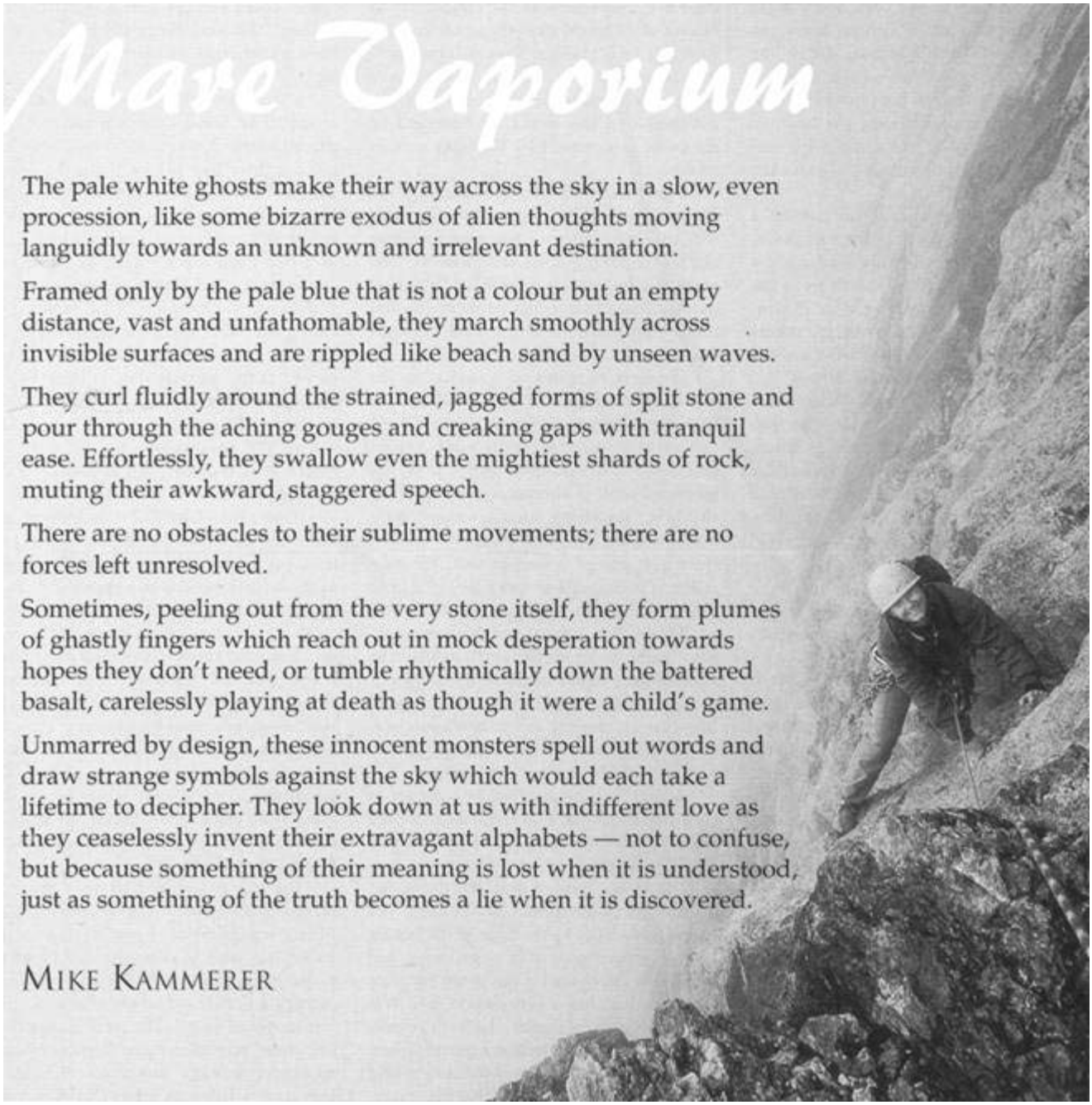
An elk or a deer, not likely a moose, has trampled a survey stake, snapping it at ground level. This is precisely the kind of victory that the land requires, a succession of hoof-borne blunders to eradicate the greater blunder, the act of intrusion that the management committee perpetrated.

I collect the much-tattered flagging tape that decorates some of the stakes and the spindly, surveyor-height crowns of a few unfortunate spruce. It seems that when plans are forfeited, surveyors are never directed to retrieve their day-glo rubbish. It would be easy enough to pull the stakes, to erase this alien construct along

the river-bank, but how to erase the intent: how to prevent it from coming forward again and again on other riverbanks, in cottonwood-cloaked prairie coulees, in ancient cloud forests, in other decades? I close my eyes and see a rain of yellow poplar leaves.

The river flows by gently. Sound fragments. I listen. The trickling music is rearranged. My attention goes beyond the armour of the moving water, past where it disassembles, beyond that meaningless, vital silence. After some time, when my meditation ends, the valley bottom is in mountain shade.

I will come here again next spring to look for the eagle. The nightmare bear has not returned to my dreams



A Day Alone

Barry Blanchard

He had slept in the back of his pickup, with the windows cracked one quarter of an inch and two candles burning on the small shelf of the canopy. The candles had warmed the canopy considerably but were too small to burn all the night, and their flames had shrunk until they were small blue spheres on the blackened wicks. They sank into the pools of wax like fragile flowers sinking into water — small lights conceding to the darkness. They died within minutes of each other.

Outside, the ice overlying the reservoir thickened and groaned as it battled the taut current below. Like broken slate, plates of ice were uplifted along the shoreline, and every hour pressure forced explosive shifts in the ice, which cracked through the arctic air with all the clarity of a rifle shot. Rolling in semiconsciousness, he saw black-and-white footage of tank barriers: concrete, geometric, impassable.

He woke to darkness and cold. His cheeks and the tip of his nose were numb, as though they'd been in contact with algid metal for the hours that he'd slept. He pulled his face back into the sleeping bag, slid his gloved hands up to enclose his face in them and flooded the vault of his hands with warm, exhaled breath. He did this until he felt the blood and life return to his face, then pushed his head outside the bag. The cold slapped him; he felt a heavy and lethargic urge to retreat back into the dark, enclosed heat of the bag. A beat passed, and he wrestled a determined hand past the closure of the sleeping bag and twisted the headlamp on. An aloneness rose in his throat and floated his eyes in the outline of a tear. He allowed the sadness to sweep him beyond lonesome to a place where he saw he had left the planet and was slowly rotating in the black void of space, arms and legs outstretched in a star, his image shrinking. The sadness scared him here; he clenched his eyes and hauled himself back to his resolve to climb. He found the bag's zipper and opened it in jerks, having to pull jammed nylon from the slider every foot or so. Raw cold bit through his liner gloves; he cupped his hands to his mouth and blew warm breath into them, then scraped around the open bag to find his outer gloves one at a time. He had slept in his underwear and pile.

He knew that to be warm he had to get into his felt-pack boots and parka and get into the cab of the truck. Leaving the ice tools and pack in the back would keep them cold so that snow would not stick to them when his passing scraped the snow from the trees later in the forest. His climbing boots and outerwear were already in the cab. They would warm up on the drive when the engine was hot and the heater blasting.

As he pivoted off the tailgate, the hair inside his nostrils bristled rigid with frost; the skin on his face, thighs and groin contracted in horripilation. He heaved the tailgate up and eased the canopy window down; he always expected it to shatter in this kind of cold.

Brittle snow crunched under his boot soles like deep gravel. He paced outside as the truck idled to warmth, throwing his arms through full circles to force blood down to his hands. Elongated shadows stretched from his feet and lost themselves in the reach of the headlights. Surface hoar sparkled along the light's edge like a border of jewels or, he thought, like the last stars that stand guard between living space and the void.

Slowly wet stains spread up the frozen windshield. When the stains had grown to eye level he climbed into the pickup, coaxed it into gear and pulled onto the road.

At the Stoney Reserve he crossed the Bow River, and the dark forms of the immobile vehicles and the solemn and unlit Indian shacks passed by his panel window like slow, grazing bison; he thought of how his people, the Métis, had once been buffalo hunters. He imagined his grandfather hunting in winter in the Qu'Appelle Valley, seventy years after the buffalo had gone — shin-high moccasins punching foot holes into the brittle snowpack or trenching furrows through waves of drift that clung to the lees of the coulees, knot heads of ice clinging to the rough leather and growing to the size of marbles through the day. Then he saw the photograph of his grandfather going to war in the uniform of the South Saskatchewan Regiment, and he thought about how men had fought a war and worked in the bush or even climbed mountains, dressed in cotton and wool and leather. Pressing his hand over his thigh, he felt the slickness of the pile salopettes and how cleanly they slipped over the silken underwear. These modern clothing systems gave him an advantage, yet he realized that when he wasn't climbing he preferred to dress in cotton and wool with leather boots or moccasins. He felt closer to his grandfather that way.

He drove in silence, playing neither the tape deck nor the radio — the smooth and efficient hiss of the truck muted by his imaginings.

Breaking the forest at the top of the Big Hill, he saw the full frontal escarpment of the Rockies, and the whole of it — the forest footing it, its borders of snow, and the sky above — immersed in the shallow blue light of a brumal dawn. He pressed the pickup into four-wheel drive and braced his hands against the steering wheel as the truck walked unevenly down the steep and rocky grade. The pickup always felt like a horse to him here as it shifted left to right, the tires riding high over boulders, then diving down into ruts.

He stepped out of the pickup at the park boundary and started down an old road to the Ghost Lakes. Dominant west winds, hauled earthward by gravity and squeezed between the shoulders of the Palliser and Fairholme mountains, had raked hard at the dehydrated and cracked bed of the second Ghost Lake. Over time the wind had pried out loose grains of dirt and bounced them over the lakebed or borne them aloft, to deposit them in the lee of the lake's eastern shoreline. Here the wind sculpted the earth into dunes. Now scythes of dirty snow clung to the dunes and extended their taut lines — lines of wind visible on the land which were to him as abrupt and clean as a sabre cut, as beautiful as the sickle moon.

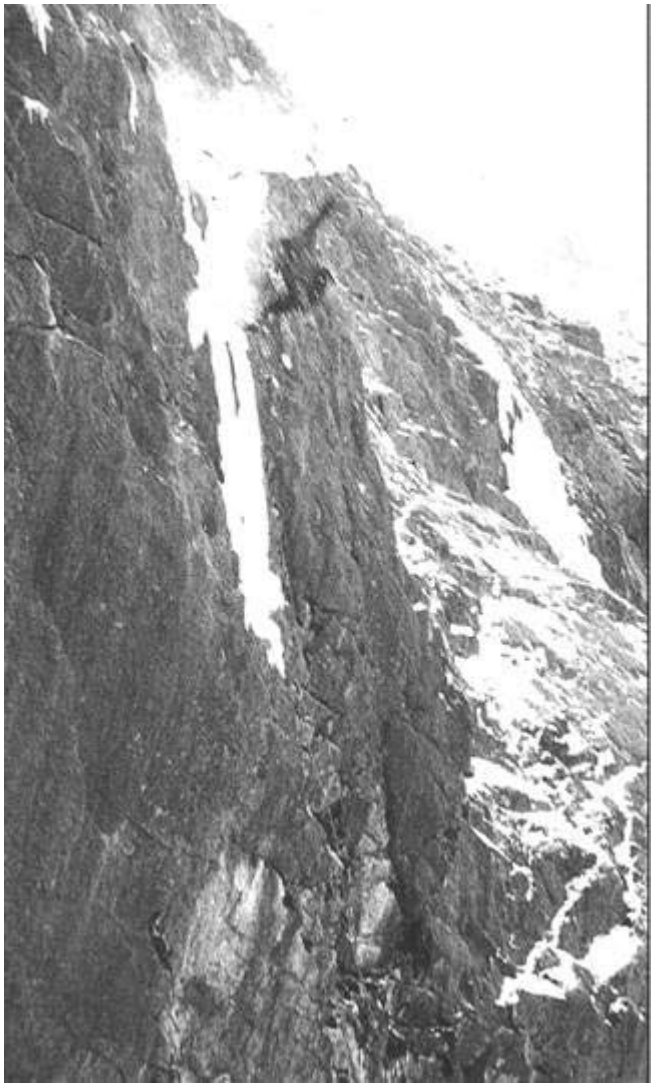
The melding of colour from earth to snow was so perfect that he could not differentiate between them, at least not until he punched in knee deep and saw the pure white basements of his footfalls. He sank little into the dunes, striding down their western flanks with extended scree-running steps. He passed stunted and leaf-bare trembling aspens, their trunks engulfed by the dunes; what was left exposed was dusted dirty-grey by the wind. A branch clawed at his upper arm but snapped immediately against his passing, the core of the branch alive and yellow but frozen brittle and the skin of it like brindled bone.

Coyote tracks were preserved in the dust of the lakebed and in the cement-coloured snow that bordered it. The coyote's cross-

ings were numerous and, to the man, haywire, erratic and seemingly purposeless. The man knew that it hadn't blown in a while — not since the invasion of the arctic air mass, maybe longer.

He first heard, then saw the great wind. A distant rumble reverberated against his sternum; an anomalous cloud rode the surface of the Devil's Lake. The cloud advanced and the rumble exploded to a towering roar and he saw trees upslope bend crazily and light in plumes of dust. With a loud crack the top twenty feet of one tree were hauled away on an angle and the fractured trunk snapped back into the wind, its core flesh-white and jagged and swaying in a structural tension.

Then he was smacked full front by a screaming wall which bowled him off his feet and thumped him down hard into the dirty snow. The abruptness of the blow defeated his reflexes, and he trenched into the snow back first with no hands extended in protection. His lungs burst out and ice shards and dirt hacked at his face. Panicking for air, he rolled onto his front and hauled his arms to his head. Now that he was able to draw breath, the wind stuffed dirt and snow into his throat, and he hacked and swore and struggled to rise. The chinook buffeted him about like a puppet, putting him to his knees twice before he finally got to his feet a full five metres from where he'd gone down. He could breathe now.



Ooops!! Eric Dumarac exploding Thin Universe, Kananaskis

Immediately he sensed the warmth — as if the wind were a biblical flood of Mediterranean water. His face grew slimy with slush, and the breastplate of frost he'd grown since leaving the truck cracked and began to fall away in small plates. His eyelashes no longer bonded together when he clenched his eyes shut, and the hood he'd had on all morning suddenly felt hot and claustrophobic. He ripped it off and faced the wind. Water teared across his face and pooled in his ears; he pulled the toque from his head and laughed and leaned his shoulders into the slapping hand of the chinook.

Reaching the side valley that contained the climb was an act of will. He continued against the chinook because he didn't know if he could. The wind pummelled him constantly, forcing him to calculate each step as a thrust for balance. Leaning heavily on the ski poles, arms fully extended like outriggers, he felt as if he were wading a thigh-deep river; then the wind would back off, and he would stagger and fall into where the wind had been.

He wondered if by continuing he was expressing courage or arrogance or stupidity. Finally he decided that he continued because it was day — and therefore his time to move. By the time he reached the ice, he had fought his way out of a pile jacket and vest. Both had to be stowed into his pack by force, the wind pulling at them like a desperate thief.

The first plant of the axe released a starburst of ice shards, which the wind swooped into the vortex in front of his face. He panicked about taking a piece in the eye and shouted to himself: "No! Not in the eyes, Pelletier — you can't take it in the eyes!" He stepped down and unslotted the tool. He pulled goggles from the top flap of the pack and turned into the wind to put them on. He kept the lenses sheltered in his gloved hands; they had to be clean to work. Rose tinting gave the sun a beautiful halo and outlined the clouds with a prism of oily blues and reds. High above, he saw the tidal edge of the chinook: a three-layered standing wave that ran south to the horizon in a series of perfect arcs and troughs.

He climbed. The chinook harassed. It pushed him hard one way, then oscillated to slap at his opposite flank. There was always an eerie instant of calm between the change, as if the wind were loading up and deciding where to land the next blow.

He told himself to stay wide, told himself that if he was stable the wind couldn't take him off — a lie, but one that gave him hope.

The final pillar gave him pause; he shifted from one frontpoint to the other for long minutes, considering twisting in a screw and beginning the problematic rappels into the wind — retreating.

Advancing, he told himself that he could downclimb. He was soon beyond the point from where it would be possible for him to downclimb. Getting real placements took many swings of the axe. The waterfall wore a facade of icicles the size and shape of church candles. They hung like wind chimes between finned and exfoliated roofs of ice and the corresponding flat floors. The icicles gave no support; clearing them with the head of the axe broke them off in their entireties to tumble towards his face or pile up on the small floors like toppled columns or bound off his other tool, tinging a tuning-fork vibration down the shaft and into his hand, there to initiate the breathtaking intellectual fear of dislodging that tool — his one pick of security. His forearms were tiring, and fear now heated his climbing and pushed on him to move, to get his body out of threat.

Then the chinook backed off completely; he felt the pounds of weight the wind had been supporting sag onto his locked left arm and he knew he was going to get hit hard. He swung his right tool in desperation, and the head of it shattered through icicles into the useless window

behind. Then the booming wind hit him, grabbing inside and spinning him through a half rotation so that he faced out from the mountain, both feet and his right tool clawing uselessly at the air like an insect turned over, with solely the left tool holding him on. "FUCK!" he screamed, and the wind let up; in blind, animal fear he kipped back to face the ice, body fully extended and hanging from the left tool in a dark enactment of the route's name: the Lacy Gibbet — a hook used at gallows to display the bodies of the executed.

Acting on reflex, he kicked and hacked for purchase. The right crampon stuck, the left clawed and skated blindly. He bludgeoned the right tool at the window; on the third flail he felt it stick but heard the ice crack deeply and saw the plane of the fracture radiate to his left tool. Fear — far beyond the fear of falling now: the man's hard-wired imperative to survive. This fear flooded his blood with fire, the command to flee shouted out at the cellular level. He shook now in a vibrant and clear tremor and he knew that if he swung madly the ice would shear off and he would fall and die.

With quivering thrusts from the heel of his hand, he coaxed the left tool out. He immediately barn-doored right and flagged his left foot behind him. The crampon points tapped the ice surface in a desperate Morse code, his leg was shaking so much. He swung and swung the left tool, his hand nearly useless, the muscles in his forearm extending into total failure. He swung. The tool fishtailed in his hand. He cried. He swung again. The pick sunk. He heaved his left foot back around and kicked it, trembling, into the ice. Tears ran in small streams from the corners of his eyes down the lines of desperation and regret furrowed into his face.

He gently lifted out the right tool. It unhooked without resistance, for the teeth of the pick had not bit. But then the hammer hung up in the window, and when he pulled on it more the detached slab skated off with a sick, clunking sound. It hit him in the chest and pushed a prayer from him: "Please, God — no." The ice grated past his body and crashed away over ledges to thump a crater into the snow 800 ft. below.

Blindly he found a sling on his right side. He brought it up to clip to the left tool. The right tool flailed about his eyes; the sling was too short to reach his harness. His left hand was open and dead now, and only encircled the tool because of the taut wrist loop and the pressure between the shaft and the ice.

Catching the right tool, which had its wrist loop hopelessly twisted, he swung; perhaps providence guided the tool's solid stick. He pulled and kicked up and bit at the left wrist loop to find the slider and open it. His left hand hung dead at the end of the trembling limb. He wrestled the wrist loop to his elbow and hooked it there, letting it bite into his jacket at mid forearm. Desperately he thrashed to find the sling and to clip it into his harness, then to catch the right tool and to resink it into providence's placement.

He fell onto the security of his harness. Breath raged from him. He shook violently. His tears flowed freely, to be smeared by the chinook across his face.

It had been one minute and 12 seconds since the wind had hit him.

Fits of shaking seized him with the regularity of a woman's labour. Over time the intensity of these events waned, and he was finally left limp and spent, a man destroyed.

He raised his head slowly. He was very tired now. He went about the tasks of getting in a screw, clipping to it and making two Abalokov anchors in the ice. He threaded 5.5-mm Spectra through the anchors and fixed it around itself with a knot and a small locking carabiner. Sixty-five metres of the Spectra was rescue-coiled in the bottom of his pack; it would support his weight on rappel on the small end of his figure-8. Into the small locking carabiner he clipped an end of 4-mm perlon. The rest of the perlon — 65m of it — was payed into a stuff sac clipped to his right side. He would pull the Spectra down with the 4-mil. Easing onto rappel, he took one last look at the Abalakovs and the bright purple cord he'd slung them with. He laughed, and shouted into the wind: "OH, YEAH! I'LL BE BACKIN'OFF!"

Leaving the side valley, he cut out of the drainage and onto the exposed grass and low growth of the south-facing side slopes. The ground gave softly to his boot edges. Lower down, he saw that the chinook had taken the main valley down to nude brown earth.

Halfway down to the main valley, he found a ram's skull. The ram had been old, his horns curling nearly to a full circle; the husks of them were incredibly heavy, coarse and deeply ribbed. They grated away from the weathered bone underneath and pressed into the ground — vacant cornucopia.

He strapped the skull under the top lid of his pack and continued down.

Two hours later he walked into the meadow where the pickup was parked. Shallow pools of water had collected in the low-lying places, and the chinook, now blowing firmly but without violence, corrugated the water's surface with small waves.

That evening he cooked on the tailgate and in the lee of the pickup, collecting water from the shallow pools with the lid to his pot. The ram's spirit surveyed through an empty eye socket from the shelf of the canopy beside two pools of candle wax. That night the man would sleep again in the back of the pickup; perhaps tomorrow he would climb.

The Wall

Dave Edgar

Having spent months reading about and practicing rope systems in the cold of a Canadian winter, I was anxious and thrilled at the prospect of learning how to wall climb in the mecca of wall heavens — Yosemite. New to the thrills of multi-day routes, I was now going to find out for myself the truth about walls.

The first time you roll into the Valley must be the best. What a huge place, what steep walls. Aid climbing was invented to climb shit that steep. Now I knew why I'd come: because of the history contained here and the people seeking to be a part of it.

It is great to find a place in this world where we feel part of a community. It had been a long time since I had felt this way: years ago, playing rugby or hockey at high levels with talented people. To experience that in the climbing world was new. Despite having climbed for a long time, I had never spent an extended period of time climbing. Weekend trips to Squamish, backpacking trips and a three-month mountaineering course had not revealed to me what I sought from climbing. Yet here it was, staring me in the face.

Climbing the Leaning Tower is a logistical battle, not a technical one. Choosing to solo the route meant soloing all of the pig hauling as well. Since I had no car in the Valley, walking four to six miles with over a hundred pounds and carrying it up steep talus to the base was the only option. The pig managed to tip me face first onto the rocks more than once. Multiple ferries were required. By the time ropes were fixed from the base of the route to the ground, others had arrived. After all that work I

decided my conscience could be abated, and we decided to hook up.

Doing this route with these guys was a lot of fun and gave me my first insight into the differing commitment levels and skill levels of climbers. Where these guys were having a blast and feeling out there, I still wanted more. Next stop — El Cap. There is a feeling you get at the base of El Cap: it is a mix of fear and excitement, but mostly you want to get up it.

Fear I do not feel. It is getting darker and I am out on the pitch I've been dreading for the past four days. It's only normal to build something up; yah, it's not new wave A4, but at one point someone thought it was hard and the topo did say it was loose and expanding. Unexpected feelings, calm and control. Standing suspended on hooks in the coming dark and calling down for a headlamp, I am collected. Receiving the lamp is like fishing in a magical pot: call out what you need and it appears on a line. The pitch ends uneventfully with all the standard hassles of fixing ropes and hauling and camp setting, but there is no taking away the immense learning experience.

Bivi on the East Face of Mount Slesse. Photo: Sean Easton

Sean has shared so many tricks for my trip to the Valley. This day is done and I am eating tortillas filled with cold, canned pasta, salsa, cheese, cucumbers, and bagged baby carrots (this is my trick — they stay crispy for weeks). Partners have all looked on with envy when banana bread is pulled out of the food barrel. Living on a wall can be luxury if you are willing to make it that.

As we watch the night fall from the comfort of a portaledge, the pilot guides our spaceship on an odyssey through the stars and space. Those who have not spent time hanging out on a ledge suspended high above the abyss are missing a part of the climbing experience. Sleeping with a harness on, shitting in a paper bag and drinking warm beer doesn't sound like something that can't be missed, but it is all a part of the effort required. The rewards are so great that the inconveniences become almost nostalgic considered from the safety and luxury of Camp 4.

Spending many weeks always learning, always gaining something new, I am amazed by how I feel here. Life is uncomplicated; there is a task, a goal, and one strives to attain it.

Too much California sun gets one yearning for the rains of B.C. After politely discussing the extreme weight of the pig with a friendly Greyhound staff person, I am allowed aboard, putting the entire rack in my carry-on. Like to see him carry this heavy, fucking thing.

Standing on the brink, I was scared. Not by the pitches ahead but by the sum of those pitches and the challenge therein. Having attained a skill level with which to confront my adversaries, was my mind malleable enough to get around what would be coming at it ? Was I able, was I committed, was this what I wanted? Could skills added to drive and desire produce a positive, gainful result? I was not gripped by these fears, yet they formed a constant, nagging doubt in my mind. It was the beginning of July, and ahead lay incredible opportunity, three new routes with good climbers, and lots of uncertainty.

June on the coast was predominantly a rain festival; climbing was so far from being worthwhile that gaining employment in Whistler became the pursuit. However, my luck held since it was a long weekend and no one was working. The following week Sean was convinced to quit his job, because it looked like we might get a break in the weather. Well, we got a break in the weather long enough to drive 40 km up a logging road and haul 400 pounds of gear to the base of our objective (I was awarded double loads for the two- to three-hour bushwhack). Adam and Sean fixed the first few pitches, I got sunstroke, and we called it a day.

The next day we found ourselves up on the wall only to have the rains begin. They came in fits and spurts, allowing us to get some climbing done. The weather had slowed us down; we were now behind schedule. Adam had a large canoe trip planned and made the decision to go. He was lowered to the ground as we said goodbye to our friend and our ride home.

We managed to move nine pitches up the route before I drilled an anchor in the pouring rain while Sean set up the ledge and got inside. Now, I don't fault Sean for the ledge's set-up — it was a slab and we had never intended to camp there — however, I had a rock in the side of my ass for 40 hours as we sat side by side watching rivers of water leak through the fabric but not the nicely seamgripped seams. Our radio fizzled out in the water, and one had to hold the play button halfway down in order to get music. We had some decent food and smoke to numb us to the fact that we were fucking soggy. We made a list of things to never forget on an alpine wall; thank Christ we had the stove. The first decent break in the clouds had us rapping with the pigs, building anchors as we descended. We hit the base, it started to rain again, and we began the long, squishy walk to civilization. A logging pickup truck saved us a 30-km walk; we would have to return for the gear.

Within days we were back on the road: more gear, more food... sunshine. Would we get up this new objective? This would be the prize; this would make the last few weeks all worthwhile. We had to get up; besides, Sean likes A4. No amount of logistics could stop us — but would the weather hold?

Looking up at the faces, I knew they could be climbed; Yosemite had given me that perspective. When the wall poked

itself around a bend in the Nesekwatch River road, it jumped forth with staggering steepness and height. The element of doubt again arose and one found oneself awash in the mystery and challenge that lay ahead. Call it butterflies, call it being nervous, it doesn't matter. It is what we go seeking when we cut loose on an adventure. Despite this, we were confident, prepared: there would be a way. Days of preparation had charged me up, so I was eager to shoulder the pig and begin our first foray.

Aid climbing has opened the doors to places I had to go to. I originally wanted to learn aid because all the mountain routes seem to have it. Now I find I am in love with what I get from the wall: the dirt, the work, the scare, the escape — not down in that dirty world full of greed, hate and shit.

"Things are different in the mountains," were the words of wisdom that rang in our ears before we left. Now wiser, I can tell you that this is true. People talk about runouts on mountain routes; what came to mind were run-outs on the Apron slab routes at Squamish or not placing much gear on the Pillar... WRONG: run-outs with bad fall potential are more along these lines. Climbing on Slesse was a mixed-up game at times: pitches of aid, then freeclimbing, then back to aid.

Climbing has begun to show its inherent potentialities. Climbing used to be a safe pursuit in my eyes: Squamish, with all its amenities; easy mountain routes, where navigation in the mountain environment is more important than technical skill and daring. Love and hate characterize this newfound revelation; as one sees more places and pursues harder routes, these goals draw one ever closer to the potential for inevitabilities. I don't want to die.

I cannot take my mind off death. Looking back, there were places waiting to swallow me whole, the void below angered at the suspension of its gravitational powers. The tax man waiting to take his payment — evasion is successful, yet next season they will look harder. Never on a route is there time for this, not when it is staring back. Why, here in camp on a sunny hot day in August, looking at the most majestic and proud mountain I have seen, am I contemplating mortality?

Those who have seen Mount Waddington at sunrise know that it is breathtaking. August came quickly; we had three days after Slesse to pack a rack and do the food before Tyler, ISP, Sean and I flew into Mount Waddington. Part of school was to plan and execute a three-week expedition. Classmates went rock climbing, mountaineering or paddling. We decided to plan a trip to Waddington.

Sean did a lot of route homework for our Waddington trip (he is good at it); I did the menu and food lists (we ate well). In his searches he found an unclimbed 5000-ft. ridge begging to be climbed. It was our intention to climb it, but after returning from our Waddington summit trip we found an entry in the hut log dated two days prior: two Brits had stolen the prize. Over seventy pitches to the summit at 5.9 Al, finishing with a traverse of the Serra group, in a total of three days. How's that for driven? Sean was most upset by this and spent a day moping in the tent. I was busy discussing other options with ISP in the hut. An unclimbed east ridge of Waddington. With shit packed, garbage burned, we bid adieu to our friends. Camp was established at Sunny Knob (terrible campsite) and a recce of our intended line was done. The approach looked hazardous since it was threatened by large séracs; we stood in the run-out discussing what would be a better, alternate path to access our route.

ISP had told the story of the Everest Express, where, in order to save weight and travel fast, Blanchard and Twight shared a sleeping bag. Whose better example to follow? Well, we did save weight, and the leader got to carry a small pack; as the guy who slept on the outside, I can say the zipper does not close fully with two stupid climbers in it! It should be noted that for three weeks solid, hot sunny weather had prevailed in Waddington. More should probably have been achieved, but it was school, a holiday, and it had been a tiring summer. My thoughts were of spending time with family next to a pool in an orchard in the Okanagan.

How weird, after spending the latter part of my summer thinking of death, that I should have been there when Paul died. His death has affected me. The weather has been nice for months, yet I haven't picked up the tools to go. Sure, I've been out since it happened, and it was not a big deal; but has ice climbing been tainted for me, or do I just need a break?

The Valley arrives tomorrow; will the next step be taken? Learning awaits — at a cost.

Burning To Be Above And Climb Beyond

Dion Bretzloff

Ben Firth — Ben is easily one of the most exhilarating people I've ever known. He possesses a seriousness hard to define, yet combines it with a goofy mentality to produce a fun, passionately extreme personality. Ben's nickname is "Bungie", which may be the best way to explain his character.

Jim Racette — This guy has an aura of incredible mental strength unlike that of anyone I've met. This aura allows Jim to climb strong and free, with absolutely no weakness in his ability or willpower. It's tough to describe him as a person, because he is so diverse. He can seem quite shy at first, but a couple of exhilarating adventures reveal a stern but very laid-back guy.

Dion Bretzloff— I'm not sure how to describe myself as a climber. It drives me bloody crazy when writers portray themselves as hard-asses, but at the same time I hate it when they don't give themselves enough credit. I guess sometimes I climb hard, sometimes I haul packs hard, and sometimes I shit my pants.

September 22

I knew what Ben had been dreaming about all summer long: the second ascent of Above and Beyond on Yamnuska. I have no clue what possessed him to want such a thing but I was comfortable not having anything to do with his dream. To be perfectly honest, I've known Ben all my life and I couldn't figure out his motivation for this one. I had seen topos, read stories, and even looked in the route's general direction once. Nothing about this route attracted me except for Ben's captivation. Jim and Ben had attempted the route twice before but only managed to get three pitches up; the result: one punctured hand, an injured ankle and a near-death barn-door swing. It's funny how epics attract people that much more. The boys were to make their third attempt and I had no climbing partner, so I joined the team as a hard-hauling jugger. I figured that if it was so important maybe I should be there to witness it; besides, I'd never jumared every pitch on Yam' before.

8 a.m., September 23

We manage to squeeze Jim into the cab of my truck and take off to a very late start after stopping for a coffee and chewing tobacco along the way. I take a look at the boys to see how they are feeling: Ben looks

nervous and tired. It seems to me that he probably hasn't slept very well from working out every possible move that will be encountered and being haunted by the two previous attempts. Jim, as usual, looks calm and collected, although he's smoked a few cigarettes along the way. I've learned that Jim is subtle; it's the little things that tell you how he feels, which is why I keep track of the cigarettes he smokes. And there's me: I feel good — no mental stress today except trusting the two mental cases. I still think it is a stupid idea.

10 a.m.

I finally trudge up to the others after the longest approach in history, due to the heat. I'm soaked to the bone with sweat and have only a half-litre of water left. As if we are going to make it up this fucking thing!!

We rack up and Jim sets off on the first 5.6 pitch. He scrambles up it in 10 minutes with three pieces of protection; perhaps they do know what they are doing? Ben hops on the first real pitch as I lazily clamp my ascenders onto the rope and start jumaring. By the time I hit the anchor, Ben's a third of the way up the pitch, which goes something like .11a with tricky routefinding. Because of the two previous attempts, Ben has the moves pretty wired, which is kind of inspiring to watch when you don't have to climb it.

Jim has disappeared above, and I'm waiting to get Dion's Pack-hauling Service in business. The consent is yelled and I release myself from the anchor, swinging out from the wall a few metres and spinning in the warm breeze.

On the way up, however, I find myself scouting the line and realize it's crazy, but totally climbable. Oh, shit!

1 p.m.

Well, we've made it into uncharted territory and I haven't fulfilled my urge to lead yet (my body thanks me for that). Keep it up, and my willpower is almighty! ! I took a peek at the previous 11e pitch, which Jim led in impeccable style, and I have to admit I got very aroused by its ledgy complexion. This particular pitch is the most serious pitch on the route; Jim announced he would not be leading it again. I push thoughts of leading out of my head and yell words of encouragement to Jim, who has also taken the 10c pitch above.

Suddenly, without warning, my mouth opens and starts suggesting to Ben that my body would be happy to lead anything they didn't want to. I thought climbing was a collaboration between mind and body, but I guess it's war between the two instead. Ben nods in appreciation while I try to figure out what I've just volunteered myself for.

1:45p.m.

To sum the situation up, Ben's got mild heat stroke and my flapper keeps asking Ben for a chance to lead one of these crazy pitches. I've always been a bit bold but usually not by my own choice; there was always someone to impress, or else I'd end up in situations where I had to be bold in order to escape.

3:30 p.m.

I think there is a point in climbers' "careers" when they achieve a focus so immensely strong that they want to do something crazy in order to put their motivations into perspective. This is such a time for me, and it's unlike anything I've ever experienced before — complete satisfaction with oneself. I feel love for this route; it has everything: good rock, bad rock, bomber pro, no pro, hard routefinding all the way and a 250-m 5.11 enema.

So I wanted air under my ass? Well, I've got what I needed after pulling over the second roof with marginal protection and topping out on a blank, vertical wall.

"Keep your head space — DON'T FALL!!"

I'm crimping on two slightly inclined edges and kissing the rock in front of my face to keep from teetering backward. Where to go? After a very quick scan of the wall above me, I spot an old Redhead bolt up a little and left. A few frightening moves bring me to the bolt and the next hanging belay. I thank the first ascentionists (Steve, Jeff and Brian) for the bolt and for possibly saving my sanity. As I drill a "newer" bolt to back up the belay, I catch myself thinking about how wild the pitch was, but instead of feeling excited I feel free and alone.

6:30 p.m.

The l0a A0 pitch goes smoothly but slowly; we are fast losing daylight. In my opinion there are two things you need in order to climb hard rock: daylight and water. We haven't had a drop of water now for about three hours, and let me tell you water is highly underrated. You never truly appreciate the cool, clean taste of water until your tongue turns into a sun-dried tomato and chunks start peeling off the roof of your mouth.

7:30 pm

Darkness has almost swallowed us, but we still have a l0c pitch and a home-free pitch to do before we top out. Also, to reduce weight cost with the hauling sendee, we've only brought one headlamp for three blind idiots. But there are still 20-25 minutes left of "dawn light", so I rack up and go. Three moves from the belay, all light is lost. I let my brain go numb and, feeling my way up the wall, manage to make it to the belay ledge. The blind belay I find is good as far as I can tell, but I back Bungie up with a hopeful bolt. Leaning back on the anchor, I gaze off into the distance at Calgary's lights, thankful I didn't grow up in the haze. Above me bats flutter by, making strange sounds with their wings, and I shiver in the now-cool breeze. I love my life.

Jim breaks my spiritual musing with the flash from his headlamp.

"You got the headlamp?"

"Yep — Ben doesn't think I can climb .10c in the dark."

I admire Ben's sacrifice, as I'm sure Jim does, because jugging 350m off the deck with a black abyss under you is no fun. Four minutes and 38 seconds later, Ben has come to join us, sounding like an asthma victim.

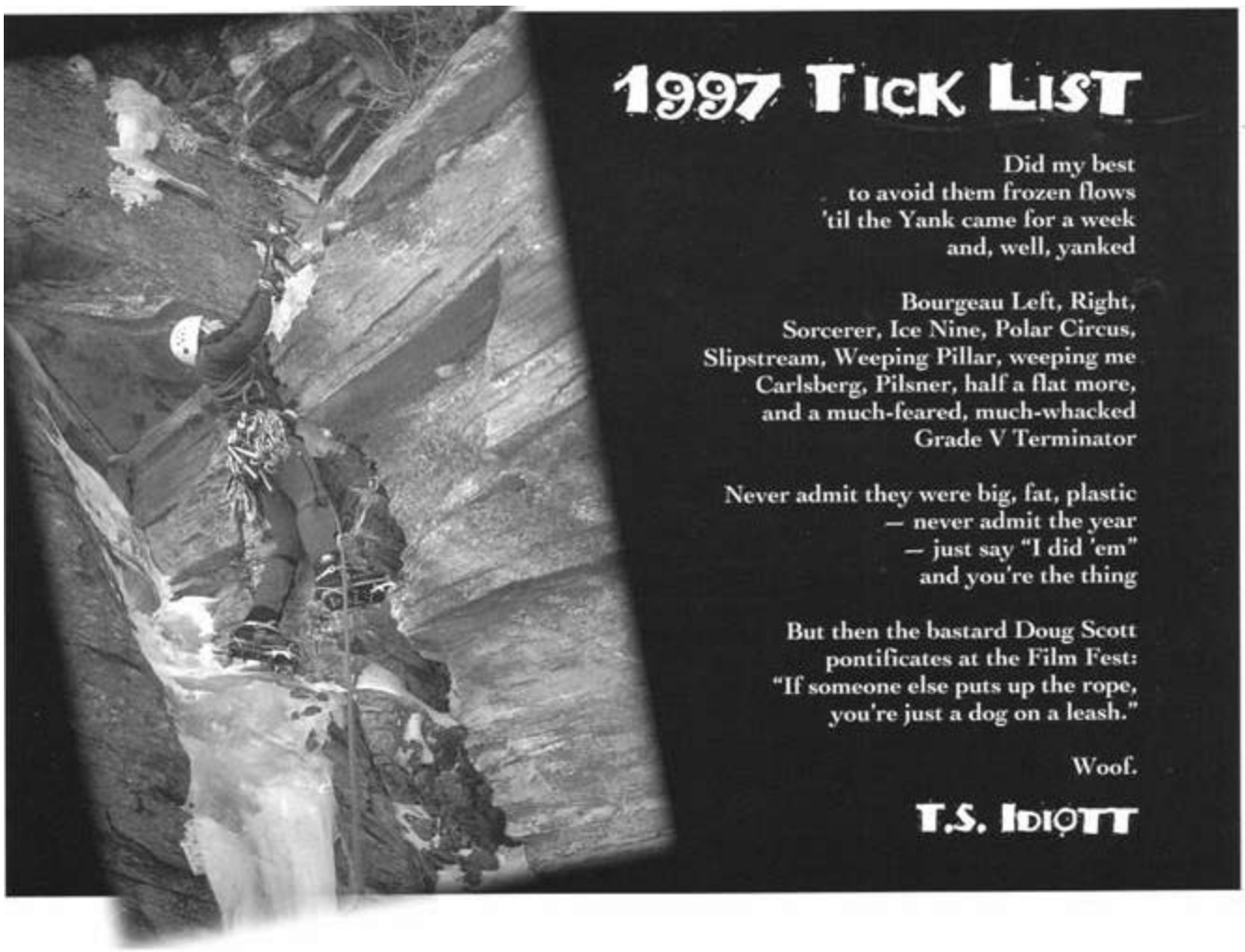
12:30 a.m.

I pull my head level with the top of Yam' and a flash singes my retinas, courtesy of Ben's photography skills. The eyes readjust, and Jim takes me in.

I can't believe it — we have actually done the bloody thing. Ben's retarded idea has become an intense focus like I've never felt before, and I understand why it is people do such stupid things. Stupidity gives experience, and experience gives an excuse to be stupid again. Experience also opens a gateway for imagination and dreams: so many routes to hop on now, so little time.

It's funny how epics attract people that much more.

An account of the second ascent of Above and Beyond 5.11c. Yamnuska, Front Range of the Rockies.



High Camp - The Lighter Side Of The Climbing Game

An Ascent Of The Mexican Hat

Andrew Richardson

"It's not a spire, it's a hat!" — Rob Slater, after Jim Bodenhamer

I guess that, deep down, it was our subconscious tribute to the North American Free Trade Agreement. How else can I explain the pilgrimage us two Canadian hosers made across the great desert of the American Southwest to climb a minor but absolutely spectacular formation called the Mexican Hat? Man, we could have gone to Vegas instead!

Our original plan had already fallen through. Matt, Craig and I had met up in Denver just after Christmas with the grand but silly plan of driving out to Utah's Fisher Towers and whizzing up the Finger of Fate route on the Titan in time for morning tea on the summit. After that, we were going to cruise down to the Hat, climb the route in the late afternoon, bivi on the summit and ring in the New Year with a scrumptious feast, vast quantities of hootch and a few fireworks.

The improbability of this dream made itself clear on our first day of climbing. We were warming up (kind of — when we weren't freezing!) on Sentinel Spire, a beautiful, 65-m-high tower about two hours northeast of the Fishers, in Colorado National Monument. It took us all day to get up the route's three short pitches. We shivered in the cold shade, brushed snow off the mungy, sand-covered ledges and delighted (not!) in the insecurity of loose sandstone (and this stuff was considered solid by those in the know!). After rapping down at sunset, we had to do an overhanging jumar back to the canyon rim. I finished in the dark. This was our holiday?

It was a beautiful summit, to be sure, but I don't think the others enjoyed the climb much. And so, as we sucked back some ales that night, we all agreed: "Screw the Fishers — let's go to Zion..."

Right then and there, the plan to toast 1998 with a wild celebration on the Hat fell apart. We spent a great week in sunny Zion — climbed some short routes, hiked up some wild canyons and even did some bouldering. It sure beat getting our asses kicked on the Titan. But the Hat still beckoned...

After Zion, Matt had to leave us to go back to school up north, so we put him on a Grayhound in the bustling town of St. George. He couldn't tell me much about the bus ride later, just that it had been "bizarre" — and there was some crazy story I never quite understood about a woman who was trying to work a pyramid scheme for selling freeze-dried groceries made by the Family Preparedness NOW! Co. (Like, whatever!)

So, our triumvirate was down to a twosome. Craig and I sat around in a laundromat and tried to figure out what to do. Go to Vegas? Or risk a chance at failure and continue our pilgrimage to the Hat? The problem was, we'd just lost our secret weapon: it seemed almost futile to continue

our Hatting expedition without Matt. He was our crack-climbing honemaster, as well as our court jester. And, he could cook up a mean chicken-veggie-noodle hoosh. Even better, he actually enjoyed cleaning aid pitches. We'd miss his talents...

It took us most of the day to drive south into Arizona, east across Arizona, over the Colorado River (stopping at the Trading Post in Lee's Ferry for essential provisions, like real beer: finding anything stronger than watery 3.2% swill in Utah required a bit of ingenuity, a lot of searching and a fat wallet), north through Monument Valley, back into Utah and up to the tiny eponymous town of Mexican Hat. By this time it was dark. The Hat would have to wait until tomorrow.

Our night camped above the San Juan River was not without adventure. Huddled around our campfire, we marvelled at the wonders of the desert. The temperature was dropping like a rock. Snow seemed imminent. Even the heat of our Spicy Moroccan Chicken dinner wasn't enough to keep us warm. More beer! Eventually we crawled into the comfort of our down bags and drifted into happy sleep... Several hours later I was woken by the sound of rattling pots. We hadn't planned on an alpine start surely Craig wasn't already brewing up? No, he was still asleep beside me. I nudged him awake. "Hey, I think something's getting into our leftovers!" Craig's initial attempts to frighten off the vicious intruder a polecat, as it turned out (we think) — were unsuccessful. Hissing, gnashing teeth, razor-sharp claws... so this was the Wild West! Craig locked the food up in the car, and suddenly the beast lost interest. We went back to sleep.

It was a cold morning. There were clouds overhead, and it was obvious that snow was falling to the west, and perhaps to the north as well. We quickly scarfed down some frosted (and somewhat frozen, I might add) Pop Tarts, then packed up and drove 8 km to the base of the Hat. As we bounced along the rough road, I perused the guidebook. Still smarting from our Sentinel Spire epic, we decided not to attempt the original Royal Robbins A4 (now rated A2) route on the east side of the formation. Rather, we opted for the trade route, put up in 1981 by a group of outlaw climbers known as the Banditos, and rated a hefty I, AO.

I got the haul bag out of the trunk. We decided we could do without the Portaledge. And we probably wouldn't need the second set of Friends either, or the #5 Camalot. "Let's do this fast and light," I announced. Craig agreed, so we left the Tri Cams in the trunk, too. Come to think of it, we probably didn't need any camming units at all. And we left behind our three sets of stoppers, as well as our RPs and a ridiculously large collection of bongs, Lost Arrows and KBs.

After an hour of sorting and packing, we had our rack ready for an audacious alpine-style attempt on the Hat. Craig's gear sling held but five quickdraws, one long sling, aiders and a few locking 'biners. I had a pair of ascenders, aiders and a skipole that doubled as a cheater stick. In keeping with our lightweight philosophy, we brought only a 25-m 10-mm rope and elected to leave most of the "Ten Essentials" behind. The pack contained only a camera and some summit libations (damn, we forgot the fireworks!). Unencumbered by unnecessary impedimenta, we believed ourselves to be making an absolutely pure attempt, one that would stand forever as a monumental event in the tangled history of climbing ethics.

We parked about 100m from the base of the gargantuan, 91-m-high talus cone that leads up to the ominous-looking, over-turned sombrero that is the Mexican Hat. From our vantage point the overhang on the summit cap looked almost insurmountable.

The approach started easily enough with a short walk along an old, bumpy road. We'd heard horror tales of wandering bovine herds threatening climbers, but we were lucky and reached the base of the talus unscathed. A cruel, cold wind whipped across the desert, numbing our extremities. At least this helped to dull the throbbing pain of our hangovers. Then the slog began! The scree was like ball bearings, and we slipped and slithered under the Promethean burden of our heavy packs. Near the end of the approach, we encountered at least one short but heinous 3rd-class cliff band, which we bravely ascended without ropes (don't tell my Mom about this!).

By the time we got up to the base of the Hat itself, the morning was wearing on — it was probably 9 a.m. or so. Craig reorganized his tiny rack, checked to make sure he'd doubled his harness back over, tied in and prepared to lead the pitch. What an outrageous position! We were perched on a narrow ledge beneath the massively overhanging rim of the Hat. The enormously oversized, pancake-like summit was supported by a telephone-booth-sized pedestal. Craig was afraid that his bulk would upset the precarious balance and send the whole thing tumbling down. We were both excited and tense. "This is awesome!" we agreed.

Craig was ready to go. "Craig, you're on belay!" I called. "Climbing!" he replied. But where to start? The overhang was blank. We could see a bolt some nine feet up, just out of Craig's reach. Maybe Craig could have dyno'd for a left-hand mono in a small solution pocket, slapped with his right hand at the overhang and clipped the fat, shiny Metolius hanger with a quickdraw held between his teeth. He elected to use the cheater stick instead.

Craig fifi'd in high, hung in his aiders and contemplated his next move. Above him, almost out of reach, was a manky old hanger that looked about as strong as the pull tab from a soda can. He loafed there for a long time, gently swinging back and forth and staring at this crappy old bolt. I began to get worried, since I could clearly see that to the west a storm was brewing. I feared that at any moment now the Alpine Simulator would get turned on full blast, and I dreaded the impending blizzard. Damn the Ten Essentials!

Craig began to get his act together. He reached up and clipped the second bolt! He moved high in his aiders, straining against gravity, and clipped the third bolt! The snow was blowing and I was freezing, but I could sense that victory would soon be ours.

Craig's feet disappeared, and I knew he was onto the fourth bolt. Thank goodness we had gone light and left most of our hardware in the car — there was no need for it on this wildest of bolt ladders!

Craig jerked at the rope, and my GriGri locked off. Damn! I knew he was at the crux move — a mantle onto the summit. He quickly dragged up about 15 ft. of rope. After a few minutes, I could hear the excitement in his voice as he called down: "I'm off belay, Andrew... and the rope is fixed."

I cleaned the pitch without incident. Craig was happily enjoying the view from the summit when I arrived. His brief encounter with that condition so dreaded by cold-handed ice climbers, the "screaming barfies", had come and gone. The snow had ended, the sky had cleared, and it was hard to believe it was the middle of winter. Wow! That's the only word for it. "What a great place to be... Man, I'm thirsty!" I announced, as I reached into my jacket pockets and pulled out two cans of beer.

There was no summit register, but someone had built an interesting little shrine

which housed a plastic Spiderman doll and a bottle of bourbon (still two-thirds full). Too bad we had forgotten the fireworks.

After hanging out at the summit for a while, we eventually decided it was time to rap down. Our short rope was just long enough to reach the ground. We scrambled back down the cliff band, skied down the scree and ambled leisurely back to the car. It wasn't even mid-morning yet. Our audacious alpine-style attempt on the Hat had been successful! We congratulated each other on our fine ascent and then started to make plans for our next great climb — perhaps a one-day enchainement of all the main towers in the Cerro Torre group? Freeing El Cap's Wyoming Sheep Ranch? A ropeless ascent of the highest point in Nebraska? Only time will tell...

A Table For Eighteen On Garibaldi — Please!

Tami Knight

Sunshine was just what I had requested from the Coast Range weather gods, for by early May I already had twelve people signed up for the mid-June Garibaldi trip. Oh boy. I signed up four more, then called the trip "Full!" — alas, the phone rang off the hook. When I wasn't home, my husband hauled the phone jack out of the wall. Eighteen people showed up in the church parking lot early Saturday morning, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, eagerly packed and rarin' to go.

Snow on the road forced us to park two switchbacks below the little saddle. I knew then that this trip was a trip of keeners. This was going to be a whole pile of fun. Some of the more excitable boys tried usin' their Y chromosome and their big 4X4 to give the road a go. Alas, it was not to be — the snow was just too goldarn deep. No, it would take the snowmobilers the next day to make the puppy go. Hmm. What implications could this have relative to the chromosomal make-up of mountaineers?

We left the cars and trucks at 9 a.m. and made camp on the shoulder above Brohm Ridge at 3 p.m. A tent city mushroomed. Sandra dug a big potty hole on the hill behind camp where snow met dirt. Really, we should have considered a method to, ahem, "pack it out" — for the digestive processes of 18 people amount to a formidable amount of poo. Even in one day — yeech!

On Sunday morning the alarms had all been set for 4 a.m. Four o'clock is a time that most humans expect to experience only one time in a day. But brrrrrr, there we were, and the heinous electronic "beep beep beep" issued from tent after tent after tent. Thin tendrils of light-lit bodies slowly emerging — coughing, farting, scratching at frizzed hair and musing about the weather.

The wind was up and the thin line of dark grey beyond the Tantalus Range was advancing. By four-thirty it was patently obvious the weather was deteriorating.

But if we bailed now the pub wouldn't even be open when we got there. So, keen and fit, we decided to see just how high we could get. And that doesn't refer to gettin' ripped and snortin' on some illicit narcotics. That meant we were actually going to have a go at climbing the mountain. Piss on the weather!

At 5 a.m. we wandered onto the glacier. The snow was soft and mushy. No crampons were needed. The landscape was white and grey, then grey and grey as the clouds began to swirl around us. We caught up to two other fellows at the 8000-ft. level and roped up with them too — now five ropes of four persons each. And then, beads on a string, we vanished into the clouds.

Crossing the 'schrund proved to be interesting. Nobody could see anything and there I was, end man (or, in my case, end beast) way down below, unable to see anything except the rope snaking off into the mists, and barking out instructions to the many folks above, who were Helen Kellering around for a way across the 'schrund. After some time it was relayed back to me that the boys had indeed crossed the 'schrund and that we were once again moving up. The chosen line of ascent was actually rather airy, but the swirling mists obscured the void below — always handy when most of a group is new to climbing steep snow. Sometimes, people are bothered by, uh, lots of exposure.

We arrived at the summit in blowing wind and pea-soup visibility at 8 a.m. As it was Father's Day, Jaro felt obligated to phone home and tell the rest of his family how much fun he was having. Several other fathers on the summit then also felt obliged to phone their families, I repeat, at 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning, to get them to say, "Happppppy Father's Day, Sweetheart!"

The swirling cloud precluded any lingering on the summit. I was the last to reach the top and was there but five minutes when the first of the party started heading down. The exposed section took a long time to descend. But once we were back on the glacier we moved quickly, and we were back in camp at 11 a.m.

Breaking camp was an interesting trial, with the gusty winds blowing across the col. My tent fly nearly became a parapente with Vince and I attached to it. A fun ride we could have had there, across the névé, perhaps onto the Phoenix Glacier. But we were now more keen on getting a beer, so the fly was wrestled into its bag and the group scuttled off down towards Brohm Ridge as our trail of footprints from the day before blew in and out of sight.

A word here to the tired on descending Brohm Ridge: As you wander along this beautiful ridge, getting progressively lower and closer to that pint of beer, do not be tempted to drift low on the east side of the ridge, thinking to yourself, Gosh, I can just contour this thing. There comes a point in your descent where you must choose between gaining a small amount of elevation or contouring the east side. Gain that elevation, I say unto you, for verily the east side is pleated therein with many a gully. Many a gully to make your tired and beer-thirsty body more tired and even more beer-thirsty. But, then, if you do go into the gullies, you do find yourself inventing all manner of creative adjectives to describe them.

Another word to the wise: You may also wish to carry a shoulder-style grenade launcher for snowmobile removal, tho' one can, I believe, serve 25 years without parole for this kind of premeditated mayhem.

We made it back to the cars at 2 p.m. and were in the pub for that deserved beer shortly thereafter. Mount Garibaldi, June 14-15, 1997. Tami Knight, Rick Carlson, John Tang, Jaro Kavalir, Patrick Brown, Frank Chanroux, Derek Hutchinson, Joanna Gaudin, Gordon Ruth, Lesley Bohm, Carol McMillan, Steve Koch, Sandra Koch, Vince Mantle, David Graham, Mike Damgaard and Ramien.

Morals, Anyone?

Heather Lea

Mark and I are in Wyoming. A freak of nature known as the Grand Teton towers over us. This delightful climber's dream broke away from the pack and pitched itself in a place where it doesn't seem geographically possible: potato farm, potato farm, BIG MOTHER ROCK, potato farm... And nowhere do you find a town quite like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where

the climbers talk ranches and the cowboys look hot in harnesses.

Mark and I are going to climb the Grand. We've known each other hardly a week, but seven days of frolicking around a neighbouring state called Utah — which translates to @#*! hot in Canadian — tends to make people close.

