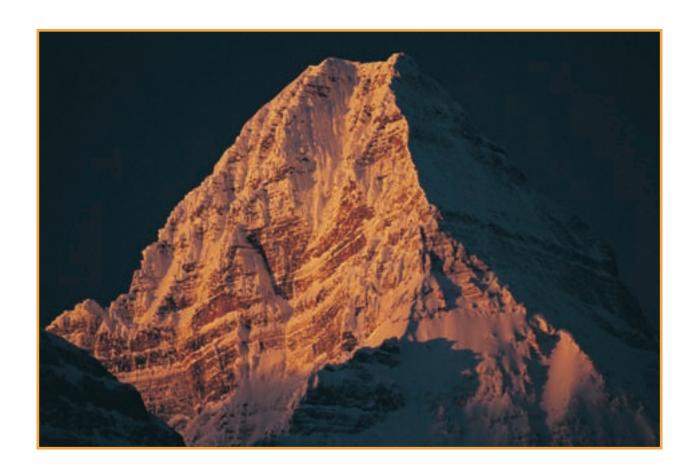


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EDITORIAL — WHY 2K?

A FEW WEEKS AGO a couple of old buggers — about my age — sat down at a nearby table in a Banff bar and started crying into rapidly multiplying beers about the sorry state of Canadian climbing. "When Greenwood quit," said the first, "that was it. No one like him since." "That's right," agreed the second, "though that Lauchlan boy gave it a good try." "A bloody shame, that," slurred the first. "To John!" he roared, obviously certain enough of his opinion to share with the rest of the bar. "To John and the end of Canadian climbing!" the second bellowed in echo. The end of Canadian climbing, fellas? Please. There are a couple of people from this year's CAJ I'd like you to meet. Climbers John would love to meet.

Every year that I've been editing the Journal I've seen evidence of the continuity of the great climbing in Canada — from Feuz to Foweraker, Poisson to Easton, Stutfield to Sanford, Englehard to Mitges, Bohren to Blanchard — and the swell of activity that I've been hearing about over the past few years suggests that we're witnessing a new golden age in hard Canadian climbing. While gyms and sheer numbers can give the boys in the bar an excuse for the pushing of standards on technical rock, there's also been a resurgence in the alpine world in Canada that easily matches the wonderful energy and exploratory spirit of Lauchlan's or Greenwood's time. While my beer-drinking pals were moaning that "all the great climbs" have been done and all the great walls pillaged, the contributors to the 2000 Journal were nailing on Baffin, skiing into the Kluane backcountry and breaking through devil's club in the Coast Range — and enjoying exactly the same novelty and solitude that Collie and his contemporaries were after.

The problem with this whole millennium thing (other than the fact that none of us climbed on New Year's Day this year out of fear that our ice screws might fail due to a Y2K bug) is that it encourages punctuation of the continuity in undeserved ways. We stop, looking backwards and forwards from a completely arbitrary point. From a Canadian climber's point of view, that arbitrariness is particularly evident: what, exactly, are we celebrating the climbing centennial/millennium of? Nothing of any particular climbing significance at all occurred in 1900, and probably even less so in 1000.

So, you'll see that there's little 2000 hoopla in this year's CAJ. Instead, we've begun the steps to make the year 2006, the centennial of the founding of the ACC, the CAJ's big year. It's our hope to have the funds in place by that time to print the Journal completely in colour. In the meantime, if you're still a committed 2000-phile, get out there and prove me wrong; climb yourself silly and make 2000 the best one yet for Canadian climbing. Then write it all up and send it in for the 2001 CAJ. That would be the real millennial journal, anyways — wouldn't it?

GEOFF POWTER

The opinions and information contained in the CAJ are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the positions of either the editor or the Alpine Club of Canada. While we attempt to check the articles for accuracy as best we can, it is not possible to do so authoritatively in all cases. Please use caution regarding ratings, route information, etc.

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, Macintosh or PC format, with a hard copy included. E-mail submissions are also welcome — try RTF format.

Submission deadline is January 15, 2001.

Photos are welcome, either as original slides or as 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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Front cover: Jany Mitges on Bionic Speedway, 5.13d, Old Baldy, ON. Mike Landkroon Inside front: Sunrise on Mount Assiniboine. Geoff Powter

Previous page: Matthias Jakob dwarfed by icefall near Mount Hislop, Coast Range. David E. Williams

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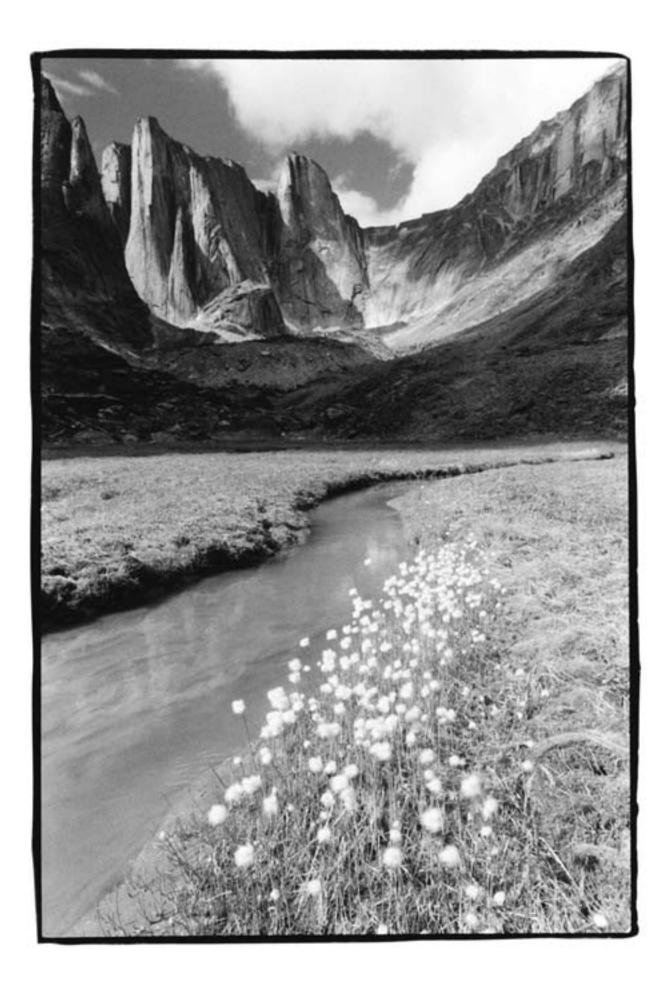
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the unplucked

"It's curious how a turn of events can change the nature of a trip. With a little perspective, the spotlight shifts from climbing walls to the unscripted details — the subtleties that give a trip character and colour, and eventually a feeling of success and fulfillment."

story and photos by andrew querner

"Ya think we got enough, man?"

I lunged for another brick. "One, two, three ... seven pounds of cheddar, three pounds of gouda and four pounds of havarti — think it's too much?"

"No, dude, it's on the list," Mike assured me. The list read like Julia Child's Y2K contingency plan: 10 pounds pepper salami, two litres virgin olive oil, six loaves Danish rye bread, one pint pure maple syrup, one bunch carrots, one bag onions, five pounds bannock, three packs brownies... Extravagant? Perhaps. Heavy? Like a freighter. But when it came to legendary free-climbs in the Great White North, we were purists and style meant everything.

With the collective grace of a high-school shot-put team, we threw the pigs — one full of food, the other gear — atop Rich's Tercel. When Rich was done, a mess of tattered climbing rope encircled the entire frame of the vehicle, simultaneously securing our load and shutting the doors permanently. We hugged Mike's girlfriend, Jen, goodbye, leapt through the windows, reset the odometer and then realized that the weight above had crumpled the roof like a soda can. A roof rack hadn't been in the budget. "Don't worry, man, we'll punch 'er out no problem — it's a Toyota!" Mile 0, Calgary, Alberta: let the Gong Show begin.

Six months earlier, Mike Henrichsen, Rich Cannings and I sat around the computer, which was patched into George Bell's Web site — essential surfing for anyone heading for the Cirque of the Unclimbables.

"Look at that, man — click right there," Mike directed. Pitch 12 of the Lotus Flower Tower popped up. "Whoa, dude, look at that crack... That's my pitch!"

"What? No way, man!" Understandably, Rich was quick to challenge. Double cracks, plumb vertical, split the soaring headwall, which looked as if it might topple over in the wind. More photos revealed our suspicions of a granite paradise — an alpine Yosemite free of roads, humans and telephones and probably containing several unclimbed gems.

Our ambitions required the services of air support — a detail that can decimate most budgets, ours especially. In the end, though, this sealed our commitment as we sent a postdated cheque to Warren Lafave at Kluane Airways for the flight from Finlayson Lake to Glacier Lake near the Cirque. Our plan was simple: climb the Flower and, if time and weather permitted, do a free ascent of Bustle Tower via the Isaac-Taylor route, Club International — to our knowledge, still unplucked.

Under the blackness of a moonless Yukon night, we approached the supposed turnoff to Finlayson Lake, two thousand kilometres north of Calgary. The narrow gravel road led to a clearing where the high beams illuminated some parked cars, a shack and stacks of fuel drums. "This

has to be it, guys," Rich hoped. "Let's sleep."

The following morning, we waited by the water, trusting that our ride would eventually show; after all, "Yukon time" demanded a little patience. After what seemed like hours, we welcomed the distant buzz of the prop with high-fives, hoots and hollers — as if we were going to be plucked from a deserted island, when in fact we hoped to be dropped off on one, more or less. Wes, our ace, cut the engine and taxied the vintage Beaver to the makeshift dock with a gentle nudge. The door swung open and he removed his headset, smiling wryly, teeth clenching a smoldering cigar. "So you boys wanna climb mountains, eh?"

A thickening blanket of cloud kept the ceiling low. On this day, there would be no flights into the Cirque. Instead, we made the short jaunt to Inconnu Lodge, Warren's labour of love and a fly fisherman's dream. Amid the rugged beauty of the Yukon wild, Inconnu brings together the contrasting worlds of the tubby, typically American, high-rollin' freshwater angler and the more elusive, polypropylene-clad, bottom-feeding climber. In between artfully prepared feasts at the cozy lodge, clients are flown to trout-rich lakes for some guaranteed catch-and-release. On a good day, with the right guide, every cast is a catch, some say.

Though initially de-psyched by the weather, we quickly realized our good fortune after being shown our deluxe quarters. Within the hour, we were sipping ice-cold bevvies, hand-delivered by Warren himself, in his lakeside Jacuzzi. "This expeditioning stuff isn't so bad," we toasted.

The next day, we rose to more drizzle and a low ceiling: "Looks like another day of feasting." Warren took the opportunity to volunteer us to assemble prefab lawn furniture. An hour later, we had managed to patch together a single chair; the distraction of clearing skies was like the incessant tug of an overeager leashed dog. Mike was the first to crack. "This is bullshit, man — it's sunny, we should be in the air!" Henrichsen did indeed have a point, and after one final meal we were on our way to our dream climb. We "rock-paper-scissored" for shotgun, our chosen decision maker throughout the trip. Warren bid us good luck and reminded us about our fuel stowed in the float. "You wouldn't be the first [morons] to forget."

Our slow but steady ascent took us over a landscape of high relief which prompted Wes to offer his geological insights. We literally sat on the edge of our seats, eagerly anticipating our first glimpse of the contact between the orange-y rock of the surrounding mountains and the dark granite anomaly of the Cirque. Mike, a student of geology himself, indulged Wes in his mountain-forming theories

Known to some as "the Red Viking", Mike is a



striking individual, his flamboyant red beard seemingly preceding the rest of him by two steps. His deep-rooted passion for the mountains shone through every time we met or talked on the phone. Constantly scheming, he would tirelessly tempt me with titillating ideas and places — from Baffin to India — the only prerequisites being alpine remoteness and, of course, granite.

I had met Rich only once —that evening at Mike's as we prematurely claimed pitches — but in the cramped confines of the Beaver, I already felt as if we were old buddies embarking on yet another great adventure.

Like a sentry standing proud on the brink of the Cirque, Harrison-Smith demanded respect. Wes buzzed its enormous 4000-foot south face, came about 180 degrees and floated down to Glacier Lake. We relieved the plane of its load, now an alarmingly tall mound on the beach. Mike's eyes illuminated just as Wes shoved off. "The fuel!" he blasted.

"Holy shit, the fuel!" I repeated. "That was a close one, dude."

"Yup, Team Gong Show has landed."

We mused at the disaster averted, thanked Mike and politely reminded Wes of our scheduled pickup later that month. The engine turned over, and the roar of takeoff faded to silence.

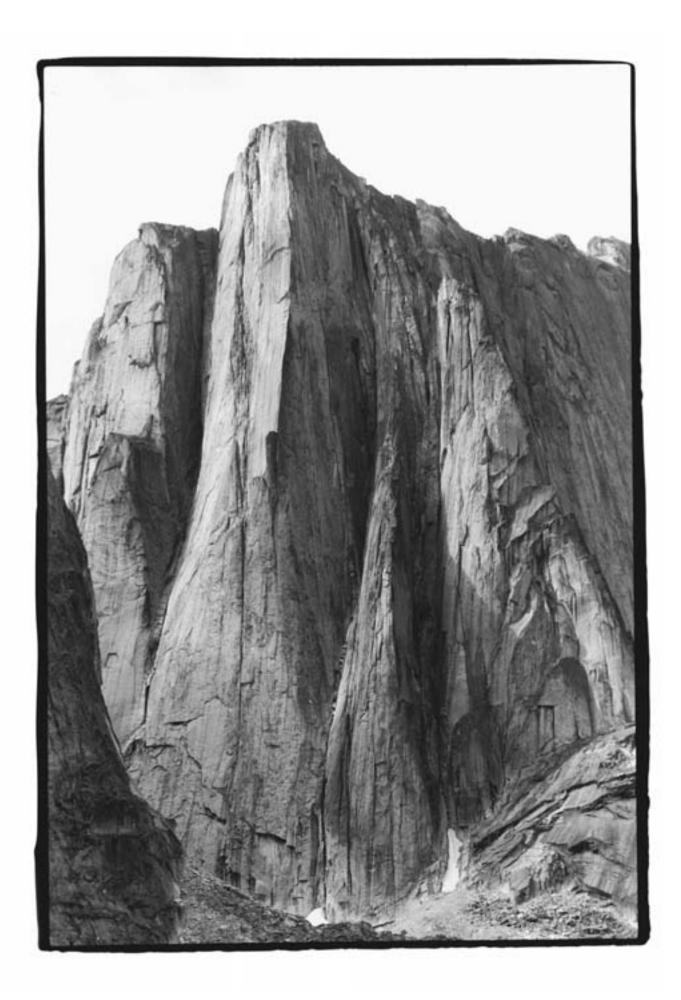
Our link to the outside world now a diminishing speck on the horizon, the gravity of the situation hit

home. We were on our own: alone, committed. So we set to work immediately. Rich pitched the tent, I located the food, and Mike rolled a cannon.

As expected, the next day was a test of muscle and nerve as we shouldered our supply of cheese and gear to the base of Harrison-Smith and its colossal, man-eating talus slope. Exhausted, we struggled to find a flat piece of real estate on which to erect the tent. Only weeks earlier a thick slab had peeled off and exploded on impact. The carnage lay in a three-kilometre-square wake. We passively acknowledged the exposure of our camp and lay our worked bodies in the shadow of this enormous rock.

Mike's alarm sounded, interrupting my deep, dreamless sleep. As if a fire had been lit under the tent, we burst into action and dismantled camp in a flurry of collapsing tent poles — our futile attempt to warm up. Only minutes later, beads of sweat rolled off the end of my nose as we navigated car-size talus. After four hellish, curse-ridden hours, the incline eased and rocks gave way to a storybook single track leading to Fairy Meadows. I forged a campsite, our home for the next two weeks, while Mike and Rich somehow found the energy to fetch a second load at the base of the talus.

Our first day in the meadows was warm and dry — a rare blessing, as we would learn soon enough. Somehow, between the dark, six-month winters, a lush oasis had



Months of visualizing blacked out as quickly as a light. On this day, gaining the summit had meant everything. I wondered vainly what I would tell people back home.

flourished, offering a thick organic carpet to our sore feet. As in a Japanese rock garden, groups of massive boulders lay in pleasing arrangements throughout the meadow. Crystals of perfect symmetry peppered the lichen-y walls to create a face climber's delight. From our perched camp, a blade of rock perhaps thirty metres tall beckoned. Shaped like a giant dorsal fin, this golden tongue of granite looked more as if it belonged on the back of some prehistoric whale. It smacked of aestheticism. Indeed, a line of brass-coloured bolts blended into its improbable face. Ironically, we had chosen to ferry everything but our climbing gear in our first two carries — classic Gong Show material. We scoped cool-looking boulder problems and climbed anything we could in our big boots. The gear would have to wait one more day.

Days of travelling had pumped our veins with an anticipatory serum. Carrying a bunch of rope, we made our way through the receding glaciers at the foot of the tower. Mike took the first lead, and before the rain began to fall we had fixed three pitches. We planned to gain the bivy ledge, the halfway mark, the following day.

"Fuckin' cocksucker, motherfucker... fuck!" Mike belted. "Damn jumars, they're faw-ked!" We watched from the top of the third pitch as one of Mike's ascenders failed to bite the rope. "I oughta throw these things off right now!" he steamed. Thankfully, though, a greater wisdom prevailed and he nursed the defective culprit slowly upward, spraying expletives the whole way.

The rest of the climbing was straightforward; most of the day was spent in the depths of a five-pitch chimney. We swapped positions leading, seconding, and jumaring alongside the uncooperative pig. Twilight saw us mantelling onto the ledge, where Steve, Jimmy, Guy and Jim, our new friends from Montana, received us warmly with offers of Jolly Ranchers. The entire population of the Cirque now sat on this small ledge, we joked. Essentially, it was the most expensive slumber party I'd ever been to. We flaked the ropes out on the edge of the 1200-foot abyss, crawled into our respective shelters and dozed.

Through a sliver of an opening in my bivy, I spied what appeared to be high cloud materializing in the south. However, this unearthly, glowing cirrus transformed itself faster than any jet stream. Then, as if on cue, the stratospheric enigma took form and whipped across the entire sky like a giant galactic curtain. I fell in and out of consciousness while green light bounced off the tombstone-like headwall above. After little sleep, I was to awake strangely rested — perhaps freshly charged

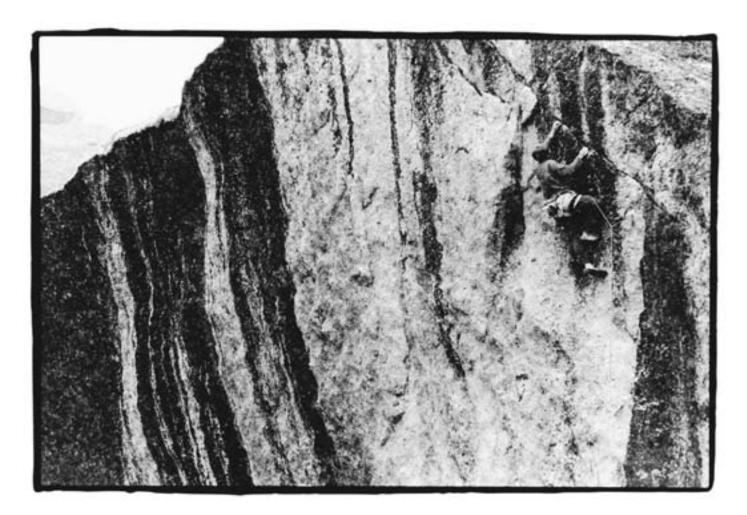
from the aurora borealis, my first dose ever.

The morning dawned crisp. The first rays hit the headwall several pitches above and slowly crept down, highlighting the climbing to come. Soon we were bathed in a shower of golden, loving light, the colourful bivy sacks appearing to glow from within. I snapped some photos and watched the skies towards Proboscis turn dark. Rain fell. Despite the shower, Jim led up the final dihedral below the straight-in cracks of the upper headwall. Steve offered to fix our lines, and we accepted willingly. Mike and Rich jugged the pitch while I waited below, the skies clearing all the while.

From within my shoulder blade, a foreign pain rippled through my back as I stretched the rope tight enough to leave the ledge. I cursed my carelessness; days earlier I had fallen off a boulder, my back taking a solid hit. As I ascended, the manageable pain grew into a sharp, piercing sensation that travelled up and down the length of my back. Then, as I strained to step up, something popped and a massive pressure was released, exploding in my ears. I knew immediately that I was finished. I arrived at the belay feeling no more useful than the pig we had dragged up the first nine pitches. My range of motion was limited, and any wrong movement had me gasping for air. In silence we exchanged glances, the words unnecessary or lost.

Months of visualizing blacked out as quickly as a light. On this day, gaining the summit had meant everything. I wondered vainly what I would tell people back home. In a sense, I was also at ease, relieved to be returning to terra firma, where things were safe and easy. It felt almost too good. Perhaps I simply lacked the conviction for this stuff. These thoughts were fleeting — born of the intensity of the moment, I hoped. Now, more than ever, Steve's earlier words resonated: "Climbing is like a lovehate relationship. You love it, you hate it... you love it, you hate it... and then you need therapy." Rich threaded the anchor and we agonizingly continued the rap, cobalt-blue skies overhead.

The following days proved to be laid-back. The Montana boys were ecstatic to have completed their climb and, in a thoughtful gesture, brought us each back a stone from the summit. Rain fell continually. Mike and Rich engaged in endless games of "speed" chess, their matches slowing progressively as the temperature dropped. My back was toast, and I languished in a state of T3-induced semi-consciousness. Snow began to fall, the mosquitoes disappeared, and an eerie silence



enveloped the meadows. Occasionally, we caught the tower peering down on us through a veil of patchy cloud, fresh snow sticking to its textured, weathered face. We reluctantly accepted that our window of opportunity had come and gone — our one chance to climb in the Unclimbables.

As we had goggled over photos in the dead of a Calgarian winter months earlier, it had never really occurred to us that we might not actually summit the Lotus Flower Tower. It's curious how a turn of events can change the nature of a trip. With a little perspective, the spotlight shifts from climbing walls to the unscripted details — the subtleties that give a trip character and colour, and eventually a feeling of success and fulfillment.

In our effort to climb remote alpine towers, we had pared our existence down to a beautiful simplicity, free of life's superficialities. In this light, the smallest of pleasures grew exponentially — the reassuring hum of the stove as it brewed the morning's first cup of java; endless conversations where we schemed about how to climb more and work less; affirming our friendly alliance with the Montana boys on the ledge; or simply wandering through the meadows amidst the vast silence of the mountains — these are the gems we plucked from the Cirque of the Unclimbables.

Once again we stood on the lake's edge beside our

tall mound of gear. Mike's ears perked up at the sound of the Beaver, its brown and yellow paint job a comforting sight. The plane loaded, we sat in peaceful contentment reflecting on the events of the past weeks and months. Mostly, though, we looked forward to the hot tub.

Wes' trained eye spotted a pair of moose far below. He banked the plane to give us a better view. The moose seemed oblivious to our mechanical intrusion and continued to graze indifferently.

"That sure is a sight, Wes," Mike observed.

"Beautiful animals," Wes' voice crackled back over our headsets.

Wes reserved a place in his heart for moose and for all the natural wonders that blanket the North. Similarly, he enjoyed sharing this world with southern folk like us and getting a buzz from watching our wide-eyed expressions. Summitting capped our dreams, but the process fuelled them. This he knew. By this simple virtue, Wes became a mirror of our own raw excitement. We could see our dreams in his eyes. To have a complete stranger who wasn't a climber see this world was like finding another one of those rare gems — a simple pleasure that only came to light after the car was on the road, headed for home. First ascents and summits escaped us, but we left feeling immensely satisfied, our pockets full of precious stones symbolic of friendships forged and of memorable adventure. Δ

LE MONT EDITH CAVELL

Miroir de sa face qui me révèle mes ténèbres Ou seulement l'éclat indécis de son abandon. Lave de séracs, ressac de larmes pétrifiées Au-dessus de ma tête comme la menace d'une faux Ou la promesse d'une brume matinale. Ange qui s'envole. Ange qui s'écrase. Sous le poids du roc. Sous un sceau de pierre. Un châle de neige a glissé sur une épaule D'une coquette trop frigide pour délier ses corniches. Et tout là-haut, suspendu, suspendu . . . Comme un ballot abandonné par un géant vagabond : Une larme. Une seule de ses larmes, Vitrifiée et blanchie. Crevassée et immobile. Une larme qui a glissé sur sa joue Et s'y est arrêtée. Qui a fait pleurer la montagne ? Qui a rendu Edith si triste, et moi, si translucide?

Angélique Prick





an introduction to Table 11 Garage

i was at home feasting on crab

with a bunch of friends when the phone rang. Sean Isaac. I had heard the name through the grapevine, but all I knew was that the guy lived in Canmore and had done walls with a couple of people in the room. Sean had snagged a small grant from the Canadian Himalayan Foundation to climb in Patagonia, but his partner had been obliged to step down at the last moment. Determined to continue with the expedition, Sean was calling around trying to round up a partner.

Several phone calls, one evening in Canmore and two months later, I was flying down to Santiago, Chile. Sean arrived the next day. We spent a day rifling through each other's equipment, reconfirming that we had sufficient gear and making sure that our climbing habits were mildly compatible. We came to the final decision that we would try the east face of Cerro Mascara, affectionately known as "the Mummer". This 800-metre face is the first large face on the west side of the remote Bader valley in the Torres del Paine park. The face had been attempted a few times by other parties, but without much luck.

IWO afternoons later, in Puerto Natales, a small town an hour from the Torres del Paine, our grocery bill was climbing much faster than we ever would on our route. We spent the better part of the evening packing and organizing the food. I was thankful Sean had done this sort of thing before; I would have been lost trying to buy 35 days of food in four hours.

Things came to a grinding halt when we were denied climbing permits for the park. It took nearly five days to get all the politics sorted out and to bring all our climbing gear to Camp Welsh, our basecamp.

My mother, Annemarie, had decided to join us for

the first week of our expedition, and she was blown away when we hiked up the valley to check out the Mummer and the buttress Sean and I would be attempting. We stood there looking up, dumbstruck — I was just as stunned as she was by the wall's size and blankness.

During the last few days before she left, my mom took a couple of tumbles on the difficult approach. I went back to Puerto Natales to accompany her out of the park and to determine what had happened to our climbing permit. I felt guilty sending my mom on her way with a huge swollen lip and a black eye, but except for the battle wounds, I think she had a good time.

Five days later, when we were finally ferrying the climbing gear up to basecamp, we learned what was behind all the hype about Patagonia. As the day progressed, the wind started building. Our last loads took double the time. We had to literally crawl along the scree slope so as to not be thrown down like rag dolls.

were self-sufficient and cut off from the outside. Camp Welsh, a small oasis of trees in a world of scree and enormous mountains, became our home for the next five weeks. It was a place that represented security and comfort, protected from the hostility of the area we were to stage our climb in.

On the sixth day after occupying basecamp, we started up the first pitch. It was good to be climbing again. I led out on a slabby face that offered meagre protection. It was a very strange experience to leave the ground on a free pitch carrying for pro' only pins and a battery-powered drill. Sean opted to clean the pitch the next day since we still had lots of work to do carrying loads up to the base of the route.

Orange slabs, a small pocket glacier and enormous packs dominated half of the next week. We put up one

words + pictures

conny ame unxen



Exfoliating slabs below "the Mummer" in the right background. The Magic Carpet Ride is marked.

fixed rope a day, slowly forcing our way up the wall. The climbing was very steep and thin and required direct aid almost entirely.

on the evening of january 25, we stumbled into advance basecamp at around 7 p.m., though one could have thought it was around noon because of the long summer light. We were bushed, but now, 17 days after first entering the park, our four static lines were fixed and all our equipment was in place for our final push.

The alarm went off at five-thirty the next morning; with a short exchange of sleepy grunts, we both agreed it was time for a day of rest — our first rest day since arriving in Chile. When we woke again four hours later, the weather had come in and we were surrounded by thick fog. The rain started shortly thereafter. We wasted the day away in bliss while it poured continuously.

In the evening, the storm finished as fast as it had started, revealing a beautiful sunset. The golden light bathing all the towers around us gave us an incredible surge of enthusiastic energy. We set about packing up and organizing ABC for the push.

We were up and packing by six-thirty the next morning. After the hike up to the base of the route, we loaded the haul bags with 42 litres of water, 10 days of food, snacks, personal stuff, a full kitchen (hanging), seven ropes, camping/sleeping equipment and, most

importantly, an industrial-size pack of baby wipes.

It was a long day of hauling. We alternated pitches. One person would haul two bags separately while the other would rap down and baby the pig on its way. Ten hours later, we had established Camp I 800 feet above the glacier. It was a very deceptive night — warm and calm. Sean slept under rather than in his sleeping bag, and our bivy sacs didn't come out of their stuff bags.

the fiext day started off slowly. We were awake by 6 a.m., but it was raining lightly and the wind had picked up a little. We decided to sit tight. At around 8 a.m. the rain eased and we got moving. I led off at around ten o'clock. The pitch started off pretty easily up the middle of three black corners. The rain slowed, and the sun came out as I started into the crux. Then the wind picked up. Scared I was going to be blown off my second hook, I quickly mashed in a 'head. After a quick test I moved delicately onto it, starting off the string of five or six. It was on that same 'head that I saw my first "brown-breasted shit hawk". Foul creatures. One 'beak followed the 'heads, and then it was up a 5.10 corner for 15 metres of A1.

During those last few metres, I noticed that the tent at advance basecamp had been blown down the moraine. When I looked down to point it out to Sean, I saw him wrestling with the portaledge. It too had been blown askew. Bracing myself so as not to be blown off my feet, I spent the next 45 minutes putting in a twobolt station. When I got down, we packed up the 'ledge and rappelled to the ground with our sleeping bags in our pack. We arrived at the remnants of the tent by 9 p.m.

The tent had rolled about 25 metres, shredding the fly and bending all the poles. Everything inside was covered with a vegetable-protein, powdered-milk and coconut-cookie paste. It had rolled through the small lake that had kept us company during our stay at advance basecamp. We spent the next two hours salvaging what we could. All our wallets, passports and documents were soaked. Luckily, all our film was dry. We got into our sleeping bags and had a cracker, cheese and oyster dinner. The stove too was ruined, so it was our first cold dinner.

we were up at 6 a.m. Again, we ate soggy crackers, cheese and oysters for breakfast. It was the only no-cook food we had left above basecamp. By 9 a.m., we had finished packing up the destroyed tent and had started up our fixed lines. The 'ledge was set up by 1:30 p.m. This time we got it right — we anchored it down a little more securely so the wind couldn't play havoc with it again.

The three pitches that followed were a little more tame, but our forward progress slowed as the weather started making decisions for us. Two full days were spent lying prone in the four-by-six-foot hanging tent as we waited out a storm. The alarm went off at six in the morning the first day. It was dead calm and dumping snow. A quick peek revealed half a foot of fresh on our haul bags. "Cold" was one of the words we exchanged in regard to the morning.

It was probably between -5 and -10 degrees Celsius. My journal for the morning captures the feel:

Back to sleep. Up at eight-thirty; snow; sleep. Up at nine-thirty; snow. We struggle out of our bags and cook up some soup and polenta (cornmeal). Then back to sleep. Up at noon. We have some cheese and I nibble on a small piece of chocolate. The highlight of the day is my venture to the far side of the camp. A mission with three purposes: 1. to collect snow for melting; 2. to find gas canister for melting the snow; 3. to defecate. Mission successful!

on many a morning we would be greeted by a blizzard inside the portaledge as the wind set aloft the condensa-



Sean back-cleaning at sunrise, Pitch 11.

tion that had frozen to the fly the night before.

Five days after returning to Camp I, we were on the move again. Pure agony is the best way to describe the haul days. The second move took us nearly 14 hours due to the lower-angle section through which we had to drag the bags.

We chose the site for Camp II purely on the basis of rockfall and comfort — absolutely spacing the fact that we had erected the 'ledge in the narrowest section of a natural wind tunnel. Our error quickly revealed itself. That night, one of the straps that anchored the bottom of the portaledge down (something you wouldn't dream of having to do on the Captain or the Chief) came loose. The resulting experience gave us our eventual name for the route: The Magic Carpet Ride. Our 'ledge, with both of us in it, was lifted by a tremendous updraft, and we

were afloat for what seemed like ages. After recovering from the immense shock, adrenaline and fear, we promptly cinched the portaledge down again, chuckled a little and tried unsuccessfully to go back to sleep.

offered more free-climbing opportunities. Our pace sped up slightly, which boosted our spirits somewhat. Motivation was quickly becoming a commodity that fluctuated drastically according to our dwindling food rations and the weather. By the fifth of February, we had three lines fixed above our second hanging camp and planned to push for the summit the next day.

The morning was calm and cold. We ate a bit of "goatmeal" and waited for some of the snow and ice to avalanche off the route. Sean started up his pitch, an A3 dihedral, at just past noon. Two hours and forty minutes later, I got the "Fixed!" call and started up. At four o'clock, I led out in rock shoes in search of the summit or at least the ridgeline. I ran out of rope ten metres from the ridge. I slapped in two nuts and two cams before yelling "Secure!" Lichen covered the rock. The winds bellowed over the ridgeline. The rock was cold and covered with patches of ice. Five more short pitches put us three metres below the summit — three metres we would have to leave unclimbed. Between the hurricane-strength winds and the lichen that covered the summit slab, it was not worth the risk. We had done what we had come for: we had climbed the east face.

As I turned to be lowered from the summit block, my watch read 7:33 p.m. Then down. Down. We reached our plastic boots at 8:30 p.m. Our feet were so cold from wearing the tiny rock shoes that it felt like trying to stuff lumps of wood into our boots. When we arrived at the 'ledge at around eleven-thirty, the wind started to pick up, tossing our hanging tent into the air and leaving us at the mercy of the slings connecting us to our anchor. A horrible thought passed through my mind: "What if one of them blows?" Sean pretended to sleep though he was wide awake. It was impossible to sleep in those conditions.

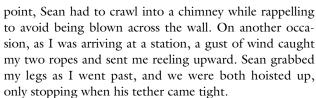
weather came in shortly after we reached camp. The first day, we were almost glad when we looked out and saw the wind howling and the snow falling. With little energy left, we welcomed the chance for a rest. The day proved far from restful, however. The winds were threatening to tear our shelter away from us. Our sleeping bags had been wet now for several days and were offering little relief from the bite of the now piercing cold. Our feet had gone numb during the night from the cold and the damp.

During the two days the storm lasted, our optimism was slowly stolen away. Our feet got all of our attention

now; we spent hours rubbing them, trying to get any sort of warmth and feeling back. The wind was relentless. When we were not tending to our feet it was because we were trying to keep the zippers of the portaledge fly from blowing apart.

After two days we decided we had to descend regardless of the weather. Our condition was only getting worse. That night, sleep having eluded us, we started the big pack-up at around 4:30 a.m. We left Camp II for a final time at around 9 a.m. on the morning of the 9th February, nearly two weeks after we had left the ground.

Tremendous winds and a blinding blizzard slowed our descent. At one



We reached the ground at around 7 p.m. Stumbling around on our lame and awkward legs, we quickly packed up the bags and headed down. A few hours later, exhausted, we were forced to crawl beneath a large stone and catch a few zee's. We arrived in basecamp at around three-thirty in the morning. Much to our relief, it was in the same condition as we had left it.

We woke up at around noon. Sean fired up some pancakes for breakfast. I was so sore I could barely move. My legs and lower back just throbbed. A bruise covered a third of my right butt cheek. I could only guess it was from one of the times the wind had thrown me to the ground. Raw knuckles and fingertips and a hundred little cuts hurt with every movement I made.





Sean jugging on summit day. Who needs coffee when you start the day this way?

Over the next six days, the damage we had done to our bodies revealed itself as we humped out loads. We were each suffering from mild frostbite and a minor case of trench foot. Sean seemed to be more affected by the injuries and at times had difficulties walking.

Nearly six weeks after we had started our whole adventure, we found ourselves back in Puerto Natales, where it had all begun. I was on the bus the next morning, en route to the airport. The plane was 30 minutes late boarding but still managed to leave on time. I got a great seat on the inland side at the front of the plane.

Until now the whole trip had been sort of a dream. Surreal almost. A story you read in Reader's Digest. The trip had gone by so fast. The fifteen days we had spent on the wall felt like three. All the loads we had ferried seemed less and less significant. It almost felt as if a

month had been spent with nothing to show for it — or, worse, with only frostbitten toes as a souvenir.

That whole train of thought changed about an hour later with a single sentence from the pilot. He announced "Estamos pasando sobre las Torres del Paine." I looked out my window and clear as a whistle saw Torre Norte, Central, Sur, Cerro Catedral, La Espada, Los Cuernos and, of course, Cerro Mascara. I was right on top of the Mummer ... Again! Was it worth it? Fuck'n' right! \triangle

Special thanks to the following for their support: the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, Sterling Ropes, Integral Designs, Powerbar, Ambler Mountain Works, Vertical Reality Climbing Gym and On-Sight Equipment.



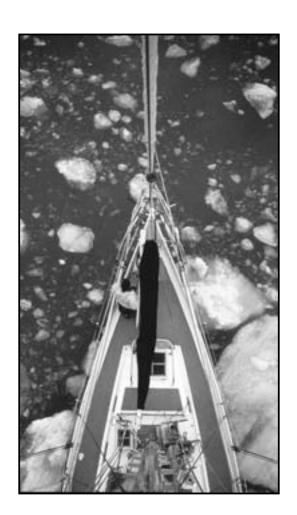


The margin of the Valerie Glacier. Photo: Dave Hildes





We were planning a marine-alpine marriage of a slightly larger scope than our usual weekend sojourn: north from Vancouver by sailboat and up the fabled Inside Passage, following the sea steps of Captain Vancouver himself in his search for the elusive Northwest Passage...



OUR DESTINATION was the not-quite-so-fabled town of Yakutat, Alaska, mostly known for its thriving commercial and guided fishing industry. Of more interest to us, Yakutat is a community poised on the edge of the St. Elias Mountains and ringed by the massive, piedmont Malaspina Glacier and by Mount St. Elias, Mount Augusta, Mount Vancouver, and Mount Cook, whose namesake was another great British explorer also seeking the Northwest Passage. He couldn't find it and therefore surmised it didn't exist. Never mind that he was in error; we still wanted to climb his mountain. Sixty kilometres from Yakutat lies Disenchantment Bay, where the Turner, Haenke, Valerie and Hubbard glaciers discharge their icy loads into the sea. Our goal: to ascend Northwest Cook, a 3687-metre unclimbed peak, from sea level and to proceed from its summit on a new highlevel traverse for the second ascent of the 4194-metre Mount Cook, then return by the original route climbed by Long, Kelley, McGowan, Miller and Mohling in July 1953.

There had been obstacles to our northern odyssey namely the lack of a vessel. When Alun Hubbard (our leader) initially conceived this scheme with our potential skipper late one night in the fall of 1998 over a few ales, the newly found captain's enthusiasm was substantially deeper than his pint glass. With fighting talk, he certainly wasn't going to be deterred by the arrival of his pregnant girlfriend's baby. However, when we caught up with him the following March, six weeks of non-stop crying and diapers had dampened his fervour for two crowded months with a pack of smelly climbers. What's more, he wasn't going to lend us his boat. The rest of the climbing team was made up of David Persson, with whom Alun and I had climbed in the St. Elias the previous summer, and Bertrand Eynard, a colleague and friend of David's. With time running short, we pulled every line, lead and shoelace trying to secure a watery passage and eventually decided to drive to Haines, Alaska, to find a boat there. Not quite the same as sailing from Vancouver, but in the end the spirit of the trip would be preserved.

Events were to quite precipitously change our perception of the task at hand, which had been to get north as quickly as possible before the brief St. Elias summer slipped by. Within days of our planned departure, David tragically fell to his death while attempting a telemark descent of Liberty Ridge on Mount Rainier. He had been a good friend, our strongest climber and an integral part of this project since its inception. We were left reeling — short of wits, short of an expedition member and unsure on which tack to proceed — and we needed some time to sort it through. In the end, we all came to the same verdict: action was the appropriate course to honour David's memory, and we wanted to continue with the climb.

The boat shortage ended abruptly as Gambo, the perfect vessel for our purposes, materialized in front of us (all because of the large Welsh dragon painted on her bow and many, many bottles of rum). Our new, 46-foot steel ketch was ready for the job, and we had found another climber in the form of Greg Brown, whose zeal for the project was inspiring and much needed. He had been home less than a week from a 31-day Mount Logan / Mount Augusta expedition but was easily convinced to quit a job (moreover, a decent-paying one!) and meet the Gambo crew in Prince Rupert. Casanova (Bertrand) needed to attend to his complicated love life and opted to fly to Yakutat, so we filled out the sailing crew with Chris Barnett and Toby Ross, both of whom we had met a few weeks prior in a pub — where all crucial expedition planning takes place. Chris was a sailor with many years of blue-water experience and to date had only lost a single boat, in a hurricane. This seemed reasonable (after a few pitchers), and he became our captain. On June 15, at the crack of noon and with a fine southerly wind blowing, Gambo most noisily and unpromptly slipped her moorings under her new guise as climber transportation. From the dock we did not veer to starboard to follow Howe Sound and the Sea to Sky Highway but forged straight ahead towards Alaska - Sea to Sky, St. Elias-style!

THERE WERE SOME MAGICAL IMAGES from Queen Charlotte Sound and Hecate Strait: walls of phosphorescence with green lines carved Zorro-style by a school of fish zipping close to the surface. We never discovered what type, despite Alun spending much of the witching hours with a crazed grin on his face and a reel in his hands. We met Greg at the fuel dock in Prince Rupert in the early morning of June 20 and loaded up with more bags, skis and ice axes and another guitar. And then we were five. After checking in through customs in Ketchikan, Alaska, we sailed up through Wrangell Narrows into Frederick Sound, where at last we had our first view of iceberg bits from the Le Conte Glacier at the head of the sound. A little further down, we were treated to an hour-long feeding frenzy of approximately seventy dolphins around the boat, followed by visitations of whale upon whale. Swinging north around the corner into Chatham Strait, we dipped our bodies into the wonderfully misnamed Baranoff "Warm" Springs (they were hot!). After turning west into Icy Strait and finally moving past Glacier Bay, with Icy Point off our bow (Icy, Glacier — the names were beginning to sound promising to a ship of mountaineers), we were finished with the Inside Passage and out in the open Pacific. On June 27, 270 kilometres north of Icy Strait, we arrived in Yakutat only one day after Bertrand had flown in; the team was reunited.

In the interest of expediency we left the next night,

after organizing a food-drop and reconnaissance flight, to cover the sixty kilometres to the toe of the Hubbard Glacier. The Valerie and Hubbard glaciers join a few kilometres upstream before both spewing out their ice into Disenchantment Bay through a long, large calving front. Praising our steel-hulled boat often and liberally, we pushed through the thick brash that we encountered at daybreak, directed by a crew member in the rigging seeking the path of least resistance. The morning sun warmed things up quickly; activity was high on the chaotic calving fronts of the Turner, Haenke and Hubbard, with rumblings and grumblings, and 'bergs breaking off every few minutes.

Nevertheless, several dinghy loads later we were all safely ashore by 8:30 a.m., with Chris and Toby sailing Gambo back to her berth at Yakutat.

LACK OF SLEEP COMBINED with carrying the rubber Zodiac and the motor and fuel to a suitable burying place shifted the entire team into low gear. It was a scene reminiscent of the poppy fields in The Wizard of Oz: halffull backpacks spitting out gear, with the packers strewn about the beach and snoring away. I wasn't having any of it, though; after recently seeing the new, touched-up version of the movie, a childhood flashback of those damn flying monkeys scared the living daylights out of me and I continued to bury the Zodiac, thinking "Lions and tigers and bears... Oh my!" I had just avoided treading in fresh grizzly scat, so bears were on my mind and I wondered about their cursed taste for rubber. The poppy effect wore off by midday, and soon we were trudging with our packs along the water. There couldn't have been a more sublime approach: the sun was shining as we ambled along a pleasant beach with the active toe of the Hubbard immediately to our right. Large bear tracks kept us moving for 10 hours until we could gain the moraine of the Valerie on the night of June 29, two weeks after leaving Vancouver.

By the next morning, the effects of an expedition's first day were taking hold. Breakfast conversation was as follows: Alun: "Bertrand, could you grab that piton?" Bertrand (defiantly): "In exchange for what?" But there was no need for bickering; as the sun went over the yardarm, we had reached continuous snow and could get out our crazy-carpet sleds — the best little mountaineering invention since crampons. The rest of the day was spent in high spirits as we worked our way up a corridor



At the toe of the Hubbard. Photo: Dave Hildes

of gentle snow between a Little Ice Age moraine to our left and an angry, crevassed margin to our right.

Under clear blue skies at midday on June 30, we eventually gained the Valerie through a maze of crevasses. The next three days were spent in the stunningly gorgeous Valerie basin, a continuous corridor of hanging glaciers and icefalls. The Valerie Glacier was heavily crevassed, and through each mosaic of slots we tiptoed across the one sketchy snow bridge that would deliver us to the other side; it felt like threading a needle. Fortunate and exhilarated, we reached the divide at the head of the Valerie late in the afternoon of July 2 — feeling also apprehensive about what a few weeks of melt would do to our return route. For the moment, however, we skied down the Seward to pick up the food cache and then continued another five kilometres across the U.S.A.-Canada border (duty-free!) to set up a basecamp at 1780 metres, close to the proposed ridge. Spirits were high; we had covered 25 kilometres of challenging ground and had finally reached the base of the climb.

With long midsummer days making the nights laughably bright, we decided to move during twilight to take advantage of harder snow conditions. After a few days' rest, we pared down our weight, packed six and a half days' reduced food rations, and left for the climb just before midnight on July 5. The climbing was moderate — mostly on poor, crusty snow and rotten ice, with the occasional chossy rock section. We set up camp at the base of a rocky ridge at 2100 metres and after lunch (quickly followed by dinner) we snoozed in the sun.

The following day, Bertrand's gut was giving him grief so he curled into a fetal position at every opportunity; impatient tugs on the rope elicited moans of "Please say we have the Immodium with us." Nevertheless, Alun and Greg led us up 600 metres to an elevation of 2700



Mount Cook, with the ascent and descent lines marked; "Mount Persson" is on the right. Photo: Dave Hildes

metres, where we enjoyed dinner as the warm sun started its daily routine on July 6 — this travel at night business had its advantages.

The summit was still another 900 metres higher, but the snow was firm and progress was quick on our third night. Bertrand led around, through and bellied his way over three sets of crevasses to reach the summit of Northwest Cook (3687 metres) at 5:45 a.m. on July 7, with clear skies and good views.

NEXT ON THE LIST was to follow the unclimbed ridge to Mount Cook that we had dubbed "Two Sphinx Ridge" because of some distinctly shaped cornices on the far end. We made good time through massive cornices on our fourth night and reached the notch, obviously the crux of the whole route, early in the morning of July 8. This was a turning point; continuing would make return via the ascent route difficult given the amount of food we had. After much hemming and hawing (limited by the fact that this is not a suitable activity for keeping oneself warm), we rappelled down and established ourselves in the notch. Sixty-five-degree ice led to a 35-metre section of steep rock blocks. Bertrand was wavering as to whether to go around the blocks or straight over them; he put a screw in at the bifurcation point, shouted to us

that he was going down, then proceeded straight up. Warmed by the rising sun, he put in a bold and inspired rock lead to regain the ridge proper, and by mid-afternoon we had dug in our camp beyond the notch. The earlier view we had enjoyed of two nunutaks sticking out of the mist on the Pacific side had been washed away by the rising clouds, and we wondered whether our good climbing weather was coming to an end.

With the increased elevation and the temperature drop, we switched to a daytime climbing routine and slept the fifth night. The morning saw us finish Two Sphinx Ridge by gaining a few hundred metres of elevation as we climbed over the backs of the sphinx-cornices in lessening visibility. There were 500 metres left to the summit, and it appeared as if the technical difficulties were over and done with; this was fortunate, as a whiteout quickly descended upon us. Between memory, GPS and our altimeter, we managed to locate ourselves right below the summit at 10:45 p.m. on July 9. However, it wasn't at all clear exactly which direction to take. We pressed on towards the nearest local maximum, and the going became quite difficult; we quickly decided it was too cold and windy to be flailing about with no visibility, so we went down behind the summit ridge to plan our next move. We could either wait a little for the winds to



On Northwest Cook, with Mount Cook proper in the background. Photo: Dave Hildes

subside or forget the summit and lose some elevation to get out of the strong summit winds.

This was the end of Day 5, food was low, and an unknown descent lay ahead of us. Alun strongly wanted to set up the tent where we were and wait it out. His argument prevailed, weighted heavily by the knowledge that we hadn't managed to summit yet. And we were so close! As we set up the tent, a faraway look came into Alun's eyes and he began to reminisce about his recent expedition in Patagonia. "Ah, this reminds me of the summit of Cerro Pared Norte. The storm lasted six days, and we had no food..." he spouted dreamily. The rest of us thought of reconsidering the decision to stay, but it was too late: Alun was excitedly unfolding tent poles in the screaming wind. "That was the storm when the tent got flattened by our collapsed wall!" he chirped. Nostalgia is a very powerful emotion.

After 15 hours of being buffeted by severe winds on the summit ridge, we saw a promising clear patch appear in the sky at 2:30 a.m. We celebrated by eating a full dinner ration at the end of our sixth night and emerged from the tent at 4 a.m., just before sunrise. Indeed, we had not been heading in quite the correct direction the previous day; the true summit was 200 metres the opposite way via an easy snow slope, so we jaunted up to a glorious sunrise on the summit of Mount Cook (4196)

metres) on July 10 and stepped into the U.S.A. once again. The sun rising behind Mount Vancouver shed its light on the incredible vista of Augusta, St. Elias and Logan as we had a celebratory shiver on the summit.

FOR THE NEXT THREE DAYS, we were frustrated by short weather windows, hunger and falls into crevasses (luckily, my ten-metre, upside-down excursion into a slot resulted in nothing worse than a delay). By 5 a.m. on July 13, we had crossed the border three more times and were back on the Seward Glacier, only a few kilometres from our basecamp at the foot of Northwest Cook (a.k.a. food). We had spent nine and a half days climbing Northwest Cook and Two Sphinx Ridge to Mount Cook and descending via the previously climbed north ridge.

On July 13, the weather was back to a solid highpressure system. We spent the day lazing around basecamp and eating. Bertrand and I went for a little ski to the knoll opposite Cook to get a view, managing to get some turns as we came down. Back at basecamp, it was apparent that the sense of relaxation that comes once a long period of stress is over was prevalent. Alun and Greg were crashed out, kit spread everywhere. With the comfort of warm sun, all tension eased from our minds; our bellies full, sleep seemed like the wise choice.

We left that night to return to the Valerie-Seward

divide (crossing the border) at daybreak on July 14. Unfortunately, the tenuous snow bridges that we had used to ascend the Valerie were much worse for wear due to two weeks of melt. We reluctantly turned and climbed back to the head of the Valerie. The conundrum was that if we didn't get back to our dingy we had no way of getting out aside from calling for a plane, which required line-of-sight vision for our hand-held VHF. This would only be achievable from the icefall at Point Glorious where the Seward joins the Malaspina Glacier, some fifty kilometres away. From there we suspected that contact was possible with Gulf Air Taxi planes doing their regular route to a logging camp in Icy Bay. Bertrand was in pain from some relics of frostbite on his feet and wasn't looking forward to a long march, therefore a split was in order: Alun, Greg and I would go light to Point Glorious (cross-border, cross-border) with a two-day supply of food and bivouac gear. Greg, coming from a cross-country-ski background, is a certified wax-head. With the thought of a fifty-kilometre flattish ski, he began to salivate heavily, lost no time in getting out his gear and started layering Swix Special Red vigorously on everyone's skis. Alun observed, somewhat anxiously, having a neophyte's suspicion of the art of waxing, but there is no stopping a frenzied Nordic skier armed with a cork. At 1:30 p.m., Greg was off at a loppet race pace with Alun and I breathlessly trying to catch up and Bertrand waving goodbye in comfortable booties as he kept guard over most of the gear and food, plus a selection of books.

By 11:30 p.m., we had been up for twenty-four hours and going hard for the previous ten as we were buffeted by katabatic winds through the weird landscapes of supraglacial lakes on the lower Seward. St. Elias, Augusta, Queen Mary, King George and the other side of Cook surrounded us; we were dead tired and savoured a superb bivy as the winds subsided and we had wonderful views through all points of the compass. July 15 dawned, and we surprised ourselves by making radio contact immediately upon climbing Point Glorious. Kurt Lawyer, a pilot for Gulf Air Taxi, was on his way within an hour, and then a second flight sent Kurt to where we had left Bertrand. By the end of the day, we were all back on Gambo celebrating with drinks and fresh halibut (compliments of some friendly fishermen).

Bertrand was due to fly back to Vancouver, and we had arranged for another crew member, Armel Castellan, to meet us in Yakutat; he had been awaiting our arrival. On July 16, after a quick change of personnel, Armel, Alun, Greg and I went back to the head of the Valerie and Hubbard glaciers to retrieve the dinghy, then out to the open ocean, where we stuck to the outside waters in the interest of making good time back to Vancouver.

Poseidon treated us well with favourable winds, and by July 20 we were coming into Dixon Entrance, crossing the border one last time into Canadian waters. The winds turned against us briefly in Hecate Strait, but we managed to make time for a dip on Hot Springs Island in the Queen Charlottes.

TILMAN WRITES THE FOLLOWING on motivation for ocean passages:

Each voyage had a purpose, frivolous though to many that purpose may seem. Rather than escaping from anything we were facing up to reality. As Belloc said: "Everywhere the sea is a teacher of truth. I am not sure that the best thing I find in sailing is not this salt of reality ..." There, sailing the sea, we play every part of life; control, direction, effort, fate; and there we can test ourselves and know our state.

Self-reliance within the bounds of forces larger than one-self is a common thread between sailing and mountaineering, making the transition from one to the other a natural. Sailing to and from a climb also offers an intermediary avenue connecting urban and mountain life — where existence is still focused on safely getting to where you want to go, but where there are some of the niceties of life that are absent on a climb. July 26: a clear, hot and unfortunately still day marked our return. After a quick pit stop at Wreck Beach to pick up some friends, we arrived back in Gambo's berth in False Creek. Moored safely again to a dock, the cycle was complete: Gambo had ushered our return to all the follies and wonders of an urban existence.

A heartfelt thanks to all those in Vancouver who helped in the last days before we set sail from Vancouver, to Dai Neale for his patience (and rum) in showing and telling us tales of Gambo's prowess, to Kurt and Leslie at Gulf Air Taxi for keeping an eye on us, and to all those at Yakutat who made our brief stay there such a laugh. We are most grateful to W.L. Gore's Tilman/Shipton Fund, the Mount Everest Foundation, the British Mountaineering Council and Malden Mills-Polartec Performance Challenge for financial support, and to Sierra Designs (Blackwater Designs, Canada) and Lowe Alpine (DayMen Outdoor) for equipment discounts.

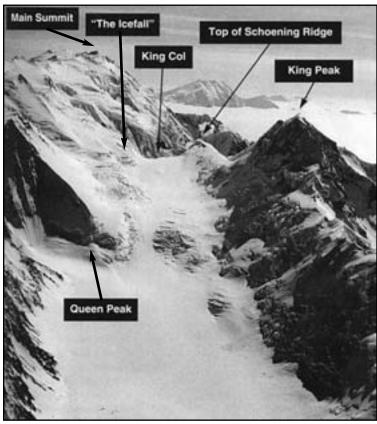
In memory of David and his love for the mountains, we have applied to have Northwest Cook named Mount Persson.

Mount Cook (unclimbed northwest ridge) via "Mount Persson" (Northwest Cook). Alaskan Grade 6. F.A.: Alun Hubbard (leader), Greg Brown, Bertrand Eynard, Dave Hildes.

oops!

Last year's feature mini-guide to Mount Logan contained a number of inaccuracies that were solely the responsibility of the editor. With apologies to the authors of the piece — and to anyone who ended up God-knows-where on the mountain as a result — we offer the following:

1. On Photo No. 4 (bottom of p. 26), the Main Peak of Logan was incorrectly identified as the "West Peak".

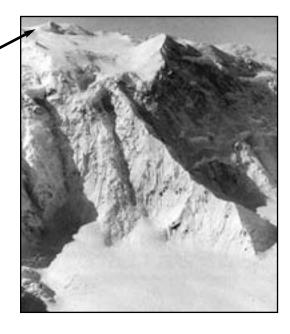


3. Photo No. 5 (top of p. 27) of the King Trench was incorrectly labelled and should have been marked as above.

- 2. The historical record contained a few inaccuracies:
- Five routes, not just the King Trench and the East Ridge, have seen repeat ascents, including a second ascent of the Centennial Ridge in 1981;
- The Catenary Ridge should have been graded alpine IV or V; it is, by consensus, definitely not grade III;
- The (1989) expedition described by the author as an Arctic Institute of North America trip was in fact an Environment Canada-bankrolled expedition.

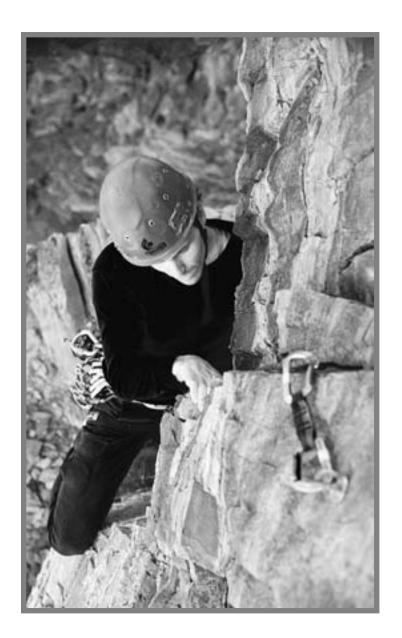
4. Photo No. 6 (the North Ridge): This peak in the upper left-hand corner should have been identified as AINA Peak.

AGAIN, apologies to parties steered wrong, and to the authors for having to endure unjust slander about their knowledge.



gallery of





inset:

chris robertson's hands after a battle with raw, 5.12, grassi lakes

loft.

howie hall on cardiac arete, 5.10d, the grand sentinel, near lake louise

facing page: andrew fitz-earle on nirvana, 5.13a, the great limestone crown,

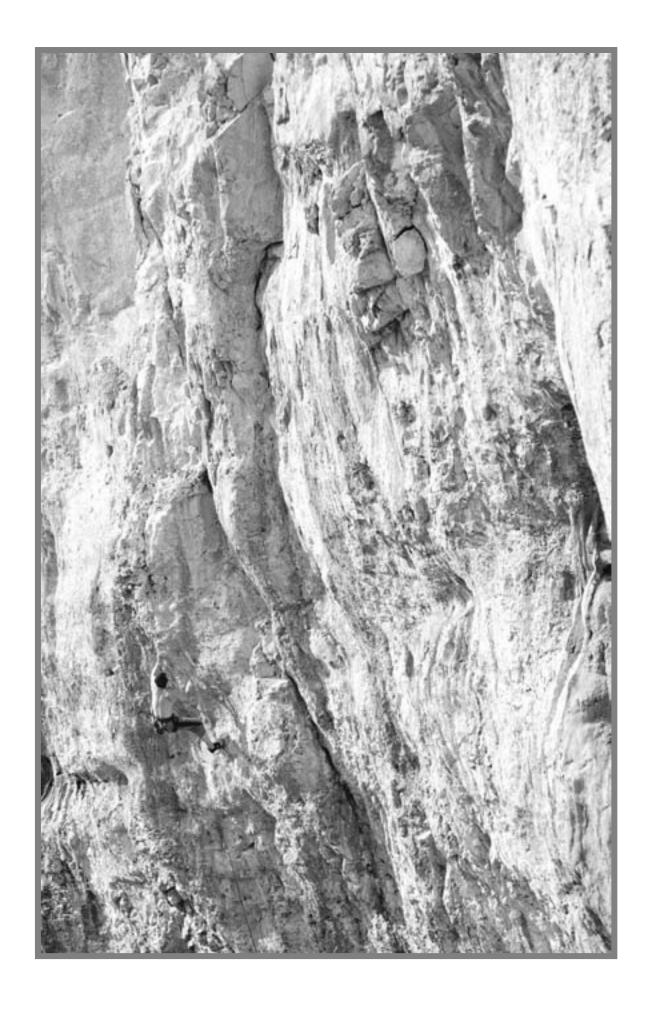
bataan, above canmore

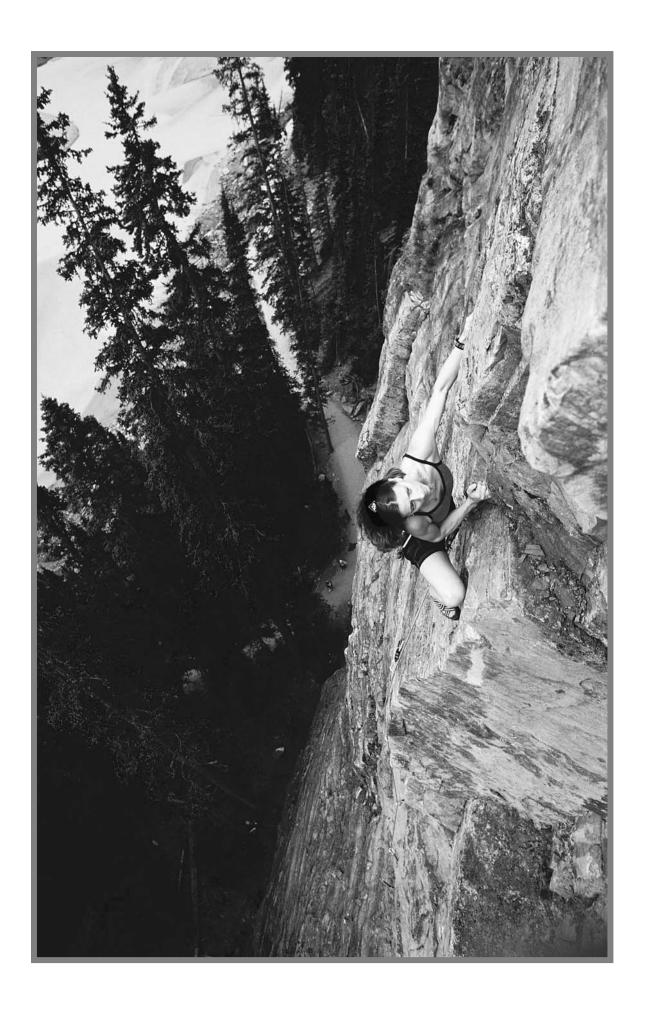
paga 09.

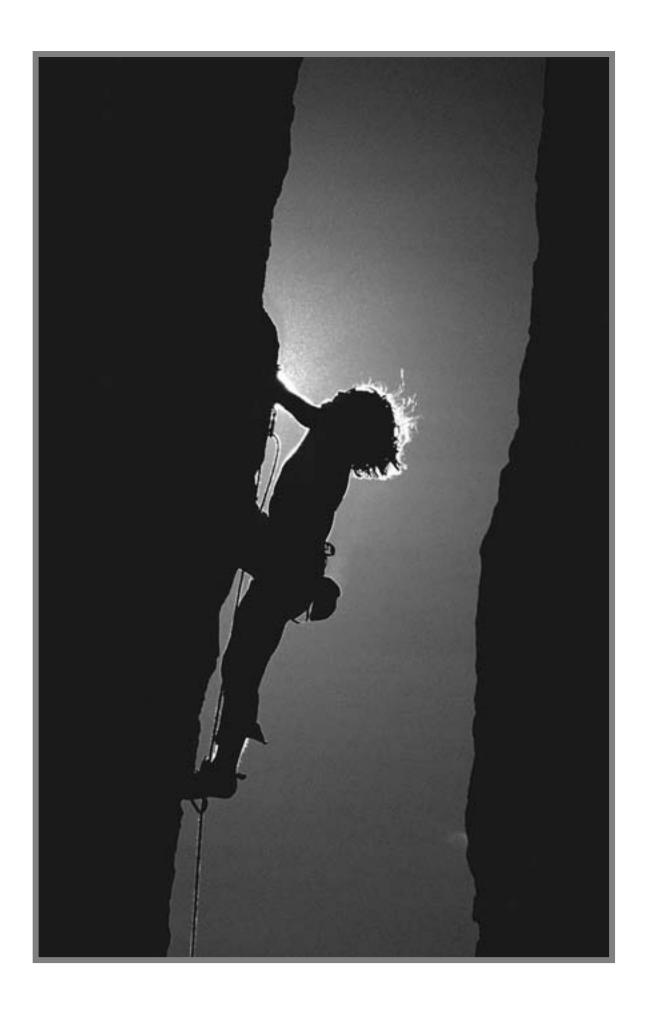
france gosselin on unnamed, 5.10b, the back of the lake, lake louise

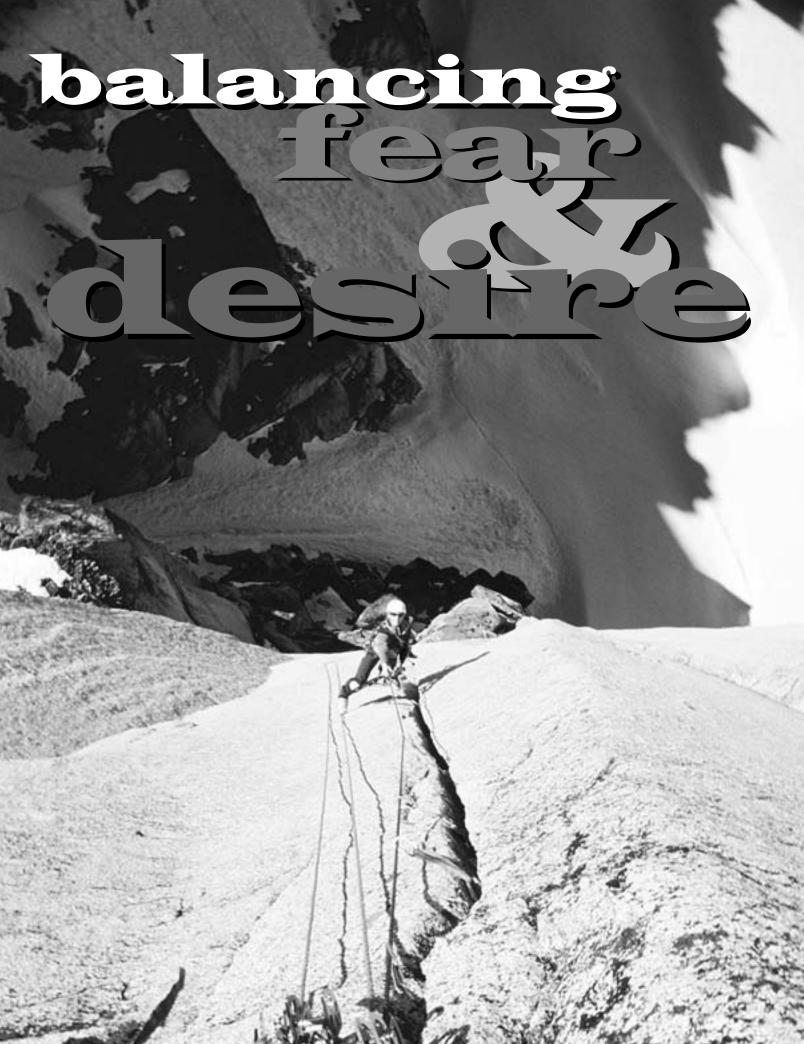
page 29:

sean elliot on blade runner, 5.12-, the ghost river valley











above: Jay Sell and Bobby Schultz contemplate the South Howser Minaret. Doubting the Millennium takes the middle line on the pillar, to the blank face at two-thirds height. opposite: Todd Offenbach soaks up the sunshine on Wide Awake, Southeast Pigeonfeather.

through the roaring wind. I don't know if my attempt at understatement is for my partner's benefit or my own. As if in a cartoon, my aiders blow sideways, slapping the wall, and the horizontal snow flickers in my headlamp, plastering me and the cliff white. "I can't believe I'm still moving up," I think to myself. The crack I am firing cams into diagonals into the blackness. I glance over my right shoulder; my belayer, stuck with the defunct headlamp, is no longer visible. Over my left shoulder, driving snow, swirling clouds and an occasional lightning flash are all too apparent.

Irritation dominates. Every minute, I'm breaking most of my rules about what is safe in rock climbing: we've got 1600 feet of rappelling to do, only one headlamp and no bivy gear, and it's midnight. Everything's eating at my sense of control and safety. "What a crock," is about my only semi-intelligent thought — that and the fact that the top of the unclimbed west face of the Bugaboos' Central Howser Tower is twenty feet away. I shake my head as I roll on, pulling the aiders out of the air to shove my foot in a stirrup. Bitter about the horrible weather and wallowing in misery, I wonder how many times I've been stormed on in my few years of climbing.

I struggle with a line of balance: to push it or to back off. I think about what Joseph Campbell says: "All human actions are governed by fear and desire." We experience this in our daily actions, but it is more powerfully manifested in climbing. Where do I find that line? How do I know when desire is too much? Is my fear wiser than my desire?

gazed at a slide show of the Bugaboos, my friend Todd informed me over five to six beers each that the Bugs were relatively dry and snow-free. Glaciers, yes, but we wouldn't even need crampons: we'd be travelling over talus and névé. He also explained fervently that there was still much unclimbed rock, including the west face of the Central Howser Tower — not a particularly giant piece of rock but supremely aesthetic, and the last major unclimbed feature in one of the more well-known alpine wall groups in North America.

Todd's slides were from two previous trips to the Bugaboos. He had recently moved to Tahoe from Maryland, and one of the first things he had spoken of when we began climbing and hanging out was these trips. Todd seduced me into spending July of 1999 in the Bugaboos with an image of the Southeast Peak of the Pigeonfeathers [so labelled in the Green-Benson Bugaboo guide], a giant blade of grey, black and gold granite with no routes on it. But the Central Howser Tower was Todd's real desire, and he subtly planted the seed for a route on this feature.

Knowing that there was a plethora of virgin cracks in the East Creek basin, we recruited two good friends and fellow beer connoisseurs, stocked up at Costco and made the all-day and -night drive from Tahoe to the Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) lodge at Canada's Bugaboo Provincial Park.

The 212 helicopter ferrying affluent blue-hairs in and away from these beautiful peaks surrounding us looked too good to pass up. We loaded our asses and gear onto





above: The Pigeonfeathers and the South Howser Tower and Minaret. Wide Awake soars up the foreground splitter.

the bird and, 24 hours and 15 minutes after leaving our doorsteps, found ourselves alone and gaping at the features of the South Howser Tower. Todd was speechless at first but soon babbling about how much snow there seemed to be. Jay and Bobby and I could only stare at the massive amounts of granite as we fumbled through the guide, trying to pick out which lines had been done.

The "big year" CMH had been talking about revealed itself as a 20-foot snowpack with no signs of letting up. I was to wonder where else in the northern hemisphere, at 45 degrees latitude and no more, one could possibly see such a pack and four feet of continuing fresh during the month of July.

Within an hour, while we were still giggling in our sleepless delirium, the notorious B.C. weather came rolling in from the northwest. Scrambling, we grabbed the snow shovels and dug ourselves bivy pits for our respective tents and the kitchen shelter.

Recovery from the road lag came easily as we sat out the next two days in a complete whiteout that deposited a foot of powder. During this time, Todd described how the boulder on which we were sitting was the 20-foothigh rock that he had bivied under on a previous trip.

The weather cleared the second evening for a ten-o'clock sunset. The next morning, we wished we had brought our skis instead of our climbing gear. Nevertheless, the skies were empty but for a deep blue and there was no wind. We split into two groups. Jay and Bobby marched the hundred yards out of camp to the

base of the South Howser Minaret to scope a supposed unclimbed line, while Todd and I negotiated avalanche hazard and knee-deep snow on our way over to the Southeast Peak of Pigeonfeather.

so good that our sunscreen wasn't up to the task (which turned out to be lucky, because the tubes were all but lost for the weeks that followed). Our faces and lips cracked and dried as we ferried loads across a mile of knee-deep snow. Our reconnaissance of the southeast Pigeonfeather, the feature that had lured me to the Bugs in the first place, proved that a route was feasible. We immediately began fixing.

The initial sixty-metre corner began, as we had hoped, at the very toe of the prow. The wide, shattered, dirty corner went mostly free, and French-free where it was wet with residual snow. The corner gained the immediate right, or south, side of the giant arête, depositing us on a snowy ledge. The broad south face of the 'Feather swept up and back, strong and sheer.

At the end of our second sixty metres, and our first day, we called it. Back at the base we decided to scope our intended line more thoroughly, so we hiked up to the Flattop-Pigeonfeather col. Turning, our jaws dropped as we realized the line on which we were poised. Just above the second fixed rope, the wall flattened, broadened, and kicked back to vertical. A single crack system soared through the gold granite for 800 feet, broken only by a double-roof system at mid-height.

Hoping the bail anchors we had discovered wouldn't show up any higher, Todd and I returned the following day to fix a line onto the wall proper. What we had anticipated would be a perfect hand crack was actually a perfect off-width. We pounded in an anchor and aimed to return rearmed with extra #4 Camalots.

e rested on the third sunny day, in no hurry since we believed summer to be a permanent fixture. We lolled shirtless for hours, napping and gazing at our surroundings. Continuous releases of snow and ice rumbled and echoed throughout the basin, captivating us. Above camp, our partners pushed more lines up the Minaret. The midday beers we cracked didn't help our mirth, or our odds on who would be pelted next by the ice breaking loose at the top of our hapless friends' route. That night, we packed up for the summit push, slogged once more to the base of the 'Feather and bivied for an early start.

We jumped on the lines at daybreak, about 4:30 a.m. I led the first wall pitch, leapfrogging #4s for a rope-stretching 60 metres and leaving the spare Camelot every sixty feet. Wishing I'd spent more time working the "big baby" in Indian Creek the month previous, I figured the pitch would go at 5.11+ off-width if I weren't standing in aiders. Three more beautiful sixty-metre pitches deposited me at the shoulder of the spire, and the top of the headwall. There was a knife-edged step to the summit, which proved impassable. The top of the spire here was from ten to twenty feet wide, bereft of

cracks. We rapped thirty feet down the opposite side to a snowy ledge at the base of a corner. I took us to the summit after another rope-stretcher, all free at 5.10.

Summit photos were snapped under one of our last still, blue days, and we walked off the back side. The Vowell Glacier literally sits flush with the top of the Southeast Peak, making the descent no more difficult than a stroll from the 18th hole at the local golf course.

The following day dawned to dark clouds and wind. I was a bit startled; my bluebird dream world appeared to have been just that. I brewed the daily coffee as Todd cracked the radio. He was flirting with the CMH radio



above: Todd shakes out.

operator again. She called for a few days of instability.

That night, I was glad to have a bomber tent when a full blizzard dropped a foot and a half of snow on camp. Todd had bivied out, spoiled by our lucky weather. In the wee hours, he found himself excavating his bivy sack from the drifted snow. Much later, fully layered, the four of us brewed tea and soup and saw the last of the whisky.

When the next day offered no improvement, we left camp to the weather and the mythical snafflehounds — large, bug-eyed rodents of Bugaboo infamy, supposedly capable of destroying vast quantities of gear — and broke trail over the Pigeon-Howser col. That evening the four of us languished in the Kain hut, which due to the copi-



above: Todd Offenbacher heads for the splitters on the Central Howser's first ascent.

ous snow still had no electricity, heat or running water.

Deciding to keep our momentum, we found ourselves laughing as we lounged among the soft, pasty tourists at Radium Hot Springs. Jay and Bob's 800 feet of fixed line seemed like a far-fetched story — draped in ice on some pillar in the middle of British Columbia, ninety miles down a dirt road and a five-hour hike in, it might as well have been in a foreign country.

We returned to the CMH lodge, our bellies full of BBQ'd steak and our packs resupplied with beer and Bushmills'. Our timing seemed fine as we made the

return slog to camp under partly cloudy skies. The mess tent was down, but everything appeared intact. We were happy to see that despite Todd's rants there was still no sign of the rampaging snaffle-hounds, who had by now inspired many a joke.

Todd and I were anxious to start a recon of the Central Howser Tower. We counted the days left and hoped the weather wouldn't subtract too many more. As a start, we hiked down to the base of the Beckey-Chouinard and back up the glacier to the base of the tower. The Central is suspended between the massive North and South towers like the back of an armchair. A seat of glacier lies in front of the Central a few hundred feet deep, then cascades two to three thousand feet to the Duncan River valley. On our return, we set an anchor roughly at the start of the Beckey-Chouinard and rapped 300 feet off the side of the ridge to the basin, saving us the hike down and around the foot of the ridge.

Meanwhile, Jay and Bob waited two more days for a shot at clear weather, then made a break for it. They rose at dawn and jumped on the fixed lines to reach their high point 800 feet up. They took the better part of the day to nail and hook their way up 600 feet of new ground. The two gained the "Southwest Pillar" route by evening and summitted via this line, another six pitches of free and aid, at approximately midnight. They rapped through the night,

enduring a stuck rope, and arrived at camp at 3 a.m. After having doubts that their route would get done at all, they dubbed it Doubting the Millennium (VI, 5.9 A3).

During our initial scoping of the Central Tower, our weak binoculars had revealed three possibilities. We selected the middle one — the steepest and most direct line. Over the next three wintry and unstable days, Todd and I fixed five cords up a line that we hoped would go. There was an unknown section near the top, where the systems appeared to blank out. Two parallel corners ran

above the blankness; as one was shallow and one acute, however, no cracks could be seen in either.

n the first two days, in marginal weather, we fixed the first three sixtymetre pitches, which followed a corner/chimney/gully system. This section would prove to be nothing more than the approach to the quality climbing that followed. In one more day we fixed another two sixty-metre pitches, now on the main wall and in bad weather. The clouds would roll in from the west and northwest and engulf us, reducing visibility to a few hundred feet and dropping a little snow.

As we descended on the last day of fixing, the weather deteriorated once again. We reached the cave near the base of the tower where we had stashed our gear. While it hailed outside, Todd and I hacked ice out of the base of the cave. Just as the hot food was ready, the clouds broke and we were treated to one of the most spectacular sunsets I've ever seen. From our box seat perched on the ridge adjacent the North Howser, we could see the ocean of B.C. mountains spread for miles. The opening of the shelter framed the blazing ten-o'clock light on the nearby peaks, and it was like looking at a movie screen. To the southwest, giant thunderclouds punched and expanded into the atmosphere, painted pink by the failing sun and highlighted like light bulbs by lightning flashing through them. To the northwest, a bright Venus shone above the wispy, roiling clouds.

The next day began clear and blue, the best-looking day in a week. It would be just enough to get us to the top — or nearly. And in the end, the only thing I would be able to think about would be going down.

The morning served it up right away. At 5 a.m., we jumped on the lines heading for the high point. Todd, in front and jugging the second fixed line, let out a frightened yell. Waiting for the rocks to come blasting down over me, I cringed into the corner. Nothing. I slowly looked up and could see only the line above me dancing on the rock. Todd was obscured in the corner.

"What the hell?" I called up.

Nervous babbling from my partner.

My heart still racing, I waited for a more coherent response.

"Holy fuck! The sheath on the rope tore! I just took a twenty-footer!" he called down, the energy in his voice clear. A tear in the sheath from previous fixing — three successive days of rapping and jumaring — had finally given in. The sheath had slid down the core for twenty to twenty-five feet, eventually bunching and stopping Todd's fall. First, he thought of his mother and how pissed she would be, then he struggled to figure out why he had just taken a whipper on his jumars, something that doesn't happen every day. He got it together, took

his GriGri, pinched the strands of the core together, batmanned up the twenty feet of exposed core to where he could re-establish his jumars, and jugged to the anchor.

Todd towed up the first fixed line with the defunct rope and headed on up. I came up the lines and at the top of the fourth line caught up to him as he was racking for the first lead. "Hey, man," I said, "are you alright? That was serious. You just tell me what's up, talk to me. If you don't feel good, I understand."

"No, I'm OK now. I'm ready — let's do this thing," Todd replied. He took off for the final high point as I shook my head.

The next lead would get us to the blank section. I hung on the wall, taking everything in. All the water drips were frozen black ice. The weather appeared clear, but the cold wind was constant and a few clouds swirled over the mountains in the distance. Todd's lead was another stretcher, involving some chimneying in double boots and a difficult pendulum.

I ascended the line and arrived at the belay; Todd had stretched the cord to the very base of the blank section. Sure enough, it was blank. We gazed at the rock for features, anything that would get me up to the underside of a large detached flake fifty feet above. We still couldn't tell which of the parallel corners above to go for. I set out with the drill in hand.

had been on bat hooks and rivets before — plenty in fact in Yosemite — but I had never drilled any. Now I strove to author as best I could a line to the flake. Drilling and enhancing tiny features, I creaked about on my hooks as the stabilizing pegs barely touched the wall. My shoulders just about blew out until I figured out I couldn't drill too high. A few hours of tension and fifty feet later, I reached the bottom of the flake.

I was glad to plug in a couple of cams, but even so I wasn't sure how solid the flake was since it was detached on one side entirely, a good four inches from the wall. Now, with two cams into the underside of this piece of rock, I wanted to get on top, but it was too tall. I took a free aider and swung at a horn on top of the flake. After three tries, my stirrup latched onto the horn. I climbed up tenuously. The angle of the cliff lay back slightly, and now I was closer to the two corners. I gambled and went for the right-hand one.

I gingerly fishhooked 15 feet across the most detached part of the flake, traversing back to directly above Todd. At the far end of the flake, I reached the shallow right-hand corner — and, boom, Al! I quickly plugged in some bomber nuts, glad to be off the flake. My next nut placement, however, blew out when I tested it. What?! I plugged in another nut and tested it, and it smacked me in the lip as I looked on, incredulous. I care-



fully gazed at the crack and the rock around it. Upon inspection, a hairline fracture a foot to the right of the crack formed a small finger of rock approximately six feet tall and a foot wide. I plugged in a cam and gradually tugged. The finger moved and slowly cracked. There was no way around it. It formed the border of the crack for the six feet above me.

"Goddamn, I'm still stuck here!" I called to Todd. As I looked back, the horizon now appeared grim, increasing the load on my ever-baking brain. "I have to cut this thing loose," I yelled.

Todd crouched into the belay a hundred feet below. I gradually pulled on the cam, and then with my hands grabbed the finger. As it tumbled out, the 250-pound block tipped to the right and I managed to get a good shove on it. Cantaloupe-sized rubble poured onto my lap as I pitched the block into space. It missed Todd by ten feet and exploded in the gully below, shattering and flying to the glacier. The crack was clear, and my pieces had held. I pressed on to the end of the rope and then pounded in an anchor bolt, six hours after starting.

Todd jugged up and jumped on lead. Would the corner go? He slowly worked his way up it, nailing and placing TCUs and RPs. I huddled in the corner, looking over my shoulder as I fumbled with my headlamp. Darkness was already approaching and the weather was looming. Our lack of bivy gear and the darkness pressed on my tired emotions. My headlamp was flickering.

The storm clouds seemed to be partnered with the darkness. Todd finished the corner as both closed in. I cleaned the corner blindly when I could not get my headlamp to stay on. At the belay, sheltered slightly by the corner and a mere fifty feet from the top, I wanted to be stoked. I wanted to be happy about Todd's survival of

the morning rope incident, about overcoming the blank section and about picking the right corner with a crack that would go. I couldn't.

I stepped around the corner for the final lead onto the diagonal summit crack. The massive summit block was blank straight above, and this crack out on the main face was the only way. The wind turned it on and the skies opened up.

So close. So close! I screamed in my head. The weather had done it again! Nearly at my wits' end, nearly at the top, I reached the end of the diagonal summit crack at around 1 a.m. It had suddenly turned vertical forty feet out from the belay. The crack glowed in my headlamp, plastered with ice and snow.

his can't be good!" I continue on against all the alarms going off in my head. As I finally reach the last twenty feet, I hear my partner, who is out of sight without a headlamp, yelling something about ribbons of light coming off the gear. The scales tip in favour of fear.

I struggle to keep my head together as I back-aid the nearly sideways fifty-foot pitch. My mind flashes back on the day. I am surprised we are even here. I keep telling myself, Zen, Zen — just be in the moment, just reach deep and keep it under control. But just how many times a day am I supposed to reach deep?

We bail — or try to. Little do I know that it is just beginning. Todd raps first with the headlamp. We reach the previous anchor, relieved to be going down but agonizing over not being able to stand on the summit. We aren't able to think about it much, however, as with the first tug the ropes are stuck. We struggle for a half-hour to an hour to move the ropes. I search the options. Wait

it out? Not an option in this storm at this hanging bela My fingerless gloves are already worthless. Wait for son help? Yeah, right. Nobody for miles even knows when the hell we are; this isn't back home in Yosemite. The only option is to get the damn rope. Meanwhile, one of the ropes has swung away, nabbed by the wind.

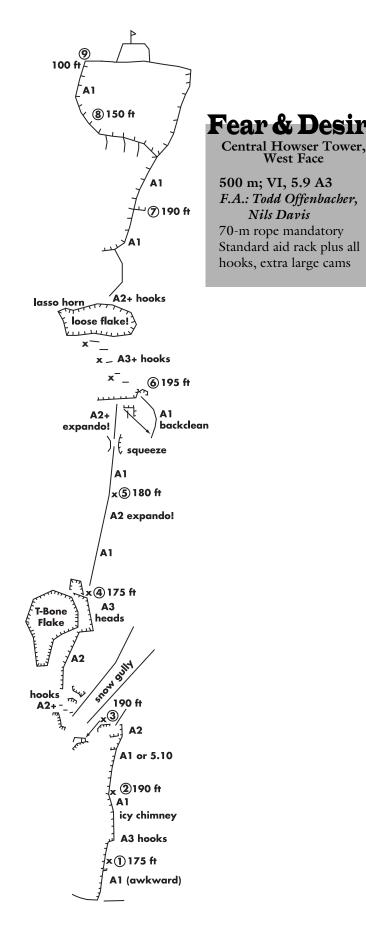
We make a deal. Todd raps on the change from the other rope and makes a thirty-foot pendulum to grab the rope swinging in the wind. He jumars back up, at whice time it is my time to fulfill the deal. I throw my juma onto the rope and start up. My tired, dehydrated, scare brain feels as if I am spinning the barrel in a game of Russian roulette. The blackness and wind pull at me from all directions. I gingerly move the jugs up with mexposed, frozen and cracked fingers, hoping not to sa the rope over some edge.

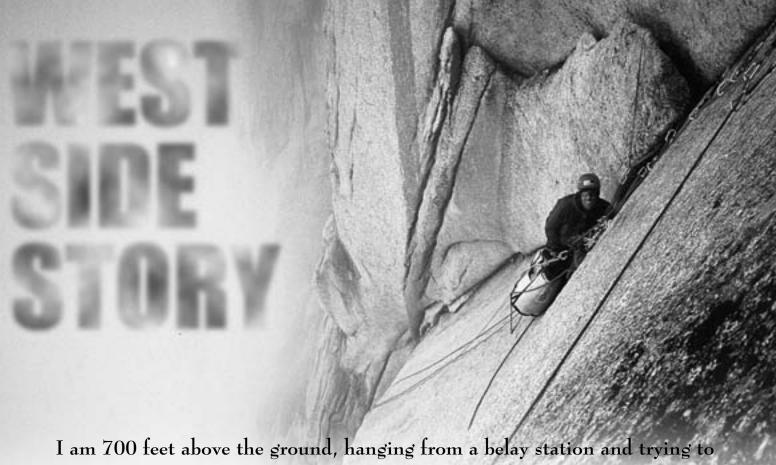
It takes what seems like hours to arrive at the ancho The ropes are fine. I thank a god I don't believe in an proceed to figure out what the hell the problem is. I hitc off to a new anchor I've built and pull the ropes closer t the edge of the sloping ledge we have been trying to pu them over. The ropes, twisted and wet, simply will no pull. I rap, untwisting them as I go. Back at the belathey come clean.

None of the rappels seem easy. Todd's back is goin out. The wind wreaks havoc with the ropes as we puthem. The cords become stuck twice more on the wadown, fortunately not permanently. At dawn, we react the top of our fixed lines. The wind has died a bit, an now the snow is only a drizzle. Some semblance of sanis seems to return. Facilitated by the lines already in place we soon find ourselves on the ground in a stunne euphoria, and we stumble down the glacier to our cave. We crawl into our bags as I attempt to work the stow with my split fingers in order to melt snow. We manage to drink some water and cook up the last meal befor crashing.

After waking, we ferry our gear back to basecamp the afternoon. Todd and I say little as we struggle over ou feelings of resignation and of failure to stand on the sun mit. I wrestle with my emotions. My desire has brougl me to the Bugs. My desire to be fully awake. I have travelled to Canada to climb unclimbed rock, to explore ne ground and to have fun in a beautiful, new place. What have found has made me reach a little deeper. I have hat to find a balance. I have looked to the real depths of my desire and motivation, to the depths of my fear. Ho badly did I want it? Perhaps not badly enough. At the to of the tower, I encountered the balance point — when desire pushed hard, but fear, or prudence, pushed harde Ironically, or paradoxically, both have made me feel alive

That night the storm sets in in earnest. We sit out the next day in full whiteout conditions. The helicopter able to fly the following morning. We pack our gear an load the chopper. I stare out the window at the cloud shrouded peaks as we fly to warmth, showers and ease.





I am 700 feet above the ground, hanging from a belay station and trying to keep my legs from cramping as my climbing harness digs into them. My partner is fifty metres above me wrestling with a thin aid crack. I am the dutiful belay slave: paying out rope, giving tension and organizing the haul bag. I am cold and hungry, but mostly I'm bored.

I have been at this hanging stance for six hours. Of all the emotions that a big wall can evoke — fear, excitement, exhilaration — I did not expect boredom. I am in the Bugaboos with my friend Sean Isaac, attempting to climb a new route on the west face of the Central Howser Tower.

I have had an interest in this face since my first visit to the Conrad Kain hut in the Bugaboos 15 years ago. On the wall of the hut were pictures of each spire with every route marked by a white dotted line. There was no route marked on the west face of the Central Howser Tower. When asked, other climbers replied vaguely about compactness of rock and no obvious weaknesses. My interest in doing a new route on this face was merely a dream then. I was only 19 years old, with just a handful of climbs under my belt.

The Howser massif comprises three distinct spires called the North, Central and South Howser towers. Collectively, they define the western edge of the Bugaboo group in the Purcell Mountains of British Columbia. Viewed from the summit of Bugaboo or Snowpatch Spire, the east aspect of the Howsers presents a three-spired massif that rises sharply out of the Vowel Glacier. Often snow-covered until late summer, these faces are overhung with cornices and guarded by a complex array of multi-tiered bergschrunds. The west side of this formation is even more spectacular. Here, immense granite walls rise dramatically up from the hanging valley of East Creek. Each summit possesses a myriad of sweeping buttresses and huge walls — all of them distinct, but all steep and forbidding.

BY BRIAN WEBSTER

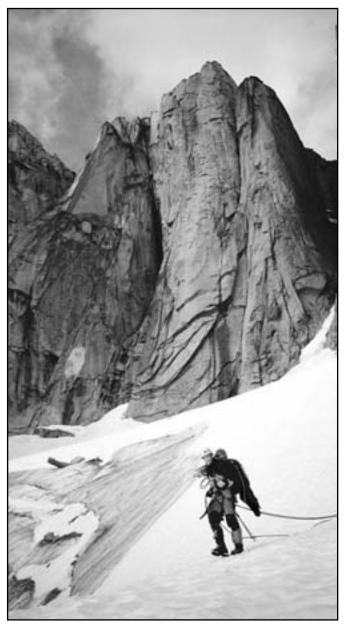
In the summer of 1960, Fred Beckey was one of the first climbers to explore the west side of the Howser towers and to see these immense granite monoliths, walls that he described as being comparable to the towers of Fitzroy and Cerro Torre in Patagonia. Beckey was not successful in climbing anything on his exploratory trip; however, he returned the following year with Yvon Chouinard and together they climbed the most prominent feature in the area, the ultraclassic west buttress of the South Howser Tower. The ascent of this incredible route, now a popular free-climb rated 5.10, marked the beginning of climbing on "the West Side".

In the years following Beckey's landmark discovery, new-route activity in this area centred on the west face of the North Howser. Here, routes with such swashbuckling names as The Warrior, The Seventh Rifle and All along the Watchtower each offer more than twenty pitches of spectacular free- and aid-climbing. The last five years have seen a mini-boom of activity. Every summer, new routes, newly freed aid pitches, and speed ascents have been documented in the hut register. Amidst all this activity, the west face of the Central Tower has remained surprisingly virgin. Admittedly, it is only half the height of both its neighbours; still, a 1500-foot unclimbed granite face would eventually capture the interest of the climbing world.

In the summer of 1997, Sean and I sought to solve this lingering problem. But, with too little gear and not enough time, we — like Beckey on his first visit here — left the Bugaboos disappointed. We swore each other to secrecy and promised to come back to this unclimbed face together. Not that this was really a big secret, since anyone staying at the Kain hut in the Bugaboos has access to the same photos that I did 15 years ago; nevertheless, this remained the last major unclimbed face in the Bugaboos, and we knew that sooner or later the word would get out.

In the summer of 1999, one week before our muchanticipated return to the west face of the Central Howser Tower, we heard through the grapevine that indeed the word was out. A group of climbers from Lake Tahoe had been in the Bugaboos with our face as one of their objectives. Some frantic phone calls and an impromptu meeting with these climbers in Canmore as they returned to the States confirmed that the wall had been climbed. Over a three-week period in July, during absolutely dismal weather, Todd Offenbacher and Nils Davis had climbed a route up the centre of the face, naming it Fear and Desire. We had missed out on the face, but we were assured that our proposed line was still unclimbed. Two days later, with light hearts and heavy packs, we made the all too familiar trek back to the mountain.