I met Mark Litterick during an evening storm at the Climbers' Ranch. I'd been ditched for the next day's climb by Rex, or whatever his name was, who favoured She-Ra 5.10-leader types as opposed to 5.6 no-rack types like me. I was just about to sit down to a lovely meal of Ramen Top-notch Crap, when...

"Do ya fancy a wee climbin' in th' mornin' then, Lass?"

What the hell did he say? "What was that?"

"Are ya Hethar then -- that's a Scottish name, eh? I say I wonder if it might be good climbin' tomorrow?" "Oh yeah — I'm Heather. Sure, I'd like to go out tomorrow."

And so, a friendship ensues, but climbing is put off by an obnoxious weather pattern.

Now, a week later, we have returned and are waiting for the clear sky that will open the welcoming arms of... THE GRAND! (Symphony, fireworks.)

Here, however, trouble starts. The kind of trouble where you hear your mother's voice in your head saying, "I'm not impressed," and the cool side of you goes, "Don't matter much."

The deal is, we need permits to camp overnight at any one of three places we can legally bivi while climbing in Garnet Canyon.

"Well, Mark, whadda ya think?" "Aach! Whaught's with the shite rules they have ova here, anyway?!"

We leave without the permit. What are the chances of getting caught?

I am extremely excited and so is Mark. We have a beautiful day, which will be spent strolling leisurely up to the Lower Saddle, whereupon we intend to push and elbow our way into a spot. Aw, come on! I mean, it's not as though we didn't try to get a permit. It's just that there weren't any left and, well, we were all packed and everything!

Mixing with our criminal behavior is a state of giddiness, and for a little while neither of us mentions the Parks vehicle we have noticed in the parking lot prior to our departure. It just adds an element of danger!

Pretty soon we start the long, arduous climb uphill, and conversation is replaced with gulping lungfuls of oxygen. Which leaves me to think: There is only one path in and out of this place, and chances are pretty good that a ranger will use a trail. Sooner or later, he'll have the displeasure of meeting up with us insidious hoodlums. I let Mark know that if we see him before he sees us, we'll turn on our heels and pretend we are going down. I am so conniving. Always one step ahead — always. But now what's that? — Whistling? I think it's the Brady Bunch theme song, and... and who do we have here? Ah, a certain Ranger Smith character, and it's too late. Mark has just seen him. He stops. The ranger stops. I stop thinking of a plan.

it leaves me to think there is only one path in and out of this place and chances are pretty good that a ranger will use a trail

This is pathetic! Why is it you never seem to think about how embarrassed you might be after doing something stupid?

"HELLO! HOW'RE YOU FOLKS DOIN' THIS FINE AFTERNOON?" Big grin. Huge.

We both offer the same wide, disarming smiles, dripping with a little innocence.

"We're good. Nice day, eh?" We start to move on. "Well, see ya."

Stopped by a big hand. "Where you folks headed?"

What the heck can you do?

"Uh... we're going to the Lower Saddle."

"Ah, well... you're staying overnight." Not a question, a statement.

"Ye...ah, I... yeah."

"W-h-hell! I'll need to see those permits!" Grin — lots of teeth there.

Mark and I act stupid, incredulous. We actually start the "We didn't know..." speech. And Chuckles' grin turns evil. No more teeth. He's heard this one before. His eyes silently beg us for a more creative excuse. We've let him down. Iraqi soldier now.

"So you have no permits?"

"Well, we'll just get them from you," Mark tries.

"No. There are signs everywhere at the trailhead."

"Look," I stammer, "we were in such a hurry, we must've missed—

"Folks! I'm gonna hafta ask y'all to turn right back around now and walk ahead of me. Back down we go!"

We've been truckin' it for two hours to get here. Our heavy packs have been pissing us off, and my feet want to be at a place which my mind knows is far off.

Of course this would happen! Oh, the bliss of ignorance.

Off we go, and Mark and I start joking bitterly about beating the crap out of Big Grin and feeding him to the bears. I offer that we should try and get way ahead of him and hide in the bushes while he passes by. Mark is grunting about how stupid this is and I'm growling back, "Shut up, Mark. Nothing we can do about it."

Two hours later, we're approaching the trailhead and I'm a little nervous. See, I have no money and so have been sleeping in the back of my truck in Garnet Canyon parking lot. I've already been found out at the Climbers' Ranch for trying to inhabit their parking lot, and now I'm afraid that Ranger Smith'll remember my bright red truck with expired Alberta plates. He'll start to wonder why he keeps noticing it parked in the same spot day after day. If I get kicked out of here, I'll have to leave the Tetons! Oh, MAN! I'm so freaked out that I punch Mark.

"We're going to pretend we're vehicle-less."

"Whaught the— Why?"

"BECAUSE, Mark! What happens if they kick me out?"

"Oh, for shite's sake, Hethar!"

Ol' Toothy finishes pointing with greatly exaggerated gestures at the permit signs. Everything would've been peachy if I'd kept my yap shut, but I blurt out, "OK, Mark, let's get those thumbs ready for the ride back."

Smith looks concerned. "You're hitching? You don't have a car?"

Mark is giving me that "Just shut up!" look.

"Well, hop in, I'll give you a ride. Where to?"

Shit. "Uh, Climber's Ranch, thanks." Shit.

"Alrighty, then! Oh! Do you have a reservation there already? 'Cause they're really full this time of year." I know that, Mr. Happy!

"Uh... no."

"W-h-hell! I'll just give 'em a call." The Grin is back.

No, don't! Sure enough, they're full. He tells us he'll drive us up to the campground — which is about 5 km more up the road, I remember as we pass my truck waiting anxiously to drive us to food.

Now we are deposited like the bad little children we are in this stupid campground that we have to pay for. What stops us from sulking pitifully is that we're lucky to have our tent, sleeping bags and food, which is bloody good because there is no bloody way I am walking back to my bloody truck on 5 km of bloody highway.

I spend the first part of the evening eating all our food and trying to get Mark to laugh. After all, it is now hilarious!

The next morning, on the advice of our tent neighbours, Mark and I are up at 6:30 a.m. and waiting outside the Parks' building in a line-up that must be for a Stones concert. The office doesn't even open until 8 a.m., but we're all lined up for the same thing. That one chance for permission to climb the Grand. What is this?! Russia? The office opens, people herd in, there are tears and fights when people realize there's no way they're in, and then it's our turn.

"Hi. We'd like a spot at the Lower Saddle for tonight?"

"Mmmm?"

"Well? Is there a spot?"

"Nope."

"Anywhere? We don't care — just get us near the mountain."

"Nope. I'll put your name on the list."

"List?"

"Yep. NEXT!"

Mark and I hang around waiting to see if anything comes of this "list" thing. I'm listening to conversations other climbers are having with the parks staff, and one catches my attention.

"All right, so you're all hooked up to climb the Grand tomorrow and you're sleeping in the caves. Have a good climb."

What?! Hey! "Excuse me, you said there were no spots anywhere near the mountain. They just got in! We wanna sleep in the caves, too!"

"They booked six months ago." Are those cabbage rolls you're eating?

"Oh... you can do that?" Apparently.

"HEATHER?! Is there a Heather here?"

"That's me."

"Heather! Front and centre!" The man scares me into a shaking mess but turns out to be one of those rangers with a demented sense of humour. He's holding THE LIST. He tries to help us by suggesting another mountain to climb — maybe trying the Grand again after the weekend. But Mark has to leave and I, well, I don't have to do anything. I want to climb the damn thing. I came all the way down here!

We must look like Sally and Johnny who didn't get Christmas this year. Just as we have resorted to copying route info on Mount Moran, Luck walks through the door and says to the warden, "Excuse me, I have this permit for the Lower Saddle tonight but I can't use it. Is there anybody who can?"

We're on him like lions jumping a zebra. Christmas has come!

"Can we, can we? Oh please, Mr. Warden?"

"Sure, kids!" Smiles.

****

"Mark, that was the best pitch I've ever led!"

We have just completed the "V" pitch on the Grand and are about two pitches from the summit. The view is, well, potato farms, and the sky gorgeous. The climbing is graciously easy and we're having a gnarly time!

Mark is so excited he has to take a leak and can't decide whether to water Idaho or Wyoming. Idaho, of course — it's good for the 'taters!

But one thing bugs the heck out of us. We have haughtily displayed our permits on the outside of our pack and on our tent, but do we see a ranger...?

The X-Games X-Plained

Karen McNeill

After competing at the 2nd Winter X-treme Games, my attitude has gone from skeptical to X-tremely positive.

Hosted in Crested Butte — described as "what Aspen used to be and Vail never was" — the games are an event produced by ESPN entirely for a television audience.

Although ice climbing in the competition does not encompass the usual boundaries and challenges of the sport, it is a great way for professional athletes to support themselves, and for the sport to gain the positive media attention that we struggle to achieve.

After our initial invitation, Barb Clemes and I spent three months justifying why we were the ones going. Not wanting to be labelled as sport climbers or mountaineers, we accepted the offer and were prepared to erase pre-established boundaries imposed on us.

Barb, who normally juggles a full-time job, a husband, a four-year-old daughter and a climbing career, decided to leave it all behind for 10 days. Her only hitch was a small scene as she tried to leave the country with no ID (it was a different story on her way home).

Meanwhile, the rest of us — the KKK, consisting of Ken Wylie, Keith Haberl and me — bonded together a few days prior to the competition, trying to pack as much adventure as possible into our holiday. Exhausted from the drive, we sent Bridalveil Falls and Ames Ice Hose in two days.

We Canadians joined forces at the first athletes' meeting. Quivers of terror ran through my body as we eyed up our international competition, which, as a woman, I was honoured to be part of. Never before had I been surrounded by such an inspiring, motivating collection of energized climbers. These athletes came from a variety of backgrounds: there were high-end rock climbers, a Survival of the Fittest winner, and Everest and Makalu summitters. Two points became very clear

Karen (1) and Barb (r), all smiles, thank one of their many supporters.

Karen doin' the hang at the crux roof

from the meeting:

You had to be of superior intelligence to ice climb. We had eight pages of rules for one of our two events, whereas the snowboarders had only half a page for four events.

One woman was unhappy at the prospect that the men and women would not be competing on the same route. She had trained on some of the more difficult routes in the Rockies. Ken and Keith pleaded that, due to their lack of training, they should be allowed to climb the women's route.

In the end the two routes were quite similar; no woman cranked the roof, whereas three men did.

On the morning of our first event, Barb and I rose early at our B & B and made our way to the hill. After forcing a few morsels down for breakfast, we headed for isolation.

To ensure that we didn't preview the wall, our approach to the climb took a direct line down the north face of the parking lot through mixed terrain.

Unscathed but nervous, we entered the trailer, where the camaraderie between the women was immediately obvious, unlike the testosterone floating around the men's comp — where there were shouting matches about who had put up the hardest climb in the world, and competitions to do the most chin-ups in isolation.

At the allotted time, the group was taken outside for a five-minute preview of the wall. (On their respective competition days, Barb and Keith, both veterans of sport-climbing competitions, unselfishly passed on their knowledge to Karen and Ken — who proceeded to place higher.)

The wall was created on a man-made structure 55 ft. high. All the gear was pre-placed, so the climbers only had to clip the draws. The crux was a large roof at four-fifths height: a 4-ft. horizontal overhang with three plastic holds that led to more ice above.

Once back in isolation, we waited our turn to be taken to the staging area and then out to compete. In the trailer, we could all hear the crowd cheering; I was sure that everyone had cranked the roof.

Out of the twelve competitors, I was the eighth to compete and Barb the last. I was so nervous that by the time it was my turn my face had drained of any colour.

The winner was decided based on four criteria. First was the height attained (within 1-ft. intervals). If two or more competitors reached the same height, the next criterion was the number of times you weighted your tools. If there was a tie here, it went down to the number of times you hit the ice, and finally to your time.

For me it was a matter of surviving the climb rather than competing. Reducing the numer of strikes was the furthest thing from my mind. Normally an efficient climber, I was shocked to hear that 10 of my 12 minutes had passed by the time I got to the roof. Fear overtook me and I have no recollection of climbing the roof, but I know I made it to the ice, where I hung helplessly with no abdominal strength to help me over. I lowered to the ground and was stunned to discover that I might have placed in the top six.

Liz Grenard was eleventh out. This was her first day on ice for the season. She strode out with a Hummingbird in each hand, strapped to her wrists with dog leashes. She meant business. Liz was the only competitor wearing gators and ripped clothes (it is rumoured that she's a member of the American Alpine Club).

Barb came out last, and I was sure she would be the one to do the critical figure-four and send the roof. Unfortunately, she didn't think of doing it.

The women's difficulty was over, with the Alpine Clubber third and Barb and I fifth and fourth respectively.

In the speed event, competitors climbed the left and right sides of another wall. The eight fastest climbers continued through a series of elimination rounds.

I thought I was fast, but I wasn't fast enough. Kim Csizmazia won outright with a time of 45 seconds. The men's final came down to a .03-second difference, making for good spectator material. (They did have softer ice, though!)

The boys all competed well and were comfortable on the ice. Ken managed to collect some cash, while Keith and Guy Lacelle placed in the middle of the field.

During the evening, the good energy from the day continued. We would share dinners with new (richer) friends who generously paid our way.

The X-Games were more fun than I could have imagined. I met a group of inspiring women who have helped me see what is possible to achieve, and they offered their support with encouragement and without a hint of jealousy or envy.

I came away with a healthier bank account, and some new boots thanks to Salomon.

Finally, I trained with an awesome woman; we've taken another step forward in our ice-climbing careers.

Results of the 2nd Winter X-treme Games Ice Climbing Competition

Women's Difficulty

1. Kim Csizmazia	U.S.A.
2. Bird Lew	U.S.A.
3. Liz Grenard	U.S.A.
4. Karen McNeill	New Zealand
5. Barb Clemes	Canada
6. Susan Nott	U.S.A.

Men's Difficulty

l. Will Gadd	Canada
2. Seung-Kwon Chung	Korea
3. Stevie Haston	U.K.
7. Ken Wylie	Canada

Women's Speed

1. Kim Csizmazia	U.S.A.
2. Kefira Allen	U.S.A.
3. Liz Grenard	U.S.A.

Men's Speed

1. Will Gadd	Canada
2. Seung-Kwon Chung	Korea
3. Travis Spitzer	U.S.A.
7. Ken Wylie	Canada

Kamouraska

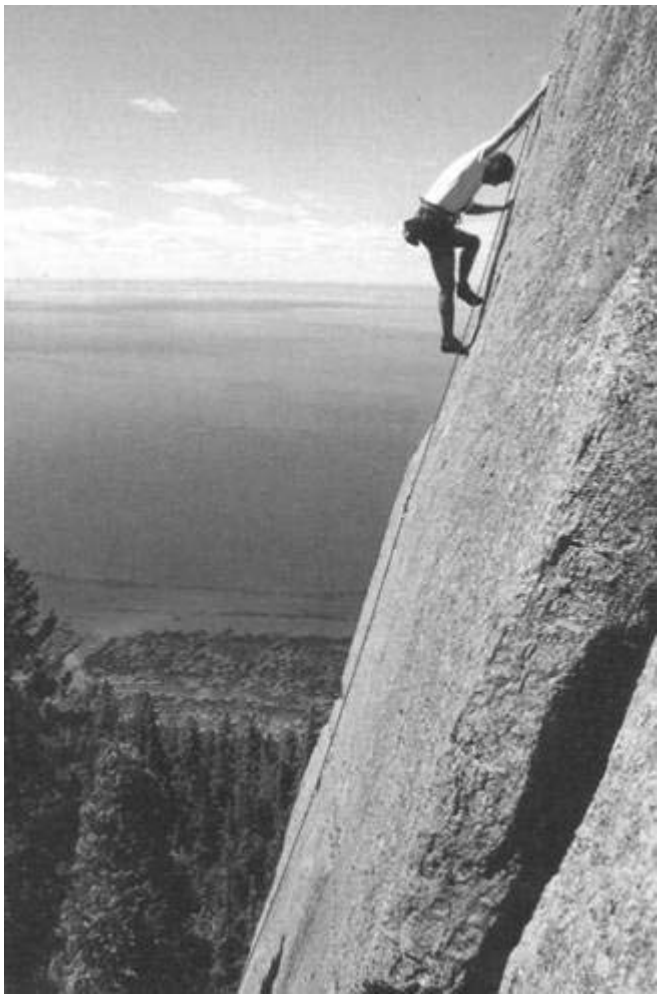
Lindsay Eltis

No one who has climbed at St. Andre-de-Kamouraska forgets its delicate beauty. From the anatomically perfect pockets of its overhanging quartzite faces to the spectacular vistas of the lower St. Lawrence, and even the killer "chocolatines" at the German bakery down the road, a day at "Kamou"' embodies much of what we treasure about the sport. Regrettably, the summer of 1997 seems to have been dominated by access issues rather than exploits on the rock. This makes for a sad tale, but many useful lessons lie in its telling, particularly for those interested in using and preserving a limited resource. As climbers we fall into this category, like it or not.

Just about all of the climbs at Kamouraska are located on the property of Jean-Claude Morin. Mr. Morin, a dairy farmer, has long appreciated the value of his cliffs and has generously allowed climbers to hike through his pastures and climb on his land. His stipulations have been few: no camping on his property; dogs must be on a leash when walking through his cows; and smoking during dry periods is not permitted. To protect himself from the legal actions of climbers who might injure themselves on his property, Mr. Morin is covered by an insurance policy administered by the Federation Quebecoise de la Montagne et de l'Escalade (FQME).

While it has arranged for this insurance policy for several years now, the FQME has had a very low profile at Kamouraska, partly because of its location in the distant city of Montreal and a limited budget. Climbers have thus been largely left to their own devices. Out of a small band of souls who developed the potential of these cliffs, Jean-Pierre Banville was by far the most active. Equipped with a gas-powered drill, he created a prodigious number of well-bolted lines. However, Mr. Banville's contribution far exceeds the establishment of new lines. He authored a guidebook that was published in the spring of 1997. In addition, he helped establish a non-profit organization at Kamouraska to develop the site and he "twinned" the site with Orpierre, France. In short, Mr. Banville has done much for Kamouraska, investing incalculable hours and much of his own money in the area.

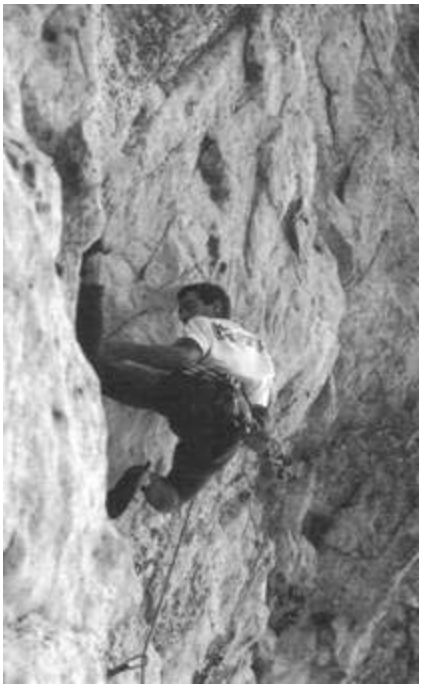
This past summer, two things occurred at Kamouraska which have led to a precipitous deterioration of the situation there. First, through no fault of the FQME, the insurance policy covering the owners of cliffs in Quebec changed. The insurance company stipulated that it would only cover the owner if the cliff users were members of the FQME. Mr. Morin was informed of this, and the FQME erected harshly worded signs on his property to the effect that non-members could not climb there. Effectively, to climb at Kamouraska and at a dozen other sites covered by similar insurance policies in Quebec, one must pay the $35 annual FQME membership fee. This stuck in the craw of many climbers, as the FQME had done little to contribute to the development of the site and did not even have a representative in Kamouraska. Even as the FQME implemented the new-policy, it was not possible to become an FQME member at Kamouraska and no provision for out-of-province climbers or one-time users had been made. As one climber pointed out, one doesn't actually have to be competent to climb in Quebec, one just has to have paid $35 to the FQME. Several climbers, expressing reservations about the ability of the FQME to represent their interests, stated that they would not join.



A project crag near Rimouski, Québec.
The name of the cliff and its location will not be published until access issues can be resolved. Photo: François Sébastien

The second thing that happened at Kamouraska was that Mr. Banville increasingly developed the site as he saw fit, without consulting other climbers or Mr. Morin, the owner. He decided there was room for a thousand routes (there are currently about seventy). He painted route names on the rock. He placed bolts on existing routes. Not surprisingly, the owner found some of the route names painted on his property to be offensive. He certainly did not like the idea of ten times the number of routes on his property. He also had climbers complaining to him about rampant bolting. Mr. Banville's attitude seemed to be that he did not tell the farmer how to milk his cows, so the farmer should not advise about climbing routes. Mr. Morin eventually told Mr. Banville he couldn't climb at Kamouraska anymore. In response, Mr. Banville started chopping the routes he had established. He did a good job of chopping about a dozen of them before the farmer told him he no longer wanted to see him on his property.

Considering the open discord between climbers and the FQME at Kamouraska, the situation with Mr. Banville, and the failure of a small number of climbers to respect the minimal stipulations, it would be entirely understandable for Mr. Morin to close his property to climbers.



François Sébastien climbing Perfection 5.11+ at Kamouraska. Photo: Michel Therrien

After all, Mr. Morin does not profit from people using his property. However, he has expressed his willingness to allow climbers to use the cliffs in 1998, provided there is a guardian present at the site. The FQME is exploring several avenues in order to ensure the presence of such an individual. It is also making arrangements so that both annual and "day" memberships can be at Kamouraska, probably at the small park located across from Prend ton trou. On a more long-term basis, the FQME has discussed the possibility of an amendment to the civil law in Quebec which would change the liability of property owners for certain kinds of accidents.

The interminably frigid winters of Quebec are tough on the spirit of even the most ardent rock climber. However, my motivation to campus in a dust-filled, dingy room somewhere in the bowels of Quebec City is fueled by the knowledge that I will again feel the caress of the sun on my shoulders and the wind in my hair as I dance up the pocketed delights of St. Andre-de-Kamouraska. I hope new-route activists realize that no site becomes theirs simply because of the time and effort they invest in developing it. The other users of the site, and — above all — the property owner must always be respected. I also hope that climbing associations realize they must establish grass-roots connections with users to effectively defend the interests of the climbers they represent.

Environmental Stewardship Along the Niagara Escarpment

Peter Kelly

They come in many shapes and sizes and are familiar sights on the cliff faces of Ontario's Niagara Escarpment. They are not afraid of heights; by the hundreds, they cling to the vertical face by grabbing hold of small indentations or cracks in the rock. While many of these individuals are in their teens, some are also over 50, and a smaller number of seasoned veterans are over a thousand years old. One thousand years?

The individuals described are eastern white cedar trees; they grow on vertical rock faces on the Niagara Escarpment and throughout Ontario, Quebec and the north-central United States. The same trees are also a common sight in swamps, bogs, open fields and backyards and along roadsides, but it is only on cliff faces that these trees reach ages up to 1,890 years. The eastern white cedars of the Niagara Escarpment are the oldest trees in North America east of the Rocky Mountains and the second oldest species in Canada, next to yellow cedar in British Columbia. Their roots extend directly into the rock and do not require soil to survive. Experimental studies indicate that the trees extract all the nutrients they require for life from water filtering through cracks in the rock. The limited space available for root expansion results in extremely slow growth rates; trees less than a metre in height may reach ages close to 500 years. Some trees less then 20 cm in length are actually 100 years in age. These are the slowest-growing trees ever documented.

Our Cliff Ecology Research Group at the University of Guelph has been studying the ecology of these trees and the Niagara Escarpment as a whole since 1985. In that time, we have rewritten the standard perception that cliff faces are places devoid of life. Apart from the cedars, 69 vascular plant species, including 35 lichen species, 14 moss species and two liverwort species, have been inventoried on the cliff face. As well, there are actually 31 species of algae that grow within the crystalline structure of the rock itself! These cryptoendolithic (crypto=hidden, endo=within, lithic=rock) organisms live in a distinctive green layer 1-3 mm below the surface of the limestone bedrock.

The Niagara Escarpment is also home to many types of fauna. Live-trapping of small mammals on the cliff face, top and base has shown that five species, namely the white-footed mouse, deer mouse, raccoon, red squirrel and eastern chipmunk, frequent all three cliff zones and that the cliff face does not act as a physical barrier to small mammal movement. Similarly, an inventory of birds revealed that 21 songbird species utilize the cliff face for nesting or foraging and that raptors such as the great horned owl and turkey vulture also nest on the face. Seven different spider family types have also been trapped on the cliff face. Other research has shown that all eight bat species in Ontario are found along the Niagara Escarpment and that rich and uniform communities of arthropod species flourish in seeps and springs and along waterfalls emerging from the cliff face.

The common thread uniting all these organisms is their ability to persist in an often hostile environment. Many of the species in the surrounding plateau and talus are not capable of tolerating such conditions. This community has persisted on these cliff faces because most of the Niagara Escarpment cliff face has escaped natural and human disturbance. Fires are infrequent and if ignited cannot spread along the cliff face due to an absence of ground litter for fuel and the absence of a closed canopy. While some Niagara Escarpment cliff faces have been destroyed for quarry and ski operations, these practices essentially ceased in the early '70s with the establishment of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. For obvious reasons, the rock-climbing community is the only sector of our population that comes in direct contact with the cliff face.

Historically, the Niagara Escarpment cliff face has been used for rock climbing since the early 1950s. Back then, small groups of dedicated climbers working in relative obscurity developed the most popular sites and classic routes. Three events in the late '80s, however, focused considerable attention on the Niagara Escarpment. First, the popularity of rock climbing increased dramatically and entered mainstream culture with the emergence of large numbers of climbing schools and gyms. Very quickly, climbing escaped from the hands of a few loosely organized groups and into classrooms and executive boardrooms across the country. The second significant event occurred as a result of a census of tree ages at the Niagara Escarpment

cliff edge in 1988 by Doug Larson and Caedmon Nash. They discovered that some of the eastern white cedars were much older than originally anticipated — in some cases up to 400 years. A survey by Cal Clark and me the following year confirmed that this old-growth forest occurred along the entire length of the escarpment. The more research we conducted, the more the cliff face continued to amaze us. In 1989, the age of the oldest specimen found was 701 years. By 1991, a 935-year-old specimen had been found, followed by a 1032-year-old tree in 1991 and, by 1994, two trees over 1500 years. Many other interesting stories are still emerging about the entire Niagara Escarpment cliff ecosystem. Third, in 1990 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Ontario's Niagara Escarpment a World Biosphere Reserve, a designation recognizing that the escarpment has significant natural features in a global context.

Suddenly, the scenario had changed from a few individuals enjoying their sport in a quiet, beautiful setting to crowds of people trying to enjoy their sport in an ecologically and scientifically important natural area. Climbers encountered resistance from some public and private land managers over the use of their lands for climbing. Data on the possible impact of rock climbing on the old-growth cliff-face forest did not exist, however, so in 1995 I undertook such a study, funded by the Ontario Heritage Foundation. A census of eastern white cedars was conducted along both climbed and unclimbed sections of the Niagara Escarpment near Milton, Ontario. The ages of all cedar trees were determined in 35 randomly selected 5-m-wide vertical cliff-face transects as well as at the cliff edge, 3m back into the adjacent plateau. If climbing had had no effect, there should have been minimal damage to the trees, and little difference in tree density or age structure between unclimbed and climbed sites.

Unfortunately, the data revealed a different story. On the face, 37.5 percent of all trees greater than 2 cm basal diameter showed obvious signs of damage ranging from cut branches and severe rope abrasion to sawn stumps. The density of trees was 2.4 times greater for all living trees and 4.5 times greater for trees greater than 300 years in age on the unclimbed cliffs relative to the climbed cliffs. The age structure of the cliff-face forest showed reductions in most age classes. At the cliff edge, tree density was not significantly different, but there was a threefold increase in damage to trees at the top of climbs. At the edge, damage could be attributed to both climbing and hiking enthusiasts.

In many ways the results aren't that surprising, as cliff faces occupy an unusual spatial niche in the landscape. While the Niagara Escarpment stretches out over hundreds of kilometres, it is only 30-40m wide at its "widest". Consequently, it is relatively easy for any section of cliff face to be repeatedly crossed and exposed to human disturbance. As well, rock climbers and the ancient cedars prefer the same habitat on the cliff face. Trees rooted in small solution pockets and vertical cracks and fissures in the rock attain the greatest ages. Interestingly, upon reading about my results in the journal Conservation Biology, an editor of Climbing magazine wrote me to say that unclimbed cliffs have more trees because "climbers generally prefer to scale steep, clean [i.e. treeless] and unbroken cliffs"! I had to explain to him that the old-growth forest only persists on steep and unbroken cliffs and that strong evidence suggests the only reason the climbed cliff sections were "cleaner" than unclimbed sections was because of human disturbance.

So does this mean that climbers are the destructive heathens that the data would seem to indicate? No, for as most climbers will attest, the climbing community tends to be outdoor-oriented and the majority of climbers are generally appalled to see this type of damage. Furthermore, dendrochronological or tree-ring dating of some stumps indicates that 65 percent of the damage occurred before 1988, when the uniqueness of the cliff-face forest had not been realized. I would like to believe that if these discoveries had been made in 1950 the damage would be considerably less severe than it is today.

It is also quite likely that cliffs in many other areas support some of the last refuges for old-growth forest. Recent investigations indicate that the same patterns we've discovered on the Niagara Escarpment are also repeated on cliffs around the world, many of which are also popular recreational climbing areas. Investigations by Doug Larson this past year have revealed old-growth forest on cliffs throughout the United Sates — in Massachusetts, New York, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa — and in eastern and southern Germany, in southern France, in England and in Wales.

Is rock climbing incompatible with the long-term goals of conservation of these ancient trees? Yes, rock climbing has had a deleterious effect on the old-growth forest on cliff faces in the southern half of the Niagara Escarpment over the last 50 years, but no, the two do not have to be incompatible. The climbing community in southern Ontario needs to take the initiative to educate its members about the Niagara Escarpment. The establishment of new routes should be strongly discouraged. Sticking to established routes would confine climbing to areas where, for the most part, vegetation has already been removed. Trees and other vegetation on the cliff face should never be removed, regardless of size, and the use of trees as anchors should be avoided. If necessary, thick foam padding or heavy canvas should be placed under the webbing or rope to protect tree anchors. Even if you suspect that a tree isn't old, do not remove it. The young trees are the most important component of a forest population. An old-growth forest without young trees and other native elements of the flora is simply a collection of old trees incapable of replacing themselves. Recent conversations with climbers indicate a heightened awareness about conservation issues. Education on these issues must continue throughout the experienced climbing community, either through casual chats with climbers on site or through articles such as these. Education must also start at the grass-roots level with instructional schools. Conservation of this resource can only come about when members of the rock-climbing community start to view themselves as stewards of this remarkable place, a responsibility which they have no choice but to accept. What is done with this responsibility is up to them. Only time will tell whether the message is getting through.

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The Canadian Himalayan Foundation And The John Lauchlan Award

Gnomen Spire and the Spirit of Adventure

Grant Statham

It wasn't all that far along in my youthful, energetic quest to climb that the name John Lauchlan began to appear — quite regularly, it seemed. Of course, at the time I had no idea who John was, or what he had really done out in the mountains. I simply read the stories, absorbed the spirit and then ran out to try and live through my own adventures.

As time and my climbing experience both continued to move along, the legacy of John Lauchlan became a part of my learning curve. I'd seen the pictures and read the stories, and now I was living out my dreams on Slipstream, The Pencil and The Maker, climbs of significance that reached far beyond my mind. I'd become good friends with some of John's old friends, and now I heard the stories from a personal side — of Gangapurna and the Grandes Jorasses. Perhaps more than anything, though, I learned of a contagious enthusiasm that wove its way through an entire community.

I was just a pimply-faced kid learning to tie a figure-8 when John — and any chance I ever had of meeting him — died on Polar Circus. The essence of his life, however, would endure, and in 1996 a committed group of people created the John Lauchlan Award. This exciting gift was "instituted to support and perpetuate the bold and adventurous spirit that characterized John Lauchlan and his mountain exploits". This was an awfully mouth-watering proposition for the likes of me; it didn't take much convincing from Tim Pochay for us to focus our energy on winning this prize. For me there was a lot more to this than just a climb, or a bunch of money: I saw it as a path to express my respect for someone whose spirit I shared.

So it was I found myself in the Kichatna Spires, staring up at the enormous, unclimbed north pillar of Gnomen Spire. Indeed, this objective embodied everything I felt the award should represent: innovative, exploratory, lightweight and bold. The reality of this trip, however, wasn't nearly as exciting as the images beforehand. We tried as hard as we could for the first five days of perfect weather, but just couldn't put it together. Mini epics shadowed us. Then the misery of expedition gambling hammered down, and we spent the remaining three weeks tentbound and shovelling.

Tim and I failed completely in our objective to "bring home" a giant new route in the name of John Lauchlan. However, his failure served only to further inspire me and to reinforce what is most important and continues to give me direction: it's not the mountain, nor the route on it, but the spirit that feeds these objectives which defines who we really are. More than anything, I'm proud to have carried the spirit of John Lauchlan into the mountains and to have thought about it a lot — realizing that, had John still been alive, he certainly would have visited the Kichatna Spires long before I did.

My sincere thanks to the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, Infosat Telecommunications and those behind the John Lauchlan Award for all helping to get this trip off the ground.

Grant Statham and Tim Pochay were 1997 recipients of the John Lauchlan Award.

The Canadian Himalayan Foundation offers grants to deserving Canadian climbers and worthy mountain-related projects.

The John Lauchlan Award is granted yearly to individuals (or teams) which exemplify the bold and adventurous spirit that characterized John Lauchlan and his mountain exploits. The award is given to the applicants who submit a proposal for an objective that is innovative, exploratory, environmentally sensitive, and lightweight and self-contained.
Teams applying for the award must be at least 50 percent Canadian.

The Canadian Himalayan Foundation gives grants twice a year to individuals and teams who are engaged in a mountain-related activity. The CHF funds expeditions and cultural, scientific and educational projects. The CHF also has extensive caches of climbing equipment in Canada and Nepal available for use by applicants.

For applications and information, contact
The Canadian Himalayan Foundation,
Box 61063, Kensington Postal Outlet,
Calgary, Alberta T2N4S6
or email gpowter@telusplanet.net

The Cirque Of The Unclimbables 1997

Andreas Taylor

Sean Isaac and I had climbed several long routes together in Yosemite in May of '96, so when he called me to ask if I was interested in going to the remote Cirque of the Unclimbables in the summer of '97, I readily accepted. I had found him to be a reliable and committed climber — something of a rarity these days in the climbing community, as I was discovering. Those of us who know Sean are also aware of his unwavering and disgustingly coarse sense of humour, which I considered to be something of an asset in anyone with whom it was necessary to share the unflattering, close confines of a portaledge for days at a time. Sean had also done all the legwork involved in financing the trip through the Mugs Stump Award. This pretty much solved the major obstacle of an expedition — money.

Winter flew by; before I knew it, the appointed time was upon me and I was off to Canmore with fifty bucks in my pocket and every shred of gear I could carry with me.

Once I had arrived in Canmore we frantically packed what seemed to be a ridiculous amount of food into the back of Sean's rusty Datsun pickup. The sight of the fully packed mini-truck was frightening; its wheels almost touched the wheel wells, it was so overloaded. Nor had there been any time to replace the brake pads, which were pretty much worn to the metal. We therefore opted for the "safer" of the two routes north — through the prairies, burning a litre of oil per tank of fuel in the process.

Our hopes of actually making it north grew as we closed in on Watson Lake; by the evening of July 27, we were rolling down the last few miles of desolate dirt road to Findlayson Lake, where we planned on being picked up the following morning.

After getting picked up by our pilot, Warren LaFave, on the morning of the 28th, we spent several idle days at Warren's luxurious lodge. It was located only 85 miles from the Cirque, but we were delayed several days because of the weather. This was no bad thing, as we enjoyed much fine dining and comfortable accommodation during our wait.

Finally, on the third day, Warren felt the weather was good enough to do an airdrop in Fairy Meadows, our future basecamp. The nearest place to land the plane was 6 km from Fairy Meadows, so Sean and I decided to throw as many items out of the plane as we thought might withstand the 60-ft. drop onto the meadow. This was meant to save us valuable days of hiking and time spent recovering from the long trip from Glacier Lake to Fairy Meadows. There wasn't much room within the granite walls of the Cirque, and some difficult-looking flying was necessary to pass over the meadow. We threw our equipment out of the camera hole in the bottom of the plane during a three-second window of time that would keep the gear within the appropriate drop area.

It took Warren five gut-churning passes over Fairy Meadows to get all of our stuff out of the plane. I felt sick for the rest of the short flight to Glacier Lake.

At the lake, we emptied our remaining supplies out of the plane and onto the shore. We briefly said goodbye to Warren, knowing that he was our only connection back to civilization. The remoteness of the area seemed rather daunting as the plane took off and disappeared over the nearby peaks.

The steep march to Fairy Meadows was longer than it had first appeared. From the lake, a flat walk for several hours along a rough, swampy trail led to the base of Mount Harrison Smith. We crossed several fast-moving creeks along the way. From the flanks of Harrison Smith a loose, shifting talus slope a kilometre wide in places gains almost 850m of elevation in roughly two kilometres. It was very hot and I soon began to feel as if I were in the desert. Sean arrived in the meadows before me and busied himself gathering our gear, which was scattered everywhere, some of it having exploded over the length of the marshy meadow. I helped Sean locate several missing items, many of which were submerged in the various creeks flowing through the meadow. We lost some food, and Sean's sleeping bag was soaked.

Over the next week, we ferried more gear from the lake to Fairy Meadows, scoped the various towers in the area and established a gear cache at the base of Bustle Tower. We had intended to climb Flattop Peak but decided against it because of the quantity of water running down the face. Nearby Bustle Tower was equally as big, and the south face had some excellent, clean rock.

We spent some time getting to know the other party in the area, a group of climbers/skiers/kayakers from Telluride and Park City.

Since our arrival, the weather had been mostly sunny and warm. There were short periods of rain on most days, but I was beginning to figure that the stories of torrential rains were all lies told to dissuade other climbers. It seemed like a long time since I had last climbed; I started thinking that this expedition stuff was going to ruin my climbing fitness. Finally, 12 days after leaving Canmore, we began climbing. We fixed 100m of rope up a short rock scar at the base of the wall. That night, we ate pizza and "fried" a cake in anticipation of having to eat cold, canned wall food for the next five days.

We had intended to get on the wall for good the following day, but after only one pitch an alarmingly fast-moving rainstorm hit us. We waited in an evil cave in the boulders at the base, after an hour or so, however, we realized that this storm was a lot more like the extended downpours we'd heard about from other parties. As we walked back to camp in the slashing rain, waterfalls began pouring off everything, carrying with them torrents of rock debris, snow and ice. We witnessed several spectacular slides and noted with relief that the line we had chosen to climb on Bustle

Andreas styling Pitch 4

Tower had remained reasonably sheltered because of two roofs on the route.

The following day dawned clear and warm. Again we hiked to the base of the tower and jumared to our high point. From here there was a face crack which appeared to go for several pitches. It was my lead and I quickly discovered that the face crack was actually only a seam surrounded by huge, detached flakes of granite. I quickly backed off and opted for the gold corner crack immediately right of the belay. This pitch proved to be one of the finer pitches on the route, with steep 5.10 hand jamming for 55m and a short section of easy French free at the end. Sean was leading another mixed pitch when a squall hit us. I was a little freaked and anticipated the force of the previous day's downpour, so I set up the portaledge while Sean drilled anchors at the top of his pitch. Soon he was rappelling back to the belay. We enjoyed a show from our ledge, watching the rain fall 20 ft. away as the roof directly above sheltered us. The weather had cleared by the time we finished preparing for the night.

The next morning, I led past the exposed, box-shaped roof above, feeling I had lucked out on this jewel of a pitch as I aided easily out the left wall via a hidden flake crack in the glorious morning sunshine! We climbed higher and the rock improved, becoming more featured with the prominent knobs we had seen from the ground.

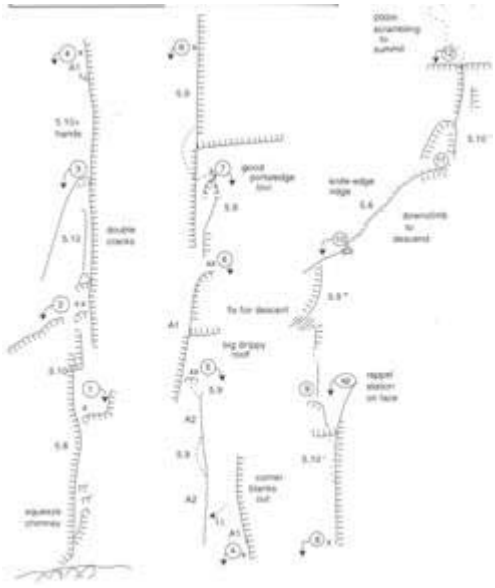
We set up our final portaledge camp that afternoon in a spectacular location below the last big roof. At the left-hand edge of the roof, a crack split a long corner that led almost to the tower's ridge crest. Our intention was to take advantage of the almost 24 hours of light to make a push from our high camp to the summit and back in one day. The weather remained warm and clear. Sean expressed his disappointment that we probably weren't going to see what it was like to sit out a cold storm in a portaledge. That evening I watched as the quarter moon rose over the Echelon Spires across the valley.

Bustle Tower, South Face. The route takes the sunny dihedral.

The next morning's breakfast of pop tarts and canned peaches felt like too little food. The corner we were climbing into yielded more steep crack climbing on the knob-peppered granite. Despite the corner being nearly vertical, it went at 5.9 and easy 5.10. I watched Sean as he led the second pitch up the corner, weaving from one side to another, following the path of knobs and short seams, the second rope hanging off the back of his harness and never touching the rock. He freeclimbed over a small roof at the end of this pitch. In two pitches we joined the 1973 West Ridge route. This led to a classic, exposed, knife-edged ridge with a few steeper sections of 5.10-. Since we were no longer hauling, the climbing went quickly. I felt much more at home-on the upper part of the route. I was enjoying the feeling of covering lots of ground on a wilderness alpine wall. Soon we were snapping photos on the summit, a little surprised at how close it had been from our camp. It was still early in the day. We descended the ridge and before long were continuing down the face from our high camp, having decided that there was enough time to make it to the ground that day.

As we packed up and sorted gear on the ground, I watched the evening light track across the beautiful face, its expanse so much more familiar now. Looking back over the past few days, I thought to myself that the route had been much easier than I had anticipated. The hardest thing had simply been wrapping my head around the idea of doing something unknown. This was my first new, long route; I was proud of the quality line we had established. Perhaps it would go entirely free (5.11+?) in the right condition (dry, that is!). I scanned the face for other potential lines, looking for the next challenge and marvelling at the quantity of unclimbed rock.

We spent another 14 days in the Cirque, being constantly reminded of the fickleness of the mountain environment. It rained solidly for the remainder of our stay. We became good friends with the two new



arrivals, Doug and Gene, who were from North Carolina. We were becoming more desperate to climb again and, at the same time, increasingly grateful that there had been such a window of good weather for our main objective earlier in the month.

The day finally came when we had to leave the Cirque for good. Our new friends Gene and Doug walked out with us back to Glacier Lake, hoping to escape the everlasting rain by flying out with us. The weather cleared at about the time we arrived on the shores of the lake. We spent the evening drying out and baking on the shale beach.

Warren picked us up on the morning of July 27. I was glad we were about to be delivered back to Warren's lodge, where we would soak in the hot tub and drink a few cold beers. I watched the Cirque slowly disappear from view into the wild northern landscape, its familiar peaks, gleaming with run-off, tempting me to forget the endless rain of the past weeks and reminding me to return again.

The party would like to extend their thanks to the following for their contributions of gear and/or money: CLIMBING magazine and the Mugs Stump Award, the Canadian Himalayan Foundation and the Escape Route.

Club International V/VI, 5.10+ A2

SE face of Bustle Tower, Cirque of the Unclimbables F.A.: Sean Isaac, Andreas Taylor. July 1997.

Gear List
2 sets of cams (to 5")
2 sets of nuts
5 pins (KBs and LAs)
60-m ropes
extra rope to fix Pitch 6 for descent

Two Weeks In The Land Of The Giants

Markus Kellerhals

With a roar quickly fading to a purr, then silence, Andy flies off in his small plane, leaving Janez and I alone on the Upper Donjek Glacier. Supposedly we are here to climb the northwest ridge of Mount Walsh, a route I saw five years ago while climbing Mount Steele. First, however, we spend a few moments just standing and soaking up the vista of mountains, before the cold starts seeping through our clothes.

The next morning the skies are a perfect, deep blue. We decide to warm up by climbing the standard West Ridge route on Mount Walsh. From our basecamp we quickly ski up to the base of the ridge, where we trade skis for crampons. We move easily up the broad crest of the ridge, both feeling strong. I figure we will be back in camp for dinner.

At 4000m the ridge flattens out, but also narrows to a knife edge. I realize that I have underestimated this route. Just because it is the standard route and was climbed fifty years ago doesn't mean it will be a piece of cake. For the next several hundred metres, we move slowly, threading the rope from one side to the other and tiptoeing carefully around cornices that overhang both sides of the ridge. The climbing soon cases off, and the ridge begins to climb again. Now, however, we have a different problem: lassitude. As we near the summit, our rest stops become both lengthier and more frequent. I feel as if I am living a modern-day demonstration of Xeno's Paradox: "If two half-baked climbers cover half the remaining distance to the summit every half hour, do they have half a chance of hauling their half-dead bodies to the summit in a halfway reasonable amount of time?" Now I am hoping we will be back in camp for breakfast.

When we finally reach the summit, we spend only a few minutes gazing at the huge mosaic of glaciers and peaks surrounding us before starting down. The sun, still shining brightly, is now in the northwest sky, almost diametrically opposite where it stood when we began the climb. Finally, halfway through our descent, the red orb sinks reluctantly below the northern skyline, but it continues to light our descent with a bright orange glow from below the horizon. Eighteen hours after leaving camp we arrive back at the tents and soon sink into a grateful sleep.

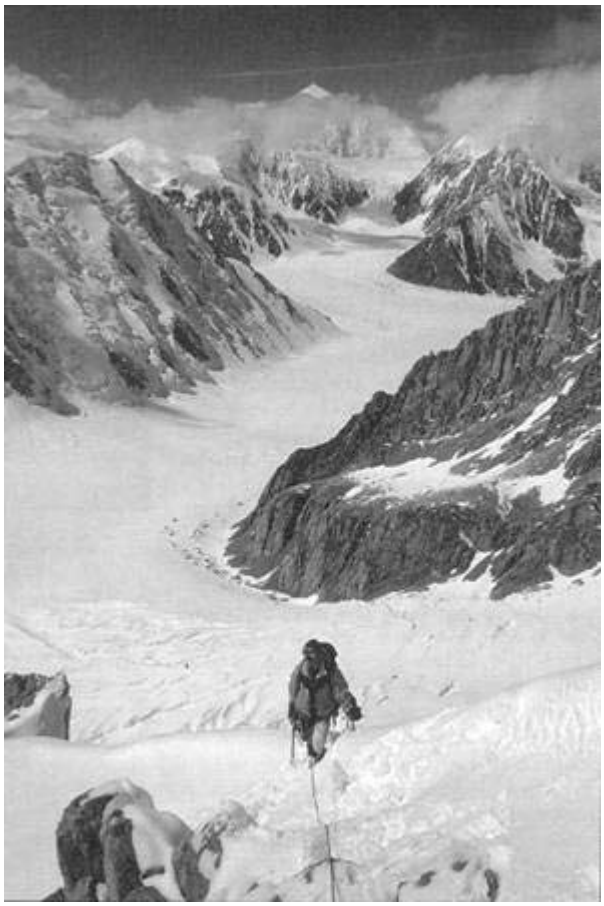
After a full day of rest we are sufficiently recovered to consider another climb. We decide to ski up the easy-looking "Jekden Mountain" (3756m) to the west of camp. The hot, sunny weather that has prevailed in camp belies the conditions at higher elevations. On the peak we are enveloped in a cold, grey mist that snuffs out any hope of views into the wild terrain around Mount Lucania. A biting wind is covering our clothes and whiskers with rime and chilling us rapidly. We ski down through excellent powder, leap-frogging short pitches to stay together in the whiteout.

The next day we descend from the Donjek Glacier to the Spring Glacier. It is clear that in so doing we have crossed a climatological boundary. The Donjek is covered by thick pillows of snow, while the Spring has only a skiff of snow covering ice and is surrounded by barren rock slopes unrelieved by any living thing. At any given time much of the thin snowpack seems to be airborne, propelled by gusts of wind constantly sweeping down the glacier. It feels altogether an unfriendly place. Because of the shallow snowpack, the Spring is a mine field of thinly bridged crevasses. We are constantly breaking through, even on our skis.

On a likely-looking patch of glacier, we stop to do some ice fishing. Against all odds we hook a valuable catch — one of Janez' skis. Now how did that end up at the bottom of a crevasse? My lips are sealed...

For now we ski right past the base of the northwest ridge. First we will try to climb "Spring I" (3976m), a broad summit standing between the Spring and Donjek glaciers. We turn south up a tributary of the Spring Glacier. We were hoping to camp at the head of this glacier, in a deep basin between Walsh and Spring I. However, after watching a few ice avalanches rumble down off the east flanks of Mount Walsh and completely obscure the basin in clouds of powder snow, we decide to camp closer to the wide-open Spring Glacier.

Two days later we take a circuitous route around crevasse fields and ice blocks to the base of our peak. We follow a couloir that leads through a rock band to the snowy southwest ridge of Spring I. The couloir, initially easy, steepens near the top and finishes with a pitch of 60-degree ice. From there the climb is mostly straightforward, along a steep snow crest. Near the summit we are engulfed in a mist of fine ice crystals that glisten in the evening sun. Once again the sun sets on us as we descend. Fifteen hours after our midday start we finally return to camp.



Climbing Spring Peak, Mount Walsh in the distance

Now we are ready for the main event. We move camp to the base of the northwest ridge. Here we are hit by our first major storm. Over the next three days at least 50 cm of snow fall. We feel very frustrated cooped up in our little tent while the wind howls outside. There is not much to do except read my book for the fourth time and occasionally shovel out the tent. At times like these I wonder about the sanity of seeking out these harsh places as a form of recreation. I can think of hundreds of places I would rather be.

Eventually the storm relents. However, the toe of our ridge, a classic avalanche slope of 35 to 45 degrees, is now loaded with fresh snow. We decide to wait at least another day for this slope to settle.

Sometime during the next day a huge avalanche clears this 500-m-high slope, yet clears it so soundlessly that we notice nothing. Only later, when we emerge from the tent, do we see the cookie-cutter pattern of fresh fracture lines and the piles of snow at the base of the face. Finally there is nothing more to delay our attempt.

We start our climb just before midnight, hoping that the evening chill will stabilize any fresh snow left on the lower face. The northwest ridge rises 1800m from our camp to the summit. The first 500m is a triangular ice face which steepens to 45 degrees near the top. From the top of the ice face, the ridge narrows to a thin, icy crest that stretches for a kilometre and a half to where the northwest ridge joins the north ridge at 4000m. We move quickly up the initial face, enjoying easy travel thanks to the avalanche, which has cleaned the face down to blue ice. The sun rises on us as we are climbing along the knife edge. This is the most enjoyable and spectacular section of the climb. Steep traversing on hard ice alternates with wading through drifts of new snow and skirting cornices.

Finally we reach the junction with the north ridge. Both of us relax, thinking that all the hard climbing is behind us and that the summit is in the bag. We turn out to be half right: there is no more hard climbing. However, reaching the summit still requires a gargantuan effort. The new snow has settled in thick drifts on the broad slopes of the north ridge. The trailbreaking, never less than knee-deep, frequently worsens to thigh- or even waist-deep. Janez does most of the trail-breaking since he seems to be having an easier time thanks to his lighter weight and longer legs. I would consider giving up, except that continuing over the summit is the most reasonable option available to us.

When we reach the summit, we are all smiles. Even though we still have a long descent ahead, we feel elated to have completed our route. We spend a few moments looking out over a sea of clouds.

Our summit is one of only a handful of high peaks rising above this thick cloud layer. After a quick snack, we start descending the west ridge. This ridge is also covered with a thick blanket of new snow, but now gravity is helping rather than hindering our progress. I throw my body at the drifts with new-found gusto. Halfway down the ridge, we decide to bivi rather than continue to exhaustion. I shiver sleeplessly all night in my down jacket

The South Peak of Mount Walsh from the Donjek Glacier

while Janez sleeps cosily beside me in his sleeping bag. In the morning we descend the north spur of the west ridge, which leads more directly back to camp than does the west ridge proper. Thirty-eight hours after setting out we return to camp, exhausted but elated.

The next evening we are on the radio to Andy, asking for a ride out ASAP. There are many more good routes to do around here and we still have extra food. But I am content to be leaving: two weeks in the mountains with a good friend and solid climbing partner, a couple of great climbs, no major epics and all extremities still intact. We have been walking in the land of giants. This year the giants have been friendly, but we see no point in wearing out our welcome.

Mount Walsh via west ridge, May 28-30

Jekden Mountain, June 2.

Spring I Peak via west slopes and southwest ridge, June 8-9.

Mount Walsh via northwest ridge.

Climbers: Janez Ales, Markus Kellerhals.

1997 Mountaineering Summary Kluane National Park Reserve

There were 38 expeditions, for a total of 137 people, within the icefields of Kluane in 1997. This was a slight drop in numbers from the previous few years. The maximum number of climbers in a single season was 186 people in 1992.

There were 22 expeditions and 74 people on Mount Logan this year, representing 54 percent of people in the icefields. The King Trench route on the west side of the mountain saw 12 expeditions (49 people) and the East Ridge had 8 expeditions {22 people). Two groups (3 people) attempted routes adjacent to the Hummingbird Ridge. Of interest to climbers this year was the appearance of a large crevasse bisecting the King Trench at 5100m. This obstacle, not evident during the 1996 season, slowed the progress of each expedition. A very thin bridge early in the season was gone by later in the year, forcing subsequent groups to explore alternative routes that detoured widely from the preferred ascent route. It will be interesting to see what effect this crevasse has on climbers next year.

Other mountains attempted were mounts Kennedy, Hubbard, Slaggard, St. Elias, Steele and Walsh, and Pinnacle Peak. In commemoration of the 100th-anniversary ascent of Mount St. Elias, several attempts were made on the Canadian side of the mountain. Unfortunately, poor conditions turned all of them back.

This year few groups managed to reach the summits they were aiming for. Historically, 60 percent of expeditions successfully get at least part of their team to the summit; this year only 30 percent of all the groups in the icefields were successful.

There were no serious accidents in 1997, and no search-and-rescue operations were required.

Anyone interested in climbing within Kluane should contact:

Mountaineering Warden
Kluane National Park Reserve
Box 5495
Haines Junction
Yukon TOB 1LO
Canada,
and ask for a registration package.

Andrew Lawrence, Park Warden

A Trip Through The Gates Of The Arctic

Kai Hirvonen

Rick and I had spoken on the phone several times in the weeks prior to flying to Alaska. We were really psyched, picturing images of 2000-ft. granite peaks and virtually untouched towers! I believe Fred's exact words were: "This place is the Bugaboos on steroids." Those words, along with a photo of Pyramid Peak in a Smithsonian magazine article by Jon Krakauer, were all the bait I needed to book a flight to Fairbanks.

For weeks prior to the departure, my mind was filled with thoughts and promises of the Arregetich Peaks of the Brooks Range. Impeccable granite, pristine alpine meadows, grizzlies, caribou herds, sunshine at 3 a.m., as well as mosquitoes so great in number that they could carry off a small child — these were just some of the things that awaited us. Needless to say, we were both filled with excitement and apprehension.