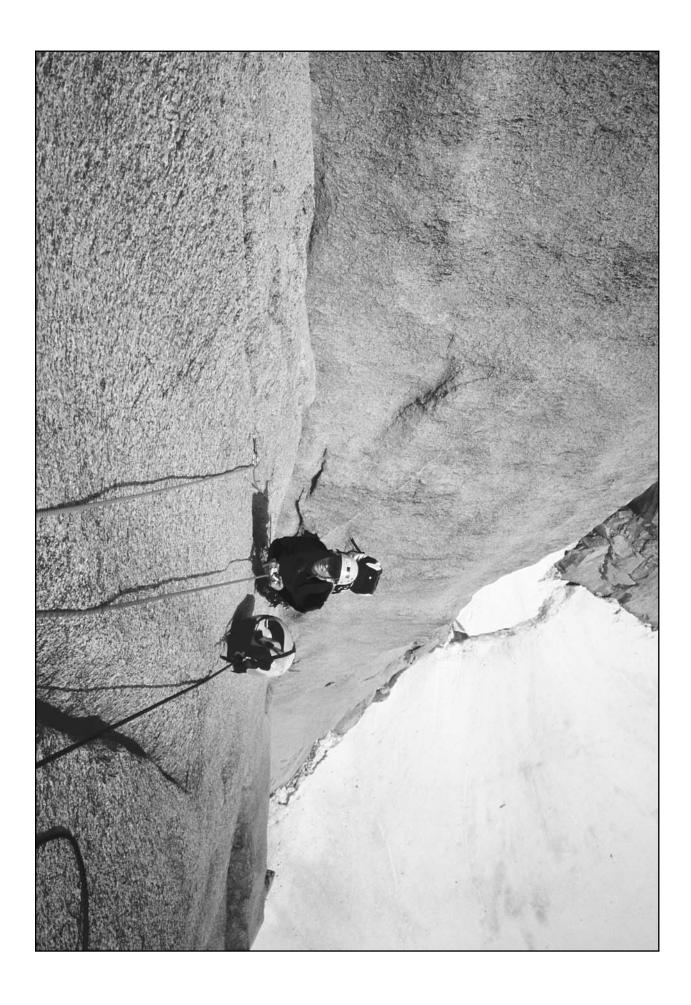
have never been on an unclimbed aid-route before, and I am amazed at how slowly we are moving. A pitch and a half per day! It was a long time ago,



The author below the Central Howser Tower. The route described in the previous article follows the central corner, then heads left onto the prominent face. The route in this article follows the corner in its entirety. Photo this page and opposite: Sean Isaac

but it seems that I moved faster on previous wall routes in the Valley. "But those were trade routes," Sean reminds me. "Nobody has been up here before. We're establishing our own anchors, cleaning the cracks and drilling our own rivets. That takes time!" There are no topos here, either; we have entered the unknown. It is an alien feeling for me to be in such a wild place with no idea what to expect over that next roof.

Our routine was established early in the climb. Once a pitch was started, it was that person's lead until it was finished. Since the climb mainly went straight up and there were no substantial ledges to





Opposite: Brian Webster cleaning Pitch 3; above: Jugging into the clouds. Photos: Sean Isaac

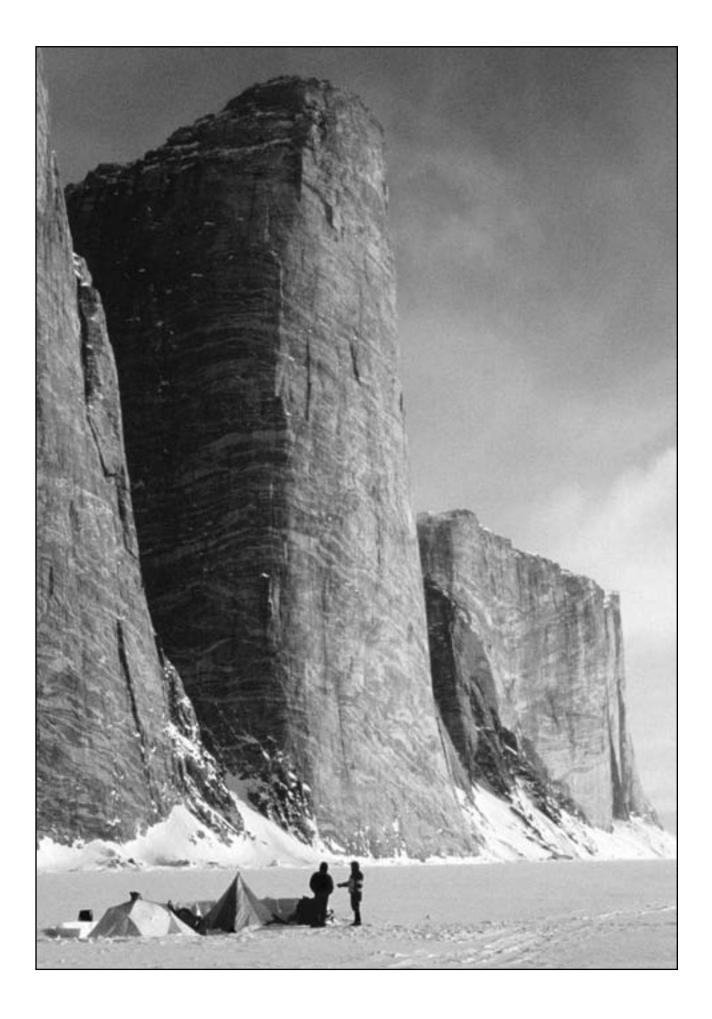
belay on, the end of the pitch was denoted when the leader ran out of rope. On the crux fifth pitch, it took seven hours for Sean to stretch out our 60-metre ropes. It was here that a huge detached flake was encountered. Not wanting to even breathe on it let alone climb it, Sean bypassed this feature by copperheading thin seams and riveting blank rock to the right of it. We called this feature the "Pillar of Despair" due to the incredible amount of energy it took to get past it without touching it. Once the anchor was made and the sacs hauled, a nice long rest awaited the leader, while the belayer cleaned the pitch and stretched out the next rope length.

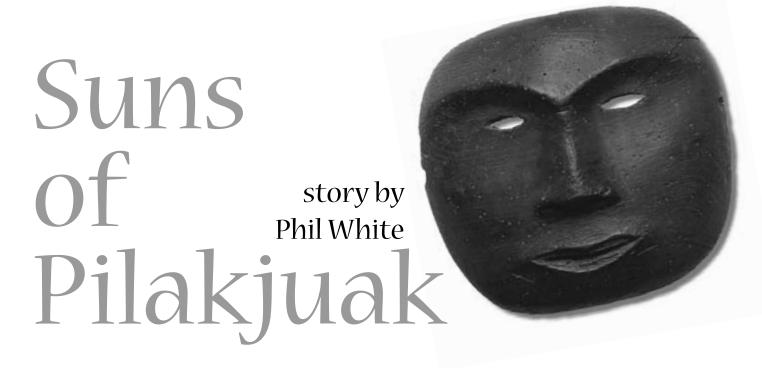
We decided to fix ropes and to sleep at the base of the route rather than spend nights on the wall. It was a decision based on our fear of getting electrocuted from the frequent thunderstorms that invade this area with alarming regularity and speed. The consequence of our fear was an ever-increasing jug session to get to the top of the ropes every morning. On the fifth day of climbing, the white line of fixed ropes seemed to stretch upward forever. After the marathon jumar, the next pitch led to the only ledge on the whole climb. It was a mere three feet long and one foot wide, but it was a welcome relief to actually stand on our feet rather than hang from our harnesses to belay.

One more pitch — a discontinuous, overhanging aid crack — led to the top of the face and easier ground above. With the delight of a couple of tricksters getting away with a grand joke, we continued up the easier south ridge towards the summit. But the mountains

played the biggest trick of all: half a pitch below the summit, menacing thunderheads sent us scurrying back down the route to our tent and to safety. The fear of getting electrocuted far outweighed our desire to stand on a summit. As the saying goes: "It's not the destination, but the journey..." And we did not want our memory of this journey up a new route on an "almost" unclimbed face in an absolutely incredible area to be marred by an avoidable epic. We named the route Chocolate Fudge Brownie after the most sought-after treat in a care package we had received earlier in the week from our friends working in Bugaboo Lodge.

Spending time in this area was like going through a time warp. We left the crowds of the more familiar world behind and entered a truly awesome place. No roads, no people, not even a clear-cut inching its way up from the valley floor. Just wilderness. I almost expected to see prehistoric birds soaring over the Gothic-looking spires that surrounded us. Sean and I spent eight days camping and climbing in this valley. We were surrounded by steep granite faces, big mountains and lots of wild country. We climbed a new route on a big peak and had a major adventure. All of this is only a two-hour drive and an eight-hour walk from Golden, the town where I live. Whether it is to hike, canoe, climb or just get away from it all, I guess this is why people (like Fred Beckey, and Todd and Nils) come to Canada, to our mountains. Let's keep them wild.





As the komatik gracefully slid to a halt, we stepped off the twenty-foot-long sled to greet some hunters on their way back to Clyde River. After a successful hunt, the komatiks are heavily laden with caribou and seal meat and pulled easily by dog teams with full bellies. The younger boys tended to their beasts while our guides, Illko and Lemecki, admired the hunters' good fortune. As we gulped tea and gnawed on raw hanks of caribou, the mighty Ship's Prow revealed itself to us for the first time. From ten miles away, its profile was as flawless and steep as we had heard. The closer we got to the monolith, the more it looked like a 2000-foot-tall icebreaker guarding the misty confluence of the Clark and Gibbs fjords.



It is April 30. Nunavut is now a territory, and we are on Baffin Island's east coast (twenty miles north of the 71st parallel) to climb the Ship's Prow on Scott Island. Tales of the formation the Inuit call "Pilakjuak" (pronounced Pil-uck-twa) have drifted around for the last few years. Climbers have passed by the island and shot photos on the way to other objectives, but until this year it has not seen any climbing activity. My partner, John Sedelmeyer, and I left a rainy Oregon Valley on April 23. We stuffed eight haul bags, one big shotgun and a case of stout into his truck for a drive across the country to catch our Arctic flight out of Ottawa. During the dual-prop air time from Iqaluit to Clyde River, I overheard my partner speaking with a woman who had met a team of climbers two weeks previously heading to Gibbs Fjord to climb "some big island". My initial feelings of mutinous treachery eased once I settled back and embraced the thought of neighbours out on the ice planet.



After saying farewell to the hunters and travelling a full day by komatik, we were finally dwarfed by the towering bulk of the wall looming above. We danced around and giggled on the edge of the monster's shadow. Through the bright Arctic glare, we spotted Mike Libecki's camp. He was soloing a line in a nice system around the corner from the Ship's Prow. We talked for a spell about polar bear sightings, rifles and our prospective routes. After some tea, John and I continued on with Illko and Lemecki into Clark Fjord to travel

far left: The Raven, Scott Island above: Inuit sun mask from Cape Dorset

around Sillem Island and explore the huge complex of formations in Gibbs Fjord.

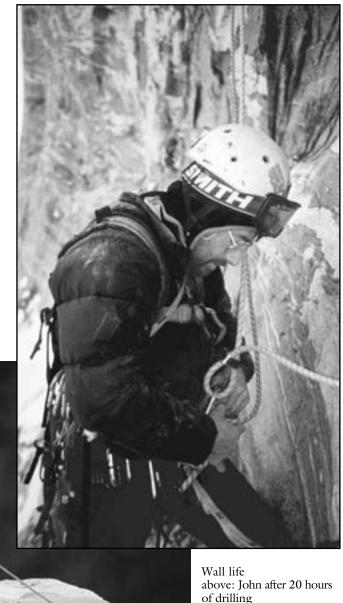
Four-thousand-foot-tall cathedrals of multi-tiered gneiss were everywhere — all beautiful, all unclimbed. This intimidating area holds the future for mountaineering and alpine-style ascents on Baffin. It soon became clear that our journey was more about seal hunting than rock hunting, as our guides zigzagged the komatiks across the fjords intuitively, from seal den to seal den. The Inuit are master hunters and the stoutest beings on earth; combined with good humour and kindness, their harmony with the elements is unequalled. As a storm blew in, we set up camp in a small inlet. By the time John and I had our scrappy two-man tent out, our new friends were inside their cozy, seventy-degree canvas palace with stew on and their feet up. Half an hour later, we were still out in the storm wrestling with the tent to secure it to the ice with primitive Abalakovs. Lemecki came out with 16-inch-long fence nails, hammered our domain into the sea ice and went back into his tent. We joined them for tea, and everybody had a good laugh about our greenness. The next day, we would begin the long journey back to Pilakjuak.

Barely surviving another full day's rodeo on the komatik, my cold toes were happy to be put into service getting basecamp dialled in front of the Ship's Prow. Our guides shared one more night with us, left a slab of caribou and some Arctic char, waved goodbye and meshed back into the frozen landscape.

After a day of Polar Navigation 101 and a lot of walking, we were at last plunging ice tools into a translucent blue dike that ran through a castle-sized iceberg shackled to the bay. Educated by that experience, we were ready to get off the deck, so we dragged some loads to the start of our route.

While John fiddled with the shotgun and a pile of gear at the base, I started up the first pitch. Thirty feet of Grade 3 sea ice eased into a straightforward A1 section, where I masterfully froze a carabiner to my lip before finishing at a good belay under a small roof. Our digits frozen, we called it a day. During the second pitch, I could hear John above me, grumbling about the major excavating and the A1- crusty bat hooks. After his battle with the "unfriendly" choss was over, we bailed for basecamp to rescope and rethink the route. If the first pitch was going to be the best rock on the route, we agreed that linking the wildly traversing upper sections in poor rock would be more work than play.

We grabbed some bartering goods along with the rifle



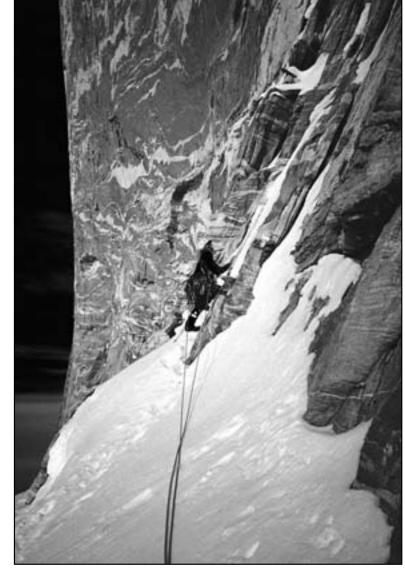
of drilling left: Phil leading Pitch 7

and split to our neighbour's place. Mike joined us, and our clan made the two-mile trek along the island and into the fjord to Jon Fox and Arron Silverman's camp. Originally a group of three, this team from Tahoe had been reduced to two after a day, and within a week would consist of Jon soloing. We sipped Scotch and played cards while the sun travelled around in a circle over the camp.

On our way home, we were floored by a wildly marbled formation. This 2000-foot wall was split plumb by an overhanging corner system that would soon become our new home. We got into basecamp, grabbed the rack and some rope, stuffed our packs with smoked ham and biscuits and headed back down to scope the cliff.

Forty-eight hours later, John and I had the ropes down off the Ship's Prow, the basecamp moved and the snow slope and free-climbing pitches fixed below the big corner that split the face. The entry pitch turned out to be a three-day battle of wills between my partner and some extremely high-quality choss. John tinkered and toiled on the "Harding Tribute Pitch" while I belayed on a one-butt-cheek ledge for three days in twenty-below temps. Having barely survived that grim session, I gladly took the lead. The third pitch turned out to be stellar, taking 'beaks, rurps, hooks and small 'heads up a shallow quartz seam. This A2+ pitch was a stretcher that finished under a huge black mica roof after 14 perfect knife blades. We descended back to camp for toe warming and a call to Beverly Illauq on the radio about incoming weather. Lying in the tent, I tried, unsuccessfully, to get some sleep in the midnight sun. John, with the efficiency of a mother chimp, proceeded to scrape all the junk out of his hair and shake it on me. We needed to get out of basecamp - soon!

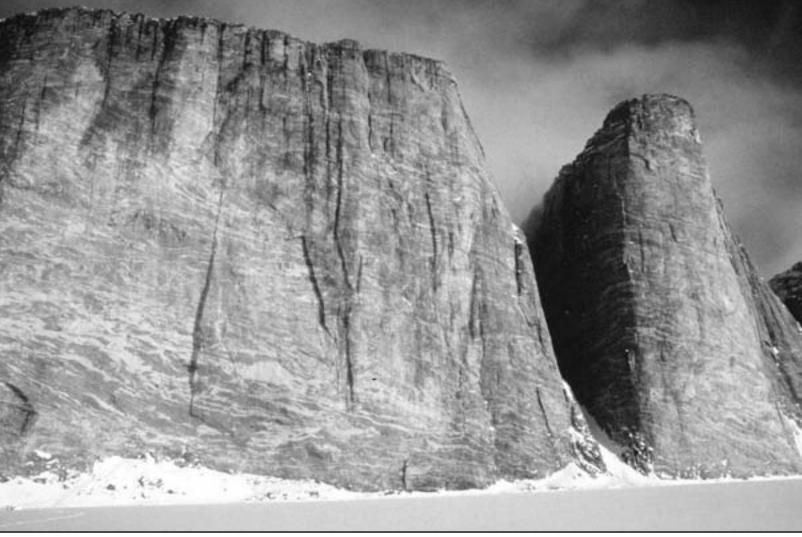
After a rest day, we worked two more pitches of 'heads up A2 nailing that landed us in a wild section of the face for our first wall camp. We descended our freehanging lines and headed back down to camp to pack and to melt ice for the wall. The cliff was too steep to hold any snow, so we calculated the amount of water needed for two weeks, which took us a solid 24 hours to melt. During our packing production, Illko stopped by to check on us, bringing seal meat and caribou for our climb. He asked me why we moved the camp, and I replied, "The polar bear hunting was no good!" He laughed heartily and poked me in the ribs with his big paws. He quietly spoke something about high winds coming, then leaned into our windbreak of snow blocks for his usual inspection. Thirty minutes after he had left, a raging windstorm pinned us down in the tent and trashed the snow wall. Storms were frequent in the area, but not severe. The stronger ones only lasted three or four days.



Phil White on Pitch 1. Photo: John Sedelmeyer

When the storm tapered off, we began shuttling loads to the base and getting ready to haul the five pitches up to our first wall camp. The haul bags would dangle in space on the entire route. After thirty hours of counterweighting hauls and jugging free-lines, we finally collapsed into the portaledge for fish tacos, Primus and some arnica. Twenty or thirty hours later, we woke to the sounds of the sea ice creaking and groaning like a great Arctic beast waking up from a long winter's slumber.

John worked the pitch out of wall camp. A delicate traverse on hooks and small 'heads reached a cool crack system that turned out some quality choss nailing, as well as some swell A1– near the end. Starting up the next pitch, I tinkered around with some stacked 'beaks, peckers and small brass in a long splitter that led to a balancefest on death blocks above worthless pro'. These tractor-sized blocks clinging to the overhanging corner were common and had mysterious attachment points that shifted if you even looked at that baby angle on your rack. After tying together a mess of jammed knots, slung garbage and taped-on hooks, I slithered onto a rivet and



The Wall of Clouds (left) and the Raven, Scott Island. Photo: Phil White

fired in some anchors for the second wall camp. We rappelled to the portaledge and chowed down our favourite breakfast of fresh biscuits with sausage baked inside, a half-pound of butter, and mocha. Another marathon day of jugging lines and hauling brought us to our airy new digs under what looked like an improbable traverse.

We figured that only four or five rope lengths remained to the summit, so we would call this home until we gained the island's immense plateau. The second wall camp was almost too plush. We had way too much food, a haul bag full of frozen water, and tons of fuel. Our flexible 10-watt solar charger flawlessly powered out tunes in the constant daylight. I cooked hot food in the portaledge to pass up to John, while he worked the creepy traverse. After a few small, gritty Aliens and some upside-down pins in loose plates, he assured me he was on a semi-promising piece. The next day, I took a whipper trying to clean this nightmare. On the following lead, I climbed a soaring pitch on nuts, cams and hexes for sixty metres, set up an anchor and rappelled back to the portaledge. Some miserable weather blew in, and for a few days we were reduced to Yahtzee, the Allman Brothers and espressos.

I lounged inside the flapping shelter and remembered a conversation I had had with Illko when he proudly visited our basecamp with a fresh wolf hide. As we admired the fine coat, he told us the tale of how he had climbed up the back side of the island and stalked this animal to the summit. The old Inuk assured us with a cagey wink that it was possible to walk off the far end of the island. Given our meagre amount of rope and the fact that every pitch was overhanging, rapping the route was out of the question. A quick haul-bag liberation and a walk off seemed like an attractive option.

When the storm broke, it was clear that the icy spring was giving way to summer. After some disconcerting rockfall, a large chunk of snow parted from the summit, hit the portaledge and produced the most efficient morning of the climb. We ate as much as we possibly could, said goodbye to our home and swung out onto the fixed lines on a push to the top. Two more long pitches that included some heinous grovelling behind giant chockstones and a final leap from a bat hook to a crusty mantel put us in a windy alcove just below the summit.

Finally, after five weeks, we were on top basking in the sun. We ran around like freaks on the vast summit



left: Camp II; right: The only mushroom for miles — the summit of Scott Island

plateau, stripping off harnesses and all other items of wall-climbing bondage. In awe of its grand scale, we stared at the 360-degree view that included Greenland to the east, the Stewart valley to the south and the foreboding interior of Gibbs Fjord to the west.

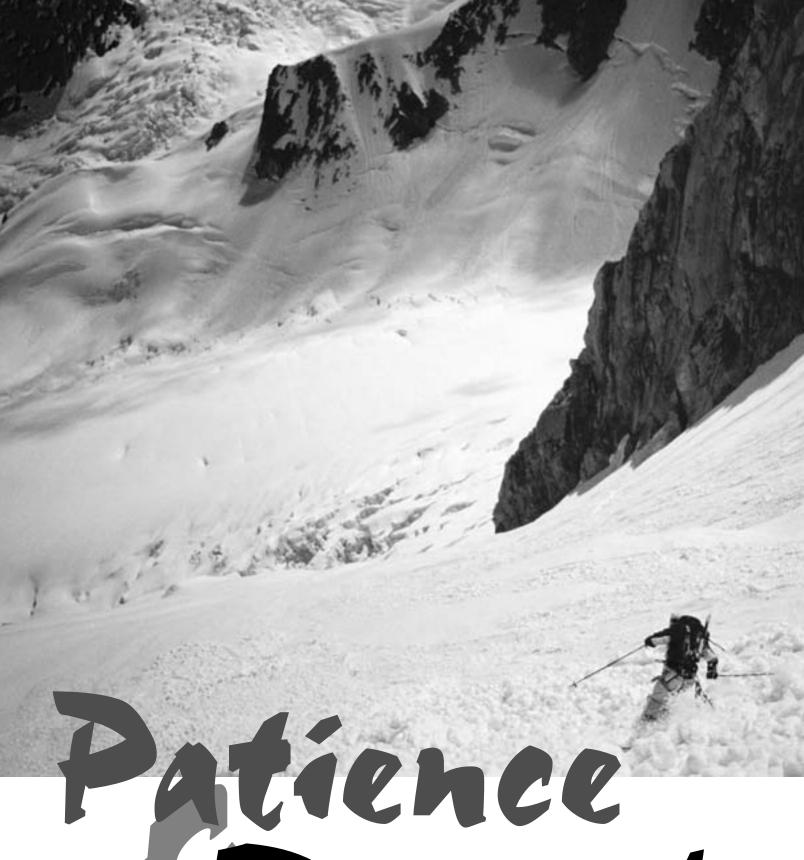
After coming out of our coma, we packed up loads for the summit and ceremoniously liberated a fleet of bags straight to the ice before making the trip back up our fixed lines. The elation that had accompanied us on the summit the day before was mysteriously absent as we started on our quest for a descent route. We had figured on two days, maybe three, to get down. A day of plunging through waist-deep crust put us absolutely nowhere. Morale was low. After a near brawl over logistics, John threw himself down on a bare patch of tundra with the gear. I headed off towards the end of the island, following a set of tracks in the snow. Certain that the wolf knew the way down, I followed his tracks, cautiously, above death-trap gullies that funnelled house-sized blocks down to the sea ice.

The cagey wolf stayed out of eyeshot, snickering at my attempt. If there was indeed a way to walk off this island, it would take us weeks to find it. With food for just one more day, our only option was to rappel down the Raven formation and try to reach our neighbour's thousand feet of fixed rope left somewhere on the face. A long day of grievous downaiding and pendulums proved to be no party, but it got us down. As we touched the melting sea ice after 16 days on the wall, the skies broke open to bring the first rains of the year. John was still freeing himself from the twisted haul bags when I grappled him for a soggy photo. The climbing was over, but the fjords felt like home.

Illko showed up way too soon with his komatik. Before we finished packing the overloaded sled, I asked Illko again about his wolf hunt on top and how he had gotten up there. With the ancient grin of an old trickster, he pointed to the summit and said, "Up there? Are you crazy — I'm not a bird!"

The Gull (Nujaup Aularutiksangra). VI, 5.9 A2+. "The Wall of Clouds", Scott Inlet. F.A.: Phil (Flipper) White, John Sedelmeyer. May and June 1999.

Beverly Illauq and her husband, Jushua, operate Quillkkut Guides out of Clyde River. They are very skilled and generous people, and a great help. Contact: Qullikkut Guides and Outfitters – Tel: (819) 924–6268; Fax: (819) 924–6362



Patience Rewaza



Story J.D. Hare Photos Jim Martinello

Super-alpine Ski Descents in B.C.'s Waddington Range

h Fziday, June 25, 1999, (ive (ziends left Whistlez bound for Bluff Lake for a flight into the Waddington Range. Derek Flett, Todd Marlor, Jim Martinello and I were on skis, and Kevin Smith was snowboarding.

The plan was to make camp at Rainy Knob on the Tiedemann Glacier, right at the base of Mount Waddington, and from there ski what we could of the many massive and wild snow lines that pour down from the high peaks. The Waddington Range is well known to climbers, but skiers in the area have traditionally opted for the lowerangled slopes of the Pantheon and Niut ranges. In fact, only three or four groups of skiers had ever flown in to the Tiedemann and virtually all efforts had been focused on skiing Waddington itself. It was looking like summer in the Whistler valley; in the alpine, however, winter was just ending, and we hoped to find perfect early-spring conditions in the higher-altitude, higher-latitude Waddington Range. We drove out of Whistler with sunshine on the windshield, but Mother Nature was making no promises. On our way north to Williams Lake and then west to Bluff Lake, we passed underneath successive bands of cloud and in and out of rain. As we stared up at the cyclonic waves of that low-pressure system, the sky seemed like a giant roulette wheel — with our money and our work week bouncing around on it.

Inevitably, we arrived at White Saddle Air in heavy rain. Unable to leave the ground that day, we spent the night in comfort thanks to the hospitality of Mike King and his family. We had heard about Mike and spoken with him several times to make arrangements; dealing with him in person confirmed his character. He is dependable and honest, and the generosity of his entire family exceeded our expectations. We woke the next morning to no improvement in the weather, but by 6 p.m. a sucker hole had opened up that was big enough for the five of us. We headed over to the hangar to consult with Mike.

"Yeah, we'd probably make it in. If not I'll just drop you at treeline, take you the rest of the way when the weather clears."

"Riiight... Sounds OK. Let's go."

We loaded half our gear into Mike's Jet Ranger. Jim and I climbed in and crossed our fingers. Sitting up front, I tried to focus on the wild terrain we were flying through, but the raindrops pounding onto the machine and streaming sideways across the glass grabbed my attention. Though it was raining, the clouds were high enough, and to my surprise Mike turned the corner onto the Tiedemann Glacier and climbed right up to Rainy Knob, where the floor met the ceiling in a doubtful shade of grey.

Derek, Kev and Todd made it in behind us, and we set to work establishing camp at the Knob. That night we dreamed of sunshine and of the cold snow that was surely falling above us; but for the time being we were stuck sucking in the drizzle. The Tiedemann remained a misty dream world for nearly 48 hours. We occupied ourselves by climbing the nearby ice cliffs, listening to the falling rock and ice and sleeping as much as possible.

On Monday afternoon, a breeze picked up and we headed down the glacier hoping for some visuals. Mercifully, we were rewarded. The skies parted to reveal crisp views of the upper Tiedemann Glacier, all the peaks freshly blanketed with new snow. There are so many big lines that drop from the peaks on the north side of the glacier, but from Rainy Knob one in particular stands out. Carl's Couloir is right in yer face, dropping from two-thirds height on the flank of massive Mount Asperity. The line begins on an exposed spine and then drops two thousand feet between walls before spilling over a disturbingly large bergschrund and another thousand feet of rolling icefall, finally washing out over the broken Tiedemann Glacier directly opposite our camp. We were stoked.

planned a midnight start. Carl's looked tasty, but our first priority had to be Waddington; that mountain really is the king of the range. Seeing Waddington in the context of the peaks around it, we were awestruck. So the plan was to climb up the glacier to an advanced camp on the Waddington-Combatant col. On the col, we'd be in position to ski a new line off Waddington's northwest peak if the weather held, or at least to ski the beautiful couloir that bisects Mount Combatant.

At 1 a.m., the window appeared to be there. We started brewing and readied our things, and then it closed in again. That was frustrating. But we didn't lose hope; all day we sat in camp ready to go at any break. We never got any break, and eventually it was nighttime again. Having done nothing for the past four days, we were finding it difficult to sleep (except for Marlor). The waiting was straining our patience now, as well as our stocks of coffee and combustibles.

After another shitty morning, the weather finally seemed to be improving at around noon on Wednesday. We broke camp and hit it. Skinning towards the col was difficult — the headwall was steep, broken, and littered with debris — but what an aweinspiring zone. Massive, sheer walls of granite towered above us on all sides, and the height of the towers seemed almost to be matched by the depth of the crevasses we crossed continually. Deep blue ice contrasted with brown and red rock and pure white snow. A thousand-foot sheet of ice calved off from the Spearman col, momentarily filling our basin with spindrift, and wispy clouds floated in and out, rising and falling, teasing us with views of the peaks one minute and with snow the next. Todd and Derek did an admirable job laying down the most trying skin track I've ever followed; they kept their heads up, and despite unavoidable exposure and many exciting snow-bridge crossings we managed a reasonably safe route. Six tense hours after breaking camp, we were nearing the top of the headwall and the final remaining challenge. A thick swath of icy debris had to be followed up through a break in the ice cliffs that guarded the lip. Again Todd



Previous page: Below Carl's Couloir; above: The snow spine above Carl's

and Derek went at it without hesitation, and with skis in hand and dusk approaching they pounded in a good staircase up the ice. After reaching the top of the debris and jumping several last crevasses, we finally gained the col. It was 8 p.m. and now socked in and snowing. Once more we prepared a camp in which we could comfortably wait out whatever weather was in store.

We had with us on the col food for four days and all the gear we would need to get up Waddington's northwest peak, but on waking Thursday morning we once again found mediocre weather. Besides that, we could see during the occasional breaks that the line we had been hoping for was totally unskiable. On the opposite side of the col, however, Combatant Couloir was looking fine, and for me that was a more compelling line than anything on Waddington. In fact, Combatant Couloir is nearly as compelling a ski line as I can imagine. From the south, Mount Combatant is a massive, twin-peaked pyramid of granite towering over the col it



above: JD Hare skiing the icefall below Carl's Couloir

shares with Mount Waddington like a mystical stronghold; shrouded by swirling clouds, as it was for us, it's an image from Tolstoy. The couloir begins in the tight notch dividing the 12,500-foot summits and drops to the col like an elevator, splitting the massive bulk of stone down the middle.

All morning the weather remained frustratingly mixed, and when the time had passed for an attempt on Waddington that day we turned our attention to Combatant. After all, the line was so clearly defined by the rock bordering it on both sides that perfect visibility wasn't really necessary. We knew that a few years previously three friends from Whistler had been in it; Johnny Foon, Jia Condon and "the Swede" tried the descent while they were in the zone spreading Trevor Peterson's ashes. On their attempt, though, they ran into ice high in the couloir and had to turn down early. We still hadn't seen high into the couloir, but we figured that climbing into uncertainty would probably be more fun

than another afternoon of smelling each other.

I left camp a little ahead; with my first footsteps I knew I was on a mission. We'd been in this zone too long without skiing anything, and I had a lot of energy. A thick blanket of cold, fresh snow added to the stoke, as did the knowledge that this south-facing line hadn't received direct sun since our arrival. The bergschrund was easily passed and would make for fun air to finish with, and the firm snow beneath the fresh made for easy boot packing. Progress was rapid, but the couloir seemed to rise up through the mist indefinitely and there were no rests. It was an incredible feature to be moving through; the angle never eased and there was never an opportunity to pull out into the rocks. On the sides, the rock rose up as much as a thousand feet above our heads — the cleanest granite buttresses I've ever seen. The couloir was set so deeply that the cloud cover really couldn't sink into it, so the visibility was quite good. We kept moving, and about two hours after leaving camp I made my way through a hundred feet of 55-degree chocolate-chip grey ice to sit in the little powdery notch of the summit ridge and wait for Jim and Derek to join me.

The weather had actually been deteriorating as we climbed and it was now snowing pretty hard, so when Jim and Derek topped out we wasted no time getting suited up. I got one soft-powder turn before scraping into the narrow slot of grey ice and broken rock and executing the most intense kick turn of my life. Beyond that, though, 2000 feet of steep powder lay ahead. Derek and Jim each negotiated the icy slot, and joined me just as the spindrift bombs began to drop from the flying buttresses sweeping out above us. The snow didn't slide down the walls; it fell freely from the ridgetops to our heads. It was weightless and harmless but went straight down our collars, so we planned our turns to dodge it. The snow was cold, the slough was now heavy, and we were getting face shots on Canada Day. We hit the peak of the bergschrund and, landing in the deep, rode out the transition to slash a turn at the tents with wide grins and high-fives. That Thursday night, we finally went to bed stoked and content.

the weather. It stormed hard that night, and on Friday morning, after waking up to snow blowing around inside our tents, we gave up on Waddington. When a window opened later that day, we used it to break camp and head back to Rainy Knob. Despite the heavy packs, the descent turned out to be a lot of fun. It was, after all, a 3000-foot powder run that took us below giant cliffs of stone and ice, and had us winding between gaping crevasses and darting across narrow bridges. As we slid along the last few kilometres to our camp, the Tiedemann seemed as clear and tranquil as we



had seen it. Kev, Todd and Derek, mindful of the past week's weather and not wishing to lose their jobs on Monday morning, decided to get out while the gettin' was good. Jim and I, however, had nothing dragging us back yet, so we split up the gear and said goodbye when we heard the thumping of Mike's machine pounding the air somewhere below the cloud. After our friends flew off, the cloud began to lift and it actually turned into a fine evening on the Tiedemann. As Jim and I relaxed over dinner and drinks, we were mesmerized by the striking symmetry of Carl's Couloir.

deally, we would have turned in very early and risen in the wee hours, but a combination of coffee before bed and excitement at the promise of a bluebird day kept both of us awake most of the night. To our dismay, we woke up groggy at 7 a.m. The weather was mixed but looked good enough for us to go, so despite the late start (Carl's Couloir, like Combatant, is southfacing, and today the sun would be on it with full intensity) we pulled our shit together and headed out. As we travelled across the Tiedemann, all cloud moved out; thankfully, the high walls had so far kept the couloir

shaded. The only obvious trouble that remained was the imposing bergschrund.

At the base of the line, the Tiedemann Glacier was extremely broken; tiptoeing through it, we could see that the icefall rolling down from the bergschrund was steeper than it had appeared. That would be good for our descent, but now we would be boot packing right from the base and it was warming up. We pushed up over the icefall and over thick piles of avi debris littered with rockfall. Despite the sunshine, the zone did not seem friendly; however, our bergschrund problem appeared to be solved. We could see that there was a large debris cone spanning the fifteen feet from the low side up and over to the lip of the couloir. The cone, unfortunately, had been formed by successive avalanches sliding through a deep runnel that ran down the centre of the couloir like Carl's aortic artery. Climbing it in the hot sun, with that busy artery out of view above us, we'd be running the gauntlet. We reasoned, though, that we wouldn't be exposed for long, and Jim volunteered to go first, so up we went. We climbed to the top of the cone and then stepped into a short, icy chimney where the runnel poured vertically into the wide crevasse.



left: JD Hare dropping into Combatant Couloir from the summit notch

above: Basecamp at Rainy Knob, with Combatant, Tiedemann, Asperity and the Serra Towers behind. Carl's Couloir is the prominent narrow line near the centre of the photo.

right: JD Hare skiing the 3000 feet of powder back to Rainy Knob after breaking camp on the col

Stemming up through that chimney, with my crampons splayed out and my hands gripping Jim's steps for balance, I was getting pretty amped on our line.

We pulled over the lip. Inside the couloir and punching quickly up the runnel, we were actually disappointed that we'd be up on the spine in no time and that the line might be lacking. But we were being fooled by perspective: after an hour of climbing, the spine still seemed close, but no closer than it had when we started. Then, when we did finally reach the spine, we discovered we were far from "up top"; it was much steeper and longer than it had appeared. I was punching at that point and, sizing up the spine from that new vantage, figured I'd make the top in 100 steps. It turned out to be 450. When the snow finally ran out and we could climb no further, we were glad for all the effort — we were high in the zone. Down on our right was Carl's and the trail we had just blazed; to the left of the spine, the slope dropped thousands of feet into the broken basin of the Serra-Asperity cirque.

The turns on the spine were intense, but we just couldn't pass them up. Once we dropped between the walls, we began to cut heavy slough into the runnel. We couldn't ski as fast as we would have liked because the snow was so touchy. We cleared out most of the surface as we descended, but managed to keep it safe. We had to pause above the bergschrund, noticing that rather than adding to the debris cone our slough had actually oblit-



erated it. We had expected a short hop onto the cone but were now faced with a longish gap jump across the crevasse. Jim lined it up and I followed him. We landed it fine, then ripped the fresh debris to where the icefall rolled off. Cruising the lower-angled icefall was refreshing; we could open it up and stay ahead of the wet slough. We were stoked, and I think that as we glided back to camp we were also pretty satisfied — the descent had been testing.

That evening, we had the opportunity to strip down and enjoy the intense tanning power of our glacial environment. Given time to relax and reflect on the week and realizing that it was now too hot even for north-facing snow, we agreed to get back to civilization. We were ready for hot showers and fresh food now — our patience had been rewarded. We called Mike and packed our gear. Then, as we caught the sound of his rotors on the wind and watched him bank his turn high above the Tiedemann in full perpendicular, we took it all in and thought about our return.

First complete descent of Combatant Couloir, Mount Combatant. Kevin Smith, Todd Marlor, J.D. Hare, Jim Martinello, Derek Flett. July 1999.

First descent of Carl's Couloir, Mount Asperity. J.D. Hare, Jim Martinello. July 1999.



The rain through the night has frozen on everything — wall, ropes, everything is covered in ice. I try to remember the breaking strength of a wet, frozen rope. Is it half? One quarter? Could we descend even if we wanted to? I can't believe I'm doing this...

July 22

I left Whistler for Baffin three days ago with Russ March. We have climbed a lot together, but what we have ahead of us is something great. Over the next weeks we will learn about the depth of our will and we will push each other and lean on the other as a brother. We spent the night in an abandoned truck left at the airport in Pangnirtung, because the taxi did not return for us as he had promised.

July 23

I called Heather for the last time. I think she was crying as I hung up. Shouldn't we say goodbye after a good laugh? I think about this for a long time. Joanee, the outfitter, takes us up the fjord — the trip takes about two hours. Soon we are on our own. The rain is light. I sit outside and try to make the adjustment to trip mode. I watch the tiny flowers blowing in the breeze, the tide receding, the sun slowly circling on its slow path to the horizon.

Tuly 26

Mount Turnweather offers the shortest approach of all the big walls in Auyittuq: it is only 11 kilometres to the base, with an elevation gain of 800 metres. The walk takes us just over four hours with a large load. It feels so good to be up on the glacier — no more mosquitoes, perfectly clear water just inches from the tent, and a view that makes us marvel to no end.

July 30

Yes! We are finally on the wall. The first pitch is fourth class. Pitch 2 is steeper — Russ has kept his big boots on and is climbing up to some mossy, vertical rock. Water oozes out of the rock here; it has shattered the corner, and the wall is covered in thin black slime. The first day on the wall is too soon to be scared. But I am. Rappel to basecamp, bed at 12:30 a.m. I awake at 3:10 a.m. to rain on my face. Zip the tent and sleep.

July 31

Still in bed. 4 p.m., rain. I wonder how long it will rain? I begin to read my book, "The Worst Journey in the World", by Apsley Cherry-Garrard. I laugh at myself for choosing this book. If the rain does not stop we will descent to Overlord tomorrow.

Aug 2

The wind blew like stink all night. Russ couldn't sleep.

a baffin island wall with RICH PROHASKA



I take some time and do some chores, wash my polypropylene shirt and put on a cotton one — mmm, so comfy. Also dry my boots and give them another few layers of Snow Seal.

Aug 4

Late in the afternoon we decide to get back up to our camp. More rain throughout the night.

Aug 5

The glacier has fresh snow, but our boots stay dry. We had left a lot of gear and food on a large rock on the glacier at the bottom of the route. When we arrived to organize we found that the wind had spread the gear all around the glacier.

Aug 6

We finally pack up basecamp and wander back up the glacier. We jumar and haul our four fixed ropes to our high point. The day is already late, so we begin to sort our gear for the night. We collect the parts for the 'ledge and at first glance cannot find the fly for it. We hunt and hunt — eventually we look into all the bags but the fly is not found. It's late, about midnight, the sky looks clear, and we decide to sleep and risk the rain, snow and wind.

Aug 7

At 8 a.m. we got up to our miserable day. This sucks: we have to re-establish each belay, fix ropes and rappel. At each belay I use the binoculars and search for the lost fly. If we cannot find it our climb will have to be abandoned. At the last anchor I scan the glacier for some time, looking for the fly. Down the glacier I see something a little bit different from a rock. I slide to the end of the rope and walk unroped down the glacier towards the spot. Sure enough, the fly is there. Then I wonder, What else has gone unnoticed off into a crevasse or has been buried under an avalanche? Would we ever know? I dawdle along the glacier, not in a hurry to get back onto the five ropes that promise aching arms and possible tendinitis. A full sweat has been accomplished by the end of the second rope. The pace slows and we slowly inch our way up the ropes. Now to relead the ice pitch across the slab towards the corner. Into bed at 2 a.m. It rains hard all night.

Aug 8

Still raining. Sleep till ten. After we finish eating, it is only drizzle. I am too eager to let the day slip by — I want to climb. It is awkward and slow climbing with Gore gloves and hood. I climb up the corner, onto the left-hand wall, over a couple of loose flakes and then I can reach across the corner and onto the main wall and the real climbing.

Aua 9

As each day passes, the loss of daylight hours is noticeable. Now it's nearly dark for two hours.

Aug 14

Day by day the temperatures seems to be declining. There is light rain/snow falling. I feel safe in our 'ledge.

I belay Russ from my sleeping bag. I read, write, eat chocolate.

Aug 15

It snowed again last night. Disregarding the awful conditions, we decide to climb on. The route out left seems uncertain. It is my lead — it goes well despite a section of loose, crumbly rock.

Aug 16

It feels very cold. The thermometer reads 0 degrees C. I can't believe it — it feels much colder. My feet didn't warm up at all last night. This is the first time in my life that I haven't been able to warm them. It scares me a bit. It must be the dampness. Everything is now wet. In the beginning it was just my boots, but now after more than a week of rain and snow my sleeping bag and all my socks, gloves and extra clothes are wet. It is impossible to keep or get dry. We have plenty of fuel — the hanging stove burns for hours each day and we try hard to dry our socks and gloves. It is an impossible task: The fly is coated nylon and does not breathe at all. It has no vestibule or overhang, so the zippers must stay up most of the time because it's usually raining, snowing, or blowing off the wall and into any tiny openings. Oh for a better system. We warm the boots over the stove, but it doesn't help. My feet, I notice, are swollen — I wonder why? Usually I wear two pairs of socks; now it is hard and painful to get the boots on with just one. Outside is something else. The sky is overcast, and the rain through the night has frozen on everything — wall, ropes, everything is covered in ice. I try to remember the breaking strength of a wet, frozen rope. Is it half? One quarter?

Could we descend even if we wanted to? Ascending the rope is a very slow process; the wall hammer comes in handy to chip the ice off. I can't believe I'm doing this.

By the time we sort the rack and Russ gets climbing, I am already cold. He traverses more to the right, then does a difficult mantel into another corner system. It's so cold. I'm too cold.

Aug 17

Our water is starting to freeze. I have a difficult time keeping my hands warm when I'm climbing. Ice covers everything — the rack looks like art. It takes work to do anything. Again I use the hammer for a new task, this time to free the ice-coated 'biners. Once the gate is loosened, it takes both hands to open it. After each move, I stick my hands into my

above: The East Buttress of Turnweather; below: Russ in the ledge, Pitch 9







left: Russ cleaning Pitch 11

Aug 20

Six a.m., clear skies. We quickly pack the bags and I jumar the first rope. By the time I get to the top it has already clouded over and it's snowing. It's only 10 a.m., oh no! I want to keep going — the weather has to break soon, it has to. Right? The corner above looks fine and long. I seek a suitable area to belay and quickly haul the bags. Tomorrow will be an exciting day. Either we will begin fixing ropes for the summit bid, or we will retreat with sad hearts.

Aug 21

Up at 6 a.m. again: more snow throughout the night, -6°C. Our feet and hands ache badly, and we wonder if we are damaging our bodies. We decide the weather has beaten us — we pull the plug. Our ropes and webbing are frozen almost beyond hope. The slings are knotted, tangled and frozen in a useless mass. For rap cord we cut a damaged rope into 2.5-metre sections. The wind is blowing snow into my glasses, making them useless, so I stuff them into my pocket. Every knot and tangle has to be undone with our teeth and hammers. By eight in the evening the wind and snow have calmed and we have reached the end of the main wall. I still think we can make it to the base tonight so set off on one rope down the slab as Russ lowers the bags on the other. Drag, pull, pull, shove the bags off at an angle. I try to reach as far as possible sideways. The air is filled with the rumblings of avalanches. I really wonder, Is this a good thing to be

I hear the avalanche coming at me, but what can I do — I simply hold on for all I'm worth. I'm nearly knocked off my feet but I'm okay. I'm really scared. I try to hurry. The belay I find is not good, but it's really hard to find cracks because they're all filled with snow and ice. The blocks are all frozen, so it's hard to tell if they're solid. The awful sloughs keep hitting us during the next rap as well. We fight and struggle for safe ground. The slope above is steeper, probably 70 degrees, so the slides are light and fast. I am beyond making sound decisions. I hate the wall. I hate snow. I even hate climbing. I just want to sleep. At 3:30 a.m. we finally get to the 'ledge. In the morning we continue our descent. After a few more raps we are very close. It is much warmer now; we're even sweating. Onto the glacier we go, easy, just pulling the bag along. Yes! We are off the wall!

Aug 22

After some water, we help ourselves to the Percocet. Soon our heads are relaxed but the feet feel no different.

mouth to warm them — when I do, they burn and tingle. The belay is safe, and I shout down to Russ, telling him that the lead line is fixed and it's safe to clean the pitch. As I unload the rack and pack, my insulated glove slips and falls into the clouds. I'm soaked. I shiver and shake to warm up, but nothing works. When he arrives I am hypothermic. I rappel first. I have to wrap the rope twice around my leg to get enough friction to safely control my rate of descent. The portaledge is sagging underneath the weight of the newly fallen snow. I cannot open the zipper or get myself off the rope. I pull some slack through so Russ can get down and help me. Once we are inside, the world seems a nicer place. We use fleece gloves as sponges and mop up the water collecting on the walls and floor. We light the stove and let it run for hours.

Aug 18

The wind began at 6 a.m. We have zero motivation — back to dreamland. We sleep on, unaware of the hostile world we are living in. Writing is becoming more difficult; I have to warm my hands every other sentence. My feet hurt and I cannot warm them.

This is Russ' first big wall in the Arctic. He has had enough. I try to motivate him by telling him that this is normal and the weather has to turn soon. To myself I confess that I can only stand another couple of days. Late in the evening the 'ledge is alight — we peek outside and see a broken sky. We can see the glacier far below; it's been so long. Everything is covered under a blanket of snow, and it looks like winter. It's amazing how a bit of sun can lift our sprits.

Aug 19

Neither of us wants to climb any more in snowy weather. Writing seems like a pain. My feet are prunes and my hands constantly tingle. Snow or ice hits us every few minutes. The temperature is colder now, -5°C; our water jugs are frozen, so the constant snowfall is a mixed blessing.

We do not know how many days it will take to get our hurting bodies — never mind our five wet ropes, a ton of hardware, our wet clothes, our books, our tents and the countless "extra" little odds 'n' ends — to the Overlord pickup. The glacier I hope will allow for each of us to drag one haul bag as we carry the other one the three kilometres to its terminus. I feel like an ox with all this stuff. My feet are numb inside my boots. When we reach the end of the glacier, the walking is much more difficult. The ground is extremely uneven and loose. Rocks of all sizes make up the surface. For each step, I have to find a suitable place for my foot and then step onto it. When I am not looking or I lose my balance and step onto an area that requires ankle support, my foot just gives way. I have no control over my toes and ankles. I use the ski poles much like crutches. Without them I would fall regularly. As we approach the Weasel valley, the heat is combining with the rich, humid and particle-filled air, making each breath feel like a gulp of soup. My mind again wanders, giving relief to my feet. I dream about the boat, the plane and meeting Heather at the airport. It gets me to the bottom of the moraine — I know that from here it is 40 minutes to Overlord.

Our feet are not in good shape. They are more swollen, the toes are beginning to discolour, and Russ has some bad blisters. I say he should pop them; he disagrees. Then we discuss how we will get the rest of our gear down. I say we should go back up soon — sure, our feet are in a bad way, but I think that they will get much worse before they get better. I think our partnership has ended. I begin to get ready to go out alone. I don't want to be on Baffin anymore; I want to sit, heal, and talk in the past tense. I radio the park office and arrange a pickup for the next morning at 9 a.m., low tide. To my surprise, Russ struggles into his boots too, and we set off for the last (and worst) carry. I take Percocet tablets regularly to help with the pain.

Aug 23

Beep, beep, beep, the alarm sounds way before I want to get up. We don't even know for sure where the low-tide pickup is — we still have to carry our stuff to the boat. At high tide, the outfitters can get to within two metres of the emergency shelter, but the tide here is large and the ocean retreats a long way. I walk out on the dry shore-front looking for the pickup. On and on I go, and after fifteen minutes I see a cairn on a rock, which I head for. Ten minutes later I have arrived; it is already 8:30 a.m. All I think about is the plane leaving without us at eleventhirty. I turn and actually run back to the shelter. As I run, my feet act like frozen lumps of meat. Another load out to the pickup. Back to the shelter. As I go I fall into a trance and just follow the tracks in the ocean muck. The final load. This is getting ridiculous.

Safe on the boat, we enjoy bannock and black coffee. At the harbour in Pangnirtung we are met by several men who help us and our gear into and onto the taxi. It takes us straight over to the airport, and while Russ off-loads the gear I talk with the flight agent. Not our luck — we are late and so they have just given our seats away to standby passengers. Next flight, tomorrow.

Aug 24

The climb is over, but the pain is not. The throbbing is intense and makes me stop whatever I am doing — my body curls in pain. Doctor Number One looks at my feet, asks me what I did and says that I have trench foot. Okay, so what do I do? She says there is nothing I can do other than to not cause any further injury to them because the blood circulation is slow and it could cause gangrene. She assures me that the pain will soon subside. She also gives me another prescription for Percocet.

Aug 25 - Sept 3

The pain still increases, and I have trouble sleeping because of it. We research trench foot but learn very little. I find that I must remain horizontal with my feet elevated. When I try to walk, the pain intensifies greatly. The flight to Vancouver is torture — I have to lie down in the food-preparation area to let the pressure relax in my feet. I visit another doctor in Vancouver; he asks what I've done and where I've been, takes a look at my feet and then leaves the office. I presume he has never seen this before because he comes back with some photocopy and reads it to me. Sept 3–15

I visit yet another doctor, who also tells me that I have trench foot and that there is nothing I can do for it. She says that I should just bear with the pain and get on with life. I have only one pair of shoes I can wear; I am extremely cautious with my feet. Heather and I comb the medical books and the World Wide Web. In all the world we come up with about ten pages. Nothing to help the healing process, little about its long-term consequences—and I cannot find much mention of it in climbing magazines or journals.

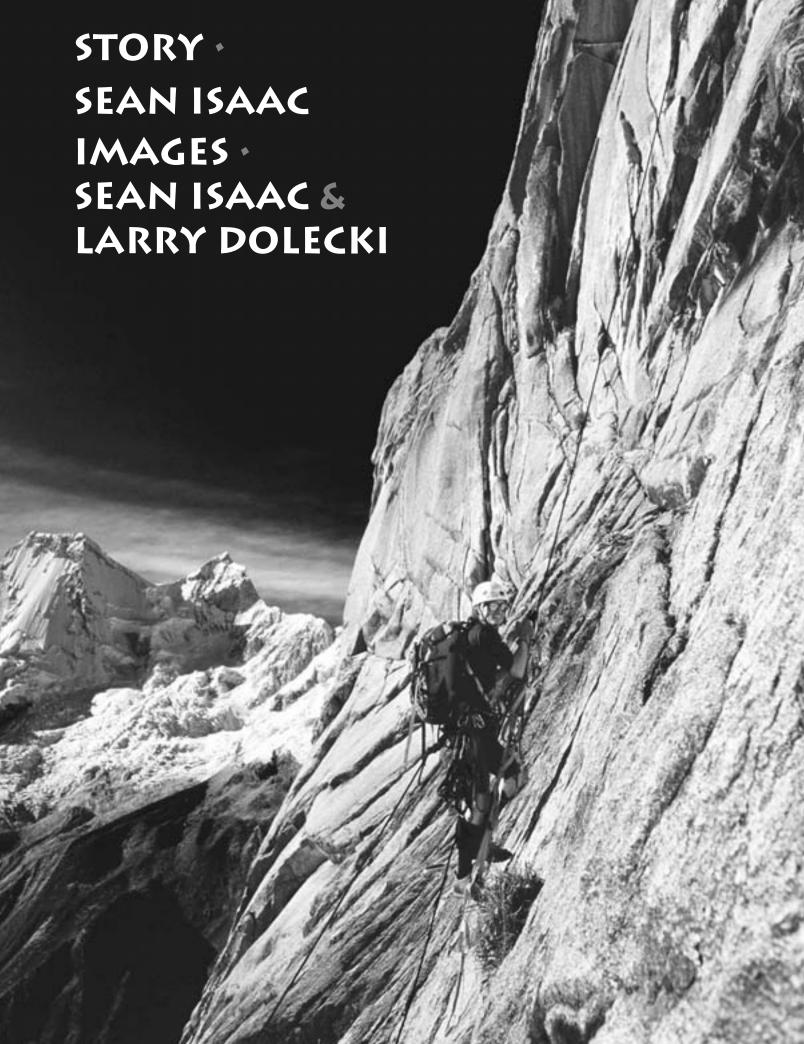
Afterword

By the end of September, the pain has mostly gone away, but still I have the occasional throb. Only one of my blue toenails has fallen off. I am able to ski, but my feet are usually cold. I still do not know what my feet will be like in the long term — I expect that this incident will plague me for the rest of my life.

Prevention

I am looking for a breathable fly, which I am convinced is a must for Arctic/high-altitude use. I will wear plastic double boots on my next adventure of this kind. I think they are the only way to keep dry over a long period, and they can be dried out over a stove. I will try to take the time to dry and warm my feet every day. If they cannot be warmed, maybe it's a sign to go home?

Thanks again to the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, and also to Arc'teryx.



DION'S DIHEDRAL

A PERUVIAN WALL-CLIMBING ADVENTURE

IN 1985, ANTONIO GOMEZ BOHORQUEZ and Onofre Garcia of Spain completed the first ascent of the east face of La Esfinge (the Sphinx) in the Quebrada de Paron (Paron Gorge) of Peru's popular Cordillera Blanca. The Paron Gorge is set in a range noted for its high-altitude mountaineering, and this was the first attention given to the area's fine granite towers and walls. Over 10 days, the two Spaniards worked away at the 750-metre face, employing conventional rock-climbing techniques and leaving plastic boots, crampons and ice axes behind. The word was out; Peru has good alpine rock.

In the years that followed, more routes sprouted up on its walls, all by Spaniards. These included a second visit by Bohorquez in 1988, when he and Inaki San Vincete made the first ascent of the southeast face. Perpetually shaded, this cold, 900-metre-high wall yielded the longest, hardest route on La Esfinge to date.

Until recently, confusion shrouded this formidable rock bastion regarding its location, its history and, especially, its name. In numerous accounts, La Esfinge has fallen under various titles: Cerro Colca, Cerro Marron, Cerro Paron, La Roca, La Aguja Nevada, Torre Aguja and Torre de Paron. The latter is actually the official name of a presumably still-unclimbed 4800-metre formation further down-valley.

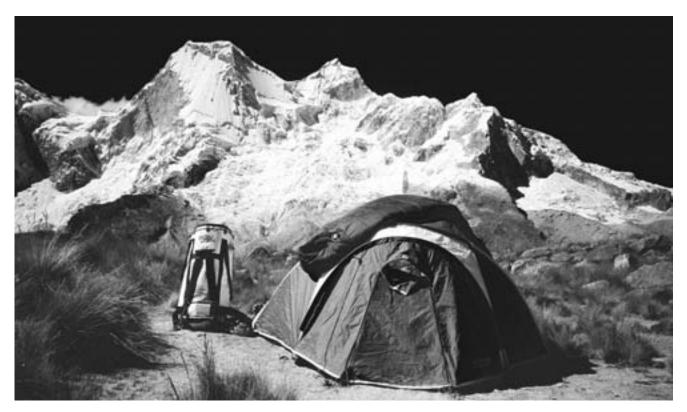
La Esfinge stands as an anomaly amid its massive

snow-capped companions: Artesonraju, Piramide and the Huandoys. At 5325 metres in altitude and with vertical walls rising above the grass-covered talus, it is one of the highest pure rock walls in the Americas.

My interest in this granite monolith was kindled by stories from friends who had climbed the more popular peaks in the Paron valley. They returned with intriguing accounts of massive rock walls rising right from the road. Weather was the main factor that convinced me this would be a great area to explore. After months of festering in wet tents in Patagonia, Kyrgyzstan and the Cirque of the Unclimbables, I was more than eager to sample some of the famous Peruvian blue-sky climbing.

Larry Dolecki, my partner for this adventure, and I decided that this would be the perfect alpine rock-climbing expedition: unclimbed granite, perfect weather, exotic culture and cheap travel. Tragically, three days before departing from Canada we received devastating news. Dion Bretzloff, a close friend and climbing partner from Canmore, had been killed by seracs on Peru's second-highest mountain, Yerapaja. A dark shadow of sadness was cast over our trip.

Larry's schedule for this expedition was tight. He only had about twenty days to spend in Peru before having to return to Canada for guiding commitments. With only four days in Huaraz and a single acclimatization hike under our belts, we hired a collectivo (a Peruvian



Basecamp, with the Huandoys behind. Photo: Sean Isaac

minivan) and headed for the hills. Four porters helped us carry our gear from Paron Lake, where the collectivo dropped us off, to basecamp. Guy Edwards, a partner from many other adventures, and Jason Price, a friend from the United States, joined us for a few days. They wanted to attempt the original 1985 Spanish route that ascends the centre of the east face. After four hours of slogging up grassy hillsides with monstrous loads and even more monstrous headaches from the quick altitude gain, we arrived at a flat area about an hour away from the face. This would be home for the next two weeks.

As Guy unloaded his pack, I heard him shout, "How did this get in here?" He stood there dumbfounded, holding a seedy Peruvian porno magazine that he had pulled from the bottom of his backpack. Larry and I, the pranksters, tried to hide our laughter while we set up our tent.

The next day, Guy and Jason rose early, planning to climb their objective ultralight and in a day. After a leisurely breakfast, Larry and I spent the day scoping new lines on the wall. Our original goal was to add a second route to the frigid southeast face. However, we decided that with only 16 days in the area we lacked the necessary time to acclimatize, ferry loads, climb a new route on a

900-metre wall and descend. Instead, we focused on the shorter, right side of the east face. Though only 500 to 600 metres in height, this area of the wall had the steepest, cleanest rock on the mountain and appeared ideal for a modern aid-route. We set our sights on a soaring, orange-streaked corner that dominated the upper part of the face, which was separated from the ground by 200 metres of thin features and seemingly blank sections.

While discussing possible new lines, we watched Guy and Jason through our binoculars speed up rope length after rope length of steep cracks and orange slabs. When day gave way to night, we caught glimpses of their head lamps cruising along the summit ridge. They completed the first one-day ascent of the 750-metre east face of La Esfinge and descended into the night, returning to camp at around midnight.

We said goodbye to our tired friends the next morning. They were going to sleep for a bit longer before beginning their journey back to Huaraz. Eager to touch rock, Larry and I approached the face for our first day of climbing. Larry tackled Pitch 1, a 5.8 crack that weaved around nasty, prickly plants called penca that grow on the lower portion of the face. I was close to throwing up as I followed the pitch. The altitude made me nauseous, and

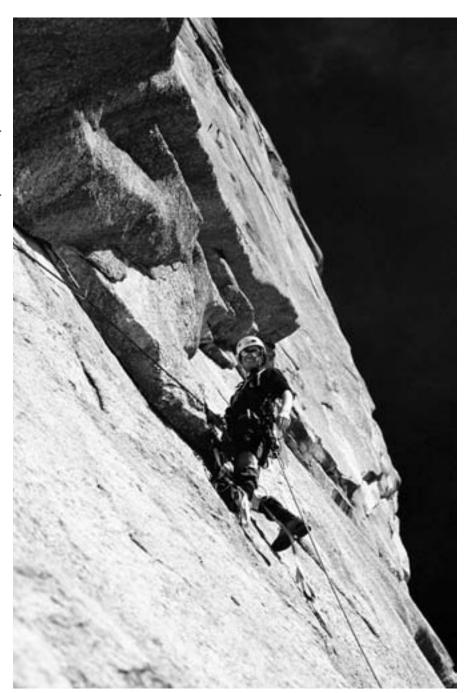
"HOW DID THIS GET IN HERE?" EDWARDS SHOUTED, DUMB-STRUCK, HOLDING A SEEDY PERUVIAN PORNO MAGAZINE PULLED FROM THE BOTTOM OF HIS BACKPACK. I was breathing so hard I thought a lung would rip right through my heaving chest. With the first pitch fixed, we called it a day and darted for camp to nurse our throbbing altitude headaches. What a surprise to return to our tent and find the interior walls plastered with pictures of naked Latina women. I guess Guy and Jason had the last laugh.

Over the next few days, Larry and I worked away at the lower part of the wall. The climbing was thin aid requiring many bodyweight placements on copperheads, hooks and 'beaks. With no obvious or continuous crack systems to follow, we pieced together a puzzle of exfoliating flakes and shallow seams. Short, blank sections were overcome by drilling quarter-inch rivets, a hateful task we both loathed. The fourth pitch required two exhausting days of intricate routefinding up a maze of microfeatures. Larry spent a full day on thirty metres of very engaging aid. I took the sharp end of the rope the next day to finish the pitch. Needless to say, I didn't set any speed records as it took me more than seven hours to gain 25 metres. I spent the day bashing copperhead after copperhead into discontinuous seams with a leg-smashing ledge lurking below. In addition to the difficulty, our bodies battled with the debilitating effects of altitude and intestinal illness.

The tales of perfect weather in the Cordillera Blanca were partly true. Every morning was sunny and warm, but without fail the afternoon sky became dark with menacing clouds. Light snowfall was a regular late-day occurrence that gave way to clear, blue skies each morning. We

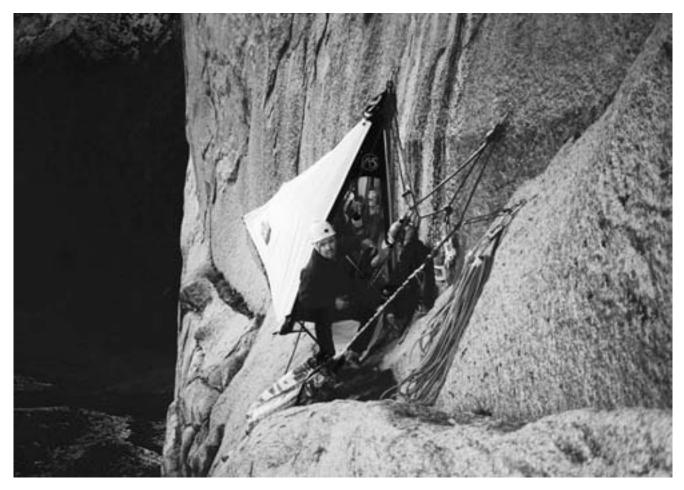
were told later by locals that this was a poor season for weather conditions. They said that most years weeks pass without even a cloud in sight.

The first four pitches now fixed, we loaded two haul bags with food, water and bivy gear and committed to the rest of the wall capsule-style. The next few days were spent gnawing away at the upper dihedral. We were hoping for free climbing, but the huge orange corner turned



Sean leading Pitch 3. Photo: Larry Dolecki

out to be more aid, taking everything from bird beaks to #5 Camalots. Luckily, there was a bit of freeclimbing and the routefinding was easier, so the pitches went more quickly than expected. Three days after jumping on the wall, I finished the last pitch of the dihedral. Larry led one more technical pitch of mixed free and aid, then we simulclimbed up two rope lengths of fourth- and easy fifth-class terrain to the summit ridge. We ditched the gear here and scrambled up the final ridge to the actual



Larry hating the claustrophobic confines. Photo: Sean Isaac

summit.

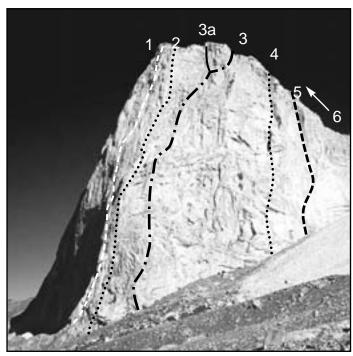
While boiling storm clouds engulfed the neighbouring peaks, we snapped a couple of quick summit shots and bolted back down the ridge to the top of our route. Snowflakes were just beginning to fall. As I started to set the first rappel, Larry dislodged a huge boulder while scrambling down to my perch. The television-sized rock landed right on one of our ropes, neatly chopping it in half. Hence, in the swirling snowstorm, many short rappels were required to reach our hanging camp.

Upon gaining the portaledge, I was ready to crawl in and enjoy our last night on the wall before descending the next morning. Larry disagreed. Being a much bigger lad than me, he despised the claustrophobic confines of our four-by-six-foot hanging tent. "You want to spend another night in that miserable thing?" he barked. "You truly are sick!" It was settled; our last hour of light would be used to pack up camp and try to get as close to the ground as possible. The first rappels went smoothly, but soon darkness engulfed us and, as if on cue, the storm intensified. The final rappels turned into a total snafu as

the ropes tangled and the haul bags snagged on ledges. Reaching the ground well after dark meant that we could not find our way back to basecamp, especially with the visibility down to thirty metres because of the snow-storm. Finally, just before midnight, we found a small rock cave in the moraine and made our last bivy.

We named the 11-pitch route Dion's Dihedral (VI, 5.9 A3) in memory of our friend. Every time I heard the ice cliffs calving off the north face of the Huandoys across the valley from La Esfinge, I felt deep remorse. Dion was constantly on my mind while I was climbing. I thought of his youthful energy and the great fun we had on the climbs we did together. Larry and I both agreed that this route was for Dion.

We would like to thank the following for their generous support of our expedition: the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, Sterling Ropes, Powerbar, Ambler Mountain Works, Arc'teryx, Black Diamond Equipment and Mountain Equipment Co-op.



APPROXIMATE LINES OF LA ESFINGE ROUTES

- 1. Southeast Face (VI, 5.10a A4) F.A.: Bohorquez, San Vicente. 1988.
- 2. East Buttress (VI, 5.10a A3) F.A.: De La Cal, Madrid, Olivera, Polanco. 1987.
- 3. 1985 Route / Original Route (V, 5.11) F.A.: Bohorquez, Garcia. 1985; F.F.A.: Boyer, Bozzy. 1995 (3a) First one-day ascent: Edwards, Price. 1999.

30m (1)

- 4. Ganxets Glace (VI, 5.9 A2) F.A.: Ortuno, Salvado. 1996.
- 5. Dion's Dihedral (VI, 5.9 A3) F.A.: Dolecki, Isaac. 1999.
- 6. *North Ridge* (right-hand skyline most common descent) F.A.: Huber, Koch, Schmidt. 1955.

DION'S DIHEDRAL. VI, 5.9 A3 THE EAST FACE OF LA ESFINGE PARON VALLEY, PERU LARRY DOLECKI, SEAN ISAAC JUNE 14-23, 1999

2 pitches

4th Class

5.7

60m (9)

RACK

60-M ROPES
2 SETS CAMS TO 4"

2 SETS NUTS

2 SETS MICRONUTS

1 - 1/2"

1 - 5/8"

10 KBS

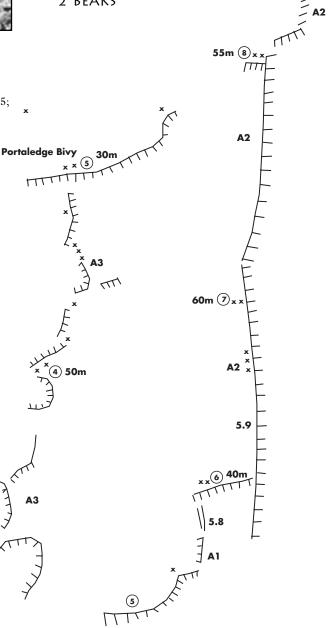
10 LAS

20 HEADS, MAINLY MED.

ALL HOOKS

RIVET HANGERS

2 'BEAKS



A

TOIDID ILIEAIRIN

A



Left: West Ridge of Mount Hunter. Photo: Todd Learn. Above: The rock buttress, Mount Hunter. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Graham blurted out. I knew it was true. Cutting the four of clubs from the deck was one of the most depressing things I had done in a long time. Oh well, I thought, there is always a chance. As I watched Graham take his turn at cutting the deck of cards, I hoped that he would cut something lower than my four. All hopes faded, however, when he cut the queen of hearts. "Well, I hope you guys have a good time on the Cassin Ridge," I said. I didn't really mean it, though. I had come all the way to Alaska to climb the Cassin, and now it looked as if it wouldn't be happening.

Eamonn had been forced to make his decision; due to altitude sickness, he could not continue. I wasn't going because of the cut of the cards. I felt strong and capable of climbing the Cassin but would not get the chance. We had decided that we would not leave Eamonn alone for a month. That meant that one of the remaining three was going to have to stay behind. Since Rob had organized this expedition, we decided he should climb the Cassin. That left Graham and me to decide which one of us would go. We had decided that drawing cards was the best alternative. I should have known better; I never have had much luck at cards.

We had just came down from the 17,200-foot camp on the West Buttress Route of Mount McKinley, where we had spent two miserable nights trying to acclimatize for our planned trip up the Cassin Ridge. Each night Eamonn had got sicker. He had terrible headaches and vomited several times. I knew that he was coming down with cerebral edema and tried to treat him with Diamox and Dexamethasone. It wasn't working. He just couldn't keep the pills down. After the second night, we decided that going down as soon as possible was essential for Eamonn's continued health. At least at the 14,200-foot camp there was a doctor if he got any sicker. Getting him down the ridge and headwall back to that camp was a huge ordeal. By morning he was feeling even worse and was having difficulty walking in a straight line. We spent a huge portion of that day short-roping him down the narrow ridge between 17,200 feet and 16,200 feet and finally down the headwall to the 14,200-foot camp and medical tent. The doctor confirmed my suspicions; Eamonn had cerebral edema. He was treated with more Diamox and Dexamethasone and spent the night there with us on supplemental oxygen. The next morning, Eamonn felt quite a bit better and the four of us headed down. We moved quickly to the 7800-foot camp, where we had cached our food and other gear — all the while heatedly discussing who would go on the Cassin.

It was that night in camp that we cut the cards to make the decision: Rob and Graham would be the ones to go on the Cassin. They began planning and packing almost immediately. In the morning, once we had seen them off, Eamonn and I started the depressing ski back to Kahiltna Base. After resting for a day, though, things changed. Inspired by the amazing mountains that surrounded us, we start thinking about other, lower-altitude objectives. The choice was simple. We would climb the West Ridge of Mount Hunter. Situated right beside the basecamp, this awe-inspiring ridge could be seen snaking up towards Hunter's summit. Though we both knew little of the route, from the information supplied by the rangers it sounded varied and challenging.

e arrived at the base of the West Ridge at around 8 p.m. on May 19 and started up the lower slopes leading to the ridge proper. We had decided to climb in the cold of the night in order to take advantage of more stable snow slopes. After weaving through an interminable crevasse slope, we finally reached the ridge and then worked our way up to 9700 feet, where at 4 a.m. we crawled into our bivy tent to sleep the day away. As I settled into my sleeping bag, I was pleased with the fact that we were moving so quickly though I knew the climbing was going to get harder over the next couple of days. The following day, we worked our way up a 500-foot rock buttress that involved moderate fifth-class climbing with some difficult routefinding. After the rock, we continued up the snowy ridge to 10,800 feet, where we set up camp. Eamonn continued to feel well and the weather had been good so far, which made us feel confident about being able to climb the route.

The next day, we left our tent, sleeping bags, stove, etc. behind and began climbing with light packs. Following a steep section of ice, we began the most interesting part of the whole route, a long, corniced snow ridge leading to the plateau below the summit tower. The climbing felt very insecure, with only our two pickets for a running belay. There was huge exposure down the south face and the worry of the cornice overhanging to the north. At midnight on the night of the 21st, we arrived at the 14,570-foot summit in the glow of the setting sun. The sun never actually set; it merely dipped below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of orange and red. Seventeen hours after leaving our tent at 10,800 feet, we arrived back and after eating fell into an exhausted slumber. The next day, we made our way back to the base of the route, where we rested, ate well and felt proud of the route we had just climbed.

On May 23, we were back at Kahiltna Base drying gear and trying to decide what to do with the two weeks

that we had until our flight back to Talkeetna. Looking at Denali in the distance, we decided we could not leave without giving it another try. While lazing around Kahiltna Base, we decided to do the West Rib instead of the Cassin. Though it was not as steep and technical as the Cassin, we considered it a worthy objective.

On the morning of the 24th, we packed nine days of food and started skiing towards the route. After moving up the Kahiltna for a couple of hours, we turned onto its northeast fork, also known as the Valley of Death. Threatened continually by seracs and laced with huge crevasses, this narrow valley is a truly awe-inspiring place that lives up to its name. Crossing crevasses big enough to swallow a house and moving quickly beneath areas exposed to seracs, we followed a trail we assumed had been made by Rob and Graham days earlier. That evening, we arrived at the base of the route and set up camp under relatively clear skies.

The next day, we soloed up the lower couloir that leads to the true West Rib. This couloir is the technical crux of the route; it is 1200 feet long and consists of fifty- to sixty-degree snow and ice. We then made our way up moderate snow slopes to 12,800 feet, where we made camp. The following morning the weather was beautiful. It turned out to be an amazing day, with some of the most enjoyable climbing on the route. We climbed over beautiful granite, in ice gullies and up moderately steep mixed ground. At around 6 p.m. that evening, we set up camp at 14,800 feet.

Things did not look so good the next morning. The weather had turned for the worse. The visibility was poor and there was light snow throughout the day. It was still climbable weather, though, and we decided to continue moving up over the moderate mixed ground. Late that evening we dug out a place to pitch our tent in everworsening weather. By the following morning, the tent walls were crushing us from the weight of the snow that had accumulated overnight. We spent the next two days here, pinned down by heavy snowfall and zero visibility. We had to get out of the tent almost hourly to dig it out from under the huge loads of snow. Every time we opened the tent door, more spindrift would pour into the tent, causing our sleeping bags and all of our clothes to get increasingly damp. Cold and uncomfortable, we whiled away the time playing cards and reading. Although it seemed that the weather was going to stop us from going higher, we never discussed retreat.

When we woke up on the morning of the 30th, the weather had begun to change for the better. Our minds fixed on summitting, we decided to continue moving up the snow slopes and moderate mixed ground above. After hours of climbing, however, we were still nowhere near the summit. Both Eamonn and I were exhausted and decided we needed to stop. We searched the snow and ice slopes for a place to set our tent. While walking



Summit of Mount Hunter. Photo: Todd Learn

back towards Eamonn, I was stunned to see the slope below my feet begin to move. The large amounts of new snow over the previous two days had created an unstable snow layer. I had just triggered a six-inch-thick slab avalanche several hundred feet across. Frozen in my track, all I could do was watch the slide roar down the slope below, all the while wondering about my fate if I were to get caught up in it. After making my way back to Eamonn, we continued our search, though decidedly more cautiously now. Half an hour later, still unable to find any flat real estate for our tent and wanting a place safe from possible slides, we began to hack a ledge out of a thirty-degree ice slope. After hours of work, we crawled into our tent completely exhausted.

We woke up later than planned the next day, but seeing clear skies when we looked out the tent spurred us to action. After quickly packing, we climbed the last several hundred feet of steep ground to the Football Field, a large plateau 800 feet below the summit. We met several parties that were on their way to the summit from the West Buttress Route since the Football Field is where the two routes meet. Slowly we worked our way up the final snow slopes in the ever thinner air. As we reached the summit ridge high winds threatened to rip us off the mountain, and it was with great difficulty that we made our way towards the summit. Late in the day on the 31st, we reached the highest point in North America.

After just enough time to snap a couple of pictures, we began our descent. We made our way down the West Buttress Route, spending one night at the 17,200-foot camp, and then continued our way down to Kahiltna Base. We had hit the one day of good weather we needed for our summit. As we descended, the weather deteriorated and we had to navigate our way down the trackless glacier, breaking trail through waist-deep fresh snow. Finally we made it to Kahiltna Base, only to find that due to the poor weather we would not be flying out any time soon. After three days of waiting, breaks in the weather allowed the planes to fly in and pick us up.

Our pilot informed us on our way back to Talkeetna that Rob and Graham were waiting for us there. As we flew over the Alaska countryside, the sight of green trees and running water overwhelmed me. It was so beautiful to see something other than snow, ice and rock. When we landed, Rob and Graham were there to meet us. They told us of their attempt on the Cassin. They had not made it. You could tell they were disappointed, though they tried not to show it. The weather had been poor and they were running low on food, so they decided to retreat. Over many beers and burgers, we talked of our respective experiences in the Alaska Range. In the end, I decided that drawing the low card was not so bad after all. \triangle

Second Annual Lake Lovelywater Summer

Camp

Tami Knight

After an inauspicious and aborted attempt to git this camp going the summer of '98, whereas Peter Woodsworth got the bull by the horns and DID,

I felt obliged to actually get off my ass and do something about it the summer of '99. By mid-April we had a full roster of participants, and a heap of others on a growing wait-list. The phone would ring and I would cringe thinking it was some old pal: "... please please get me a spot on the camp cuz I've allweez wanted to go to

Tantalus but was too bloody lazy to either organize the flight in or sweat up the Approach of Despair."

But it didn't happen. So forgetting my lameness from the previous year, I got in there with Peter — who wears a button that tells ya "When I was your age I had to walk TWO MILES to get sex and drugs" — and we got together an idea of what this camp would be. The thing is, here on the Coast there are no ACC summer camps. Shit, in the Rotties, waaaaay to the east, the ACC musters up zillions of activities! Full to the brim with grinning participants, why wouldn't a summer camp be a total hit here on the Coast? We also decided to inflict upon the participants some climbing instruction, so folks might get the idea they were receiving something for



their money. Such a '90s ideal, eh?

We picked the third week of July for the happenin', cuz that was when we'd likely get the best weather. Tantalus is a fab place with lotsa howlingly beautiful peak-baggin' for the masses. Oh, mountaineering is ever so delectable when you can get on top of something and just glower down on the rest of the world beneath yer feet. And yawp in laughter about it. Now I already hoarsely mentioned the Approach of Despair — it's after the River Crossing from Hell and includes the Hill of Sweating Death. So we flew in. Ha! The Airborne Climbers of Canada! Another wonderful thing about Tantalus is the cabin there, so lovingly kept up by Ron Royston, and the cabin's proximity to the lake. Jeez, Ron

has ... what ... in there? Two boats and a canoe? It's a veritable yacht club. They even say there's fish in the lake. Only a hot tub, and a fridge full of cold, free beer would make this into perfection itself.

W9 had a pr9-trip m99ting to let the participants know they were in good hands. Peter scored the inimitable Monica Bittell as another "amateur leader". So, we all gathered and decided on food groups. I find if everyone cooks their own grub you get this rollicking competition for Who's Got the Best Dinner. In other words, food envy. Invariably there's lotsa leftovers too. Peter showed some slides from the '98 BCMC Tantalus camp, and I saw some participants wiping drool from their mouths. It was a good start. Everyone seemed to be in good shape and looking to have a fun time. As spring went along ... Okay, the truth: spring didn't really come this year, now, did it? It was monsoon season from the third week of October last year until the rains stopped mid-July. What? The rain stopped mid-July? Huzzah! Doesn't suck to be on this camp after all! Even tho' a week before the camp started I wondered if skis might not be a good idea. Okay, I love skiin' too, but mountain climbing cranks my tractor, so bugger the skis, fix the crampons to the boots and grab that ice axe. Shoulder that rucksack, visualize the wind in yer hairs as you wander 'cross the snowfield. Consider the sweat on yer brow drying as you soak up the joy of baggin' another peak.

We dovetailed our flight in with Ron and some very wet and fishless friends. They weren't making a beer run; they were indeed flying out from Tantalus saying things like "It rained the whole time," and "We caught no fish." But here, for us, for Day One of our camp, the sun was shining something fierce and the forecast was glorious. More or less. And so, wreathed in smiles, we flew in, taking five loaded trips with Dave drivin' the machine, and got ourselves all snuggy in the cabin. Rob posted next to his sleeping place a lovely pic of his girlfriend — "She's a good line dancer too, eh?" — we dug refrigerators for the tomatoes and wine in the considerable snowbanks out back, and then we just sprinted willy-nilly towards the closest thing resembling a mountain. Since this camp also purported to teach some skills, Peter and I got right to it with a snow school where we all tumbled down a snow slope doing the selfarrest thing as though we were crazed seals and demented penguins rolling and howling down a slope, and generally getting arrested. Then we wandered up the Iota and ogled the surroundings.

Day 2 was a long wait for everyone while I had a trouser-filling experience leading up to the Niobe-Pelops col. My husband and I had descended this very slope twelve years before, when it sported a short snow wall at mid-height. I had lowered him down it and then jumped



down afterwards. Well, ya wouldn't find this chick jumping that 'schrund now. It's a forty-foot vertical and overhanging wall on a gulpy steep snow slope. So while everyone cooled their tootsies for two hours in a slot of the 'schrund, I sketched up the snow shedding a wee tear over global warming. Once the whole crew was up some mumbling things like "Shit, you took a while, eh?" — we wandered up the cute summits of Niobe and then Pelops right next door. Fingers pointed at distant peaks to name as many as possible, and snouts were shoved into rucksacks to see what food lurked within. Obligatory comparisons of various chocolates were made. Are Chiplets better then Toblerone? Or should one bring bulk Hersheys cuz it's cheap and you can appear to be a real friend by sharing? The bush thrash down the south side of Pelops was a sweet introduction for some of the participants to krumholtz up the bum. Not everyone is into eating trees via orifices sans dents, but it's amazing what fetishes you discover in folks when they thrash and bash through impenetrable Coast Range bush. I remember Meriza's big bad broad smile as she emerged from yet another set of trees.

Now we come to a goofy thing. In the first three days of this camp, we had three bloodletting accidents that

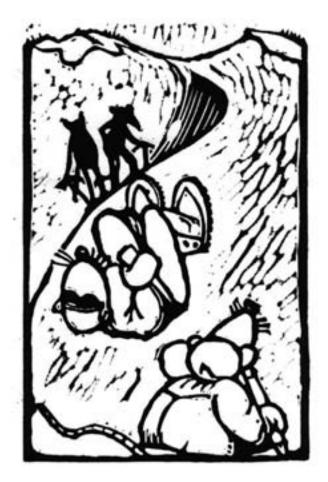


required Steri-Strips and hockey tape to ensure the victim didn't expire right there and then. Well, maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration. The first wound I don't really want to talk about cuz it was my own blood staining the snow, dribbling from a wound in the saddle of my right thumb and index finger. Hint: teach new climbers not to fall over belly-flopped onto the adze of their axe with their hand caught between axe and belly. How stupid can you get? The next day, Jacquie fell off the trail and slid downhill into a tree well. She got bashed up some with bruised ribs and lost confidence. Ravinder also fell off the trail, causing Peter to quip that we oughta rope up to go potty. Oh, ha ha ha. But he got his own a day or so later when he went out with Peter-2 and Brenda and had a total epic on some godforsaken ridge on Niobe. He is denying it now, but at the time he said he kissed the glacier and swore upon all the graves of his forefathers to lead an upright and Christian life because he had survived the epic.

L9st you think all w9 did in there was go potty roped up, fall off the trail and drip blood onto the snow, drink wine, swim in the snow-filled waters of the lake, ogle distant summits, roll in the snow like seals and learn a Garda knot ain't to fix the crotchless panties, I'll tell ya we had another real whiz-banger of an accident, this time on Day 3. You all ready? This is where I get to say, Shit happens. The short version is like this: Three of the camp participants went up the east ridge of Alpha,

and at around 1 p.m. the leader accidentally dislodged a large rock (an easy thing to do, by the way). The second, upon hearing "ROCK ROCK ROCK!" from above, jumped out of the way and caused herself a deep and nasty facial cut in the process of that jump. She also suffered an injury to one hand. The three of them descended to the cabin, which they reached just after 10 p.m., and the injured woman was heli-evac'd out the following morning. She drove to Vancouver, where she sought medical attention, and then she returned to fly back into the Tantalus cabin that evening. Despite her injuries, she continued to participate in the camp. That's the kind of participants we had on this camp: lawyers, physiotherapists and teachers willing to catapult into tree wells, bash their faces apart and come back smiling for more. The important thing we all learned was the power of the cellphone — that we were in the Sea to Sky corridor and could actually use it. We summoned the helicopter with the thing. We also learned to have thousands of Steri-Strips riding shotgun in the first-aid kit. By the end of the week, we had pretty much exhausted our supply of that and hockey tape. Yeah, the wine was gone too. And, duhh, understanding the nature of wilderness first aid is an utter necessity.

Omega Peak provided us all with the most delightful ascents — free of the gushing blood, falling rocks and



heart-stopping rappels of our other outings. We climbed it from the north, and we climbed it from the south, traversing northward over its loaf of a summit. We all climbed it once; some climbed it twice.

And then there was the day

seven of us wandered out to climb Alpha. Try as I might to find the saddle between Serratus and Alpha, the thing was studded with a half-dozen houndsteeth each a couple of hundred feet of gnarly rock tall. "God, the route's not HERE!" I snivelled, as Alpha snickered at me prowling around among the houndsteeth. Monica suggested we descend a little and take a look from lower down. Waddle, waddle, down we went and then, yeah, saw what looked to be the route up above. Four of us were tired enough to just say "We'll wait here while you guys take a look at the route." Monica, Kevin, and Rob said "OK, then we're just going to take a look at the route, OK?" Kevin's wife, Banafshah, was with Rochelle, Erika and me on a little dry outcrop of rock as we watched the three moving above become the size of lima beans and then peas and then tiny, like little beads. Ban jumped up suddenly, shouting "The bastards are GOING FOR IT! They ARE! Arrrghghgh! They're going fer the summit!" Initially I was too tired to care, but Ban's crazed squirrel rantings made me realize with horror that we'd have to return the next day. That, shitgaddam,

the four of us sitting there like lumps had indeed blown it. That those three up there were making for the summit. I watched as the three far, far above vanished over a ridge out of sight. Ban glowered, Erika looked bummed, Rochelle silently looked away, and I had to go pee.

As the light rose out of the east early the next morning, Rochelle, Ban, Erika and I — four chicks each with a bone in our throat — purposefully stalked to our high point of the day before. Once there, we were not to be stopped. Even if aliens had landed there next to us, they'd have had to wait for us to summit before we would take them to our leader. We were that psycho to make the summit. Which, amid swirly clouds and great mountain winds serving to add drama, we did a few hours later. Yessssss!!

The weather just wouldn't stop being brilliant. Peter gave a demonstration of prussiking in the bugs and trees outside the cabin while others took the day off to row languidly around in the few hundred metres of water by the shore that were ice-free. Some of the pinnipeds in the



crowd went swimming in the water, but I found it seriously a brass-monkey experience despite lacking the necessary balls to truly understand the feeling. We also included a bit of trail clearing and a morning of How to Make Snow Anchors among the wonderful days of peak bagging and the evenings of trying to outcook each other.

We finished the week off with a great last-evening party, lavish with the last of our food and wine, and — surprise — Scotch! Peter had kept a hidden stash. What a guy!

Such fun it was that word's got out and I've had six or so phone calls about next year's Summer Camp. One participant — our first-aid attendant in excelsius, Meriza, still grinnin' about the trees — plans to return. Old dinosaur-types have heard about it and, remembering the camps of yore, are planning their bribes to get in should the thing sell out as though it were a whisky giveaway in deepest Scotland. Operators will be standing by to take yer calls in January.

COMING IN SECOND PETER TUCKER

In the mountains there lies a song line
It runs from there to here.
Its verses are glaciers and icefields,
The words are rock and snow.

In the spring of 1967, four men traversed the seven major icefields along the spine of the Continental Divide between Jasper and Lake Louise in Alberta. They had little prior knowledge of the terrain and travelled with gear that now belongs in a museum. Chic Scott, Neil Liske, Donnie Gardiner and Charlie Locke forced a ski route through some of the most rugged country imaginable — country that still remains infrequently visited despite the recent explosion in outdoor recreation. It took them 21 days.

Over the following twenty years, there were many attempts to retrace their steps, none successful. Thirteen years after the original traverse, Rory Macintosh, Saul Greenberg and Don Chandler tried to do the route in a lightweight style. Banking on the precept that there would be no need for a tent fly in the cold Rockies spring, they got dangerously soaked just a few days out when the weather once again demonstrated that it doesn't read the guidebooks. After wading through a foot of water over the ice on Fortress Lake, they decided that the conditions were too horrendous to continue. Rory never gave up his dream, though, and in 1987, exactly 20 years after the first traverse, he and Steve Langley organized another team, which included my closest friend, Charlie Eckenfelder, and me. We completed the trip, and this is our story.

The cliffs and the drifts will sing to you
In voices of flesh and bone.
You'll sense the line's strength
in your body.
Ski sure when you're on its course,
Lag slack-legged if you skid to the side.
Leave the excitement behind;
Be led by the song in your body.

Something's wrong. Two hours from the start, and the snow in the Whirlpool River valley has run out. We add our skis to the already ridiculous loads on our backs. Rory is limping. My own knee, recently damaged, twangs a sympathetic chirp as we each take some of Rory's gear to ease his strain. We camp on bare ground that night, with a lip-service fire to fool us into thinking we're warm. It works

The snow we see the next day is not a medium for travel. The open, meandering Whirlpool continually shunts us through heavy bush and across tentative snow bridges. It is wearing on the body and the nerves. My mind isn't in expedition mode yet, and I feel that our progress is negligible. We have so far to go, and I fear that I don't have the stuff to do a trip like this.

Shambling across some gravel beds, I look up to see the others silently staring. As I draw alongside, I am more than a little stunned by the object of their attention. The shattered mass of seracs that is the Scott Glacier is the gateway to our first icefield, the Hooker. The gate-keeper is a bastard, but I know that he owes Rory a favour. A really cold wind whips my face, and, at last, I feel the first inkling of high-country rhythm seeping into my chilled lungs. Yeah.

For days we were deaf but to breathing
And our heart's push on push on.
Cobbles caught in the river's braid
Squinted at our gaze.
The damp first valley sniffed up
our backside
And our only welcome was
a clenching of teeth.

ur second night, also in the valley bottom, was colder than the first. It still felt like night as we moved up into the maw of the Scott, each knowing that this was the first real commitment to the route. Rory and Steve picked the glacial lock, finding a clean ramp on the east side of the icefall that took us 3000 feet up to the Hooker. Charlie and I then led the way past some steep slots before the world opened up — clear, flat and stunning. We had acres of whipping cream before us; I, for one, was ready to lick the beaters.

But high on the Scott Glacier's snout,
In the pricking of thinner air,
We began at last to hear
Small, dry whispers from
a rime-blasted billow.
A crevasse's warning mutter
Under the chatter of sastrugi.

The next morning, a whiteout's blinders gave me my first chance to witness some of the latent talents of my partners. Skiing close together on two ropes, we felt our way past the yawn of huge crevasses that we could only see once upon them. Steve and Rory led through with a finesse born of ... what? Experience? Sixth sense? Living right? Not for the last time was I astonished at the surety with which these two moved safely over dangerous ground without being able to see more than a few metres ahead.

The whiteout soon dissipated, leaving us in sight of Serenity col. I guessed that it would take about an hour to break trail over to it. We were there in 15 minutes; for the second time that day, I realized that the sense of sight is not all it's cracked up to be.