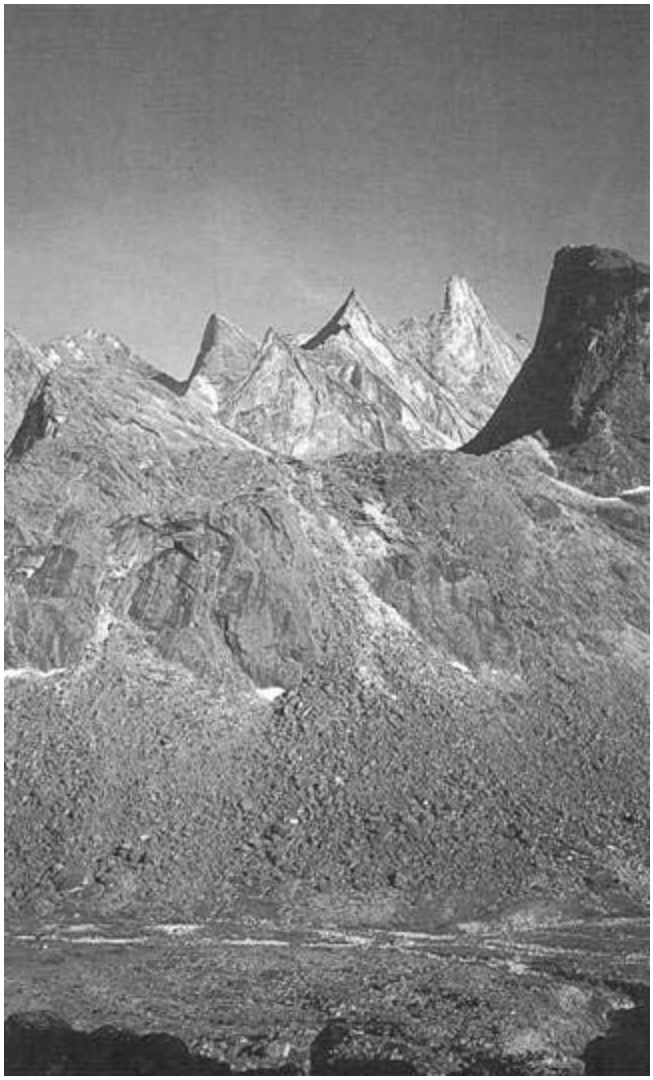
Rick and I left Vancouver on June 6 and arrived in Seattle at Fred's just after midday. We spent a good part of the afternoon pouring over slides and maps while enjoying some of Seattle's finest micro-brews. We peppered Fred with questions: What's the approach like? Can we do it in a day? How many grizzlies? Should we buy a gun? How bad are the mosquitoes? Really!?! "What?" "Oh yeah, I'm really hot for the north ridge of Pyramid." "I think it'll be a good trip." Oh well, I thought, I guess we'll find out soon enough.

The flight was filled with grand views of the Coast Range; Rick and I took turns pressing our faces up against the window, trying to absorb as much as possible. Next came the Saint Elias Range, with Mount Fairweather rising straight out of the Gulf of Alaska. Further along came Mount Saint Elias, then Mount Logan. The view alone was worth the price of the air fare. At that moment I made myself a promise to return to these mountains in the future.

The next day we were to meet the other two guys Fred had invited along: Dave Medara and Jon Allen. The only information we could pry from Fred was "Oh, Medara, he's a good climber — he wouldn't put you on belay with Bird Beaks, or anything!" Well, that's reassuring, I thought. I wondered if he had told them something along the same lines about us. Anyway, as it turned out, they were really great guys and we had a lot of good laughs.

Three days and three flights later we were dropped off with our 90-pound packs at Takahula Lake, with a 24-km approach to the head of the Ayya Goma Halla Valley ahead of us. A local outfitter and guide from Settles gave us some good approach beta, which saved us about 5 km and some serious bushwhacking. On his advice we climbed up and over Takahula Mountain. This route was quite steep and direct, and kept us out of the bush thrashing of the lower drainage as well as away from the constant onslaught of the mosquitoes — at least for the time being.

The next morning we gathered up the rest of our gear, which we had airdropped at about the 12 km point of the valley. It quickly became apparent that we had brought too much gear. Even worse, we knew that we had at least two long and hard days of approach still ahead.



The north face of Shot Tower just right of centre, in rear.

The approach consisted of thick patches of slide alder; it was so dense that in some areas you were actually 3 ft. off the ground. In between the slide alder sections were huge slopes of loose talus, which we later dubbed "the sketcher talus from hell". At one point I saw Dave surf a boulder about the size of a Volkswagen bus! It could have been really ugly; fortunately, all that resulted was a boost of adrenaline and an elevated heart rate.

All the while, we were being tempted by the view of Wickman Tower standing proud at the head of the valley. We were also treated to occasional glimpses of wildlife including the largest grizzly any of us had ever seen. One morning Rick and I got an early start and headed out for the trail first. Not far from camp we saw an arctic wolf: it was pure white and about the size of a small horse! I remember that my first thought was "What's a polar bear doing this far south?" Later I confessed my thoughts to the others . Rick had an embarrassed look on his face as he shared the same thoughts. For the rest of the day we all took turns earning the bear spray we had purchased in Fairbanks. Not very reassuring!

After two days of ferrying loads, we reached the head of the valley. We set up camp beside the creek; it would be home for the next two weeks. After a rest day and a couple of exploratory hikes, we gathered under Jon's 10 x 10 ft. mosquito net to discuss our climbing objectives. Rick and I were still keen for the north ridge of Pyramid. With the help of Fred's binoculars, we had put together a potential line along crack systems that we figured we could link up. Jon and Dave likewise had scoped out a line on the north face of Shot Tower.

The next day we packed up and said our goodbyes and good lucks. After an hour and a half of approach across more sketcher talus and over granite benches, we found ourselves at the start of the glacier. Rick asked if we should cook up a meal first. I'm not one to turn down a meal, so

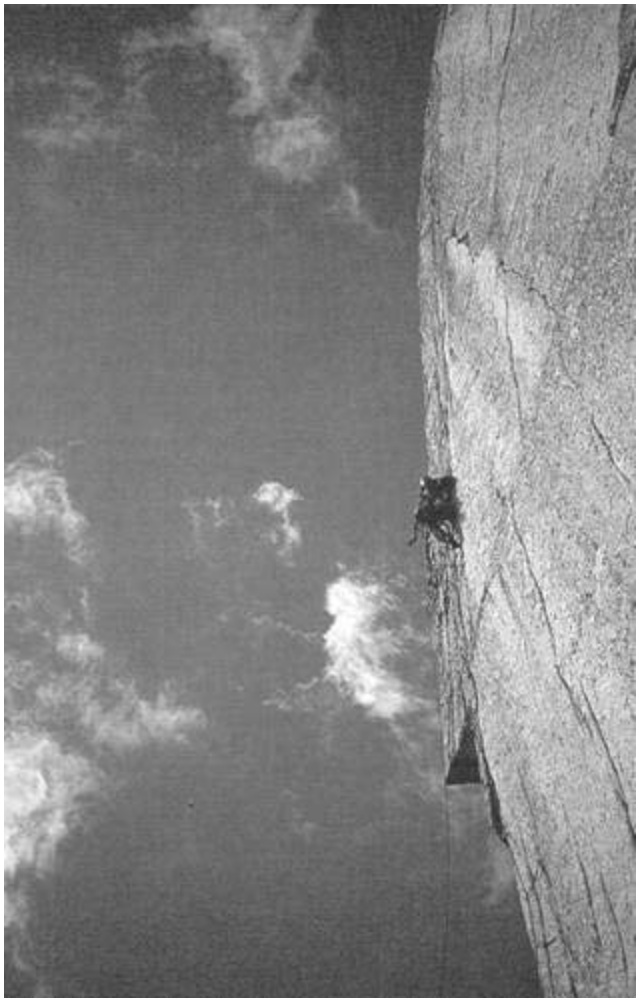
I jumped at the opportunity for a few extra calories. We feasted, stashed some gear and started post-holing up the glacier.

We decided on a ramp system that cut diagonally leftward for a hundred metres or so to a corner system on the edge of the northwest face. The ramp wasn't technically difficult, only low 5th class, but it was covered in gravel that made us feel like we were skating on ball bearings. Two quick and uneventful pitches later we were at the corner system. The corner seemed quite interesting: a wet, flaring off-width and chimney. Safe at the belay, I shouted words of encouragement upward while thinking to myself that I was glad it was Rick's lead. We swapped leads for three pitches up the corner, occasionally taking short ventures onto the slabby face to the left. The face was perfectly dry and clean, with lots of friction and fun edges. Even though it was only about 5.7, the run-outs became scary and we were forced to pad our way back into the wet corner to plug in some pro'. The top of the fifth pitch turned out to be a great bivi ledge: it was comfortable and offered great views. We tried to get a bit of sleep, since it was about 1 a.m. I didn't sleep much that night — if you could call it nighttime: it looked like it was about three in the afternoon. I just remember staring up at the steepness of the north ridge. It reminded me so much of the northeast ridge of Bugaboo Spire back home in British Columbia. Although this ridge seemed a bit steeper, it had the same quality about it.

With a reasonably early start we were off. Rick took the first pitch off the ledge, which was a shallow corner with a beautiful hand crack in the back. After about 30 ft. of excellent jamming he had to pull out the aiders. The crack had narrowed to fingers and was full of dirt. Rick made short work of the Al crack, taking the time to clean the dirt as he went. While following the pitch, I thought to myself that this would be a four-star crack pitch back home in Squamish. At the stance, I took the rack and started jamming the lone splitter that continued above me. This turned out to be one of the finest pitches I have ever climbed. After 20m the perfect hand crack led to a 3-ft. roof. I placed some gear below the roof, then paused to look down at Rick; his big grin was all the encouragement I needed. Good stemming and perfect jams put me above the roof. I continued to the end of the rope and built the belay. Sixty metres of perfect crack climbing had left me without a care in the world.

After several more pitches of fine cracks and one loose corner system, we reached the first false summit. We continued over broken ground along the ridge until we reached the true summit. We shook hands, took pictures and ate some chocolate bars for dinner. We both sat admiring the view and wondered how our new friends were making out with their adventure on Shot Tower. After a short time we started to descend the route we had come up. Several hours later we reached the bivi ledge, where we got some much-needed sleep.

The next morning we made our way back to camp, where Jon and Dave had a pancake breakfast all ready for us. What a treat! We swapped success stories over rounds of pancakes and coffee. They had completed a new route on the north face of Shot Tower that sounded both exciting and difficult.



The headwall of the West Ridge, Shot Tower

A couple of days later we all went and did a climb together on the two Maiden peaks. What a classic day that was. It let us look into the next valley over and see many more beautiful peaks, including a peak that my friend Lara would be trying in two months' time. I snapped a lot of photos, hoping she could use them for her trip.

Time was quickly running out, and we had to decide if we were going to try something else. After discussing the many possibilities, Rick and I chose the west ridge of Shot Tower while Jon and Dave headed to the other side of the valley for the Badille. Although the west ridge of Shot Tower had already been climbed, it sounded like a beautiful route from what little we had read in previous alpine journals. The route consisted of excellent, clean rock throughout and offered impeccable crack, face and aid climbing. If Steck or Roper had ever climbed this route, I'm sure their famous book would have been called Fifty-one Classic Climbs of North America. After topping out we made all 14 rappels quite quickly thanks to Dave and Jon's effort a few days previously.

As soon as we reached camp we had to pack up and start the return journey to Takahula Lake and our flight back to civilization. We reached the lake just as the skies opened up and gave us the first rain of the trip. Inside the tent we laughed at our incredible luck. Perfect!

New Ascents in the Arrigetech Mountains of the Brooks Range, Alaska

(First ascents where indicated)

North Ridge of Pyramid Mountain IV, 5.10 Al (will also go free at 5.10). F.A.: Rick Clements, Kai Hirvonen. June 14—15.

North Face of Shot Tower V, 5.10 A3. F.A.: Jon Allen, Dave Medara. June 14-15.

West Ridge of Shot Tower IV, 5.9 A2. Clements, Kai Hirvonen.

Southeast Face of Badille III, 5.10+ (single splitter on southeast face for six pitches!). F.A.: Jon Allen, Dave Medara.

West Ridge of West Maiden II, 5.6. Jon Allen, Dave Medara, Rick Clements, Kai Hirvonen.

West Ridge of East Maiden 4th Class. Jon Allen, Dave Medara, Rick Clements, Kai Hirvonen.

Summer '97 In The Waddington Range

Don Serl

The wettest spring on record drifted into a pretty scruffy summer, but four noteworthy new routes and one significant "completion" got done during breaks and once the weather settled down a bit.

In late July, Greg Foweraker and Sigg Isaac spent a week or so getting chased around the Upper Tellot Glacier by clouds while looking for "big rock". They got stormed off the northwest side of Stiletto Peak (3397m/ll,145 ft.) only two or three pitches from the top, but did manage to put up a very powerful new line on the east face of McCormick Needle (ca. 2960m/9700 ft.). Their as yet unnamed climb follows crack systems about 50m left of the prominent Last Tango on the Tellot dihedral towards a huge, detached block. This was bypassed via hand and finger cracks on the left, the continuations of which were followed to the top. Three roofs were overcome, one of which provided the crux, enlivened by a bit of doggin'. Seven pitches, IV, 5.11+/12-

The big event of the summer took place a couple of weeks later. (See the feature article "Asperity and Beyond" on page 4. Mr. Serl's account is included here because Simon's article is rather modest, and this summary puts their accomplishment in a clearer light — ed.) A pair of visiting Brits, Dave Heselden and Simon Richardson (who actually are current residents of Hong Kong and Scotland respectively), cruised Waddington (4019m/13,186 ft.) in "full Scottish" conditions, then went on to climb the last of the great rock ribs on the upper Tiedemann Glacier, the huge South Buttress of Asperity (3716m/12,192 ft.). Intermittent previous attempts had revealed a complex section of sharp gaps and poor rock at about 2500m, and much of the crest above is similarly serrated. Dave and Simon bypassed the lower ridge via the glacier on the right and climbed a short, diagonal couloir to gain the right flank of the ridge. They stayed well right of the crest for almost the entire first day, finally surmounting a tower to regain the crest. The notch beyond required a few aid moves, then a broad bivi terrace was reached. The first half of the second day was spent in runnels and icy gullies (to WI3) on the left flank, but after regaining the crest and passing a second and third notch, a subsidiary rib out on the right face was gained and followed to what appears from below to be the relatively easy upper main crest. There was, however, a very sharp hidden notch high on the ridge; this was crossed with a difficult, diagonal rappel to a final bivi. On the third morning, five more pitches and easy ground led to the top. About 30 pitches (to 5.9) had been climbed on each of the earlier days. 1400m. V, 5.9 Al WI3.

The descent was nearly as exciting as the

ascent. The south-facing gullies that would normally get one back to the Tiedemann were avalanche-raked, so the lads took the only logical option: they tackled the eastern half of Croft, Foweraker and Serl's Waddington Range traverse to get off. This initially involved downclimbing the icy northeast face of Asperity, then climbing Serra V (ca. 3600m/l 1,800 ft.; fourth ascent, variation finish). They then had to repeat (not without incident) the highly serious east face rappel descent to the Serra IV-V notch. The pair bivied for the third time on the crest just east of Serra IV, then traversed Serra III (3642m/l 1,949 ft.) to gain the Upper Tellot Glacier and easy walking via the Plummer hut back to their camp at Sunny Knob on Day 4. More than a little impressive!

The third noteworthy climb of the summer, a significant variation, came later in August. Sean Easton and Dave Edgar tackled the rocks of the true crest of the right-hand rib on the northeast face of Waddington. They climbed about a dozen pitches before the lower-angled upper crest was reached. The bottom two-thirds was on great rock (at 5.7 to 5.8, with one short Al section), but the rock deteriorated for the final two or three leads. The crux was a 5.9 pitch on poor rock. The earlier Michael Down-Bruce Kay Northeast Spur line (which angled in from the right) was joined on the dw crest, and (as previously) a variety of séracs (ice to 90 degrees) and crevasses on the upper glacier were overcome or outfoxed to gain the base of the summit tower. Unfortunately, as with the earlier party, bad weather forestalled any summit attempt, and the pair bailed via the Bravo Glacier. 1200m. IV, 5.9A1AI4.

One final new route capped a fine spell of Indian summer in September. Michael Down and Mike White choppered into the Upper Tellot Glacier and spent a day fixing a rappel descent and traverse (difficult) from the top col on the glacier down into the north (Radiant Glacier) face of Serra III before returning to camp. The following morning they repeated their unusual approach to climb The Hose, the beautiful ice-line on the upper north face of Serra III. There were six pitches in the couloir, the last three being a continuous 3-m wide runnel of perfect 70- to 75-degree WI3 ice in a corridor of beautiful granite. Three more rope lengths led to the summit, where the pair bivied. All that remained was to rap off in the morning, throw camp into the helicopter and fly home. Jeez... Envy, or what? 350m. Ill, WI3.

A final climb is worthy of note. David Hughes led a large B.C. Mountaineering Club party into the Radiant Glacier in late July, and six of them (including David and his son, Eric) completed the North Ridge of Tiedemann (3848m/12,625 ft.) by linking a previously climbed east-side couloir to a completion up the old 1961 Harvard route on the middle and upper ridge. Given the difficulty of passage through the Radiant Glacier icefall and the seeming impassability of the original Harvard west-side approach, this is plainly the logical way of tackling this huge (1400-m) feature, which is one of the outstanding moderate mountaineering challenges of the range, and unjustifiably ignored.

Whitemantle Range Revisited

John Baldwin

Perhaps nowhere else in the Coast Mountains is that whipped-cream look of snow-draped summits so pronounced as in the Whitemantle Range. Seen from the north, the whiteness of foreshortened icefalls and fluted summits is etched against the sky. This view, steeped in my mind from several seasons of skiing in the

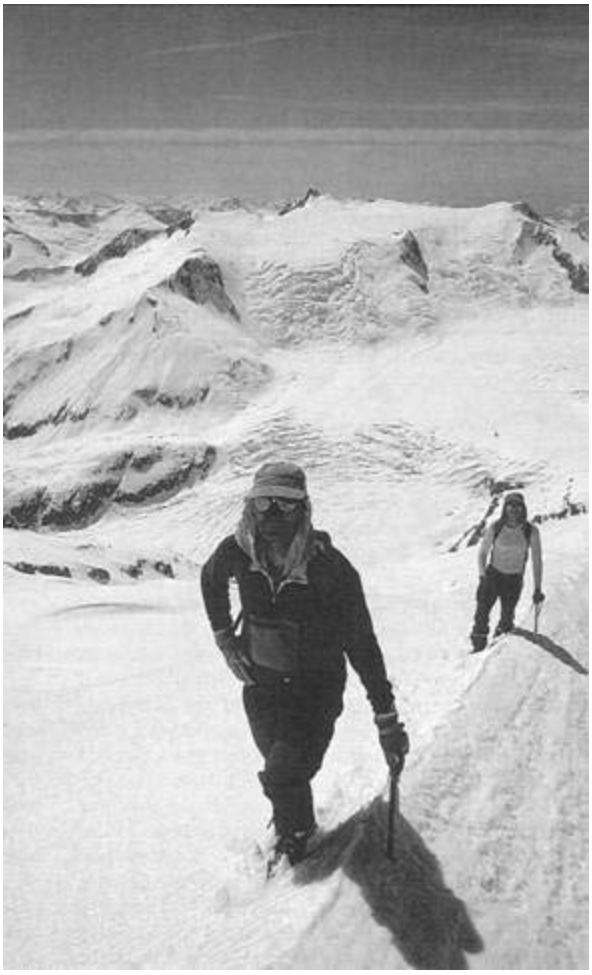
Waddington Range, kept urging me to revisit the Whitemantle Range.

The north end of the Whitemantle Range begins in Scar Creek, where its highest summit rises in a series of ridges and icefalls to almost 3000m. This is also where our trip began: at an elevation of 200m, beside a rock the size of a house which blocked the road 2 km from the logging camp on the Homathko River. Gordon Ferguson, Steve Ludwig and I had flown in from Campbell River at the beginning of May. With "Krazy Karpets" in tow, we planned an unsupported ski traverse of the Whitemantle Range.

Our entrance into the Whitemantle Range was gradual. That first afternoon we added skis to our already-bloated packs and staggered a few kilometres up to the first bridge across Scar Creek. As the snow line was exceptionally low this year, we were able to load most of our food onto our Krazy Karpets the next morning and ski right from the bridge. The heavy rain of the past week had blown over, and as we inched our way up the road on the south side of Scar Creek we began to get views up the valley. These expanded to include the Waddington Glacier and the main summits of the Waddington Range as we climbed higher. By late afternoon we had reached tree line beyond the end of the road.

The following day we caught glimpses into the main valley of the Homathko River and continued up undulating slopes to the ridge north of the Whitemantle Glacier, where we were greeted by incredible views of the black tusk of Pointer Peak plastered in winter snow. We followed this ridge west in the hope of finding a direct route to the upper plateau of the glacier. As we skied along the narrow ridge crest, our Krazy Karpets dangled down the side slope in deteriorating weather. At the west end of the ridge we were unable to find an easy route around a minor summit and eventually plunge-stepped down steep slopes to the glacier below.

Clear cold weather in the morning brought a yellow glow to the spectacular ice-fall that seemed to rise from right behind the tent. Our steady uphill climb skirted this and continued onto the plateau at the head of the glacier. Heavy trail breaking made for hard pulling, and flurries returned in the afternoon. This was our third day in a row of hauling the heavy loads uphill. We dragged ourselves into Camp IV, just below the col east of Whitemantle Mountain, at the end of the day.



On the Southwest Ridge of Mount Stanton, Wahkash Mountain behind

Evening clearing and a sunset on the distant buttresses of Mount Combatant suggested that the following day we would finally be able to take off our skins.

Our joints rejoiced the next morning as we zipped up the last few hundred metres of Pinhead Mountain without our loads. It was a crystal-clear morning and the distant peaks glistened in the sun. Our most stunning view came higher up, as we gained the ridge above. Without a rope we were stopped only a few metres below the final summit block, but even this didn't matter on such a morning. The air was absolutely still and an incredible panorama of huge icefalls and fluted ridges rising up from the depths of Whitemantle Creek lay spread out at our feet. The mountains shimmered in the early morning light like a clear pool in a slow-moving river that makes you want to swim in it and drink the water at the same time.

Despite the perverse attraction of dragging our Krazy Karpets over the highest summit in the Whitemantle Range, we down-climbed the steep slopes south of the Pinhead-Whitemantle col and skied up Whitemantle Mountain via glaciers on its south side without our loads. We again spent a long time on the peak, soaking up the view. Distant icefields shimmered in the sun, but our eyes were again drawn south across the head of Whitemantle Creek. Though the mountains looked calm and peaceful on such a beautiful day, they had that storm-battered look that is duplicated only on the rocky headlands that jut out into the Pacific Ocean on the coast below. Portions of our route could be seen winding out of sight along the divide through a maze of icefalls, and we could sense the delicate balance between what lay ahead and the loads on our Krazy Karpets.

We had our first real ski run from the summit back to the packs. The snow was not great, but the backdrop was truly spectacular. We were now finally into suitable terrain for our Krazy Karpets (or '"boggies" as we came to call them). An afternoon push had us rolling across glaciated benches to the west, and late in the day we dropped 500m over several steep, crevassed rolls onto the valley glacier at the head of a tributary of Stanton Creek, with our 'boggles drawing wild circles as they dragged behind us in the soft corn snow.

By Day 6 we had been drawn well into the folds of the Whitemantle Range. The good weather was holding, and that easy feeling of moving day by day had settled upon us. A steep climb took us back up high onto the main divide between Stanton Creek and Whitemantle Creek. At one point we caught a glimpse of Knight Inlet deep in its wooded trenches to the west. After lunch we climbed Peak 2658m and in the afternoon heat we slithered across glaciated benches high above Stanton Creek.

After a hard freeze that night, we scraped our way down around a large cliff band and kicked steps up a steep, exposed slope to gain the névé below Mount Stanton. We dropped our packs and headed for the peak. Leaving our skis at the head of the glacier, we kicked steps up the wonderful snow arête on the southwest ridge and had lunch on the summit. Instead of Whitemantle Creek it was now the head of Brew Creek

which lay spread out at our feet, but the view was just as spectacular. We could see everything from the snout of the glacier 2000m below us to the distant summits on the Lillooet Icefield over 200 km away. From Stanton a long, mushy traverse and a short climb took us west to a camp on the névé at the head of Brew Creek. Steve washed some underwear and took a much-needed rest, but Gordon and I couldn't resist a last climb to Peak 2525m in the still evening air as soft light spilled across the névé.

Looking south across the head of Whitemantle Creek

Clear skies greeted us again the following morning for a 4-km schuss south across the névé to Wahkash Mountain, rising to a high ice plateau surrounded by glaciers that twist off into the neighbouring deep coastal valleys. I had always wanted to ski here; it was a treat to haul the 'boggies up the broad slopes and across the plateau. The actual summit is a rock nipple rising from the south end of the plateau; with a bit of effort we were able to ski right to its summit. To the north, Mount Stanton and Whitemantle Mountain marked our route, with Mount Waddington rising beyond. But my eyes were drawn to the maze of peaks and rows of lower summits that stretched along the entire outer fringe of the Coast Mountains. It was strange to realize how familiar to me these wild remote summits had become. What had once been so unknown and had formed such a major driving force behind many of my previous trips was now an inseparable part of my being. Not only had the mountains become part of me, I had also become part of them in some way; I could see myself in them much as you see yourself when you look in a mirror.

A ramp below the summit cliffs avoided icefalls descending the east side of the mountain, and we traversed south across this in the afternoon heat. Lower down, we stumbled upon some exposed, lichen-covered rocks and sprawled across them, slurping up nearby meltwater and peering down into a rugged tributary of Wahkash Creek. It is wild valleys like these which make these icefields feel so remote.

The effects of hauling our heavy loads for over a week without a rest were beginning to show. With great effort we pried ourselves away from this haven and traversed south to a col above the Stafford River. Rain runnels formed twisted, abstract forms on the glacier below. A long afternoon climb to Peak 7905 was worth it when we perched our tent on the summit, high above the deep valleys of the Bear and Stafford rivers.

Clouds moved in overnight and a small shower slowed packing up camp in the morning, but the odd shaft of sunlight promised a usable day. We left our string of icefields behind as we plunged into more rugged terrain that we hoped to follow east to the Homathko River. This began with a 1000-m run into the head of the Bear River, from where branches of a narrow, T-shaped glacier eventually led us onto the narrow divide between Brew Creek and the Bear River. Unsettled weather remained with us all day: a cold, windy lunch with mitts and jackets was followed by a warm stop in shirtsleeves for running water at a rock outcrop. A long, afternoon traverse on the north side of the divide took us into a col east of Peak 8112. From here, cliffs and a narrow ridge crest forced us onto south-facing slopes which plummeted into a deep tributary basin of the Bear River rimmed by steep icefalls and bands of cliffs. The slope rolled away below us and steepened as we traversed out of the col. In the distance, Cumsack Mountain marked the edge of the main valley of the Homathko River. John Clarke and I had tried to climb this mountain from the head of Bute Inlet the previous summer but because of bad weather had failed to even get near it. On this trip it again formed a kind of beacon that we singled out from the distant jumble of peaks at various points along our route. And Gordon's perverted imagination had been taken with the name itself! But rain showers had softened the snow; when we discovered a cliff band cutting across the mushy slope below us, it appeared as if Cumsack would elude us again. We decided to camp on the ridge in the hope that the snow would firm up. In the morning we climbed Peak 8112 for a better look. We thought we could spot a route through the cliff band, but the threat of being carried away by the mushy snow again prevented us from venturing below the cliffs.

Our only choice now was to traverse back across hanging glaciers onto the main valley glacier draining north into Brew Creek. But with the hope of picking up a road the next day, this didn't seem too bad. Near the end of our traverse Gordon dropped his 'boggie while trying to untangle his towrope. Steve and I watched from below as our dinners hurtled down the glacier. The 'boggie ran over a crevasse, then sailed off a sérac before Steve managed to retrieve it. The glacier took us north into a deep hanging valley above Brew Creek. The tiny meadows were surrounded by cliffs and were buried under huge piles of winter avalanche debris. We passed wolverine tracks while two families of goats watched us from above, and set up camp early on rocks and slabs at the end of the valley. Returning to bare ground was like getting out of the water after swimming; we lay in the afternoon sunshine, our packs exploded onto slabs around the tent. That night we slept to the roar of the creek and thundering waterfalls.

On our approach to the end of the hanging valley, we had joked about the headwall below us. It turned out, however, to be far worse than anything we had joked about: in steady rain the next day it took several hours to scratch a route through the cliffs and waterfalls. Snow still lingered in the deep trench of the main valley, and we skied through clumps of slide alder as waterfalls and cliffs towered above us. The first signs of the road were groves of sweet-smelling cottonwood saplings. These quickly turned into thickets of willow and alder, and eventually we realized it was easier to walk off the road. Patches of yellow monkeyflowers under some slide alder were the only bright spot in a long afternoon that left us camped on a sand bar and staring at a washed-out bridge. Without a road on the south side of Brew Creek, our prospects for the next day were rather bleak. As the trip was mostly complete, however, we savoured our last evening in the presence of these wild, towering mountains.

In the morning Brew Creek remained

unfordable, so we continued down the south side of the valley, throwing our skis through a thick band of slide alder where the creek pinched up against a steep side slope. This took hours but eventually brought us to some thicker woods and a well-worn bear trail. By lunch we had reached slightly newer logging roads on the south side of Brew Creek; we breathed a sigh of relief when we found out that the bridge across a major tributary was still intact. We coasted down the final 10 km of road into the Homathko valley as if still on skis, the main road marking the end of our trip. I knew then why the attraction to return to the Whitemantle Range had been so strong: this had been one of my best trips in the mountains! As Emily Carr once wrote, "When it was going to happen, the dance in your feet took you there without your doing anything about it."

Serein from the rigging

Sailing To The Sky: False Creek To Mount Waddington

Brian Pegg

April 22 - May 13, 1997

"When my old body is finished, and dies, my soul will come to a place like this — ...It will travel all over the glaciers, which I love so dearly, and the sparkling snow fields, the deep blue crevasses and shining séracs — and the steep snow ridges, and rock faces — and finally, with all the world at my feet, to sit exalted on my summit to just look, and look, and love it, deep, deep, down in my soul..." — Phyllis Munday

The Coast Ranges of British Columbia are remote, difficult to access, and have terrible weather conditions. Their highest peak, Mount Waddington, typifies all of these characteristics. The existence of Mount Waddington was not known until the 1920s, when Don and Phyllis Munday's almost religious exploration of the region opened climbers' eyes to its potential. As fate would have it, the couple never managed to climb the highest summit of their peak, not so much because of a lack of commitment or technical skill, but rather because of the difficulty of reaching the mountain at all. This was years before air support made our world of rock and glaciers much smaller.

Most expeditions now rely heavily on helicopters or fixed-wing aircraft. Parties fly to basecamps with sufficient supplies to wait out periods of bad weather or use airdrops to provide them with supplies. Air support has tipped the technical ante, making it possible for hard routes to be climbed on extremely remote peaks. It has also made these expeditions extremely expensive. Rarely are climbing parties in the Mount Waddington area totally self-contained, and when they are, arriving at the base of their peak is often the crux of the expedition.

With the spirit of the Mundays in mind, Shaun King and I boarded my sailboat Serein in False Creek on April 22, 1997, with three weeks of supplies, skis and climbing gear on board. We were bound for the summit of Mount Waddington. Sailing, like climbing, is a fundamentally technical activity and requires calm assessment of natural forces that are beyond our control in a very obvious and immediate way. Like climbing, sailing forces its participants into an understanding of the natural world that cannot be achieved through the urban existence characterizing people's lives.

Four days of spectacular sailing were to lead us to moorage at the head of Bute Inlet. The first day out from Vancouver, excited by the prospects ahead, we pushed on until well after midnight to moor in a small cove at the north end of Texada Island. Luminescent plankton turned the night sailing into magic, but the stress of entering an unknown cove long after dark made us decide to travel only when there was adequate light.

Sailing further north, past Desolation Sound, we encountered excellent winds in the inlets and fiords. During clear weather, higher pressure and temperature in the B.C. Interior causes the air there to rise, drawing wind into the large river valleys connecting coastal inlets to the interior. During poor weather, the generally lower pressure along the coast draws air out of the Interior and down these inlets. Past Desolation Sound the character of the coast becomes truly wild. Settlements are small and isolated. The coast here has changed little from when the Mundays travelled into the Mount Waddington area by boat 70 years ago.

My partner was immersed in all the intricacies of nautical technology: learning to reef the mains'l, tie a bowline in the spinnaker halyard and take a watch at the helm. Several nights were spent tied up to log booms in secluded coves. Had I not been sharing a small boat cabin with a hairy, smelly climber, these nights would have been incredibly romantic.

After arriving at the head of Bute Inlet, we explored the mouth of the Homathko River in order to find good moorage within the river's delta, while avoiding the dangerous sandbar. The river colours Bute Inlet grey-blue for several kilometres beyond its delta, owing to the high concentration of glacial silts suspended in the outflow. This contributes to the beauty of the delta, but makes navigation especially hazardous since there is no underwater visibility. The depth sounder determines where the bottom is, but will not pick up the numerous underwater snags, which could tear the bottom out of our fibreglass sailboat. Exploring the river delta like this is safe only on a rising tide, which would float us off if we did become fast to the bottom. Finding no suitable moorage inside the river mouth, we settled for tying to the corner of a log boom.

Sailing up the coast was a luxury vacation: I was rarely wet and never cold; I never worked bitterly hard; and I was never afraid. Compared to many of the climbing trips I have been on, there were very few hardships to be endured. I am comforted by the knowledge that when I am old and infirm and my body shrinks from the idea of carrying loads into the alpine, I will still be able to experience the power of the wilderness by sailing into the thick of it. Now we had to leave the comfort and safety of the sailboat for two weeks of ski touring with 60-pound packs on our backs.

During the planning stage, we had purposefully neglected research regarding technical difficulties and routes up Mount

Waddington. We knew that the Northwest Ridge is generally the "trade route" up the mountain, and that there were two summits: a smaller, relatively easy one and a higher, more difficult one. Other than that, details were hazy, and I had not even seen a photograph of the mountain. We hoped to attempt the higher summit, possibly from the northeast. As a result, we were prepared for a number of different possibilities, including difficult rock climbing and ice. The metal for this weighed heavy on our backs.

Early the next morning, we ferried our packs to shore and the real work began. Two weeks of food, fuel and climbing gear inside a backpack is not just overbearing, it is hellish. We began by walking a road to a logging camp where we hoped to hitch a ride. Resting was accomplished by leaning the upper part of my pack forward against the handles of my ski poles. Setting down the pack to rest was a terrible mistake, as it took so much effort to stand up again that all the effects of the rest were negated.

I cannot imagine the effort that it would have taken to get up the Homathko River valley if logging roads had not been built in this area. Without roads, it would have taken us more than a week just to get to glaciation. We were glad to accept a ride to the upper logging camp on Scar Creek. This was the only part of the trip that was not "pure", but the thought of hiking along in thick coastal brush next to a logging road was too inane, even for me. Loggers, of course, are friendly people like anyone else. They were, however, fairly used to expeditions in this area and relatively unimpressed by our goals; they recalled that several years previously a party had also come by sailboat.

When we started up the deactivated logging road in the Scar Creek valley, we were ready for serious isolation. I started to feel more and more keen as we climbed past the clear cuts into the sun-dappled mountain hemlocks near timberline. Located in a beautiful hanging valley far above Scar Creek, our first camp with a truly alpine atmosphere came on our fifth night. Up until this point we had been slogging through sun-baked porridge-snow lying thick on logging roads, which is not my idea of high-quality skiing, but once we gained elevation our spirits improved with the snow conditions. We would be exclusively on glacial ice from here.

Ragged cloud cover alternated with sunny breaks, freezing us, then roasting us. I cut the legs off my long underwear to use as shorts and grew jealous of Shaun's baseball cap. Daily we played a game of subtle nagging, each trying to make the other believe that his load was lighter, that he was shirking his duties or that he was suffering less.

Travelling on the heavily crevassed glaciers, we each vied to take the pole position on the rope. Few things are more irritating than skiing second on the rope, spending your day chasing the frozen line through the snow rather than enjoying the scenery. The first person on the rope can go at his own pace, making the second speed up or slow down to suit him, but the second must take care not to tug on the rope or to catch up and create a loop of slack.

As a result of our lack of foreknowledge, we approached the southeast side of Waddington by a direct and strenuous route, gaining and losing a great deal of elevation. The last sign of animal life was a northern flicker engaged in an expedition of its own. Five days of grinding up glaciated slopes and poking around the edge of cornices to find a route onward led us down to the Ice Valley glacier, beneath the southeast face of Waddington. This face is a grand sight. It in no way alleviated the sense of intimidation that had nagged at me since setting foot on the glaciers. Horrible, crumbling cliffs plastered in fresh snow guarded access to the summit from this side, so we opted to circle round the south side of the mountain to find a better route.

Little snow had fallen recently; we skied on a brittle, icy sun crust scoured by the wind. Skiing on this type of surface is difficult and tiring at best, dangerous at worst. Climbing up the steep Jester Col between the Ice Valley and Dais glaciers, the clouds lowered to create whiteout conditions. The only indication of the slope was the rope trailing into the mist. We were extremely careful, since losing the edge of the ski on the crust meant a possibly unstoppable slide down the col. Real fear came on the other side of the col, where we became committed to skiing across a steep, icy slope above deep crevasses when we should have been carrying our skis.

Smashing my dull edges into the icy crust, I hoped to cut through to the soft, granular snow underneath. The rope was good only for dragging both of us down the slope and into a crevasse if one of us slipped. Finally, after four or five age-long minutes, we were across the dangerous section, and my fear ebbed away.

An abandoned snow fort at the confluence of the Dais and Fury glaciers served as a food and fuel cache. We hadn't had much promising weather since leaving the boat, and we knew success would be a roll of the dice. Our plan was to put a snow cave as high on the northwest ridge as we could that day, then climb the northwest summit when our window of good weather came.

Fury Gap has a dramatic name for good reason. The wind tore at our clothing, faces and exposed skin. It was impossible to look directly into the wind or to determine whether it was cloudy or not. We were in another whiteout. It was a struggle to move against the wind, and I often had to clean the snow from behind my sunglasses. Shaun was snug behind his goggles, but I had not had the foresight to bring any and so began to suffer. It is inevitable that suffering will occur, but it did not help my motivation level.

We reached 3000m in the face of a full-fledged storm and began casting about for a place to dig a snow cave. By this time we were on the northwest ridge proper, but we could have been anywhere, so little could we see in the howling wind. In order to find a slope to dig into and to determine whether we were headed off a cliff, I threw snowballs down the slope to determine its angle. On the lee side of the ridge, snow was piling up in the storm. It appeared safe enough as we began to dig, but wind-borne snow fell continuously down our necks and onto our clothes, and our suffering increased. Now we were getting wet.

Relief came when the cave was deep enough to escape the outside conditions. It was shattered when I broke into a crevasse at the back. Not only was it deep, dark and full of ancient icicles, but the wind we sought shelter from was blowing with chilling force out of it. I made my peace with the crevasse, however, by filling it up with snow from the inside of the cave, saving the work of throwing it outside in the gale. We stopped up the crevasse with blocks and, finally, rested.

Due to the crevasse, the cave did not feel secure, but at least it kept out the storm. The sleeping spot next to the crevasse was the low-rent district, and was to be avoided if possible. We were destined to spend the next three days in this cave. We watched the entrance drift completely closed in the space of two hours, then watched cracks open in the wall from the gradual widening of the crevasse. Every few hours we packed fresh snow into these cracks to keep out the

wind. This snow cave would never feel like a home!

After the first night, it became obvious that the roof was sagging because of the widening of the crevasse and that it would eventually collapse. Shaun pushed his snow-pack ruler into the roof, and we calculated the creep in centimetres. As the cave became smaller, our claustrophobia grew. Each morning, we would have to tunnel upward through the freshly drifted snow to clear a way, swimming upward through the constricted entranceway into the blizzard outside. Conserving our food and fuel, we lay prostrate in the cave, playing card games, talking about women and whining about the weather. After three days we gave up, with a sense of relief and also of disappointment. Our window had closed.

It is very apparent how far away from outside help you are on this kind of trip. This is one of the primary attractions of the wilderness. During the 12 days we were away from the boat, we did not see anyone else. It is imperative that you trust yourself and your partner completely. With help at least four days away, I was always conscious of the need to be extra careful, although I know I was overcautious at times. Personal safety and survival can depend on the smallest decisions — such as whether to cross a slope or not, where to leave your skis or how much food and stove fuel to bring. Most choices, at a certain level, may involve life or death. This is perhaps melodramatic and a bit of an exaggeration, but I feel it is true nonetheless.

Bailing off the mountain, we retreated down wind-scoured rocks and snow slopes to our skis at Fury Gap. Several centimetres of wind-borne snow had been plastered to our skis, leaving them filigreed with delicate white feathers. The wind was still blowing hard, with the occasional ragged patch of blue showing through the streaming clouds. We dropped down the Fury Glacier to the shelter of our snow fort and revelled in a surfeit of chocolate bars and stove fuel.

Whiteouts prevailed throughout the next several days as we made our way back into the Scar Creek valley. The weather steadily warmed, with fresh precipitation every day from a series of small storms. A thick blanket of heavy, wet snow lay everywhere, and unseen avalanches growled in the murk. Reaching tree line meant total luxury: a fire and a dry place to sit. A long ski back down the road to the logging camp and a ride with a tree-planting crew brought us back to the Serein.

On the way back to Vancouver, the weather was perfect at last; we flew the colourful spinnaker for half the distance. Summer was on the way, and we left the snow, cold and damp behind us on the glaciers. Nothing has as much power to affect climbers and sailors as the weather; warm sun can make all manner of problems seem surmountable. It was warm enough for Shaun to sail naked when we reached False Creek — a penalty he had to pay for losing at cards during our three-day stay in the snow cave.

This three-week expedition was accomplished without air support, without outside contact, and at a total cost of $700 — far below the cost of most week-long expeditions to this area. Our provisions were bought at Costco, and we had no sponsorship. Most of the trip was propelled by totally renewable resources: the wind and our bodies.

The Lunatic Apprenticeship

John Chilton

Huh, what? Oh yeah, Jesus Christ, I remember this time..." I knew Fred was raving again. I smiled and turned up the Cult tape that was already blaring through the speakers. I love Fred and I know his ravings are full of valuable information but I was happy that today it was in someone else's ear. Chris and I could just sit back and cruise to the music. Jason, who had never met Fred Beckey before, was a captive audience somewhere just ahead of us on the Stuart-Cassiar highway in Northern B.C.

When Chris had called to tell me Fred was coming over with maps and photos of a peak he wanted to do, 1 was pretty sure that I was more psyched on just hanging out in the warm sunshine and climbing in Squamish. Fred unfolded the first map and pointed to the remote northwest corner of B.C., and I noticed a wry smile creep over his face as he set the hook and reeled me in. Approximately 70 km west of Telegraph Creek, near the Alaska-B.C. border, the alpine area surrounding Chutine Lake forms the headwaters of the Chutine River, a major tributary of the mighty Stikine. Chutine Peak dominates. The south face rears up an abrupt and dramatic 3000m from the shores of the lake. The lower two-thirds is solid granite, but the upper portion is metamorphic and quite broken. We

Chutine Pk. N. Face This upper section of the route follows the obvious couloir.

heard a local rumour that some Swiss guys had climbed this face a few years before. It must have been quite a journey. Our plan was to bushwhack over the northwest shoulder into the Barrington River valley and find a route up the north face of Chutine Peak.

A 40-minute flight with Terry Walkley of Apex Air in Telegraph Creek landed us on the northern shore of Chutine Lake. Whereas Jason, Chris and I were content to spend the rest of the afternoon absorbing the serene solitude and beauty of this place, Fred would have none of it: "There are still seven hours of daylight left. Let's get going." Within two hours the coastal bush had engulfed us and the thrashing began. With darkness approaching, we decided that Jason and Fred should stay together while Chris and I tried to hammer our way through to better ground. Devil's club, slide alder, windfall, vertical rock bands, exposed slab, seemingly solid walls of bush, and bugs as big as buffalo — if bush-whacks were ice climbs, this would be a Grade VII. It was well into the next day when we broke out into more open terrain above the Barrington valley. The awe and privilege we felt as we looked out at the natural splendour of this untouched country was marred by worry. We were surrounded by awesome alpine possibilities, but neither of us had a rope. Finally we heard a faint reply to our yodels, and a solitary figure emerged from the bush. When the thrashing had become ridiculous, Jason had gone back down to the base of the shoulder with Fred, filled his pack with Fred's share

of the communal gear, and then hammered his way up to where we were waiting.

"Did you bring a rope?" "Oh, yeah. I got both of 'em in here." "Wow, man. You're my fucking hero." His pack weighed a ton. Another very full day spent traversing above the valley and then climbing about 800m up a steep, unnamed glacier brought us to a good high camp beneath the north face. Then the rain came.

After three days our tents resembled wilted yellow flowers, the melting ice having left them perched on ever-shrinking pedestals. The next day we were scheduled to begin our return to Chutine Lake to meet the plane.

Journal entry, Aug. 14, 1997

Time means little now. Sleep is a welcome respite from the monotony of these yellow walls. Dreams take me into imagined activity, and hours pass in a twinkling. I hate Ms weather, but the boredom is strengthening my desire. Two days ago I felt overwhelmed by the defenses this mountain was putting up. Protecting its summit like a treasured leader within unassailable castle walls. I doubted my resolve, my ability. But now I want it. I want to meet this leader, this king, this summit whose knowledge needs such protection. I want to learn what he can teach me. The passage of time within these walls cannot change. Perhaps the weather can. It would seem so unworthy of this place to be sent home without a shot. At least an opportunity to throw our feeble human desire at these grand walls. At least an opportunity to learn a little from the strength that lies within. To have put in so much effort to get here only to be shooed away like an irritating insect.

Then the weather broke and we got our day. The obstacles slowly fell away and the mountain rewarded us for our patience. The ice was nice — 65 to 75 degrees most of the way — until we came to the "hairball" section. It was Jason's lead; he came through again, cruising the vertical crux without hesitation. Once atop the face, we had a few hundred feet of ridge left to reach the summit. With less than two hours of daylight remaining and an arduous descent ahead of us, our decision wasn't a difficult one. Sometimes the sanity of survival must overcome the success of summits, so we began the first of 20 rappels back down the north face. We had built about half of the necessary V-threads on the way up, so the descent went quite well despite my headlamp's decision to jump off my head and go screaming down the face to the sound of a bellowing curse. At 5 a.m., we elected to curl up in our bivi-sacks and wait out the last hour of darkness before crossing the final sérac field. When Chris asked if Jason and I were going to remove our crampons before getting into our bivis, we all leaned back and howled.

"Umm, yeah. But I've heard that I'm 'crazy, so you don't have to."

Twenty-five and a half hours after leaving, we were back in camp. We took three and a half hours to dry out some gear and catch a nap before the ten-hour slog back down to Chutine Lake. As we reached the landing/pickup zone, darkness shepherded us into slide alder through calf-deep water. We laughed again, knowing that all that remained was to drink coffee with the young girls at the Riversong Cafe in Telegraph Creek until we quivered — if Fred hadn't scared them off already.

When the plane arrived to whisk us back to civilization, I turned back for one last look at Chutine Peak and waved goodbye. I was tired and sore, and we had failed. There is no question that the summit had always been our goal, and never along the way did that goal change. Yet I smiled and felt no sense of failure. We had had our shot, we had been given our opportunity to learn, and we had climbed one hell of an ice route. It was a mind-blowing trip that we would always remember, and that's what climbing is all about.

The Lunatic Apprenticeship North Face, Chutine Peak, 1000m. V AI4+. F.A.: Fred Beckey, Jason Robinson, Chris Kettles, John Chilton. August 5-16, 1997.

The Disappointed Mountains

Drew Brayshaw

To places untravelled/They have travelled/So that others could/Come that way/And marvel at their music/Written boldly/On the faces/Of those disappointed peaks (excerpt from "The Rock Bandits" by Paul Lawson, Raincoast Chronicles, 17)

I was reading an issue of the British magazine *Climber*, which had a feature article on the joys of the ground-up, on-sight first ascent. The stories and pictures depicted some of the U.K.'s best trads running it out on dirty, loose 12bX face-

Mike Buda on the fourth pitch, Bre-X Buttress

climbs — ground up, no inspection, no cleaning, no pre-placed gear. This is apparently "better than sex", according to the cover blurb. I sat back and tried to think of actually doing a crag climb that way: climbing at one's limit; scratching away for pro', way run out; finishing the climb only to realize that your end result is a loose, dirty route that no one will ever repeat (since the YDS doesn't reward a choss pile with a higher grade, there is no motive to push the numbers that way). I am not a complete stranger to this method of establishing a route, having done just that on one or two climbs at Skaha, with my reward being almost total vilification by local climbers for not cleaning them. My partners mutinied too; they didn't like the feeling of being targets as the loose rocks showered down on their belay.

I was getting kind of bummed thinking about all this, since I was all keen to try it again and see if it really was better than sex or not. I imagined trying to do one of my projects in Cheakamus Canyon this way. My imagination drifted away from the enjoyment of the post-climb adrenaline rush and euphoric glow to some of the other possible consequences: dead belayers, lungs full of dirt, and so on. This didn't seem better than sex anymore! Besides, where would I find a sucker to hold the rope?

Suddenly it hit me: the Brits are only climbing this way on their crags because they don't have any mountains worthy of the name. Some of the routes I had done

in the mountains in the last year fitted the "ground up, no inspection, no cleaning except on lead" maxim exactly. I had thought they were just good fun, but I guessed now that the reason they were so much fun was because they truly were better than sex! I got all hyped up on this idea and ran out and cornered an old buddy. After listening to me babble, he considered the idea, then shook his head.

"I guess it all depends on how good the sex is," was his only comment.

THE OLD SETTLER, Northwest Ridge

This one was a bit of an inadvertent adventure, since I had no idea that there were any accessible unclimbed lines left on the Settler. Doug Wilm, Shane Cook and I went in mid-June to try to get into the east side of the Settler. Someone had told us that this was the way to go. It turned out he couldn't tell east from west; he had just reversed the compass directions for accessing the standard route. After bailing on the overgrown logging roads east of the Settler in Cogburn Creek, we decided to check out the brand-new roads in Settler Creek. These run all the way up to the lake under the Settler's huge, slabby, loose north face (1000m high). We headed up an obvious snow gully bounding the face on the right (west) side (beginning at GR 986861 on 92H/12), climbing 2800 ft. of up to 30-degree snow to a col (GR 984851), then traversed the long northwest ridge along the top of the face, over the pointy 6500-ft. summit (GR 991853) and all the way to the Settler's north peak (the high point). Getting around Peak 6500 involved tricky, loose 3rd-class gullies on the south face, and there were several 4th-class pitches and one of 5.5 on the final series of towers before the north peak (GR 997853).

The crux, however, was the traverse across the notch at the top of the standard route's descent gully, which involved traversing 45° snow without an ice axe — I had left it with my pack at the top of the roped pitches. We saw several goats along this 1.5-km-long ridge and found one cairn at a notch immediately before the start of the technical pitches. This point could have been reached either by our traverse or directly via a gully from Daiphy Lake; it seemed to us that the cairn marked the high point of someone's previous attempt, so we called this only the first complete ascent of the northwest ridge. The rock was generally all right, loose in a few spots but mostly tolerable, and the route took 10.5 hours return from Settler Creek (III, 5.5). Several slings, a set of nuts and a set of hexes were all that was needed for this long scramble, which had worse rock than, but was otherwise comparable to the west ridge of the North Twin Sister in Washington State: an enjoyable day with big exposure down the north face. A later attempt by some friends to repeat this route confirmed that it is best to climb it while the approach gully is still snow-filled.

MOUNT VATU, Bre-X Buttress (northeast buttress or north face of east ridge)

At the start of August, Mike Buda and I drove up to visit this peak, which featured prominently on p. 88 of the 1997 CAJ. We were expecting Bugaboo-like rock and incredible climbing after reading Serl's article, which turned out to be not exactly the case. We went in on the second of August via the Jamie Creek roads and set up camp in the "pocket meadow" as per Serl's article. That afternoon we scrambled up pumice slopes north of camp to bag the 8281-ft. summit there, an enjoyable granite knob (3rd class via the east ridge). It was lacking a cairn, so we fashioned one and spent a few hours eyeing Vayu before enjoying a pumice ski back to camp. The next day, we hiked up the flat "Pancake Glacier" northeast of Vayu and climbed a seven-pitch route up the obvious buttress dropping north from the east ridge to the glacier (quite obvious in the 1997 photo), beginning at a snow patch on the lower left and following slabby ramps up and right for five pitches to the crest, then straight up for two more pitches to join the east ridge. The climbing was up to 5.8 AO, but the rock was crap — one and a half good pitches out of seven, with the rest being loose, wet, dirty or all three together. We named the route Bre-X Buttress (II, 5.8 AO) because we felt as if we had just been involved in one of the scams of the century! We used seven or eight pins, from KBs to 5/8" angles; a set of nuts; Tri Cams; and four cams from 1/2" to 3". Despite not being what we had expected, it was a challenging climb, though no classic. We agreed that we had had fun, but that we wouldn't recommend the route, not even to our worst enemies! Numerous other lines remain to be plucked in this region, but the area really seems more suited to general mountaineering.

MOUNT WEBB, The Digestive System (northeast buttress)

I first noticed this line while doing some terrain mapping in the Chilliwack Valley a year or two ago. At the start of September, Doug Wilm, Carl Fleet, Eric Hutton and I were looking for a worthy project to challenge our mountaineering skills that could be done in a day and a half, and we decided to give this line a go. Fuelled by Tim Horton doughnuts and beef jerky, we made it to Radium Lake in record time and set up a bivi by the old cabin. The next day we hiked straight up from the lake, crossed the northwest ridge of Webb and descended a loose gully into the cirque to the north, traversing slabs and pocket séracs to reach our objective. Beginning left of the base of the buttress, we climbed two pitches up steep, clean corners (5.10 and 5.7) as two parties of two, following parallel lines to the right of a large, loose chimney. Our routes joined for the third pitch — a delicate face-climbing traverse out right to the buttress crest, on which the first gear (a marginal nut) appeared about 15m out from the belay, immediately after the crux was passed (5.9) — and for the fourth pitch, up wet slabs and heather ledges (5.6). The routes then diverged again; two more pitches of lower quality (5.6+ and 5.8) got us to a major snow ledge and an escape line onto the upper east ridge. Some 2nd-class climbing led to the top. We named the route The Digestive System for the way the climbing began with quality pitches and gradually became crap. A full rack of nuts and cams up to a #4 Camalot was required for this 300-m line (II, 5.10).

I have to admit that none of these climbs was "better than sex" .They will not appear in any future editions of the "classic" or "selected climbs" style of guidebooks. The climbing was technical, continuously interesting, and challenging; the views were superb, and the positions and exposure excellent. However, all three routes also had loose rock, vegetation and a lack of fixed protection. Those in search of classics would be well advised to stick to popular lines like those found in the Chehalis or on Mount Slesse. These lines, and the many others like them that remain unclimbed in southwestern B.C., demand a different mind-set: a will to explore, get dirty and scare oneself as one disappoints the mountains.

Early Risers In The Niut Range

Don Serl

The West Coast suffered through the wettest year on record in 1997, but Gord Betenia and I were lucky enough to pick the only consistently fine week in months for a trip into the southern Niut Range, about 40 km northeast of Waddington. Our base was in the tree-line pass at 1750m that is 4 km south of Mount Ottarasko, between "Paradise Valley", the main west-side feeder of Ottarasko Creek, and the Nude Creek drainage. This location had long appealed to me, both because of the proximity to Ottarasko — a sprawling, heavily glaciated 3000-m peak that I wanted to "tick" — but also because of the superb northern flanks of nearby 2900-m "Cloud-drifter Peak". Both had caught my attention way back in '85 as Greg Foweraker, Peter Croft and I enjoyed the early-morning views from the east peak of Razorback before pitching ourselves into the Waddington Range traverse. Steep, icy, nearly unknown peaks: perfect!