One of the dichotomous joys of this kind of travel is that you never really know what is on the other side of a pass or ridge. At every such feature, I was at once excited to have a look and frightened that the route would be impassable or deadly. Your map gives you a clue but nothing more. This time, the east side of Serenity col yielded a 5000-foot powder descent to the valley floor, by far the best skiing on the whole trip. If Charlie were alive, however, he would not concur. Though he was one of the finest skiers in Canada, the combined bugaboo of a massive pack and stiff boards better suited to hardpack made it tough to link two turns. Rory and I, skiing on soft-snow "noodles", yee-hawed our way out of there. And Steve, well ... he's a Brit.

After a brief break at the west end of Fortress Lake, we headed off in sunshine to pick up our first food cache, which we had stashed 10 kilometres away at the other end of the lake. In the first of his many "horizon jobs", Charlie began to skate across the packed surface with his monster pack. Not even Steve could keep up; pretty soon, all we could see of Charlie was the image of a little stick figure with its little stick legs kicking left, kicking right, rhythmically, systematically, unstoppably.

When those legs did stop, they found themselves by a huge, unoccupied outfitter's tent on the south shore of the lake, a couple of kilometres short of our cache. We spent two nights there, luxuriating in the warmth of the wood stove, making small repairs (Charlie the dentist fixed my loose filling with some boot-repair stuff), eating some of the treats we had craftily included in the cache and generally basking in our unforeseen good fortune.

Lots of laughs, lots of stories and lots of food

When I awoke on Day 6, I recognized the cruel trick we had played on ourselves. Two comfortable nights had chased away our "expedition edge", and we had a hard time motivating ourselves to get moving. After a lazy trudge to the end of the lake, I decided that I needed to dash up the Chaba riverbed to get my blood rolling. Sprinting on skis with an eighty- or ninetypound pack is more a state of mind than a stylish endeavour, but the race it engendered among Steve, Charlie and me seemed to do the trick for our spirits. We were still a little out of breath when the master of energy conservation strolled up, giving us a look that said "Way to go, juveniles — we're all in the same spot, but one of us isn't tired."

Ahead was the eerie routefinding through the creaky, tottering seracs of the Chaba icefall, and the 3500-foot ascent to Chaba col. I was roped to Charlie, and for the next few hours I felt like a rag doll being dragged behind a thoroughbred. We kicked steps up the final 300 feet and hugged each other with joy as the rugged pass afforded us views towards the Columbia Icefield. Shortly after Steve and Rory joined us, we skied down the gently curving slope towards the Wales glacier. Suddenly, we found ourselves in a really heavily crevassed section and Charlie went in. As the rope came taut, I dived to the snow and scrabbled to gain some purchase with my skis and poles. I looked up to see Charlie's head and ski tips visible above the lip of the slot; he was wedged in by his pack. As I lay there, I watched him merrily ski/chimney his way out of the crevasse and roll up to his feet. He was laughing so hard I couldn't help but join in. Everything was a happy adventure for this guy — it was one of the reasons I loved him so much.

We continued down to the Wales confluence and up another 1500 feet to a spectacular camp on a remote arm of the Chaba Icefield, north of Omega and Triad peaks. We had skied more than twenty kilometres and up 5000 vertical feet that day, and we were high.

We skied verses Hooker, Chaba Lips relented.

ay 7 began reasonably enough. We could see two possible cols to shoot for, but could not tell from the map which was better. We chose the wrong one (couldn't safely descend the other side),

but I'm certain that something made us select that saddle. This notch perfectly framed Mount Alberta, one of the most awesome peaks in the Rockies. The true passage for us, but a short distance away, afforded no such view.

The east side of the col took us onto a seldom-visited region of the Columbia Icefield that contained some of the most complex terrain I had ever seen. Avoiding any significant loss of elevation would mean negotiating a series of ice cliffs that had avalanche and death written all over them. We knew one group had successfully travelled that way, though I felt pretty certain there hadn't been as much snow on the route then. This was an interesting moment for us, as we had never really talked about how we would make crux decisions such as this. There was no de facto leader, though Steve had clearly been a key driving force. I guess that by the third time the word "suicide" crossed my lips, the others got the pretty distinct impression that I would not be a happy puppy climbing the ice barrier.

We skirted the cliffs and rappelled off the icefield into the head of the Bush River drainage. I found the next couple of kilometres as nerve-racking as anything I had ever encountered. We contoured high above the Bush River, edging delicately across rock-hard, avalanche-swept paths. There were rarely ever more than a few millimetres of contact between my ski edges and the surface supporting me, my pack and my shaking legs. Once, I heard the edges of both my skis pop as, in one particularly dicey spot, I had to bridge my tips and tails between two blocks of avalanche debris. Fortunately, nobody came off and we soon found ourselves on less dangerous ground in the trees.

We now had to regain the two thousand feet we had lost, but the snowpack had gone isothermal. The terrain consisted of an endless series of cliff benches that would have been difficult enough with day packs and friendly snow. After a couple of hours of desperate flailing, Charlie hit on the idea that it would be easier to pack our skis and climb trees to gain access to each successive bench. Though we made progress in this way, the toll it exacted on our skin and clothing was awful. Climbing a dense spruce while carrying a pack and skis is akin to forcing yourself through a giant, resinous cheese grater. I thought a number of times about where we could have been had I not been so frightened of the ice cliffs: luxuriating at 9000 feet in a comfortable camp at the foot of Mount

Columbia ... or entombed in a frozen mausoleum at the bottom of some avalanche runnel, only to be spat out into the Bush River when the glacier got around to giving us up. Maybe that's why we were surprisingly exuberant as we camped atop the final bench in the dying light of that incredible day. Or maybe it had something to do with the fact that, only seven days into the trip, we had covered nearly half the entire distance. We would be off the Columbia and at our second cache in a day and a half. There didn't seem to be anything that could stop us. We gleefully reduced our pack weights by lobbing Mrs. Wright's Light Fruit Cake grenades into the void. This would later prove to be dramatic irony at its best.

A clear dawn saw us moving upward again. Here in the subalpine, the snowpack was real and our progress underscored our confidence of the previous evening. Mount Columbia came into view, and each step drew us closer to the first peak that Rory and I had ever climbed together. That afternoon, we came across a cache left by some other ski tourers. My God, we weren't the last four people on the planet! Stopped for a rest, we all casually observed the cirrous lace that damped the sky's azure, and we all just as casually dismissed this as a portent of no significance. That evening, camped on the crest of the largest non-polar icefield in the world, I felt as big and as small as I have ever felt. I was as powerful and as pitiful as I had ever been and as alone and as embraced as ever I could be.

Too soon, storms struck
White they shrieked
Shattered the blue
Drove the sky's keen spittle in our eyes.
Columbia

N one of us was really surprised or even overly disappointed when the weather closed in like a collapsing tent. This was, after all, the Columbia Icefield — maker of wind, snow and ice. The number of clear days in a year here is smaller than the number of cigars Churchill smoked in a week. Rory and Steve plotted a course by map and compass; we skied down the Saskatchewan Glacier and hit our second cache bang on. Out of the whiteout but not out of the storm, we decided to make it an early day and camp by the cache. The more we could eat, the less we would have to haul with us for the latter part of the trip. Seemed like a simple equation to me!

There is only so much one can stuff in

one's gullet, however, so it was with immense effort that I shouldered my pack the following morning. The slope up to the Castleguard meadows was short but steep, with only a mirage of snow overlying the frozen mud and scree. Kicking steps into this crud was almost certainly responsible for some of the boot problems that Steve and Charlie experienced later. I felt awkward and out of balance, and nearly tipped backward a couple of times until I gained some rhythm near the top.

The Castleguard meadows area is a spectacular alpine basin set at the foot of the mountain by the same name. Unfortunately, the snowfall had not abated, so we broke trail somewhat blindly, each of us remembering what we could from past visits. Near the end of the meadows, movement towards me popped my balloon of reverie. It was a small group of skiers, one of whom I knew. Phil had just portered in gear and supplies for a group of spelunkers who were exploring a part of the renowned Castleguard cave. Following a broken trail was strange enough for me, but I doubt that even David Lynch could have helped me concoct a more surreal vision than that which awaited at the cave. Thirty-nine men and one woman, each smelling as if they had just rolled out of a coin laundry, swarmed the area like ants on a fallen hive. Preparing for a siege on the formidable cave, they were stamping down the site, setting up huge canvas tents and carting around supplies like grunts at a boot camp. I was about to inquire of one of them how they had managed to get a permit to take down trees in a national park, when the lone female walked by with a twenty-foot spruce under each arm. Well, who am I to argue with someone who probably didn't even need a saw to accomplish her task? The fifty or so pink flamingoes, peppered liberally around the site, were no more out of place than we felt at that moment, so we pushed off muttering that caving wasn't really an outdoor sport anyway.

Though we may have held the moral high ground momentarily, we were headed for low ground in short order. Just a few metres below the cave, the snowpack became isothermal once again. Climbing through sugar is frustrating and arduous; skiing down in this stuff through steep, dense forest with 10 days of food and gear on your back is just nuts. It was possible to glide ten feet, after which you would disappear from sight in a blaze of crystalline shame. I was piteously happy that the trees prevented the cavers from watch-

ing this humiliating debacle as the four of us pitched and rolled through the woods like drunken sailors on a storm-tossed yawl. It was only the dream of the valley floor that kept us from a mass suicide ritual. Two hours of crashing and digging later, we bashed our way, soaked and exhausted, onto the welcome flats of the Castleguard River. The optimism of fools knows no bounds.

Whatever prospect of salvation we had hoped was awaiting us on the Castleguard River valley floor vanished with our first few steps. The snowpack strength was, if anything, worse than what we had just endured. Only now we didn't even have gravity working in our favour. With each step, the surface crust gave way, dropping the lead person nearly a metre to the ground and forcing him to literally dig his ski tips out. We tried looking for the geographical clues that suggested a shallower snowpack, with little success. Usually, three of us would sit down and wait 10 or 15 minutes while the grunt in the front carved a fifty-metre trough ahead. Then we'd trudge up to the pathetic, exhausted soul and wait again while another victim took his turn on the treadmill of doom. Rory soon discovered that he could save himself some energy by attaching a thin rope to the tips of each of his skis, thus allowing him to retrieve them a little more easily from their sugary tomb. In this way we inched along, growing weaker and more frustrated while the damp, glowering day passed us by as a triathlete would a club-footed child. From that day on, the Castleguard River would forever be known to us as "Up Shit Creek".

Four kilometres of this was all our battered bodies and spirits could take. It was not hard to get agreement to camp. We dropped our packs and sprawled across them gratefully — all of us, that is, except Steve. While the rest of us watched in mute amazement, he, without a word, staggered on down the valley, arms and poles akimbo, looking for all the world like an inebriated scarecrow trying to escape a burning field. As I began to set up the tent, I silently thanked and cursed Steve for his strength and drive. His efforts would make it physically easier for me the next day, but psychologically harder for me to ignore my inner belief that I didn't have what it took to do a trip like this. In the drizzling twilight, Steve returned, informing us that he had gotten lost and had ended up travelling in a circle. While I felt sorry for his valiant but futile attempt, the little vindictive schmuck that resides somewhere beneath

the layers of my consciousness felt just a wee bit satisfied.

The following day was a rest day. Nobody actually declared it thus; it was just that nobody moved. Outside, the constant rain and wet snow beat a tattoo on the tents. Inside, we retreated as well. Having been hammered hard the previous day, we each sought solace within our down cocoons. We spoke little, ate little, read a little and dozed a lot. I found myself caught in that "poor sleep / barely awake" cycle that always seems to leave me more tired despite the apparent rest. When my eyes were open, I would trace the hypnotic lines of condensation as they wove their way down the filamentous walls of the Gore-tex tent. When my eyes were closed, my brain ran unbidden scenarios of my life, changing the faces and actions to produce impossible endings. Through it all, the only constant was Charlie's quiet presence - God, how I wish I could thank him for that.

Dawn saw the weather move more resolutely towards snow. Remarkably, our own resolves had similarly strengthened as we geared ourselves for the 6000-foot ascent to Lyell col. We followed the vestige of Steve's earlier track for a while, saw where he had veered off, razzed him about it as only good friends can and then moved through the woods to the tarn at the base of the East Alexandra Glacier. Visibility was again nil as we headed upward. After about an hour, the storm began to intensify and, as we couldn't see a thing, we decided to make camp. Rory unroped and started to stamp out a tent platform. Within moments he had disappeared up to his waist into a crevasse. Adrenaline must have given us X-ray vision; suddenly, continuing into the maelstrom didn't seem like such a bad idea. Steve and Charlie moved off quickly, with Rory and I following their rapidly filling tracks. Six thousand feet of elevation gain is an enormous task under any circumstances; deep snow, heavy packs and virtual blindness combined to make this an epic day. But something had changed. As irrational as it may seem, it felt good.

As the afternoon wore on, the whiteout lifted a little, allowing us a glimpse of the route. There was a pass directly ahead, though this was not where we were headed. We were traversing east towards Lyell col when the storm stiffened once again. Just short of our goal, we camped in a large crevasse and, similarly to the first party 20 years earlier, stayed there for two nights. It was now near the end of March, and we began to wonder whether we would have enough food to complete the trip if the weather did not improve. We couldn't afford many more non-travelling days. It was likely because of this that Steve took a stronger role in urging us onward. That morning, as I moved up out of the crevasse that had partly sheltered us for a couple of days, I caught sight of a huge cornice suspended like the sword of Damocles on the ridgetop above us. I said nothing, put my head down and kept going.

Blind, We followed the strength of our sinews Lyell, Mons

I don't remember much about the trip across the vast, gentle Lyell Icefield. Once, the whiteout lifted — like a Middle Eastern temptress raising her diaphanous veil for a brief, hungry moment before withdrawing to her chamber. Steve and Charlie were a long way ahead. We had agreed to regroup for a break near Division col, but when Rory and I arrived there we found only their tracks leading south. I was angry that they had continued onward, and I blamed Steve for his pushon tactics. We caught them up on the other side of Division Mountain, where I told Steve that I was pissed that we hadn't stuck with the plan. He pointedly told me we weren't a bunch of Boy Scouts, and that was the end of that.

We crossed a tenuous slope and made camp on the Mons Icefield. Evening brought a break in the storm, and we were treated to a healing view of the ice-draped Bush Mountain massif across Icefall Brook to the west. We were so grateful just to be able to see; it buoyed our spirits immensely.

The following morning, Steve and Rory woke us as usual. In a semistuporous state, Charlie and I pulled on some clothes against the chill air and laboriously extricated ourselves from our bags. I began the routine but still painful chore of putting on my icy boots. Fifteen minutes later, I was sitting in the doorway of the tent - warm, moist and tired from my exertions — when I heard a muffled chortle coming from the other tent. When I asked what was going on, the chuckle exploded into peals of laughter, followed by a chorus of "April Fools!" It was 1 a.m. To this day, I have yet to exact retribution, but ... I'm a patient man.

The traverse of the Mons Icefield passed in much the same way for me as

had that of the Lyell. The storm had returned, evaporating hopes for views and increasing my anxiety about what I knew faced us near day's end. The site of the rappel off the west glacier into Forbes Creek is tricky enough to find when conditions are good. Now I was concerned that the one good rock that is usually used to anchor the rope would be buried beneath all the new snow. Well, Steve and Rory found it with little trouble. Rory set up the anchor and was first to descend. As we had no rappel devices and the ropes were too icy to use an effective carabiner brake, Rory used the often uncomfortable and always humiliating dulfersitz technique, wherein the rope travels between your legs and over one shoulder to create enough friction to provide a controlled descent. Clearly, the heavier your pack is, the greater the pressure between your legs. Nuff said. When Steve offered to lower me rather than have me rappel, I jumped at the opportunity. The gully was icy and steep, but the descent was uneventful.

The 2500-foot drop to Forbes Creek was tricky. The snow in the high bowl just below the rappel at 9000 feet was avalanche-swept, wind-blasted and crusty. We each handled it in our own inimitable way. Off the ice and unroped, Charlie pulled another horizon job, taking a highvelocity line that sped him to lower-angled safe ground in short order. Steve did many low-angle traverses with kick turns at the end of each. Rory skied steeper traverses followed by smooth tele turns to bring him around, while I tried to put in some short-radius telemarks. I fell enough times trying this technique that after about 15 painful minutes I began to copy Rory. The ligaments in my right knee swore revenge on me for this and waited only until the final steep pitch down to Forbes Creek to demand payment. The pain was sharp and a little scary, and for the first time in a while I thought about bailing. I looked at my friends and decided that I couldn't leave just yet. One of them would want to go out with me, and I couldn't face the thought of ending the trip for him too. I kept my mouth shut and we turned north towards the Freshfields.

In a little while we arrived at a beautiful, sheltered spot with an open creek. It was a perfect place to pitch the tents: flat, out of the storm, with no need to melt snow for water. Steve was still in his "push on" mode, however, and he urged us to continue on up to the head of the creek. I was still stinging from the Boy Scout remark of the previous day, so after way too little discussion I just followed

the others. An hour's ski took us into a high bowl not far from the final pitch up to the Freshfield Icefield. This place was the complete antithesis of the idyll we had just left. Here, above the trees, the storm hammered us with unabated fury and unabashed glee. We coined it "the windiest place in the world" as we struggled to peg down the Gore-tex banshees before they flew off to Oz. I couldn't help feeling that this struggle had not been worth the extra hour's travel. It was only some time later that I learned that both Rory and Charlie were feeling the same way; yet we all remained silent. Hard men don't whine - not, at least, until they write the story.

> Pitched by the press of thighs Freshfield The long wind snapped at our ears Wapta

The storm raged at us all night, turning our tents into nylon echo chambers. None of us slept well, and we were happy to get rolling in the morning - such as it was. A short ski took us up to the base of Niverville Col, our gateway to the Freshfields. The slope reared up for 500 feet at forty degrees, and even through the veil of the whiteout we could see that it was heavily loaded with the snows of the previous week. The Wizard of Oz metaphor of that moment is still burned into my mind. Steve, the tin man with no heart, led on up. Charlie, the scarecrow, followed blindly and unthinkingly. I, the cowardly lion, quaked in my boots from more than just the horrendous wind chill, and Rory ... well, someone has to be Dorothy.

Truthfully, we made the decision to head on up as one. We were just about out of food, we had all encountered worse scenarios before, and we were too close to the end of the trip to give up now. We took turns out in front, cutting shallow switchbacks across the narrow defile. With each step, the snow sloughed away from under the leader's skis, avalanching away the tracks below. The couloir steepened and narrowed near the top, forcing us to pack our skis again. Charlie the machine ploughed his way to the top. I was last, struggling to focus on inner balance while my outer equilibrium was threatened each time the tips of my skis jammed the slope above me. At the top, I nearly cried as I looked at my friends, looked back down the route we had just climbed and then saw the easy-angled fairway that led to the Lloyd Mackay hut. Safe.

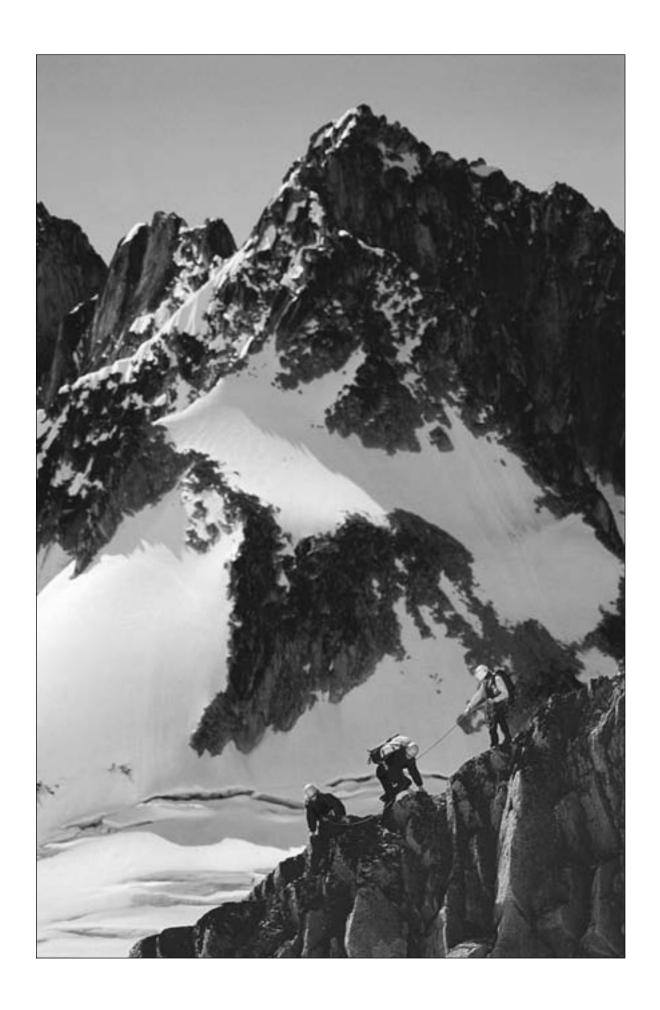
I guess it had to happen at some point. Whether it was the anxiety from just having escaped with our lives, the utter disappointment at finding our expected food cache gone, simmering tensions over differing styles, or some permutation of all three, an explosion occurred at the hut. Steve and Rory began to scream at one another about what route to follow next and whether to head out right then. To be honest, I don't remember who represented which point of view; nor does it really matter. We all knew that the original route led us up to Lambe col via a slope that too closely resembled the one we had just survived. We also knew that the route out via the Mummery Glacier offered little better given the prevailing conditions. The tension in the room was razor-sharp as I studied the maps in quiet desperation. While the manhood challenges rose to their zenith, the solution revealed itself to me. If we descended the Freshfield Glacier and entered the Blaeberry drainage over Howse Pass, we would avoid any major avalanche hazard. Thankfully, fists unclenched, jaws loosened, pulses slowed and shoulders dropped. As the electricity drained away, so too did our energy. We would stay at the hut overnight and get a really early start the next morning. We turned our collective attention to the food situation. If all went well, we could be out in three to four days. Without the food that I had arranged to be left at this hut (I never did find out what happened to it), we had enough to get us by for a day, maybe two. The irony of us pitching several fruitcakes into the Bush River drainage haunted me even as the helpless frustration of not finding the food began to ease. We would make it, though. We'd be on the familiar turf of the Wapta Icefield in two days, the weather would clear, and we would cruise home for a song. Yeah, right.

The following morning exuded magic. ▲ The previous day's tension was gone, and we were rested and didn't have to pack up frozen tents. At 5 a.m., we stepped out into the calm whiteout. We wended our way over a couple of windblown, rocky shoulders and fell through a world of rhythmic, muffled silk. The descent of the Freshfield Glacier was one of those events that evoke more feeling than memory: four bodies swinging through the silent gloaming down a thousand feet of the sweetest snow you can imagine. I heard nothing but my even breathing, felt nothing but the embodiment of joy.

We dropped out below the clouds onto Freshfield Lake and broke trail for 12 kilometres to Howse Pass. It was a huge relief both to be able to see and not to have to navigate by compass. Rory finessed his way down to the valley floor like a falcon returning to its traditional hunting grounds. I've yet to meet another who can read terrain as he does. Out in the open on the Blaeberry River, we could see the descent from Lambe Col - the route we would have taken had the snow conditions been more stable. I was only slightly sad that we had departed from the original path; the chicken in me was still flapping its wings pretty hard.

At this point, we had two options. The historic route from the Blaeberry up to the Wapta Icefield was via Wildcat Creek, an approach that in places is dense and narrow. On our maps, we could see a possible alternative that would have us head up Ebon Creek to around the 6500-foot level and then contour across some subalpine benches to Parapet Creek. From there, it looked as though we could continue over to the Wapta via the Capricorn, Barbette and Delta glaciers. No one we knew had travelled that way, so we went for it. It was a higher, more aesthetic line, and the weather seemed to be turning in our favour. That night, after 25 kilometres of trailbreaking, we ate the last of our suppers in a pretty gully not far below the ramparts of Breaker Mountain. With any luck, we would be out in two days our hunger to complete the trip would have to supersede the hunger in our bellies. We slept well.

In the morning, our spirits were high. We knew that we had to travel but 15 kilometres to reach the Peter Whyte hut, so we flew up Parapet Creek right back into the teeth of the dragon. The storm had just been hiding and was clearly pissed off that we had managed to evade it for most of a day. We crept along the southern edge of the Capricorn Glacier to the Barbette Glacier, whereupon visibility dropped to near zero. I knew from the map that keeping a contour was the best plan, so I stomped my way for nearly three kilometres through knee-deep snow to the Barbette-Delta col. Rory was right behind me, and I could feel his eyes boring into my back as I continued to steer away from what seemed the direct route to the edge of the 400-metre-wide saddle. He couldn't understand why I was veering north, but I had a funny feeling about the place. I wanted to check it out from below the ridge of the outlier, where it seemed



safer. When the cornice cracked and gave way a few minutes later, I felt somewhat vindicated.

My relief was great as we worked our way south across the Delta and over to Cauldron Lake, but I knew there was one more potential ugly spot. To get from the lake to the Peyto Glacier, one must traverse a narrow alley that turns the shoulder below the northeast ridge of Peyto Peak. Tipping back at thirty degrees above a series of cliff bands, this alley was the lowest-angle corridor available. The snowpack was abysmal here — shallow sugar over frozen scree. Steve led across on foot and we followed gingerly one at a time, knowing that this was the last of the really dicey spots. Back on skis, we again thanked our individual guardian watchers before sliding in to Peter Whyte hut an hour later.

We slid past the quiet cols the silent ridges And strode toward places that sang. Waputik

That night we were giddy as fools. We were out of food but found a box of sugar cubes. We laced tea with seven or eight cubes each and ate them straight as well. We also found a package of rice and something, which was rapidly dispatched. We bragged about doing the "Wapta 42" the next day and reaching the road. It would have been easy to ski to the road in a few hours via Peyto Lake, but, food or no, we were going to finish the route. Our bodies could feast off our own muscles for another day. Besides, the storm would die off and the final day would be as spectacular as any. As if.

The next morning, we had a Hillary breakfast: a breath of air and a quick glance around. A quick glance would have to do; we couldn't see a thing, anyway. Travel was slow, as the snow was deep and the winds were high. We skied by the drop to Bow hut and decided to skip the food cache in favour of keeping our elevation. Hopes of getting out that night were wasting away faster than we were, and since we couldn't be sure that this food too had not been eaten, we opted to put in more distance. We made it to Balfour hut and figured that we'd best save our strength for a final push the next day. In 1987, the Balfour hut had more holes in it than a croc has teeth. We watched as the wind forced spindrift through the walls as though they were cheesecloth. In the midafternoon, the door opened and in walked two frozen lads who had just come over

from Bow hut. They weren't used to storm travel and were quite happy to have reached the hut safely. They were only the second group of people we had seen in three weeks, and Steve had a wonderful greeting for them: he took off his boots, exposing the neoprene socks that he had rarely removed since the beginning of the trip. The stench was beyond their ability to assimilate; they put their gear back on and skied off into the whiteout, back to Bow hut. The true testament to human adaptability? We didn't smell a thing. We each slept well that night, knowing at some level that we were on the verge of completing a dream.

This morning, I don't need the wakeup call. I'm so hungry, I could eat the arse off a skunk. The wind hasn't eased, and, as we file out into the empty, blinding monster that has swallowed us for weeks, each of us knows that today will be work. Steve lifts his left arm and points up - Balfour high col thataway. In less than an hour we're there. Descending the main névé of the Waputik, I fall several times, each time believing that I have stopped moving when in fact I haven't. Out front on the rope, I listen to Charlie calling out directions to me: A little left... A few degrees to the right... Back around left... Too far...

I can't tell how much I'm turning. I'm weaving a drunken path through a land that doesn't exist — please, please, let me see something. Thankfully, Rory and Steve take the lead; now, at least, I can see them. Over Bath col, again right on the money, pushing across the Bath Glacier in echelon form through knee-deep snow, picking up speed as we're drawn inexorably past the wild east wall of Mount Daly. We stop for some liquid, and the whiteout lifts. Not far now. There are two more short climbs to the final 4000-foot descent; I'm dreaming about how I'm going to eat that slope up. Charlie and I wobble together to the narrow saddle and are instantly blasted off our feet by the banshee wind. I lie there, blinking, unbelieving, before crawling to the lip and laughing at what lies before us — the top thousand feet is glare ice. We're going to have to bite and scratch and claw our way right to the end. We unrope, and Charlie, the veteran of Tuckerman's Ravine, strolls down the face as though he's taking a Sunday walk along the seawall in Vancouver. The rest of us don crampons and pick our way down like spiders on a frigid pane of glass. In the trees, we're out of the storm at last. The others, smelling the road, have continued down. I sit by myself, unable to grasp that it's over. The song line that has led me here has now left me here, and I feel more lost than at any time in the past three weeks. What now?

We slipped out of the blast Down to a porridge of wet snow Firs nuzzled up to a sodden asphalt slab Where mouths in the faces of people Opened and closed like fishes.

The rest of the day remains a vague stream of consciousness in my mind: stubbornly forcing turns in the final few thousand feet of mashed potatoes that excused itself for an April snowpack; staggering through the parking lot of Wapta Lodge to hug my waiting partners, who had opted for the no-nonsense descent; calling Debbie to let her know we were okay; feeling the alcohol from one beer spiral its way through my ravaged and atrophied body like a locomotive without brakes; screaming along with total abandon to the Pointless Sisters' "Neutron Dance" cranked up to a billion decibels in Steve's van; finally arriving home to Debbie's homemade blueberry pie, ice cream and love - manna to our emaciated bodies and souls. In so many ways, I was not the same person who had left three weeks earlier; nor would I ever be.

One year later, Charlie was killed on Ama Dablam in Nepal when the rope he was rappelling on, having been shredded by rockfall, gave way. Rory and Steve, so impressed with him on the High Route, had invited him on that expedition. I was unable to go, though I know I should have. I have some guilt around this. I introduced him to the strange and mystical arena of expeditions, where the risks seem to inordinately exceed the apparent rewards. But I wasn't there when he left it.

There are times now, in places high and wild, when I feel Charlie's spirit dragging me along in the same "rag doll behind a thoroughbred" way he did on this trip. There are times when I visit those places that were special to him and I realize from the unstanchable tears how close to my surface he really is. And there are times, as the song line again touches my shoulder, when I understand that he guides me still.

The companion verses in this piece were penned by Rory McIntosh.

SHADOW SONG

Graeme Pole

There may be no finer place than a Rockies front-range summit when the sun falls to the angle of revelation. The leaning light cleaves like a scalpel, penetrates the nameless, shapeless array of mountains, pries from them dimensions that were merely suggestions moments earlier. This occasional reward is a magic locus, an alignment of position, of time, of illumination. Shadow cones sweep the horizon. Jumping-off points. Valleys deepen. Lakes still. Ridges resonate. Routes become clear. Geology glows and tomorrows shine. It is necessary that rapture at such times be brief. Camp is usually half a day away; and late in the season, nightfall a matter of minutes.

We had been travelling steadily since the first sunbeams made patchwork of the frost in Clearwater Pass. Armed with crucial knowledge — that the south ridge would be gained by a chimney — we sought to follow in the footsteps of the fabled Dominion Topographic Survey to the summit of Mount Harris. Being first in the brief roll of attempts, the surveyors had not benefited from prior knowledge of the chimney.

We left the Clearwater trail at a fortuitous point, sidehilling into the hanging valley without undue climb or descent. Another hour of sidehill along boulder slopes brought us to what we assumed was "the chimney", although after its inspection and attempt we agreed that "waterfall" was a more appropriate description. It did not go, nor did the cliffs beside it - at least not for two cautious climbers armed with only a six-mil rope and a handful of slings for protection, two days from the highway. But the surveyors had packed a plate camera and a transit in 1919, and they were two weeks from town. Surely we were off their route?

The wonderful hanging valley beckoned farther. This particular early September it was almost devoid of the snow patches that doubtless would have facilitated travel, especially (as we would discern later) on the descent. Every boulder that plugged the length of the valley floor teetered and toppled into the next. The valley, ageless creation, now



"A precious, rare wildness filled our gaze." Photo: Graeme Pole/Mountain Vision

consumed time, devoured it, as if all the hours eroded from history since the last ice age had waned were deposited there, never to be set free. We hopped from pile to pile, from boulder to boulder, and plodded along against the flow of grains in the hourglass, to reach the headwall at about the time that we should have been summitting. The summit was still far above.

A chute led to a balcony fifty metres up the wall. We accepted the tentative offer. It was either that or go home; no other break split the cliff. On the balcony we moved left, traversed the head of a scree-choked basin that hung above the drop, to where we confronted two uninspiring limestone fins that led upward. Farther left, gravity curtailed the routefinding. The "chimney", we assumed, would be some cleft embraced by one or the other of the fins. We were correct in that assumption, although had we not known that someone else must have taken that route almost eighty years earlier, we probably would not have bothered to make the attempt.

Above the fins, a rightward, belayed snowslope traverse of another hanging horseshoe led to easy ledges and the penultimate slopes beneath the twin shale domes of the peak. Twin? This was surprising. In their account, the surveyors had neglected to mention this detail. At no

point in our planning had discussion or speculation encompassed the inevitable Rockies front-range bugbear: Which of the crumbling summits in view is the highest?

Of course, the other one always is. But as it was past five o'clock in the afternoon, we did not have the option of rambling over both. We had to quickly choose one, and my only lament of a five-day trip — trivial complaint that it is — was that in this case we chose the west one, because in doing so we robbed ourselves of the northeastern view of Martin Lake and of the middle reach of the Clearwater Valley. All the more reason to go back someday.

Beside the summit cairn, we ate our chocolate bars and marvelled. A precious, rare wildness filled our gaze. The silence was vast, the landscape chaotic. The possibilities, it was clear, would consume lifetimes, especially given a method that requires two attempts to top the high points on each peak in view.

We stumbled through the willows onto the Clearwater trail just as twilight surrendered. Our lumbering journey back to camp, some ninety minutes' worth, sent many a creature packing ahead or off to the side, thrashing, startled into the black. Headlamp off, I would close my eyes when we rested. Serried limestone peaks alpenglowed in the eyelid ebony, their shadows thrown towards tomorrow's horizon.



Home at Last

You know how it is: staying up burning the oil well past midnight, trying to make sure everything is packed and ready to go. It's the small things I don't want to forget — not just the important stuff, but the real things, like a thermos of hot tea and an extra toque.

Morning comes early after only a few hours of sleep. The alarm blurts out of the darkness, forcing me out of bed and to the light across the room. I'm not really tired — haven't slept much anyway: too excited for the dawn of the next day and new adventure.

Any good day starts with a big pot of black coffee. I cherish the rich elixir, saying nothing, as if in a daze, only warming my hands on the ceramic mug, my bare feet up off the floor. Breakfast is always hard to get down at this time of night. I never really want to eat, but the little voice from within reminds me I will need it.

Before I know it the van is running and friends are waiting. I curl up, trying to stay warm in the back seat and wondering how long it will take for the heat to reach me and the stack of boots and skis I sit atop. Unable to see out, I doze off back to sleep for a few precious minutes.

The van has stopped; the door opens and cold air cuts through my open jacket. In a circus of darkness, beams of light flash from side to side looking for kits of gear, the essentials for travel through the day. The skins go on easily, with movements that by now are second nature. The van door slams shut and resonates like a steel drum.

We are off, moving slowly uphill, cold snow squeaking underfoot. The upward motions are hypnotizing amidst the quiet; only the strokes of our skis overpower the sound of our breathing.

To the southeast, the sun is illuminating the sky with vibrant colours of orange and yellow. I knew there was something great about being up so early. My camera clicks away trying to save this moment, to extend it longer — if anything, to save the memory.

A few hours pass; bright and glowing, the sun fully greets the day, and it's time for some food. After a short break, we keep moving. Trees grow smaller, then disappear. Out of the green and into the white. My eyes strain to recognize the changes in terrain.

The ridge is narrow and steep, providing a wonderful position. It's know time to go down. I get first tracks. Wow, my balance is off. I struggle to move forward on my skis. My speed increases and I carve a long, hard turn — back under control.

Once again, we skin out of the lowland onto summits and ridges. We are free; I feel alive. "You guys move on — I need time alone." They understand but don't really want to leave me weak and at the mercy of the white killer. As voices fade, I see them disappearing over the ridge. I'm alone.

This is a church. The light filtering through the peaks, speaking to me, forever changing. Clouds pouring over, between and around these giants I call friends. One summit obscured, another revealed. It's quiet — only the faint sound of the wind and the voices of the trees.

I sit and feel everything, learn from and enjoy this special moment. Warm tears roll slowly down my face. I know I am home at last. But I cannot stay.

the darker side

DOH, THAT BITES!

Merrie-Beth Board

August 22, 1999, 5 a.m.

"Lena, hey Lena, are you awake?" The alarm clock I had carried up 3000 feet had done its job. I sprung to my feet and outside to lighten my load. The sky was still black; the starry alpine night took me away, as though I were an animal stirring. Soon my dawn dream was disturbed as I fiddled to turn my headlamp on and returned to the cozy table I had managed to sleep on. Even without a foamie it had been comfortable.

Lena was still sleeping. This was one of many adventures the two of us had gone on. Lena was raised in the mountains and is equally as tall as one — compared to all five feet of me. She was full of surprises, from blue hair to fortitude. We pushed each other, but not especially to rise and shine. I whispered again. "Hey, wake up, it's five." So far in our months of mountain trips together, alpine starts had been hurting, and I was keen to practise being the annoying ball of energy that would rally us to our feet. Lena wasn't so psyched to leave her table, but she did look out the window, bringing to my attention the fact that it was still dark and suggesting that we wait a half-hour. Without argument, I got onto my table and drifted into a deep sleep. After twenty minutes my eyes opened wide, as if my eyeballs might jump out. I quickly sat up to chase them. This time I made sure to get us moving, and quietly we started to pack up. The other group in the cabin got up too; they planned to do the same route, but from the opposite direction.

We all went about our duties in the crisp morning air. Breakfast for us was a few gulps of leftover tea and some cold cereal. Then it was away to the day's objective: the south ridge of Mount Weart, a direct approach to the summit, followed by a tasty traverse of the entire ridge, also known as the Armchair. Both Lena and I had on separate occasions tripped to the high point on the mountain, but neither of us had done the summit traverse. The beta was that it was a

Class 3 to 4 route, perfect for a quick Sunday-morning endeavour. With the possibility of work on Monday looming over my head, I was eager to move quickly.

We travelled at a steady pace through the flat boulder field towards the glacier, stopping to drink and to fill water bottles. Wedge Mountain, which we'd climbed the day before, towered above us. From its summit we had been able to scope the ridge for the next day. We gained the sculpted glacier, which resembles a white tongue with its tip touching down on the still green lake. Rocks cluttered the edge of the ice and made perfect steps. From a distance, the scree slopes looked steep. We talked over our best route and then carried on into the boulders. Water ran under the loose surface, rumbling like a jet engine through the hollow ground. Being cautious not to disturb any boulders, we moved upward and then crossed the iceglazed rocks of a small creek to gain the snowfield. With only approach shoes on, the hard snow was tricky to penetrate. Lena broke trail in her plastics, so I lightly jumped from step to step. We followed the tracks of a cougar, thinking the animal had disappeared into the rocks, only to have the imprints reappear just beyond. The frozen cat tracks made for smooth travel up the 15-degree slope. By the final pitch, the rock had changed from white to tangy orange granite. Morale was high as I held up a small rock labelled with a strip of orange flagging tape, a sure sign that we were on the right trail.

The crest of the ridge revealed the view of white tops in familiar ranges; below lay the massive Weart Glacier, which we'd both crossed in winter. Wasting no time, we decided to rest when we reached the summit, 300 feet higher. The loose rock of the ridge shifted often, and I kept my senses heightened to warn Lena of any drastic movement. We made sure not to walk directly below or above each other. In no time the summit cairn came into sight. With each step, the cairn grew more life-size: one round rock for a head, a long

rectangular block that looked like broad shoulders, a plump middle like a snowman's. It was 8:30 a.m., and the early sun bounced of the peaks, the electric-blue backdrop making it hard to take my eyes off the 360 degrees of things to do.

We rested on the narrow summit and wrote our words in the register. A summit phone call determined that our friend Steve was on his way up the steep trail. The day was so great it warmed me deeply. After a half-hour, we decided to move onto the sharp-looking ridge, but first I wanted to place a rock on top of the huge cairn (a tradition I had adopted from an unknown source of pure nincompoop). Searching the rocky platform, I grabbed a sizeable rock that slipped from my fingers as if to say "No, no, no - I don't want to go." Persistent in my task, I picked up a much smaller rock and placed it gently on the cairn. As I stepped away from the rock statue. I mentioned how precarious it seemed.

"It's lasted all winterrr... Oh my god!" was Lena's response as the cairn began to topple, knocking me in the shoulder and back. In that instant I started falling; the summit was too small for me to run, roll or jump out of the way. My arms reached out towards the empty air as I caught a glimpse of the adjacent peak. See ya nice to know va... Not much time for thought. Then I was pulled to the ground as the rocks pinned my left foot and stopped the momentum that was sending me for the big ride. Lena's first reaction was to laugh; then she realized that my face held a look of shock that communicated anything but "That was funny, hee hee, ha ha."

Reality clicked in quickly: I was injured at 9400 feet. The first step was to assess the damage. I took off my sock and noticed a puncture in the front of my leg, just above my ankle joint. "I'm cut, I'm cut." There wasn't much feeling — just the rush of adrenaline and my heart pounding hard enough to move my torso. I thought "Wow, that's nothing."



Photo: H.K. Podrej

Then Lena sung out once more, "Oh my god!"

Not sure I wanted to know, I wondered, What this time?

On the outside of my ankle was another hole, this one the size of a nickel with a half-inch piece of flesh hanging out. My ankle was tattooed with a band of hot pink. We concluded that the flesh was only tissue — nothing that a few sutures and ice wouldn't heal. Just a simple visit to the clinic. Then we looked down. "Oh shit."

oving quickly would be the only Lcure for this disaster — a perfect day brought down by a pile of rocks. We used a few Band-Aids to hold the protruding flesh in and then generously wrapped gauze around my ankle. There was no time or energy to waste on regret, and we decided to continue along the ridge instead of turning back the way we had come. Luckily for me, Lena had two pills of painkiller, which I ate soon after I started to traverse. The pace was steady, and the climbing good. I didn't have to stand on flat ground, or even weight my foot for the most part. I kept reminding myself to breathe, breathe, focus, move, breathe, push — no, sorry, that's for childbirth. The stress was getting pretty high, but then the tasty little pills finally kicked in, lifting my spirits. By the time we crossed paths with the other group on the mountain, enjoyment of the beautiful ridge wasn't forced. They were willing to help if need be, but we had the situation under control. We even shared in a laugh about the stupidity of being injured by a rock cairn. I couldn't have agreed more.

Time went by, and we kept moving off the ridge, down more loose rock and finally onto snow. The small chunk of glacier that rests neatly below the ridge was a welcome terrain change. Relieved to be on safe ground, I sat on my butt and slid a few hundred feet on the slushy surface, leg in the air and brain tension-free.

Now over halfway to the cabin, we

decided it was time to rest by a sloping waterfall. After a few stale gummy bears, some chocolate, and a drink, I was excited to realize I wasn't bleeding that badly. There were no bloody prints in the snow, which meant that my shoes weren't drenched. Not the greatest thing to be excited about, but a positive attitude couldn't hurt. We slid another 600 feet and then into boulders. The high of the painkillers abruptly ended when a small boulder moved, causing me to roll my already-injured ankle. I screamed for a minute until my voice was hoarse. Lena laughed as I talked aloud to myself to calm down, sounding like a smoker of thirty years. After sliding down the grassy mounds that grew over rocks and beside running streams, Lena strolled and I limped into the cabin. When a man asked how I was, I nearly burst into tears but instead just asked if he had any painkillers. He handed me two Dristans that I downed with a swig of wine, thinking they were related to Tylenol (my sinuses staved oh so clear).

Since I had walked off the peak, I decided I had the energy to descend the 3000 feet to the trailhead. It had already been eight hours, and the walk out was slower then I expected. Using a stick, I limped along the trail. The previous time I had descended, I had run down. Now I studied every rock, root, and moss blanket, anticipating what to avoid. I had no energy to be humbled, but I was. By the end of the trail, I was emotionally, physically and mentally gooned. It was an epic experience I wouldn't wish on anyone. Luckily, some other climbers had waited and they drove us to the Whistler clinic. The muffler of the truck I was in fell off; as the two climbers struggled to fix it, I tried to move my swollen joint, feeling like a bad-luck charm. The challenge of surviving the descent was over, but the real challenge was about to begin.

So, 12 hours after leaving the summit, I showed my swollen limb to the doctor.

"Looks like you broke your ankle!" Our mouths dropped and our heads shook. We were shocked that I had been crazy enough to walk out on a broken ankle. Things quickly became more serious; it was thought to be a compound break, meaning that the bone came out the same hole as the protruding flesh. Infection can set in after only eight hours of exposure to too much air. I was rushed to an operating room in Vancouver, pumped up with antibiotics and put to sleep. The dealings in the hospital seemed more stressful than the hobble out; either way, it made for a very long day.

The next morning, the surgeon told me there was good news and bad. The good news: no ligament or tendon damage. The bad news: a severed muscle had to be cut to about half its size. And of course I had a broken fibula, but no plates, pins or screws were needed. Sounded like pretty good news to me. Microscopic pieces of rock and moss had to be cleaned out, and I would be kept in hospital for 10 days so that infection could be monitored and to undergo another operation. In the end, the ten days were reduced to five, and they did a great job of fixing me up. A bruised ego was what I had to deal with. Looks as if I'll climb again, and for that I'm grateful.

More experience might have prevented this accident. It was hard to accept that I hadn't followed my intuition and that I'd made a poor judgment call. I guess that's what an accident is. According to the register, no one else had been on the summit that summer. Cairns, whether on a summit or elsewhere, are subjected to extreme weather patterns and can be very deceiving. I let my guard down, not even thinking it would fall on me. If I could help anyone else by sharing this somewhat embarrassing event in my life, it would be to say: Don't let your guard down at any time, anywhere. Rest away from cairns live and learn.

day four - alone in the st. elias

Just enough time for the immensity, silence and loneliness to settle in. Enough time for slight madness on the edges of the mind to start developing. A beer to get the creative juices flowing, some Emmy Lou to banish the silence, and it's time to scrawl some poetry on a page or two.

Andy, Lance, Nick and I launched a new project in the St. Elias this year. We thought, "Hell, let's set up a comfortable place to go drink Scotch in the hills over there." So we built a refugio right in the middle of the St. Elias and called it "Icefield Discovery". It wasn't all that easy. There were times when the other three would give each other this look that said, "How do we get rid of the girl?" Which they seem to have managed to do, as they are all down in the world of green and I am alone here in the world of white.

Being a poor bunch of sods, we can't really afford to build ourselves a retreat in a place like this — actually, we are also rather dependent on others donating fine bottles of Scotch to our cause — so Andy flies charming people up here to spend a few days skiing, being amazed by the beauty, getting stormed in and

being very well looked after by Lance and me.

We go skiing sometimes ourselves. Lance, Tas and I plodded our way up Mount Queen Mary's Poodle the other day. It's not a pretty sight when a large, black labrador (Tas) mounts a poodle. I don't know what the Queen thought, but Tas enjoyed himself immensely. Andy has been trying to get us to rename the Poodle, as it is not a very impressive name for the closest mountain to our refugio. However, Martyn Williams named it and it seems to have stuck.

At times, building this place has made this one of the most impressive summers of my life. And, at other moments, while staring out into a wall of white, I have wondered why I wasn't lying out on the beach beside Kluane Lake. But there are always events that bring this world alive. The one that will stick in my mind for this season is the day the whole tail-wheel/ski assembly snapped off the Helio on landing. Andy taxied up to our site. No one said anything. Lance, Andy and I just stared at the aircraft in disbelief. I walked down the glacier to collect the pieces. By the time

I returned, they were building a new tail ski out of the lid of the snow melter, a couple of sleds and some rope. It performed beautifully back on the gravel strip at Kluane. It's so good to know that the romance, and horror, of bush flying is still kicking.

It's getting later in the season now, into August, and the sun is setting down at the end of the Logan Glacier. The light is especially warm tonight as it sinks away, Emmy Lou is "looking for the water from a deeper well", and my attempt at poetry is at an end for tonight.

Sian Williams



Photo: David E. Williams

SURFIN' THE CURVE Steve Demaio

Most of the time I don't see it coming, as if it were an avalanche crashing down from a hidden bowl up on a steep face. For minutes at a time, my brain is strapped solo on this climb, fighting the futility of all my existence, staring wide-eyed into the black abyss that is my life. There is a heightened awareness, a craving for understanding well beyond what is socially acceptable. Yet, simultaneously, a need for an outlet of such scope that I am tortured by it. I am stranded in purgatory, craving a set of chinups that will trash me whilst I murmur my blackest, most depressing poetry. The people around me stand like lampposts, only further illuminating my desperation. I learned long ago that I can never communicate these sufferings. They are my yoke, my shackle, the negative of the extremes. Time to get out from under the lamplight and go home and deal with it. Walk out that door, Stevie go find your way to channel it.

I manage to make my way back to my condo. Clothes fall into the washer. Food warms in the microwave. I sit aimlessly at my desk and shuffle paper. I cut a finger on one of the envelopes. A blotch of blood forms, then grows into a bubble, its surface under tension. I hold it up to my eyes; it breaks and streams down my hand. The bell rings on the microwave. The dishwasher shifts cycles, and my eye catches the moon in the sky, poking out from an illuminated cloud. I put my fingers in my mouth — mmm, the acrid taste of blood. The white light expands into a white wall, encompassing everything; then it cracks and the pieces begin to fall like giant chunks of brittle ice. A massive jigsaw puzzle crumbling before my eyes.

Soon, these pieces pile up on my desk into a large mound of ice shards. In a trance, I begin building a shape out of this pile of ice. Melting this piece, joining that, until I can envision a physical and psychological sculpture. I am pleased with its form. I touch it, caress it, feel its energy. It screams for realization. I am intimate with its desire for manifestation in the real world: to be brushed in broad, harsh strokes on the canvas of reality.

It is not long before I have it. From out of this psychotic, manic meditation, my sculpture congeals into a healing vision: a "quadrathon" in the mountains. Begin by headlamp and climb the 1000

feet of north-facing ice on The Professor Falls. Drive over to Yamnuska and saunter up 700 feet of south-facing limestone. Rollerblade the fifty miles from Yam to Calgary, leap onto my bicycle and cycle fifty miles back to pick up the truck — all solo.

Suddenly, I am back at my desk. All the papers are on the floor. The moon is gone outside the window. My hair is damp with sweat. There are streaks of blood dried on my arm. My conscious mind hurls into the logistics of execution. I have joyed in many link-ups in the past, but this would be my most ambitious, most risky and likely most rewarding. The sheer craziness of it makes my spine tingle at the prospect. A tour de force on the tightrope: Dancing on the high wire, in tension between endurance and speed. In balance, only with precision. Each step subtle, yet distinct. Each touch gentle, yet severe. Every motion unknown, until made. Textured on the grand canvas. I crane my neck and howl at the anticipation of the adversity. Yes. Give me the broad, harsh strokes.

White again encompasses my world. A shard of brittle ice sails over my left shoulder. It is early, and the ice is not yet plastic. I squint my eyes and hunch my shoulders, bracing at the sound of spindrift spilling over the lip above. There is, I know, a huge, hidden bowl above the route. A white plume sugar-coats me with a dusting of powder snow. I stare hard at the white curtain: a thousand tiny grey daggers hang from every feature and point at me like so many sharks' teeth. Sweat and spindrift-melt drips down my upper lip into my mouth. I chirp to myself "White is ice." The ice of the final, crux pillar of Professor's. 8:45 a.m. Tap, tap, hook, tap, tap, hook. "White is ice; ice is nice." Tap, tap, hook to set, weight and breathe. A nofall situation. For now, I seize joy from the moment — thirty more feet of this ice, and I'm outta here.

High over the lip of the pillar, a big black raven circles. For some reason, as I hang there breathing, this bird forces an instant of introspection: Do I seem absurd from his perspective? I don't seem absurd to myself, but then I am intimate with this process. I have to chuckle to myself, however; it did take me thirty odd years to understand it.

In the first decade of my life, I recognized my propensity for adventure for its own sake. By the age of 9 or 10, this further metamorphosed into an attraction towards adventures that had some challenge associated with them. By 12, I knew I wanted to be a rock climber, and at 14 I was officially indoctrinated into the brotherhood. By my late teens, the concept of risk analysis in the venues of adventure challenges was well ingrained. By my mid-twenties, I had a fairly well-developed understanding of my psychological and physical limitations, of objective and subjective risk and of my relative competence at any instant in time. By the age of 30, I began to study the peaks and valleys of my intellectual, physical and emotional states and how they affected my performance in gymnastic, endurance-oriented, artistic or cerebral exploits - inside and outside of high-risk environments, including emotional ones. Generally, the lows in the cycle were to be avoided.

I began to recognize swings in my nature in much more pragmatic ways. Mania and introspection were a part of my day-to-day existence. The amplitude and frequency of these cycles varied radically. I became quite comfortable with my periods of mania and learned how to exploit them. These moments were of such value that I coveted their arrival. Introspection, on the other hand — which in those days I called "depression" — was socially unacceptable and was therefore to be avoided, and above all never discussed. Still, I seemed to naturally tumble into extremes of introspection, and I beat myself up for being "depressed".

It wasn't until my early thirties that I learned the value of these periods and consequently renamed them "introspection". The new label helped to remove the negative connotations. When a wave of introspection hit, I learned to encourage it by pursuing activities that were complemented by deep reflection — like writing, painting or meditation. The challenge and subsequent opportunity, I uncovered, was to not only exploit the highs but to also exploit the lows and, if possible, everything in-between. I was learning to "surf the curve".

I hammer the adze with the palm of my hand and then give the shaft another hard yank. Levering the shaft prematurely pries off a small dinner plate with a hiss. It lands in the crook of my arm. Instinctively, I give my arm a wriggle, and the ice slips easily away. The raven is still circling, watching. "What?" I tell him, "I told you it started when I was a child."

Mom says that when I was two years old I'd stretch and curl my fingers around the lip of the counter and then do a pull up in order to see what was up there. The confines of my playpen presented only a minor obstacle, and I was regularly up and over the rail and into an adventure with my older brothers and sister. Two years later, when I was 4, I made a fateful attempt to follow my siblings into a very high tree fort. The crux move was a tricky traverse where the ladder went from one side of the tree to the other. Little Stevie got stuck right at mid-crux — unable to go up or down. Daddy heard my cries for help, plucked me off and carried me over his shoulder back to the ground safely.

Stealing another look upward, the large, burnished black bird seems to further question my rationale. He hovers momentarily in the updraft as if to say, "That's a simplification!" I turn back to the ice, but those black eyes burn holes in the back of my helmet. I didn't say or mean to suggest that it was simple, easy or never-changing. The day I turned 35, another variable got added into my nicely quantified framework:

The epidural is taking." The fluid line dangles out of Karen's spine. She has been valiantly enduring the last thirty hours but has progressed very little. Her energy reserves are rapidly depleting. The midwives suggest drugs in order to try to give her some rest. We had aspired to a natural birth, but just over 60 minutes ago we made the decision to intervene medically.

A nurse interrupts: "Baby's pulse has dropped to 80."

"Are we getting mother's heart rate on sonic? Or is that baby's?"

The nurses and midwives stare at each other. "Put in the electronic."

There is a flurry of cables, wires and hands. I am pacing. I hope these people know what they are doing. Our baby's pulse has been steady at 130 throughout the last thirty hours, in fact throughout Karen's pregnancy. Everyone's countenance has turned serious. The nurse's hands are a blur as she hastily tears off the Velcro on the sonic readout. I feel as if we

are unroped in a narrow ice gully and panicking to place our only ice screw before an avalanche hits. The digital readout is inserted. It is stuttering as if there is a loose connection. This does not help my confidence level.

Another hook placement knocks a small ice chip into my eye. It stings. I hang there, my arms feeling the beginning of a gentle burn. Aggressively and rapidly, I open and close the eye, trying to melt and clear the ice chip. Ice cracks under my left crampon. A cauliflower head plummets 130 feet to the snow ledge below. It bounces once. The raven is gone.

"Baby's pulse is still 80. It's in distress. Take Karen to OR. We will recheck the pulse and perform a C-section if it stays low." Karen is whisked out of the room and down the hall ahead of me. A nurse blocks my entry into the operating room, asserting that I can't enter without a sterile gown and booties. Through the still-swinging doors I can hear the fear in Karen's voice demanding my presence. I want to knock this nurse down. At that moment, an aid hands me a sterile outfit. Focus on getting the gown on. Booties over the shoes? They'll never fit over my Hi-Tecs. Shoes off — now!

I would save only minutes. But minutes were minutes — especially when tallied below an expansive white blanket draped precariously in a steep-sided bowl. Topping out, I do not coil the rope. Rather, I trail my 8.5-mil behind me into the trees. I've never liked being exposed in the fall line below avalanche terrain.

recall vividly the day I found my very I first rope. It was springtime, and the "big garbages" (as I called them) were out in front of all the houses. These excited me as there was always neat stuff to be found by picking through the piles. On this particular day, I was on my twowheeler making my rounds looking for old broom, rake or shovel handles. They made excellent swords or spears. Stopping at a "big garbage" just around the corner from our house, I looked more closely inside a cardboard box, gasped and was off my bike in an instant. Reaching inside, I touched what appeared to be an old hemp cord. Weather-beaten brown, frayed over its length, it had a few knots in it and two cool, rusted iron clips attached to it. My heart raced. I bunched up the rope and like a pirate with his treasure made my way back home. My little nine-year-old body tingled with the possibilities for adventure that this ratty piece of tat would allow.

Soon, I am out of any potential avalanche's path and descend to a large tree. I thread a sling and toss the ends of my rope down the rock band. It is a 30-metre rappel. My doubled line is 25; I will have to be careful not to rap off the end of the rope. Maintaining my purchase on the rock, I let the ends slide through my descender. My crampons scrape white marks on the limestone; I momentarily use a much smaller pine tree growing out of the cliff face as a foothold and smile to myself as I remember:

Also at the age of 9, I visioned climbing all the trees on our street in a day. I grew up in southern Ontario, and our street was lined with mammoth maple trees, many of which had huge trunks. The arms of these great trees created a tunnel of leaves over the road in summertime. I remember joying in the strife as I pulled from one tree into the next, and finally into the last. I was trashed. My hands and little body smarted with muscle aches and abrasions. I was never able to replicate this feat again.

A few more short rock bands on the descent feature "tree moves" as I make my way back to the base of the route. Stuffing all the ice gear into my pack, I begin to jog back to the truck. The trail is a tad slippery here and there, but twenty years of dynamic balance are well ingrained: I shuffle over ice patches and tree roots and limbo under fallen trees, avoiding a tumble or twisted ankle.

Doctors, nurses and other hospital staff are tripping on and ducking around a bird's nest of IV poles, fluid lines and electronic leads as I enter the operating room. There is not a glance in my direction. Karen is on the operating table. I know she is more scared than I. Baby's heart monitor is still stuttering - blinking on and off sporadically. The doctor is going to make his decision based on this. Delivering babies is not my area of expertise; however, I do know a thing or two about electrical instrumentation, and an erratic signal that has a loose connection is unacceptable. In the climbing world, we would call all this "a cluster fuck". I am standing by Karen's head and prancing like a father gorilla.

When I was 10, paramedics set my smashed tibia and fibula in a temporary splint before loading me into the ambulance. I had been hit by a car while riding my two-wheeler on the solid white

centre line on a two-way street. It was quite an event in our neighbourhood, and all the kids lined up to sign or put their initials on my leg-length cast. It was not a week later that I tumbled while speeding around on my crutches. A follow up X-ray revealed that I had indeed knocked the bones out of alignment. A surgeon drilled seven holes into the shattered bones and installed a steel plate in order fix them in place and give them a chance to mend.

In my early thirties, the concept of "the horizon of social acceptance" — the level of intensity on the curve between mania or introspection which most people can relate to — really gelled in my mind. If you cross the horizon of social acceptance, you are on your own. The unenlightened will describe exploits beyond the horizon of social acceptance as psycho, strange, crazy or dangerous. The exploits might be spiritual, as in hiding out at your computer for a long weekend and working a manuscript or writing black poetry. Or they might be physical, like dangling forty metres over the football field at McMahon Stadium in Calgary and tyrolean-traversing the two-inch steel cables that span from high towers in each corner — solo, at night and in a snowstorm.

The year after I broke my leg, I attempted an aerial traverse across our driveway on my hemp rope. I'd seen commandos in the movies crossing deep gorges by first spanning the distance with a rope. They would hang from their hands, hook their legs over the rope and "commando crawl" across the gorge. I strung my rope about twenty feet up between the arms of two great maple trees, one on either side of our driveway. Once I got the rope as tight as I could, I quickly began my "commando crawl" across the driveway. I was about halfway between the two trees when, without a hint of a warning, my rope snapped. I smacked the pavement with a loud crack. Rolling around in pain, I lay on the driveway with the wind knocked out of me. Before I could get my breath back, I looked up to see my neighbour standing over me and shaking his head from side to side. He stared for a moment, still shaking his head, and muttered, "You just never learn, do you, Steve."

"Well," I thought as I tossed my pack full of ice gear into the truck, "I wouldn't go that far." Pounding down tins of Ensure Plus and chugging Gatorade, I drove the miles to Yam; it looked clean and dry. In April of

any year, it was a definite gamble whether the face would have any snow on it. Walkman on, a few tins of Ensure in my pocket, I began the power hike up to the base. Groovin' to the tunes, I exhorted myself, "Surf the curve, man! Surf the curve! It's a mania day today, Stevie! Exploit, exploit, exploit." Naturally, I was also fully cognizant of the other extreme...

The climber who has the boldness to descend into the abyss in order that he may become more intimate with it — and with himself — and who has the power and discipline to "arm" his way back up the rope out of this darkness will grow spiritually at rather an alarming rate. Some of my most philosophically and emotionally complete essays have been composed in this headspace. Once in a while, though, I would miscalculate, and rap off the end of the rope into a void of black poetry:

Ever try to have a conversation / While holding a gun to your own head / Do you know how poignant every word can be? / As it echoes down the barrel / Or how futile/Meaningless / The trigger almost pulls itself / Oh, the moments when I have the strength / To pull it away from my ear / And to channel such passion / Into something positive / Or just into something / For a moment breathing fully / Feeling pain and joy / Simultaneously / The Junkie / Free for just a moment / From the shackle of his life / Thank you, thank you / But tomorrow is another day / Yes, another fucking day

I jam, stem and chimney up the first pitch — really technical and absurdly polished — on King's Chimney, a route on the west end of Yam. There are, I am aware, situations in which one is bulldozed out of prolonged introspection.

The doctor looks at the blinking heartrate monitor still reading between 80 and 85. To me it looks like the front of a microwave oven bolted onto a cheap black box from Radio Shack. The handles on the light over the operating table appear to have "Glad Baggies" over them. This does not make sense to me. Somewhere, out of my periphery, water is running. I hear the snap of rubber gloves being stretched over chubby wrists.

"Let's go. It's going to be a section."

I stand ten feet tall and stare down at the doctor. Our eyes lock. "Tell me. You are positive that is Baby's heart rate?"

"Positive..."

This pitch is always a bit gripping. Awkward and bowling-alley smooth enough in spots that you have to really focus so a foot doesn't slip off. Pulling out of the slippery chimney, I recall with a bit of a chuckle how on one occasion I managed to "kick-start" a mania cycle from the depths of introspection:

As I strapped on my ice skates I tried to remember the last time I had been skating. Never having been a hockey player, I skated poorly at best. For this project, however, I really only needed to know how to stand up and go straight. It was around 10 p.m., and I was fully garbed in what I was later to call my "urban-adventure suit": black insulated pants, black double-lined pile jacket, knee pads, elbow pads, homemade hip and tailbone pads (folded towels stuffed down my pants to protect "bony" protrusions), double-lined gloves, and cycling helmet. The last item, my ice axe, was included purely as a precautionary measure: any snow-and-ice man hurtling under the force of gravity will first attempt a self-arrest using his ice axe. I stood up on my ice skates, ice axe in hand, at the top of the bobsled track at Canada Olympic Park in Calgary.

"What's all the fuss about?" I had said as I walked beside the bobsled track earlier in the week. "This is a playpen compared to even the easiest ice climbs." I was amazed at how low-angle it was. "I could do this on ice skates!"

And so, there I was. My skates cut parallel grooves in the artificial ice as I accelerated more rapidly than I had anticipated. I crouched like a downhill ski racer, and the serrated blade of my axe pick nicked the wall in the first corner as I tried to maintain balance. My "safety" device, I was discovering, was actually a liability in this endeavour: the jagged blade of my axe gouging the wall threatened to throw me off balance and send me into a cartwheeling tumble. Going over the rail would be bad. This was keenly on my mind as my skates and legs started to get speed wobbles. Then I discovered that at top, or "wobble", velocity, I could crouch and sit on my tailbone pad. This checked my speed and brought my centre of gravity below the height of even the lowest sections of rail. All this I learned at 45 km/h. Ooooeee, son: easily in the top five most fun things I have ever done.

Stemming around a vein of snow while attempting to keep my rock shoes dry, I giggle again to myself in recollection of the endeavour. Normally, this section of the route is quite trivial. Today, however, the

chimney is choked with unconsolidated snow. The grade increases to 5.7 or so, then to 5.8. As I bridge ever higher, another variable enters the equation: verglas. I continue up the gully, the walls becoming smoother and the verglas more frequent. Before long, I am suspended between chinks of rock poking through an armour of ice. The whole thing looks too much like a vertical luge track — with fangs. Even a subtle snarl from this beast could send me over the rail. Definitely something to fuss about.

Even with the rope on, this would be an exciting challenge. Straining around the sinister armour of verglas, I downclimb the coarse rock pattern, craving the sharp, serrated blade of my ice axe. Hanging there, as if frozen in a still frame, I have the luxury that most bobsledders don't — to study the adversity while in it, to avoid a catastrophic over-the-rail wreck. I decide to inch out left and see if I can traverse into a different pitch at mid-height. I postulate that if I can make it out left I will prefer to on-sight-solo a dry 5.5 pitch rather than deal with the latticework on the luge track directly above. The ante has been upped. I shut my Walkman off. Time to focus.

Awhite sheet is strung up at Karen's midsection. There is a clatter of stainless-steel surgical tools jostling on a metal tray. I hold Karen's hand. She is fully conscious. A nurse paints iodine on Karen's abdomen with a broad brown brush. The smell makes my nostrils quiver. I am sweating. Crouching beside her, I see the sheet at Karen's waist fog into a white blur as I begin to experience a new type of risk. A different kind of concern, a further form of fear. All very primal. Our child, my offspring, and my wife — all potentially in peril. And though I stand only inches away, this adversity is beyond my influence. I am aware of my excited state, and of the fact that I must "flatline" right now. Karen needs me. Have to dial in. I steady my breathing. The white expanse of fog overwhelms my periphery.

In times of extreme mania, there can be a tendency to lose focus and waste valuable energy. We often experience the perils of high excitation through fear. We lose motor control. Our joints stiffen. Our physical and mental capabilities plummet. In these situations, one must enter yet another altered state. I call it "manic meditation": maintaining that high level of energy and intensity, but with control and precision; flatlining while in a heightened state of mania.

Indeed, I am cognizant of this paradigm as

I begin an uncertain traverse towards this route to the left. The first few moves around the arête are tricky. I have to be sure I can reverse them: If I get stuck midway across this traverse, unable to continue up or down, there will be no one to pluck me off and carry me back to the ground. My rap line, I am also aware, is two thousand feet below in the truck. I climb out of the relative security of this "playpen" and into an expansive grey mist of limestone. It looks blank. My spine tingles as I take a deep, even breath.

We all surf our own curves. Some of us need more risk before we have to kick into manic meditation. I have often joked, while drinking my fifth cup of coffee, that I am a "low idler" and that I am not truly awake unless I am risking my life.

"Okay, okay," I whisper to myself, "I'm awake." Focusing through this mist of stone, I scan the rock for about 45 seconds until I distinguish a dark, circular shape. It is the eye of a tarnished piton poking out of a tight seam. Under further scrutiny, holds seem to take form out of this fog in the direction of the pin. The piton, I am acutely aware, may not be on the pitch. It might be an old rap anchor. My instinct says "Go have a look." Three digits on one hand sink into a wonderful, prickly jug. My other hand is massaged by a surface of baby shark's teeth on another hold. Sticky rubber sashays on some smears. The holds continue to come. Soon I can see station anchors and I'm "rockin" up the crag again. The rest of the route is relatively clean. Rippin' down the scree on the back side of Yam, I am mindful that ...

Generally, in the hush of deep introspection the allure of the impossible or "just possible" seems more powerful. The rush becomes problem solving though such endeavours with skill, experience and psychological/physical prowess. At other times, tribulation is completely beyond your control.

My ears are straining for our baby's first cry. A doctor and two nurses work with fervour. I'm gripped. So gripped that I stay low behind the white sheet. So low that all I can see is the surgeon's jaw muscle glistening and twitching behind his mask. I'm not a blood guy. Need to flat-line. Don't want to pass out.

As I jog back across the wet gravel in the Yam parking lot, my shoes squelch muddy water onto the ground. It's just before 2 p.m. After changing my socks, I strap on my Rollerblades, pound down a few more tins of

Ensure Plus, throw three more into a fanny pack, chug a litre of Gatorade and begin the fifty-mile rollerblade back to Calgary.

The road is rough. I can feel the vibration through my skates, up my shins and in my knees. After three hours, I sit on a guardrail at the side of the road, take off my 'blades and push the soles of my feet into coarse gravel, trying to massage away the pain of pressure points. The cold pebbles feel good on the hot spots. Cars zoom past as the sharp steel plate of the guardrail begins to cut into my buttocks. The wind whistles across my teeth.

For the first time all day, I feel alone and lonely. The wind and the rough road have slowed my progress, almost doubled my estimated time on this leg. I have not brought enough food, and food is fuel. The fact that I have underdressed for the wind further drains away fuel reserves. I can feel my feet quickly cooling on the pea gravel and a chill entering my body. By my estimate, my carbohydrate reserves will run out ... just about now. I curse myself. These were avoidable mistakes, fully due to my miscalculation. The game transforms and now consists of keeping my heart rate low enough that my body can metabolize fat into clean-burning fuel, but fast enough to still make good progress.

I put my skates back on and begin again my methodical strides. Slow but fast. If, however, I allow my heart rate to get too high, my body will start filling the fuel void by burning blood sugar. This, I am mindful, is only a stop-gap manoeuvre. A blood-sugar crash now, after 11 hours of effort, would finish me. Again, a tightrope: 'blading in balance between speed and physiological fuel constraints. I enter an "enduro-trance". A kind of meditation that focuses on efficiency of movement and progress, one skate in front of the other, rather than on pain and self-pity — flatlining in introspection to prevent an off-the-rap-line plummet.

Others claim that activity comes before motivation. My experience has been that visions of extreme endeavours often come as a result of deep introspection. At times, true arms-flailing passion can only avalanche one's mind when the surrogates seem meaningless and futile.

I re-ask myself the age-old question: Is it more difficult to handle a situation where you can't "just quit?" Like this morning on the ice and rock — where "quitting" means death. Or is it more challenging to continue when "quitting" is simple? Like right now: I could just stop, stand right here and hitch a ride.

It is too late when I realize that I've gone too hard. The delicate balance is blown, and I falter on the tightrope. As I swoon on my 'blades, the last remaining calories of blood sugar spark, sputter and fizzle. The void is deep. I stumble and catch myself with the crook of my elbow on the taut line. My feet dangle in the wind. I fail at a scissor kick in an attempt to hook a knee over the wire in "commando crawl" fashion. If only I had a carabiner I could clip. My fingers begin to open on the cold steel. Both hands fail simultaneously and I plummet, then crater in a blood-sugar crash. As I stagger into a gas station, the girl's eyes widen behind the counter as she asks, "Are you having fun rollerblading?" My silence turns the heads of the other customers.

There is little chatter in the operating room. To me, the quiet is greater than the acres of vertical limestone in the Bow Valley as I listen for protracted minutes for the cry that will mean the life and living of our child. I can only hear the doctor's and nurse's sterile gowns chafing against each other as they huddle over Karen and fervently but precisely cut through the wall of her stomach. A splash of red spatters the doctor's sterile white mask. I cannot watch. I have never wanted to hear a baby cry more in my life.

Perhaps the most problematic situation of all is when the relative amplitudes of mania and introspection max out and frequency approaches infinity. What does this mean? You are swinging, well beyond the horizon of social acceptance, from extreme mania to severe introspection so rapidly that for all practical purposes you are simultaneously in introspection and mania at acute levels. You need to storm a mountain and recite your blackest poetry all at the same time. I call this the Zone. In this purgatory, impossible odds may entice because failure is seen as punishment for mediocrity. Amidst the Zone's trickery, however, is also the possibility that your whole being may rise up in revolt of facing certain failure with off-the-charts intensity:

As I stand at the bar, minding my own business, a peanut shell falls like a small piece of ice into the crook of my elbow. I give it a wiggle and it slips easily away onto the plank wood floor. I don't see the avalanche coming. It crashes down the slope and blasts me like a battering ram. I enter the Zone.

A sweat breaks out above my hairline. It creeps around my ears. Large beads trickle down my jaw and dangle off my chin, freezing into sharp icicles. These

snap off and make a pile of ice shards on the floor. All conversation turns to noise. The people around me wear headlamps, which only further illuminates my desperation. The air becomes thick with ice crystals - smothering. In this cartwheeling tumble, I clench my ice axe and manage to make my way out the door. I hail a cab as if it were a rescue chopper, and two big cowboys wearing trench coats challenge me to a fight. My biceps begin to twitch. I struggle to speak clearly: "It appears to me that you guys just stepped over the rail of your playpen..." The claws of the Zone have me fully in a stranglehold, and I continue to hiss, "All guarantees of your physical safety have vaporized." There is a flurry of ice axes, cowboy hats, avalanche dust, trench coats, peanut shells and growling. A policeman digs me out of the avalanche debris. Two cowboys lie sprawled on top of the snow.

Before squaring off against the crux of the rollerblading leg — a mile and then some up the Cochrane hill — I rummage around in the road gutter and find a large piece of cardboard and a plastic bag, both covered with road salt. I stuff the cardboard down my shirt for insulation and to help cut the wind. The plastic bag I tie around my head for a hat. By just after 9 p.m., I hurtle down a steep hill on Nose Hill Drive in Calgary. I've been going for 14 hours and discover, too late, that I've misjudged the turn onto my street. The curb approaches my 'blades at, I'm sure, 40 km/h. Dial in, Stevie! This is it! It's the real thing!

My wheels ricochet off the curb like a staccato of machine-gun fire. I hurtle through the air, tuck, hit the ground and, like a 190-pound Nadia Comeneci, instinctively shoulder roll and stand up on my skates — still doing 30 km/h. I chortle to myself "I've still got it!" By ten, I am on my bicycle heading back to Yam to pick up the truck. I have no spare tube or patch kit. This is yet one more very careless oversight.

And where does the ego fit in the paradigm of "surfing the curve" of mania, introspection and risk taking? The ego "Drive" can move one into grand exploits; the ego "Dive" can send one into hiding for weeks. I have gone and soloed rock climbs to give myself a bit of a kick in the self-esteem department. I have also turned down climbing exploits in moments of deep introspection, recognizing the risks and the fact that I just was not up to such challenges.

I become gripped about getting a flat tire. In and of itself, a flat tire is not necessarily gripping. At this point, however, I am trashed and riding the ragged edge. I have not fully recovered from my blood-sugar crash. I will ride on the flat or walk with the bike if I have to. By now I am imprisoned by my vision. Escape will come only through completion. I will do whatever it takes to get my bicycle across the finish line. Every metre my tires remain filled with air is one less metre I will have to ride or walk with the flat. And yes, my ego is involved.

Finally, I hear the loud squeal. Simultaneously the doctor announces "It's a girl!" Air touches her lungs for the first time. I glance over the curtain carefully and see her squirm in the doctor's hands. "She's beautiful." Karen and I share tears. I nuzzle her as she lies there and the doctor and nurses make the first inspection of our little girl.

I mumble further encouragement to my tires and tubes. A spasm knotting in my neck encourages me to sit up and ride with no hands when the road is flat to ease the pain. I have not been hunched over on my road bike all winter, and, curiously, my neck hurts more than any other part of my body. The Gatorade in my water bottle freezes. I dehydrate further. The full moon makes my headlamp mostly unnecessary, though I turn it on for a particularly rough section of road. The beam forms a white circle of light around my front wheel — like a stippled canvas sheet with a black border. The road steepens. Hair bristles on my scalp as I become aware of the long, harsh pedal strokes that I continue to paint onto this coarse cloth. The other border of this rutted fabric remains emotively just beyond my reach provisionally paralysing me in purgatory.

To a degree, we all measure our self-worth against our endeavours and exploits. When mania is aligned with socially acceptable behaviours or indeed respected behaviours, society rewards us: we are creative or innovative — an artist or a genius. The same applies for introspection. On the other hand, when the extremes of mania or introspection manifest themselves in venues on the dark side, we are shunned, disrespected and, in some cases, "put away".

Karen is wheeled into the recovery room. She is drained. The last 35 hours have ground her down. The drugs have fully taken, and she falls into an exhaustionand drug-induced sleep. The midwife has Baby Stephanie in one hand and Karen's breast in the other. Stephanie latches on

and eats her first food.

Swerving to avoid a pothole, I suddenly find myself riding on the solid white centre line. Seven screw holes shiver even though they are now sated with bone. My shin tingles as I shoulder-check and speedily steer back to the roadside. The outline of my truck finally comes into view as a dark shape beside the road. Gravel grunts under my skinny tires as I ride up and dismount. The rear window of the truck has been broken. Filled with a sudden uneasiness, I stand there in the broken glass. My headlamp further illuminates the reason for my dread: my rock and ice gear have been stolen. I climb in behind the wheel, start the engine and turn on the headlights. The actuality of this financial avalanche assaults me as I hang frantically onto the faded hemp rope of my success. In the bright light, I can no longer see the stars and the moonlight dims. I stare into the white pool made by the headlights on the gravel. Again, my whole periphery is overwhelmed with a wall of white. This time, though, blackness invades like the closing aperture in a camera. Soon only a pinhole of light remains. I become aware that the realization of my sculpture is complete as this last glimmer fades to black.

"Hold Stephanie's head like this, and Karen's breast this way. This is a good latch." The midwife coaches me for two or three minutes, is obviously satisfied and leaves without a word. The stretcher is quite high and very awkward. I have Stephanie's head in my hand and hold her mouth over Karen's breast. Karen is breathing steadily but remains unconscious. After a few minutes, my neck starts to hurt. My arms are cramping. I glance around the room for help. There is none. I am it. Our 53-minute-old baby is solely reliant on me. This, I realize as the crick in my neck spasms down my back, is a very true definition of responsibility.

I'm sitting in my corner office, shuffling paper and sipping my fifth cup of coffee. Cutting my finger while removing a staple, I stare at the blood running down my hand... And then laugh to myself. I am about as far away from hand jams, cauliflower heads and bobsled tracks as one can get. Things have been relatively quiet on the mania/introspection front — nowhere even close to beyond the horizon of social acceptance. Stephanie is three months old. We have just bought her a "Fold & Go" playpen. I have begun to recognize that surfin' the curve at will was actually a tremendous luxury that I have had for

most of my life. Stephanie brings us great joy. How do she and our future children fit into the model? Will she be a dampening factor that will limit my exploits, manic or introspective, in the physical or intellectual arenas that are well beyond the horizon of social acceptance? What about ego? Will gymnastic and mental restraint over greater periods of time instil enhanced amplitudes that I have yet to experience? I don't know.

Holding a tissue to my finger and being careful not to get blood on my starched white shirt, I walk over to my window and stare down 300 feet into the street below. Glancing out over North Calgary, I notice a large black bird soaring in updrafts made by the chinook

wind. It is the raven. He dives headfirst into a spiralling plummet and seems out of control for several seconds. Quickly, though, he arrests his plunge and again hovers in the updraft as if to caw, "And what about risk?"

It's a good question. And one that has been much on my mind. I have yet to experience and then reflect on this new sensitivity. I turn and stare through the inner glass wall of my office and see my boss, our department vice-president, at the end of the hall. I turn back and face the raven:

I did just recently execute a high-risk and very politically sensitive decision here at the office. Most of my colleagues, including my boss, disagree with my process of implementation. I paraphrase their comments to me: "You'll put yourself out of a job!" "It's political suicide!" "It's your power you are eroding." "It's a blasphemy!" "This will mean the end of your department." "Is this the beginning of the end of your group?" "You do that and we're finished!"

The issue has obsessed me — waking me up at night, distracting me while cuddling Stephanie, causing twinges of stomach pain, trashing me to such an extent mentally that I've had little energy



left for physical exercise. In execution of the endeavour, I am alone. Is this naïve? Stupid? Brilliant? Time will tell. Once again, I suddenly become vigilant; I am beyond the horizon of social acceptance, "commando crawling" across a tightrope. My old hemp cord is held in tension between the arms of power and politics — balanced and judged, I hope, by the value added to the shareholder.

The raven's charcoal-black eyes seem to connect with mine in understanding. In the tinted glass, I become cognizant of my reflection. My left hand removes the tissue from my right and squeezes the end of my finger. A bubble of blood forms, its surface under tension. I hold it up to my eyes and watch it balloon on the tip of my finger. My eyes focus on the white reflection of my dress shirt in the window. The white expands into a broad canvas. I curl my lip in an intense grin as my finger paints a broad, harsh stroke of blood across my shirt. I chortle loudly enough that the raven and my secretary hear my cackle: "SURF THE CURVE, MAN! SURF THE CURVE!"

Δ

HIGH CAMP OF THE GAME

Angelus Vicia

Trevor Jones

April 1975: Here I am in the Canadian Rockies, on a huge unclimbed piece of rock known as Phantom Crags. I'm here with three other British émigrés: Chris Perry; Martin White; and my travelling and climbing partner of the last few years, Andy Dunlop. We are impressed by the size of the crag and have come prepared for a bivy. Chris and Martin are to lead the lower section while Andy and I will lead on the upper wall. The first pitch of 5.7 has taken us into the base of an imposing open book reminiscent of the legendary Cenotaph Corner in North Wales. As I arrive at the bottom of the corner, Martin is just heading off to the left.

"Hey, this corner looks great!" say I. "Why are you going that way?"

"Oh, it looks too hard," says he. "This way will be quicker and easier."

We follow.

August 1992: Here I am, back at the base of the corner. It has crossed my mind a few times over these last 17 years, but somehow other things have always taken precedence. But now I'm back with some keenness, and a young set of legs on the other end of the rope in the form of Joe Josephson. Joe leads the first pitch, and I get to lead the corner — finally. It's a classic 5.9 crack with oodles of pro' (including threaded chockstones) and next to no loose rock. What little there is is perched on one ledge and is soon giving Joe an adrenaline rush as it bounces around the belay on its way to the ground.

At the top of the corner, we discuss the options.

"This wall looks pretty good," say I.
"It leads up to that groove line on the edge."

"Yeah, I suppose," says he. "Doesn't look like much pro' though. Why don't we just do the original route. Ya know, it's pretty neat being up here with a guy from that first ascent back in the Dark Ages. I think I'll just go left."

I follow.

September 1997: Here I am, back leading the corner. I can't believe it. I did everything to get the Bulky Boy, Rick Felber, to lead it, but he outmanœuvred me by sticking most of his prodigious rack into the first half of the corner and then wittering on about how steep it was and how tired he was and how a guy like him who'd only been climbing a couple of years on sport routes had never seen anything like this and how he didn't have any gear left and how it would probably be best if I were to lower him off and lead it myself. My protestations based on age and bulk were countered by arguments that age was merely a substitute for experience and that bulk was a relative term and I actually had less than he did.

So I find myself huffing and puffing up the corner. I bring up Rick and the skinnier Bulky Boy, Corey Smith, and they huff and puff suitably, so I'm happy. At the top of the corner, we discuss options.

"I'm going up this short wall," say I, armed with pitons and self-drill bolts, "to the base of that groove up there. OK?"

"OK!"

They follow. Yes!

June 1998: Here I am, back at the base of this damn corner. Of course, it got dark shortly after I got the Bulky Boys up the short wall, and now I'm back with Al Pickel for one last visit.

He leads the corner and laps it up. I huff and puff with the pack and cut my hands getting Al's first-generation Friends out of the crack. He's amused by the blood. I'll see if he's amused when I remember this at some later date.

I lead the short wall. Al comes to grips with the new terrain above and adds an excellent pitch that finishes at an exposed and semi-hanging belay. I cruise through up to a bomb-bay groove, add a self-drive and realize that we have a technical problem.

As I try to load the bolt driver, it becomes apparent that the remaining bolts are imperial and will not fit the metric driver. I curse Napoleon. I curse Al for having equipment even older than mine. And I curse myself for not checking.

Al raps first.
I follow, dammit!

10 a.m., July 5, 1998: Here I am, huffing and puffing my way up this damn corner again. I'm not huffing and puffing as much as Al, though. We're simulclimbing with packs and being top-roped by the Great Blobbo, and I've made sure that Al's pack is heavier than mine. Unfortunately, Blob has done a good job on the gear placement and it comes out without lacerating Al's hands. I'm able to make up for this shortcoming by getting him to lead the short wall: it requires a certain amount of nerve, which Al is lacking today.

Blob leads the pitch to the hanging stance, and I blow by the previous high point to a decent ledge just on the east face of the tower. We continue on throughout the day with only minor inconveniences, such as: Blob has forgotten his helmet and has to hide under the pack or lead; the head falls off the bolt driver; Blob forgets the hammer and only discovers this halfway up the last pitch, when he thinks he'd like a pin; we do the free rap in the dark; we walk back to the car using two headlamps for three people; we find we have a flat tire; we discover the car won't start because I left the headlights on. I left the headlights on??!

"Trevor! This is NOT minor," says Blob.

"Not to worry," says Al. "If we're not back by about eleven tomorrow, Tobe [Al's wife] will come in to get us."

"If I'm not back by ten to give a lecture," says Blob, "there'll be hell to pay. Not to mention what the new girlfriend is going to say if I don't ring her in about half an hour! We've got to do something!"

"We could walk to the Bar Cee, I suppose."

"It's bloody miles."

"Yeah. About ... er, twenty."

"If you walked all night, Blob, you

could make it. I'll wait here for Tobe."

"Wait a minute! I've got a laptop. Don't ask me why I've got a laptop with me while rock climbing in the Ghost, but I have."

"Why wouldn't a professor of computer science have a laptop with him?" Al and I wonder.

"So, if I had brought the computer with the modem, I could e-mail for a rescue."

"But presumably you didn't, so you can't."

"Right. But Trev's got a cellular that we can't use because it plugs into the car, which has a dead battery. So what about getting the battery out of my laptop and fixing it up to the phone?"

"Might work," say I, as Blob dives into the back of the car and thrusts a very swish-looking battery at me. "That was quick."

"It's the spare. See what you can do."

"Hmmm! Six terminals. Which is positive?" I wonder aloud. I fiddle with it, using a headlamp as a test device. "Nah, we're screwed. I can't get any action from anything on this. But we do have other batteries in the headlamps. One's got six volts and the other's got four and half, so we're almost at twelve."

"Brilliant," says Blob. "We need a fire for light so we can see to do it." He charges off into the bushes.

Al and I follow.

10 p.m., July 5, 1998: Here I am, dialling like a maniac while Al holds the wires in place and Blob tends the fire. We've just managed to get the phone operational. I dial the nearest help, which is Rick near Cochrane, about 35 miles away. Brrring. Brrring. Click.

"Shit."

"What happened?"

"It rang, then cut out."

"Try again!"

Brrring. Brrring. "Hello." Click.

"Shit! ... He answered, then it cut out."

Brrring. Brrring. "Hello." Click.

"It cut out again. I'll keep trying."

Brrring. Brrring. "Hello." Click.

Brrring. Brrring. Click.

"Dammit. It's getting worse."

Brrring. "Hello." ... Click.

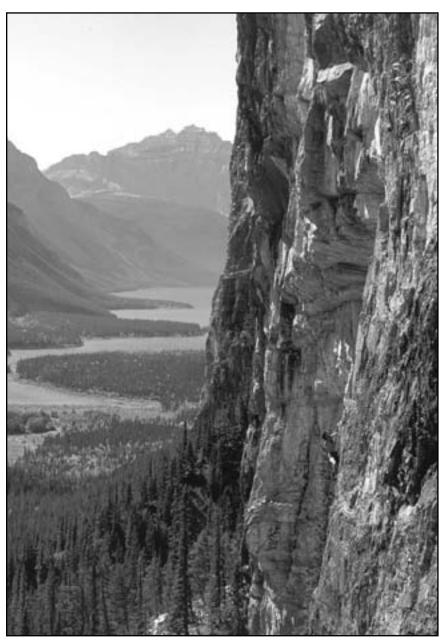
"Maybe not."

Brrring. Brrring. Click.

Brrring. Brrring. "Hello." "Rick, we're stuck in the Ghost!" Click.

"Did you get through?"

"Maybe. I'll keep trying, though." Brrring. Brrring. "Hello." Click.



Peter Arbic on Dreams of Verdon, Ghost River. Photo: Roger Chayer

Brrring. Brrring. Click.

And so it went for an hour and a half, until we eventually gave up.

"My life's going to be hell for the next few weeks," moans the Blob.

"Well, at least I've got a tent," say I, rummaging in the trunk.

Sometime later, I crawl into the tent. Blob follows, still moaning.

1:30 a.m., July 6, 1998: Here I am, stuck in the damn tent with the unhappy Blob. It looks as though the sun is coming up. No it isn't; it's too early. That's a car!

"The cavalry's here," says Al.

"I'm saved!" says the Blob, as he

rushes out of the tent to hug the Bulky Boy, who's our Angel of Mercy. "Quick, Trev, bring the phone so I can call Dianne and get out of the doghouse." He dives into Rick's truck as we thank Rick and break camp.

Blob emerges from the truck a few minutes later. "She doesn't believe me!" He goes back to the phone: "It's true, love — it is, really!..."

Rick and Al climb wearily into the truck.

I follow. Happily. \triangle

Retrospective 2000

HOWIE RICHARDSON

The 1988 CAJ included a tongue-in-cheek forecast of the future by early Skaha-ite Howie Richardson. We asked him to reprise that piece with an updated look both back and forward. — ed.

New Year's, 2025. It was great to have the whole family around, particularly the grandchildren. Two of them, Kate and Emma, are enthusiastic climbers, and we had some great chats about modern climbing. They scanned through some of my guidebooks from the 1960s - and laughed. Kate ran out to her truck to get the latest guide to B.C. She flipped open the lid of this slim, palm-sized gadget and asked me to name a climb. She keyed in U Wall, and successive images on the highresolution screen showed the line of the route on an overall view of the Grand Wall. Next came the detailed topo, then a verbal description of the route with start, finish and belay positions all given using the new 3-D, one-metre-resolution GPS, and finally, of course, the chat room to get the latest beta.

Kate and Emma spent hours browsing through my seventy-year accumulation of climbing literature. These youngsters, raised as they have been on a pure diet of electronic imagery, seemed like the first primarily picture-oriented generation since the Lascaux cave dwellers. Their experience of communication other than via a computer screen is woeful, so I was most encouraged as they raved about the blackand-white photos in John Cleare's Rock Climbers in Action, Pierre Tairraz's books on the French Alps and Fosco Maraini's spectacular pictures of the Karakoram taken nearly 80 years ago. They seemed intrigued by the humour, insight and philosophical tenor of the passages I pointed out. They roared with delight at Allan Austin's description of his girdle traverse of Dinas Gromlech. You could see them lifted and inspired by the sheer exuberance of Lionel Terray's description of he and Lachenal racing up climbs at unprecedented speed, then glissading down steep couloirs in a style of incomprehensible boldness. They wondered how Harold Drasdo could view a visceral and inconsequential sport such as rock climbing with such cerebral navel-gazing.

The girls admitted that they read only

the electronic climbing magazines, the literary level of which has now sunk to that of Skateboard Weekly. Perhaps the disenchantment with climbing literature of a more substantial nature stems from around the year 2000, when the alleged best consisted of some of the most unimaginative and joyless accounts ever of death, near-death and suffering. It's likely that the modern preoccupation with technical difficulty and celebrity status also contributed to the disenchantment. A detailed chronicle of redpointing the latest 5.15c is about as exciting as a stroke-bystroke replay of the fourth hole at the Holiday Hills Pitch and Putt. It's a great shame, because until the late 20th century there was probably no other sport with such a rich written record of the traditions, musings and achievements of its participants.

I particularly wanted Kate and Emma to read a great essay that Bruce Fairley had written years ago on the changes in climbers' attitudes towards each other and in society's attitudes towards climbers. We found it in the 1988 Canadian Alpine Journal, unfortunately juxtaposed with an article I had written. Certain events of the time had led me to some cynical predictions about the state of climbing in the year 2000. In retrospect, Fairley's piece is the more prophetic of the two, since it is obvious that it was not spiralling standards, improved gear, closures or regimentation that transformed our sport, but rather those very shifts in attitude. Other than in the level of athleticism of its practitioners, football (soccer for those in the small corner of the world where it is unimportant) in 2025 is pretty much the same sport to players, fans and society alike as it was in 1928. That is not true of climbing. In the last 15 years of the 20th century, there was a paradigm shift (I sniggered to myself as I used that trendy term in 2000) as climbing moved from backwater to mainstream. This was the time when danger ceased to be a necessary adjunct to the sport, when kinaesthetics became the driving sensation and the aesthetics of the arena were reduced to such little consequence that it was no longer required to even go outside to climb.