The weather was crystalline as we set up camp in a glade of trees in the pass, and our excitement was high as we bedded down: both the face and the ridge on the 2500-m summit ("Early Riser Peak") on the south side of the pass looked superb, and the approaches amounted to 10-minute walks. We did the typical 6 a.m. exit from the bags and set off up the ridge an hour and a half or so later. The terrain was easy but exposed, and by 9 a.m. the snow was suffering from the sun. Fifteen minutes later we were unpacking the rope below a dripping, curling, corniced section of ridge, eyeing the drop to our right and taking note of the absence of belays. Well, on second thought... maybe not. An hour later we were back in camp.

We spent the afternoon sunning on the easy summit northeast of camp, and got up at 4 a.m. the next morning. The snow was frozen hard as we skied east and curved south into the next glacial basin. From the col at its head we doubled back up the southeast ridge of 2800-m "Sleepwalker Peak", which was an easy snow-climb, and by just after 9 a.m. we were on top. The views were stunning, especially south to Reliance and Queen Bess. The snow was softening on the descent, but we got back to camp in good time and enjoyed a blazing-hot afternoon of food and relaxation.

We repeated the 4 a.m. alarm on Tuesday morning and traversed left around the corniced section on the ridge on "Early Riser" which had scared us off earlier. Even arriving on the top at 8:10 a.m., however, involved climbing a couple of hundred metres of pretty sketchy, sun-baked, east-facing snow; we snapped a couple of photos and bailed as fast as we could to minimize the growing danger. These conditions were on our minds as we lazed through another hot afternoon and planned our attempt on Ottarasko, which was going to involve five or six hundred metres of very steep, south-facing snow; we therefore dragged ourselves out of our pits at midnight and were away by 1 a.m. Unfortunately, squally clouds were moving in, eliminating an overnight freeze; after plugging onward for a couple of hours into increasingly boggy conditions, we turned tail and went back to camp.

We had a radio on this trip, and from the ridge above camp had managed to contact the Kings to get pulled out: it seemed the snow had become too soft to make any climbing feasible. However, the helicopter didn't arrive that day, or on Thursday morning. Gord finally trudged up to the ridge (we couldn't "get out" from camp), only to return with the discouraging news that Mike had been required for Forest Service duty and couldn't come for us until Saturday night or Sunday morning. Although Wednesday's squalls had passed quickly and Thursday had been perfect, the weather closed in after dinner, and rain and snow followed. It looked as if we were going to "enjoy" a pretty boring wait.

Luckily, the poor weather blew through on Friday evening, returning us to bitingly cold nights, and we were up early again on Saturday. The attractive face on "Early Riser", directly above camp, took only two hours. The snow was perfect, and it was possible to flat-foot crampon up pretty much anything that was white. We waited on the summit until we reckoned the Kings would be out of bed, then got on the radio to put off the pickup until Sunday evening — the snow was perhaps the finest I had ever climbed on, and we wanted another crack at Ottarasko. The sunbaked afternoon was enlivened by watching marmots pop out of the snow nearby as their hibernation came to an end; bird life multiplied; a wolverine (the second we had seen) trundled through the pass in the evening: spring was coming to the high country.

We estimated four and a half hours for the trip, so arose at 1 a.m. and got away at 2 a.m. Four hours and 25 minutes from camp, we clambered onto the excitingly exposed summit chisel, having thoroughly enjoyed about 400m of superb snow climbing up a steep face and broad ramp on the south face. We then promptly set off down, as it would not do to be downclimbing the steepest parts of the face after the sun had warmed it. At 9 a.m., we reached the ridge above camp and radioed out, only to discover that Mike was going to be pulled away again by the Forest Service that afternoon, which would delay our flight out. Simple: we were less than an hour above camp, so we reset the pickup for 11 a.m. Just as we were walking the last bag out onto the snow, Mike whipped around the corner, and a few minutes later we were sucking in the fresh spring scents at Bluff Lake. Our morning schedules thereafter reverted to normal, but so too (unfortunately) did the days. What a pity times like these can't go on forever.

Nomenclature Note: "Paradise Valley" is the name in local use for the main drainage in the area, which lay to the east of our campsite. There is considerable mineralization southwest of the junction of this valley with Ottarasko Creek: thus the human attention (and the name), which is rare in these parts. "Cloud-drifter" and "Sleepwalker" were climbed and named by Bob Woodsworth and others in 1967; it is unlikely anyone else has visited this attractive group since. "Early Riser" is my suggestion.

New Ascents In The Tchaikazan River Area

Peter Green

One hundred miles on a gravel road in a 15-passenger van leaves scars that don't heal quickly. We had spent 16 hours in a rental van before our group of seven students and three adult leaders spilled out onto the road newly bulldozed into the wilderness of the Chilcotin Range. It took some time for each of us to regain our sense of balance and to realize that the glaciated peaks and wild rivers were indeed worth the unending drive.

We found ourselves in a high basin above the Falls River. A long string of lakes dotted the alpine valley. Access to this area was provided by a recently reopened road serving a mining operation high in an adjacent valley. The weather was mixed as we set up camp on August 23, 1997.

The group consisted of 10 climbers from the Mazama Explorer Post in

Portland, Oregon. Each of the students had spent two or three years involved in intensive climbing activity and training in mountaineering. Despite their young ages — 16 through 20 — many of the students had over thirty summits to their credit. The goal of the trip was to explore areas with little or no previous climbing activity. We settled on this remote region 10 km east-northeast of the eastern extremity of the Tchaikazan Glacier.

In an ongoing effort to fulfill the self-imposed obligation of the group to climb like crazed weasels, we made an ascent of Mount McLeod via the east ridge only 12 hours after arriving in Basecamp. Although the route was straightforward scrambling on wet scree, a previous ascent via this route had not been recorded. That evening the rains came. We remained tentbound for two and a half days. Our tans and egos faded, as did memories of what it was like to climb in the glorious sunshine. It wasn't until Wednesday morning that we deemed the weather decent enough to venture from the safety of our tent city. Partially driven by festering animosity spawned by 56 hours of card playing, we chose as our objective the heavily glaciated peak that dominates the south end of the basin and rises 4500 ft. above the Lord River near its junction with Chapman Creek.

The climb was marked by poor weather and visibility, necessitating the unusual practice of carrying rocks to be left periodically along the glacier in order to supplement the wands that would show us the way back. Seven members of the team set out for the peak and climbed the glacier north of the objective. We at first tried to climb a steep snow gully that connected the glacier to the summit ridge, but were turned back by fresh snow and lack of visibility. We retraced part of the route and gained the summit ridge at a point about a quarter mile north of the summit. Scrambling on steep and wet rock finally brought us to the top late in the afternoon. We rejoiced at seeing no evidence of a previous ascent and proposed the name of Mount Becker for the peak, which at 8820 ft. is the second highest in the area. This was the initial first ascent for almost everyone in the party.

The next few days provided fine weather, and we made the most of it. One small group climbed the north peak of Mount McLeod via a 40-degree snow ramp on the northeast face, while a larger group completed a traverse of three peaks east of camp. The traverse began with an ascent of an unnamed 8800-ft. peak via the west face. The peak had been climbed previously by at least one party. We traversed south from there, easily scrambling to the top of an 8100-ft. unclimbed peak that we dubbed "Broken Finger" after an unfortunate cairn-building incident on the summit. From here we continued south to climb a 7600-ft. peak, which showed evidence of a previous ascent.

Mount McLeod; the route is the left skyline.

Two peaks south of the lake basin were climbed the following day and named "East Twin" and "West Twin". The two peaks are the furthest outliers of the Mount Becker massif, being about 2 km east-northeast from that summit. A reasonably pleasant granite dihedral (5.6) was climbed on the north buttress of West Twin by a group of three, while the 40-degree snow couloir separating the two peaks was ascended by another pair. The ascent of East Twin was nothing more then a short scramble from the south, although the peak presents a fine granite face on its north and west aspect.

A group of three climbers also made an ascent of the narrow, 55-degree snow couloir on the north face of Mount Becker just east of the summit. The route featured steep snow and ice, with moderate rock scrambling.

We broke camp early Saturday morning, leaving behind fine weather. The opportunity to make first ascents and climb in remote wilderness provided the students with a landmark in their climbing careers.

New Ascents/New Routes Team members: Robert Johnson, Matt Hickey, Alex Brun, Cory Nauman, Peter Joy, Josh Hess-Yoder, Conrad Kornmann, Peter Green, John Youngman, Susan Barbur.

Mount McLeod, east ridge 9230 ft. The entire team. August 24, 1997.

Mount Becker, north face glacier and west ridge 8820 ft. Johnson, Hickey, Nauman, Hess-Yoder, Kornmann, Green, Barbur. August 27, 1997.

Mount McLeod, North Peak, north face. Youngman, Brun, Hess-Yoder. August 28, 1997.

Unnammed 8800, east face. Johnson, Hickey, Nauman, Joy, Barbur, Green. August 28, 1997.

"Broken Finger", north ridge, Johnson, Hickey, Nauman, Joy, Green. August 28, 1997.

"Mount Sauron", north ridge. Johnson, Hickey, Nauman, Joy, Green. August 28, 1997.

"West Twin", north face. Hickey, Hess-Yoder, Green. August 29, 1997.

"West Twin", north face couloir. Johnson, Nauman. August 29, 1997.

"East Twin", south ridge. Johnson, Hickey, Nauman, Hess-Yoder, Green. August 29, 1997.

Mount Becker, north face couloir. Youngman, Brun, Joy. August 29, 1997.

Iskut To The Unuk— Or Nearly

David E. Williams

We circled over and over again, virtually skimming the surface of the silty Iskut, which was broken by branches and sand bars. Landing smoothly with the engine roaring, we powered upriver against the strong current to a little sand bar on shore that we had noted from above. We both held the tail wing of the plane to keep the

alignment required for takeoff; otherwise the current would have had the float plane barrelling into the bushes nearby. Another mass of roaring sound and spray, a goodbye roll of the wings, and we were left with a mountain of gear and the immense "silence" of the Iskut River valley.

The idea for this summer trip had sprung from a notion that Markus Kellerhals and I had pondered. How could we link ski trips that we had made north of the Stikine and Iskut rivers to those made south of the Unuk River? We decided that the terrain was too rugged to safely negotiate on skis. But a high-level traverse along the border between B.C. and Alaska looked possible and would probably make a delightful outing in the heart of the Coast Range. Unfortunately, however, for Markus — my co-conspirator for seven seasons of traverses in northern B.C., Alaska and the Yukon — the economics and time for the trip proved too much for his pocket; sadly, I had to look elsewhere for a trip mate. Initially I could find no takers, but eventually Peter Celliers, a great friend and ex-Vancouverite now living in Berkeley, California, proved keen and the trip took off.

On that morning of August 17, 1997, Peter and I had flown from Vancouver to Prince Rupert (Peter from San Francisco the afternoon before), then on to Ketchikan, to arrive on the banks of the Iskut River that afternoon. Viewing the maps, we soon realized that I had had us land at the mouth of the Inhini River (approximately 14 km upriver from the junction with the Stikine River). Our proposed drop-off point was to have been Caralin Creek. Fortunately, the map and the view above indicated that the ridge running west from the Inhini delta should lead us up to Snowy Mountain. Luck was with us that Sunday evening; we were able to avoid a nasty bush thrash to Caralin Creek. In approximately two hours (perhaps I exaggerate here) we covered a rather heinous kilometre or two through buckbrush, alders and swamp crisscrossed with numerous moose trails. After only one fall dunking we arrived at the base of our ridge to the high country and made camp.

The following day we loaded ourselves down with 14 days of food and gear and made our way slowly up through low-elevation spruce. We slid and scrambled across the same moss-covered slab a bear had struggled across earlier. Late in the afternoon, we broke out of the forest to fantastic views: the Iskut River snaking east to the interior, the Stikine River to the west, the Great Glacier, and Great Lake dotted with icebergs, Hoodoo Mountain and the ever-dominant Kates Needle. These features were familiar friends and represented the start and the finish from two past trips. Tired after a long day's climb, we camped at the 4000-ft. mark, 2 km northeast of Snowy Mountain. As the evening proceeded, high clouds and wind rolled in. Rain started that night, and we spent the next day in the tent.

August 20 proved to be a gorgeous, sunny day. Ridgetop hiking led up and over Snowy Mountain and southeast past mounts Whipple and Geoffrion, past a family of goats to a camp overlooking a world of continuous mountains and some very green valleys 8 km north-northwest of Mount Fawcett. The next day, we continued south to Mount Fawcett, then did an arduous decent into the upper Inhini River valley. Salmonberry bushes, ferns and alder made for very rough going both on the descent into the valley and on the ascent to a camp at about 3800 ft. on the ridge 3 km northeast of Mount Rastus.

This proved to be a disastrous day for me. On the ridge descent towards Mount Fawcett, I slipped on a scree slope. With the full weight of my pack driving my downward motion, my left foot slammed into the slope. I heard and felt a snap of pain on the inside of my left knee, then my leg collapsed. After a rest and the addition of a Tensor bandage, we decided to avoid our proposed high traverse over Mount Fawcett, as this would entail some scrambling on the descent. Instead, we opted to descend to the turbulent Inhini River.

That evening clouds rolled in, which only added to the dramatic look of Mount Fawcett's spire and to my dampened spirits. In retrospect, the day and a half of heavy rain that followed was probably a blessing in disguise; it meant that I kept the weight off my knee. However, an injury four days into what was proving to be a very rugged fourteen-day trip weighed heavily on my mind, and every scenario possible went through my wandering thoughts. For the first time ever, I actually wanted a trip to be over and finished with.

After lunch on the 23rd, the rain eased and Peter and I decided to continue on rather than returning to the Iskut and trying to attract the attention of an ore plane flying in and out of the Bronson gold mine. "Slow and careful" was the name of the game for the rest of the trip. My knee was painful and continually felt as if it were coming out of its socket, clicking with each step and always on the verge of collapse. With care, the Tensor and quantities of Ibuprofen, however, we made progress whenever the weather permitted.

We continued south up the ridge to Mount Rastus, a very dramatic setting of blue ice with a dark green backdrop, and descended over ice into the northern fork of the upper Craig River valley. The following day, the weather forced us to stay low in the valley rather than high on what should have been a continuous high traverse. The creeks and rivers were now raging, and all crossings become serious endeavours. The bush was unbelievably bad. After we joined the main valley almost at the head of the Craig River, a promontory of deposited silt allowed us to cross the river safely. We camped below cliffs, feeling soaked and cold.

Luck was with us at this point. With the aid of the map, we had gambled that there would be a break in the cliffs to the south. Although steep and ringed by bluffs, a route had been carved by a creek-cum-waterfall. This placed us in a pass at the head of the north fork of the Bradfield River. We found ourselves in a heavenly, miniature land of brooks, ponds and meadows, bathed in a brief interlude of golden sunlight — the first in days. More horrendous alders and salmon-berry bushes led us to the next series of ridges, glaciers and peaks, which straddles two forks of the north fork of the Bradfield River, 14 km to the west of Mount Lewis Cass. It was a lovely afternoon. We felt we were in the heart of the Coast Range. Broad ridges topped with heather marked the south-facing slopes; ice covered the northerly exposures. Icefalls tumbled down between the peaks, and below us lay a gorgeous turquoise lake. Once again sleet, rain and rather intense, damp cold forced us to prepare a hasty tent platform on the glacier a little below the crest of the peak at 5600 ft. After days of damp weather, our sleeping bags were now the worse for wear. We spent a rather uncomfortable, dank night here.

The morning of the 26th dawned looking a little brighter, but after we had packed everything but the tent, the clouds rolled in and the rain came in earnest again. An hour or so later, during the next opening, we made our way past slots to the peak at 5600 ft. Traversing north, we descended into the middle branch of the upper north fork of the Bradfield River. We hiked down the valley for approximately 3 km and then

up to the lovely, heathery pass that divides the drainages of the north fork of the Bradfield River and the south fork of the upper Craig River. Although it was getting late, we decided to continue southeast along the ridge to a camp approximately 1 km south of the small peak at 4739 ft., on a very comfortable, sandy beach. The Coastal scenery was taking on a film-set look: very two-dimensional, with a planar, metallic sky. Needless to say, the relaxed beach scenario quickly ended when the rain started during supper. We spent the next two days hunkered down, viewing the inside of a cloud as we listened to the wind and rain, rationed our noodles and counted the days. At this point I don't think either of us expected to make our pickup at Blue Lake at 10 a.m. on August 31. Fortunately, we had a backup plan. If we were not there on Sunday, Tachwan Air would come back for us the following Tuesday morning. We were still confident that we could make the Tuesday deadline.

On the morning of our 13th day, August 29, there was no wind or rain, but our view was still restricted to the inside of a cloud. We needed to get moving; with the aid of a compass, an altimeter, our noses and 10- to 20-m visibility, we poked our way southeast along the ridge until we reached the ridge end and Peak 5700. From Peak 5700 we changed course and descended north down the glacier for a kilometre, then swung northeast and started the ascent of the sharp south-southwest ridge of Peak 7055. On the lower slopes of this ridge, wolverine and goat prints abounded. Halfway up the ridge, the sky cleared enough to give glorious views down to the rugged landscape of glaciers and ridges we had walked on earlier that morning. The ridge started to become steep, narrow and rather blocky. At this point we left the ridge and skirted along steep snow, weaving around slots just below the rock on the west side of the ridge. At 6200 ft. we crossed over the ridge, dropped onto the east-side glacier and traversed east over the second of two nunataks to the base of Mount Lewis Cass. Our traverse below the southwest face was straightforward except for one tricky move getting back onto the glacier from the rock. Finally, after 12 hours and 5000 ft. of elevation gain, a slow trudge back up the glacier to regain some lost elevation placed us on the southeast ridge of Mount Lewis Cass; we camped a couple of hundred feet below the peak. Although we were both very tired, we thoroughly enjoyed the late-afternoon display: clouds of golden pink and the light on the peaks as the skies opened, the sun set and the stars came out. A tasty soup, followed by curried rice with coconut milk and tuna, rounded the day off nicely. We were confident we would make our prearranged Sunday pickup time.

After a cold night that left lots of frost on the tent, an exquisite day dawned. Peter could not resist. He was up snapping photos in the cold while I stayed snug and cosy under two sleeping bags. Our original plan had been to traverse south from here along the divide of land above the head of the Blue River and to drop into the tributary valley that flows into the main Blue River valley just over a mile northwest of Blue Lake, our pickup point. Although we eyed and anticipated this lovely ridge system snaking off into the distance, a shorter route to Blue Lake appeared to exist; after all our delays, this was the way we opted to head. Traversing east-northeast below Peak 6322 and over to the col to the north of this peak, we soon crested to a viewpoint with 6000 ft. of relief down to the Blue River valley, Blue Lake and the lava beds of the Unuk River — quite incredible, although my knee groaned at the thought of this descent and the bush ahead of us that afternoon.

After ascending the 6000-ft. peak to the northeast of the col, we started our descent to the southeast. A few balled-up-crampon moves on a mixture of steep ice and snow brought us down onto a perfectly graded ridge. The ridge descent consisted of beautifully coloured sedimentary rock formations covered in heather and goat trails, with snow and a glacier a few yards away on the north side. The backdrop of glaciers and the Blue River valley added to the stupendous nature of this walk in the wilds. We stopped for lunch at 4600 ft. on the nose of the ridge. After a good filling of hummus and cracker crumbs, the agonizing descent began. Initially we headed due east into the large tributary valley and picked up a bench system at the 3000-ft. mark. Then we headed south and southeast, sliding down the heather on our bums until we entered the wrestling zone of salmonberry bushes, alders and ferns, where we attempted to follow creekbeds as much as possible. We finally reached mature forests full of devil's club. Continuing south, we picked up another bench below a cliff band at around the 1400-ft. level. This made for easy going just above a canyon, since the bench consisted of lovely, low-elevation swamp grasslands covered in wild cotton. On reaching the end of the bench, we descended down the nose of the ridge to the alluvial flood plain of the Blue River. We poked around for quite a while to find a safe place to cross the river. Even the tributary creek we had descended was now raging and angry. We decided to make camp on gravel flats near a spot where the river split into three braids and to cross first thing in the morning. While sitting on a log, we cooked a spaghetti dinner and watched the Blue River fall by over a foot. The stars came out and began to twinkle. Luckily for us, it was going to be a snow-freezing night. Thank goodness it was no longer raining!

We were up at 4:45 a.m. The crossing of the Blue River was straightforward. For the next couple of hours we crashed through alders and buckbrush and waded up to our hip belts in beaver ponds as we continually crossing back and forth across various small braids and tributaries. On occasions we walked pleasantly, one of us limping, along a wide-open alluvial plain. Finally, we splashed across several slow-moving channels and walked out onto a lovely delta at the end of Blue Lake. Canada geese and loons greeted us with their calls, and perhaps a small bear looked on, too — we found fresh prints nearby. We could see, 5300 ft. above us, where we had stood just the morning before. The level of the lake rose quickly as the snows started to make their tumbling journey. Our friendship was fresh and alive.

Half an hour later, Tachwan Air floated by. "How was the trip, guys?" "Oh, fine!" The flight out, the scenery, the lava beds of the Unuk River, Ketchikan, the coast — those are another story and the beginning of trips to come.

That evening we were asleep in my apartment in Kitsilano, Vancouver. My knee is still recovering.

Cambria Icefield Traverse

Markus Kellerhals

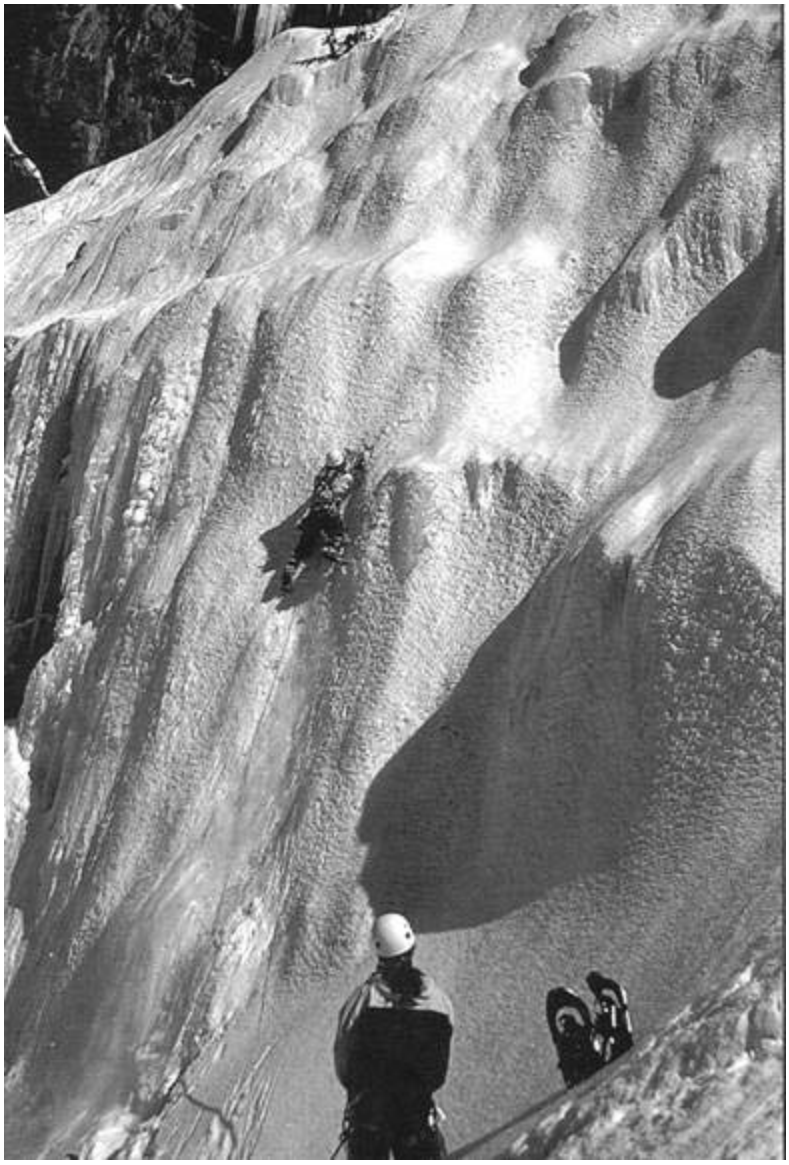
The Cambria Icefield lies east of Stewart, B.C., in the Boundary Range of the Coast Mountains. It is a large expanse of ice, punctuated by numerous peaks of 6000 to 9000 ft. From the south end of the Cambria Icefield, more glaciated terrain stretches southward to the Nass River.

Between May 5 and 18, our group of four — Joe Fillipone, Matthias Jakob, Dave Williams and I — traversed the Cambria Icefield on skis. We travelled from north to south, starting where the Bear Glacier

Above the Kinsuch valley. Photo: Markus Kellerhals

descends to the Stewart Highway and finishing at a logging camp located near Kwinamuck Lake in the Nass Valley.

We climbed several peaks en route: an 8000-ft. peak one mile north of Otter Peak, an 8000-ft. peak 3.5 miles northeast of Otter Peak, an 8200-ft. peak 14.5 miles east of Stewart, Lavender Peak, Tchitin Peak and several minor summits between Lavender and Tchitin peaks. We found cairns on Lavender Peak and on one of the 8000-ft. peaks. All the peaks were straightforward climbs on steep snow and easy rock. Lavender Peak was particularly pleasant since it offered an uninterrupted 4000-ft. ski run on the descent. We had a great deal of poor weather en route, which somewhat hampered our explorations.



Sean Miller on Keener

New B.C. Ice Routes

Miller Time 25m. W13

Approach up the Rainbow Lake trail to just before entering the old growth. At an elevation of approximately 1000m, look left towards Mount Sproat and follow left (south) along the edge of the old growth until you see the cliffs. The flow can be seen running in the summer. The climb is steeper at the bottom. It seems to form early and can be seen from the Blackcomb Glacier Rescue Road. Approach is approximately 2 1 /2 hours.

Sean Miller, Solo (20/12/97)

The following two routes are located just northeast of the Rambles on the opposite side of the Cayoosh River (use hip waders or cross on ice jams) an the Duffy Lake Road. Wishful Thinking is furthest right, and El Nino is in the middle of three obvious routes on the lower face.

El Nino 35m. W14

Lots of water, slabby at bottom, steepening in pitch as you climb. The ice is good until you reach the top, where most of the ice is often seen from a distance as being rotten This proved to be the case on the first ascent. Hook on rock at the top of the flow, where the pitch backs off considerably. Rap from tree.

Sean Miller, Erich Diercks (18/1/98)

Wishful Thinking 60m. W13

Rambling ice leads to the crux, which is a 5-m- high pillar. Seen from a distance, the pillar seemed much bigger than it was — thus the name.

Sean Miller, Jia Condon (26/1/98)

Damp approach conditions, Cayoosh River. Both photos: Greg Lee

Keener 70m. W14

Consistent cloudy weather seems to be the best conditions for this south-facing route. Valley temperatures had been mostly above 0° for four weeks before we climbed it; the valley ice season had long since past. The route is at roughly 1650m on the south face of Mount Cook.

Park on the Wedgemount Lake trail as for Mystery Roach. Follow the trail for Wedgemount Lake for all but one to two kilometres, as the trail crosses one of the first avalanche paths. The route can be seen to the left of the path. Ascend for ten minutes or so to the base of the route. Climb slightly left on the flow. Sixty metres up is a good belay, where a knite blade is still embedded in the rock. Climb left from the belay to a vertical, 7m finish. Thrash through thick, steep brush to bigger belay trees. Descend on climber's right for 11/2 leads through WI2 and trees to where you can make a 30-m rap.

Sean Miller, Erich Diercks (16/2/98)

A Perfect Outing

Nicholas Blenkinsop

July 1996 was drawing to a close, and I found myself in the rather enviable state of having money, time, a partner and a destination. We — Jim Miller and I — had been talking since the beginning of summer about hooking up and getting into the mountains to finally do some alpine rock routes that Jim had been eyeing for quite a while. The time had finally come.

As always, we found ourselves heading out later than we had planned and more tired than we had expected, but the change of scenery was going to be good for us (or so we told ourselves). We were heading east from the Lower Mainland to the northern part of the Cascades in order to take advantage of the better climate and more solid rock.

With some four hours of driving and a bit of shopping behind us, we started out with packs on our backs and more gear than we really needed. Our approach involved approximately 13 km of hiking, a fair bit of elevation gain, a border crossing, a night on the trail and quite a bit of bushwhacking. The approach route was quite a good one, unlike our map, and the bush, although not coastal rain forest, was, as Jim said, still hard.

It took us about four hours to get to our basecamp at the upper Cathedral Lake; since this time had been spread out over two days, we decided to use the rest of our daylight to climb the first of our intended routes on Cathedral Peak. Rated 5.8 Al, the South Face route went free at 5,9.

Mount Tiedemann, North Face. Photo: John Baldwin

The next day, we climbed the Southeast Buttress and enjoyed the quality of the line and the rock much more than we had the previous day's climb. Back at camp by three o'clock, we started exploring our other options.

Having rejected the idea of moving camp and doing a route on Grimface, we decided to try a new line on Cathedral. With the perfect weather continuing, we set out for our new route and found it to be quite good. This line, the east side of the south buttress (it starts west of the South Face route and heads up and left to the summit), was eight pitches in length and went at about 5.9. Though not as good as the Southeast Buttress, it is better than the South Face; if you are already in the area, it is worth doing.

The next day was our planned date of departure, but we figured we could squeak in yet another, shorter route before we had to head out. With that in mind, we turned our attention to Amphitheatre Peak and decided on something that looked possible on the First Finger. What made us pick the line was a stunning northeast-facing dihedral about halfway up the climb. This dihedral turned out to provide the hardest and most interesting climbing of the route, but the rest of it was far from a giveaway. After five pitches of varied climbing to 5.9 (it could probably be done in four, but I didn't want to tack the penultimate chimney onto my last pitch), we reached the summit satisfied.

After hastily packing and heading out, we made it back to the vehicle before dark. What was most of note about this trip was its relative ease. The weather was perfect, the company easy to get along with, the climbing beautiful, the setting idyllic and the concerns non-existent. We even managed to spend enough time resting and enjoying where we were to feel content about going back to work. It was — unlike the harrowing tales of glory that seem so pervasive in climbing circles — a perfect trip, which reminded me of why I love climbing.

Cathedral Peak, Cascade Mountains, South Buttress, New Route, IV, 5.9. Nicholas Blenkinsop, Jim Miller. July 1996.

Nequatque - New Route

Nicholas Blenkinsop

It was July 1997, and the search for a partner was once more in full swing. I had lined something up in the spring, but fate had conspired against me; my partner had managed to find some lame excuse about work and a hernia, which meant that all had come to nought. I was determined not to let it happen again this time.

My desperation must have been obvious as I accosted and badgered the different people who happened across my path. This modus operandi did eventually work for me; in less than one day I had changed partners, destinations and goals.

Two days later, the three of us — Dave Sarkany, Renata Fliegner and I — set off into the mountains. We were planning to go into the Marriot basin in order to do a couple of first ascents.

Our first evening found us sleeping by a lovely mountain stream below the first item on Dave's first-ascent agenda. It turned out that the route had been travelled before, but it was still an enjoyable jaunt and it lifted our spirits enough that the shouldering of our far too heavy packs seemed not as

much of a chore.

The next day, Dave and I leisurely headed off to do a route on the largest and most southerly of Nequatque's three buttresses. As with most routes in the mountains, the approach, the routefinding and the descent turned out to be the most difficult parts of the whole endeavour. We finally decided that the best starting point was at the base of the middle buttress, just down and to the right of the gully between the first two buttresses. The initial two pitches traversed up, left and into the gully proper. After that we picked the path of least resistance up onto the buttress itself, and then just up. Eight pitches of technical climbing to 5.9, and 300 ft. of 4th-classing brought us to the summit, but with darkness approaching we decided not to linger.

After rappelling the route and hiking back to camp in the dark, we had dinner and went to bed exhausted. The route had turned out to be more than we had anticipated, so we spent the next day resting before we started our hike out.

Having eyed scores of unclimbed lines, we arrived tired yet excited back at the car. Our first trip together into this area had inspired us, and we talked of other adventures we could have. The new-route possibilities seemed endless as we left the mountains, proud of what we had done and inspired (or daunted) by what we still wanted to do.

Nequatque South Buttress, New Route, c. 500m. 5.9. Nicholas Blenkinsop, David Sarkany, Renata Fliegner. July 1997.

BC Interior

Trout Fishing In America

Guy Edwards

The Leaning Towers Group in the southern Purcells is one of the most remote, unexplored and unclimbed areas of granite in the southeastern part of British Columbia. The beautiful and steep faces of Block Tower, Wall Tower, Hall Peak and the Pulpit offer phenomenal and exhilarating climbing to whoever ventures there. After two years of trying to get into the Leaning Towers, Sean Isaac and I finally found ourselves at the base of the towers in September of 1997.

We made our basecamp at a beautiful little tarn below Block and Wall towers, surrounded by larch trees that were just beginning to turn autumn-gold. Our main objectives were the unclimbed (or so we thought) east faces of Block and Wall. Our reconnaissance convinced us to try the slightly shorter east face of Block Tower first. We thought there were a couple of stations partway up the most dramatic line of Wall Tower, but even with binoculars we couldn't be sure. So, thinking we had plenty of time and gear, we decided to try the shorter, easier-looking tower first.

The first day provided a smack to the head! Sean's first lead (he won rock, paper, scissors) took four hours. "Well, we're not going to make the summit today." The next lead found me remembering how to aid climb again; Sean taught me how to drill bat-hook holes, place copperheads and rivets and make other neat, technical aid moves — all as I was 30m above him. Well, that was a fair bit of technical climbing — and only two pitches in one day. We fixed the ropes and retreated to the tent at the tarn for some great Mr. Mclsaac and Eddie the Eagle cookery.

And then came the rain! A storm thundered in and the walls turned into waterfalls. Ah, it was nice to live in a basecamp with a leaky tent, beside a tarn in which the water level was rapidly rising. Well, to bide the time, we did what we do so well: we read our books. Pete and Rose, my book suppliers from Golden, B.C., had lent me a great selection of wonderful books for tentbound climbers: Watership Down, Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Way of the Peaceful Warrior and, from one of the greatest authors of all time, Richard Brautigan's Trout Fishing in America.

Trout fishing sounded like a great activity; why were we camped out in the rain, waiting to climb, when we could be fishing?

Our second day on the route up Block Tower was quite eventful. We jugged the first two pitches, and Sean started up the third — the pitch that was supposed to get us into the main crack system. He fiddled his way up some pretty blank-looking rock with a few birdbeaks and copperheads and some hook moves, and finally got into the system, but there sure wasn't much to it. The good-looking crack was much smaller than we expected. In fact, Sean had to continue with more nifty aid moves until — an upside-down, backward, rope-burnin', butt-smashing, head-crashing fall: 25 ft. of air onto a "smack me hard" slab. After shedding a few tears from the pain, Sean mustered up the courage to try and finish the pitch. And after completing just the one more pitch, we fixed the ropes to our high point and rappelled back down to a hot meal and some medicine for Sean's aches.

Across the valley from the massive east faces of Block (left) and Wall towers

The third day of our attempt on the east face of Block Tower started out sunny and clear. We jumared up the bouncy 9-mm ropes before dawn, ready to climb in the gorgeous orange light of the morning. We were determined to finish the route; as we were now established within the main crack system, we

Guy Edwards jugging fixed ropes during the final push on Block Tower

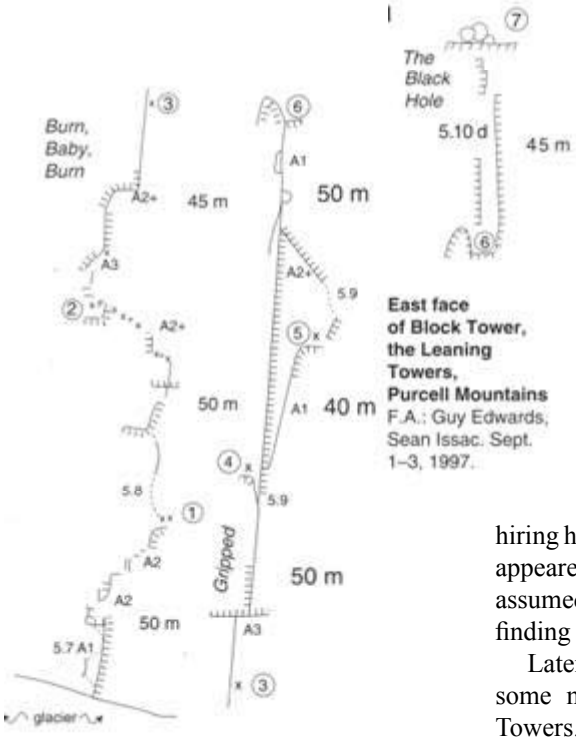
expected that much of the route would now be freeclimbing.

After swapping leads for a few more great aid pitches (but with no real freeclimbing to speak of),the sun disappeared behind some ominous-looking clouds. It started to gently sprinkle with rain while I was negotiating some loose blocks on what I was hoping would be the second-last pitch. Just as I found a great belay under a large overhang, the gentle sprinkling turned into a down-pour. Only one pitch was left, however: a beautiful corner crack, just like a fist-sized Caboose at Squamish. We did not want to spend a night out on the wall, so it was up to me to ignore the water draining down the crack, to ignore the famous slippery black lichen of the Purcells and to leapfrog my three large-enough pieces of pro' up the 40-m pitch. Finally, just as day was turning into night, we reached the top of Block Tower.

The descent was a frustrating experience: our ropes were wet and got stuck, and we got lost on the glacier as we stumbled back down to our tent. Lightning was flashing everywhere as we settled into our sleeping bags and I went back to Trout Fishing in America.

East Face of Block Tower, the Leaning Towers, Purcell Mountains

F.A.: Guy Edwards, Sean Issac. Sept. 1-3, 1997.



East face of Block Tower, the Leaning Towers, Purcell Mountains
F.A.: Guy Edwards, Sean Issac. Sept. 1–3, 1997.

Gear List
set RPs
set nuts
2 set cams (1-4" piece)
5 LAs, 5 KBs, 1 1/2", 1 5/8" angle
3 beaks/peckers
6 'heads
all hooks
rivet hangers

Access To The Leaning Towers — Comment

Pat Morrow and Robert Enagonio

To complete the climb described above, Sean Isaac and Guy Edwards used illegal helicopter access. We feel it is important to address their actions and to insist that future visitors to the area understand and support the no-helicopter regulations. Helicopter landings have been prohibited in the Leaning Towers since 1974, when, after years or lobbying by residents of both the east and west Kootenays, the area became British Columbia's first nature conservancy. The B.C. Parks and Recreation regulations governing use of non-permitted aircraft in these protected areas clearly states that both helicopter company and client are liable for contravention of this regulation.

Having climbed in the lovely and relatively remote Towers a. couple of times and followed the protocol of carrying in our own gear (one long day of hiking, equivalent to reaching the west side of the Howser Spires in the Bugaboos), Bob and I volunteered access information to Sean Isaac when he asked for it in mid-July, 1997.

When I told him that the area was a nature conservancy, and therefore protected from aerial access, and that there were more aesthetic — and probably cheaper — alternatives such as hiring horse packers or human porters, Sean appeared to assimilate this information. We assumed he would take the simple steps of finding an alternate means of access.

Later in August, Sean called Bob for some more information on the Leaning Towers. At this time, Bob again raised the issue of the proposed use of the helicopter, saying he was not comfortable with giving advice to their expedition if they were going to proceed with their plan to fly in. It was clear to Bob at this point that Sean and Guy were going to use the helicopter and that no other options were being considered. This was about a week before their intended departure in early September.

Bob says now that he felt caught between conflicting interests: On the one hand, he wanted to see more climbing exploration on these striking peaks and to encourage a worthwhile attempt to climb one of the walls there. On the other hand, he wanted to help protect the wilderness integrity of the area and to uphold the spirit of a close friend who, ironically, died in a helicopter crash near the conservancy boundary last year and who was instrumental in establishing this protected area of the Purcells.

Eventually the two came to an agreement in which Bob would provide Sean with information and show him slides of the mountains and climbing routes, while avoiding entirely the subject of access. Bob admits now that this was a compromise of principle on his part.

On reflection, there are several moral and practical points that need to be considered by any party wishing to launch an expedition into any protected area:

Sean and Guy were thrown a difficult curve ball in mid-July with the revelation that helicopter landings were not permitted. Up to this point their actions

were blameless, and their plans appeared to be falling into place nicely. However, they failed to use the ensuing month and a half to make alternative arrangements, apparently not wanting to disrupt a plan that seemed to be working out so well.

Sean and Guy received support for their expedition from the Canadian Himalayan Foundation. While this lack of knowledge on the part of the CHF of the restrictions is understandable and even pardonable, it is incumbent upon the CHF, or any grant-awarding organization, to take the following measures with any application for funding: (a) pay closer attention to the environmental impact of the applicant's project before issuing grants, (b) discourage more actively the use of air support in short-haul locations such as this, and (e) require its applicants to do enough research to keep them selves clear of such infractions.

The local helicopter company, based in Cranbrook, has known of this restriction since 1974, and therefore willfully violated this rule. They have since been ticketed by B.C. Parks.

The most worrisome implication in this whole matter is that when news of this climb reaches other non-local climbers the question of access will invariably come up. Inquiries will reveal the helicopter precedent, threatening more infractions through unscrupulous helicopter operators. But B.C. Parks will be watching...

All comers would do well to embrace a lightweight style for attempts on routes such as the east face of Wall Tower. Follow the tradition established in this area: just walk into the mountains — and treat them with the respect they deserve! After all, Fred Beckey scorned the use of choppers until he was well into his seventies.

Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park 1997 Climbing Summary

Typical Bugaboo weather provided brief periods of warm summer temperatures for the 1997 climbing season. A. Norman and J. Magnen climbed a new 5.10- A2 or 5.11on the east face of Bugaboo Spire to join with Pretty Vacant. A variation of Tom Egan Memorial on Snowpatch Spire was climbed by W. Hair, C. Luebben, K. Harvey and B. Jackson. It is rated 5.12b/5.11+ off-width. Needless to say, a few Big Bro's and large Camalots were required. The route is named Sweet Silvia after a woman who died this summer in the Bugaboos while attempting the East Face-Left/Herr Route.

A new route named Another Fine Day in the Bugaboos (III, 5.7) follows the east-northeast buttress of Brenta Spire. This nine-pitch route was completed by G. Dudley, C. Ruthiem and S. Hiopes. E. Dumerac and J. Setters completed a seven-pitch III, 5.8, also on Brenta Spire.

Three Spaniards — J. Bou, R. Besora and F. Queipo — completed a 600-m 5.10+ A3, Les Bruixes Es Pentinen ("And the Witches to Comb One's Hair") on the east face of Snowpatch Spire. Six days were required to complete this new route, which is situated to the right of Deus ex Machina.

A new route on the west face of the North Howser Tower was climbed by C. Teague and E. Greene. This 17-pitch climb, Spicy Red Beans and Rice, is rated Grade IV, 5.12- S Al. The route starts on Seventh Rifle and crosses Mescalito to eventually finish on the North Howser Tower's north ridge.

The Alpine Club of Canada's summer camp on the Vowell Glacier was a success as weather periodically co-operated. Many peaks in the area were climbed by visiting climbers. Few of these peaks see much traffic; many may not be climbed again until the next ACC camp.

Fees remain the same for the 1998 season, with hut fees at $10 (CAN) per person per night and camping at $4 (CAN) per person per night. Payment and registration is mandatory at the Conrad Kain hut prior to any overnight camping, and camping is no longer allowed at the Bugaboo-Snowpatch col. The payment/registration requirement at the hut and the no camping policy at the Bugaboo-Snowpatch col are both being strictly enforced. A note of interest to people wanting to use the hut during the winter is that the hut is officially closed every winter. This is for a very good reason. The hut has been hit by three avalanches in the last 15 years. Each avalanche caused significant structural damage to the hut; B.C. Parks would therefore prefer not to see anyone staying at the hut in the winter season.

A Bugaboo Glacier Provincial Park bolting policy is being developed. Currently, a policy of no mechanized bolting in the Park is being enforced. If you have any stake in such a policy or have any useful ideas, please feel free to forward your ideas to the local area manager: Windermere Area Manager, Box 118,Wasa, B.C. VOB 2KO.

The Conrad Kain hut is being upgraded to include electricity from a hydro-electric system, which will result in hot water, baseboard heaters, electric stoves and lights. This will be an improvement from the current propane system. An increase over the last few years in the high number of people staying overnight at the hut has raised some serious public-safety concerns with B.C. Parks. A limit lower than the current designated maximum of 50 people in the hut may be set to reflect these public-safety concerns. Please check ahead with the East Kootcnay District office at (250) 422-4200 for hut status and be prepared to camp out.

Garth Lemke, Bugaboo Glacier Park Ranger

Return To Nemo

Steven Horvath

I have visited the Nemo Group twice before and managed to climb almost all of the peaks except Mount Nemo. This amount of activity does help one to have a better idea about possible "unfinished business"; thus, when our '97 summer climbing plans were suddenly complicated, I remembered some of that unfinished business and mentioned it to Hamish. Hamish, always keen on first ascents, was quite agreeable. Our self-rescue capability and entertainment potential were much improved when, a day prior to our departure, Paul phoned and invited himself.

On our first day, still full of energy and enthusiasm, we did indeed put in a first ascent on the north ridge of Peak H (Hematite) of the Iron Ridge. It provides some eight pitches of sustained and entertaining mid-5th-class climbing. The highlight of the climb was some rather creative

Peak H, Nemo Group route is left Skyline

ropework on the descent, or — to be less cryptic about it — attempts to remove snagged rappel ropes; it seems that none of us is young enough anymore to enjoy even the possibility of an epic. After all, we were in shorts and T-shirts and it was getting dark and cold.

The rest of the week was spent exploring, resting and waiting out questionable weather and snow conditions. We did manage to put up another first ascent — sort of, anyway: it had never been climbed before — this one up the west side of Mount Nautilus.

During our week in the basin, we found only two signs of human presence. One was a by now ubiquitous (more is the pity) heli-skiing landing stake, the other was a few rusted tins from what appears to have been a prospectors camp. Let's hope that the relative remoteness of the valley will save it from that new scourge of our mountains — those testosterone- and ignorance-fuelled Joe Six-packs on their fancy, high-powered snowmobiles.

Summary

Peak H (Hematite), north ridge. Nemo Group, Iron Ridge. F.A.: Paul Allen, Steven Horvath, Hamish Mutch. July 27, 1997.

Eight pitches of fairly sustained mid-5th-class climbing (up to 5.7-5.8). The route goes straight up from the col north of the summit; difficulties can be bypassed to the south, but the rock is less solid there, as can be seen when rapping the descent route.

Mount Nautilus, west face and south ridge. Nemo Group. F.A.: Paul Allen, Steven Horvath, Hamish Mutch. July 31, 1997.

One full pitch of 5.7-5.8 to get out of the basin south of Nautilus, then scramble to the summit. One full 50-m rap is required on the descent to reach the glacier.

The Tao Of 'Boo: The 1997 GMC

Bob Stirling

A line of cars travels southward along B.C. Highway 95, stopping at the small Columbia Valley lumber town of Brisco. Slowing down as it approaches the town's outskirts, the line steers onto a narrow service road running parallel to the highway.

Overhead, a slate-coloured sky threatens but fails to deliver rain. A short distance to the west, the mountains of the Purcell Range rise abruptly from the valley floor. There, the grey periodically relents, allowing an occasional glimpse of blue sky. Sunlight and shadow flit momentarily across the flanks of the distant Bugaboos. In the immediate foreground, framed by this sky, these mountains, stands a whitewashed, wood-framed church, its steeple a stylized echo of its mountain backdrop. Passersby, encountering this scene, might mistake the recent gathering of automobiles for a funeral cortege or perhaps a wedding party.

The line of cars comes to a halt. Moments pass before engines are turned off. Doors open. Legs, then bodies appear, backs arch, arms stretch skyward. The cars' occupants slowly apprehend the bucolic scene to the west. The atmosphere is, at least momentarily, reverential, anticipatory...

"Hey, they've got a liquor store!" The lone exclamation breaks the collective reverie. Heads spin as the cars' occupants take in the view to the east. There, the ramshackle assemblage of shed roofs, outbuildings, parking lots and picnic tables that is Brisco's version of a general store crowds the opposite side of the highway — the sacred and profane separated by a narrow ribbon of asphalt.

Giving in to the Dionysian muse, a few people break ranks and dash across the highway.

Once purchased, the precious liquid cargo is then surreptitiously stowed in and among the baggage and gear that has been crammed into back seats, trunks, hatchbacks — indeed any place not otherwise occupied by flesh and bone. Calm and order thus restored, and bodies and baggage accounted for, the line of cars stirs to life once again.

Turning due west and travelling through the mountain barrier along rugged logging roads, the line of cars finally arrives, some forty or more kilometres later, at Bugaboo Provincial Park. Nearby stands the impressive Bugaboo Lodge. Built for Canadian Mountain Holidays' seminal foray into the heli-skiing business (now a multi-million-dollar industry), the "lodge" is really a vast complex of buildings, machinery and landscaped spaces. The tennis court has been put to use as a parking lot — the game of tennis, evidently, being not as important as safeguarding the chewable, rubber extremities of the guests' autos against the area's spiny, car-loving vermin. Nearby, on an airstrip that has been carved out of the forest on the valley floor, people unload the contents of their vehicles. Dozens of duffel bags are loosely stacked into pyramid-shaped heaps alongside the airstrip. Some time later, the pyramids will fly away, this improbable feat being performed by that most improbable of flying machines, a Bell 212 helicopter.

Meanwhile, footgear is removed and replaced, lotions and sprays judiciously applied to exposed flesh, and small packs donned. The "line of cars" now becomes the "line of people" and continues on to its penultimate destination: the foot of the Vowell Glacier and the Alpine Club of Canada's General Mountaineering Camp.

Arriving at Camp, the line of people discovers that the pyramids of gear they left behind have miraculously preceded them, rematerializing in a nearby meadow. They marvel at the myriad tents that have been erected, blossoming in vivid colours among the granite boulders, each with its own numbered address. They are impressed by the camp's infrastructure: carefully demarcated footpaths; newly constructed toilets and shower; dining, kitchen, drying and storage tents. They note with pleasure how everything has been placed with the greatest of care and attention to details concerning environmental impact, convenience of location, and the olfactory consequences of wind direction. They take delight in this compact, gossamer substitute for the so-called real world. The latter, so recently (and eagerly) departed, has here, in this wilderness, been reconstituted for them in canvas, wood and nylon.

Two days later, a subset of the line of people (now a line of climbers), tied together, and spaced evenly like dots in a coded message, ascends the Vowell Glacier in the Bugaboo Mountains. Catenary arcs of nylon rope — dashes to the climber's dots — mark the regular intervals in their even, rhythmic progress. They have tied themselves together to better cope with the randomly spaced intervals that mark the glacier's travels (sometimes a riot of tumbling séracs, or great, sweeping arcs of crevasses of seemingly unfathomable depth). The line of climbers negotiates several of these open gashes, pausing now and then to absorb their terrible beauty. Where they meet the surface, the polished walls of each fissure display a colour like that of a pale blue sky at dawn. Then, plunging violently through azure, cobalt and ultramarine, the icy mass vanishes into an inky blackness that makes the climbers think the night sky has somehow been

drained into the frozen underworld beneath their feet.

On their first day of Camp, a privileged few will be permitted to forego the ignominy of falling into a crevasse and will instead be lowered in. Part of "Snow and Ice School", by now a camp institution, the experience of being suspended over icy oblivion will not soon be forgotten. (The same, sadly, cannot be said about the rudimentary physics of the hoisting experience.) It is primarily a clinic about cold and gravity.

Out here, the effects of gravity are everywhere to be seen — and felt. Many of the individual climbers, themselves a kind of GMC institution, have been waging their own quiet war against gravity at these camps for decades. Their bodies are now living testaments to their efforts, and their physical beings a kind of cartographic palimpsest: drawn, erased, then drawn again... Gesture, language, hair, teeth and skin are parts of a landscape story, a relief map of mountains climbed, adventures lived; in the folds and crenellations of a weathered, smiling face, whole sun-drenched ranges can be seen, engraved there by a jagged mountain stylus.

The line of climbers contours towards the boulder-strewn Bugaboo-Crescent col. A sinuous imprint now stretches out behind them: sun-softened snow yielding to eight heavy boot treads, each placed deliberately, repeatedly in one set of advancing prints. An elegant signature — so pleasing to the eye, so satisfying to its creators, so ephemeral. By day's end the sun will have all but erased this energetic inscription from the crisp, white vellum of the glacier's surface.

In this line of climbers, there is one (an amateur leader) who enjoys the privilege and title of leadership — an illusion or conceit he will try not to indulge. For, on this day, it is the one immediately behind him who is the de facto leader. At some 82 years of age, and one of the above-mentioned "institutions", he may not be at the front of the rope, but it is he, more than any other, who determines its ultimate course. And rightfully so. As he candidly admits to his fellow climbers, he may not have many more climbing days like this left and is therefore deeply grateful for their indulgences, however few or minor they may be. Despite the slower pace, the others are energized by his presence.

Gaining the col, the line breaks up, each climber performing his or her own peculiar ritual acts reserved for such moments.

The view north from Cobalt Lake, Bugaboo Spire is in rear.

There is the obligatory chit-chat between mouthfuls of food and water, the polite banter on the weather and the views, the breathless accounts of past ascents, the humourous anecdotes. Then, as is so often the case when perfect strangers tie onto a rope and climb together, the conversation moves — at first tentatively, then pell-mell — towards the scatological abyss. Gales of raucous laughter pelt the granite walls of the nearby peaks. The ice now well and truly figuratively broken, the climbers rejoin the rope and make their way to the base of a ridge leading to the summit of Crescent Spire. Passing only a few sections requiring more than a modicum of climbing skill, the line nevertheless takes its time, carefully turning each problem, savouring occasional moments of dizzying exposure and congratulating itself on each small success. Upon reaching the summit, cameras are produced, poses struck, handshakes exchanged and vistas viewed; the moment is well and truly lived and recorded for posterity.

Elsewhere throughout the range, other lines of climbers from Camp are enjoying similar moments of shared summit bliss. Some have climbed more technical lines, employed more sophisticated technique and moved with great speed. Some have not. Moments and experiences such as these are hardly unique to the GMC. What is unique is that so many for so long have deliberately gathered in great numbers over several days, even weeks, to meet and climb together — many for the first time, many more for as long as they can remember. They revel in the simple pleasures, draw ever more enjoyment from the pure physicality

of their beings and the brute fact of their absurdly beautiful surroundings. They are compelled to experience, together, a realm of complimentary opposites — age and youth, order and chaos, pleasure and pain — where the delicate, fragile and impermanent is pitted against the hard, unyielding and seemingly eternal... That the GMC's (or indeed the Club's) days at the climbing vanguard are now decades past is of little importance to these people, some of whom were part of that vanguard. The people who attend these gatherings do not aspire to be like mountain über-menschen from a 1930s Leni Riefenstahl film. What draws them to the camp is not the wider margins of safety, the waivers, the solar showers or the helicopters. Nor is it the vacuous pursuit of tradition for its own sake. To be sure, there is a tradition, stretching back to the turn of the century, but it is one which fosters joy in celebrating our shared infatuation with, and great indebtedness to the rejuvenating power of the mountains.

Turning away from the mountain's summit, the line of climbers descends. With gravity now on their side, they plunge headlong down slopes of sun-softened snow.

George Waddell, age 82, on the Vowell Glacier

Reaching the bare ice of the glacier's snout, the line of climbers dissolves. Four people stroll quietly along the banks of braided glacial streams towards camp. The sky above, which has been threatening a late-afternoon shower, delivers on its promise. Granite boulders darken and become slick with rain. To the east, above the camp, the clouds begin to part as the tempest eases. Rays of gilded light slant across the distant meadow. The amateur leader pauses to take off a rain-sodden jacket, then gazes wide-eyed as a luminous arc of multi-coloured light vaults over the camp, ending — quite auspiciously, he thinks — above his tent: perfect.

"Say, from over here, it looks like the pot of gold's in the outhouse!" someone cracks.

Well, almost perfect.

The Rockies

The 1997 Mt. Alberta Circumambulation

Glenn Reisenhofer

Years ago, a friend of mine had completed the Gec Traverse. She was unsure of the name of this traverse, but stated it was a great trip. Basically, the tour followed the unnamed glacier near the north face of Diadem Peak towards Gong Lake and then, finally, to the Athabasca River. I asked if she had seen Mount Alberta from one of the cols. She told me that she couldn't see it on her trip. Once I started to check out the maps (and Rocky Mountains of Canada — North), I found that you can ski up to a col between two peaks to view the princess. From this point on, a ski tour was in the making.

The motley crew — Sean Elliott, Steve Morris and I — was quickly assembled. Time was booked off from work, and soon we found ourselves skiing up Diadem Creek. The creek is easily followed to a moraine below the Diadem headwall. (This headwall is where the ice route Ambivalence Falls makes its home.) We followed the moraine until a side valley to the northwest took us towards the Gec Glacier. A small rock wall was scrambled and followed to the top of a small knoll (GR 981721). From the knoll, the Gec Glacier snakes its way along a high terrace. Strangely enough, it reminded me of the Bonnet Icefield.

Day 1 ended at a camp below the Gec-Nelson col (GR 993689). The sky remained free of clouds as the cold night set in. I slept in the doghouse, for I had forgotten to bring the windscreen for the stove — however, it is amazing how well shovel blades can perform this job.

A beautiful morning got us on the move quickly. The view from the Gec-Nelson col was stunning. To the northeast we could see Mount Brazeau dominating the skyline. The view in the opposite direction knocked us over. From there, Mount Alberta revealed her best side: her north face — the face that allows few to witness her curves and graces, and fewer still to climb her.

On the Gec-Nelson col. Photos: Glenn Reisenhofer


Scrambling the rock wall below the Gec Glacier

After a plethora of shutter releases from our cameras, we prepared for a 1400-m descent down Lynx Creek to the Athabasca River. No powder slopes presented themselves to us, only hard, ballistic snow. This was not what we had hoped for. The youth of the tour refused to be beaten. They wanted turns; I, on my skinny skis, just wanted down. I simply walked until the terrain got back to a decent-enough level for me to resume skiing.

During the later part of the day the snow instability increased proportionally with the temperature. We found ourselves skiing through isothermal snow. Lower down in the Lynx valley, we would constantly break through the snow surface and grind to a halt. On one of these many occasions we saw evidence of logging. There were big trees that had been cut by some form of saw. This was amazing, because we were still quite a distance up the valley. We speculated that some type of logging operation existed there years ago. Perhaps someone built a hut up Lynx Creek and needed a bit of lumber for the job. It remains a mystery to us.

After the painful descent of Lynx Creek, we were pleasantly (and thankfully) surprised by the decent skate-skiing surface on the Athabasca River. We travelled in awe towards the huge peaks of the Columbia Icefields: King Edward, the Twins and Columbia. Mount Alberta was constantly keeping tabs on us over our left shoulder. We set up camp at the junction of the Athabasca River and Habel Creek. We even had patches of dry grass to sit on and enjoy our supper (cooked on a screenless stove).

The next day was one of reckoning. Under grey skies we skied 1300m up Habel Creek to the north shoulder of Little Alberta. We passed numerous frozen waterfalls; they could have occupied several climbers for a while. The north face of Twins Tower loomed above us, lost by itself in the clouds. We ascended a steep, wooded shoulder (GR 706891) and descended into a hanging valley (GR 704898). Access to the upper level of the valley was barred by very steep slopes. We skirted them by climbing scree slopes on the north side of the valley. This finally allowed us to move slowly up the remainder of Habel Creek to the shoulder of Little Alberta.

This is where a new term came into my vocabulary: "bonked". Loosely translated, it describes a person with severe muscle fatigue, who is hungry and drained of energy. With most of our gang "bonked", we dragged our butts into camp, but the views demanded that we recover quickly. Alberta and Woolley were bathed in the golden light of evening. We were thrashed, but happy. All we had left to worry about was the descent of Woolley Shoulder; however, none of us would talk about it yet. The next day was beautiful. No one felt the desire to move; all we wanted to accomplish was the enjoyment of our surroundings. This did not last too long, however as the keen telemarkers in the crowd were soon carving turns on steep terrain. The slopes that led down to the east face of Alberta were wonderful; we were lucky this time, for they had powder on them. On my last run down, I learned something valuable: How small I felt amongst these big peaks; how tiny was my existence in this world. I learned how fragile I was. I felt vulnerable and shuddered.

The morning yielded the finest sunrise I have ever seen in winter. The clouds glowed with luminous purple as they blew off the summit of Stutfield East. Woolley and Engelhart seemed frozen in time, and Alberta shone as if the top half of her were an orange light bulb. The colour was penetrating the clouds as if it were a part of our own essence. The sunrise provided a sense of wholeness, and we smiled with it.

Sean, Steve and I slept restlessly that night, for we knew we had to deal with Woolley Shoulder the next day. In the end, the most we had to deal with was strong winds that kept knocking us to the ground. The avalanche danger, existing mainly in our minds, was not to be found. We had worried for nothing; yet how can one travel the back country and not have a healthy fear of avalanches? In this case, there was basically no snow at all to endanger us. We skied away from our "anxiety" and cruised down the Woolley Creek roller-coaster ride.

Soon we were skate skiing across the Sunwapta River and heading towards the highway with "pub crawl" thoughts in our heads. Some folks who were travelling from Florida to Alaska gave Steve a ride back to the vehicle. They were interested in what we had been up to. After Steve told them, they couldn't understand. No matter how hard Steve tried to explain, they simply replied "Why?" This is a very good question; I know that we three all know the answer.

Mount Battisti: Second Ascent

Rick Collier

Mount Battisti (10,280 ft./3133m) is not the highest peak in the Northern Italian Group, but it is the most spectacular: it is steep — even sheer — on all sides, the strata having been tilted almost to the vertical; it possesses a many-towered summit block; and sports one of the most impressive hanging glaciers in all of the Rockies. It tumbles down from a dome of snow, over precipitous rock, in cascades of exfoliated and often vertical, perhaps even overhanging blue ice. Battisti looks rather like Mount Louis with an icefall.

For years various members of the Old Goats Group had discussed climbing in the Northern Italian Group but had never got around to it, primarily because of the length of the approach from almost any direction. Previous parties had entered the area from two points: the Gardiner/Feuz expedition of August 1929 ascended Mount Cadorna (10,320 ft.) from the west by way of the White River; most others, including the Fuhrmann party of July 1964 and the four groups recorded in the summit register on Stiletto, traversed over from the Elk Lake area via Coral Pass. As far as we can tell, therefore, very few mountaineers have climbed in this location,

and only hunters and fishermen have entered by way of Cadorna Creek.

Bill Hurst (who at close to 70 years of age is one of the few truly veteran mountain climbers still making ascents in the Rockies) and I spent considerable time this past summer discussing over the telephone the feasibility of a trip into this group of peaks; eventually we decided to give it a shot in the five-day period from September 7 to 11. Our hope was to climb all four of the peaks accessible from the meadows above Cadorna Lake; we had to settle, however, for half of that — our attempts on Cadorna and on apparently unclimbed Swiderski (a.k.a. Diaz) were frustrated by huge and uncrossable moats separating the cirque glaciers from the headwalls. But we did manage to do a new route on Stiletto (see the Old Goats' report) and to reclimb the 1964 route on Battisti, which apparently makes ours a second ascent. This is an excellent and complex climb; it is well worth doing, both for the delights of the approach and for the variety and demands of the ascent itself. The purpose of this article is, then, to provide some hints concerning the Cadorna Lake approach, to advertise the climbing of Battisti and to update and amend the route description written by Wallace R. Joyce that appeared in CAJ 48 (pp.187-92). This is, incidentally, an excellent article — generally quite accurate, and accompanied by superb photographs (the marked frontispiece is essential information as well).

Bill and I met at the east side of the bridge over the Elk River about 44 km north of Elkford at around 11 a.m. (I had driven from Calgary in about five hours and Bill from Cranbrook in three). Based on our experiences climbing Mount Nivelle and other peaks in the west Elk Lake area, we had decided to forego the Coral Pass approach as being unnecessarily unpleasant, especially with heavy packs, and to attempt the trail into Cadorna Lake.

An additional 6 km of driving brought us to the turnoff to the left (west) that runs down to the Bighorn Outfitters hunting lodge situated along the river. Soon we had assembled our packs and were ready to ford the Elk River, which at this time of year was only knee high; there are, however, reports that earlier in the year, especially on warm days, the river can crest its banks. Once across the river, we found most of the rest of the hike in to Cadorna Lake to be relatively flat and fast, even though the first 5-6 km are generally (though gently) uphill. This part of the march follows the remnants of an old seismic exploration road and is a somewhat roundabout and uninteresting plod through undifferentiated forest. At several points, however, the road is washed out, and we found it refreshing to see nature demolishing and reclaiming something constructed only 30 years ago. One erosion point in particular should be noted: at km 4.5, a smaller trail branches off steeply up a gully to the north and climbs over the river's embankment (it is important to recall this detour when returning, since the narrow trail is ill-defined on the west end). At 6.5 km, the road up Abruzzi Creek fords the stream and continues heading west; the approach up Cadorna Creek now becomes a horse trail which bends around a small spur (82 J/6 404908), bringing one into a beautiful valley of extensive meadows and, at the far end, old-growth forest. It is important here to follow the right-hand (east) edge of the meadow no matter how

Battisti. Bill Hurst on Pitch 4, just below the waterfall

circuitous the route appears, since venturing into the grassland puts one into marshes and innumerable crossings of the much-meandering creek; across the meadows to the west and at the end of the valley's northwest ridge (GR 393915) are a set of outfitters' cabins. Generally, this trail up Cadorna Valley makes for easy travelling and permits considerable time for viewing the surrounding ridges and the animal life in and near the stream. However, about 3.5 km before Cadorna Lake, the trail becomes boggy and begins to gain some 600 ft. of elevation. Another 1.5 hours in thick forest brings one to the lake, which is, sadly, something of a disappointment: it is narrow and silty, and permits only a few views of the surrounding peaks. There is, however, a good campsite at its northeast end.

Bill and I arrived at the lake after about six hours and some 19 km on the trail (enough for one day!) and had a good night's rest, except for the inevitable attack by porcupines. We were up early the next day, and off along the lake shore in chill shadow, but with blue skies overhead. When ascending to a high camp in the upper meadows, follow the trail west from the camp on Cadorna Lake for only 100m or so and then take the first path leading upward to the right — the trail that continues along the shore is a fishermen's route and leads eventually to impassable cliffs at the west end of the lake. The correct path climbs steadily up into the surrounding forest, then levels out and proceeds to the upper flats at the far end of the lake. However, here the trail is easily lost amongst stream braids and willows. Generally, one should stay as far to the right as possible along the edge of the forest (but without climbing) until the most northerly of the two feeder streams bends northwest. Here there are remnant game (and perhaps horse) trails which eventually start to climb up through the forest; the most advantageous trails are those that stay close to the stream itself. After several hundred feet of climbing, we reached gorgeous open meadows, with their stands of larch and magnificent views of the four Northern Italians. It took us about 2.5 hours to cover the 3.5 km to these meadows, where there are plenty of delightful places to pitch a camp.

We had an early lunch and then headed up the grassy slopes, talus, glacial moraines and exposed bedrock to the niche glacier between Stiletto and Battisti; our intention was to climb the south face of Stiletto and along the way get some clear views of the Fuhrmann Route up its neighbour. We managed to find a decent route up Stiletto and at the same time use binoculars to spy out the northeast cliffs of Battisti. Face on, they looked horrendous; as Joyce noted in the original article, "The fantastic hanging glacier tumbling down between near-vertical rock walls was an awesome sight." I kept nagging at Bill that there couldn't be a route through all that ice and those cliffs, and, even if there were, maybe we could find an easier way up somewhere else. I was clearly intimidated; but Bill was not to be moved in his assertion of where the

route ran and where we would be climbing in two days' time.

On the 9th, again under cloudless skies, we made our fruitless attempts on Cadorna and Swiderski, the latter of which included two pitches on what looked to be a promising line on the south face of Battisti (success at which would have enabled us to access the col leading to Swiderski). It wasn't. And so, after rapping back down, I resigned myself to a premature death on the northeast side of this monster.

Finally, then, early on the morning of September 10, Bill and I set off to hurl our frail bodies against the walls and spires of Mount Battisti. We meandered up the now all too familiar scree to the toe of the glacier, donned crampons and marched up the frozen snow; this was, in fact, the first really good omen: the glacier and the northeast face are situated so that at this time of year practically no sunlight strikes them, thus ensuring both hard snow and minimal rockfall. Although the glacier rises steeply as it laps up against the rock of the northeast face, its ascent was straightforward, and even the crossing of the substantial bergschrund was not difficult since it was filled at one point with blocks of snow and ice. Some modest routefinding and front-pointing brought us to what Joyce called "the rock bands on the left". All the while, however, the hundreds of feet of bulging, overhanging glacier brooded above us — at least until we could finally step off the snow and onto rock. The ramp that we exited onto was so clearly defined that no other ledges posed the slightest temptation as alternative routes; it rose straight ahead of me (now foolishly leading) at about 30 degrees, and the only difficulty I encountered was the ball-bearing scree covering every surface. I placed a couple of Friends because of the precarious footing, ran out the rope, brought Bill up and ventured on another 25m. Joyce notes that the Fuhrmann party ascended off this ramp at "a very steep and narrow chimney"; in fact, there are several chimneys along the 75m of this ramp. Probably the easiest (and the one intended) breaks the cliff to the right after a rope length and a half where the ramp constricts to a very narrow ledge. Bill led up this short chimney (10m) in good style; however, it is deep enough that we had to haul both our packs, which ate up considerable time.

Above the chimney, the original CAJ is, except for one point, quite accurate: Bill led a diagonal traverse across "easy broken rock and scree" (but it is to the right as one faces the peak, not the left), up a short and broken cliff, around a corner and along an upward-slanting ledge at the base of a sheer cliff (there was no snow here, as there was for the Fuhrmann party). This 75-m section brought us cheek by jowl with the hanging glacier. Just to the left of the ice was what we unfondly dubbed the "Pitch from Hell".

Battisti (1) and Stilletto (r) from camp.

Joyce makes rather light of this 25-m chimney: it is a "somewhat damp route upwards". The ugly truth is, however, that the icy run-off from this side of the glacier pours down the chimney in a ceaseless waterfall. Not at all a pleasant prospect, especially given the lack of any drying sunlight on this side of the peak. And it was again my lead. Bummer.

But then I had a modestly bright idea: I put on my rain suit, my gaiters and my wool gloves and cinched everything, including my hood, up tight. Gingerly I stepped into the maelstrom, knowing that speed would keep me from getting too wet and thereby freezing solid in the chimney, but knowing also that extreme care would be necessary since most of the rock was thickly covered with verglas. Fortunately, the climbing was not too difficult, perhaps 5.4, and pro' placements were plentiful; however, frost wedging had made many of the handholds and chockstones less than reliable. After some 20m of wriggling and thrashing, I was able to exit the deluge to the left and climb onto the much drier (and much airier) face of the adjoining cliff; 10m of enjoyable (by comparison) face climbing brought me to the top of both the cliff and the chimney, just below a small scree basin, with little damage other than wet hands, arms and rope. After tying in I brought up Bill, who made embarrassingly short work of the chimney.

At this point we diverged somewhat from the Fuhrmann route: Bill led up across the scree, climbed the abutting cliff to a ledge slanting off to the right (5.6) and belayed from a corner overlooking the middle tiers of the glacier. I took the lead at this point, put on crampons and climbed down the rock on the far side of the corner and into the ice couloir melted out between the glacier proper and the cliff (one could skip the previous rock pitch and frontpoint up the ice from the scree cirque, but the ice is quite steep). Delicate crampon work with single axe placements allowed me to manoeuvre up the couloir, onto a still-steep but open sheet of ice, and eventually onto the rock at the crest of this tongue of the glacier (about 40m). We moved together on this rock crest, traversing right (southwest) until we faced a cliff, the upper slopes of the glacier rising to our right. Some steep and tricky bare ice, which included a delicate traverse, put us up on the convex snow cap, where we rejoined the Fuhrmann route. As we ascended the hard snow, the angle began to ease, which was a happy change since near the top of the glacier, as we slanted upward to the west, we were forced into an intricate, snaking route to avoid several large crevasses. Here I was finally able to wonder just how the hell Bill was able to avoid losing his ice axe — he climbs with an ancient wooden antique that possesses neither a lanyard nor a slip-ring.

Finally back on scree, we found that the obvious south ridge led easily and directly up 300 of the last 400 ft.; however, in contrast to the Joyce article, we found in this section no significant "rock faces", no "delicate (and very airy) traverse", nor the need for "a couple of running belays". The summit area is, however, confusing since there are several towers which from below all seem to rival each other in height; the actual summit (thank God!) is the closest. Its ascent does require that one traverse out onto the loose west face. I climbed directly up the middle of this face to the summit crest, placing a bit of pro' to protect the final 30 ft., which are extraordinarily loose and require great care.

We reached the summit at about 3:30 p.m., had a bit of late lunch and enjoyed the superb views in all directions. Our examination of the surroundings led us to

the same conclusion as Joyce: "No other route seemed practical, for the mountain dropped steeply into the deep valley... with several jagged pinnacles...[and] detached summits.... Its connecting ridge bristled with needle-like gendarmes." We found no cairn and so built a small one, leaving a small register behind.

On our descent we placed four rappels, three of which seemed to differ from those used by the Fuhrmann party. All four required only a single rope. The first placement was about 3m down from the summit in a short chimney to the left (northwest) of the line of ascent. From the end of this rappel, we scrambled down the ridge and back to the glacier, carefully making our way among the crevasses and down the several ice pitches. At the corner overlooking the lower half of the glacier, we placed our second rappel, which took us partway down the face to the side of the Pitch from Hell. This is the only point where we found what must have been a pin left by the Fuhrmann party; we set our third rappel near here to avoid the waterfall. This rap goes over an overhang and is therefore free for some twenty metres. Finally, instead of rapping the first chimney, we scrambled down the ledges to the left of this feature and set a rappel so we could descend to as close to the ice bridge across the 'schrund as possible. We reached the snow just after 7 p.m., made it to the toe of the glacier in another hour and were back in camp by headlamp at around 9 p.m. We made an extra large and tasty supper: a fine end to a wonderful climb that both of us recommend most highly. We'd also like especially to extend our thanks and admiration to Peter Fuhrmann and his party of five companions, who made the first ascent of this difficult route more than 30 years ago.

Cassiopeia

Brendan Wilson

Following the fluvial deposits that marked the forest floor to the narrow creek drainage above the Sawback picnic area, I marvelled at how much power the water that carved at the surrounding mountainsides possessed. And though little of this geological might seemed evident as I stepped past the new growth on the buffalo berry, potentilla and kinnikinnick, I had to laugh at the invisible power the approaching cliff line had on me.

I had been up this drainage before. Ten years previously, drawn by the beauty of several possible lines, Troy Kirwin and I had scrambled up some of the less committing one- and two-pitch low-5th-class slabs on the right-hand side of the main cliff system. Shortly after this adventure, I had left the Bow Valley,chasing a higher education overseas; but like the poorly organized long-distance romances that would haunt me over the following decade, one of the lines we had admired in the Sawbacks would continually draw my mind back home from the South Pacific.

In early June of 1997, I stood on the late-spring avalanche debris that covered the creek at the base of the slope below the route. With my binoculars I could follow the crack system that Troy and I had seen earlier. A long, continuous hand crack led up through steep slabs to a broad, sloping ledge beneath a large, steep open-book corner. A crack continued up the first half of the corner, but then ended at what looked like half a pitch from the top. Surely there must be some small fissure which would provide gear placement for this last part of the route?

I had been back in the Bow Valley for several years now, and every time I drove by the Sawback picnic area on my way to a study site I would look up at the cliffs and vow to head out and try the route, but lack of time and resolve had kept me elsewhere. By early September I realized that another summer was slipping away. So one Friday night, after drinking a quantity of home-brewed courage, I asked Chris Millar, with whom I had gone cragging several times in the summer, if he wanted to accompany me on an adventure the next day.

Chris looked up at the first pitch, an 85-degree crack/corner system, looked back at me and said something like "I'd like to lead the first pitch, if that's OK with you." I smiled and said "Sure." I sensed that Chris was totally into doing the route, which he had only just heard about the night before and only just seen when we left the truck an hour earlier. This was a calming revelation. By the time we roped up it was 1 p.m. — not quite an alpine start for something with no beta which was going to be at least five pitches long. Such is the nature of home-brewed courage.

Chris dispensed with this first 40-m 5.8 pitch quickly. I cleaned the corner and grabbed the remaining gear from him at the belay. From the belay ledge, the crack system led up steeply through a little bulge (5.9) before reclining into a gentler corner system. I set up a belay in the hand-sized crack at about 35m from Chris, as I was worried that I might not get any reasonable gear in higher up since the main crack obviously bottomed out within 10m. To find protection on the third pitch, Chris went up right, following a rubble-laden flake/corner system to a stance within 30m of the large, sloping ledge below the final open-book corner. Although the climbing here was technically straightforward (5.6), the loose rock reminded you that you were in the Rockies!

The next, easy pitches (5.5 and 5.2) brought us to the base of the final open-book corner. It was 5 p.m., we were about 70m below the top of the cliff line, and it didn't look that simple! The big crack that I'd observed from below in the spring was less well-developed than I had thought, and from right below the corner there still

Cassiopeia, Cockscomb Mountain.
The route following the obvious left-trending corners/slabs right of centre, then climbs the large open book. Photo: Brendan Wilson

didn't appear to be any obvious gear for the top pitch. Shit! We both did a whole lot of swearing and scratching of our brows. The other options for upward escape looked harder, contrived and not much easier to protect. We could have also considered retreat, but because I'm both a chicken and a poor graduate student, the thought of having to rap five pitches and leave behind any of my precious rack seemed impossible. To make matters worse, we had left instructions with a very reliable person to report us overdue at 9 p.m. and we were a bare minimum of two and a half hours from a phone.

In the end, my fear of high rappels, combined with the thought of being so close and not making it after all those swooning years, drove me to utter the schoolyard dare: "If you lead the first pitch, I'll try the second." Certainly this was a backhanded attempt at courage, but it was the best I could muster at the time. Nevertheless, Chris took up the challenge. After some tricky bridging and inventive pro' placement, he disappeared, lay-backing over one side of the bulging corner (S.lOa) to a hanging stance halfway up the corner. After he was settled, Chris yelled down that a crack continued up for at least part of the next pitch. I followed up to take a look.

The thin corner-crack stretched out above our heads, separating a smooth, waterworn wall from the other steeper, more featured side. The crack had evaded earlier detection because it faced the opposite direction to that of the visible lower crack I had identified with binoculars. This final pitch was a gem. It provided interesting jamming, bridging and face moves, and generally excellent protection. It also provided the technical (5.10b) and mental crux of the route. After I belayed Chris over the loose rocks on the top ledge to the final stance, we grinned, chuckled, patted each other on the back and yahooed towards the sky, which would soon be filling with its resident stars.

We made our descent by walking up the ridge about 20m and then dropping into the steep gully that led down behind the main cliff line (some low-5th-class downclimbing or a short rap). We avoided the nasty-looking canyon at the base of the main gully system and traversed right, back out to the lower end of the cliff' line. More scrambling and down-climbing brought us back to the base of the route and our packs at 8:30 p.m. We grabbed the rest of our gear and ran stumbling over the water-rounded boulders in the creekbed towards our vehicle to head off any unnecessary rescue effort.

Some evenings later, I was out admiring the stars in the meadows below Ishbel and the rest of the Sawback Range when I noticed Cassiopeia, one of the few constellations I can recognize, stretched out over the drainage where our route lay. Somehow this boastful, conceited mythological queen seemed to suggest hers as an appropriate name for our effort.

Cassiopeia Cockscomb Mountain, Sawback Range. 5.10b. F.A.: Brendan Wilson, Chris Millar. June 1997.

The Grog-Aux-Pommes Traverse

Glenn Reisenhofer

When I was young my parents always took us camping. Often we would stay in the campground at Castle Junction. Once my friend Neil and I tried to climb Castle from the front side, long before we knew how to climb. Since there was a trail to the old lookout, we thought this would be a great place to start. We discovered cairns above the old fire lookout, which led us to the bivi hut on Goat Ledge. Luckily for me, Neil was smart; as we scaled the snow couloir between Eisenhower Tower and the main peak, he talked me down on grounds of lack of experience (and also lack of an ice axe). Enthusiastic youth can spell disaster so easily. We were lucky, and I'm still thankful.

Once we were back on the ground, my father told us a trail existed on the back side of Castle and that was the way people went to the top of the mountain. On our very next camping adventure with my parents, Neil and I made our way up to Rockbound Lake and towards "adventureland". I'll never forget the alplands situated on the bench above that lake: beautiful moss beds, miniature, meandering streams, and small waterfalls carving their path through this pristine landscape — I was lost in paradise.

Once I got older I realized the usefulness of maps. I would pore over them for hours and dream the time away. If we are lucky, there comes a time in our lives when we can form these dreams into reality, particularly if the weather holds. I got the chance to wander along what I later dubbed "the Dream Ridge". It was the highlight of that summer. While I was on the hike I noted particular features of the terrain we were travelling through, and it suddenly dawned on me: we could ski this route. Ever since the creation of that idea in my cranium, I desired to ski this traverse.

Dealing with the Mitella headwall, Grog-aux-Pommes Traverse

The task of finding out more information began. No one seemed to know much about it. Somebody out there had to know something. Tim Auger had heard that some wardens had done a ski tour up there years before. This was all I needed to fuel the inner fire.

Sean, Steve and I began our route by skiing up to Rockbound Lake. By a stroke of luck, Alan Kane was at the lake. His party broke trail for us from the lake up and through a small couloir to near the top of the bench. Then we simply continued up the last steep bit, onto the top of the bench and through the alplands.

Waiting for the right time was crucial to our well-being. We needed to have stable conditions, for the route went up to the Helena-Stuart's Knob col. The base of this slope is similar to the west side of Wenkchemna Pass: scree, no rock outcrops to hide along and few rocks to anchor the snow. Sean volunteered to go first. Steve and I didn't argue with him and willingly allowed him to kick steps and post hole up to the darkening skies of the col.

A windy col is no place to set up the tent and relax, but how does one get off a col with a huge cornice on its leeward side? The solution was to hike up one side of the col until we could get past the cornice, then to descend steep slopes (in fading light) on

the other side. Finally ending Day 1, we stopped at a sheltered rock outcrop and had awesome — albeit cold — pizza for supper.

We awoke to a beautiful morning. Our designated route continued high on a plateau above Luellen Lake. We followed the plateau northward to a small col situated between TV Peak and an unnamed peak originating from the ridge that points southeast from Pulsatilla Mountain (GR 908725). In the distance to the southeast, Eisenhower Tower could still be seen from the col. To the northwest, a hanging valley invited us to explore and become immersed in a winter wonderland. As on all ski tours, a price had to be paid somewhere along the route: "The waiter was soon arriving with our bill." The Mitella Lake head-wall dropped below us; we knew it was payment time.

Previously, I had reckoned that we could sneak along and down the west side of the headwall. My "highway in the sky" was now sloping, scary and somewhat questionable. With a sideways glance at my partners, I pulled out the rope and gear and proceeded to put my harness on. Several pitches of traversing delivered us to a gully through which we could rappel down and gain the Mitella Lake basin. Again in the fading light, Steve and Sean carved turns down to a camp while I made my way down in a tired, zigzagging fashion. Steve "Everkeen" wanted to go back up to the headwall for more turns, but his stomach reminded him that he was famished.

A campfire, Comet Hale-Bopp, fresh water and moonlight create an atmosphere that lasts a lifetime in memory. An image burned into your mind. Something special that no one can alter or take away. You desire these moments to last, for you know that one day you'll be longing for them to return — and they will, but only as a fleeting glimpse.

Unfortunately, my cooking spoiled the evening. My partners were subjected to noodles sticking to the pot's bottom, and whatever zany concoction I derived from my food bag. I was harassed again the next day when the apple cider in my thermos tasted like the previous night's supper. They both told me it tasted like puke. After that strong comment, I couldn't drink it either and dumped it out.

Leaving behind Mitella Lake and a bizarre rock that looks like something from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey, we skied down Wonder Creek. There are some stellar, unclimbed routes beckoning the ice climber on the west face of Pulsatilla Mountain. We were surprised to find bottomless snow lower in the drainage. On many occasions this December-type snow caused much unhappiness as we catapulted head first time after time after time.

The temperature increased phenomenally as we reached the bottom of the valley. Our original plan had been to either continue up and over into Purple Bowl or ski through a pass between Redoubt Mountain and Heather Ridge. The avalanche danger was increasing, however, and our desire for refreshments steered us down Baker Creek, towards the Peyto Cafe in Lake Louise.

The beauty of this traverse is that one half of the landscape is almost a mirror image of the other. Rockbound and Mitella lakes are almost totally encompassed by rock walls with high plateaus and valleys to ski on both sides. The traverse can be skied in either direction; however, it is beneficial to get a head start by using the groomed trail to Rockbound Lake. It is probably easier to rappel down the head-wall at Mitella Lake, although it can be climbed.

A possible, exciting adventure would be to scramble up TV Peak and take in the view of the Bugaboos and that magnificent peak to the south, Assiniboine. It would also be feasible to ski up from Luellen Lake to join the Grog-aux-Pommes Traverse. This would certainly change the nature of the Drummond-Bonnet traverse, adding a significant variation that would eliminate the slog down Johnston Creek.

How did we contrive the name of this traverse? First pretend you're a redneck and a horse wrangler. You're melting snow at your camp on the traverse. You have a package of apple cider with the written French words: "Grog aux Pommes". Now pronounce the words in English, and you understand the true name of the traverse. It gave us many moments of joy as we laughed over Sean's version of the apple cider traverse.

New Ice Routes

David Thompson Motor Inn 150m. IV, WI2. Hike into Old North Fort Creek (as for DeMaio's Dementia}. Take first drainage north. The route is 20 minutes into the canyon. Big, fat, steep steps. Rap or downclimb. The route is basically on the back side of Association Peak.

F.A.: Greg Cornell. December 1997.

Good Host 230m. IV, WI3R. The route is above Goat Pond on the Smith-Dorrien Road. It is quite visible from the car. As you follow the secondary road, the route falls in a direct line towards the road. Break through the rock band via a line of trees on the cliff. Continuing along the ridge above the route had been the plan, but conditions during the F.A. would not permit this.

F.A.: Greg Cornell, David Marra. December 1997.

The Vermilion Range

John Martin

The southern portion of the Vermilion Range extends northward some 22 km from Mount Norquay to the Cascade River at Flints Park. Although it is readily accessible from both the east and the west, it has attracted little attention from climbers. The southernmost peak, Mount Brewster, was climbed in 1926, and in 1987 I ascended the "Elk Lake Peaks", the sixth and seventh peaks north of Forty Mile Creek (CAJ 72:75). Until 1997, these three were the only peaks in the southern portion of the Vermilion Range with recorded ascents (in this article I refer to the peaks by number, starting at the south end; thus these peaks would be VI, V6 and V7).

After a 10-year hiatus, I became interested in the Vermilion Range again. In mid-July of 1997, I set off in the direction of Elk Lake late one sunny morning with the intent of finding a way up V4 and V5. I followed the Elk Lake trail for rather more than an hour before reaching an obvious place to leave it, directly opposite V4. The woods at this point are open, and I had an enjoyable walk up to a knoll just above timberline on the north side of the cirque between V4 and V5, where I took a break and inspected the route to the V4-V5 col. It was an idyllic, timeless Rockies day: brilliant sunshine, puffy white clouds and a temperature in the low 20s. A perfect day to go climbing. And it did look like there would be some climbing ahead, as the top part of the cirque is formed by an unbroken, steepish headwall perhaps 100m high.

After making a sort of semicircular ascending traverse to avoid as much scree as possible, I reached the upper cliffs roughly at the centre of the cirque. Here I stopped to change into rock shoes. The climbing above was surprisingly easy and I was soon at the col. I had expected that at this point the climbing would be over and that I would be strolling to my peaks

V5, Vermilion Range

in running shoes, but this was not to be. V4 (9300 ft.) (GR 937807), to the south, did appear to be straightforward, but V5 (9400 ft.) (GR 935917), to the north, looked quite challenging. From the col this peak rises in a sharp ridge, blocked partway up by a vertical wall. The ridge falls away in steep slabs on the left and in cliffs on the right. Obviously, I would be keeping my rock shoes on to climb V5.

The ridge sharpened and steepened almost immediately, but I was able to traverse below some tricky-looking places by following a ledge of sorts on the right side of the ridge, and so arrived without difficulty at the steep wall. Here my traverse line on the east side of the ridge terminated. I could see how to climb the steep wall — at 5.10, maybe. Not soloing terrain for me. I would have to find something on the slabs to my left or go down. I was bothered by the exposure and an acute shortage of holds, until I pulled off a small, loose flake to reveal a 1-cm-wide by 10-cm-long flat hold — pretty much a parking lot on a slab climb — in exactly the right place. Problem solved! I made a short traverse, climbed a corner, traversed again and climbed another corner, then pad, pad, pad up some nice open slabs and I was back on the ridge crest at a minor summit after climbing a total of perhaps 100m of up to 5.7 rock. The major difficulties were now over, but there was still a long ridge traverse over to the main summit of V5, which was mostly easy climbing rather than walking. What a fun route!

As I had expected, there was no sign that the peak had been climbed before, and I stopped long enough to build a small cairn before heading down. It was already late afternoon and I still wanted to climb V4. The descent went well, but even so it took 90 minutes to get back to the col. After a short break, I scrambled up V4, which was as easy as it looked — and also a first ascent. Again, I built a small cairn and then immediately headed down. I saved some time in the lower part of the cirque by glissading on some good snow and was able to get back to the parking lot well before dark, after a 10-hour trip. I had enjoyed the V4/V5 trip so much that I decided to try V10 (GR 910876), which at 9800-plus ft. is the high point of the range. This impressive peak had caught my attention during previous ascents in the Palliser Range. On another day of perfect weather at the end of July, I bicycled up the Cascade fire road to Stony Creek and then hiked west on the Elk Pass trail until it turns south, where a tributary stream comes in from the north. I planned to follow this stream first north, then west and finally south to its origin in a small headwater lake at the foot of VI0.

For the first 1.5 km, on the northward leg, the going was pleasant and easy, on excellent game trails. As soon as I turned west, however, the trails evaporated and I found myself in trackless bush. There followed a monumental bushwhack during which I came close to turning back more than once. Eventually, though, I reached the lake and was finally able to see my intended route. It looked pretty straightforward — and so it proved. I hiked up into the V9-V10 cirque and continued pretty much straight upward, first over avalanche snow, then consolidated scree and finally rubble-covered bedrock, reaching the ridge on the V10 side of the col. The ridge was easy, and I reached the top within two and a half hours of leaving the lake. Not surprisingly, there was no sign of a previous ascent.

The weather was so warm that I was comfortable lounging around on the summit in shorts and a tank top, enjoying the views of familiar peaks from a new vantage point. I had hoped to incorporate an ascent of V9 into the trip, but I could now see that the route from the V9-V10 col passed over a series of vertical pinnacles and was not practical. Instead I returned to the lake and spent some time there. After all, it is not often one is privileged to visit a completely pristine lake showing not the faintest trace of human activity.

On leaving the lake, I decided to try a different return route over the ridge to the east, which I hoped would save some bushwhacking. The route started badly, with a difficult thrash through steep, dense bush under a hot afternoon sun. Soon, though, I reached open slopes and the top of the ridge. The ridge crest offered easy going all the way down to the unnamed tributary, which I reached within a kilometre of the Elk Pass trail. The gamble on the shortcut had paid off. Within another 45 minutes I was back at my bike, and 45 minutes after that I was back at the parking lot. The trip had taken not quite 12 hours.

From the top of V10, I had mapped out a route to the top of V12 (9200 ft.) (GR 907898) which seemed to be reasonable in terms of bushwhacking, and in late September I was back at the Cascade trailhead at first light on a brilliantly clear day to give it a try. I approached as for VI0 until I reached the point where the game trails end and the unnamed tributary stream turns west. Here I left the creek and angled up through the forest, finding mainly easy going, towards the east ridge of V12. Above timberline I walked through extensive grassy slopes to the last vegetation on the east ridge, at about 8000 ft. The larches were in their autumn finery and a skiff of fresh snow brightened the peaks. It was a gorgeous day.

The ridge ahead was easy at first but then was interrupted by a series of short cliff bands, which I detoured on the left side. One of these steps proved quite awkward, giving a few exposed 5.7 moves. Above, I detoured a 9000-ft. subpeak on the left and continued without difficulty to the main peak. As expected, it was a first ascent. I had some lunch and enjoyed the view. It looked as if I could easily traverse over to V13 and V14, and then descend by a different route. Since there was plenty of daylight left, I decided to carry on.

Within minutes of leaving the summit, my progress was blocked by a pinnacle on the ridge. It appeared that in order to detour this obstacle I would have to make a long

descent and reascent, so I decided to traverse across a scree slope to the V12-V11 ridge and try V11 instead. This was a mistake. Up close, the "skiff" of snow on the north side of Vll turned out to be 15-20 cm sitting atop a dog's breakfast of slabs, frozen scree, short cliff bands and occasional verglas. I fiddled around for at least an hour before giving it up. Infuriated, I could see that, had I been less impatient and had I attempted to bypass the difficult spot on the V12-V13 ridge, I would by now have been lolling in the sun on VI3 instead of slithering around in the shade and cold of Vll's north face. But it was too late now. Ah, well — such are the vicissitudes of climbing.

I descended with some difficulty to the V11-V12 col, where things began to go well. First, an improbably easy descent into the cirque on the east side appeared. Then, at timberline, I intersected a game trail which contoured off to the left. It led after about 1.5 km of spectacular scenery to my route of ascent. I even found a better way down through the trees. The rest of the descent was routine, but enjoyable, and I rolled into the parking lot just before dusk, after a 12-hour absence.

I'm looking forward to seeing more of the unexplored country in the Vermilion Range.

Mount Chester, North Ridge

Allan Main

A long time ago, I was having a day of scree appreciation in the Spray River valley. A friend and I had wandered up some rubble pile and, being rather pooped, had sat down to contemplate. Looking across the valley, I saw the ridge. I quickly paraphrased Service: "There's ridges that somehow grip your eyes, and hold them like a, spell/Such was she, and she looked to me, like a ridge that was born in hell."

And so the idea was hatched; I wondered if anyone had ever done it, but couldn't find anything in the Little Green Bible. Nothing. Virgin territory! Most of the range is a series of very steep slabs that charge out at angles between 50 and 70 degrees. On the east side of the ridges, scree accumulates in the intervening gullies and often provides a ledge system. In this range, the rotten rock will occasionally firm up long enough to create a skyline that reminds one of a stegosaurus silhouette; the back of this dinosaur was about a kilometre and a half long.

Time passed. I mentioned to a few gullible faces that I had an idea that would not only rank up there with the famous climbs but would become one, once we had completed it. Chuck said it sounded like something he would like to try; Ray was willing to try anything; John came along 'cuz a) he got invited, and b) he had no idea what we were getting into! And so we set off, with four 9-mm ropes, a rather small rack, a whack of slings found on other climbs, three hammers and a plethora of pins.

Saturday morning was brisk, with the temperature a bit above freezing. Clouds scudded around the nearby summits as we followed the gravel highway to the flats below Chester Lake. We got our first look at the objective. After removing layers of clothes, we left the trail, crossed the creek and headed for the col on the southwest side of Chester. An hour later, we arrived at the col, took a bit of a break, then started for the summit, which we reached at eleven o'clock. John looked towards the Fortress and exclaimed, "You want to go there??? Man, that looks dangerous!!" It was a bit early for a lunch break, but we took one anyway. Twenty minutes later, we resumed our upright postures and reshouldered our packs.

In order to find a route off the summit, Chuck explored the left side while I looked at the right. Nothing too promising right off, but I thought the right side would probably work out. It did, but at the cost of precious time. John made his decision and headed back down the way we had come.

In general, three is not a great number for mountaineering, especially on technical ground. I scrambled down the scree-loaded ledges and small bowls. With three ropes at our disposal, the plan was that one man would try to move ahead and get a rap station set up for the others. So I downclimbed some 5.4 stuff, looked over the brink and turned back to the rock to find a crack for a piton. Ray yelled from 15m above me, "Where are you and how did you get there?" Receiving traffic directions, Ray downclimbed 3m before doing a 2-m butt slide to another ledge. Chuck took a dim view of Ray's performance, drove in a pin and rapped down to my freshly planted knife blade. More time passed, as did another rap. Three knife blades used up and the summit behind us was still within shouting distance.

We rambled along, going around little pinnacles on the right-hand side. Not only was the exposure somewhat reduced on that side, the views down to the Headwall Lakes were magnificent. Using the ledge system whenever we could, we moved onward.

More sub-ridges. Downclimbing rotten crap. We could see a distinct high point on the ridge just ahead. Chuck was in the lead, boldly looking over the next little outcrop. The ridge had suddenly narrowed to a razor and the option of staying directly on the ridge proper lost its appeal. It looked like a high-altitude sand castle; we paused long enough to see if the next gust of wind would send the precarious blocks crashing down. A sobering look down the west side of the ridge restored perspective. We backtracked slightly and used the ledges on the headwall side. The high point was reached: no cairn, no human signs.

A fresh Rocky Mountain cairn was hastily built. Now that we could see down the ridge a fair way, we knew that the sun and the clock were plotting against us. Escape routes — where were our escape routes? If night fell sooner rather than later, would we have a route down, or would we have to sit out the night? Chuck and Ray thought the steep chutes down the west side could offer a possibility. Silently I didn't hold out much hope for an easy "bail". Working down off the high point, we ran out of easy ground. Rap-a-rama continued. Slings around large blocks, more knife blades and a steady diet of leapfrog rapping. The hours raced past. It was nearly 5 p.m., and there was still a long way to go.

Then came the crunch. Chuck had rapped and was 49m below us on a rather small ledge. He was trying to set up the next station and was struggling to find a crack that would hold a piton. I rapped down. "Is it givin' ya grief?" I asked unnecessarily, noting that he was anchored to a tied-off Lost Arrow that had at least half the shaft still out of the rock. He grunted, "Anything over there?" A quick survey showed little promise. Glancing down, it seemed about 80m to the apparently flat scree. Eyes scanned the meagre fare. With only a few knife blades remaining, Chuck tried one crack after another. None gave us that distinctive ping ping! Ping! Ping! PING! PING! PING!! PING!!! we so eagerly wanted. "I'll try this crack, but I don't honestly think it'll be any better," said Chuck. The knife blade sank with two blows of the hammer, finishing with a dull thud. I could sense that he was muttering under his

breath as he struggled to pull out the pin for yet another fresh attempt. "DAMN!!" The flying pin bounced three times en route to the scree. "I see the rock it landed on!" he offered hopefully. Great, I thought. All we need is a pair of PF Flyers to go get it. But Chuck was back at work on another crack. This one gave us more hope. Although we didn't really trust it completely, it was the best we had. During all this time I had been tied off on the double-nine rap lines and now I anchored myself to the new pin. There was a bit of a crack under a block which looked like it might hold a small stopper securely. But was the block secure? I tapped the block with my hammer; though not a distinct "pong", it wasn't a flat "gluck". I placed the piece and equalized our set-up. Ray rapped down to us. Chuck added another marginal piton to the system. He saw a better place for his Lost Arrow, transferred his tie-in to the "anchor" and pulled out the piton. "DAMN!! DAMN!!!!" The pin bounced twice before hitting scree. The ringing Lost Arrow had a lower pitch than the knife blade. "Did you see where that one hit?" In a small voice I said "No." I thought about a lot of things in the next few minutes: An instructor's voice said: "Only rap off a bombproof anchor that has at least three pieces."; I thought about my wife, who had asked me to be careful; I wondered whether we could climb the steep rock above us.

We pulled down the double nines, then rapped off the suspicious "anchor", Chuck leading the way. "Will we make it to the scree?" I called down. There was a bit of silence, then the reply came back: "No, about 12 metres short." My brain told me that one guy making it down the rope didn't guarantee that the anchor would hold the second guy. I broke my logical thought pattern and concluded that I would make it to the scree — especially if the anchor came unglued. I knew what I was doing, yet I had told myself that I would never do exactly what I was about to do. It seemed like a very long rap down to the ledge where Chuck was waiting. He already had a piton in and was waiting for the rope I was carrying. We rigged the next rope and waited for Ray to join us. As soon as I reached the scree, a barrage of falling rock pelted around me. I quickly ducked under the lip of the ledge just above me and flicked the rope in, too. Chuck came down and marched towards the rock where the piton was allegedly lying. En route he stopped suddenly, exclaimed "HEY!" fished between two rocks and pulled out the fallen Lost Arrow. When he reached the piton rock, he found nothing, but after turning around he bent over and withdrew the knife blade from the scree. "Those are pretty long odds!" I commented. Ray descended the rope to join us. Two hours to sunset. Leaving me to coil the rope, they started off at a brisk pace.

Ray looked tired. Chuck looked worn, too. I probably looked pretty rough also. Another sudden drop-off. I fished out some old, sacrificial 9-mm rope from my pack, tied it around a large block and cut off the excess rope. With another rap safely behind us, we moved on. The end was within sight. We could see only two more significant drop-offs between us and the col. There were just 45 minutes left before sunset. The ridge protested, throwing more obstacles at us. A short rap followed by some tricky down climbing. I was beginning to hate this thing. I was tired, too. The moss on the ledge was not dry, the handholds were not positive or stationary, and the other two were not in sight. Reaching the next ledge system, I realized that I had crossed my line of safety and that my reactions were based more on adrenaline than on common sense and my usual modus operandi. I just wanted to be down. Scrambling along the ridge, kicking off blocks that seemed to beg for movement, I chased Ray and Chuck. At the top of the last drop, Chuck was tying a new yellow 7-mm cord around a secure block. He seemed to be putting a lot of thought into the process; glancing up, he flatly said "Sure hate to leave this one behind." There was not much energy in his voice, just a tinge of regret. He rigged his plate and disappeared over the edge. Shortly after, Ray and I followed. The scree at the Fortress col was tantalizingly close. Another large horn, another length of 9-mm rope. We had run out of daylight. It was 7:50 p.m. Chuck led again. Ray and I looked anxiously down the cliff face. "Are you there? Are you on the scree?" "NO!! One more!" was the unwelcome reply. Silence. Ray offered an opinion: "S ===!" Then from below came another cry: "YYAA—HHOOOOOOO!!!!!!!! WE GOT IT!!"

When we reached the Fortress col at 8:10 p.m., we shook hands all round. No one had seen any signs of a previous party along the ridge. We walked to Chester Lake in the dusk, Chuck and I together and Ray a bit behind us. I said to Chuck, "I'll be in church tomorrow morning. I must remember to say thank you for a safe conclusion to today's adventure." He replied, "I won't be there, but say thanks for me, too, old boy."

Mount Chester, Kananaskis Range, North Ridge. Allan Main, Chuck Young, Ray Van Ness, John MacKenzie. September 6, 1997.

Mount Ida, Southwest Ridge

The Canadian-American team of Alan Ewert, George Evanoff and Christopher Webb established a basecamp below the south face of this remote peak in the Kakwa Recreation Area of Northern British Columbia on July 20. Moving up to an advanced bivi, they ascended the previously unclimbed southwest ridge of the mountain on July 21. The southwest ridge is comprised of extremely loose and shattered rock. After an initial 500 ft. of 4th-class scrambling, a 150-ft. cliff band was encountered. After a period of exploration, this problem was surmounted by sticking to the crest of the ridge; the difficulty was 5.3 to 5.4 in double boots. Once above thFe cliff band, the route angled right into a water-streaked alcove tiered by scree benches. These were negotiated by weaving along and up these benches, always regaining the immediate right side of the actual ridge crest. After another 1000 ft. of climbing, the team topped out on the beginning of the broad snow shoulder leading up to a prominent rock and ice summit tower. Splitting this is an obvious cleft filled with ice. Considerable water was trickling down the rock walls and being blown horizontally by wind gusts. Twenty-five feet of wet water-ice led to 200 ft. of steep snow which deposited the team on the slightly corniced summit ridge. The team summited just before noon, then left quickly after summit photos because of an approaching electrical storm. They rapidly descended the steep, nameless glacier east of the southeast ridge of the mountain. This glacier is thought to be the original ascent route used in 1954. Four days of wet, snowy weather ensued, during which the team bushwhacked 40 km through this amazingly untouched region of British Columbia, north of Mount Robson.

Mount Ida (3180m), Sir Alexander Group, Southwest Ridge. II, 5.3-5.4. July 20-21, 1997.

Mount Owen — Solo

Russell Lybarger

The idea was born in spring of '96 during a ski ascent of Cathedral Peak in Yoho National Park. Looking southwest from this summit through Odaray Pass, I saw a magnificent cone-shaped peak with a steep, north-facing glacier — an amazing-looking ski run. The map showed it as Mount Owen, 10,100 feet.

So in spring of '97, with no recruits, I found myself going alone in an attempt to climb and ski it. Nobody seemed to know anything about this peak, so it was to be an adventure.

I drove up from Golden on a sunny Saturday afternoon, dropped my truck at the Ottertail River trail-head at 5 p.m., then hitched a ride to the Lake O'Hara trailhead. My proposed route was up to Lake O'Hara, over McArthur Pass, up Mount Owen and out via Float Creek to the Ottertail River.

The wet snow from the heat of the day was setting up nicely as I skated in to the Elizabeth Parker hut. Thanks to the dry firewood and an old sleeping bag left there, I had a cozy bivi in the hut.

Up and gone at dawn — severe clear. Snow was rock-hard, great for fast travelling. Siding over McArthur Pass, I caught my first view of the peak, the tip glowing brightly in the early-morning sun. It looked so nice.

Off I went down McArthur Creek to the flats at 5800 feet. This involved skiing and walking through the worst avalanche debris I had ever negotiated. It had been very warm the previous week, so a lot of slides had come down, including a huge Class IV avalanche off the south side of Odaray Mountain. It was 300m wide and 1.5 km long, and had wiped out four hectares of mature forest. Messy.

At this point I travelled up the northwest fork of McArthur Creek through a skier-friendly forest. An ascent of about 3 km put me into a lovely valley just south of Odaray Pass. I skinned up steep, treed slopes to "Owen Pass", the narrow 7000-ft. saddle between Mount Duchesnay and Mount Owen. From there I traversed southwest for 1 km on frozen snow to gain the north slopes of Mount Owen.

At one point along this traverse, the way was blocked by sharp, 1.5-m crowns from climax avalanches (where the whole snowpack rips out). This forced me to de-ski, walk down about 300 ft., circumvent the initial mess, then continue up through a whole series of climax avalanches. Finally I reached the smooth, open bowls I had come for, putting me in position for a 3000-ft. ski up to the summit.

The lower slopes were glazed and firm, which gave me the opportunity to try out the new ski crampons I had rigged up for my free-heel gear. They worked well.

At 8500 ft. the glacier got steep. (Although the map doesn't show it, there is a small glacier there.) The north ridge to my left looked like an option for a fun climb, so I kicked steps up 400 ft. to gain the ridge.

Well, this turned out to be a mistake. I found myself post holing in thigh-deep sugar on loose Rockies slag with increasing exposure. After wasting an hour and a half, I sucked it up and bailed back down to the glacier. The sun was now cookin' and I was tiring, but the peak was close — only 1000 ft. of higher-angled snow and I'd be there. I skied till it became too steep, then kicked steps up to the corniced summit. Whew! It was 1:30 p.m., eight hours into my day, and I had made the summit. Wicked view of the Ottertail Range.

Okay, I'm running late — time to go. The ski run was spectacular and steep. First thirty turns were cardboard and styrofoam, then soft powder for two hundred more. Nice. Eventually I hit corn snow and then the inevitable spring slop. But what an amazing run.

Stopped for a break at the bottom of the run, had a quick snack and considered my exit. The proposed ski route out Float Creek was intended for earlier in the day, before things got too dangerous. My ordeal on the ridge had cost me precious time and now I was faced with travelling during the hottest part of the day. Stuff was already starting to move. It was too far to go back to Lake O'Hara, and there was considerable danger as well along that route. I had no bivi gear; wasn't too interested in hangin' out till morning. I bit the bullet and shot off like one, down what turned out to be a war zone of avalanches for 5 km.

The following hour was as stressful as any in my life. Picture a mouse in a cougar den.

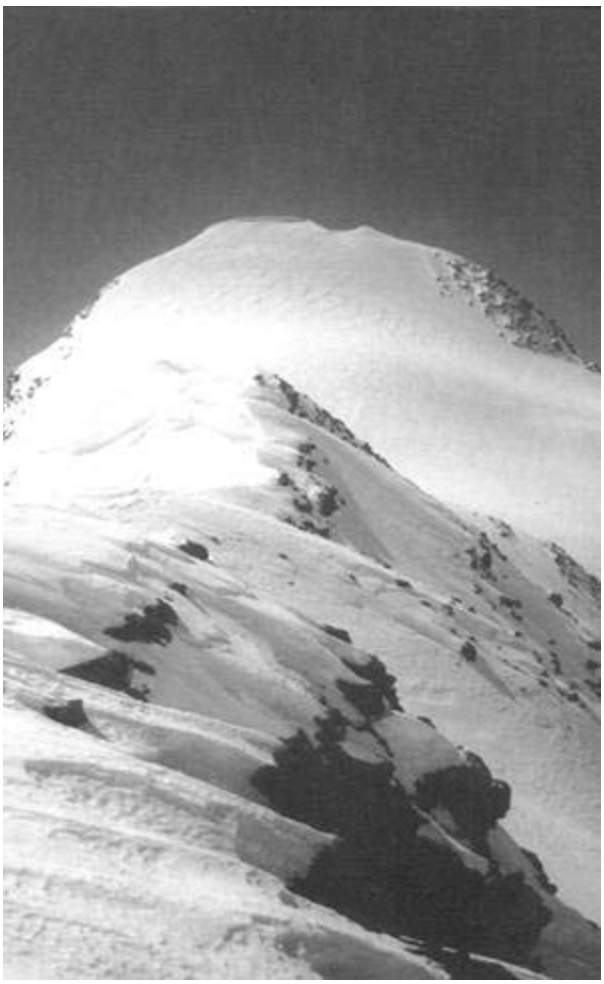
I whipped across path after path, listening and resting in the narrow bands of trees in between. It was a serious shooting gallery — a narrow, V-shaped valley with numerous slide paths (some descending 4000 ft.) from both sides, Mount Owen and Mount Duchesnay. At one point, just after starting one of the longer crossings, I heard a deep rumble from above. Racing back to the trees, I watched wide-eyed as the wet debris roared down and vomited into the creek metres from where I had just been. Hate it when that happens.

This nightmare continued for much too long a time, until finally I found myself in the safety of the thick forest. I sat down by the creek and felt waves of relief wash over me.

A nice, safe bushwhack for another kilometre got me to the Ottertail River trail. Six sweet kilometres of strolling down the fire road put me at my truck at 6 p.m. Juice, potato chips, a ripe banana. Wow.

What a day. Thirteen hours, 5000 ft. total gain, 8000 ft. of descent, a rarely visited peak, GREAT ski run, avalanches (a few too many) and an epic circle tour.

Time to hang up the skis and go biking.