But of course the girls wanted to read my piece not Bruce's, and since neither of them had been alive in 2000 they found it even more hilarious than the antiquated guidebooks. It was hard to explain what had prompted the article because they had little concept of the year 2000 and none of the 1980s. How did you climb when there were no gyms? How could people have been allowed to take part in risk sports without any special insurance and equipment safety checks? The girls expressed horror at the idea of someone belaying them or placing fixed anchors on a climb unless that person had some formal training and recognized certification to do so. To them my cynicism seemed misplaced, so we went through the piece together to see if I had got anything right. Perhaps in retrospect the kindest thing to say is that I share with George Orwell a rather dark view of life and the future. At least it gives one cause for celebration when proven wrong.

I explained that the genesis of the article had been the increasing impingement, from many directions, on opportunities for outdoor recreation. Houses mushroomed on the Smoke Bluffs, there were threats of bans from the developers, and a mean-spirited resident extended his fence beyond the property line so that we could no longer climb at the Potty Room and peer into his bedroom windows. Litigation over personal injury was at an all-time high, and the notion of personal responsibility was taking a nose-dive. The cross-country skiing at Cyprus Bowl had just been turned over to a contract operator, and a traditional activity in a public park seemed on its way to becoming a private, revenue-generating venture. Emma, the more rebellious of the two, asked if there really had been any mass protests over access fees as I had suggested would happen. I had to admit that we had all acquiesced to the notion that improvement was both necessary and desirable, that it cost money and that the user should be the one to bear the cost of the improvements. By 2000, we were dutifully — and almost uncomplainingly — paying our car-park fees at Squamish, at Stanage Edge or wherever else it was demanded. We accepted that it was anti-social to throw our camping gear down wherever we wanted on Psyche Ledge or at the Bulletheads, to light fires and to shit in

the woods. So we paid the camping fee, huddled over the dreary flames of our MSR stoves in the dank, depressing and designated sites and strained each morning in the self-composting, solar-powered, ecologically benign outhouse. Many found the convenience of following prepared sheep trails too seductive and joined the one-way flow of track skiers. It was far easier to cough up the fee than to go to the effort of, God forbid, making their own tracks in splendid but unrecognized isolation. Of course, the hard-core minority were still out there, but backcountry skiing became increasingly confused with skiing out of bounds and public sympathy for all these activities dwindled. We had even grown used to the idea that we might have to book almost a year in advance to hike the West Coast Trail, to pull our kayaks out of the water in the Broken Islands or to get a campsite in any provincial park on a long weekend.

But this seems all rather petty in the late 2020s, when it has been standard for many years to pay for just about everything for which the government or a private landowner can charge and the limits on access to various areas are as ubiquitous, complex and confusing as the hunting regulations.

In 1988, the struggle over access to the Smoke Bluffs was tangible and immediate; the developer owned the land and wanted to build houses, and the buyers didn't want us in their backyard. That was simple. Although I had suggested in the article — rather tongue in cheek — that we would eventually have to apply for permission to place bolts for new climbs, even I had not foreseen the totalitarian position that would be adopted a mere ten years later by various state and national bodies in the U.S. In their convoluted reasoning, a stream of air-conditioned, gasguzzling motorhomes driving through City of Rocks did not constitute an assault on people's capacity to enjoy the wilderness, but some small bits of metal on the

At the turn of the century, climbers seemed to be winning against the more draconian of these rules simply because the farcical nature of these rules was obvious to all and non-climbers, at least passively, supported the fight against them. But also around the end of the last century, the tip of the conservationist iceberg started to float upward, and it was this that finally killed off the last vestiges of unrestricted access to the crags. This was the time when cliff ecology became trendy, with articles in such high-profile

journals as Nature and American Scientist. Climbers had always thought of themselves as good environmental citizens; they loved the outdoors, they never littered, and they accepted limited restrictions to avoid disturbing peregrine falcons. Unfortunately, in reality most climbers in 2000 paid no real attention to the habitat into which they ventured, nor were they aware of the ecological problems they were causing, and they placed access to their sport before conservation. Unbeknownst to most of them, starting in the mid-1990s, there had been a growing stream of studies providing scientifically verifiable evidence of both the unique nature of cliff habitats and the huge impact that climbers had on them. So, since there were about a hundred times more bird watchers than climbers, public sympathy was against us. The 2020s generation is actually much more environmentally aware and accepting than we were in the 1990s. Kate and Emma understand and accept the need to close places like Skaha, the Niagara Escarpment, Joshua Tree, Hueco and many others to all climbing because of their special ecological or anthropological significance. They see bookings and fees as a necessary way of controlling the numbers of recreationists in these beleaguered spots, and of generating revenue for conservation measures. A far cry from 1988!

And what of my paranoia of regulations, testing and certification, so strongly evident in that CAJ piece? Such things seemed an inevitable consequence of the liability-avoidance tactics of landowners, public-land managers, climbing schools, guidebook writers, equipment manufacturers, etc., which in turn had been a direct result of the 1980s sue-for-anything-and-everything syndrome. Well, it turns out that rock climbers were as riskaverse as any of the other groups, at least in North America. By 2000, growing numbers of them voluntarily wore helmets at the Smoke Bluffs, ventured only onto routes with fixed gear or climbed only indoors. The lone, all-inclusive guiding qualification had been supplemented by ones for hiking, top-roping and a whole slew of others. The demand for the qualifications was huge because of the hordes who wished to participate in adventure sports but saw no need to involve themselves in the tedium of acquiring skill and experience and who sought to avoid the "adventure" part by placing the onus of responsibility and decision making on a guide with a day sack full of these aforementioned certificates. Adventure tourism

became an industry and was regulated like an industry, and the consequences spilled over into the pastimes that had spawned the industry.

Kate and Emma were getting fidgety. Climbing for them is still purely athletic; it involves no ethics, nor any underlying philosophy. They are still seduced by their rapid rise through the grades, and for them there are no good routes under 5.12. The talk had whetted their appetite, and they asked if I would climb with them. I glanced through the window at the snow and thought of the seventyminute drive to the gym and my rapid descent through the grades. They reassured me that we need not go anywhere because they had brought their new virtual climber. I was confused. While Emma set up the simulator, Kate explained to me how it worked. She said there is a digital library of classic routes laser-scanned to nearly one-millimetre resolution. A holographic projector produces an image of the part of the climb you are on right in the middle of your front room. Projection is controlled by a computer that also tracks your body movements through sensors in a body stocking and through a pair of glasses that monitor your eye movements. She explained that to go virtual climbing I really should have recorded crucial aspects of strength, endurance and flexibility on a body-motion analyser while I was actually climbing, but that today I could "borrow her body". Whoa! Now there's something that boggled the eighty-year-old brain: virtual virtual climbing versus surrogate virtual climbing! So I donned the glasses, support harness and motion analyser, they flicked the switch, and there I was at the base of the climb. I reached out for some handholds, selected footholds and looked up. As the route unrolled in front of me, I moved to the next holds. I looked around, and the computer actually projected an image of Dinas Mot and the other side of the Llanberis valley. At one point I selected a particularly small nubbin to pull up on — projection stopped. I wasn't strong enough. I tried a larger one, and on I went. So, on a cold, snowy day in Okanagan Falls in 2025, I used my grand-daughter's body to climb Cenotaph Corner, a route I had not done since 1969.

I was inspired. I know there are lots of other eighty-year-olds still out there climbing. I really will go to the gym more often this year, and I should get out my copy of John Fantini's old classic, Eating for Climbing. Who knows, perhaps I could actually do the Corner again.

Organizations -

THE SWISS GUIDES CENTENNIAL

R.W. Sandford

In the fall of 1998, a broad range of partners — including the Alpine Club of Canada, the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, Parks Canada and Canadian Pacific Hotels - began planning a celebration to mark the centennial of the arrival of the Swiss guides in Canada. It quickly became apparent that the project was going to be much larger than anyone could have expected. By the spring of 1999, the centennial had become a regional celebration involving 32 publicand private-sector partners who, together, offered more than 50 events throughout the Rockies and Selkirks celebrating the role played by Swiss guides in shaping our national alpine aesthetic.

The Swiss Guides Centennial was kicked off during the Mountain Heritage Weekend in May with a gala event held at the Chateau Lake Louise. General Manager David Bayne welcomed guests and introduced the dignitaries including His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia and His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador to Canada. The official banner was unveiled, and the centennial officially declared. A replica reprint of the William Spotswood Green mountaineering classic Among the Selkirk Glaciers was launched by publisher Cameron Treleaven of Aquila Books in Calgary. High Ideals, a commemorative book on the history of the railway guides in Canada, published by the Alpine Club of Canada, was also launched. Banners were hung celebrating the event throughout the mountain West.

In June, a Canadian delegation attended official ceremonies marking the centennial of the arrival of Swiss guides in Canada in the home country of these guides. This delegation met officials of the Swiss mountain-guiding community at Interlaken before proceeding to Gsteigwiler, the birthplace of Edouard Feuz Sr. and Christian Häsler Sr., who in 1899 became the first two Swiss guides to come to Canada in the employ of the CPR

A week later, Golden held its Mountain Heritage Weekend. The town went all out with the opening of the Swiss Guides' Edelweiss Village for interpretive tours and the official opening of an exhibit on the Swiss guides' families at the Golden and District Museum. "Bruno's Black and White Impressions", a photo exhibition by



Following dinner in Gsteigwiler, the birthplace of the first railway mountain guides to come to Canada, the Canadian delegation unveiled a memorial plaque honouring the contribution made by Swiss guides to Canadian mountain culture.



Bruno Engler, also opened at the Purcell Heli-skiing Base Lodge. This weekend also featured the première of The Mountain Show, a play about the lives of the Swiss guides performed by the Golden Players. The tours, the exhibitions and the play were offered all summer.

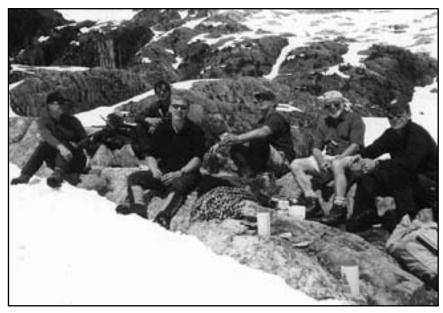
On July 1, a Swiss Guides Centennial float won first prize in the Canmore Canada Parade. On July 2, an exhibition on the Swiss mountain-guiding tradition also opened at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff.

In July, the first two of ten centennial

ascents were undertaken at Lake Louise and at Rogers Pass. Parks Day celebrations featuring special family hikes in Glacier, Yoho and Banff national parks began which celebrated the heritage of the Swiss guides. Other summer events included a Swiss Guides Weekend in Field, mountain film and mountain literature festivals in Golden, guides' walks throughout the mountain national parks, and dozens of public programs dedicated to celebrating Canada's unique mountain heritage. The festival concluded with the 10th Annual Mountain Guides' Ball at Chateau Lake Louise in November, honouring Sid Feuz.

Thousands of people participated in heritage events associated with the Swiss Guides Centennial. These events were brought to the attention of millions of others through extensive coverage by local and regional media and by newspapers and magazines with national and international circulation. Full-page newspaper and magazine articles were published as far away as Switzerland, Germany and France. It is estimated that the story reached six million people through print media alone.

More importantly, the Swiss Guides Centennial proved beyond a doubt that a wide range of diverse partners can work together to celebrate heritage in a highprofile way. The development of effective



After deep, late-lying snow made an ascent of the actual Swiss peaks unsafe, Mount Truda was chosen as the objective for this centennial climb on July 19 in Glacier National Park. The ascent was undertaken by media representative Kevin Brookner; park wardens Eric Dafoe, Darrel Nitsche and Percy Woods; Swiss Consul Bruno Dobler; and CP guide Matthias Ahrens.

The centennial flag was unfurled at the summit.

partnerships and the capacity to honour our natural and cultural heritage in innovative and effective ways that respect the ecological integrity of our national parks will hold a central place in our club's future.

"THAR SHE SNOWS!" THE MOBY DICK GMC 1999 DAVID DORNIAN

Hold your left hand in front of your body. Turn the palm up. Look at the spot where your lifeline turns towards your wrist, at the place where a teaspoon of water would naturally sit. That's where the tents were pitched, along the north shore of Houston Lake. Now, look at the rise and direction of your cupped fingers. Your thumb is Claggart, on the south, and Mount Billy Budd. Your index finger points over Houston Pass to Escalade Peak, Harpoon and Mount Fafnir. As you move along the ridge from west to east, your middle digit becomes Proteus, White Jacket and Redburn. Your fourth is Benito Cereno and Moby Dick, and your pinky points up Forecastle and Typee. The summits were that close.

Climbing began more or less right behind the outhouses. This could be a good thing, depending on the speed of your digestion and whether you were a devotee of the "sudden shock" cult of elevation gain, or a bad thing, for those more inclined toward the "gentle surrender" mode of alpine approach. The suddenshockers were in their element this year, yodelling like roosters and cramponing happily between the crevasses less than an hour out of their sleeping bags. Us surrenderers had to be a bit more careful inadvertently short yourself on caffeine at breakfast, and you might still be trailing bootlaces when you shuffled into the bergschrund. There wasn't much opportunity for hands-in-pockets work, either. There couldn't be, really: walking in any direction from the lake tended to turn to scrambling before you were out of earshot of the supper horn. You could do laps between your tent and the tea tent and the shower stall, with options for the thorns and willows above the waterfall cliff a quarter-mile away, but the impressive drop in that direction blocked any casual impulse to move down-valley. Besides, that was where the mosquitoes lived. There was a grizzly's den in the only trees.

This being the Battle Range, we were climbing on granite, mostly. However, this being the relatively untrammelled Melville Group, it was often bad granite. Ridge lines were stacked with tottering tabletops, furred with lichen, defying gravity. And the snow: Week 1 camped in it, Week 2 could glissade to the tent doors, Week 3 were surfing, Week 4 — well, everyone was sick during Week 4, and it rained some, too — by Week 5 and the accompanying TNF/ACC Mountain Leadership Course, the peak names were the same, but the routes were all new.

Most afternoons would find us rocketing down the decaying snow from the cols on the seats of our wind pants, sending heel sprays of slush arcing high overhead, then staggering up and slogging through sun cups and sand back to camp. There were little yellow flowers that would appear between the morning's outgoing boot prints, amidst the boulders and rills in the final hundred metres to the drying



Photo: Roger Laurilla

tent. Here, the set-up crew had constructed a chaise lounge out of two-by-fours, oriented to face the four-o'clock sun. This was where you collapsed your trekking poles and dumped your pack and rope. Mug in hand, you could watch the other parties descend the slopes like Tuaregs crossing distant dunes or cowboys riding out of a drive-in movie screen.

Brad Harrison ran the whole show from the site, never leaving. He was the first on location for camp set-up and the last man out after take-down at the end of the summer. Some of the guides were in the house for almost as long, or came and went and came back again for later weeks. Participants were consistent as well; there were many familiar faces and names, even repeats travelling from continents away. That's one of the things that really makes these summers great; close to half of those who sign on (the GMC committee could tell you the exact percentage) have attended previous GMCs — some have attended many previous GMCs — and so you're climbing with friends who feel like family. Combine that with the contact high you get from the first-timers who've never done anything like this before, and you have an experience that is difficult to

exhaust.

A GMC is the perfect vacation. You can't ask for anything better. Really. I mean, have someone else find a beautiful mountain location with a good variety of climbing possibilities. Fly there in a helicopter. Then, day after day, have the staff wake you up and feed you breakfast. Go climbing. Come down from the heights, get out of your boots and loaf until dinner. Eat like a hog. Swap stories. Sign up for the trip you want to do the next day. Pack a lunch. Go to bed. Repeat as necessary until you forget ... uh ... um ... What was the question, again?

The GMC is a tradition as old as the Alpine Club itself. No other organization I know offers anything with quite the same brass-and-canvas ambiance. Perhaps that's part of the reason folks return year after year. In a world consisting of cement and cellphones, a GMC presents a unique opportunity for community and communion. The participants, the peaks, the staff, the situation — the camp literally is the Club in microcosm. Heads up. The GMC sells out every year, and the special Year 2000 edition will be held at Fairy Meadow. With all the Adamants splashing up into the sunrise, you'll have to be there. Get your name down now.

David would like to thank all those who helped him shelter his Bic against the wind whilst he lit his cigars at belays and on summits during the GMC last summer.

The Canadian Himalayan Foundation

THE CANADIAN HIMLAYAN FOUNDATION continues to be the major funding source for most mountaineering and mountain-related endeavours by Canadians, both at home and in the far ranges.

Our last fiscal year saw us award more money than ever before, with contributions totalling more than \$36,000 to 26 expeditions and scientific, educational and cultural projects.

A recent casino has given us similar funds to be dispersed over the course of the next year, so individuals with mountain projects in the works are strongly encouraged to submit an application for funding.

The CHF offers direct support to projects — either through our general grants program, or through the John Lauchlan Memorial Fund, which is targeted at high-end technical trips. We also offer gear support through our Canadian and Nepalese caches. Both these caches are well equipped at present with several types of gear that will help

reduce shipping costs and wear and tear on your personal equipment.

There are no formal applications for the general CHF grants. Simply write up a proposal outlining the team and the objective and provide a detailed budget. Send the proposal by mail, fax or e-mail to the addresses below.

The Lauchlan award requires an application form to be filled out; this form can be obtained at the same addresses.

The deadlines for CHF applications are
January 1 and July 1 of each year.

The deadline for the Lauchlan award is August 31.

Send enquiries to:

The Canadian Himalayan Foundation
Box 61063, Kensington Postal Outlet
Calgary, AB T2N 4S6
Phone and fax: (403) 678-2881
e-mail: gpowter@telusplanet.net

Avalanche Safety — A Devil's Advocacy

SANDY BRIGGS

A valanches scare me! Fortunately (for me), I have not yet been buried in one. This may be attributed to experience, knowledge, luck, the fact that I don't get out much in the winter and the fact that I almost never ski in the Interior (and consequently have no familiarity with a substance called deep powder snow). The relative importance of these five factors is open to debate, but it is likely that the last three are right up there. I have taken a couple of avalanche-safety courses, but I am admittedly somewhat complacent and unpractised in the use of avalanche transceivers and in some other avalanche-safety procedures. With that as an introduction, I hope you will manage to remain seated and calm while I pull your chain a little on this subject.

I am interested in risk and its evaluation. It is perhaps worth renaming the separation of real risk from perceived risk as the separation of real safety from perceived safety. We also need a sense of perspective. There are, on average, 10 to 12 avalanche fatalities in Canada per year, of which about half are backcountry skiers. Driving to and from our outings almost certainly is more dangerous.

However, my first problem with avalanche transceivers is not about risk, it is about their cost. They are hideously overpriced, currently fetching a dollar figure approximately equivalent to the value of my (admittedly "low-end") car. Yet I cannot help but suspect that they contain less than 20 dollars' worth of parts. The cult of avalanche safety keeps us buying them unquestioningly (yes, I own one), but I keep hoping that some day somebody will break the price bubble with the truth.

Before I get to my second and more important complaint, I'd like to offer a "creative" interpretation of some numbers from the Web site of the Canadian Avalanche Association. According to the "Trends and Patterns in Avalanche Accidents" pages, our chances of surviving an avalanche are about 86 per cent. Put another way, our chances of dying if we get caught in an avalanche are about 14 per cent. One data set suggests that about one third of avalanche deaths are caused by trauma rather than asphyxiation, so our chances of being killed by asphyxiation if we are caught in an avalanche are only

about two thirds of 14 per cent, which is just under 10 per cent. It is these cases that, it seems to me, constitute the proper focus of transceiver usage. In one data set spanning 12 years, it was found that the proportion of completely buried persons found alive by the use of transceivers was 42 per cent¹, the others being found by other means. A little bit of "interpretation" now has us down to this: an avalanche transceiver is going to be of real value in only about 4 per cent² of the cases in which people are caught in avalanches.

Another data analysis (Avalanche News No. 42) tells us that there were 73 people either killed or completely buried by avalanches in Canada between 1986 and 1993. Of the 32 victims without transceivers, 13 per cent survived, while 32 per cent of the 41 victims with transceivers survived. There is a lot of information missing here, and those killed by trauma have not been factored out, but according to these data it looks as though wearing a transceiver increases our survival chances by only about 20 per cent.

Admittedly, about 75 per cent of recreational avalanche victims (i.e. deaths) in a different, larger sample were not wearing transceivers. Also, the numbers would probably improve a bit if all wearers of transceivers were proficient users. But when the situation is viewed in the (skewed?) light of the above paragraphs, one can hardly wonder at or even condemn the low usage of these devices.

On the Canadian Avalanche Association Web site, under the heading of "Safety Measures" on the pages called "Accidents Factors", there appears the following true statement: "Other safety measures such as wearing transceivers or removing ski-pole straps tend to reduce the consequences of being caught." Unfortunately, it seems to me that there are many winter recreationists who have confused the real purpose of avalanche transceivers — as a modest search-and-rescue advantage in a small percentage of avalanche incidents — with a false purpose - namely as a way to reduce the likelihood of being caught in an avalanche. This is my second big issue with transceivers. It seems obvious, but I think it needs saying (again). Wearing a transceiver does not decrease your chances of being

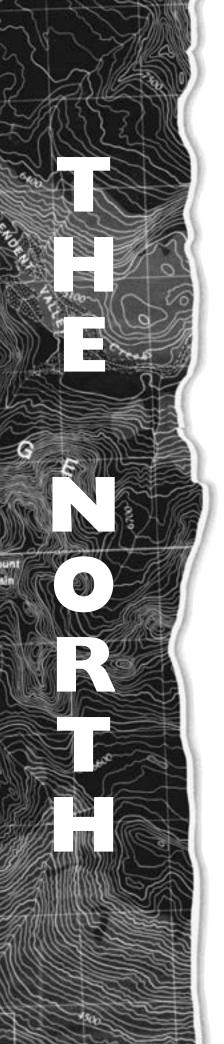
caught in an avalanche. In fact, if you think it does — that is, if you would go somewhere with a transceiver that you would not go without one — then it actually increases your chances of becoming an avalanche victim. Let me rephrase that. If while wearing an avalanche transceiver you would ski or climb somewhere that you wouldn't go if you were not wearing one, then you are stupid. (Unless, I guess, your policy is to never go out without one. Think carefully about this.)

My argument is, then, that transceivers confer only a modest search-and-rescue advantage in a small percentage of avalanche incidents, and it is therefore not irresponsible for informed parties to go into the snowy mountains without these devices. This conclusion will be unacceptable, perhaps reasonably, to commercial operators and to most clubs, but if this heretical article fosters a discussion that leads to a more realistic understanding of risk, then we will all be better off.

As a final point (actually, there is another one, but I'll spare you), I'd like to comment on avalanche probes. Again we are talking about a device that will not reduce your chances of getting caught in an avalanche. It is a single-use pound of metal that costs about half the price of the exhaust-system replacement that my car could use right now. Moreover, as the CAA Web site shows, only about 10 per cent of avalanche victims completely buried alive are found by this method fewer than are found either by surface clues or by the last-seen point. Put another way, your powers of observation alone are weightless and worth about 2.5 times as much as an avalanche probe for locating a buried victim alive. Again it is scarcely a cause for wonder that so few people choose to carry a probe.

So, if this devil's advocate has to come up with a conclusion, it is this: Let's learn to understand risk better. Let's get a sense of perspective about what's really important, and let's concentrate more on safe travel. (I hope I never have to eat these words.)

- 1. It is not stated whether all victims in the data set were actually wearing transceivers perhaps unlikely.
- 2. This is 42 per cent of 10 per cent.



Baffin

Louise Thomas

I'm not sure if it's just my nature, but before a trip I always have a worry that wakes me in the night. My worry about Baffin was polar bears; after all, I had been reliably informed that five out of six bears prefer women, and although Shaun has long hair I was sure that wouldn't count. The policeman was very kind and did not once fall off his chair laughing. He carefully studied my gun application and simply confirmed that I needed a gun in case a polar bear tried to eat me. Of course I needed a gun; the others could all run faster! In the event, they said no.

No gun meant that we missed the armed escort through Heathrow; however, chaos ensued at Canadian security: "I'm sorry, sir, but we cannot take responsibility for that rope." Shaun obviously looked as if he were ready to commit mass hanging.

Somewhere along the way, we picked Jerry Gore off the terminal pavement, where he had been selling sleeping space and collecting statistics on the breathability of Gore-tex in airports. We were a team — Jerry, Shaun, Twid and I — en route for the Stewart valley, which links the Sam and Gibbs fjords. We had seen the pictures and were heading for unclimbed, golden granite walls under deep blue skies, for Jerry had reliably informed us "It never snows in Baffin, and never for more than three days."

Unfortunately, the first of those days came on our flight to Clyde River. A reality check hit us: "What have we done?" It was -17°C and we were missing half our bags. They were stranded in Pond Inlet due to storms over Clyde River. We huddled outside the wood shack that was the airport, unconsoled by the thought that only once in nine years had the plane failed to land in Clyde. We were learning that Baffin doesn't like to be typical.

Three days later, having gathered our kit and food and packed and repacked and parted with a huge amount of money then parted with more money for extras and more money for tax, we were more than ready to go. Our time for climbing was short, but, more seriously, we had 36 kg of digestive biscuits to devour in less than a month.

There were three teams in Clyde River: our group; two other Brits, Stewart Millar and Andy Jones, heading for the Stewart; and an American team with sights on the Gibbs. Our outfitter elected to have us travel en masse. We did not argue. The Inuit are probably the hardiest people I've ever met. At age 2 they loiter in the street, at 10 they eat raw fish, and then they become ageless. With bare hands they will strip a Skidoo engine on the frozen sea; they can spot a seal a mile away; and they will also chat to us the visitors in English.

Travel seemed guaranteed to cause maximum body confusion. We journeyed through the freezing night sun and slept in the warm morning. For two minutes the excitement of the journey would take hold, but it would quickly subside due to genuine concerns about concussion and compressed spines.

The land was beautiful, however. Even though my feet and toes were excruciatingly and worryingly cold, the drama of the frozen sea, the white land and the towering walls was breathtaking. When we stopped to camp, it looked as if we were besieged by a chaos of ice but it was a mirage. While the Inuit organize themselves quickly, we struggled with poles and fabric made brittle with cold. We stopped in open spaces and slept safe from bears and were comforted by the Inuit presence. Afternoon came and we broke camp and broke down immediately. As a distraction we were shown bear prints a mere fifty metres away. "Skinny male, two days old," Jushua told us confidently. Twid and I were taking pictures when the team called "Bear!" Ha, ha, very good! But there it was, fortunately running away. Jerry was off in hot pursuit!

Our arrival in the Stewart valley was a moment of blurred relief. Our journey through two nights had been cold and intolerably uncomfortable. As the Skidoos powered up the final rise to the lakes of the Stewart, our relief at arriving began to turn into an excitement of superlatives. Jerry whooped, Twid yelled, and Shaun played the silent one.

The valley is truly a big-wall climber's dream. Imagine every big-wall you have ever drooled over and then line them up: El Capitan, Tre Cima and Lotus Flower Tower look-alikes interspersed with the valley's own specials. Imagine, and then remember that all but one is completely untouched. Each an adventure to unfold.

The Inuit bade farewell: "It will be warmer each day."

It might have been morning or midnight when the explosion happened. We were sitting in a silence that felt remote as the Skidoo engines faded into the distance. The bang was Jerry bursting from his tent: "My harness! Has anyone seen my harness?" The fall-out was kit every where. As we retreated to coffee, it was a forlorn man who appeared with a scrap of paper: "Look, it's on my list." A last-ditch effort to deny reality. It's hard to know how to comfort a man who has travelled so far from a Cotswold outlet!

Shaun is a practical man and generously offered to rustle up a harness from a few slings; after all, Jerry already has two children. Jerry chose the harder option; across the airwaves he matter-offactly explained this slight hiccup. His reward was a place in the Guinness book of records for the world's most expensive mail-order harness. Airfreighted from Montréal at an undisclosed four-figure sum.

The next 24 hours were spent lying on a frozen lake and studying the walls above with sneaking glimpses into the trapped bubbles below. We divided tasks, sending Twid and Jerry to recce an approach while Shaun and I moved gear. This was nearly to be their downfall.

We shared our base with Stewart and Andy; happily, they had a big gun with silver-tipped bullets. The second big bang of the trip was Andy trying out his gun. Three of us stared in absolute horror as the gunshot reverberated around the peaks, triggering a multitude of avalanches off every wall, with Twid and Jerry below. Andy smiled, oblivious, his earplugs still in place!

And now to the climb.

As we set off, I think that we are simply carrying kit to the start of the route. The first few pitches are on snow, crossing ledges. I curse the weight of my sack but continue. Eventually the ropes stop and all four of us dump our loads. It is early evening, time for tea. Twid looks at me hopefully: "Shall we carry on?"

My feet are frozen, my hands numb, my back sore; I am tired and hungry. "Of course," I reply.

It is strange how confined we tend to be by the convention of time. Twid is quick to shed its shackles. I remove my watch and join him. We climb at night, Shaun and Jerry in the day. As we get higher, we climb for up to twenty hours then sleep while the others climb. We briefly share traumas as we pass in the night.

The climbing has started not on rock, as we anticipated, but as hard mixed climbing on rotten snow. Two days have seen us through awkward grooves and thrutchy chimneys. Now Twid is bridged above me. We both hold our breaths. The huge cone of snow that was hanging above now rests on him. As he hesitates fifty feet out with rotten gear, neither of us can contemplate the consequences. He shuffles, tensing his body, and finds a placement. The cone drops — on me. I am winded, and half my belay is dismantled by the force. We return to the portaledge to tell the tale.

Once out of the snow, we begin to enjoy the puzzle of roofs, rotten rock and traverses. We have a new bolt system that we use on belays, but so far the drill bits are snapping fast. Placing each bolt is laborious and frustrating. At one point Twid and I are abseiling in a snowstorm in the early hours. Twid pulls himself onto the stance. Quite simply, the bolt heads have sheared. He calmly reorganizes the anchor. The closeness of our near disaster does not need to be mentioned. We were hauling and jumaring simultaneously from those same bolts a few hours before.

A week passes, and the temperature remains steadfastly at around -10° C. Each day the weather deteriorates and it snows.

Home life is only comfortable in the tent, though we find a sun trap in the afternoon when it isn't snowing. Even the luxury of washing our naughty bits is denied, as the Wetwipes have frozen!

On the wall, Twid hooks and mashies and I take my biggest fall while cleaning! We watch Shaun and Jerry break through an ominously loose band of roofs. On Friday we stretch out the last of the rope and once again descend in a snowstorm, groping our way back to camp and company.

In basecamp we all gang up on Jerry, reminding him of his eternal quotes: "It rarely snows in Baffin."; "It'll get warmer every day." We also muse on the fact that we have come to climb in what feels like the coldest place in the world and have opted for a north-facing wall!

A day on earth, and we are ready for the wall. On Sunday we leave in the sun and begin to haul. I glance at my watch and then put time away. Sometime on a snowy Monday morning we crawl into our portaledges.

We sleep; it snows; we sleep until it becomes Tuesday, and still it snows. Next door, Jerry meekly demands more tea for a suspected kidney infection while Shaun clucks over his homemade hanging stove. We suspect that things have reached an all-time low when I start reading the messages off the porridge packets for inspiration. I'm not sure whether it is due to this or the game of guess-the-singer, but Wednesday morning we are out and climbing. True, the temperature has risen so we are now damp and snowy. That night after change-around we listen to the steadily worsening weather and calculate whether we can escape.

Morale is low. We are damp and tired, not to mention suffering from digestive-biscuit withdrawal. With some misgivings, we stretch the rope to ground.

Andy and Stewart have retreated from their peak and are on their way home. We now have had buttonhead bolts spontaneously explode and so are very grateful to borrow their Petzl system. The next day, the sun shines and we laze in an unusual sensation of warmth. Nobody suggests that we should stay. We bid our farewells and head up the ropes for one last time.

Somebody is looking after us. I reach a belay and stop for just a moment longer to drink, while from above me comes a shout and the clatter of rocks down into my intended path.

It is 6 p.m. at the ledge. "Shall we climb?" Above us the sun has hit the wall. For the first time I peel my gloves off. It is my turn to hook and pendulum. We are in the main system, looking down not into cloud but into the oblivion of sheer walls. The exhilaration of space and granite is all around us.

Back at our portaledge, we resist waking as what feels like a hippo passes by, but sleep is definitely not possible when the clear strains of "Dance in the Old-fashioned Way" drift down the wall. Three days pass, along with cracks and corners. Twid is hopeful of seeing the top. I teeter across on worrying slabs to belay below a precarious pillar and a bottomless off-width. Summit fever is unfounded, but the pitch is solved and the way to the top of the wall in sight.

Shaun and Jerry head off early. The cloud has crept back, but our luck is hanging in. Shaun finds a crucial RP, which opens the way to the final crack and chimney. We listen to the singing and time our departure. As the ropes pass, the cloud begins to thin. Shaun has climbed a fine crack and a hideous chimney; Jerry launches out on a snowy traverse.

At 9 p.m. we stand on the summit in blue skies and sunshine.

It has felt endless, but now we loiter in our vertical and rocky world turned snowy and horizontal. Then, quite suddenly, we know we have to go; the need to be safely off the wall is overwhelming. We clean our route with the usual hassles of jammed ropes, detached climbers and dropped gear. There is no question of stopping, and some 12 hours later we drag our haul bags down the final slopes. Behind us the cloud envelopes the face and the wind begins to roar.

Skiing Northeastern Baffin Island

B etween April 30 and May 12, 1999, Annie Larrivée and I skied the glaciated valley southeast of Pond Inlet. We hauled our sleds through this impressive region in cold but pristine weather, making steady progress every day. Snow was deep and light near and beyond Utuk Lake and throughout the southern valleys, but icy conditions and a dryer climate were found as we skied closer to the

Our chosen route, of moderate difficulty, would certainly appeal to a great number of Arctic adventurers. Deeply incised, twisting valleys, hanging glaciers and breathtaking Arctic-barren scenery made the skiing always interesting. The challenge was kept alive when several glaciers had to be crossed along the way. Although no significant climbs were attempted during this trip, the potential for mountaineering objectives was scouted and is deemed excellent. We definitely plan to return next spring for more exploration and possibly several first ascents!

PHILIPPE GAUTHIER

Kluane National Park Reserve Mountaineering Summary and Statistics — 1999

This year, even with the unusual weather conditions, there were 46 climbing expeditions, comprising 176 people and accruing some 3005 person-days within the Icefields of Kluane. Weather and time delays forced another six expeditions and some members of two other expeditions to cancel their trips. Overall, this was one of the busiest years on record for the Icefields.

There were 31 expeditions and 107 people on Mount Logan this year, representing 61% of the people in the Icefields. The King Trench route (standard route) saw 18 expeditions and 65 people, whereas the East Ridge had 10 expeditions and 35 people. Other routes on Mount Logan attempted this year were the Catenary Ridge, the South Face and the Hummingbird Ridge. Nine expeditions were successful to either the East or West Peak of the mountain, putting the success rate at 30% of all expeditions on the mountain. Once again, climbers reported some large crevasses opening up on the upper King Trench route above 15,000 feet, but these posed no major problems this year. The major complaint was the weather. Storms forced long delays in accessing or leaving the Icefields. Temperatures into the 40s were common in May, and some frostbite problems were reported.

Other mountains that were attempted included Lucania, Steele, Kennedy, Queen Mary, Vancouver, Seattle, McCauley, King Peak, Walsh, Pinnacle, Hubbard, Augusta and Baird. Interesting climbs included a route up the northwest ridge of King Peak, and what is believed to be a first ascent of Mount Seattle to North Peak.

New at the Icefields this year was the establishment of the Icefield Discovery Lodge in the divide area near Mount Queen Mary. This camp is a trial commercial venture to allow more people to experience the true heart of Kluane National Park —

the Icefields. Approximately 35 people flew into the area over the summer and spent at least one night in a comfortable, heated camp on the glacier.

If the weather was the negative side of this climbing season, on the positive side there were no search-and-rescue operations or fatalities within the Icefields, although falls into crevasses and frostbite were reported.

Park wardens spent some time in the King Trench area this summer monitoring use. Some of the climbers contacted expressed concern over latrines and human waste, especially at King Trench basecamp and Camp I. Wardens noticed that the lower King Trench route gets excessively wanded by the end of the summer as most parties do not remove wands upon completion of their trip. The onus seems to be left to the last team on the mountain. One group on a late-season trip on the East Ridge of Mount Logan reported quite a bit of older fixed line surfacing on parts of the route.

Of note is the use of satellite technology. More climbers are showing up using GPS units for navigation in the Icefields. And the satellite phone, especially the Iridium phone, seems to work very well in this environment and is a great improvement over the heavy HF radio system.

Anyone interested in climbing within Kluane should contact the "Mountaineering Warden", Kluane National Park, Box 5495, Haines Junction, Yukon Y0B 1LO, Canada; or call (867) 634–7279; or fax (867) 634–7277, and ask for a mountaineering registration package. Or visit the Kluane National Park Web site at http://www.harbour.com/parkscan/kluane/climb.htm

RICK STALEY, MOUNTAINEERING WARDEN,
KLUANE NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

Cumberland Peninsula Ski Traverse David Bowers

During the spring of 1999, Rick Seivers, Dave Moore and I skitraversed the Cumberland Peninsula of Baffin Island. Our route took us from Broughton Island to Pangnirtung Fjord and then up the Owl River and down the Weasel River to South Pangnirtung Fjord.

Much of our time was spent in Auyuittuq National Park, which has seen skiers before. However, we spent a considerable amount of time exploring the side canyons and glaciers that feed into the Owl and Weasel rivers.

We enjoyed some turns from the summit of an unnamed peak a few miles up the Rundle Glacier. More spectacular was the descent of a massive, northwest-facing couloir from the summit of Mount Battle to the frozen surface of Glacier Lake.

The circumnavigation of Mount Asgard was an excellent day trip on one of very few warm days. We travelled up the Caribou Glacier to the Turner Glacier, then up the Parade Glacier to our intersection with the Caribou Glacier, which led us back to our camp at Summit Lake. Some technical skiing was required at one point to avoid open crevasses.

A beautiful, dome-shaped peak several miles up the Nerutusoq Glacier offered some very nice skiing with superb views of the high peaks to the east that drain into the Padle River valley.

We then climbed a northeast-facing couloir of Thor Peak, which placed us at the huge landmark ledge of Thor's west face. From this point, we skied the couloir back to the Fork Beard Glacier, where we continued up and around to the Sivingavuk Glacier. The final three thousand feet of descent provided phenomenal skiing on several inches of surface hoar between towering granite walls, sun dogs glistening in the twilight below.

The trip took us 18 days total, including the side trips and two severe weather days.

Baffin Island is a pristine, remote and wild area of Nunavut that demands respect in many ways.



Mount Fairweather — 12 to the Summit Willa Harasym

had never heard of Mount Fairweather when my spouse, Paul Geddes, scouting the ACC program list for winter-spring 1999, saw a ski-mountaineering trip scheduled and raised the possibility of us climbing it. I did not know that Mount Fairweather, at 15,300 ft., is cheated of the official title of highest peak in British Columbia because its summit forms part of the border between the United States and Canada and is shared with Alaska. But it is higher than Mount Waddington (13,260 ft.) and therefore truly is the highest point in British Columbia. The mountains of the Fairweather Range, together with those of the St. Elias Range to the north, are the highest coastal mountains of the world. I did not know that Mount Fairweather was less than 15 miles from the Gulf of Alaska — and as a result I had not yet put altitude and proximity to water together to realize that "Fairweather" could only be a misnomer.

Our Fairweather trip would be different from previous trips Paul and I had done in the St. Elias. This would be our first major, on-the-move expedition. It would be guided and big: two guides, an assistant guide and a camp manager, with eight participants. But we were attracted by the area's proximity to Mount St. Elias, by Fairweather's remoteness, altitude and low number of ascents and by a route that would be within our technical abilities. So it was a go.

The Canadian Alpine Journal provided us with a recent Canadian perspective. The most relevant article seemed to be one describing the Williams, Kellerhals, Stone, Fletcher and Hollinger ski traverse of the Fairweather Range and their climb of Mount Fairweather by the same route that we were planning to use [CAJ 1992, pp. 20–24]. I was struck by the description of their emotions upon attaining the summit. But of course they started at the ocean and skied all the way in, whereas we were going to fly to elevation. Their article offered one of many documented descriptions of the adverse weather of the area.

On a winter ski trip to Colorado, we used the excuse of researching Mount Fairweather to check out the new American Alpine Club headquarters in Golden. Mount Fairweather being partly in the U.S. and more easily approached from the American side, there has been a healthy interest on the part of Americans over the years in climbing it. It was at the AAC library that we found the perfect Bradford Washburn photograph of our intended West Ridge route from the Grand Plateau Glacier.

We also stumbled upon a video in the AAC library with the name "Fairweather" on it; it told a story that was to haunt me over the next few months before our trip. In 1977, Jim Wickwire, Al Givlar and Dusan Jagersky, along with a cameraman, Steve Marts, started out on an



On the summit ridge. Photo: Helen Sovdat

approach to Mount Crillon (12,726 ft.) in the Fairweather Range. When Crillon proved not possible, attention turned to Mount Abbe's granite peaks. After two of the group ascended Mount Abbe (8200 ft.), they all climbed a neighbouring unnamed 8440-ft. peak via its challenging southwest face. Within minutes of departing the summit, Givlar and Jagersky (both professional guides) were tragically killed when they slipped and plummeted down the 4000-foot face. [See the 1978 American Alpine Journal, pp. 392–396.] The video was very hard-hitting.

I had the opportunity to meet Helen Sovdat, the lead guide for the trip, at an Alpine Club of Canada social at the beginning of May, and we were able to share some of the information each of us had pulled together. As luck would have it, Markus Kellerhals, of the CAJ-chronicled Mount Fairweather trip, was in attendance. As always, there was comfort in hearing first-hand the route description and benefitting from the experience and recommendations of those who have gone before.

The Fly-in

Arriving in Yakutat, Alaska, on May 22, 1999, the group comprised the three guides — Helen Sovdat, Steve Ludwig and Lars Andrews; the camp



Camp VI, Mount Fairweather. Photo: Helen Sovdat

manager, Ron Andrews; three Torontonians — Paul Geddes, Norm Greene and me; two from Vermont, Peter Helmetag and Ron Hauser; Millie Carson from Montana; and two Albertans, Marg Saul and Dave Creith. The guides had done their screening job well. This was a geographically diverse group who would prove to be well matched in terms of skills, fitness and personal compatibility.

The first signs of how the weather would play a role in our expedition were evident. It was pouring rain, and there was a queue of climbers waiting to be flown into places like Mount Kennedy and Mount Logan. We were also greeted with the news that we would be flown in to no higher than 3000 ft.

A weather window and some shrewd negotiations allowed us to fly in the next morning. The views of this isolated area of Alaska were superb. We flew south from Yakutat over miles of coastal lowlands covered in shrubs and trees. From Dry Bay, a remnant of a wartime base, it was a short flight to the 3200-ft. level on the Grand Plateau Glacier. It was hard to contemplate the trip on skis from sea level which the earlier Canadian group had done. We were happy to be spared the travelling through the scrub and up the snout of the glacier.

The Ski to Mount Fairweather

We spend two nights at our first camp. It is a beautiful spot. A herd of mountain goats,

oblivious to our presence, move about on the rock wall across the glacier. The presence of wildlife on a climbing trip always makes the surroundings seem more friendly to me. A turquoise pond in a depression in the ice provides fresh drinking water. We explore the arm of the glacier leading up to the first icefall that we will have to negotiate.

Two days of skiing take us past the first icefall to 5500 ft. and give us a sense of what to expect. The conditions include wet snow, poor visibility and big crevasses. Each day involves decisions on when to move and when to wait in hope of better weather. Making decisions in and for a group this size is not easy. In particular, Paul and I have difficulty accepting what we think are late starts. It seems to us that we have lost travel opportunities due to weather that closes in by noon, but we adjust to this different style. The size of the group seems to add immeasurable complexity, as it takes almost three hours to eat and break camp.

It has taken us four days since landing on the glacier to arrive at the top of the first icefall. The weather and the weight are slowing us down. We need to ensure that double carries are eliminated and that everyone has the strength to carry their pack and share a sled. We take nine days' food with us from Camp III at the top of the icefall, leaving the rest behind along with some gear. Dave, our group's keenest (and, as I learn on the trip, almost certainly our most talented) photographer, is equally desperate and leaves a Nikon camera behind. He hopes to retrieve it on the way down if things work out.

The views down to the beaches of the Pacific Ocean are wonderful. Surf is breaking for miles along the coast. We will not see the ocean again until we reach the summit of Mount Fairweather.

On Day 5, we progress from 5500 ft. to 7700 ft. and are stopped by a snow squall and a crevasse field. It is not until the evening that the sky clears to reveal the spectacular location we have chosen for Camp IV. The perfectly pyramidal snow face of a minor peak is framed in our tent door. Just off to the side, we can see Mount Watson and the "checkerboard" icefall that is on our route.

Warming temperatures and heavy snow keep us in our tents on Day 6. The marine weather forecast on Ron Andrew's radio does not sound too encouraging. At 6 p.m., we hear a plane overhead and Steve makes contact. Our pilot is able to tell us that the mountains are clear above 12,000 ft. We keep our fingers crossed for an area of high pressure to move in. The temperature drops from freezing to -10° C.

By the time we leave camp the next morning, high cloud has moved in. We head up the checkerboard icefall but are forced to abandon the route and backtrack. The crevasses have no pattern to them; they are huge and turn in every direction. The light is flat. Our guides push a route up the side slopes of the icefall. The crux is a snow bridge over a bergshrund which Lars and Helen shovel out (it will collapse before we can use it again on our descent).

The cloud moves up the mountain and we are captured in a blizzard. Camp V is made a mere 650 ft. above our last camp.

Day 8 dawns with marginal weather — again. The group is disheartened as no one believes we can still make the summit. We have just five days of food, and the weather is not co-operating. From this point, it would be an easy day's ski down to our pick-up point. We lose good travel time debating our fate. Finally, it is decided to go on. We ski up the Grand Plateau Glacier, gaining 2100 vertical feet over five miles, virtually all of it in whiteout conditions. Steve's routefinding with compass and GPS is without fault.

We dig in at 10,400 ft. in an intensifying storm. We are all exhausted by the time the tents are up and the gear stored. Spindrift is everywhere, and we have to seal up the tent flys with snow. After a couple of hours' rest, Paul stumbles out of the tent; straight in front of him, less than a mile from our tents, is the 5000-ft. north face of Mount Fairweather. Everyone scrambles from the tents to enjoy the view. We cannot be sure we will see it again.

The overnight temperature is low, and some people are feeling the effects of the rapid elevation gain. Day 9 is cold and partly sunny but with fierce, blustery winds continuing — this is the day for making summit plans. We have two options: leave for the summit from here with 5000 ft. to climb, or set up a high camp just below the col on the west ridge. With a group this size, the latter will be the choice. The weather radio forecast reports high pressure moving into the area. It seems so strange to be spending a day resting with the peak so close.

The Summit Climb

At 3:30 p.m., the winds die off and we can see our route to the col. We pack up and are on our skis at 5 p.m. We will leave Millie and Marg's tent behind with gear not required. Marg will join Norm, Paul and me. Millie will bunk in with Peter, Dave and Ron H.