Ascents From Silverhorn Creek

John Martin

The north side of the Silverhorn Creek valley is formed by a ridge of unnamed summits culminating in a 9700-ft. peak at GR 350402, which I think of as "PorSilDol", since it forms a triple divide between the drainages of Silverhorn, Dolomite and Porcupine creeks. There is no record of ascents for any of the peaks along this "SilDol Ridge". In 1994, Lynda Howard and I set out to explore it. We planned to approach via Silverhorn Creek, climb PorSilDol, traverse the ridge to the col at the head of Silverhorn Creek and then return via the creek valley. However, we bogged down in sidehill deadfall and bush within a kilometre of the highway and ended up climbing the southeastern peak of the Noyes massif instead. From here two things were evident: the planned traverse would work, and the approach via Silverhorn Creek wouldn't be much fun.

By 1997 I had pretty much forgotten the downside, but Lynda hadn't. Left to my own devices, my imagination ran wild and I conceived an expanded version of the original plan. From PorSilDol I would detour northeast to a 9600-ft. peak at GR 362410 ("PorDol"), return to SilDol Ridge and traverse it to the head of Silverhorn Creek, continue up the far side to complete a new route on Silverhorn Mountain, and then descend to the highway to close the loop. Don't ask how or why I came up with such a plan. Sometimes I just get these ideas, and then I have to see if they'll work. So, on August 22, I made an early start from Calgary and set off up Silverhorn Creek at first light. This time I stumbled on a better line through the initial deadfall and found somewhat easier going beyond in the valley bottom. Almost immediately I saw a fresh bootprint beside the creek. I was amazed. What other crazy person would be coming up here? I concluded that it must have been someone with the same traverse in mind.

The Silverhorn Creek valley is a bit of a grind — seldom very difficult, but never easy for more than a few metres at a time, and completely without even the most rudimentary of game trails. It took me quite a while to reach a confluence of streams below PorSilDol. From here I saw an appealing prospect: open terrain leading to an attractive rock rib on the southwest side of the peak, just right of a major gully. I was soon at the rib enjoying some fine, easy climbing on sound rock. The pitch that had appeared from below to be the crux slid by with hardly a pause, and a heretofore-hidden slab of perfect, if wet rock gave an unexpectedly spicy finish up to the summit shale slopes. I carried on over a subsidiary peak, walked over to the rounded top of PorSilDol and found what I had been expecting ever since I had seen the footprint: a cairn. It looked freshly minted — not a single rock out of place — but there was no record.

The route over to PorDol looked like a snap. The east side of PorSilDol carries a low-angle glacier, which I would have to cross, but it is very smooth and, with only a light covering of snow, the few crevasses were clearly visible. Beyond, easy slopes led to the summit of PorDol. I strolled down to the col, only to be cut off by a hidden ice wall at the last minute. Without crampons I had to make a long traverse south until I could get to the base of the glacier. This was a happy place: meltwater flashed everywhere in the sun and gurgled across ice-polished rock ledges; the valley of Dolomite Creek stretched out below; glaciated slopes lay above; and to the south appeared an unfamiliar view of Observation Peak. I felt privileged to be witnessing this grand and unspoiled place, so close to the hurly-burly of Banff National Park at the height of the tourist season and yet so remote from it.

From here PorDol really was a snap. I was still feeling energetic and was soon on top building a cairn, lunching and enjoying the view. All too quickly it was time to carry on. I retraced my steps to the foot of the glacier and then made a long ascending traverse southward across it to reach the crest of SilDol Ridge at the next peak along from PorSilDol. It sported a carbon copy of the cairn on PorSilDol. Clearly, someone else had had the same idea of traversing the SilDol ridge. I continued south over shale and occasional snow slopes, passing cairns on all three of the remaining peaks, and descended at length to the col at the head of Silverhorn Creek.

Sitting here, eating the last of my energy bars, I reflected on how tired I had become, how attractive the upper Silverhorn valley was and how easy it would be to get there, and by contrast how unappealing the 200 vertical metres and more of scree leading to the summit ridge of Silverhorn Mountain looked. Add to that an unknown descent on the far side of Silverhorn, and you'd think you'd come up with a real no-brainer. But I went up, not down.

The scree turned out to be well consolidated except for a short section near the top. Nevertheless, by the time I had reached the ridge crest I'd put 2300 vertical metres underfoot that day and was feeling about as tired as I can remember ever being. Silverhorn Mountain was only 500m away and 70m higher, but I just couldn't bring myself to finish the climb. Instead I turned northwest along the ridge towards Mount Weed, first descending to a col and then reascending to the sharp, rocky top of an unnamed 9200-ft. peak ("Silverweed") at GR 338359. It was a significant moment for me, as it was my 100th first ascent in the Rockies.

Beyond, the ridge became broad and shaly, giving some very welcome easy going. Soon I reached a major gully which offered an easy scree descent to the trees. Within 90 minutes of leaving Silverweed I was at the highway, very footsore and hoping that some kind driver would pick me up and spare me the 4-km walk back to my car. With 1.5 km to go, I finally got a ride. A luxurious ending to a long, hard day!

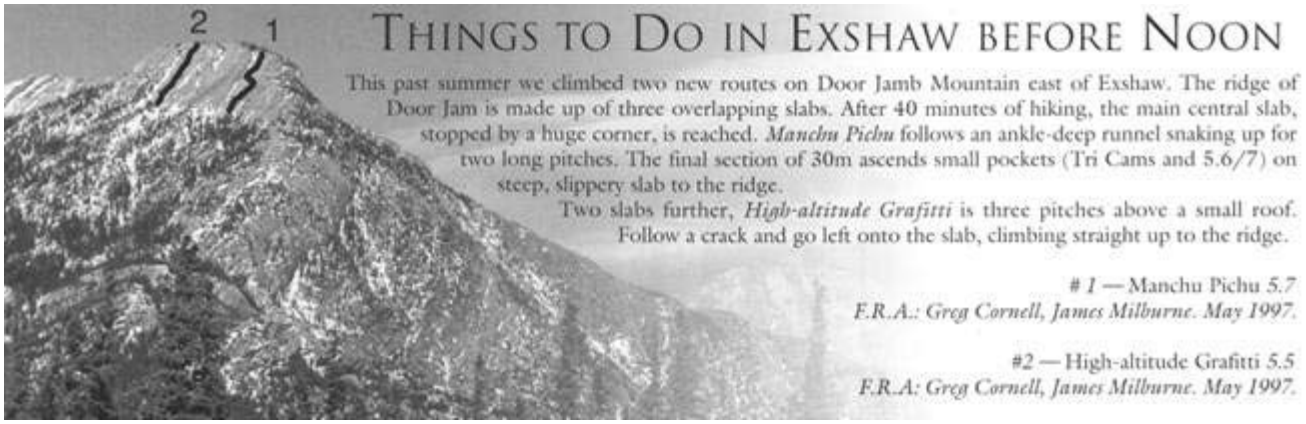
Things To Do In Exshaw Before Noon

This past summer we climbed two new routes on Door Jamb Mountain east of Exshaw. The ridge of Door Jam is made up of three overlapping slabs. After 40 minutes of hiking, the main central slab, stopped by a huge corner, is reached. Manchu Pichu follows an ankle-deep runnel snaking up for two long pitches. The final section of 30m ascends small pockets (Tri Cams and 5.6/7) on steep, slippery slab to the ridge.

Two slabs further, High-altitude Grafitti is three pitches above a small roof. Follow a crack and go left onto the slab, climbing straight up to the ridge.

1 — Manchu Pichu 5.7 F.R.A.: Greg Cornell, James Milburne. May 1997.

#2 —High-altitude Grafitti 5.5 F.R.A: Greg Cornell, James Milburne. May 1997.



Climbs From The West Fork Of Mosquito Creek

John Martin

The valley of the west fork of Dolomite Creek runs behind Dolomite Peak and connects with the Dolomite Pass area by way of a high col. As part of the popular Dolomite Circuit, this valley is well known by skiers; however, it has largely been ignored by climbers. The only recorded climb from this valley is the 1941 ascent of an unnamed 10,100-ft. peak (GR 449269) on the north side of the Mosquito-Dolomite col. In 1995, I became interested in two other unnamed and apparently unclimbed peaks accessible from the west fork: a tower-like 9400-ft. summit (GR 440257) that forms the south buttress of the Mosquito-Dolomite col; and a 9600-ft. peak between the west and northwest forks of Mosquito Creek (GR 457257). I call these peaks Dolomite Castle and Mosquito Peak respectively.

In October 1995, Lynda Howard and I went out to have an initial look at the two peaks. We hiked up the Mosquito Creek trail for about 40 minutes to the west fork, crossed it and then had a pleasant walk through open woods up the north bank to the hanging portion of the valley near timberline. At this point we headed north up open slopes along the top of a cliff band to get above the last trees and then turned left through meadows to reach the upper part of the valley. A cold wind and fresh snow deterred us from climbing either of the peaks, but before we turned back we were able to confirm that both lacked cairns.

We returned for another try in July 1996. Again, the weather didn't cooperate, and we decided to hike around the Dolomite Circuit instead, a trip neither of us had done before in its entirety. Overcast weather and heavy snow blanketing both sides of the Mosquito-Dolomite col gave way to an idyll of sunshine, flowers and marmots at Dolomite Pass. We went down via Katherine Lake, which brought back happy boyhood memories of fishing there for beautiful native cutthroat trout 40 years earlier. The day was a big success.

In August 1997, I went back without Lynda, who had declined a third trip to the same place. On the previous two trips the light had been flat and we had been unable to identify a feasible route on Dolomite Castle. My plan this time was to climb Mosquito Peak via the apparently easy southeast ridge and then carry on to Peak 10,100. In this way I would be able to examine Dolomite Castle from a variety of different angles and, hopefully, spot a route on it. I gained the upper valley as before and walked through flowery meadows before turning right up a prominent rocky spur, which provided an excellent route with a minimum of scree bashing to the upper southeast ridge of Mosquito Peak. The last portion of the ridge proved even easier than it had looked from below, offering fun scrambling up short cliff bands. I was able to circumvent the imposing final wall by an easy passage on the left side, after which a ridge of firm bedrock led to the top.

The trip so far had gone extremely well. I now seemed to be able to see a route up Dolomite Castle! After building a cairn, I headed down the ridge towards Peak 10,100. The closer I got, the less appealing it looked, with ice-choked chimneys and undercut blocks poised on steeply inclined strata. At the same time, the potential line on Dolomite Castle was looking more and more promising, so I changed plans. Instead of heading over to the summit tower of Peak 10,100, I did a descending traverse beneath it to a point directly above the Mosquito-Dolomite col and then descended to the col.

After lunching at the col, I walked up an easy ridge to the impressive north buttress of Dolomite Castle. I now had to traverse left to get to my intended route on the east side of the peak. From below, the traverse had appeared to be on scree, but instead I was faced with bizarre conditions: steep slopes of dried mud mixed with chunks of rock, in which I was forced to cut steps. Eventually, I was far enough around to start heading up on islands of bedrock in a sea of rubble to gain a spur on the east side of the mountain. I wandered up little rock bands and debris slopes to the top of the spur at a steep cliff. Here I made a long traverse right on a ledge, slashing steps in dried mud all the way, to the spectacularly exposed crest of the north buttress. Now came a tricky move up the shattered crest of an arête to gain an awkwardly sloping gully-cum-ledge leading back left. This feature ended at a short groove guarded at the bottom by an overhang. A few awkward 5.5ish moves over the bulge, some easier climbing above, and I was pulling over the top only about 15m from the highest point. It was quite exciting to have found a solo-able route.

After building a cairn, I reversed the top part of my route and then continued down the eastern spur directly into the valley of the west fork. I stayed on the south side to see some new country and then angled down through open woods into the main Mosquito Creek valley to pick up the trail back to the highway. The entire trip had taken just nine hours.

Mosquito Peak is a classic short Rockies "scramble". Be sure to descend by the route of ascent; the traverse and descent to the Mosquito-Dolomite col is ugly, and other descents to the west fork valley are cut off by cliffs. Dolomite Castle is an anti-classic by the route I took, but there may be a better alternative via a gully on the southeast side leading to the southwest ridge.

New Ice Routes

Allan Massin

Yoho National Park

MOUNT BURGESS

Up a Tree 70m. AO WI4+ Park 1.7 km east of Field. Walk up, trending right towards second rock band in trees (2 hours). Climb the dead tree until under roof (small rock gear). Pull the roof to a wonderful, narrow pillar. Rappel from tree.

Lone Pine 55m. A2 WI4 Park 2 km east of Field. Very visible from highway. Walk up, trending right to first rock band (1 hour). Climb a beautiful corner on thin ice, using rock for protection. Thicker ice above is climbed until below a big roof (with more ice above). Climb thin A2 crack to reach roof, then pull and climb steeper ice above. Rappel ice.

MOUNT DENNIS

Traditional Ale 55m. 5.9 WI6 Just right of Warthog is a series of small mushrooms attached to frozen rock. By connecting these features a free-hanging pillar was eventually reached. Climb pillar to a small roof with thin ice above. Climb up or complete a neat traverse left.

All above routes F.A.: Allan Massin, Steve Pratt.

MOUNT STEPHEN

Just Water 55m. 5.10 WI5 Park at the intersection of the Yoho Valley road. The climb is located on the lowest rock band, left of Home Brew. It forms as a distinct, thin vein of ice below a roof. A narrow avalanche path heads straight up to the climb from the railway tracks. Climb thin ice on good rock, with good cracks and good moss, to a thin column of ice. A thin crack leads to a roof and more ice. Follow ledge right to frozen moss, with good rock gear. Rappel trees.

F.A.: Allan Massin, Joytie Vein.

Strained (The FFA Of The Andromeda Strain)

David Turner

The weather is definitely not cooperating with the master plan. Dreambed on Yam' is good, but not the draw for coming up to the Rockies from Colorado. Alpine routes have brought John Culberson and me here, and the weather is getting worse.

John and I did this same routine last year: a climb on Yam' (CMC Wall last time), then go alpine. It's amazing how easy it is to forget how the rock is here. It looks loose — and, by golly, it is! Between the rock and the weather, getting up a big route in the Rockies is cause for celebration.

The weather page in the Calgary Herald is our daily muse. We try to decipher the five-day forecast in the morning over cafe-au-laits at the Coffee Mine in Canmore. It's hard to be depressed with such a wicked buzz on.

The Herald contains nothing but rain symbols, except for on the fifth day, which shows a snowflake. A hike up Rundle, a session at the Canmore rock gym, cruising Banff, dinner with friends, Monday-night American football at the Drake Inn, moping — anything to fill time. It appears as if the first week of our allotted two will be a bust. How far to Yosemite? We decide to hang.

Our weather muse begins to promise better things for the future. Glowing sun symbols begin to appear after the snowflakes. Finally, suns outnumber flakes. Our stud-poker hand shows one flake and four glowing suns. We start to plot. But what a flake it turns out to be! Six inches of snow on our tent below Yam'. A call up to the Icefields reveals a huge dump. The mountains around Canmore look hopelessly snowed up. We decide to take it one day at a time.

The next afternoon, we crag at Grassi Lakes. Say, this is fun! John and I discuss doing this for the remainder of our stay. But the locals quickly peg us for Americans, and no American would come here mid-September just to sport climb. We decide the disgrace would be too much.

The following morning finds us bivied in the woods below Castle Mountain. We are up before dawn to do Super Brewers. A lone driver arrives and innocently announces that he and his three friends intend to do the same. Our hasty departure follows. John and I agree that the " Ultra" part is okay and that upper Brewers is beautiful.

The next day gets us to a bivi below the southeast face of Mount Sir Douglas. We arrive at the summit the following afternoon and hike out in the dark. John, wearing new plastic boots on the hike, now has severely swollen ankles.

The weather muse has been absolutely right on. It now shows two remaining sun symbols, then trouble. We burn one symbol driving north to where the big game lies. After talking to the Sunwapta warden, we decide to spend our last glowing sun on Andromeda Strain.

The warden gives us a topo lovingly drawn by Barry Blanchard. She tells us that The Strain has been climbed just a few days ago by Americans, one of whom we recognize by reputation. Their ascent took 20 hours of climbing, with a bivi on top. The fact it has been climbed so soon after the storm gladdens us. The part about 20 hours of climbing saddens us.

Four in the morning finds us walking up the snow-coach road. The night sky is huge. Orion the warrior keeps us company as we climb over the 'schrund. John is wincing in pain with each kick into the firm snow. When he takes off his boots afterward, his ankles are double in size.

We solo to the hockey-stick crack and head right. Instead of the full-on traverse, John decides that a short 5.9 wall halfway along and bristling with fixed pins looks appealing. He pulls it off free, even though it is well-iced. We are now directly below the Al pitch. Attaching aiders to my harness, I wonder aloud how long it is since I've been in them. I can't remember.

Up I go through the first bit of loose 5.9 blocks. By now I'm used to the looseness — sort of. The trick, it seems, is not to pull on any one thing more than another and to think light thoughts.

I arrive at the Al part of the pitch. It immediately takes great stoppers. Also, the rock is better. My psych increases.

Stemming up the double-overhanging corner, I sink in a TCU. The stems run out. I spy a face hold and decide that, if it's any good, to hell with the aiders. It is good!

My right crampon has been stemming off the crack. The trick is going to be to switch feet and jam my left crampon points into it. I get that part done, then stretch to a thumbs-in jam. As my feet draw level with the TCU, as my hand takes up the last place for gear and as the climbing ahead looks mixed and run out, I face that timeless question that confronts climbers over and over: Thrash or go? I go.

Luckily, the holds are positive. I'm about forty feet out from the last gear when I reach the underside of a huge flake stuck in the corner. It has a sling hanging from it. Relieved, I clip in. I give the sling the old yank test. Because the sling is attached to nothing, I almost go for a ride.

When my heart returns to something approaching normal, I undercling the flake, mantle onto its snow-covered top and yell like the adrenaline-laden fiend I've become.

John follows quickly. With no gear to pull on, he does not have the thrash

option and freeclimbs the pitch in his usual excellent style. John dispatches one more desperate section, and we are in the upper couloir. Running belays bring us to the exit pitch. This year it's much steeper than depicted on the guidebook's cover. We wonder if the previous party had to climb this by headlamp. Not a pretty thought.

The top is absolutely magnetic now. We simulclimb the summit slope, pull through the cornice and flop around on top for a while, giving high-fives and admiring the view. Hurrying along, we are able to get down to the moraine at last light. Orion accompanies us again, this time to our car.

The weather muse is off by a day. The next morning, the sun is strong, but we are not. The last six days have wasted us. We begin to whimper home.

New Ice Routes

In October 1997, we did a couple of long, new ice routes quite close to Canmore which are both worthy of early-season repeats. The face is the typical nebulous Kananaskis pile, so with any significant snowfall both routes have a healthy avalanche hazard. They are located about 100m apart, right at the toe of the Goat Glacier on the west side of the Spray Lakes. The upper half of Centaur is visible from the road just past the dam.

Follow the Smith-Dorrien road out of Canmore until just past the Spray Lakes Ranger Station, then cross the dam and drive 1 km down the west shore of the lake. Park in a campsite and head up the obvious drainage (Spray Lakes map — GR149493). Two hours.

Cabrio 400m. WI5 (thin). This is the right-hand of the two big runnels. It's about nine pitches long, with the last five being quite easy. The climbing down low is very thin, so take seven or eight pins and a few wires in addition to some screws. In fat years this climb will be quite easy. Rap the route.

F.A.: Grant Statham, Larry Stanier

Centaur 350m. 5.9 WI4. The left-hand runnel didn't touch the ground when we were there. Sixty metres right of the main drainage is a 50-metre corner system which gets you to a ledge and across to the ice. Take a healthy rock rack for this pitch only; once onto the ice, we used only screws, and drilled bolts for one anchor. Rap the route.

F.A.: Grant Statham, Joe Buszowski

Blunders And Bouquets: More Bravado And BS From The Old Goats Group

Rick Collier

1. Allsmoke Mountain (the Hard Way): This mighty massif of towering limestone in the foothills of the Rockies soars almost (but not quite) to timberline (6950 ft./2119m). Despite the less than daunting elevation of this summit, Allsmoke still provides an excellent warm-up ski. On January 18, we started at the parking area where McLean Creek splits off from Gorge Creek, and followed the Gorge Creek road up and over the ridge to the south and into Ware Valley. We then puttered through meadows and along an old road on the north side of Ware Creek until the stream branched; in deep snow, we followed the north fork around a corner, where (now heading west) the valley narrowed considerably and the rating for the bushwhacking rose to 5.8. We camped where the valley began to rise steeply up the mountain. The next day we skied up the east ridge for 2.5 km, at which point it turned sharply north; another steep but skiable 600 ft. brought us to the wind swept summit and excellent views of both the Front Range and the prairies. Admittedly, the ski down through the toothpick timber was less than pleasant; nevertheless, we were back at the cars by 9 p.m. John Holmes, Alistair Des Moulins, Gail Des Moulins, Rick Collier, Carmie Callanan, Christine Grotefeld.

2. Recommended Traverse: On a decidedly frigid February 2, we skied up the long valley through which flows Buller Creek (near Spray Lake), reaching the col of North Buller Pass at about 1 p.m. Boiler-plate skiing led us to the upper Ribbon Creek cirque and then down the drainage to the southeast to the warden's cabin. Another hour took us across Ribbon Lake and to the cliffs overlooking the lower Ribbon Creek valley. Here's where the fun really began; if you haven't enough luck to find the ascent chains or the nerve to down-climb them in winter conditions, bring two ropes and rap. We did. And, as a result, the seven of us arrived at the valley bottom well after dark. Once there, we found that no one had beaten a trail this far up the canyon. Headlamps, floundering in powder snow, and a good deal of bonehead compass-work brought us back to the hostel and our prepositioned cars by 9 p.m. Twelve and a half hours, return. Reg Bonney, Carmie Callanan, Steve Tober, James Huston, Rick Collier, Ealaine West, Christine Grotefeld.

3. Another Recommended (and Possibly New) Traverse: On the three days of February 15, 16 and 17, we skied a circuit south of Assiniboine that was both demanding and spectacular. We started at the Shark Mountain parking area and skied the usual route past Watridge Lake, down the hill and across the bridge over the Spray River. Here, instead of continuing north to Bryant Creek, we turned left to follow the Spray River trail to the Currie Creek valley south of Mount Morrison (3.5 km from the bridge). If there is a deep snow base, skiing up the valley is, despite the deadfall and a couple of narrow sections, fairly easy. We camped the first night at about 1.5 km from tree line. The next day we continued up, past frozen waterfalls, larch groves and vast meadows of snow, all the while surrounded by the towers of mounts Alcantara, Aurora and Byng. There are several access routes to Aurora Pass (82 1/13 014308) from near the end of the valley, but all need to be ascended with care. Once at the pass, the views of Alcantara, Eon and Gloria are spectacular. Skiing down from this high point towards Marvel Pass is also steep and, like the ascent, requires caution. The 1.5 km to Marvel Pass is a winter delight of timberline skiing. We camped the second night just east of the unnamed lake at the pass itself. The third day, unfortunately, was cloudy and snowy, thereby frustrating our attempt to ascend Mount Byng. The remainder of the trip consisted of plowing out over Owl Lake and down Owl Creek, crossing Bryant Creek (there is a bridge) and skiing the normal route back to Shark Mountain. We averaged about 16 km per day (most of it trailbreaking). John Holmes, Reg Bonney, Rick Collier, Carmie Callanan, Alistair Des Moulins, Gail Des Moulins.

4. Possible First Winter Ascent, Whistling Rock Ridge (9610 ft./2929m): On February 9, we skied up the usual route towards South Burstall Pass, stopping at the foot of the objective: the main peak of the long ridge running north from Sir Douglas. Crampons and step- kicking for 2000 ft. plus in sugar snow that alternated with boiler plate — some of it quite steep — brought us to the narrow, corniced summit

ridge, which we traversed rather gingerly to the cairned summit. Excellent views on a supremely cold day. Reg Bonney, Rick Collier.

5. World's Worst Bushwhack and Alpine Botch-up: During the period from July 19 through 22, we managed to ascend two peaks, one of them being Mount Alexandra (11,114 ft./3389m); the other we'd rather forget. However, climbing the peaks themselves was the simple part of the trip; getting to them was the real bummer. So, anyone planning summer ascents in the area, take note: the final 3 km up Lyell Creek to the intersection with Whiterose Creek (running north), as well as the first 3 or so km up this second creek, constitute the bushwhack from hell: crisscrossed fallen timber, tangled and knotted alders, and thick stands of 8-ft. devil's club are only some of the delights to greet the unwitting climber. It took us two 13-hour days of very serious effort to reach our high camp at the base of Alexandra. One should be sure to take a fold-out saw; better yet, take two or three; better still, do these climbs in the winter (unless, of course, you're from B.C., where misery like this will seem to be child's play). On the third day we ascended Alexandra easily, but our attempt on Queens went badly awry: when we reached the Alexandra-Whiterose col on the descent, thick cloud moved in; displaying unwarranted bravado, we continued across the Spring Rice glacier and, after considerable step kicking, post holing and route guessing in the mist, reached a summit and left a register. However, once we had crossed back over the glacier — this time in rain, sleet and lightning — and the weather had cleared, we realized, aha!, that we'd ascended Fresnoy (10,630 ft./ 3241m), not Queens. We are appropriately humiliated, and humbly request that whoever is up there next change the entry in the register. Reg Bonney, Rick Collier.

6. New Route Attempted, Cathedral Crags (10,083 ft./3073m): On July 24, we ascended through the bush from the highway and the railroad to the bottom of the west face, which is split by a large couloir and crack. The climbing is not difficult, but the rockfall is quite ugly. We made it about halfway up before lengthening shadows prompted us to turn back. A bivi late in the season near the face (or wherever there is water) is recommended. Rick Collier, Mardy Roberts.

7. Nine-day Alpine and Mountain Trek: From July 26 to August 4, a group of six Old Goats visited the Victoria Cross Range northwest of Jasper — an area, according to The Rocky Mountains of Canada-, North, "of scant interest to mountaineers". However, delightful ascents were made of Snaring Mountain (a probable first ascent!), Mount Oliver and Monarch Mountain. The latter is a very fine looking mountain from most directions, with icefields on the northeast and southeast sides; sadly, however, the summit was strewn with the remains of batteries and other debris. With more time, several other interesting ascents could have been attempted. This area has many scenic lakes, has more permanent snow than the maps indicate, and is very popular with the mosquitoes. Alistair Des Moulins, Gail Des Moulins, David Mulligan, Will Jull, Alan Law.

8. Third Ascent, Mount Aye (10,640 ft./3243m): My journal notes for the summer of '97 include the following: "...at last we got up this big, nasty, lumpy, black bastard!" Very appropriate. Readers may recall that we attempted this peak last year (1996) over the September long weekend, and near the crux (not far from the summit) were defeated by an autumn blizzard. In that CAJ report, I said, "We intend to return." We did — this time a month earlier, which made all the difference. Nevertheless, Mount Aye remains a long, difficult climb. On August 2, we ascended easily from the cars up Eon Creek to the meadows; this time, however, we continued up the scree to the Eon-Aye col (in and out of thunderstorms), where we found secure but exposed bivi sites. The next morning, on the third, we set off early to follow the scalloped shelf to the west; about 0.8 km of traversing, with some snow, ice, and rock scrambling, brought us to the grand couloir that splits the massif between the east and west (false) summits. We found easy scrambling up the east side, which led to deep cracks trending southeast. We roped up here; two pitches of 5.4 deposited us on ledges that we followed in a semi-circle around the cwm to cliffs on the south face (what we called the Nose). We scrambled these without rope to snow and scree, which themselves led to the ridge connecting the two false summits. More scrambling on very loose rock brought us to within 300 ft. of the east summit. When we could no longer climb upward, we traversed west and then north around this summit. This took us to the main south ridge, which is long, exposed, precipitously notched and nearly horizontal. We started on the east side, quickly climbed up and over the spine of the ridge, then descended to the narrow, slanted scree shelf on the west side. We delicately followed this shelf for some distance before being stopped by the first major tower; these "stacked, greasy dinner plates" (along with the weather) had defeated our climb in '96. Once on top (30 ft.), a third of a rope length of very exposed traversing (2000 ft. plus on either side) led to the second major notch. The descent into the notch was slightly overhung (5.6), and therefore strenuous, but not difficult. On the other side of the notch, a face of broken red shale led back to the crest of the ridge; this face looked far worse than it was (5.3). From the top of this face, a stroll north along a shale boardwalk for some 300m brought us to the summit at about 3 p.m. We found no cairn or other signs of ascent, which would seem to suggest that the climbs by Crosby and Aemmer in 1934 and by Brooks et al. in 1935 were the last times this peak had been ascended. Excellent views of Lunette and Assiniboine in warm sunshine. On the way down we rapped five times: the final tower (one rope), the Nose (two ropes) and three raps down the cracks of the northwest face nearly to the traverse shelf (all two ropes).This is an excellent high-alpine route: strongly recommended. Reg Ronney, Ealaine West, Rick Collier, Bill Hurst.

9. First Ascent, Franklin Peaks (9490 ft./2892m). It's a long drive from Calgary over to the White Swan Lake area, south of Invermere in B.C., but well worth the time and effort. The OGG has climbed several peaks in the area: Russell, Dorman, Empire-State, Folk and, of course, Harrison. We'd tried Franklin on the Thanksgiving weekend of '96, but had been beaten back by the snow, ice and infinite willows in Akunum Creek. On August 11,1 camped near this creek, and the next morning bushwhacked up 2000 ft. to the crest of the ridge behind the camp. This ridge was followed (more or less) as it snaked its way northwest and west towards the summits— lots of minor bumps, game trails, scrambles, sidehills and the like. There's some route finding required on the final thousand foot massif, but it is mostly straightforward. Franklin possesses two equally high summits; the westernmost is easily accessible from the easternmost. I did not find a cairn on either summit. Rick Collier.

10. Second Ascent (New Approach Route) Dip Slope Mountain (10,250 ft./3125m): On August 21, we hiked over Fish Lakes Pass and down into the Pipestone, where we camped. The next day we ascended to an above-timberline camp at the Three Brothers Lake (the one with the island in it) and then made our way around the south end of the lake and up the meadows and glacier-scraped valleys to the northwest, reaching the col (9200 ft.) that looks north towards Clearwater Pass at about 11 a.m. We negotiated the glacier to the north carefully (crevasses present) and descended a thousand feet to the base of the peak. Once we found a way through the curtain cliffs, it was mostly a scree bash to the summit, but with wonderful views of the Willingdon area. A cairn and register had been placed there by Graeme and Marny Pole in 1990. As well, in 1991, Alistair Des Moulins climbed the two east and west summits of the Dip Slope ridge north of the main summit (82 N/9 590320 and 604318). While in the area, we also ascended two of the Three Brothers: East Peak and Centre Peak. Both are excellent climbs. Martin Kripple, Rick Collier.

11. New Route, Stiletto Peak (9760 ft./2975m). [For a description of the approach route to Stiletto, please see accompanying story on the ascent of Mount Battisti, p. 107]. From our camp amongst the larches, we made our way up through meadows and talus to the Stiletto-Battisti glacier (one hour), donned crampons and plodded up the soft snow and ice to the point where the glacier begins to steepen. All along the south-facing rock, the glacier had, of course, retreated, leaving a wide moat. We were lucky, however, and found a substantial snow bridge which led us across the dark abyss to the rock of Stiletto. From here we followed ledges and cracks, with a few scrambly cliffs, to the ridge connecting Stilletto to Battisti; generally we trended to the right or northeast, away from the obvious notch high up on the ridge to the left (one hour). Another half-hour of easy scrambling brought us to the summit late in the afternoon of September 8. Bill Hurst, Rick Collier.

12. Second Ascent, Mount Battisti (10,280 ft./3133m). [See accompanying story, p. 107]

New Routes - Jasper National Park

Greg Cornell

Members of the Edmonton section of the ACC drive a long way to gain altitude. If the day has only a dibby-dab of light left and the legs could use a stretch, then maybe a three-pitch rap-bolted slab secret is the quick fix.

From the west end of Medicine Lake, Rainy-clay Slab descends into the trees left of Medicine Slabs. After a 20-minute approach, gain the slab's base and follow it to an open section, where a treed bay in the middle of the face trickles a vegetated gully to the floor. Ribbed for Your" Pleasure (3 pitches: 5.6, 5.7, 5.8) lies 50m left of the gully.

Four quickdraws are all that is needed to vacate the car for a few hours. Hanging from bolted belays, the views of Unwin and Charleton will clear even the worst auto-lag.

From the highest tree at the bottom of the slab, gain the first hidden bolt at a small, weedy ledge. Climb sweet water-runnels of all sizes in three long rope-stretchers to the upper forest. A short traverse left from the first belay is the only jog in the route. Desperation only comes with a smile.

My Own Private Idaho (5.7) is an unprotected climb that follows weeny ribs beside four big, lone shrubs just left of Ribbed.

Gear: two ropes for rappel, four draws, extra sling for the belay; leave the rest of the rack in the trunk!

Ribbed for Your Pleasure 5.8. F.A.: Greg Cornell and Neil Kavaje. September 1994.

My Own Private Idaho 5.7. F.A.: Greg Cornell.

The East

Dernieres Tendences Hivernales Au Québec

Stephane Lapierre

Après la parution du Guide des cascades de glace du Québec en 1993, certains étaient étonnés d'apprendre que l'on retrouvait dans la Belle Province plus de 350 cascades de glace. Ceux-là seront d'autant plus surpris de savoir que depuis la parution du guide plus de 400 nouvelles cascades ont été gravies! Incroyable mais vrai. Les piolets s'en sont donnes à cœur joie au Québec. Il est bien sûr impensable de dresser une liste exhaustive de toutes ces cascades ici. Nous tenterons toutefois de faire ressortir les grandes tendances de l'escalade hivernale au Québec au cours des dernières années. Vous retrouverez également la description de certains des itinéraires les plus significatifs gravis au cours des dernières années.

Gaspésie

Si la saison 1995-96 a été exceptionnelle quant au nombre de cascades formées le long de la côte gaspésienne, et bien la cuvée 1996-97 a été encore plus abondante. Au cours de ces deux seuls hivers, ceci a permis l'ouverture de plus d'une soixantaine d'itinéraires répartis entre la Baie des Chaleurs et la rive nord, de la vallée de la Matapédia jusqu'à Percé. Ainsi, le village de Mont Saint-Pierre confirme sa position de grand centre de l'escalade glaciaire de la province. Avec les ajouts des derniers hivers, un grimpeur qui ne souhaite pas faire plus de trente minutes de voiture à partir du centre du village a le choix entre plus de cent itinéraires, plusieurs à moins de dix minutes de marche. Les nouvelles voies se retrouvent principalement dans la vallée de la rivière Mont-Saint-Pierre, dans la vallée de l'Anse-Pleureuse et à l'est du village du même nom, en bordure de la route 132. A l'extrémité est de la péninsule, autour du village de Percé, les saisons '95-96 et '96-97 ont également été excellentes.

Le sens de la vie (70m, III, WI4+; S. Lapierre et D. McNeil, 27/11/93): Une des nouvelles cascades du Parc de la Gaspésie, dans l'impressionnant amphithéâtre du lac aux Américains. La grande cascade sur la paroi nord de la cuve.

Petite Ève (95m, III, WI5+; S. Lapierre et D. McNeil, 27/02/95): Un délicat rideau de glace qui se forme parfois tout juste à droite de Corneille.

D'la belle visite (40m, II, WI5; J. Josephson et S. Lapierre, 03/03/96): Face à I' Épée de jade, une petite paroi est parfois parcourue de quelques filets de glace. Cette impressionnante voie se retrouve isolée sur la droite, tout juste à gauche d'une grosse corne de roche.

Éole (75m, III, WI5; D. Berger et G. Lacelle, 27/02/96): La paroi des Crapauds de mer compte maintenant neuf itinéraires. Celui-ci est le plus beau, le plus raide et le

plus haut, au centre de la paroi.

Ice Ventura (60m, II, WI4; P. Beaudet et J. Josephson, 04/03/96): 7,0 km a l'est de l'Anse-Pleureuse. La première des nouvelles cascades de ce secteur. Plusieurs autres autour.

Souris de man cœur (205m, III, WI3; P. Beaudet et G. Filippi, 02/97): Très joli couloir, 12,9 km a l'est de l'Anse-Pleureuse.

Le grand délire (30m, II, WI5+; J. Josephson, G. Lacelle et B. Mailhot, 10/03/96): L'une des incroyables chandelles que l'on retrouve parfois sur la route des failles à Percé.

Mont du Gros Bras, Charleviox. Photo: Stephane Lapierre

Charlevoix

De passage au Québec en 1996, le grimpeur britannique Andy Perkins, grand amateur du verglas et du turf écossais, aurait dit du mont du Gros Bras quelque chose comme: «This is the most exciting mountain I've seen in Québec.» Ce n'est donc pas un hasard si depuis le milieu des années '80 cette montagne (avec un vrai sommet) est parcourue par certains des itinéraires mixtes les plus délicats et les plus engagés du Québec. Au cours des dernières années, un grand nombre de jolies petites voies ont également été tracées sur les montagnes environnantes. Si le Parc des Grands Jardins présentait à peine une quinzaine d'itinéraires en 1993, il en dénombre maintenant plus d'une quarantaine, signe de l'activité intense des grimpeurs de la région et d'une saison 1995-96 tout à fait exceptionnelle.

All Fine (170m, III, M5+R; G. Brousseau et F.G. Thivierge, 19/11/95): Une ligne en glace très mince qui suit la voie de rocher du même nom. Certains habitués attendaient que cette voie daigne se former depuis plus de dix ans! Elle a bien daigné rejoindre le sol pour s'écrouler moins de deux semaines plus tard, après n'avoir été gravie qu'une seule fois.

Le fruit de la passion (180m, IV, M6+R; F. Côté et S. Lapierre, 03/94): La première des voies mixtes de la nouvelle génération. Elle se déroule entre P'tite tête et la voie suivante.

Position soumise (l5Q m, III, M5R; G. Meekens et L.J. Roy, 03/94): L'étroit couloir qui coupe la face ouest du mont de l'Ours. Joli et délicat.

Lennox Hill (55 m, III, M6+, Al; G. Meekens, 07/03/95): Au lac a l'Écluse, l'immense chandelle sur la gauche de la Glace dans face a été le site d'un audacieux solo lors de la première ascension. Une bonne partie des passages rocheux surmontes pour atteindre la chandelle proprement dite ont toutefois été gravis en artif. Quelques tentatives ont depuis permis de libérer l'ensemble de ce très impressionnant itinéraire, à l'exception d'un point d'aide.

Aucune nouvelle voie n'a été gravie dans la vallée de la Malbaie malgré l'incroyable potentiel pour des itinéraires mixtes majestueux. Malgré tout, les grimpeurs viennent de plus en plus nombreux pour se mesurer a la fameuse Pomme d'or (330 m, V, 5+). Ils oublient pourtant que la vallée recèle plus d'une vingtaine d'autres voies qui sont presque autant de grandes classiques et qu'il n'est nul besoin de pouvoir gravir du WI5 pour s'y amuser. À noter pour la condition physique remarquable que cela nécessite: Serge Angelucci a enchaîné 1'approche a ski (35 km), la Pomme d'or et le retour a ski (encore 35 km) dans la journée.

Dans Charlevoix, des grimpeurs se sont aussi mis à explorer l'incroyable potentiel grimpable de l'arrière-pays, allant Jeter un oeil en dehors des vallées bien connues. Saint-Siméon, Clermont, Saint-Aimé-des-Lacs et Sagard sont les portes d'entrée de ces nouveaux territoires de jeu. Pour l'instant, une seule cascade exceptionnelle a été découverte, au nord de Clermont, mais les recherches se poursuivent.

Dernière représentation (100 m, III, WI5+; X. Barbarant et G. Girard, 28/03/96): Décrite comme l'Amphithéâtre dans le Guide, cette cascade est l'une des plus régulièrement formées aux Palissades de Saint-Siméon.

Côté-Élement-Roy (80 m, II, WI5 ; F. Côté, F. Élement et L.J. Roy, 11/94): Une quarantaine de kilomètres au nord de Clermont, en bordure du lac Plongeon, l'une des très jolies cascades de la province. Des motoneigistes rencontrées sur place ont affirmé en connaître beaucoup d'autres bien plus belles tout proche.

La monte du gigon (50 m, II, 3+ ; L. Beaudet et S. Pilote, 12/96): Du village de Saint-Aimé-des-Lacs, empruntez le chemin du Pied-des-Monts en direction ouest. Une dizaine de voies (25 à 100 m, 3+ à M5+) se répartissent le long de ce chemin.

Saguenay

Principal affluent du Saguenay, la rivière Sainte-Marguerite a reçu de très nombreux visiteurs depuis 1993. En suivant la route 172 qui longe la rivière, on ne peut en effet s'empêcher d'être frappé par le grand nombre de parois et de minces filets de glace qui s'y retrouvent. Tous ces trucs jaunes et bleus ont attiré des glacecadeurs de la métropole, de la Gaspésie et, bien sûr, du Saguenay à aller y planter leurs piolets. On nous annonce au moins une douzaine de nouveaux itinéraires, mais pour l'instant ils demeurent presque tous des secrets bien gardés. Il y a aussi eu quelques petites cascades gravies sur les rives du Saguenay proprement dit, principalement au centre ville de Chicoutimi.

La dame de la vallée (135m, III, 5; A.M. Cournoyer, J. Dionizio et A. Laperrière, 04/03/95): Nominée Allaire dans le Guide, cette grande cascade de la vallée de la Sainte-Marguerite offre plusieurs possibilités de sortie.

Fox Victor India (280m, V, 5.10/A3; M. Boiteau, S. Gagnon et C. Grenier, 02/97): Sur le cap Trinité, la plus imposante voie de big-wall québécois a reçu sa première ascension hivernale. Six jours ont été nécessaires par des froids mordants pendant lesquels les grimpeurs étaient chaussés de bottes Sorel.

La cascade du traversier (100m, III, WI5; A.M. Cournoyer, J. Dionizio et A. Laperrière, 1995): Depuis le traversier qui relie Baie-Sainte-Catherine à Tadoussac, à l'embouchure du Saguenay, on peut apercevoir cette très jolie cascade. Approche en zodiac depuis Tadoussac.

Québec

Noël 1990. Gilles Brousseau se rend au canyon de l'ile aux raisins, près de son

village natal, pour confirmer un vague souvenir d'enfance. Deux semaines plus tard, il ouvrait la première des grandes chandelles de glace de Pont-Rouge. Février 1997, Serge Angelucci confirme l'incroyable potentiel du site en enchaînant Icetro Man (M8-), une très impressionnante ligne mixte. D'autres voies du même calibre se travaillent dans le très déversant mur à gauche de Valentin et Valentine. Aiguisez bien vos piolets et vos ongles ! Le petit canyon creusé dans le lit de la rivière Jacques-Cartier compte actuellement plus de 30 itinéraires différents.

Massachusetts (35m, WI6+; X. Barbarant et G. Girard, 23/02/95): Un impressionnant méli-mélo de chandelles que l'on connecte par de délicats passages rocheux, juste à droite du Tube. La première voie à suivre un cheminement aussi complexe dans le canyon.

Icetro Man (40m, M8-; S. Angelucci et F. Bédard, 02/97): Quelques mètres à droite de Copains d'abord, un itinéraire très raide qui connecte stalactites et passages rocheux delicats.

Inconnue (20m, WI4), une large cascade bleue entre Icetro Man et la Source enchantée. Plusieurs autres voies humaines de ce genre existent sur le site.

Beaucoup plus haut sur les rives de la rivière Jacques-Cartier, dans le Parc provincial du même nom, quelques glacecadeurs se sont payés des petits tours d'hélicoptère pour aller explorer l'une des plus belles vallées de la province. En deux hivers, ils ont ainsi ouvert plus de 25 voies au nord-ouest de la Cascade et des Elles du délire. Vous n'avez pas les sous pour vous offrir le tour d'hélicoptère jusqu'au pied des voies! Il ne vous reste donc que l'approche douce: 40 km à ski sur une route enneigée. Il semble qu'il y a toujours de petites cascades vierges dans le secteur.

Viking (250m, IV, WI5; O. Gascon et F.G. Thivierge, 1994): Quelques centaines de mètres a l'ouest de la Cascade, cette superbe voie se classe sûrement parmi les plus esthétiques de la province.

Squider (40m, M7 ; J. Lowe et F.G. Thivierge, 1995): Départ en rocher et sortie très engagée en glace mince. Premier grade 7 de la province.

Xaladoux (100m, III, WI4; C. Bérubé, D. Rayner, P. Roger et M. Simso, 1994): La plus longue cascade de cette petite vallée.

Côte-Nord

Si une région a gagné en importance dans le cœur des grimpeurs québécois au cours des dernières années, c'est la Côte-Nord. C'est ici que l'on retrouve la plupart des plus beaux et des plus gros itinéraires nouveau gravis au cours des quatre dernières années. De l'embouchure du Saguenay jusqu'a Sept-Îles, les vallées encaissées sont nombreuses et il est fort a parier que l'exploration ne fait que commencer dans ce grand pays sauvage.

Après nous (95m, III, WI5; A.M. Cournoyer, J. Dionizio et A. Laperrière, 19/93/94): Dans la vallée de la rivière Bersimis, au km 32. Superbe! Décrite comme Après vous dans le Guide.

La maudite (40m, III, WI6; G. Lacelle et A. Laperrière, 03/95): Au km 29 de la vallée de la rivière Bersimis. Très raide et peu protégeable.

Un trou dans les nuages (G. Lacelle et A. Laperrière, 21/03/95): Près de Outardes 3, superbe cascade étroite de couleur orange. Cascade 40 dans le guide.

Le mulot (210m, IV, WI6R ; P. Beaudet et M. Melançon, 18/02/97): Environ 400 m à gauche du Pilier Simon-Proulx, une cascade très raide. L'une des principales réalisations depuis la Pomme d'or en 1980. L'équipe de la seconde ascension confirme la qualité et la difficulté de l'itinéraire.

Beauce

Un petit groupe de jeunes grimpeurs très actifs ont scruté la région à la loupe et y ont déniché plus de 25 nouveaux itinéraires de 15 à 60 m. Les plus intéressants de ceux-ci ont été tracés sur le mont du Grand Morne, près de East Broughton. Depuis, l'escalade a toutefois été interdite sur la montagne à cause d'une question de sous.

Mauricie

L'escalade de glace en Mauricie a tellement pris d'ampleur depuis la parution du Guide en 1993 que les grimpeurs locaux ont produit un guide juste pour la Mauricie. Le nombre de voies répertoriées est ainsi passé de 3 à 33! De quoi s'amuser à tous les niveaux.

Rêve d'Écosse (80m, II, WI4, 5.4; J.P. Ferron, B. Mailhot et P. Pibarot, 1995): 1,7 km au nord de l'église de Grandes-Piles, une jolie petite voie mixte.

Astro-Logique (70m, II, WI5 + ; D. Fournier et C. Bergevin, 1995): 3,32 km au nord de l'église de Grandes-Piles, la plus au nord (et la plus difficile) d'une série de colonnes connues sous le nom des Cathédrales.

Ready Mix (45m, WI5 a M7, 5.10; J.P. Ferron, B. Mailhot et C. Picard. 1995): Le off-width plein de glace dans le dièdre à gauche de la dernière longueur de la Sainte-Trinité, 3,9 km au nord de l'église.

Rock Climbing in Ontario in the '90s

David Smart and Carl Johnston

It's been several years since the CAJ carried an article on Ontario climbing. This may have led to a belief in the rest of the country that climbing in Ontario is moribund or that the best days have passed. And though the tone of recent Escarpment guides may have given many western climbers the false conception that the Escarpment is closed and with it Ontario climbing in general, the reality is merely that climbers have shifted their focus — their energy remains the same.

Climbing gyms have sprung up throughout the province, and new ones are opened all the time by intrepid individuals capitalizing on the indoor-climbing craze in Canada's most populous province. Where previously there existed only a small, rather counter cultural climbing scene, climbing has now been made accessible to huge populations of urban dwellers. The ease of setting up a gym has led to a situation where the major population centres are no longer the only places where there are active communities of climbers. As a result of better — year-round — training facilities, the standards of gymnastic climbing have risen dramatically, and this has translated directly into increased standards at the crags.

Traditional climbs in general, and climbing areas such as Bon Echo, Kingston Mills, the Eagles' Nest and the Climbers' Cliffs in particular, are also seeing more and more climbers. Finally, there has even been a renaissance of adventure climbing: not only a handful of new, clean-protected limestone routes, but, more importantly, an entire new adventure-climbing cliff, Devil Rock, on Lake Temiskaming; other new long routes on remote cliffs along the Ottawa River; and the beginnings of a significant traditional climbing scene in Thunder Bay. So, while there has definitely been a fundamental change in climbing in Ontario since the late eighties, Ontario climbers today are still developing new crags, still pushing their climbing standards to new highs and, throughout all, still

bringing to bear a modern sensibility, new ideas and new energy. Plus ca change...

Sport Climbing

The discovery of the Niagara Escarpment as a potentially world-class sport-climbing area in the eighties was a fateful occurrence in the history of climbing here — coming, as it did, at a time when lycra sensitivity was heavily thinning the ranks of traditional climbers. Development was further aided by the subsequent introduction of climbing gyms, the Hilti drill and the sports bra. At present there are hundreds of sport routes on the Escarpment, and standards, although not at internationally high levels, are still rising. Local sport climbers are somewhat contentious over which Ontario climbs and areas are interesting or worthwhile and which are not. Some have even been heard to say things like: "There aren't any eastern sport climbs outside of Red River Gorge... Well, maybe those three routes Moffat did at Lion's Head." To climbing generalists, the distinctions being debated seem to be rather finely drawn: in fact, challenging and worthy sport-climbs are to be found everywhere in Ontario. If you do come climbing here you are in for an enjoyable time, because the routes are, on the whole, well-crafted and safe.

The introduction of modern sport climbing, with cold-shut anchors at the tops of climbs, closely spaced protection bolts and, perhaps less fortunately, densely packed climbs, was the work of Chris Oates and Judy Barnes with the assistance of the members of the MC Oates posse: Blood Tom Valis, Bro' John Weir and Homey Marc Bracken, among others. The results of their Herculean labours can be seen at virtually every major limestone crag in Ontario, but are most noticeably in evidence at White Bluff, Lion's Head and Old Baldy, the province's most important sport-climbing venues.

The raison d'être of sport climbing is, of course, gymnastic difficulty and big numbers; Ontario climbers have been no slouches in the pursuit of these goals. The incredible Bergman brothers, who brought the climbing gym to Ontario, were star proponents of the sport throughout the eighties. While Bob Bergman was a major competition contender, Brian cranked the numbers up at the crags. Their new-route careers began with some of the more impressive face routes on the Escarpment, such as Judgement Day (5.12b), which climbs pockets up a monumental wave of limestone at Metcalfe, and the second ascent of Lummox Lawlor's Hang Ten (5.13a). Following those notable accomplishments, they proceeded to up the grades at Crag X. Intensely overhanging, this almost-cliff near Milton wouldn't win any beauty competitions, but it has been visited by big names and possesses many of the hardest to climb — and hardest to find — routes on the Escarpment. Brian's route, Happy (5.13b), with its series of overhangs, is aptly named only for the strongest of contenders. Elsewhere, guidebook author and long-time local Chris Oates worked to consolidate 5.13 with his difficult pocket routes, The Victim (5.13a) and Luputa and Entropy (5.12d). Recently, Jerry Moffat and Mark Leach, sport gods from England, got in on the action. Leach put up the overhanging Aruga (5.13c) at White Bluff, but "The Big News", however, was Moffat's first ascent of the hardest climb in the province, The Big Kahuna (5.13d), at Lion's Head. As a visiting Spanish climber commented, "She's-a-thin-a-that-one." The route has since been surfed by local boy J.P. Charbonneau. Also nearby at Lion's Head, Doug McDougall crowned The Lion King (5.13c), the hardest first ascent by a local.

Ottawa now has its own intense sport-climbing scene as well. Under the original inspiration of Peter Slivka, who opened Ottawa's first climbing gym, several suitable crags for sport climbing at Luskville's Eardley Escarpment were discovered and developed. The premier crag is Down Under, an acutely overhanging, featured wall at the south end of the Eardley Escarpment's climbing areas. In the early '90s, Slivka climbed Mahlzeit (5.13a/b) at Down Under and Make My Day (5.13a) at the East Wood at the Western Cwm, bringing the big unlucky number to the crags of the nation's capital. Slivka, Beatrice Winsborrow, Karol Mikulash and Greg Jackson have developed Luskville into a modern sport-climbing area, a process which must have entailed similar efforts to those of Oates and Barnes on the Escarpment. In the summer of 1997, Emile Poirier pinkpointed the open project The Beast (5.13c/d). Although it awaits a redpoint, this route stands as the hardest climb in its region. It tackles the steepest, bleakest part of the Down Under Wall with a sustained series of throws for small holds.

Almost every area in Ontario, no matter how small or underpopulated by climbers, has been involved in sport climbing, although the standards aren't quite as high as they are on the Escarpment and at Luskville. Kingston's Dog Lake sandstone crags offer good climbing on pockets. Those guys from Brockville scooped Coeur de Chien (5.11e), which ascends an attractive arête, and around to the right is the enjoyable Wondering Where the Dogs Are (5.10d). In Thunder Bay, at Silver Harbour, there are a handful of enjoyable sport routes such as Black Stallion Arête and the thin face of Nasty Girls (5.11 a). There are also several good sport routes on the sandstone of Pass Lake that were developed by Chris Wrazes and Marc Barbeau. In most of these areas, however, development is, as yet, largely unrealized, and the standards aren't as high as they are on limestone.

Traditional Climbing

With the advent of so much bolt-protected and plastic climbing in the province, the bulk of new climbers are now to be found in the gym or on sport routes, but those who think that traditional climbing in Ontario is dead are, well, dead wrong. Trad' climbing, though only a small fraction of the scene, has increased in popularity alongside the general boom in climbing. Undeniably, some of these trad' climbers are merely gym bumblies out galumphing up beginner crack climbs to the music of jangling megaracks. But slowly and surely, as the trad' men of old return to the crags after their failed ministries in the fake world outside of climbing, we have seen the renaissance of hard adventure climbing in the province.

On the Niagara Escarpment, there is a continuous, if tenuous tradition of hard, naturally protected lines. Burly local trad' man John Kaandorp put up a superb, arching 5.11b finger crack and corner at Spirit Rock in Wiarton, accompanied by sportsters Gates and Barnes. At Lion's Head, with resurrected muscle-and-guts man Reg Smart, Kaandorp ascended The Lighthouse Pitch (5.11b), an overhanging wall to the right of Thunderball, protected with threaded rope ("Bolts? We don't need no stinking bolts!"). Reg also led the Escarpment's most amazing 5.5, Renaissance Men, which climbs the exposed crack to the left of the Lion's Head arête.

Eventually, however, climbers will have to realize that for adventure climbing in Ontario the short and steep limestone Escarpment, while gymnastically challenging, isn't the hot venue. Instead, it is the remote locations and Precambrian

granite of the Canadian Shield, little developed thus far, which offers climbers the opportunity for the Wagnerian epics they crave. A few examples from the recent past suggest themselves:

The authors of this article colluded on the development of Devil Rock, on Lake Temiskaming. Devil Rock is 130m high and has steep granite crack lines. Only in 1997 did it become anywhere close to a popular location for other climbers. Its three best routes are multi-pitch crack climbs which would be classics anywhere and which rival the best routes of places like New Hampshire's Cathedral Ledge. Hoary veteran Dave Smart, who can drink with the sport guys but isn't well-dressed enough to climb with them, teamed up with unwitting dupe Carl Johnston to establish the most popular route on the cliff, Siegfried's Difficult Way to Brünhilde (5.8), which climbs the free-standing Finger of God via three beautiful and exposed moderate pitches. The best long route at the cliff, however, and Ontario's most difficult crack climb, rivals Cathedral's Prow for beauty and difficulty and is almost as long. Carmina Burana (III, 5.12b or 5.8 A2) takes the two most prominent features on the cliff, a striking diagonal finger crack and an overhanging prow riven by a crack line. This route has four overhanging pitches that have everything from finger to hand to off-width, and was first climbed by the pair in 1996. Smart, accompanied by Cort "Basecamp" McElroy, also completed Bombay Sapphire (III, 5.lib), named for the crucial ingredient in the world's best gin-and-tonic. Four pitches of crack, ranging from fingers to laybacking, provide a superb expedition. Devil Rock's short climbing season has even provided opportunities for several winter first ascents.

Perhaps the biggest adventure-climbing news is the rediscovery of the cliffs around Chalk River, just north of Pembroke, which had been visited in the '60s and '70s by Pat Duffy, Imre Michalik, Dick Dorling, Eric Marshall and others (CAJ, vol. 50, 1967). Routes here are up to 150m long, and the cliffs, which jut directly out of the Ottawa River, have that remote, alpine quality that makes them seem even higher. The Original Route (III, 5.10b) on Toronto Wall on the Ottawa River, is one of Ontario's best moderate climbs and has seen attention from a variety of climbers recently. Its second pitch, a 40-m-long 5.9 face on good edges, seems destined for status as a classic. Haunted Summer

Norbert Kartner performing Ontario's version of mixed climbing
On Nightmare on Elm Street, WI5, Bear Lake.
Photo: M.F. Manolson

(5.11b), a harder, direct variation along a clean layback corner, was climbed by Dave Smart in 1995. Most spectacular of these new routes on the Ottawa River, however, is Freebird (III, 5.11b) by Johnston, Danger-girl Larissa McWhinney and Smart. This route tackles a diretissima line, following cracks and weaknesses up the most prominent face of nearby Oiseau Rock, a 200-m-high overhanging wall just south of Toronto Wall. Only the second route on Oiseau Rock, this hybrid of bolt- and gear-protected climbing particularly shows the potential for adventure/sport fusion routes in Ontario's backcountry.

In the far north there has been ongoing development centering around Thunder Bay and the cliffs north of Kenora, which have seen climbers from Winnipeg since the '70s. In Thunder Bay, the cliffs of Squaw Bay, Pass Lake and Silver Harbour continue to see activity, although since many of the climbs are developed by students who aren't present in the summer months there is less activity than there is farther south. At Squaw Bay's Chiller Pillar area, excellent hard crack routes like Right Hand Man (5.10c) and Cam-a-Lot (5.10c) show the potential for the area to become a superb, short, hard crack-climbing crag. Most of these routes were completed by a small handful of climbers including Randy Reed, Julian Anfossi and Scott Kress. Possibilities for freeing aid lines are abundant, and some aesthetic, thin cracks show potential for yielding difficult routes of high calibre. A new guide is being prepared by Randy Reed, and should be available in early summer of 1998. Other cliffs in the region, such as those at Claghorn, Atikokan, and the famous ice-climbing area, Orient Bay, also show potential but are at present undeveloped.

The cliffs of the Minaki region, near Kenora, have seen some recent activity, with many repeats of hard routes at both Gooseneck Rocks and the Experimental Lakes region. Of particular note was area veteran Peter Aitchison's first free ascent of the Mitre (5.11b), the superb, overhanging corner line right of Great Slab. This was a long-standing project and is the hardest traditional line in the Minaki area. Several sport routes have also been put up on the wall to the left of Great Corner, although precise information on them is unavailable. As in Thunder Bay, several beautiful lines in the upper ranges of difficulty remain as aid routes, and other lines and cliffs are entirely unvisited.

The Future

Issues of access and environment remain important to climbing in the province, as they do everywhere. Continued growth in the sport has put tremendous pressure on several popular crags in the Toronto area. Through the efforts of the Access Committee of the Alpine Club and a few active individuals, struggles to maintain access to many locations, including Bon Echo, have yielded generally good results. However, problems continue to arise. At the time of writing, access to ice climbing has just been blocked in many areas around Hamilton, a move by land managers which, if not reversed, will effectively shut down local ice climbing.

What about the climbing? It must be said that few sport climbers see themselves as Ontario climbers any more than they see themselves as Red River Gorge climbers. It is unlikely we will ever see hard Escarpment types freeing aid lines at Squaw Bay. Gym climbing is ghettoizing climbers. Climbers no longer travel regionally to climb, they travel internationally. Is it worth trying to unite "Ontario Climbing" under a common banner? With so many climbing areas spread over such a large and varied geography, is such unity even possible? It certainly seems that the common history and traditions of Ontario climbers are gradually being forgotten in favour of local, or even just personal versions. With them, the sense of a singular community is

also disappearing. Or perhaps there never really was any such sense of community; perhaps Ontario Climbing is really just as fragmented as the society from which it is drawn. Perhaps the simple fact is that such questions just don't matter: the cliffs are worthwhile in their own right — for their challenge, their ambience and their stories. Because of that, there will always be reasons to try them.

New Ice Route Activity In Southern Ontario

Morris Manolson with Contributions from Graeme Smith and Don Collier

New ice route activity in southern Ontario? You betcha!! Through a combination of methodical, arduous work, serendipity and hot tips from snowmobilers, a vibrant Ontario ice-climbing community has established 18 new crags and 116 new routes in the ice-climbing seasons of 1995-96 and 1996-97! Considering that a good climbing season here lasts only four measly months, that's no small feat! The proliferation of new routes was partially due to those finicky Ice Gods finally heeding our blood sacrifices and delivering up the best conditions seen in these parts for the last decade. These conditions resulted in a few ethereal ice climbs materializing on previously dry faces; unfortunately, they will probably not appear again until well into the next millennium. Further contributing to the flurry of new-route activity was the arrival of the first and long-awaited guidebook to ice climbing in southern Ontario: Southern Ontario Ice — A Climber's Guide by Kartner and Bracken. As in the past, the appearance of the new guidebook had a galvanizing effect on the climbing community. In the time-honoured tradition of rendering guidebooks obsolete as quickly as possible, Ontario ice climbers set out and "discovered" 18 new crags previously known only to snowmobilers, ice fishermen and cottage owners, all of whom have probably stared at these ice-encrusted cliffs for years, never imagining that people would be stupid enough to waste their time trying to climb them.

Finding these new crags in southern Ontario requires more a sense of adventure and a high tolerance for disappointment rather than a strong desire to climb ice. This is because one spends more time driving, slogging and cursing than climbing. With

Brian Irving on The Grinch
A scary WI5 mixed route at Eagles Nest, Bancroft. Photo: D. Collier

binoculars, compasses and topographical maps in hand, Ontario climbers like Norbert Kartner, Don Collier, Graeme Smith, Ian French and others are systematically checking every fall and cliff marked on their maps. Don, in fact, calculated that he averaged 12 km of driving for each metre of ice climbed. This systematic, scientific method (indeed, Norbert, Don and Graeme are all scientists) eventually hits pay dirt, as evidenced by the prolific number of crags and routes established by these climbers. This process can be a life-regenerating, awe-inspiring and almost poetic adventure, as was a recent trip to Killarney. Alternatively, the process can be a frustrating and grim ordeal that continues only through a neurotic need to finish what one has started, as was the case with the first ascent of Nightmare on Elm St. Both stories are described below.

Timing, as all climbers know, is everything. Knowing that one might have only one real chance, one must learn to patiently wait and watch, carefully noting the monthly cycles and quietly observing for any signs of turbulence under the surface — until just the right moment, when all the planets come into alignment. At this time, one must unhesitantly and stoically step forward, hand the spouse a bunch of roses and quickly say "Gee, Honey, you look just terrific; you wouldn't mind if I left you with the kids for a few days while I went ice climbing with some buddies? Did I mention how radiant you look today?" Just as the Israelites rushed out of Egypt once permission was granted, the trick is to pack and leave as quickly as possible before your traveling pass is revoked by the higher authorities.

In one's hurry to pack for a week of camping and climbing, small insignificant items are of course bound to be forgotten. And so it came to pass that Norbert Kartner and I found ourselves on our first night out in the interior of Killarney Provincial Park, staring at an unlit camping stove and coming to the slow and embarrassing realization that neither of us big, tough, winter-camping/ice-climbing studs had remembered to bring matches. After a few pathetic attempts to ignite the fuel with the spark of a 4.5-V battery, there was nothing left to do but put our skis back on and drag our deflated egos back to the car to retrieve the forgotten item.

Killarney Provincial Park is a magical place that has inspired famous Canadian artists for years. In fact, it was the Group of Seven artist, A.Y. Jackson, who, upon learning that his favourite sketching area was about to be logged, petitioned the government to protect the lakes, resulting in the formation of the provincial park. In the summer, one must book months in advance to get a permit to camp in the interior of Killarney and then fight hordes of other canoeists for the few camping spots. In winter, we had the entire 48,500-hectare wilderness reserve to ourselves; if anything, the snow and ice formations draping Killarney's red granite and white quartzite hills make the area even more beautiful than in summer.

With matches now in hand, we packed our 70 pounds of respective climbing and camping gear onto children's toboggans and started off on a five-hour slog through a blizzard to the central lake area of Killarney Lake. Back in 1989, armed with not much more than a hunch and a hope that there should be ice somewhere in Killarney, Norbert had set off on a snowshoeing tour of the park and had spotted this area.

Nine years later, we were setting up camp at what would be known as "Comet Crag", where we were treated to four perfect days of clear skies and mild temperatures that made simply being alive a joyous event (a far cry from our lives in Toronto, where simply waking up means yet another day of living hell). The days of course were spent ice climbing, with each climb a first ascent! During our five days, we only saw one other group: a platoon of 15 Canadian (at least

we hoped they were Canadian) soldiers skiing in synchronous single-line formation across Killarney Lake — a rather surreal site after four days of isolation. As the sun set each night, the snow-covered lake would become a giant canvas picking up the subtle hues of the sky and slowly going from light red to deep purple to a finale of pitch black. Seconds after the sun had finished its performance, directly across the horizon, the full moon would begin to rise over the hills, with Killarney's trademark white pines wonderfully silhouetted in the foreground. In this second performance, the slowly rising full moon bathed us first in an eerie, surrealistic violet-blue light, gradually changing into powder blue, and finally becoming stark white as the moon reached the apex of the sky. This awe-inspiring nightly performance distracted us from the fact that after a day of ice climbing we were dead tired, starved, dehydrated, and dripping wet from our own sweat, while the temperature was rapidly dropping down to -30° (the unfortunate flip side of perfectly clear skies). Our evening entertainment consisted of shivering convulsively around our camping stove as we desperately tried to use our telekinetic powers to speed up the slow and painful process of melting snow into sufficient water for cooking supper and rehydrating ourselves. Actually, the real distraction each night was the magnificent Hale-Bopp comet, with its bright fuzzy head and long, luminous tail that stretched several degrees across the night sky (hence the name Comet Crag). If that was not enough, during our final night huddled around the camping stove watching snow melt, Norbert asked me whether there was supposed to be a lunar eclipse that night. As I used to like to pride myself on being an amateur astronomer, I answered with an authoritative "No!" Norbert replied that it would have been prudent to look up before answering, as indeed, more than half of the previously full moon had miraculously disappeared. As the moon gradually winked right out before our very eyes, the Milky Way equally slowly came into spectacular view across the now dark sky. By the end of the short trip, one new crag and nine first ascents had been established. People pay thousands of dollars and travel half-way around the world to get a taste of adventure and accomplishment; Norbert and I drove five hours north of Toronto.

In stark contrast to the highly productive and almost poetic Killarney trip was the horror of trying to climb Nightmare on Elm Street, a three-pitch WI5 climb on Bear Lake in the Haliburton Highlands. According to Don Colliers' "km driven for metre climbed" formula we would embarrassingly (or maybe actually boastingly) have to admit a 30 km/metre ratio for this particular climb. On five separate occasions over a two year span, Norbert and I drove the three hours from Toronto to Livingstone Lake, skied for an hour to Bear Lake, and finally slogged up the slope to the base of the climb just to see what cruel fate the Ice Gods had in store for us. As punishment for crimes committed in our past lives, we were taunted with slush ice on the bottom pitch with nothing on top in 1996, and vice versa in 1997.

A variety of tactics were then implemented to overcome the iceless and seamless overhanging rock at the start of the first pitch. Initially, Norbert used my head as a stepping stone, a particularly exciting manoeuvre considering he was wearing crampons. This method was thankfully replaced by gently climbing 5m up a small tree trunk that had become welded to the ice at its top — Ontario's version of mixed climbing.

On the day of the first ascent, Norbert was encountering "intestinal difficulties" and wisely turned down our usual "Ice Fisherman's Breakfast" of three eggs, three sausages and three pancakes, and instead, prudently ordered only two of each item. This of course had the immediate and expected result of poor Norbert rushing for the men's room, a pattern that was often repeated during that day. As the season was rapidly coming to a close and he was unwilling to admit defeat for yet another season, Norbert struggled on, finishing the climb while wracked with intestinal cramps. The ice was thin, rock hard, and brittle. The temperature was -25° in the sun, which of course set just as we gained the second belay, catching us with only one headlamp containing a rapidly fading battery between the two of us. We were not having fun. At the top, there were no congratulatory remarks or sense of elation, just relief that we would never ever have to return to Nightmare on Elm Street.

As with horse racing, hot tips never come with guarantees. One such "hot tip" of a possible two-pitch climb near Burk's Falls sent Don Collier on a 300-km trip to climb 12m of rotten ice (Hey, a 25 km/metre ratio, not bad, Don!). In contrast, a tip from snowmobilers led to what may become the premier winter camping/ice climbing spot in Southern Ontario, Schooner Lake. The story of this ice climbing windfall is reported below in the following correspondence I received from the discoverer himself, Graeme Smith:

You know how you can remember where you were when Paul Henderson scored the winning goal in the 1972 Soviet-Canada Summit Series (maybe I'm dating myself)? How I found out about Schooner Lake and Brule Lake is like that. I was operating up to my elbows in someone's abdominal contents, talking about ice climbing (obviously lost in thought), when one of the nurses piped up that she and her husband frequently snowmobiled by two very large ice formations that formed year after year. The more she described, the more I was glad that I was wearing a surgical mask (drooling in the OR is bad form....sleeping is OK, but drooling is right out!). I'm always dubious when a non-climber tells me there is ice-a-plenty...! don't know how many kilometres I've skied/snow-shoed/postholed/cursed only to find nothing (not a sausage)!! This nurse subsequently took pictures and brought them in to show me.... "Look at this most impressive piece of ice," she pointed out (neglecting the many flows that were far more impressive all around what we subsequently named "Ferguson's Wall" after her). Schooner Lake is a long haul (by Ontario standards) to get to the ice. About eight km of well packed, rolling snowmobile trail on an old bush road (one-hour ski or two-hour slog with a big pack) to Schooner Lake and about 4 km (30-minute ski or 1-hour slog) along the lake to the ice. You don't actually see the ice until you come around a corner and it's all right in front of you. The first time I saw it, I was totally blown away. It was one of those times you almost piss your pants you're so excited. I had brought my axes/boots/crampons so I did a quick solo of what is now Tachycardia (95m, WI4), which is probably the longest route in southern Ontario at present (who knows what else is out there). I subsequently came back in several times during the winter of 1995/1996 (an exceptional year) with my perennial partner and belay slave (Andrew Westwood) and the Queen's University Climbing Club (Chris Geisler et al). On more than one occasion I've seen bald eagles and listened to wolves howling at night. There are now about a dozen and a half routes with some potential for others in really good years. The quality and quantity make this THE place to ice

climb in southern Ontario... if it wasn't so far in!!! Brulé Lake is also a phenomenal find as it offers half a dozen high quality routes with great exposure. It's located on the same road you drive in to the Schooner Lake parking lot (both of which are north of Plevna... east of Bon Echo Provincial Park). Considering that neither of these formations appears very impressive on topo maps, one wonders what else is out there to be found?

To help cope with the influx of new routes, Martin Le Roux has constructed an excellent Web site at www3.sympatico. ca/martinlr/alpine/index.html. Within these pages one will find directions, descriptions and pictures of all the new crags and climbs established in the 1996/97 seasons along with a weekly update of current ice conditions. For complete directions to crags and climbs established prior to 1996, one must get Southern Ontario Ice, A Climber's Guide (Kartner and Bracken, Borealis Press, 1995). If southern Ontario Ice is looking thin, a 15-hour drive (or one-hour flight) north to Orient Bay will assure one of an unlimited supply of first ascents on world-class ice (described in detail in North of Superior, Orient Bay, Ice Climber's Guide, by Sean Parent, Granite Publishing, 1993). Rest assured, new routes in southern Ontario have in no way reached saturation. Whip up that old adventure spirit, get some maps, befriend some snowmobilers, avoid snoring climbing partners, fill the car up with lots of gas and before your "km driven/metre climbed" ratio hits 50:1. There should be a crag with your name on it!

Foreign

Aconcagua, South Face

Eric Dumarac

The lonely giants of great glacial ranges — sentinels of rock, snow and ice. These high-altitude peaks of the world, along with the great adventures and mystery that envelop them, had always held a fascination for me. Like many others, I too was mesmerized by the exploits of such greats as Herzog, Bonington, Tenzing, Terray and the venerable Messner, to name a few. Yet in their accounts I never truly understood why it was that after losing a brother, friends, or body parts, and sometimes almost their lives, these mountaineers were driven to go back over and over again.

What is this great and secret phenomenon that drives us to challenge vertical, high-altitude deserts of sheer rock and ice? Maybe it was damn time I found out. After all, I had come a long way since the first time I had climbed — armed with an old yellow plastic Canadian Tire rope and some nails and a hammer from Dad's tool box. The final incentive came when I picked up Chouinard's ice-climbing book just as these thoughts were in my mind.

I was infected with a common mountaineering affliction which I call The Urge. The urge to climb, to climb hard, to climb high and to climb now! After a few weeks of furious contemplation and air-ticket pricing, I found my mountain. Aconcagua beckoned me like the bright light one sees from the bottom of a crevasse. I was truly fixated with this cerro. The highest mountain in the Andes at 6962m, it is located between Chile and Argentina. Nearly 3000m high, the impressive south face rises majestically above the Horocaones Glacier valley. The French expedition's account is a hair-raising epic I will never forget. Their route was my objective; its modern rating was interesting at VI, 5.9 Al WI4. R.J. Secor, in his guidebook to Aconcagua, refers to this undertaking as "one of the most coveted alpine big-wall routes in the world". It was all very enticing and helped me ignore some of the recent horror stories I had read about the route.

My exhilaration was hard to contain when the plane touched down in Santiago. After two days of seeing the sights, romancing Chile's gorgeous women and gorging myself on good food, I felt lucky. Perhaps the following day I would go to the local alpine club to look for a partner for Aconcagua. After nearly ten months of trying, I still had not found a suitable climbing partner. First, though, I had to go to the airport to pick up a friend who was to spend part of the trip with me.

To my astonishment, who walked off the plane with my buddy Adam but one of Canada's most underrated climbers, Guy Edwards! Close friends know him for his many hard routes and daring solos. I know him for the jovial, impossibly clever, cherished friend that he is. Although notorious for the most putrid-smelling socks any lengthened fermentation could possibly produce, Guy was indeed the perfect partner. He too had a bad case of The Urge and was looking to bag his 36th technical peak that year! So, as fate would have it, we soon found ourselves purchasing a permit to climb the crown jewel of the Andes. There were hundreds from around the world climbing the North Face, but only Guy and I had signed up for the South Face.

We planned food for four days; with bivi gear and other necessities, the packs weren't all that bad. We had previously acclimatized in Vallacitos, a branch of the Andes near Mendoza that offers easy and technical ascents of peaks up to 6000m. There we had established, while simulsoloing on Cerro Rincogn (5315m), a nice alpine mixed route — Dulce de Leche (IV, 5.9 WI3) — named after a sweet caramel that we consumed in industrial quantities. The South Face approach, from Puenta del Inca to Plaza Francia basecamp, was a swift 25 km; I was primed and ran most of the way. The sight of all the gear- and people-laden mules bound for the North Face only motivated me to run faster, since we had decided against using such help. The approach was like going to Mars after an earthquake: a red, tormented land; deep fissures in the ground; bizarre, twisted rock formations; sharp glacial spurs jutting out of small, emerald ponds; heat mirages dancing about. A lifeless land, yet beautiful.

Basecamp was at 4150m. At 1 p.m. on December 21, the longest day in the southern hemisphere, we started up the climb. After only a few hundred metres I had a moment of self-doubt. Guy's frustration was obvious as he grabbed my pack and raced up quite a distance. My cheeks became cherry-red from embarrassment and anger. I needed to adopt that philosophy of commitment and persistence. Soon afterward I adjusted to the brutal change and became — as Guy was — a machine.

All went well, and in three days we had finished half the route. I remember passing by Messner's battered metal aid ladder, the same one pictured in one of his books, just hanging there — a wind chime for the spirits. On December 24, with the barometer dropping, we were below the upper rock band, the crux of the route. Dark, ugly clouds threatened as we started up this difficult section.

As a storm built during the morning, the excitement we felt from the climbing soon deteriorated to horror. The wind howled a

mean yell, temperatures plummeted, heavy snow fell. Then an alarming sound cracked the air as a bolt of lightning landed nearby. I saw a ghostly image of Guy as he led off: one hand on a shitty, knobby hold, one tool in thin ice, his feet crumbling the rock as he stemmed, he faded away into the whiteout. When it was my turn, I understood his ramblings at the belay about having to run it out. Protection was an illusion. Every hold needed to be brushed free of snow, every move calculated. We progressed upward like automatons. Each electrical discharge rattled our brains and scared the hell out of us. Then I saw something inexplicable in the darkness. From above me slowly came down a bizarre glow of pale light that resembled an octopus with a bulbous head trailing lighted tentacles. Then, just as I thought it would collide with me, it disappeared.

After a 24-hour battle, we carved out a tiny perch below the upper glacier. It overhung threateningly above our heads, but we were too exhausted to continue. I crawled into my sleeping bag, wished Guy a merry Christmas and reflected that no doubt it was the hardest thing I had ever done. Little was I to know it would be nothing compared to what was to come.

The continuing storms hampered our progress. We managed to find a passage amongst the séracs of the upper glacier and to get across it without being obliterated by one of the countless avalanches. Add the rockfall, and I felt like an ant crossing the race-track during an Indy race. We were finally at the base of the Messner exit — the last leg of our journey. But in our tiny rat hole of a cave that evening, our sixth night on the face, we were truly worried. Our food and fuel was all but depleted.

The next morning the storm hit us halfway up the Messner rock band. The going was slow in the rarefied air; I had to pause every few moves to catch my breath. The electricity in the air wasn't rarefied, though; things were so charged that our helmets and ice axes buzzed loudly. It was as if the mountain were outdoing itself in its attempt to eradicate us. Lightning boomed, and every so often a rather large rock would hurtle past us. The wind and heavy spindrift were constantly threatening to knock me off balance. My hands were going numb from having got wet the night before when I was digging the snow cave. Now in these freezing temperatures frostbite was imminent. After we finished the rock band, a short slope brought us to a

The author on the south Face of Aconcagua. Photo: Guy Edwards

slot that led to the summit slopes. There we unroped and started up. I was perhaps 20m above this slot when I was suddenly struck by an avalanche. I clung on desperately and burrowed into the slope, but it was a futile effort. A scream of horror left my mouth as I plunged down. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a black object also sliding down; I immediately thought of Guy. The next instant my mind was void of all thought except to self-arrest. It seemed an eternity as I hopelessly tried to get a grip on my tool, my arms flailing above me and the axes occasionally bouncing off my head. Somehow I managed to get my right hand over the head of the axe. In an instinctive move my left hand then grasped the neck and I drove the pick deep with all my weight — and came to a stop.

Emotions ran wild, deluged my mind. I was astonished at how far I had slid — almost 50m. Even more shocking was the possibility of having slid further; the rock band below promised pain or even death. Shaken from the fall, I regained my composure and felt surprisingly calm. Soon all the fear and trepidation that had just poisoned me ceased. Spindrift quietly flowed over my head. Something bizarre got hold of me. There was no more urgency to get on with it. I felt serene and at peace. Something in me had changed. As if in a trance, I closed my eyes and let whatever had captured me take over. At first I saw images of people; then I became aware of the tears flowing down my face; finally I started understanding my thoughts. Everything about life instantly became clear as crystal. My mind went into another consciousness. I realized then what were the most important things in life: love of family and friends. How I cherished them now. The importance of joy, human compassion and peace. Life was great— precious — and I was doing what I loved. I was ready to fight. These were a mountaineer's thoughts near the top of the southern hemisphere after surviving an avalanche.

During the climb my philosophy on how to climb in the mountains was transformed. I realized that nature was unforgiving; if you slipped, you fell. One could rely only on experience and good judgment to avoid the greatest objective dangers garrisoned by the mountain. As for the subjective dangers, the onus was on you. The mountain was unrelenting in its hazards and obstacles; when faced with adversity you had to fight against it: "...and warlike habit of great glacial ranges." I later dubbed this "mountain combat", for as a warrior you must be an expert in strategy, tactics and fighting.

It was approximately my 16th hour of non-stop climbing. I was undernourished and dehydrated, and my heart was beating like a hummingbird's because of the thin atmosphere. I could feel the pain of frostbite now in my hands. My feet were simply numb. I felt so very weak, my last bit of strength drained by the avalanche. My body may have been beat, but I was not defeated. I was now armed with a desire to survive and I was in mountain-combat mode. Furthermore, I wanted to stand on top. My fears were suppressed, replaced by a shield of confidence: I was determined, motivated. The only thing I could not fathom was the thought that my partner and friend might be dead.

And so I gathered my courage and started climbing again. From the depths of my soul I summoned a power I had never known I had. Miraculously my axes started swinging again, my feet kicking. As the beam of the headlamp pierced the snow falling heavily on the cold face, I dedicated every strike of my axes to a family member or a friend. I had no intention of going back through the slot that seemed to be an avalanche funnel, so I took to the steeper ice on the left. For another six hours I continued upward until my foot made a fortuitous discovery: a hole that when enlarged proved to be a crevasse curving down into obscurity. I set two ice screws and rappelled into the abyss below. On my left I spotted a ledge, and by swinging from side to side I was able to hook it with my axe and climb up on top of it. I excavated the site, retrieved the "pig"

(my backpack) and set up my bivi. It was 4.30 a.m. I felt lonely here as I admired beautiful ice stalactites dangling from the ceiling. They were made of complex and intricate ice-crystal formations and looked like the finest lace. I missed Guy; thankfully, my exhaustion took over. Before long the nice Spanish man whose house was just outside the crevasse was inviting me to have supper in his warm home with his family. I did not want to offend him, but I was just too tired.

The next morning I heard yells; after many of these, I realized it was not another hallucination like the night before. Then joy filled my heart; it had to be Guy. I packed my stuff, jumared out and spotted the waving black dot high up above. My heart felt as if it had seized a few times from the effort, but my goal — my dream — was not far away. The day was magnificent, the views stunning, the black dot taking shape. I got to his position, never so happy to see his bushy head of hair and that bright smile. He was like a brother to me. We hugged and quickly proceeded upward to finish the route.

It is hard to explain triumph — when I topped out and all I could see was down. I flung my arms up towards the heavens and let out a roar; it was as if all that perseverance, fear and hardship had evaporated, to be replaced by bliss. This was the climax. God, I felt happy, content and proud.

Aconcagua has taught me the great secret. I understand and fully support man's need to push the limits, whether they be physical, scientific, artistic, or whatever. It is an expression of human triumph. It is because we are exceptional beings and need to explore experience to its fullest. We have hidden strengths that will help us overcome our dreadful faults. I learned perseverance, respect and optimism. Nothing is impossible; we can achieve anything we put our minds to. I will never again have barriers to accomplishment. In the end I know that friendship and love are what counts and that we should cherish these, never taking them for granted. We must help others, for this is what I was proud of when I came close. Peace is ever-present in my heart. Life is to be lived to its fullest and I will never refrain from enjoying it. When old in my deathbed, there will be no regrets. These may be things we all know and hear, but the difference is that I am one with them all, they are me. But for now, I've got The Urge...

I would like to extend special thanks to the medical group at Plaza del Mulas who looked after my frostbite.

1997 ACC Expedition To The Cordillera Blanca

Tom Haslam-Jones

On Pisco, 5752m

The Cordillera Blanca of Peru lies 400 km north of Lima and is the world's most accessible range of mountains over 6000m; sizeable communities of people inhabit its slopes and valleys, and good weather is almost guaranteed from May to September. Many of its mountain summits are dauntingly difficult to reach; many others, however, require little more than what is needed to climb mountains in the Rockies, together with a suitable bodily constitution to cope with the higher altitudes. The highest peak in the Cordillera Blanca, also the third highest mountain outside the Himalaya/ Karakoram, is Huascaran at 6768m. Under the right circumstances, it is one of the latter types of summit.

We met for the first time over breakfast in a cafe in Lima on the first of June: Diane; Bob, the doctor; Gerta; Reinhard; Helen, the guide; Marg, the manager; and I (Tom). George, from Kitchener, hadn't managed to make it due to a knee problem. That evening, on the roof of our quaint hotel, Helen brought us up to date regarding her plans for our expedition and enquired about our individual reasons for undertaking what we were about to do. Already the group had an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support — a good sign for the remaining three weeks.

Two of us — Diane and I — had not been high; the rest had been, though some more than a few years previously. The next day, on our way to Huaraz, the Banff of Peru, Diane and I broke our altitude records as we crossed in a minibus the 4000-m pass at the head of the Callejon de Huaylas, the valley between the Cordillera Blanca and its companion to the west, the Cordillera Negra. After descending the valley to 3000m, we settled into a quiet hotel in Huaraz and set about acclimatizing ourselves. Little did we know that our E-coli were also acclimatizing themselves, a condition which required a copious supply of Cipro antibiotic by the time it had hit six of us — fortunately, not all at once.

Three days later, after ever more adventurous sorties around Huaraz, we embarked for the Quebara Ishinca, about 20 km north of Huaraz. Our minibus took us up as far as a dusty village called Huillac at the end of a winding, bumpy track. After entrusting our big backpacks and our camping gear to some horses and burros, we climbed up steadily for five hours to a meadow at the head of the valley and camped at 4400m. We could see the pyramid of Tocllaraju (6000m) at the head of the valley, but our intended peaks, Urus este (5420m) and Ishinca (5530m), were made invisible to us by the steepness of the valley sides. Plenty of other people — Americans, Austrians, Colombians, British, Canadians — were camped in the valley because the locale is popular for acclimatization climbs.

After a day of acclimatization, we rose before dawn to climb our first peak, Urus este. The climb started up a moraine and then continued up snow and rock. The Andean rock is considerably more pleasant than that of the Rockies; it does not seem to crumble as much, which may account for the greater altitude of the peaks... On the way up the moraine, we looked across the valley at our second objective, Ishinca, dwarfed by the neighbouring Ranrapalca,

another 6000-m peak. This was the highest I had ever been and, as we got on the higher slopes, I noticed that my breathing was down to one per step.

We got to the top at about midday. We could see the summit of Huascaran, 20 km further north. We celebrated eagerly because this was the first ascent of the expedition. Most of us seemed to be handling the altitude well; we descended quickly to our camp in order to prepare for our next peak.

For Ishinca an overnight was planned at 4800m, so the next morning we packed our big backpacks and climbed, this time without assistance from burros or horses, all with the purpose of further acclimatization.

We climbed a good trail for about three hours to where we planned to camp. We had planned to climb Ishinca from the right, according to the guidebook, but porters told us of a large crevasse on that side of the summit. This information convinced us to climb it from the left, which meant that the last half-hour of climbing we had just done was unnecessary. We descended a little to camp in a more appropriate spot.

The next morning we woke at 4 a.m. and were ready to go at 5 a.m., when a party of Austrians passed us by, ascending at a measured pace from the valley. We followed them up to the beginning of the ice. Climbing Ishinca was mostly glacier travel, unlike Urus, and prepared us for more to come. We followed a well-marked trail in the snow, skirting most of the crevasses. The crevasses we could not avoid had good snow bridges. Occasionally the climbing was up steep snow slopes, but generally it was a classic glacier plod. The summit cone was quite a bit more challenging because it was very steep and there was quite a wind blowing. Once again I was down to one breath per step. We got on top at about ten-thirty, just after the Austrians, which made the small summit area a bit crowded for a short time.

Our early start left us plenty of time to descend and move our camp back to the Ishinca Valley. Descent at high altitude is markedly faster compared to ascent than it is at lower altitudes. It took us a total of two and half hours of travelling time to descend from the summit to the valley; it had taken seven hours of climbing to gain the summit.

Back at the camp in the valley, we luxuriated in using more tents, breathing denser air and making our plans for climbing Pisco (5752m), our next objective in four days' time.

Pisco is a popular peak one range north of Huascaran, about 40 km from our base in Huaraz. To get there we passed through Yungay, or rather the new town of Yungay. The old Yungay was buried with its 18,000 inhabitants by a landslide off Huascaran norte in 1970. Not far away lie buried the village and 4,000 inhabitants of Ranrahica, victims of a landslide off Huascaran norte in 1962. The peace and prosperity of the valley are deceptive; the peaks above hold all in thrall.

We drove up out of the valley along a good, winding dirt road into a national park and on past the Llanganuco Lakes. Their brilliantly turquoise waters, surrounded by groves of tough-leafed quena trees, are a major tourist attraction.

We disembarked from our minibus soon afterward, loaded up our big packs and set out to climb up to our camp in the Quebara Pisco above us. Jorge, our camp guardian from the Quebara Ishinca, was with us again. We climbed steadily up a good trail for two and a half hours to the camp at 4705m. Above us were Pisco at 5752m, beyond a steep moraine, and the three sheer faces of the 6000-m peaks of Huandoy. Pisco was going to be a more modest glacier climb, preceded by a pre-dawn navigation through an extensive complex of moraines.

In the morning we were off just before 4 a.m. We quickly climbed and descended the steep moraine. Our headlights picked out the cairns that showed our trail through the subsequent moraines. As the sky lightened we ascended the final moraines and overtook a Japanese climber and his Peruvian guide. The sun rose while we paused to dress for the glacier. Small clouds tried to push into the valley from the moister Amazon side of the mountains.

After a five-hour-long glacier slog up a well-worn trail in the styrofoam snow, we approached the summit to find our way barred by a huge crevasse, into which a snow bridge had recently collapsed. After some searching we found a small bridge on the far side of the summit, then followed a snow-ridge up onto the summit. Now we could see the icy pinnacles of Chacraraju to the east and an unusual view of the twin peaks of Huascaran to the southeast.

We set off down just as the Japanese and the Peruvian arrived. It only took an hour and a half to descend the glacier, but then it took us three hours to find our way back through the moraines; navigation in the daylight was more confusing than in the dark — the cairns were less visible... The whole climb had been a 12-hour day and a good addition to our acclimatization.

A group of Austrians had arrived to camp in the valley. They were guided by Walter Wertl, about whom we would learn more later. A pair of young climbers, one Austrian and one German, wanted to climb the face of Pisco the next day, so they borrowed some of our axes, promising to return them at Huascaran Basecamp.

The next day, while descending from the valley, we watched the two climbers creeping up Pisco. As we travelled down the road in the minibus, we started to inspect Huascaran more carefully; we were going to be on it in two days' time. Back in Huaraz, we had dinner and then joined the Peruvian and Japanese climbing pair to celebrate our third peak with pisco sours in the Tomba Bar nightclub, resulting in a late night.

We then had day off in Huaraz, during which Helen and Marg finalized negotiations with a high-altitude porter for support on Huascaran. At a conference in the evening, Helen rated our chances of success on Huascaran at 50-50, considering that it had apparently already had a few ascents this season.

For our first day on Huascaran we drove to the village of Musho in order to meet up with our burros. After loading them up with our big packs, we had a leisurely climb up a good trail to the basecamp. The camp was full — 18 Austrians had climbed the peak the previous day. We retrieved our ice axes from the young climbers from Pisco and learned that their climb had been successful. In the evening, as we sang songs to the music of Gerta's flute, we noticed that clouds were covering parts of the Cordillera Negra, across the valley, more than at any time during our stay so far.

The next morning was clear; we loaded everything into our packs and slowly set off over the glaciated rocks above the basecamp. This was the tough part of the climb: three days' worth of food and a 1200-m ascent up to Camp I at 5200m. We passed a party of French climbers camped at 4800m; they had been our neighbours on Pisco. As we moved onto the glacier, the clouds became thicker and it started to snow a bit. Eventually we found the campsite, just before dark. We quickly set up camp and melted snow for cooking. I found the day to have been exhausting and I could hardly eat my supper. The clouds

got thicker and thicker.

During the night it snowed, and in the morning we were socked in. We had one spare day available, so we decided to stay put and see what would happen. After lunch a party of Austrians crept down the icefall above us, having decided to quit their attempt. At the end of the day the Austrians with Walter Wertl appeared from below, as did the French party.

In the men's tent the next morning, we concluded that the wisest thing to do was to descend, since there was probably new snow above us and the going would be very tough to the summit. At that point Marg appeared at the tent door saying that the weather was fine and that we were going up. The whole camp was rapidly packing up to ascend the icefall. We followed the Austrians and the French.

In the icefall, the crux of the climb is a steep pitch of ice. The French went one way, the Austrians went another, and we went both ways. There were signs of small avalanches in the icefall, but most of the perils were covered over by the previous day's snow. Still, the crevasses and the jumbled ice blocks told us not to linger.

Above the icefall a snow slope led us over to a dell where the French had set up their camp. Underneath a protective ice wall above the dell was Camp II, with room enough for five or six tents. We were now just below the Garganta, the col between the two peaks of Huascaran. Clouds gathered again, but not as thickly as before. Helen and Marg had thought about at least climbing into the Garganta at 6000m, but negotiations with Walter and his party resulted in a bargain that he and his porters would make a trail to the summit ahead of us, provided the weather was good. We turned in very early.

Summit day: we were awakened at 12.30 a.m. The full moon was up and there was little need for headlamps. We left an hour later, pursuing the two Austrian teams. We made two enormous zigzags to negotiate huge crevasses before arriving vertically above Camp II at the entrance to the Garganta. It was somewhere here that three members of the ACC Montreal section — Kevin O'Connell, Carl Lund and David Findlay — had camped and had perished in a nocturnal avalanche in 1984; Carl and David are still buried there in the ice.

We went through the Garganta, climbing to the right, up the north face of the south peak. We overtook the slower Austrian party while the other team, our trailbreakers, forged ahead of us. Then came a steady ascent diagonally up the face, with one or two small crevasses. The snow was treacherous because it was half frozen, and each step was unpredictable. All the while, the moonlight on the snow glistened and sparkled around us. The pace slowed gradually as the breathing got harder.

At dawn we came to the last big crevasse, which had a rapidly dwindling, icy bridge across it. Then up the summit cap. It seemed to go on forever. Occasionally we saw the trailbreakers ahead. Then they were descending back past us; it couldn't be that far now. We stopped; Marg was tired and so was Gerta. They teamed up together and the rest of us went ahead of them. Ten minutes later we were there — all of us. Some of us ran the last part. It was 10 a.m.

The emotions overloaded: sunshine, blue sky, tears, photos, hugs. What had seemed so uncertain two days before had turned out perfectly. We calmed down by holding a moment of silence for Kevin, Carl and David.

I found it difficult to descend the treacherous snow. It might have been all right with ski poles, but we had left them behind. Helen wanted to take our tents and gear down to Camp I, where we had left spare food. At the rate we were going we realized we were going to have to spend another night at Camp II and descend 3000m all the way to Musho the next day.

So it was that, tired and sleepy, we finally returned to Huaraz as dusk fell the next day, in time for our booked bus trip back to Lima the day after. We bade a fond farewell to Marg and Helen, who were planning to try Alpamayo a few days later. They never made it up Alpamayo; there was too much snow, too many clouds and not enough time. The additional snow may have contributed to the massive avalanche that destroyed Camps I and II and took several lives on Huascaran six days after we summitted; the mountain was closed for several weeks. Huascaran has taken many lives, but it let us climb upon it and depart safely, without disturbing the beauty of the moonlight ascent and the happy return.

The success of the expedition had five elements: Helen's quiet leadership and planning; Marg's meticulous management; the patient and efficient support of Pyramid Adventures, with their minibuses, porters and camp guardians; plenty of Ciprio antibiotic; and finally the good companionship of all seven of us, which will hopefully endure.

Antarctica '97

Rich Prohaska and Jia Condon

I almost started this story by going straight to the climbing, because, at first, I found it hard to remember the beginning of the trip. But it didn't take me long to remember how apprehensive I had been about sailing to Antarctica. Our crew consisted of Greg and Keri (the owners of our transport boat, the Northanger), Rich, me, and two charters: John (an Australian) and Laure (a French girl). After about two weeks of hearing far too many sailing epics and stocking our boat with about two months' worth of supplies, we sailed from our safe moorage at Puerto Williams, Chile. Fortunately, we were blessed with fine sailing going past Cape Horn, as the wind was in our favour. I remember sitting on deck with Rich, discussing how big the swell was. "What do ya think? About eight feet, maybe ten, eh?" "Yeah," I'd say. Then we'd ask the sailor: "Hey Greg, how big is the swell?" "Oh, about three or four feet." I remember shuddering, imagining what a ten-foot swell would look like, much less a forty-foot one.

After a day of calm seas, things began to change, and we did in fact get to see a twenty foot wave, in forty-knot winds! Shortly after that, I found out what "hove to" means: you take down all your sails except for the mizzen and turn into the wind — and believe me, being sideways in a twenty foot swell is quite intimidating — then you tie off the wheel, go below and drift with the storm. I remember Rich getting up for his watch, walking up to the table and looking puzzled as he tried to figure out what didn't look right. It wasn't until he took a head count that he figured out that no one was on deck. But even though we drifted with the storm for about 12 hours, we were only off course by about 10 miles.

By the fourth day, I had relaxed considerably. I even hollered with excitement when we surfed down the backside of a ten-foot swell! I was amazed when I realized that, after five days of sailing towards Antarctica, I hadn't gotten sick once (though four out of six of us did).

And there we were, hundreds of miles from civilization. For some reason, I thought we'd be isolated, but little did I know that all the drinking I had done before leaving Chile was only the warm-up for the things to come. On our first night in Antarctica we were invited to a Chilean

base for beer and pizza. Then we sailed for a day and were invited onto a cruise ship for dinner, a shower and an open bar! And so, the style of the trip was set: there were lots of firsts (things like sailing, winning at Scrabble, making bread and such...) and socializing, and there was a little bit of climbing thrown in, too. Unfortunately, the weather was not on our side — I'm not sure if it was a normal summer season or not, but it sure didn't cooperate. For some reason (the short notice? the lack of research?), I expected Antarctica to be flat and white. I'd even bought new ski-touring boots, expecting to ski more. But I was pleasantly surprised to find numerous 2500-ft rock towers sticking straight out of the ocean, and quite a few 3000- to 5000-ft walls.

The trip down was great, and as awesome as it was to watch the endless wildlife, we did come here to climb. I'll let Rich talk about our first climb...

Rich on Booth Island

The first ascent of Who's Una on Weineke Island

It all began, as I think back, when Greg suggested that we should climb "That Thing" as a warm-up for Una's Tits. "That Thing" was a steep wall/buttress on the most southwesterly peak in the wall range, just above Pt. Lockroy. Greg told us that a couple of friends had climbed five pitches on good rock and then rapped — and that they had figured they were only halfway up. We packed our gear and waited for good weather. At 4 a.m. on the 26th, I got up and looked around. The sky looked better than it had, but black clouds still loomed above. By 6 a.m. the sky was 50% clear, and we hoped it was a trend. We got up, and after some coffee and a few pieces of bread and jam, we paddled to shore; by 8 a.m. we were skiing. An hour and a half of glacier travel brought us to the base of a beautiful, clean granite wall. Looking up, we saw 70° nice, vertical cracks. I guessed 8-10 pitches would take us less than 10 hours up and three hours to rap. With the long Antarctic summer days, we should have no problems whatsoever. We set out at 10 a.m.; I thought we'd be back by the time the three hours of twilight arrived at 1:30 a.m.

Jia drew the first lead and we raced upward. We moved simultaneously for two pitches before stopping below a steep step. After another section of smug climbing, we began to belay each pitch. Soon we came upon a sling, which the previous party had used to rap off. We believed then that we were roughly half-way up. But on the very next pitch it became all too obvious why they had quit. It was much steeper, with freshly exposed rock which was extremely sharp. Our progress slowed; we changed our heavy boots to rock shoes and delicately moved upwards.

The view was stupendous. Often, our ridge became very pronounced and we could stand on what felt like the tip of a sawtooth. At about that time, I asked Greg how far he thought it was to the top. He said, "three pitches.", but in fact, it was at least eight more from there. The rock slowly became more loose. In one especially frightening section, we had to mantle up onto a large block, and only when we were on top of it could we see how precariously it was keystoned. Things were looking bad. It was getting late (about 9 p.m.), and we knew that it would take a long time to rap from there. I was really not looking forward to descending down the route — I'd rather have done the long slog we were hoping existed down the backside. So I carried on up to get a better view of the top section, which we knew to be dangerous, because our route would take us under huge rime ice "half moons", unrealistically stuck onto vertical rock. At some point, we would have to traverse underneath them, cross a gully, then head up a slight ridge off to our right.

On the top of my pitch I yelled down, "It's getting better here." I don't know why I told that lie, except that I really did not want to rap from where we were, 14 pitches up. Jia's next lead put us directly beneath the most unreal ice clump "thing". Greg led out towards a gully, belayed, then I climbed beside the gully and stopped beside the bottom of a snow patch. By then our feet were getting cold, so we changed back into our heavy, awkward boots, and Jia donned his crampons to climb the ice pitch. Greg's turn again, we were very close to the top.

About 25m below, he stopped to belay. I went up on rock/snow and came to a halt. The rock ramp I was following became perfectly seamless and solid. I could have hooked my way up, but we had left the aid gear at the base of the route when we saw how pronounced the buttress was. To my left was a pinnacle of snow stuck to the rock, ending part-way to the main snow slopes. On the right was ice, shaped into a vertical wave so that it formed an ice chimney. I called down saying that there was no way I could climb any higher and suggested that we could traverse one more pitch to where a better-looking ridge led up, or someone else in crampons could climb the final 10m to the top. Unfortunately for Greg, he was wearing plastic mountaineering boots; we elected him to lead the ice. Up he went, and set to work on the wave, slowly breaking it away and sending down a shower of ice onto our heads. After a long and desperate struggle, he made the snow slope and sat down in it, and readied himself to bring us up. Without picks or crampons and in flexible boots, we slowly made our way up the 80° ice.

By 1:30 a.m. the weather had fully gone bad and it was a struggle to plod to the summit. There we immediately said to each other, "Now what?" Greg had seen the "backside" last year, and remembered it as being simply not too nice, even ugly. I still didn't want to rap the route and preferred to wander down a jumbled glacier, with perhaps a couple of raps, and then to post hole around the whole mountain to get back to our skis. Since it was very cold, with intense winds, the idea of a snow cave came up. I just wanted to go down blind, or whatever, and not spend hours getting soaking wet by digging a cave. We decided to have a look for a crevasse suitable for shelter and we found the perfect spot almost instantly.

At 2 a.m., we sat on our packs to wait for more light and clear weather. Sleep came in fits and starts. By 4 a.m. it was bright again. We geared up and Greg went outside but immediately came back in. The wind was still blowing hard, and it was snowing heavily. After a few more false starts we fig-

ured that we must get down somehow, since we were very cold and had nothing to eat or drink. For some time we wandered around looking for a descent, eventually seeing a rock ridge below a steep snow slope. We thought that we should head for it so that we could rap the remaining vertical away. We belayed Greg down onto the face, but the wind was blowing very strongly, carrying lots of snow and making visibility nearly impossible. Jia was belaying and I was standing above, watching, when Greg fell. I yelled "Falling!" to Jia, and I ran back to safer ground. Greg had arrested his own fall. He had stepped over a bit of ice and lost his footing, regaining it on the snow slope below. I got scared about the slope down to the ridge and had second thoughts about the "backside" descent. I lowered Jia down to Greg and he found a better route (and he didn't fall). Very carefully, I downclimbed to Jia; Greg had already descended a half rope further. He yelled up, "Blue ice," and I worried even more. No ice gear, one tool, flexy boots and 'pons — being roped together? It didn't sound right. But I went down to Greg anyway and he said "What do you think?" I said, "Pretty awful." He agreed; we climbed back up to the cave, and after a short discussion about our options, we thought we should rap. The weather was still horrible and cold, but we set off on our journey down to safety, one rap followed by another. When I reached the traverse with the very unstable looking flakes, I found that we had to rap off the worst-looking one, but it stayed keyed for one more day and permitted our tugging. Finally, we reached the old sling, which meant that there were only 5 or 6 pitches to go. The weather had improved slowly, and we could see the clear water and the sky was lit by the setting sun. It was by far the most beautiful sunset we had seen in Antarctica. The last few raps passed without event and at 11:30 p.m., after 11 hours of rappelling, we reached the seemingly safe haven of the glacier. After an hour of skiing, we were back on the Northanger, enjoying its comfort, heat and good supply of beer. Back to Jia...

First Ascent of the East Peak of Una's Tits

After that "warm-up" climb, it was easy to go back to watching the penguins. After leaving Port Lockroy, it only took about six hours before we were directly under our next climb, Una's Tits, a.k.a Cape Renard Tower. This is a beautiful, 2500m tower sticking straight out of the ocean. Being in front of the tower and its neighbour helped explain the name that the British gave the tower. With the right perspective, the towers did in fact resemble a set of breasts. Una, we found out later, was the well-endowed secretary for the British base.

Unfortunately, there were no safe achorages near Una's, so we set out for Havgaard — an eight-hour sail. There we sat waiting once again for the weather, getting bored and suggesting silliness, like driving the Zodiac through holes in the icebergs. Thankfully, the weather started to break, saving us from future silly acts and allowing us to participate in more intelligent acts such as climbing.

Our plan was to sail to Una's, drop off Rich and me, and then get picked up in five days. Our first two days were rainy and windy. The third morning was the same, but by 10 a.m. things started to improve and we decided to try and fix some lines. After our "warm-up" climb, we thought we would fix a few ropes to help us on our summit attempt. The first six pitches varied from good to bad rock, with 70° ice. The last pitch of the day was the start of the steeper climbing. It proved to be poor rock with shitty pro. The fourth day was a mix of snow and rain, with gale force winds. By the late afternoon the clouds started to break. Since our pickup day was to follow, we figured it was our last chance and we planned for an early start.

At 1 a.m. the alarm droned deep into my dream. We looked outside and found almost clear skies. By the time we reached the top of our fixed lines it was already very light out. While I was sorting through the rack (which we left at the top of the fixed lines), I realized that the cams were all frozen. I did my best to clear the cams and started the first lead of the day. The pitch tested me right off the bat with a 15 -foot off- width crack. Being in the mountains and leaving my ethics in Squamish, I had no problem resorting to a couple of moves of aid. The pitch turned out to be one of the hardest I've ever done in the mountains, though, thankfully, the rock was good. I remember trying to stuff in some cams, and that I had to breathe on them to be able to pull the trigger. And after climbing above them, they usually fell out. Just when I felt the rope become tight I found a great belay, right below a snow section. Rich led off to start another steep section of rock. After two pitches of moderate climbing on good rock we again reached snow. This time, however, we had to simulclimb with minimal gear over some very steep sections of corn snow. We were both happy once we reached a good belay. Rich's lead took him through the crux of the climb, a 40-foot section of 95° rock. I remember feeling privileged to be climbing in such a remote and beautiful place, watching the ice floes drift by with seals on them, listening to whale sounds and then spending the next few seconds tracing the noise to the whale swimming below. "SLACK, JIA!" Oh, yeah. "Sorry, Rich." Back to the climb.

Rich's hanging belay brought him just below the summit ridge. My lead took me over more steep corn snow to a step just below the summit (or what we hoped to be the summit). Rich continued past. "Off" belay," he yelled down and I excitedly joined him. Unfortunately, we were on the east summit; the true summit was still further along and it was guarded by a notch with a large cornice. We quickly decided that this was not going to go (not to mention the ugly grey clouds we saw rolling in), and we started our descent. After about five rappels it started to snow. Later, with only five more rappels to go, we saw our chariot sailing around the corner. I promptly turned on my radio and told the crew of our success. I also told them where we were on the mountain and that we would be down soon.

After tearing apart our camp and lowering it to the shore we were quickly shuttled back onto the Northanger for some of Laure's French crepes. By now Greg and Keri were juiced up to do some more climbing, so we made an attempt on Wandel Peak on Booth Island. The route we climbed proved to be the wrong way to reach the summit, but that's how it goes when you don't have a guidebook.

And so, it was time to start our sail back to South America. I was not looking forward to what the Drake Passage might offer us this time. We started studying our weather faxes, waiting for a break in the constant systems. Unfortunately, they never came, and off we went. The first two days the wind blew us off course quite a bit, but then it died off completely. I had heard about people praying for the "Drake Lake" — I just wasn't expecting it on this trip. Time to motor sail. Of course, we had to listen to the clatter of the diesel engine, but I'll take that over a 20-foot swell anyday!

Challenging The Turquoise Demon - Cho Oyu '97

Shelley McKinlay

Our plans to climb Cho Oyu began about three years ago. Cho Oyu, the Turquoise Demon, is sixth highest of the 14 peaks in the world over 8000m.

One of our main reasons for organizing the trip ourselves was that we wanted to go with people we knew and had climbed with before. Grant McCormack, Murray Hainer, Fred Ziel and Jeff Alzner were obvious choices. They had been on Broad Peak with us in '95 and were strong climbers, experienced at high altitude and easy to get along with. Next, we wanted more people from Saskatchewan. We knew Steve Pasmeny, Yannick Champollion, Rob Owens and Brad Matushewski to be strong technical climbers. They were experienced alpine climbers on both rock and ice but had never been to high altitude. All in all, we knew we had a strong team; we all had the potential to do well on the expedition.

Since our experience with food on previous expeditions had not been the greatest (not enough, boring and very repetitive), we wanted to bring someone from Canada to be responsible for cooking and managing Basecamp. Suzanne Eames and Tracey Straub volunteered. Tracey cancelled at the last minute, and a team decision was made to hire a Sherpa cook in Nepal. This worked out very well, as both Suzanne and Kanchha Nehru were extremely hard workers and took pride in the excellent food they prepared for us.

While everyone was busy training, Andrew and I were also organizing logistics including airline flights, visas, transportation in Nepal, expedition food, and sponsors. Although most things went smoothly, various problems with the airline tickets left us wondering if we were ever going to make it out of Canada. We left Saskatoon in the early morning of April 4, 1997.

On April 11, after days of shopping and organizing, we left Kathmandu on a six-hour bus trip to the Nepal border at Kodari. After passing through Nepalese customs and crossing the Friendship Bridge, we entered "No Man's Land", a 40-minute bus ride up a steep hillside to the Chinese border at Zhangmu. Our interpreter and our Liaison Officer from the CMA met us at Chinese customs. They quickly rushed us through customs, and we transferred our gear to a different (Chinese) truck and hopped on another bus. Because it had been raining, landslides were a concern; they wanted to continue on to Nyalam before the road was closed.

After an extra night in Nyalam for acclimatization, we continued our drive to Tingri, our last resting stop before getting to Basecamp. From Tingri to the end of the road and our basecamp was a three-hour ride by truck. The road was too rough to take the bus, so we rode in the back of the open truck on top of our gear. Not surprisingly, the truck broke down partway there, but after about half an hour they got it going again.

Our yaks and yak herders arrived earlier than expected to carry all our supplies to Advanced Basecamp (ABC), but we were happy to be on our way. By April 20 we were all at ABC. For Andrew and me it was a great relief, as it felt like the majority of our organizing work had been accomplished.

Over the next several days, everyone carried loads to stock Camp I. The route to Camp I is not technically difficult; in fact, most of us just wore lightweight hiking boots. It starts out reasonably level but after 1.5-2 hours goes into a straight-up scree slope with lots of small rocks and dirt, so that for every two steps up you slide one step back. "Why do I do this?" was the question that kept running through my mind.

On the first carry to Camp II, those not experienced at high altitude learned a new lesson in load carrying as they tried to take on too much and burned out quickly. By mid-afternoon the weather was worsening and a tent with stashed gear was put up halfway between Camp I and Camp II. Everyone then retreated to ABC. After a few good rest days, most of the group — except Andrew and me — were ready to head back up to Camp I, sleep a night and then head to Camp II. We both had very bad coughs and hoped that one more day at a lower altitude would help us recover.

After getting to Camp I and then making a carry to the cache, we headed all the way to Camp II. I was quite worried about carrying an even larger load an even greater distance. I felt pretty good for the first while, but it was really windy and cold. We got to the first steep icefall, which had already been fixed with rope by previous teams. Because of the altitude and the need to carry large loads, the fixed ropes were instrumental for safety and ease of travel. Before we got there I desperately wanted to stop for a drink, but Andrew pointed out the number of people behind us and observed that the ropes in front of us were free at the moment. I didn't relish the thought of standing out in the cold and wind to wait my turn so I pushed ahead and got my ascender attached to one of the lines. I struggled my way up, fighting fatigue, thirst and my monstrously heavy pack. About halfway up I was greeted by Fred and then Rob, who were rappelling on the down line, descending from Camp II to ABC.

By the time I had reached the top of the icefall, my fingers were so cold I could hardly hang on to my ascender. We hurried as much as we could to the cache tent and crashed there for a while, warming our hands and toes, filling up on fluids and snacks and, blessedly, getting out of the wind for a while. The second icefall on the way to Camp II was not as steep as the first but much longer; it was hard blue ice with not much snow on it and therefore required frontpointing most of the way.

Steve had told me that the terrain levelled out over the last 60 to 70 metres to Camp II. By the time I got to this part, everyone ahead of me had disappeared. I kept counting to see how many steps I could take before having to stop and rest; it varied between 15 and 25. As came up to the crest of the ridge, I was praying that I would see tents on the other side. Instead, I saw Andrew come down around a corner. He'd already made it to camp and had come back to check on me. 1 didn't have the energy to argue when he offered to carry my pack. I could now take 50 steps without resting. It was 316 steps to the tent. We were at just over 7000m.

Murray, who had come up to Camp II the day before, tried to serve me hot drinks when I arrived. All I could think was: Go away — leave me alone! Although I knew I had to drink and I greatly appreciated his gesture, I was totally wiped out! It took me a few minutes to get the energy to dig my cup out of my pack. I sprawled in the tent, resting between sips of tea. I started to get too warm with all my fleece and Gore-tex on so I got my jacket unzipped, then had to stop for a rest. I got one arm out, rested, then the other arm, and so on. I found some cheese and crackers in the food bag. I would break off a piece of cheese, put it on a cracker and then lean back until my breathing slowed down enough so that I

could eat it.

After a couple of hours I felt somewhat better, and I finally had a chance to look around. Wow — a camp with a view! The surrounding snow-capped peaks were all lower in elevation, and far in the distance the dry hills of Tibet could be seen.

By morning the weather had changed for the worse. As the clouds and snow rolled in, we bailed out. At this point everyone in the group had spent at least one or two nights at Camp II. A few days' rest at ABC would put us in a good position to make our summit bids!

On May 4, Steve, Yannick, Rob, Grant, Fred and Jeff started back up to Camp I on their way to the summit. Andrew, Murray, Brad and I followed on May 5. The plan was for the first group to establish Camp III on May 6 and make their summit bid on May 7. The second group would make its summit bid on May 8. However, the best-laid plans don't always work out! On the morning of May 7, Fred, Steve, Grant and Rob set off from Camp III for the summit. Rob turned around soon after, as he was not feeling up to it. Yannick did not leave Camp III. Jeff was still at Camp II with Andrew, Murray, Brad and me because he had a very bad cough. By 10 a.m., Andrew and I were ready to set out for Camp III, but because it was snowing and there was a whiteout we weren't sure what the first summit team would do. If they turned around and wanted to try again the next day, there wouldn't be enough room for all of us at Camp III.

Grant got to 7800m before turning around. He felt he just couldn't go any further. Rob and Yannick came down to Camp II early in the afternoon. A couple of hours later Grant also stumbled in, disappointed at not reaching the summit but realistic about what he felt his abilities were. We anxiously waited to hear from Fred and Steve. It kept snowing off and on, and Andrew and I were worried. Illogically, we felt it would be our fault if anything happened to them. Finally we got word via Suzanne that Fred and Steve had made the summit at 3:45 p.m., but this still did not dispel our fears. They still had to get safely down to Camp III. Each time the summit cleared I would silently yell "Move, you guys! Get down quickly!" and each time it clouded in "OK, slow down, just do it safely." At 8 p.m., we spoke to them directly. They were safely at Camp III and sounded jubilant but totally thrashed. Steve later told us that, had he not been with Fred (who he felt was more experienced), he probably would not have continued to the summit since the weather was so marginal. They were lucky that everything worked out in the end.

The next day, the second summit group made its way to Camp III. By late afternoon the wind was picking up again, and later yet it began to snow. We had every piece of clothing on, including our boot liners. It was just barely warm enough in our -30° sleeping bags. We had our alarms set for 3 a.m. The wind was howling by that time, and snow had drifted inside the tent through what little ventilation we had. Each time we unzipped the door, more snow came whirling in. By 5 a.m., Jeff, Murray, Andrew and I were ready to go. Brad was not feeling well and had not gotten up. It was still extremely windy, with a lot of blowing snow, and when Andrew stepped out of the tent, he could barely see twenty or thirty feet. We discussed the situation, yelling at the top of our lungs to be heard over the howling winds. Our only choice was to wait and see if the wind would settle down. During our 9 a.m. radio call to ABC we were advised that the forecast was for more wind and snow over the next few days. By noon it was clear but still extremely windy. We decided to pack it in and head down. Jeff was in pretty rough shape; he had been coughing really hard for the past few days and his voice was almost gone.

After the scariest night of the trip at Camp I, we arranged for five Tibetans to come up to Camp I to help us clear our gear off the mountain. Other groups had been hiring them to carry supplies up to Camp I, but we wanted to climb this mountain on our own and had strongly held to that conviction. By this time, however, our strong ethics had gone by the wayside. Getting the tents down was a trial in itself. At one point Andrew, Murray and I, and three Tibetans were hanging on to one tent to try to keep it from blowing away!

A couple of days later, in still very windy conditions, the yaks and yak herders came in to carry our gear to the end of the road. Once at the end of the road, we spent $100 U.S. to bribe the Chinese into letting us take a truck out to Tingri that night. We did not relish the thought of unpacking all the tents again! In Tingri the sparse accommodation had mysteriously become luxurious; we gathered around the warm stove in the hotel restaurant and feasted on rice, potatoes, bits of meat, and chapatis. Jeffs bottle of Chivas was downed in celebration of a successful and safe trip.

The next day Urgen Sherpa met us at the Chinese border. We moved all our gear from one truck to another to get through "No Man's Land" and rode in the back of the open truck down to the Nepal border. It took us 12 long hours to get back to Kathmandu. Hot showers, fresh food and clean sheets were welcome sights!

Tooth-Crushing Dentistry (Real Men do it with a Leatherman)

Murray Hainer

We were already an improbable crew of ten climbers — seven of us from the flatlands of Saskatchewan — but with two highly qualified physicians in our climbing team, our Cho Oyu encampment also tended to be the focal point of any serious medical problems that arose, bringing in every porter, trekker, sick climber, and/or wimp.

Grant McCormack is a respiratory physician, climber and skier from Vancouver. He was participating in his third climb in the Himalaya.

Fred Ziel, our other physician-climber, is an endocrinologist with a practice in Pasadena, California. Fred, as well as having done numerous big-wall climbs and first ascents, helped wire Yannick's house and is also a freight train in the mountains!

There were both Spanish and Basque teams at Cho Oyu Basecamp this spring, much like having Canadian nationalists and separatists side by side. While the Spanish team had a physician, the Basques did not, so when the Basque leader began to have trouble with a root canal job done one month before the climb, he came to our doctors for help.

Failure to be able to deal with such a situation at Basecamp would necessitate a trip out of China and a painful return to Kathmandu, so despite the fact that Fred hates to do teeth and Grant refuses to do teeth, we decided to alleviate the situation at Basecamp.

The Basque climbing leader, Josu Feijoo, was brought to our cook tent by one of his climbing team. He was given two Tylenol T30s, and while they were hopefully taking effect, our medical arsenal was prepared. Though we had more than adequate supplies of bandages and antibiotics, we had no extraction equipment, but I had purchased a Leatherman prior to departure for Tibet and it became the tool of choice.

Fred had Josu lean back, then administered three shots of Novocain into Josu's

gum tissue. Grant also suggested he administer an additional ampoule of Morphine. Soon the patient was much higher than our 18,800-foot basecamp.

Fred went to work. Using the Leatherman, he crushed and cracked the inside wall of the tooth, then exposed the upper portion of the root canal filling. Grasping the filling with the pliers, out it came. The air was immediately permeated with the fetid stench of decaying tissue. While the patient was obviously experiencing some discomfort, his companion was slowing changing from a ruddy alpine glow to a pallid blanch.

Thinking that a festering jaw would be difficult to keep from becoming further infected, Fred tried an extraction. Fred weighs in the neighbourhood of 210 pounds, and possesses the shoulder girth of an NFL linesman. Applying all this strength upward, while squeezing the pliers, yet not trying to totally crush the tooth wall, Fred pulled. In spite of all the sedatives administered, the patient groaned, perhaps fearing in his chemically induced stupor that his head was being torn off . The tool repeatedly slipped off the tooth, leaving a calcium-enamel deposit between the channeled grooves of the pliers. It was obvious that getting this tooth out could only be done by crushing it, then extricating all the fragments. Drs. Fred and Grant decided that this was not a good idea.

Grant opened the tube of temporary dental filling, which Fred then tamped into the tooth cavity. No time was wasted in checking the bite impression, or scraping the filling to smooth it cosmetically. It was a done deal.

Fred released his hold on Josu, who then staggered to his feet with a glazed look in his eye. Leaning on the arm of his solicitous and still blanched countryman, he was led groggily out the tent flap into the now darkening evening sky and rapidly dropping temperatures.

Several days later, the patient was the climbing leader of a Basque summit attempt on Cho Oyu. This attested to the success of the temporary dental procedures, as well as to the tenacity and toughness of Josu.

Reviews

Into Thin Air, by Jon Krakauer

Villard, New York, 1997

"It allows of no latitude; it defends with every means in its power; and its weapons are terrible ones; it is as exacting on the mind as it is on the body. Those who tread its last 1,000 feet tread the physical limits of the world."

Frank Smythe, Everest,1933

It was inevitable that disaster would strike a guided party on Mount Everest and that the climbing world would take the opportunity to moralize over the event when it happened; but who could have expected that so many would suffer such grim and terrible death, or that perhaps the finest outdoor writer in the United States would be on board to record the horrific ride?

In 1996, a number of expeditions were seeking to climb Everest via the South Col route, established by the first-ascent party; among them were two expeditions on which clients paying up to $65,000 (U.S.) were hoping to follow their dreams, with the assistance of some very strong and capable guides, to the top of the Big One.

One of these expeditions was led by New Zealander Rob Hall, apparently universally respected on the Everest circuit as someone who knew how to organize tightly run, smooth expeditions; he had demonstrated great success in the past, having got almost 40 clients to the top of the world. Krakauer went along on Hall's 1996 expedition as a client, sponsored by Outside magazine.

Also on the mountain was a guided American expedition led by Seattle climber Scott Fisher, Fisher's approach to the business of guiding Everest was somewhat less structured than Hall's. He was apparently a character with limitless drive and a gregarious personality that many found irresistible; his strength as a climber seemed to be his incredible threshold for pain and his ability to keep going under any circumstances.

As all the world knows, both Hall and Fisher now lie dead, high on the South Col route of Everest, victims of a sudden storm which killed them both and devastated their teams of clients.

Do we blame the mountain for the tragedy? The ineptitude of the clients? Competition between guiding companies? Was it just Nature, showing a savage streak, which killed Hall and Fisher? Or were their deaths, and those of the three others who perished with them, once again due to human error?

The word "tragedy" is rather overused these days in mountaineering writing to describe pretty well any expedition where one of the party dies; however, as the events of May 1996 high on the slopes of Everest unfold on Krakauer's pages, the story does take on something of the inevitability and horror of great tragedy. The chief protagonists, Hall and Fisher, are both larger-than-life characters — heroic, powerful personalities. The fate that overtakes them is vastly disproportionate to the actual mistakes they made. And, as in tragedy, the two are struck down suddenly and without mercy, just at the point of their lives when they have the most to live for.

It is very clear to anyone who has followed Krakauer's career as a journalist that he certainly knows how to tell a story, and Into Thin Air does not disappoint in this respect. The writing is crisp and literate. One is impressed by the amount of background Krakauer has dug up on the participants involved; he keeps the pace moving along smartly, mixing anecdote, observation, quotation. The chapters detailing the climb from the South Col to the summit and the retreat of the climbers in the storm are riveting, and one has to admire the thoroughness with which Krakauer has managed to reconstruct exactly where everyone was on the Southeast Ridge at all the crucial times. It takes great skill to keep track of such a large cast of characters throughout the narrative and still keep the story moving along, and Krakauer has succeeded in this job completely.

Most readers are going to be well-satisfied by Into Thin Air, in the end, however, this is a very good book but not a great one. I think it was written too soon after the event. It lacks an element of really deep and mature reflection on the nature of the disaster, which in some ways might have been the most significant aspect of the story. The catharsis we experience at the conclusion of great tragedy is missing, probably because the cast of characters is so large that none are all that completely drawn; we don't really see inside Hall or Fisher or Andy Harris deeply enough .

That said, the story has much to tell us about human character under conditions of great stress. Krakauer makes it clear that the seeds of the disaster are sown

early, arising from the situation created when two competitive guiding companies serving wealthy clientele are operating side by side under such extreme conditions. Krakauer will not come right out and say that competition, or the need to maintain one's commercial reputation, entered into decisions made by both Hall and Fisher which proved disastrous, but he does not have to; it is all too clear that, when you are in the business of getting people to the top of Everest, influences that are extraneous to good mountaineering practice enter into the judgments you make.

While the book is a good length, this reviewer would have liked fuller treatment of some issues. For example, the clients who turned back — mostly on their own initiative — deserve greater scrutiny. These climbers were the ones who made the right decisions that day on Everest; they deserve at least as much attention as those who carried on. No clear picture emerges of any of them. Krakauer seems to feel that the climbers who turned around just summed up the situation and saw there was little likelihood of success. As far as it goes, this analysis is probably true but simplistic. Anyone who spends $65,000 U.S. to get to Everest is both successful in life and highly driven. In light of what happened, it would have been interesting to hear more about how such motivated people dealt with the conflict between the desire to continue on and the decision to retreat.

One of the more surprising elements of the book is that Krakauer is so muted in his criticism of the expedition leaders, whose poor decisions contributed substantially to the disaster. For all the analysis that has been expended on the disaster, the mistakes the guides made were fairly obvious. Above all, the guides knew that clients who were not on the summit by about 2 p.m. had to turn around. If just this one resolution had been kept, probably everyone would have survived.

Presumably, the guides also knew that the clients were paying the big bucks because they expected to climb with a guide — and not just be left on their own to cope with the exposure and difficulty of the last 1000 ft. of Everest. Although Everest has now been climbed many times, Frank Smythe's words, quoted above, remain salutary. It is still very easy to die up there if everything does not go perfectly on summit day.

Krakauer is far too easy on Fisher and Hall, who did a poor job of organizing their teams for the summit day. The lessons are there in the book, but Krakauer always feels it necessary to qualify his conclusions. He says: "Certainly time had as much to do with the tragedy as the weather, and ignoring the clock can't be passed off as an act of God. Delays at the fixed lines were foreseeable and eminently preventable. Predetermined turn-around times were egregiously ignored." He goes on to say that extending the turn-around times "may" have resulted from rivalry between Fisher and Hall, then observes that, of course, Fisher and Hall "were forced to make such critical decisions while seriously impaired with hypoxia.... Wisdom comes easily after the fact."

This would have been a stronger book if Krakauer had drawn the hard conclusions and stuck with them. And it is important that the right conclusions be drawn here, because there is a school of thought which actually blames the clients for the disaster. The line of reasoning runs something like this: These people were simply rich mountain snobs who tried to buy their way up Everest; they did not have the ability or the training or the apprenticeship for the job; they should not have been on the mountain; and if they were conceited enough to attempt something like Everest just for the vainglory of it all, then they really had it coming — sheep to the slaughter. This viewpoint is fairly popular among experienced mountaineers. Closely allied to it is the dictum that once you get over 7000m in the Himalaya you are really on your own, and it doesn't matter if you paid a fortune to get there. No one can or should expect a guide or anyone else to bail them out once they enter the "death zone".

Krakauer himself provides support for this view in the book. He points out the incompetence of some of the clients: Beck Weathers' skills were "less than mediocre"; Yasuko Namba barely knew how to walk in crampons, and so on. In blaming the clients for the tragedy, however, one ignores the fact that the guides knew the hazards and planned for them, and that if they had followed their plan, instead of being swayed by collateral interests, the disaster could have been avoided. Presumably, the guides also knew that the whole idea of these expeditions is for inexperienced clients to be teamed up with experienced guides. Yet Scott Fisher continued to push on to the summit when his clients were heading down; meanwhile, his second-in-command, Boukreev, was heading down at a time when the clients were all still climbing up. What kind of guiding is that?

People who hire guides have a right to expect them to meet certain standards of responsibility and care for their clients. As for the culpability of Boukreev, Krakauer — without coming right out and pointing a finger — makes a convincing case that he ought to have been on the mountain with the clients when the disaster struck.

Krakauer's reluctance to take the gloves off probably has something to do with his own position on the mountain as the strongest of the clients and easily the best climber among them. For some reason, he insists on beating himself up over what happened. Yet nothing we have heard about the Everest disaster leads us to believe that any blame could be attached to Krakauer. One hopes that over time this sense of guilt will leave him, because the facts do not justify his view that he shares some blame for what happened.

In the end, it is unlikely that modern high-altitude guided climbing will be much different because of this disaster. Into Thin Air is a good read and has proven very popular; as the book relates, however, only two weeks later a climber from the South African team, who had been at the col during the disaster of May 10-12, made his own summit attempt and never returned. Like Hall and Fisher, Bruce Herrod kept climbing when he ought to have turned back; he did not make the summit until 5 p.m. After radioing from the top, he was never seen or heard from again. The lure of the 8000-m peaks is one of the more curious obsessions of modern climbers. Those of little experience who are looking to attempt these Himalayan giants would do well to read this fine book before committing themselves to such ventures.

Bruce Fairley

Risking Adventure, by Jim Haberl

Raincoast Books, Vancouver, 1997

Jim Haberl's new book Risking Adventure is a collection of five stories from his extensive mountaineering adventures. I think most mountaineers at some point ask themselves why they climb. Jim not only asked himself, he decided to write a book based on the question. It is particularly interesting to read his point of view on some answers to the question, as he is a renowned Canadian mountaineer who has experienced the ultimate in both tragedies and successes in his climbing history.

I found the book to be well-written. Jim

has a way of describing the landscape, the people and his own thoughts which makes the reader feel as if he or she are right there on the trip. It can be difficult to write about technical climbing stories so that non-climbers can understand what is going on, but I think he has succeeded, and without insulting the intelligence of the readers who climb.

Even though every one of his stories is vastly different from the others in terms of its geographical location, the nature of the expedition and the end result, Jim has managed to make the book flow quite naturally.

Jim is also a fantastic photographer, and he uses many beautiful pictures to enhance his writing. He has included a full range of photos, from mountain scenery to human interest to wildlife, each one obviously carefully picked for its quality and relationship to the story.

One of the stories bothered my personal moral values quite a bit. I was disappointed that a prominent Canadian mountaineer would condone, participate in, and then publish a story about cheating park and mountain fees in a developing country. I guess everyone makes their own decisions.

As for coming up with answers to the question "Why do people take great risks with their lives by climbing mountains?" Jim does a great job in the introduction and the afterword, but I thought he let the topic slip away when he was writing each individual story. Maybe the stories are supposed to speak for themselves, but I found myself often asking "I wonder what he was thinking when that was going on?" However, when he does express his personal thoughts, he does so with clarity and profoundness. I wish he'd done more of it, but sometimes it is good to leave your readers wanting more!

Overall, Risking Adventure is well worth reading.

Nancy Hansen

Outdoor Leadership Technique, by John Graham

The Mountaineers, Seattle 1997

The book is a training guide, designed to be read fast and digested slowly. Graham has focused directly on volunteer organizations or clubs, where all aspects of leadership are in perpetual short supply. Graham has created the book to instruct, for people who are busy, involved and pressed for time. Each chapter starts by discussing fundamental concepts, then moves on to review case histories or possible scenarios and to evaluate problem-solving techniques. The chapter finishes with a summarized list of learnings as a reminder. It is the type of book that once read could be quickly skimmed several days before a trip.

Leadership courses or training I have taken tended to deal with the more concrete issues of mountain leadership — such as finding a good path around an avalanche zone, setting a pace that all can follow — not enough was done on the harder, people issues. Graham deals directly with the "soft" or human stuff. He addresses issues such as attitude, leadership style, women in leadership, sexual harassment, decision making, effective communication, leader responsibility, stress management, conflict resolution, courage, team building and more.

The first two chapters deal with Graham's view of leadership and they force the reader to evaluate his or her own attitudes on leadership. I found myself asking serious questions about my own skills and techniques as a leader. These are "in your face questions", with not always the best answers. I guess, if the author had me doing this in the first 20 pages, the book was already effective.

Graham believes that all people have some capability of leading; however, they must be honest about their own motivation and understand their own style. He suggests some interesting visualization techniques, which would probably work well in a pub, to assist readers in understanding their own style. Although he is a firm believer in non-authoritarian leadership, he does address situations requiring a more authoritarian role.

Good decision-making is one of the most challenging tasks of a leader. Graham suggests a reasonable strategy to assist in logical decision-making. He suggests techniques on how readers might explore their own "experience" development such as recording one's hunches and subsequent actions and evaluating them after the fact. I agree that this takes discipline and it may not fit with one's style, but it docs give the reader new avenues to approach a difficult area.

Conflict resolution is perhaps one of the most uncomfortable aspects of leadership that one may have to deal with. Graham points out that often the reasons for conflict are not the obvious ones. He stresses identifying potentially difficult people or situations and the subtle hints of trouble before they are an issue. Once potential conflicts are identified he recommends a delicate balance of gaining trust, communicating and understanding the issues, all of which involve a sense of caring. I agree with Graham's ideas, but they are a lot easier to read than to practice. Graham admits that things do not always work but the methods improve the odds.

One section that seems out of place is the final chapter on political leadership. While initially thumbing through the book I wondered where this fit in the grand scheme. Graham focuses on political leadership, in terms of environmental activism. I liked his argument that both sides have a valid story and that one should always bargain hard for a true win-win scenario. He refers to earlier sections to outline strategies to deal with problems. As I read this chapter I felt that it all sounded too easy, whereas it is not. To the author's credit, he admits this.

One caution to the reader: Graham is an experienced leader and has taken the concept of leadership very seriously. It is perhaps his experience that makes this book almost too easy to read, thus increasing the potential for overconfidence in the reader. Most of us have had similar experiences following routes from a climbing guidebook written by a very skilled climber, then finding that the real challenges have been understated.

In reviewing Graham's work,. I aimed to be as critical as possible, using my experience to benchmark the concepts discussed. I found that for the most part the issues addressed by Graham reflected my own observation of failures and successes in leadership.

Should you buy this book? If you are an aspiring or accomplished club leader the answer is yes. Better still get the club or organization that you are with, to buy it for you.

Ken Larlee

Denali's West Buttress by Colby Coomb

The Mountaineers, Seattle

Denali's West Buttress (A Climber's guide to Mount McKinley's Classic Route) is a specialty book — designed solely to provide information and insight for a trip of Denali's West Buttress, or the Butt as it is fondly known.

At first glance this book is gentle on the eye with bold print and easy-to-read layout with plenty of white space. It has all the prerequisite chapter headings for a "how to" book — "before you go", history,

grading, ethics and climate — but it also comes with a few bonuses that made me keep on reading, such as history of rescues, lodging, ferries and driving information and even a few words on women's concerns.

Much like its brother publication, Surviving Denali by Jonathan Waterman, Denali's West Buttress is filled with a lot of detailed info: volumes of information on what to take, how to get there and how to get back in one piece. It comes stocked with the sobering pictures of dead climbers, rescues, bad weather and other pics to keep you second guessing that trip to Red Rocks. Despite the heavy stuff, Denali's West buttress is a lighter, less gory read with higher quantity and quality of information than Surviving Denali.

When reviewing this book it is hard to find fault with it. Its easy reading, detailed info and quality photographs make it sure to be the "bible" for the Buttress route. If I have one bone to pick, it is in Coombs' prose on climbing strategy. He would have been better off simply offering "further readings" and a disclaimer, instead of trying to educate the unknowing (especially since he mentions that the book is for the experienced instead of the amateur).

Overall, if it is quick, easy information you are after for your spring vacation, then this jam packed book is for you.

Brad Wrobleski

Wild Snow By Lou Dawson

The American Alpine Club

Having written the guide to the Colorado 14ers, Lou Dawson then set his sights on a more general book. Wild Snow is a combination history book and guidebook. In neither category is it the definitive authority, but it does give enough information in both categories to be a worthwhile addition to one's library.

The book is broken down geographically; it gives history information specific to the area and details selected trips in each area. A general history of developments in skiing is included in the first chapter. Lou's focus is on "glisse" skiing, which by his definition is ski descents from summits rather than general touring. This explains why tours such as the Wapta Traverse are not covered whereas Mount Gordon is. I would have expected a little more information on John Clarke's explorations in the Coast Ranges of B.C. While an argument could be made that John's trips are more "touring" than "glisse", he has made more first ascents on his trips than anyone alive (except perhaps Fred Beckey) — the suggestion being that for every ascent there is a corresponding descent. It was nice to see credit given to Don and Phyllis Munday for the pioneering work they did in the Mount Waddington area, a lot of which was done on skis.

The book is well illustrated with photographs, although there were some mislabelled photographs in the Canadian Rockies section. The caption of the photograph of the Jasper to Lake Louise group has Chic Scott and Charlie Locke reversed. The photograph of Mount Assiniboine is reversed.

The scope of this book is very ambitious. A complete book could be separately written on the history' of skiing as well as "Selected Ski Routes in North America". It looks like Wild Snow was rushed; consequently we are still waiting for the complete, definitive book on either topic. Criticisms aside, Lou Dawson has an approachable writing style which draws you into the book, and the tour details make you yearn to strap on the boards and get out there!

Rod Plasman

The Rocky Mountains, by Shiro Shirahata

Raincoast Books, Vancouver

This impressive, large-format book by famous Japanese photographer Shiro Shirahata presents a collection of dramatic, full-page images of the Canadian Rockies. Shirahata is renowned for his earlier big — and we're talking big — books on The Alps, Nepal Himalaya, and Karakoram: Mountains of Pakistan. He has also been involved with numerous other projects, including on his native country.

As Canmore resident Pat Morrow (an accomplished photographer himself) points out in the Afterword to this book, conveying a creative expression such as this requires time, patience and hard work. There are no captions —- perhaps because they would conflict with the photos — but in brief notes at the back of the book Shirahata describes in poetic terms the effort he puts into obtaining his pictures. There is no denying that he shows heightened commitment and dedication. For example, he makes many pre-dawn forays in the hope of witnessing promising sunrise lighting and moods.

Shirahata tallied 270 days in the Rockies on seven trips over three years. In that time he made some 35,000 exposures of over 300 peaks —meaning that he tripped the shutter on an alpine scene an average of 130 times per day! Out of that significant library, all taken with medium-format equipment, he chose 107 images for this book. Thus we are assured a compilation of superb compositions.

A brooding Mount Alberta at sunset, its summit wreathed in clouds, suggests the difficulties for alpinists. (As it happens, its first ascent was by a Japanese expedition in 1925; a seventy-fifth anniversary Japanese/ Canadian climb is set for the year 2000.) A two-page spread — one of many — represents well the vastness of the Columbia Icefield: dappled patches of shadow and sunlight on a vast glacial expanse, with glowing peaks on the horizon. Oft-photographed, Castle Mountain in Shirahata's eyes is a series of sheer buttresses soaring above swirling mist. The only offering from near Canmore is of sunrise alpenglow tingeing the north face of Mount Lougheed, seen above snow-draped Wind Ridge.

Most of Shirahata's work is with telephoto lenses zooming in on the textures and shapes of rock and ice. This approach registers the powerful, even forbidding aura of the peaks. The foreground is often, however, completely dark, so that the occasional photograph establishing context is welcome, be it of a clear turquoise lake, of golden subalpine larch trees or brilliant wildflowers. A good example is a gentle landscape with wild roses at the Vermilion Lakes, in which the mountains — those of the Fairholme Range in this case — play an uncharacteristically minor role. (From the same area, the shot of Mt. Rundle is a rare disappointment.)

Shirahata is known as a mountaineer, still active at over 60, and he did indeed travel through much rugged terrain to get many of these photos. However, following a highway accident in which he suffered serious injury, he used a helicopter for the first time in his work. This gave increased mobility and resulted in several unusual angles, albeit perspectives that most people cannot see.

There is one case in which the identifications of two photos have been confused; as well, there are several minor typos. Another caveat (at the risk of sounding like a skipping record, this being a pet peeve of the reviewer) is that this book once again lumps the Columbia Mountains in with the Rockies.

Fully 25 percent of the plates, and even the front cover on the dust jacket, are from well to the west. This seems especially odd when photos from some areas of the

Rockies, including Waterton Lakes National Park, Kananaskis Country and particularly the Northern. Rockies of B.C. (a large part of which recently received designation as a park) are missing or sorely lacking.

Why cannot the Rockies be the Rockies, and not have other ranges tacked on as so often happens? Maybe this was a decision of the publisher, but surely — as Shirahata and others show so well — there is plenty of material in the true Rockies without going farther afield. There have, after all, been books on other ranges, such as the Selkirks and the Bugaboos, that have felt no need to add on the Rockies.

That carping aside, this book is a beauty, a magnificent portfolio displaying the grandeur of the Rockies. Even the standard views that Shirahata accepted with reluctance have an evocative quality, a moving combination of the interplay of light and shadow that defines these Shining Mountains.

Mike Potter

Planning a Wilderness Trip in Canada and Alaska by Keith Morton

Rocky Mountain Books, 1997

Keith Morton's Planning a Wilderness Trip in Canada and Alaska represents a hybrid approach to outdoor guidebooks. It is neither geographically specific, beyond the obvious boundaries denned by the title, nor activity specific. Accordingly, it must be reviewed within this context — based on the understanding that while it encompasses a very sweeping breadth of information it is intended to be a resource book — not the source book.

Morton begins with a general physical overview of the many geographic regions within Canada and Alaska, and a concise compendium of their peculiarities. As with all general knowledge hooks, his is not a completely comprehensive planning guide. The book is intended instead as a reference and logistical planning aid. It offers many insights, suggestions and anecdotal references drawn from the author's considerable outdoor experience. In this light, there is something to be garnered by every reader.

It provides typical commentary on many, areas of interest that are usually left unaddressed in less thorough works. For example, it explores the ever-important intangible elements upon which any successful trip depend — personality dynamics, leadership approaches, cultural sensitivities and other issues of contention.

Complementing the author's anecdotal writing style are additional suggested readings within some topic areas. Interesting commentary is made on other topical subjects which are often neglected in more destination-specific guides. These include liability considerations, radio communications and licensing requirements, applications of GPS navigation equipment, and respect for indigenous archeological sites.

Morton's book is laced with a good selection of illustrative photographs which compliment accompanying text, and a varied sampling of inspiring eye candy. The book is well laid-out, highlighting issues and concerns as they gain pertinence in the planning process. It is a useful companion reference to be utilized by group trip leaders and individuals alike. It stimulates thought and encourages the reader to anticipate various contingencies.

Given its general nature and therefore broad application, any future edition of the book would benefit greatly from an appendix of additional reference books. Although reference to other books is made throughout, they are not listed as an appendix. Regardless, it must be noted that the author does include a source list for obtaining topographic maps and marine charts, as well as aerial and oblique photography products. This is potentially highly useful to those intending to venture into the more remote realms of North America. A list of provincial and state tourism departments and organizations maintaining backcountry huts and cabins is also included.

Marc Elrick

Obituaries

Rob Driscoll - 1962-1998

January 2, 1998. In a bowl high on Mount Woodbury in Kokanee Provincial Park, B.C., the snowpack suddenly gives way under the weight of the continuous heavy snowfall. A slab a metre thick and 300 metres wide starts to slide. Accelerating, it sweeps over a 200 metre cliff. Underneath, a party of experienced back country skiers are probably not even aware of the bowl above, due to the poor visibility. Reaching a speed of over 100 km/h, the avalanche takes less than 10 seconds to hit the party, engulfing them and drawing them a further 200 to 300 metres. When the snow settles, it has taken the lives of the six skiers. One of them was my close friend Rob Driscoll.

Rob started climbing in the late '70s as a Venturer in West Vancouver. The first few years of climbing were mostly self-taught with a few friends and characterized by trial and error. In 1981, still only 19 years old, he and fellow scout Ken Legg completed their first new route, a winter ascent of the North Couloir on Wedge Mountain in the Coast Range. Typically, this was a mistake, since they thought they were on a different route. A few months later he became reacquainted with Bruce Fairley, whom he had met four years earlier on a cross-Canada trip with his Venturers. Under the mentorship of Fairley, the mountain lifestyle quickly became an obsession for him. Later that year he and Fairley climbed Mount Queen Bess during an ACC camp. The next year the two of them climbed Mount Waddington. He is, after Fred Beckey, likely the youngest climber to have summited on EC's highest peak.

The Coast Range was Rob's backyard. He loved exploring and took every opportunity to investigate the more remote parts of these mountains. Over the years he put up many new routes, including the North Buttress of Wahoo Tower, which has become a bit of a classic. However, for him climbing quality was as least as important as racking up first ascents. He was also intrigued by mountaineering history and would usually know all about the first ascents of classic routes. He had perhaps an overly romantic view of old time climbing but for him tradition and style were very important. One of his favourite books was 50 Classic Climbs in North America; he has done at least 23 of those routes.

Rob's love of exploring led naturally to travel. In addition to the obligatory (for a

"trad"' climber) pilgrimages to Yosemite, Colorado and Utah, he was also intrigued by other cultures and loved going overseas. In South America, his climbs included Alpamayo and Huascaran. In Africa, he climbed Mount Kenya. And in Nepal, he and Mike White were the first North Americans to climb Jannu (7710m), a beautiful, remote, difficult and historic peak that had repulsed several strong American teams. At the other extreme, after an unsuccessful attempt that was hindered by incorrectly reading the tide tables, he was also able to add Siwash Rock (13m) in Vancouver's Stanley Park to his list of accomplishments. He was proud of all these climbs.

Wherever he went, Rob was quick to make friends. His sense of humour and unassuming manner made him very approachable, and people were quick to trust him. More importantly, he showed a very strong loyalty to his old friends, which allowed us to trust him completely.

In many ways Rob was a true mountain man. Climbing was perhaps the most important aspect of mountain life for him, but he also was proficient at and got much joy from other mountain activities including kayaking, paragliding, mountain biking and, of course, telemarking. He felt a responsibility to pass his knowledge on to others and spent a good portion of his time teaching, mostly informally but also in more structured situations.

Rob was also a very intelligent person. When he first went to UBC he wasn't sure where to go. He didn't do exceptionally well and ended up taking a year off to work in a meat-packing plant. This mindless work slapped some sense into him and he went back to university with a sense of direction, having been accepted into medical school. He graduated near the top of his class. Though he had to study hard for this, he managed to continue climbing, using his scholarship money to finance his climbing trips in the summers.

After finishing his studies, he chose to work in the mountains. He particularly loved the North, and spent many months working out of Iqaluit. In addition to exposing him to the Inuit people, whom he highly respected, this gave him an opportunity to do some climbing on Baffin. His climbs there included Mount Thor in very marginal conditions and a new route on Mount Menhir. While working in Iqaluit he met Dr. Carrie Fitzsimons, a pediatrician who was also doing a locum there. The chemistry was right, and Rob had reached that stage in his life where a lifelong companionship started to be desirable, no longer something to run away from.

The romance was put to the test when Rob got the opportunity to fulfill a long-time dream. He was asked to join an Everest expedition, most expenses paid. Rob was steeped in mountain history and for him no mountain had more history than Everest. From Carrie's perspective, however, this didn't seem like such a good thing. The massive Everest tragedies of May 1996 were in the news, and the trip would occur just after she had moved out West from Ontario. As it happened, the expedition wasn't able to find adequate financing and the two doctors settled in Nelson, where they quickly were accepted into the medical community.

Having bought a house together, the next step for the two was quick to follow. They went to Hawaii for a vacation (yeah, sure, Rob!) and, on December 5, 1997, were married on a beach in Maui. Part of the honeymoon was an after-Christmas ski trip to the Silver Spray cabin in Kokanee Park. Carrie was feeling tired and chose to stay in the hut that morning while the rest of the group went skiing. They never came back.

As all climbers know, the mountains can be dangerous. In many ways it is precisely this danger which gives the mountains their appeal to us. Rob was an experienced and cautious mountaineer. He and I have backed off almost as many climbs as we have accomplished. Yet that line between life and death, success and failure, is always blurry. I know for a fact that several times Rob and I stepped over that line and only survived by pure luck. Afterward, we would talk about it, both agreeing we had learned a lesson, but that it was worth every minute of it. As Reinhold Messner writes: "Anyone who is first and last a climber knows that he lives dangerously; even when he is not looking for danger, it can find him." On January 2, just married, Rob was certainly not looking for danger.

There are many aspects of Rob's being which I cannot adequately capture in this tribute. While an extremely competent mountaineer, he wasn't a superstar: he struggled up 5.11 and Grade 5 ice like the rest of us mortals. Yet his joy of life at the limits and his love of the mountains propelled him through an enviable mountaineering career. He had a quick wit and good sense of humour that allowed him to rapidly make friends and gain the trust of his patients (despite his unorthodox ponytail). He was a gentle man who was never mean-spirited, except in the face of bigotry and stupidity, neither of which he had any time for. He was totally loyal to those close to him; having him as a friend meant having someone you could completely trust. And his best friend was always his father, Mike, for whom he would always make time for a hiking trip. How can you not like someone like that?

Rob was a very close friend. If there is any consolation for me in his death, it is that my life has been greatly enriched by the times we spent together. I know many others feel the same way. Rather than looking forward to the future and seeing the holes his passing leaves, I must look back and envision how much emptier my life would have been if I hadn't had the privilege of knowing him. Farewell, Dr. D!

Bill Durtler

Art Twomey - 1944-1997

Art Twomey and four others were killed in a helicopter crash January 11, 1997, while on a flight to Ptarmigan Tours Ski Lodge in the southern Purcells. Three were students on an avalanche course that Art taught for the Canadian Avalanche Association every year.

In his self-penned resume in 1983 (the most recent auto-record we can find), Art described himself as a geologist, mountaineer, photographer and ski guide. This doesn't even come close to covering the multi-faceted character of a man who dedicated himself to the most arcane

pursuits engaged in by anyone who owns a post-office box in Ta Ta Creek, B.C. For the purpose of this journal, we'll stick to Art's climbing-related achievements.

Art placed a high value on freedom — freedom to explore his own backyard, and the world in general. And as a climber he was well equipped to let his curiosity propel him to the edges of the earth. Prior to his arrival in Canada in the late '60s, he honed his rock-climbing skills in several areas between Devil's Lake, Wisconsin, and Tucson, Arizona, and made an early ascent of Shiprock in New Mexico.

Art spent three seasons as a project leader for the U.S. Antarctic Research Program, focusing on the glacial geology of Victorialand. On the way to and from Antarctica, he stopped off to climb the rugged snow peaks of New Zealand, cementing friendships with Kiwis and an Aussie who went on to share first ascents in the Cordillera Vilcanota of Peru in 1974. These same hardcore teammates invited him to join them on the first Sherpa-less attempt on Everest in 1977. Art and the others made 16 carries each through the notorious Khumbu Icefall. They were turned back at the South Col and probably would have summitted had it not been for the atrocious weather that season. Closer to home, he snagged the first ascent of the east face of the Leaning Tower at the head of Fry Creek in the southern Purcells. And later, with one of his Leaning Tower partners, he climbed the north face of the Totem in what is now St. Mary's Alpine Park.

Summits alone weren't enough for Art. With his wife Margie, he made long forays through the mountains, using mules to carry their provisions. Their longest journey took a whole summer, following old horse-packer trails from the Royal Group at the head of the Palliser River to Mount Sir Alexander in the Rockies. Art's passion for the preservation of the natural world and his natural leadership abilities landed him a major role in mustering support for the creation of the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, and he was instrumental in helping to develop the high standards of the Canadian Avalanche Association.

Patrick Morrow

Damian Jensen - 1979-1997

Damian Jensen, 18, of Kamloops, B.C., died ice climbing in Maligne Canyon in Jasper on March 18, 1997. Damian had finished a climb, yelled "Secure" to his climbing partners and was then to meet them on top after cleaning the anchors. It is unknown what happened next, except that Damian let out a yell and fell twenty-five metres to the canyon floor. First aid was applied immediately but he never regained consciousness and was declared dead when a medical team arrived at the scene.

Damian had just celebrated his 18th birthday on March 5 and was looking forward to graduating that spring so that he could pursue his passion for the mountains full time. Introduced to the beauty of the mountains and all that it encompassed by his mother at a early age, Damian excelled in all parts of mountaineering. A gifted student, Damian that spring had decided to become an ACMG guide and was looking forward to the long but fulfilling journey ahead to accomplish such a goal.

Only 18, Damian was already an accomplished, well-rounded climber. A strong 5.12 sport climber, Damian had also trekked through the Himalaya, climbed numerous peaks throughout the Rockies, the Cariboos and Monashees. As a ski racer, Damian carried this passion into the back country, skiing all over British Colombia whenever he could get away from school in the winters. Damian's love for the rock was cemented in Jasper, where he would spend his summers climbing as much as possible. A highlight for him was a three-month climbing trip through out western United States with his older brother Shane and their long-time climbing partner David Marra.

Even though Damian was still in school, with support from his family, teachers and friends he was able to take time out to pursue his adventures and learned from an early age to embrace what life had to offer.

A beautiful young man, Damian had a certain way that attracted other people to him. He touched countless souls, young and old, and gifted as he was, always had time to help others. He had a passion and understanding for life far beyond that of most young men at his age. He once wrote: A great concern of mine is whether I will enjoy life to its fullest capacity. Cat Stevens said in his song 'Oh Very Young' that 'You are only dancing on this earth for a short time.' I feel that we must fully capitalize on this time, and experience everything we can during it. I will always have the fear of becoming too obsessed with the life of working as hard as one can to make one's first million, just to realize at the end, that there is no longer any time to enjoy it. I always try and make sure I have enough time to do what I really enjoy, and that I never am to busy with work to no longer do what I enjoy. I live my life always taking these concerns into consideration, and in doing so I live a much more fulfilled life. I constantly find myself pondering whether I will regret tomorrow the decisions that I make today, for fear of the repercussions that will limit me to a restricted life, and whether there will be enough light left to finish my climb.

Damian, wherever you may be, may there always be light.

Shane Jensen

Gwyn Lewis

A lovable, bright member of the Vancouver Section of the Alpine Club of Canada passed from our midst on November 4, 1996. Gwyn joined the ACC when she attended the Club's 1944 Summer Camp in Paradise Valley. She became a graduated member at that time with her climb of Mount Temple, led by a famous man of that era, linguist Dr. Ivor Richards, who endeared himself to Gwyn and other grads with a "sip" of rum at the summit. Gwyn said that she and the other grads were brought out of their lofty feeling of "Active" status at a meeting and chat the following day with Edward Feuz Sr. (much-loved Swiss Guide and guest of the Camp) during which he made the casual comment, while looking at Mount Temple: "Oh, I could lead a cow up there!" They all learned, too, that if they had ventured another 4 ft. onto the cornice at the summit they might have had a quick descent down the difficult side of the mountain; at times Temple is not as friendly a mountain as it appears.

Gwyn's happy, companionable and helpful attitude contributed to true joy for those who shared her presence at ACC camps in the Rockies (she and her sister Margo attended six camps) and on Vancouver Section trips and climbs. One could always count on returning with some prize "Gwyn one-liners or fantastic understatements".

With over a half-century of deep affection for Gwyn, her fellow ACCers send her their best vibes and bid her God speed to her "next Temple". To her loving sister Margo, our sincere thoughts.

Arnold Wexler - 1918-1997

Arnold Wexler died in his sleep Sunday evening, November 16, 1997, of brain cancer. He was 79. Arnold lived in a rarefied atmosphere — that of the research engineer at the National Institute of Standards and Technology and that of the mountain climber.

Arnold was born January 3, 1918, in Manhattan in New York City but spent his early childhood in the Catskills until his family returned to New York City. He received a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering from the City College of New York in 1940. In 1941, he joined the then National Bureau of Standards in Washington, DC to work in structural materials research and testing, eventually focusing on instrumentation and standards for measurement, primarily for determining the moisture content of gases.. During Word War II he tested climbing ropes and equipment so the military could undertake mountain operations.

He was one of a group of rock climbers that pioneered climbing in the Washington, D.C. area in the 1940s. Richard Leonard and Arnold made the first mathematical analysis of the forces on a falling climber, and on anchors, rope, and belayer. They created the idea of dynamic belaying — a progressive snubbing of the rope around the belayer's body to mitigate the shock on the system. At Carderock, a local climbing area, Arnold encouraged practicing dynamic belaying using "Oscar", a 150-pound dummy, who could be dropped to simulate a falling climber. The ability to do a dynamic belay help dissolve the prevailing ethic that the leader should never fall — because of the usual fatal consequences. With Arnold's design, the system need not fail. This was the first step towards today's new climbing ethic.

Even with a dynamic belay, Arnold was a cautious and competent climber. He pioneered routes at Seneca Rocks in West Virginia such as Simple J Malarkey (5.7) and Ye Gods and Little Fishes (5.8) — strong routes for 1953-4 in sneakers, driving pitons on sight.

Arnold climbed almost every summer either in the Canadian Rockies, the Interior Ranges or the Northwest Territories (at the Cirque of the Unclimbables, which his party named). There were also trips to the American Rockies, to the Alps in France and Italy, and to the Peruvian Andes. Altogether Arnold made well over 100 ascents, of which nearly 50 were first ascents. His most notable climb took place in the Selkirks in 1946 with Sterling Hendrick. The Hendricks party made their way through one of the most inaccessible regions of British Columbia to make the second ascent of Mount Sir Sanford, a major peak that had been first climbed 32 years previously. Many of Arnold's subsequent trips involved horrendous bushwhacks, ferrying loads on pack boards or in shapeless Army rucksacks — all to get into peaks which no one had ever climbed before. There was an excitement in this which is hard to come by now.

Arnold had an ever present curiosity about different ways of life and different cultures. It was only natural that he began folk dancing and went on several treks in Nepal, in Kashmir and Ladakh at the western end of the Himalayas and on less rugged trips to other remote corners of the world. Arnold was a gentle person, a patient teacher and a trusted climbing partner.

John Christian

Robin Rousseau - 1968-1997

Robin Reginald Rousseau was born in Edmonton, Alberta in March, 1968, the second child of Louise and Leonard Rousseau. He grew up and attended school there before moving to Lake Louise in 1988. Although Bob lived for a time in Field and Canmore, The Lake was his home. It was the place where he could always meet friends, where he returned every autumn to work at the ski area, where he discovered his enjoyment of the mountains while skiing, climbing and working.

An avid hill skier — especially during the 96/97 season — and ski tourer, Robin probably loved climbing the most. He liked to test himself on the crags and waterfalls, accomplishing leads on 5.11 rock and Grade 6 ice.

Mountaineering was also important. In 1995 he and Mike Verwey climbed the East Face of Mount Lefroy. This was one of the few ascents of this long route, by a difficult (albeit unplanned!) variation to avoid an area of rock-fall. Later in 1995 Robin and I made a trip to Nepal, where we climbed the East Ridge of Lobuje. During this time we talked often of the future. He wanted to continue his snow-safety career at least for a few years and also expressed an interest in guiding. Pursuing an engineering degree sometime in the future was also on the agenda.

After I left the Khumbu, Robin continued up the Hinku Valley and climbed Mera Peak, a straightforward but high summit. To cap this, he continued soloing over the Mingbo La back into the Khumbu. His Nepal trip was a fine effort, and displayed his maturing skills as a climber.

Soon after coming to Lake Louise, Robin started working as a ski patroller. He eventually worked his way to a Senior Patroller position, acting as an avalanche control team leader. During the 1996 summer season he also worked as a guide at the Banff Cadet Camp. Bob showed promise in his mountain career, especially in the technical aspects of avalanche forecasting. He also showed a keen interest in the instrumentation systems involved in snow safety work. I feel that with more experience he would have become a good practitioner of the trade.

On August 20, 1997, Robin and Mike Verwey attempted the Greenwood/Locke on the north face of Mount Temple. All went well until they were high on the route and discovered that the upper rocks were wet. They decided to retreat, and descended easily to the final snow gully. After a rest, they began downclimbing the low-angled, soft snow. Robin was facing out and somehow lost his footing. Despite an immediate attempt at self-arrest he was unable to stop and slid over cliffs near the bottom of the couloir. He was gone.

Robin and I had our moments of conflict, but now, months later, the thing I remember the most about him is that big, slightly goofy grin and his ability to have a good time whatever the situation. Climbing, skiing, working, partying — many of us did so much growing up together. How do you let go of that — how do you say goodbye? I'm finding this one hard. Bob, it seems like we had grown apart some in the last few months of your life but, on another level, I think we were becoming closer. I feel you close to me often.

Robin is survived by his parents Leonard and Louise, brother Leonard Jr., sisters Mireille and Mirianna, his dog Bo, and many other family members and friends in Edmonton and Lake Louise. We miss you, brother. Rest in Peace.

Mark Klassen

Roly Reader - 1930-1997

Roly's unexpected death on May 29, 1997, at the early age of 66 was a tragedy. Apart from reminding us that we don't stay here for ever, it forcibly reminds us that it was only his decision to quit work in 1990 that gave him a few years of retirement to wind up his affairs in the East, move back home to Alberta, start fixing up a property at Bragg Creek, and otherwise spend a lot of time climbing, skiing, backpacking, canoeing, sea kayaking and cycling. Roly became a downhill skier and started climbing while at UBC, then moved to Ottawa in 1962. He had some fishing buddies, but found less and less time to go fishing. From local maps he discovered some lakes that you couldn't drive to in those days. Schooner Lake proved to be a nice weekend canoe trip with a good climbing cliff on it, so it became an annual event. We both worked for Northern Telecom but in different areas. He was in radio and defence projects. Later he became famous for the notebook that recorded all the promises made by his staff as to when every job would be finished. They might forget, but he never did! He served them well — there was more than a grain of truth to the legend that everybody who worked for Roly eventually became a director, or worse!

On the hills our trajectories crossed, but it became clear that his abilities were still improving and mine weren't. On the 1967 Centennial Expedition to the Yukon that the ACC organized, Roly was assigned to the group that climbed Mount Ontario. He and I also arranged to be part of a six-person attempt on Mts Lucania and Steele after the centennial climbs. This trip proved to be more than eventful for Roly, who fell while skiing down from the first carry up the mountain, breaking one leg badly. Two of us looked after him in a tent while the other three climbed over 16,700' Mt Steele to find help. After more than a week of climbing and waiting, they lassoed a helicopter and Roly was evacuated to the ACC camp on the Steele glacier as the first stage of a journey home. In Whitehorse a couple of weeks later, I smuggled in to the hospital a few bottles of Old Vienna — his favourite "blue" — and he held up the front page of the Vancouver Province with "CLIMBER SURVIVES NINE DAYS IN SNOW CAVE". Evidently, in those days you could survive and still get two-inch headlines.

Once he could walk again, Roly started going out again to the Rockies, including quite a few ACC camps. After being the ACC recorder for Canadian accident reports, he took on the task of editing Accidents in North America jointly with the AAC counterpart, complete with editorial friction. This wasn't over American versus Canadian spelling — he couldn't see why an editor would want to demolish a concise, factual account from the victim or anyone else.

In 1973 and afterward, Roly took a very active part in several Ottawa/Montreal expeditions to the Eastern Arctic. Since these were team exploits, some background details may be in order. In 1973 the group's charter pilot successfully landed them on boulder-strewn gravel at Swiss Bay in Sam Ford Fjord, 120Km west of Clyde River on Baffin Island. In mostly good summer weather the party of twelve made 33 first ascents, four new routes, and ten other climbs. Roly did more than his share with six of the first ascents and two others. The first ascent of Castle Mountain began with a fjord journey of 17 km, wiggling an inflatable boat among massive blocks of sea ice that moved with the tide. In 1976, he and Ted Whalley went with several Americans to Mackinson Inlet on Ellesmere Island (another unique gravel landing) an inlet surrounded by mountains with no reports of any previous alpinism. Hindered once again by ice breakup on the fiord, they realized that midsummer was a time of access problems in the Arctic, and planned that next time they would go in May, with skis.

"Next time" was 1977 and Roly was again an active participant. Again the expedition was organized by Ted Whalley, this time jointly with Kevin O'Connell of Montreal. In 1979 Roly went again to Baffin. This time, Mike Frame with a lot of help built two 16-foot kommatiks in Ottawa, then the group rented two more kommatiks in Clyde River, and towed them behind snowmobiles to set up a skiing base camp at Ayr Lake, 60km west. Mike's kommatiks featured hard plastic runners and fetched good prices afterwards in Clyde River.

There were suggestions for a 1980 return to the Yukon with a ski ascent of Mt Logan. Eventually, there were just four of us, including Jim Whitteker and Peter Mix. Roly, who was taking a year off work, was anointed organizer and leader. You never saw so thorough a job. Starting with $10 polyethylene toboggans, he produced a scientific load carrier for each of us, with tracking runners, lightweight shafts, and a rope brake so you could actually stop and rest on your way uphill. (Well, yes, he admitted to copying the rope brake from his young nephews in Calgary. We then invented downhill rope brakes, operated by letting go of a string. The nephews would not have understood why anyone would want to go slowly downhill.) Thanks to Roly's logistics and acclimatization plan, once on the move the climb went so smoothly it was almost boring. Coming down, the snow — and our faces — were rotting away in the hot sun faster than we could travel. Two weeks earlier, aspiring Loganists unused to Ottawa winters (not us of course) were in risk of frostbite.

In between the events of the '70s, Roly went through the medical ordeal of a disc removal, and later had cataract operations on both eyes. This didn't keep him from leading hiking and canoeing trips for the Hostel Association. For ACC ski trips he worked out an ingenious ski traverse from the Pines to the Gangway via the Gap. He came up with some additional place names, including Nobodies Fault. (I'm sure he wouldn't want us to rename it Roly's Fault.) He joined Peter Mix and former Ottawan Vic DePaul on some major cycling trips, including the Rockies, the Dempster Highway to Inuvik, an Alaska trip, the Gulf Islands of BC, and the Olympic Peninsula. He did river trips by canoe, sea kayak trips on the BC coast, and backpacking endeavours such as the Gold Rush route over Chilkoot Pass. There were other high spots such as the well-deserved award of an ACC Silver Rope. Having arrived back in his home province of Alberta, he regularly climbed with the ACC "Grizzly Group".

In late December 1996, he felt unwell, but recovered after an operation for a brain tumour in January. By February his voice was back to its usual state of cheerful normality. But in May he had to cancel out of a planned canoe trip, and passed away within a week. We now realize that he won't be coming back to Ottawa for another visit; we know it's the end of an era for us. His sister in BC and his brother in Calgary are, like us, going to miss his modest and always friendly greeting.

Stan Rosenbaum

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Canadian Pacific Hotels Interpretive Guide Michael Vincent on the summit of Mount Lefroy in period gear during the re-creation of the first ascent, August 3, 1997

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