The route takes us over and around crevasses; steep walls of ice loom above on both sides. The danger is acknowledged by each of us before we start to climb. We try to move quickly, some more successfully than others. As usual, my spouse is at the front and I am at the end of the group. It is dark by the time we get our camp set up just below the col. The guides cook our meal, for which we are grateful.

Paul and I are up at 4 a.m. on Day 10. To our relief and disbelief, the weather is clear and calm; the usually sullen skies have offered us a timely reprieve. The two of us take a few minutes together in the -17°C

temperature as we soak in the view of the pre-light in the distance. It is my favourite moment of the trip.

Action takes shape a half-hour later, and all twelve of us are off at 7 a.m. with crampons, ski poles and axes. There is a steep snow slope up to the col, from which we can see the Pacific Ocean — a solid bank of low clouds. We can also see north to Mount St. Elias. Down below on the south side lies the Fairweather Glacier.

We proceed up the west ridge. It is a rolling expanse of windblown ice and snow. There are a few crevasses, and Paul tells me later that he has put a leg into two of t he means are a man and a man and a means to an end. Feeling as strong as I have felt all trip, I plod along at my steady pace.

The views are panoramic. Nothing in the area is nearly as high as where we are walking. There are traces of windblown steps from another expedition. Who? And when?

We are on the summit at around 12:30 p.m. — five and a half hours from Camp VII. The twelve of us briefly celebrate together. None of our research indicates that such a large group has previously attained the summit of Mount Fairweather, so we like to think we have established some kind of first on that basis. To the south lie Mount Crillon and Glacier Bay. Mount St. Elias is 100 miles north, and the Pacific Ocean is less than 15 miles to the west.

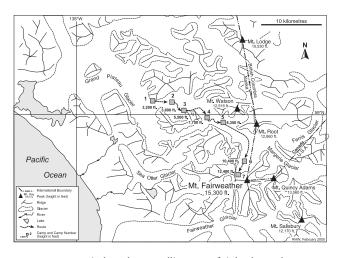
I briefly consider from above some of the other routes that have been climbed to the summit. They appear to be of a technical grade well above what we have just done. Our route has been much easier from a technical standpoint than either Paul or I expected — just as well, considering the number of bodies moving along it and the fickleness of the area's conditions!

A storm follows us down the mountain; within minutes of arriving in camp, snow is blasting our tents again. As tired as we are, we cannot stay. The slopes above the tents are in the lee of the col and will quickly accumulate enough snow to create a potential avalanche hazard. Within two hours we are packed up and heading down on skis into the driving snowstorm.

Two thousand feet and many falls later, we are back at the site of Camp VI. We dig out the old tent platforms, erect tents and fire up the stoves. The high winds hammer us all night, but we sleep soundly.

The Ski Out

The next morning, we sleep in. The plan, unexpected by at least Norm and me, is to head down the mountain to Camp V. While we are packing up, a tent escapes in the high



winds and goes rolling out of sight down the glacier. As if in a scene from "The Lone Ranger", someone throws down a pair of skis and Steve hops onto them, giving chase within seconds. He returns some time later with the errant tent successfully lassoed and collapsed underarm.

Our packs are lighter now — at least for a while until we start picking up the gear left at previous camps. We are skiing by noon. Knowing that the skiing is virtually all downhill from this point produces a delicious feeling of lightness. The afternoon cloud rolls up the glacier, and Mount Root and Mount Watson become invisible again. It is the last we will see of either them or Mount Fairweather.

Steve's navigation returns us safely through the cloud to 8350 ft. We have some trouble finding Camp V because it is difficult to distinguish our drifted-over tent platforms from the crevasses. We know the drill by now. We will spend the next 36 hours waiting for clear weather. Those with critical-date departures are getting restless. The summit achieved, thoughts have very quickly turned to our other lives.

Finally, on Day 13, the weather is perfect—well, nearly perfect. The ski out is memorable, with blue sky and brilliant colours. We discover a tiny bird on the glacier as we approach the site of Camp IV. It has died frozen in the position of flight. So perfect in its form. So alone and out of place up here.

The only mishap of the trip occurs on a steep and crusted portion of the run out. Marg falls and twists her knee. We divide up her gear and watch with both concern and relief as she struggles on her skis down the route. It is a reminder of what dealing with a serious illness or injury would be like in such a rugged and isolated area. The guides once again prove their mettle when they ski down an icy, crevassed section with their usual heavy packs while also hauling huge duffels along the ground.

Within four hours we have descended 5000 vertical feet to Camp I. Ron Andrews opens a bottle of 12-year-old single malt that he had cached, and it does not last long as we celebrate the safety and accomplishment of our trip. Twelve people on the mit of

The Eldrid Valley Gets Some Funk Soul, Brother!

Wall Climbing in Powell River

MATT MADDALONI

You were actually there! So what's it like — are there walls awaiting first ascents?" I probe.

"Man, you have no idea how much unclimbed rock is in this valley. There are several walls reaching heights up to 2000 feet. Here is the number of a guy who could give you some more details." Al hands me a tourist map of Powell River with a big circle around the Eldrid valley and a phone number.

Beside me is my wall partner, John Millar, and all it takes is one look between us to decide to check it out. Neither of us has ever done a first ascent of a wall; it is sure to be an adventure and a learning experience.

We drive from Squamish on July 15. Our wallets frustratingly empty as usual, we stop at various places in Vancouver to scrounge what we can, including food from Millar's grandmother's house. After five hours and two different ferry rides, taking the long way, we get to Powell River, which lies only forty miles west of Squamish beyond the Tantalus Range. Powered by a V8 engine, my seriously beat-up Dodge camper van "Brutus" makes it into town with no signal lights, one window wiper and no spare tire or front shocks. However, my perception of Brutus as being reasonably reliable will change over the next week. My stereo is the one thing that works well, so the whole way we blare out techno, particularly a tune called "Rock-a-fella Shank" - a song that turns Millar into a dancing freak.

In the morning, we phone the number we were given; Colin Dionne answers the phone and suggests that we come over and spend the day with him and his girlfriend, Christie. Minutes later, we arrive at their place, a classic climber-style home cluttered with climbing paraphernalia - ropes, maps, manky bolts, and pieces of collected rock and animal skulls. In one corner lies an original portaledge used in the movie K2, and tons of climbing literature fill the shelves. Our hosts are equally archetypal: Colin's beard stretches all over his face below a mass of dirty-blond hair, and his well-built, almost Cro-Magnonstyle features bulge under his worn shirt. A true hard man of the old code, he will prove to us over the next two weeks that he is a master of his wilderness. Christie Lepitre, as energetic as Colin and maybe more so, wears long black hair down to her knees and smiles with dark but bright eyes. She continually fusses over us, fixing sleeping bags and making us treats to eat. We feel right at home. Colin and Christie are incredibly stoked that their little valley is generating interest at last. Through their company, Fjord Coast Expeditions, they volunteer to help climbers access and climb

new routes. This in turn allows the Eldrid valley to become a destination, which will keep the logging road from being deactivated and cross-ditched. I know that even without that incentive they would have helped us out anyway.

After breakfast we all pile into Brutus and bomb out to the valley. An hour and a half on 35 miles of logging roads brings us to a secluded valley surrounded by snowcovered peaks and lots and lots of rock. Nothing but blue sky, rock and trees, with the roaring Eldrid River dropping down a gorge through the middle of it all. What a difference from Squamish's hustle and bustle. This place turns out to be even bigger then Squamish as far as rock goes and way more suited for free-climbing. Three major walls stand along the river. The farthest, called Amon Rùdh, looms high above the valley, huge granite dihedrals protecting its summit. The middle wall, called the Mainer, soars a good 500 ft. above the other two, reaching 2300-plus ft. Colin and Rob Richards first climbed it in '96, topping out after 25 pitches and naming it The Main Line (VI, 5.11 A4). There is also a "community project" free-route going up, but so far it is only about six pitches long. Each person gets a different pitch to clean and name. The first wall of the three stands at the entrance to the valley and is called Carag-dur, or Black Tower, taken from J.R.R. Tolkien's The Simirillian.

On the opposite side, facing the three walls, stands a large buttress similar in size to the arête of The Angels Crest in Squamish but much wider. Next to that, at the intersection of the Eldrid and a smaller valley, sweeps up an apron approaching the size of Glacier Point in Yosemite. Three long multi-pitch routes, each of approximately 15 pitches, explore this slab.

Of the five major formations, Carag-dur gets our attention. There are no routes up it other than a five-pitch attempt in a bushy corner off to the left. This wall rises 1800 ft. out of the forest. No trees or ledges clutter its mostly featureless wall; only a huge arch crosses its middle, creating a pitch of overhanging rock above a steep slab. Millar and I spend a couple of hours with binoculars scoping our beautiful and unclimbed line. Only two problems exist that we can see: trees obstruct our view of the bottom of the wall, leaving it a mystery; and the river at this time of year provides nowhere to wade or jump across. Nevertheless, we choose to attempt the route.

On the way back, the adventure really begins when the rear ends of both leaf springs break off my van, leaving no rear shocks and resulting in a blown-out tire. At Mile 30, realizing our predicament (no one will be coming up here for days), we decide to drive out on the blown tire. A mile down the road, the tire rips the brake line and the overflow gas line out and then goes and wraps itself around the axle, bringing the vehicle to a sliding halt. I apologise to my new friends for being such an idiot, and we set to work in an attempt to remove the tire from the rim, knowing that it would take an entire day to walk out of here. The rim has flattened out and destroyed the brake drum, so we finally give in to walking. Colin suggests that we hike up a side road to a mountaineering friend's truck that might be six miles up with 3000 ft. of elevation gain. John, exhilarated at the chance to get really sweaty, takes off with Colin up the side road. Christie and I, stoked that they have volunteered, continue along the main road hoping to get 16 miles to a campground. Hours later, Colin and John pick us up with

We retrieve my van the next day, rack up and discuss methods of getting our gear over the raging gorge. A couple of miles up the river hangs a cable rigged by Colin for the Mainer ascent, but it is too far away for us. Instead we equip a 30-ft. ladder with two ropes on one end so that we can lower it into place and anchor it off. Back up we go in Colin's van, with mine on blocks at his house, and get our idea underway. On the edge of the torrent, water rushing by above his knees, Colin holds the ladder fast against the flooded slab as John and I lower it down to the sloping bank on the far side. We anchor the ends, one upriver and one down. Since no one is volunteering, I slowly crawl across the manky bridge, belayed by Millar. I know Colin will have a hard time preventing the ladder from slipping off the edge, so I gingerly place my foot on the far bank and ease my weight onto it. My foot begins to slip on the green-slimed wet rock, so I get on my knees to add dry clothing for friction. Fully committed and still slipping, I end up completely sprawled out, trying to get as much clothing against the rock as possible. Scared out of my mind during what seems an eternity, I manage to crimp my way up wet moss to the lip of the forest and beach myself onto a ledge.

An hour later, we have set up a tyrolean and ferried over our haul bags. Colin leads the way with machete in hand as we hack out the old trail. He created this trail on a previous attempt of the wall years before, but most of it has disappeared under the old-growth forest and needs remarking with tape. When we reach the base after an hour of grovelling, we see the lower part of the wall for the first time. A thin but climbable seam

fires straight up a featureless slab for a couple of pitches, filling in a big hole in our scoped line. With no excuses to screw around any longer, we hike back down to the river, bid Colin goodbye and march back up with a final load of water. I even manage to do the first pitch before nightfall. It consists of beautiful, straight-in nailing right off the ground. We sleep at the base, dreaming of higher adventure after our first hard day.

The following morning, stoked that the only two holes I needed to drill were for the belay, Millar tries to lead the next pitch without any drilling. Halfway up, he comes against an impassable blank section and starts to drill a 1/4-inch bolt for pro' and to gain height. Above many bird beaks and 'heads, his piece pulls, breaking the drill bit he was hammering on. Luckily, a 'beak below stops him right away. He decides that his six-hour lead is enough for the day, then drives a rivet into his shallow hole and lowers off. From this we learn our first lesson of the wall: bring more 1/4-inch bits, for we'll have to drill 3/8-inch bat hooks from now on. I complete the pitch, which adds another couple of hours, and strap myself to the only tree belay on the route, finishing a 60-m lead.

The next pitch is the easiest and requires a traverse on TCUs to a short A3 roof. Millar pulls a piece at the lip and takes his second fall. He is upset because he couldn't get a rurp to stick — he wanted to prove to me that my most hated piece of gear actually could be bomber. Instead of putting in a somewhat more solid 'beak, he has taken a whipper while trying to prove me wrong. We fix our ropes to ground and spend the night suspended by our 'ledges in the trees.

With our haul bags on the ground and having only three ropes, we fix one more pitch before committing. "Meeting the Wizard" becomes the hardest pitch of all. This long seam takes me the entire day, uses all the remaining 'heads and thrashes most of our ten 'beaks. We notice that Colin is on the logging road below, so we rap off to get more supplies such as 'heads and 1/4-inch bits.

On the way in the next morning, listening to Metallica blasting out gets us pumped up to space-haul our eight days of rations to our high point. The next two pitches go really well over the course of two days, even with the unexpected rain and fog. Looking down at John's yellow fly in the gloom one evening makes me feel as if I were on a wall in Patagonia. These two pitches bring us to the base of the overhanging headwall for a total of six long pitches. A couple of expando flakes to a ladder of four exhausting-to-place rivets and a long, traversing corner require a 10-hour lead on John's part. While John is hand-drilling his station in the dwindling light, I notice someone below on the road flashing his light in our direction. I point this out to Millar and we vell down to see what's up. People start hooting, and 300 ft. of logging road lights up on fire from a trench with gasoline poured in it. We yell in surprise as it continues to twinkle far below us. We call the pitch "Playing the Pyro".

Another entire day's lead creates some of the raddest situations put into one pitch that I've ever experienced. Lots of steep hooking, nailing and free-moves to a huge death flake the size of a small tennis court which floats a foot away from the wall. A 10-ft. hook throw and 30 ft. of carefully climbed 5.7 brings us to the top of "the Flying Saucer". The "Surfing with the Alien" pitch ends at 55 m.

After another bivy, John leads out the ninth pitch with a thrilling hook traverse and then a long, straight-up crack taking 'blades which passes over many horizontal dikes. He takes a big fall, which a copperhead stops, resulting in him landing on his head and bruising some ribs. He decides to leave me to

drill the ladder needed at the end. I drill a couple of bat hooks, passing over many more dikes, and decide that a pendulum is better than hammering in ten more holes. The 30-ft. "Escape from the Wrinkles" pendulum gets me into an Al corner.

One more day of climbing takes us to the top after eight days total on the wall. We spend the night there with a big fire and cans of ravioli, thinking of a name to call our adventure.

Late the next morning, we pack up our stuff and start what we know will be a gruelling hike through thick old-growth forest down to the river. Fifteen minutes later, already covered in sweat, we hear a yell. In disbelief, we see Colin thrash his way out of the bush; he has just climbed up here in five hours to help us. We follow him once again as he swings his machete, looking like a man who will never tire. The next three hours are spent fighting thick, prickly bushes and climbing down giant-made boulder steps to the foaming Eldrid.

Over the following few days, Millar and I eat ridiculous amounts of food, never seeming to leave the kitchen, climb at the lakeside crag and boulder near the ocean. Colin invites over every climber in town less than ten — and before we leave we party hard. The locals have brought steaks, cake and huge amounts of beer for our celebration, and we feel like kings. I follow through on my promise to Colin to spew if we complete the route, by christening his lawn at around two in the morning. Convinced that we have now properly experienced the climbing here, we get ready to leave. With just enough money to pay for gas and the ferry, we say goodbye to our new friends and in a Brutus without rear brakes roll slowly back to Squamish. All the while listening to "Funk soul brother, check it out now" blasting out of my stereo.

COASTAL ICE 2000

Don Serl

N ovember and December dragged on, warm and wet, to a bleak end to the millennium, but around Christmas reasonable cold finally arrived and by New Year's Day Marble Canyon was climbable. There were very few people out, as the Whistler, D'arcy and Duffey Lake Road climbs were still in tenuous shape and, being closer to Vancouver, were setting the tone for "poor ice". Word started to get around on the second weekend in January, though, and activity picked up a lot. Many of the visitors were from south of the line, as the B.C. crowd still hadn't seemed to clue in. Traffic had leapt by the third and fourth weekends, even out in the remote reaches of the Bridge River canyon, and a surprising number of new routes were netted in January and through February. Interestingly, many of these routes were on columns that seldom form, whereas

many of the main routes stayed pretty lean — you never know what the ice is gonna be like in any given winter, do ya!

Here's a summary of the new routes that I'm aware of so far (plus a few not previously reported):

Bridge River Canyon

The Virgin 15m. WI4. The column emerging from the rock 5 m below the rim at the back of the cliffy little alcove 400 m right of the Night 'n' Gale gully. Young ice, and harder than it looks. Jon Cornforth, Wes Giesbrecht, Olivier Trendel. January 9, 2000. Mixed Master J 20 m. WI5. The left-hand pillar in this same cirque. Steep, hard, yellow ice; a pretty stiff lead for a relatively neophyte party — good goin'! Mike Johnston, Dean MacKay, Tasha McIlveen, Jim Young. January 22, 2000.

Blackbird 35 m. W15. A dramatic, free-hanging pillar 200 m left of the Night 'n' Gale gully. Approach up 70 m of W12 ice. Rap from V-threads at the top of the column. Gord Betenia, Don Serl. January 22, 2000. Unnamed 35 m. W15. Two fine columns came in on the cliff band halfway up to Capricorn, an hour above the Bridge River road. This route is the left column, which was a steep, superb, full-on lead. There was a sling on a tree at the top of the route, so it obviously had seen a prior ascent, but by whom and when is not clear. F.R.A.: John Millar, Conor Reynold. January 22, 2000.

A 4 Dressed up as a 6 30 m. WI5+. Like a Rocket, at the right side of the rim mentioned above, had previously been climbed (see photo in CAJ 1997, p. 80, captioned as Capricorn Column). That ascent, however, had overcome the pillar from its back side,

leading — in the context of the times — to the waggish suggestion that the route ought to be called Like a Hockey Coach. Kai and Sheila tackled the pillar straight on and fought their way up a stout pitch of extremely challenging ice. Is that a new route? Kai Hirvonen, Sheila Sovereign. January 21, 2000.

Drake (35 m, WI3) and Troubled Waters (70 m, WI4) both lie high in the gully before Salmon Stakes, halfway through the Bridge Canyon. It's about an hour to the former, on the left, then another half-hour to the higher route. See the Climbers' Access Society of B.C. ice conditions update Web site (www.bivouac.com/casbc) for photos of the first ascent. Lyle Knight, Garnet Meirau. January 1998.

Lillooet

Storm Brewing (Seton Weep Right) 95 m. WI5 5.8 R/X. The two wild seeps that plaster the face above the spawning grounds at the outlet of Seton Lake, 5 km west of Lillooet, finally came in this year. Access was via the dam; there's a hole in the fence at the parking lot 500 m east to help one get started. The bottom of the line was too tenuous to climb, so a groove left of the ice was used to start (bad gear, ground-fall potential, #5 Camalot). Above, lots of WI4 with bits of 5 awaited. Rap the route. Guy Edwards, Chris Geisler, Damien Kelly. January 23, 2000.

Mumu Man (Seton Weep Left) 95 m. WI5 5.9. Guy came back a week later for more of the same — another outstanding line. The climbing was very similar to Storm Brewing, with a bit more difficulty on the rock. One bolt was placed at the curtain, which was very thin, poor-quality ice. Guy Edwards, John Miller. January 2000.

Out of the Vault. WI3. Three pitches. The gully high and left above Small Creep also finally came in. Approach from the westernmost roads in Lillooet townsite and walk up the hillside and over a ridge in about an hour. Superb flow ice in the gully, thin at top. Walk 200 m left, then whiz down scree to regain the base. Beautiful. Too bad it's so sun-baked; otherwise it would be an all-time classic. Jamie Boxter, Jason Sinnes. January 23, 2000.

Seton Lake

Deliverance 200 m. WI4. After an initial probe to suss out the lake and climb Fishin' Musician (which they reckoned was WI4), Mark and Andy tackled the unclimbed line right of Comedy of Errors, then its very difficult neighbour (see below). It has been a long time since anyone canoed to the routes down the lake, but with these big lines within an hour's paddle perhaps they'll now get visited occasionally. Simulclimb about three pitches up and left on easy ice, then finish on a steep half-pitch curtain on the right (or continue on up left on mellow ice). Rap V-threads and trees to the left of the route. Mark Price, Andy Hein. February 13, 2000.

Squeal Like a Pig 150 m. WI6. This route starts at the same place as Deliverance but comes straight down the cliff. The first pitch is good WI4, steep initially, then easing. The second is rambling WI3 with one steeper section. The upper pitch involves two stacked, free-hanging curtains, with an exit through a hole in the lower curtain flipping you out into space way above the waters of the lake. Then all you have to do is bridge up between the curtain and the overhanging fangs, pop a window out, get good gear and sticks, and cut loose with both feet to stab the fangs. "One-hit ego ice led to the top." Very cool. Mark waffled and gave it "5+" sounds like "6" to me. Mark Price, Jim Meyers. February 20, 2000.

Phair Creek

The Phair Creek area is Lyle's big contribution to the Coastal scene this winter. The access road (initially the Enterprise Creek road) drops south from the Duffey Lake road 7.5 km west of Lillooet, halfway up the hill from the Seton Dam to the crest of the canyon. It crosses the Cayoosh and switchbacks up out of the canyon, passes west above Three Ring Circus and disappears into the narrow valley leading south. There are many fine routes in the valley; unfortunately, however, access is a major problem.

The road is unlikely to be plowed in most winters, and even if you can get up the initial switchbacks above the Cayoosh and across the "flats" to the mouth of the valley, the road is gated and locked (at 2.5 km on the Phair Creek road, about 9 km from Highway 99). As of this moment, keys will not be available from the contractor, Ainsworth Logging in Lillooet. The logging company is not "the bad guy" here; access issues are totally controlled by the Ministry of Forests, and the Ministry has made the decision to keep the road locked because of wildlife concerns expressed by the Ministry of the Environment. Ainsworth are contractually bound by this agreement. An attempt will be made to alter the MOF position (perhaps with a seasonal opening), but nothing is guaranteed. Furthermore, the logging plans call for only five years of effort; then the bridges will be removed and the road de-activated. Climbing in this valley looks as if it will be "phairly" ephemeral.

It's Only Phair 60 m. WI3. It's Only Phair is a beautiful flow of ice in a gully, only five minutes above the road on the right at 8 km, just beyond APTA. It's harder than it looks. Walk off right. Lyle Knight, Garnet Mierau, Gerald Wolfe. January 9, 2000.

A Phairwell to Arms 60 m. WI5+. APTA is one of the outstanding routes of the winter and an obvious future destination. It falls as a broad curtain of heavily chandeliered ice, a lot like a half-scale model of Curtain Call. The route lies 20 minutes above the bridge on the Phair Creek road at 7.5 km. About 40 m of heavily mushroomed, near-vertical ice leads to a ledge; 20 m more of the same stuff gets you to the top. A 60-m rappel from

V-threads at the rim just gets you down. Lyle Knight, Kevin McLane, Garnet Mierau. January 30, 2000.

Phair Game 45 m. WI4. The climb is prominent on the right from just beyond the 4-km marker. A steep flow leads left to right up to a curtain. The original approach was made by hiking up left of the avalanche chute directly below the climb (25 minutes), but it is quicker and easier to traverse north from the bridge .5 km beyond the climb to gain and climb a little rib left of the route. Hard variants of the pillar are easily TRed, so the single approach can turn into a full day of fun. Lyle Knight, Kevin McLane, Garnet Mierau. January 22, 2000.

Nectar of the Gods one pitch. WI3. From the bridge just before the 4-km marker, climb about 150 m of snow and easy ice in a long, left-angling ramp to two steps: the first, 20 m of WI3; the second, 15 m of Grade 2. Lyle Knight, Garnet Mierau. February 18, 2000. Airy Phairy two and a half pitches. WI3+. Traverse right from the top of Nectar of the Gods, passing beneath some impressive icicles (not fully formed, unclimbed) in about five minutes and reaching the route in another ten. A pitch and a half of WI2 leads to a 10-m WI3+ pillar, after which a 20-m WI2 ramp reaches the top. The route is prominent in the views back down the valley from the vicinity of Phair Game. Lyle Knight, Garnet Mierau. February 18, 2000.

Cavoosh

Gung Hai Fat Choi, or 100 West Pender, three pitches. WI5+ 5.11-. Cross Cayoosh Creek just east of the Cinnamon Creek recreation site (near the sandpit). Pitch 1 ("Cordova Street"): climb 30 m of hard technical ice. Pitch 2 ("Hastings and Main"): finish the ice, then traverse left on steep rock (hands and tools, three bolts) to smears and a tiny pillar (one bolt). Finish up more thin little pillars to a big alder break. Pitch 3 ("Terminal Avenue"): move across on rock (pins needed for pro'), then up steep ice with alders. This was almost certainly the big technical undertaking of the winter; the second pitch took two days to lead. Guy Edwards, Damien Kelly, John Millar. January

Last Call three pitches. WI4-5 mixed. The smears in the steep amphitheatre just west of the Cinnamon Creek rec site had long been admired, but the ice never seemed to touch down. Mark Price and Co. overcame this apparent problem in February this year by climbing a rock chimney/tunnel on the first pitch to access the ice. Two pitches of beautiful WI4(?) flow ice followed, but a sling was found in a tree high on the route that "looked like it had been there a while" - Jia and his friends had done the route at the tail end of the previous winter, in much leaner conditions. In fact, the earlier ascent was a much harder climb, involving lots of dry-tooling and sketchy pro'. This is one where the WI is more than typically heavily dependent on conditions. Jia Condon, Sean

Miller, Rich Prohaska. February 1999.

Fountain

Fountain Blue 40 m. W15. Located high on the ridge south of the village of Fountain, 15 km north of Lillooet on Highway 99. Park at the fire hall (yellow building) and start up a long, narrow cut in the timber, continuing through open forest to the gully above (1 1/2 to 2 hours). A narrow W15 column leads to 20 to 25 m of W13+ to the top. Walk off right. Lyle Knight, Garnet Mierau. February 15, 1997.

Fountain of Youth 60 m. WI4. Two pitches. About 1 km past Fountain Blue; visible high on the right as you climb the long hill.

After an hour and a half approach, 45 m of consistent WI3 leads to a 15-m dead-vertical pencil. WI5 if it were longer, for sure. Tree belays; walk off right. Lyle Knight, Garnet Mierau. February 11, 2000.

Whistler

Full Moon on Guy three pitches. WI5. Guy and Chris climbed Blue Moon on Rye, then did this line to its right, starting only an hour before sunset. The first pitch is a mixed chimney, the second is open mixed, then "mellower" climbing finishes. The name came from an unnamed source (who works in the Co-op office — initials GB) and seems too good to not use. Guy Edwards, Chris

Geisler. January 2000.

Jia Condon and friends have been busy over the past couple of winters working up mixed lines on the bluff next to Another Day at the Office, up on Blackcomb. Specific details are lacking, but it sounds as if there are three or four good lines to choose from.

Yale

Previously unreported, Mark Price and Miles Elledge climbed the direct, left-hand finish to Kryptonite Column in January 1998 (see photo CAJ 96, p. 86, the full left-hand line). Three pitches, likely WI6, with a steep curtain, hard but short, to finish. Two long rappels to get off.

Around the Wahu in 47 Days John Clarke

Winter evenings. Maps on the floor. A circle of misfits staring at tight contours. This ritual is well known to climbers everywhere; and it was happening now in Trevor Lumley's apartment in North Vancouver. In raptured attendance were Trevor, Darren Quist and I. We were looking at a 1:50,000 map, sheet 103 H/9, which showed a 650-square-kilometre section of the sprawling anonymous ranges between Bella Coola and Kitimat in the Coast Mountains of B.C. The range is enclosed by Gardner Canal on the south, the Brim River on the west, the Kemano River on the east and the Kildala River system on the north. The area's previous climbing history was a short one. On page 21 of CAJ 1959, Sandy Lockhart describes his adventures in the 1950s with Einar Blix while both climbers were working for Alcan. Most of their trips were to ranges east of the town of Kemano, but they did climb Powell Peak and a few others just southwest of Powerline Pass. In 1992, Fred Beckey flew into the range and climbed the beautiful 6300-ft. granite horn 7 km northeast of the mouth of the Brim River. Lonely country! For our trip, we decided on a clockwise horseshoe traverse of the entire Wahu drainage system, which joins the Kemano River just before both rivers enter salt water at Kemano Bay.

We drove up to Terrace in early July, went to the airport and did one expensive helicopter charter to place eight food caches containing 47 days of food on the ridges along our intended walking route. When we arrived at the mouth of the Kemano River on July 10, we were met by Jarod Sarosky, who took us down Gardner Canal in his skiff and dropped us off at the mouth of a tiny creek 2.5 km southeast of the mouth of the Brim River. We camped in the woods near a pretty waterfall and thought about the next day.

In the morning, the going was great through easy, steadily climbing forest and even the blueberry bushes were dry. When we broke into the alpine, the full power of Kitimat Range scenery presented itself. To the east, Gardner Canal wound its way towards the Kitlope valley; to the northwest, we peered into the wonderfully remote and rugged Brim and Owyacumish valleys — and above it all, the leaden signature sky of summer in the Kitimat Range. We camped on heather at 3700 ft. and settled into our new life.

The 12th was cloudy, but we moved east along the scenic ridge while ducking showers and arrived at our first airdrop, perched at 5100 ft. on the ridge crest and 4.2 km northnorthwest of Icy Point on Gardner Canal. The following morning was cold, windy and foggy, and it even snowed. While reading our books throughout the day; we witnessed something else that these ranges are known for - the slowest clearing-up process imaginable. We discovered another thing too: Trevor and I had both managed to put a copy of Stephen King's The Dead Zone into this airdrop! In the evening, we saw our route ahead to the north and the beautiful horn that Fred had climbed in '92. Finally, just before sunset, the marvelous, gentle and snowy ranges around the headwaters of Barrie Creek revealed themselves to the south across Gardner Canal.

The morning of the 14th was clear, and I went outside early to spread the map out on a rock in order to identify distant points. Then I heard a "swish, swish" sound and thought it might be something rolling down the snow above camp. When I looked I saw it was a wolf only 30 ft. away, coming in my direction, who still hadn't seen me because our camp was pitched in the lee of a huge erratic. I enjoyed the look of complete surprise when he eventually saw me. Being peered at by a wolf is one of the greatest exercises in humility a person can experience.

The morning of the 15th was windy and cold. Picked up by a gust, our cookpot got carried west down the ridge and was last seen flying through the air over the col below. Hoping it hadn't gone south for the long ride towards Gardner Canal, we finally found it hung up in a small tree at the top of



Trevor and Darren on "Transmission Tower" west of Powerline Pass.

some cliffs! The next day, we took our time packing as the snow and even the tarns were frozen solid. From the high point east of camp, we took a last look at Gardner Canal before dropping 2000 ft. to the north. From here on, the route roughly followed the alpine ridges parallel to and west of the Wahu River, only leaving the crest of the divide when we were forced off by steep steps. That evening we found a smooth slab camp (with tarns) at 4700 ft., just southeast of Fred's 6300-ft. peak. We climbed the horn the following day, ascending its gentle west slopes and then finishing on the south ridge. We found Fred's cairn, but no record was inside. We



Amid the peaks north of the source of the Wahu, Kitimat Ranges. Photo: Darren Quist

spent hours on the summit picking out distant peaks on the map — particularly the horizontal band of white to the west at the head of the Gilttoyees River, where we had been in '93 and the year before.

On the 18th, we just lay around heaven all day reading, and listening to avalanches pouring onto the névé from the slabs behind camp. As on the previous day, clouds appeared but seemed to be behaving themselves. Trevor was now reading The Ascent of Rum Doodle, brought back by Darren from Kathmandu. High clouds put a soft pastel light on the peaks at sunset. Dreams of travelling the next day.

It was a beautiful morning, and the woolly clouds blowing around promised a perfect day for ridge walking. From our catwalk, we looked down into the deep green tributaries of the Wahu and Brim valleys, the cloud shadows moving across the forest canopy.

Later, in darker cloud, we put the tent on the broad, gentle 4700-ft. col 5 km west of the 500-ft. contour on the Wahu River. Finding a well-drained tent site with some wind protection was always a challenge, and three of us walked all over the expansive col in search of something out of the wind. When we had finally put the tent up, filled the water bottles and moved inside, we heard the first raindrops on the fly. We didn't know it then — but not only would this camp be our home for five nights, our next camp (only 4 km farther north) would imprison us for six nights!

Clouds on the 20th produced only the odd misty shower. We were settling into the routine of "just hanging around": "Should I have a snack or read a chapter?" "I've just read so I guess I'll have a snack." Later, we had cold baths in the tarns and

undertook the risky business of laundry with no sun.

The next day, Trevor and I headed off into thick fog to climb the two peaks just southeast of camp. We were climbing in what Phyl Munday always called "wet winds" — soaking, wind-driven, Scottish-type fog. We saw nothing from these two summits, and I was reminded of something Glenn Woodsworth had told me years ago about the north Coast: "You learn to climb in fog, or you don't climb." It does have its appeal, though, and it's a great routefinding exercise.

More foggy travelling on the 23rd got us to the top of the 6500-ft. peak north of camp, and on the 24th, completely out of grub, we moved to our next airdrop, which was on a rounded knoll 4.5 km west of the 650-ft. level on the Wahu River. The last thing on our minds when we put the tent up on the lee side of a low cliff was that this would be our watery home for six nights! We were happy about the little cliff, as we could hear the wind screaming across the ridge above.

We counted off the days, reading our books and listening to the rain on the flysheet, which often sounded like someone spraying the tent with a hose that had various settings for droplet size and volume. When the hose was set on "light drizzle", we dashed outside to grab photos and make flailing motions to ward off atrophy. After a long period of Darren's watch altimeter not budging, he decided to call this "the Wait and See Range". In the evenings, the books and sewing would be put down and we would mumble a few hopeful words about the next day before going to sleep. We learned not to take naps in the afternoon, as the result was often wide eyes in pitchblackness and the longest night of our lives!

Towards the end of our stay in this camp, the spectre of food rationing crept in, but mercifully we were able to dash off and climb the 6700-ft. peak 3 km north of camp on the last day. It was a day of foggy ridge walking on rock, heather and snow, past tarns and cornices that would suddenly show themselves out of the mist. Just before we reached the eastern subpeak, the main summit cleared for ten minutes and that was it for the whole day! The powerfully steep step just below the main summit provided a single, beautifully blocky pitch, giving us a chance to use the rope and our rock shoes and harnesses. Our fourth foggy peak! Many animal sounds came from the three of us at supper that night, as we were truly and properly starved.

On July 30 (our 20th day out), we moved. The sky was an impossible blue without a trace of haze, and a nice breeze made for perfect travelling conditions. It was a day of marmots, goats and wildly scenic ridge walking, and in the afternoon a group of four eagles floated above our heads. We camped on clean, slabby granite 2 km west of the 1000-ft. contour on the Wahu River.

Despite the clear windy morning, nobody was too heroic about getting up. Then the thought of how little grub was left got us going. The hike north along the ridge crest was stupendous. We were very anxious to see whether there was an easy route around the 6300-ft. peak ahead. After climbing the peak, we found a marvelous ledge system that went all the way around its east side and on to the ridge beyond and the airdrop.

August 1 was sunny and windy all day. We moved briskly through this beautiful group of high snowy peaks, as there was no shelter from wind. Throughout the day, we climbed the peaks and crossed the glaciers on the northwest side of the divide. In the evening, in terrible wind, we stamped out a platform for the tent near the col from which we would drop 3200 ft. into a deep valley with a spot elevation on the map of 2724. After supper we wandered up the 6400-ft. peaklet just northeast of camp and watched the sun go down over Kildala Arm and the mountains west of Douglas Channel. In alpenglow and desperate wind, we wandered down to the tent to find that Trevor's four-cupper had disappeared down the glacier. Later, a big gust bent all four poles of the tent.

The morning was sunny, but we thought the wind would never stop. We packed up inside the tent and once outside started to enjoy this very snowy place, beautiful in the morning sun. After caching our packs on the col, we hiked over and climbed the most northerly peak (6400 ft.) of this group. On the way back, we actually retrieved Trevor's cup from a crevasse! Then the big descent began. The first 1500 ft. was a long glissade, and the rest of the route to the valley floor,

though it kept us nervous, went very easily. We sometimes followed a line of goat wool on bushes to keep on track; the route was not something I would have done in fog. The valley bottom was flat, with meadows and a creek. The marmots were howling their heads off. We found a dry tent site, washed up in the creek, put up the tent and settled into our new valley home. The plan was to light a fire, spend two nights here and do absolutely nothing!

On August 4, we did the big climb up out of the hole. The 3700-ft. ascent went much more easily than expected because the gradually unfolding views distracted us from the weight of the loads. With thunder in the distance, we put the tent up near the 5600-ft. col 4.5 km east of the 1700-ft. contour in the Wahu valley.

In the morning, despite being tired from "the big carry", we climbed the peak that Dick Culbert and Glenn Woodsworth had called "Transmission Tower". It is the very prominent massif 3 km west of Powerline Pass and is crowned by a sharp spike of a peak that actually overhangs greatly on its north side. From the top, the views south showed not only all the mountains we had come through since leaving Gardner Canal but all the country ahead of us too, particularly the prominent 6800-ft. and 6500-ft. horns that held great interest to us.

August 6 was a day off. All the same, we weren't idle — what with tea to make, baths in the tarn, clothes to mend, lunch, reading. The pace was terrific! In the evening, fog began to steam off the snow; it hugged the ground as a slow wind moved it along. Then the orange and red glow of sunset came through the cloud, creating a wonderful scene that kept the cameras going until the sun blinked out behind a ridge.

August 9 was Day 30. And we moved! It was cloudy all day, but mercifully the rain held off while we travelled through fog and negotiated a couple of awkward rock steps on the ridge. Camp was on the 5400-ft. col 5.5 km east of the 900-ft. contour on the Wahu River. Outside the tent, there was Scotch mist, fog and light rain; inside, we had a huge mashed-potato and bean dinner.

Day 31 was a fantastic day of travel, as it was sunny and cool, with boiling cumulus all day. The route took us right over the top of a triple-summitted 6700-ft. peak, one of the highest peaks in the range. We were happy to have this behind us, since it had to be done in good weather. The tent went up on the highest site of the whole trip — the 6400-ft. ridge just southeast of the big 6700-ft. peak. Rain and thick cloud kept us in the bags until noon the next day, when we took advantage of a lull to climb the 6600-ft. peaklet just west of camp. Then once again wet weather drove us back to our sleeping bags and books.

The morning of Day 33 was windy and cold, but we hiked up the 6600-ft. peak northeast of camp. From the summit, we saw clouds moved past, views come and go and

the wind finally settle down. Later, it was good to be moving again; this became another classic Coast Range day of heather, tarns and views down into valleys that seemed nicer to look at than travel in! Our destination for the night was the deep valley 4 km east of the 500-ft. contour in the Wahu valley, and the expectation of another campfire quickened our pace. Our camp was at 2600 ft. among a most remarkable arrangement of boulders, some of them so large that they were crowned with tiny meadows and stunted trees. One boulder had a 16-ft. overhang that would provide shelter even in the worst weather. During supper, two big rock slides came down off the cliffs to the west.

The next day was another wonderful day of idleness. In the morning, wisps of valley cloud formed around the enclosing walls and then evaporated. I took a walk among the meadows, boulders and crystal-clear creeks with my camera and my ice axe, which I use for a tripod. The whole place was a garden that held a new surprise around every corner; it reminded me of the first time I walked around Racoon Pass in the Randy Stoltmann Wilderness north of Squamish, B.C. All through this hot day, we did nothing, occasionally dumping pots of water over ourselves to keep cool. At sunset the sky was completely clear and the air warm. What we did not know was that not only was the morning going to bring us cold rain and thick fog but it would be the start of 13 days of continuous rain for the rest of the traverse!

On August 15, we moved up through fog, drizzle and showers. At the ridge crest above, we saw a rainbow lying flat on the ground and immediately photographed it. Camp was on the 5300-ft. ridge 7.5 km west-northwest of Powell Peak. With an eight-day airdrop there, we were confident that we could make the multi-day side trip to the 6800-ft. and 6500-ft. horns off to the northeast. The weather was terrible, however. But such was our desire to climb those two peaks that we decided to move through lulls and get wet if we had too The next morning, we left on the side trip in blustery weather and under a thick, dark grey ceiling that produced regular heavy showers. Mercifully, we didn't get socked in and no full-blown storm moved in. A complex route south of and then on the divide, in flying cloud and wind, brought us to a flat, slabby tent site just before the 6000-ft. col below the big 6800-ft. peak. On the way over, we saw a goat running up a slope that we had just glissaded down. Our camp was surrounded by short cliffs perfectly featured for bouldering. Powerful winds all evening brought back the garden-hose spray of rain on the tentfly, and a brief opening in the clouds revealed both peaks with the wind screaming over them and plumelike clouds racing past. Then Darren announced that his altimeter had just gone up 220 ft! Rain, wind and fitful sleep that night.

The next morning, I wrote in my diary: "Socked in and wet — can't see a thing.

Humour is good, barometer the same. Trevor is reading a book about sailing."

Later, after supper, Trevor announced that if it didn't clear the next day he would go back to the airdrop and bring food so that we could continue what was looking more and more like a siege. I was ecstatic, as this heroic act was going to hugely increase our chances of getting up these peaks, chances that were slipping away by the hour. Powerful wind and rain raged all night.

In the morning, Trevor gulped down a big "cupper" of granola, suited up and took off into rain and big wind to get groceries. All morning and into the afternoon, Darren and I listened to the rain and hoped Trevor was doing okay. One thing in his favour, despite the non-stop rain, was the high cloud ceiling, which allowed him to see his way on the complex route.

Trevor was back in only five hours and he had hot chocolate! We were surrounded with food, and a wonderful feeling of calm and of indifference to the weather settled over us. These mountains really are all about food! My side of the tent was piled high with rice, pasta, mashed potatoes, spices, crackers, butter, cheese and granola. Now, life became an exercise in glancing regularly out the door, checking the altimeters constantly and, of course, eating. Later, Darren and I dodged showers to see what we could learn about the route over to the col between the two peaks and confirmed what Trevor had seen a few days earlier: an amazing route could be stitched together that would get us to that col. Back in camp, there was a very strange and quiet lull during which Darren announced that his altimeter read 340 ft. above our actual elevation. Twenty minutes later, the firehose began.

In the morning, as wind-driven fog raced across the col and showers came and went, we realized that this was the morning of Day 40. After cream of wheat, I went out and hung around behind "my rock" to "keep an eye on things". Then a bright spot – I even had to squint! Then another one! I raced back to the tent to see the altimeter reading. It was 180 ft. higher, then 160, 140, 120 and 100. A flash of sun. I even piled all my day-trip stuff outside in a fit of optimism. But it wasn't to be! Back inside, listening to the raindrops, I discovered a hole in my mattress and was glad: I had something to do.

There was a very strange sky at 5 a.m. — and not one that caused us to leap out of the bags and fling ourselves at the peaks. All day we watched the sky but just didn't want to risk being caught out on the peaks in storm. I did another recce, spending hours clawing my way around the peak on wet lichens and grassy ledges, only to come back to the tent again in full storm. Darren announced that the altimeter was still reading 300 ft. higher than our actual elevation. We couldn't believe it! There we were, lying in our sleeping bags, 600 ft. below the top of the highest peak in the range. Fresh snow overnight made us very unhappy.

The next day was August 21 (Day 42); this would be our very last chance at the peaks. We set out in fog, hoping the weather wouldn't get any worse. We knew the route from the recces we'd done over the previous few days. Climbing in fog the whole time, we managed to grope our way up both peaks. We were supremely happy to have made it and at the same time disappointed to miss the views. Light snow fell while we were on the summit of the high peak. The col between the two peaks is an extraordinary place - tarns and impossibly green meadows, made more beautiful by the heavily filtered light. Trevor found a tiny animal bone on the lower peak and kept it as a keepsake of this wonderful climb. The long march back to camp took us almost until dark, and even before we reached it a full rainstorm had started. All night it raged with more firehose rain and lashing wind. We simply could not believe our good luck at squeezing in those two climbs.

The morning of Day 43 produced the usual weather. My diary reads: "Still lashing in the morning, very windy and cold, completely socked in — and we HAVE to move." We were so unhappy. We lay there, putting off the inevitable, hoping it would stop. Slowly it wound down, the three of us listening quietly to the patter on the fly, hoping it wouldn't pick up again. Then we broke camp and headed for home.

For five days, our damp little caravan walked through fog and rain. We thought we wouldn't see the sun again for the rest of our

lives! The route lay over the summits of two 6300-ft. peaks, and fortunately the heaviest rain came at night. We ached upon realizing how beautiful some of the ridges might be in good weather — not to mention the views we were missing. The long, gentle descent beyond the final 6300-ft. peak took us below the cloud ceiling. We could see! I was going half-crazy to see some sun but getting a real kick out of just seeing where we were going. We looked down into the thick, rich forests of the Wahu valley, still in the same condition as the whole continent was in 1492.

We spent two nights in our final alpine camp, on the exquisite 4600-ft. ridge 2.5 km east of the 200-ft. contour on the Wahu River. On the 25th, we dropped into the trees; when we reached the big sandbar on the Wahu River, my camera and sleeping bag were the only dry things left. The next day (Day 47), our last, I sleepwalked behind Trevor and Darren the final 3 km to the river mouth. The trip ended on a narrow, bushy point surrounded by the estuary. Our arrangement was to hail my friends in Kemano with smoke from a fire. We managed to coax a fire to life and eventually piled hemlock boughs on it, producing enough smoke to get the attention of Glen Craig, who was in his skiff at the mouth of the Kemano River. We nearly jumped on him when he showed up, particularly after his question "Do you guys want to go out tonight?" That night, at Alan Colton's house in Kemano, with our clothes tumbling in the drier, we pulled out the maps and planned

another trip! Trevor and Darren would visit Prince Rupert while Alan and I spent three days climbing the elegant 6500-ft. peak southeast of Chief Matthews Bay. This proved to be a very scenic little trip because the inlets were spread at our feet like a map.

Back in Vancouver, I packed up more grub and with Shel Neufeld headed up Pitt Lake to climb the 8-km-long south ridge of Mount Pitt. From the end of all logging roads on the upper Pitt River, we entered Garibaldi Park and bushwhacked up the east side of the road — free and trail-free Pitt River. This is one of the finest pieces of lowelevation wilderness near Vancouver, as we were at only 700 ft. above sea level and in a valley that didn't have a piece of flagging tape anywhere. Because it was September we used sandbars for much of the distance to Iceworm Creek, which we crossed on a very lucky log. We found a long gully that got us to treeline and followed the ridge to the summit of Mount Pitt. Since the weather was perfect, we decided to drop down into upper Iceworm Creek and climb up to the Misty Icefield from there. We then crossed the icefield, climbing the Caligo peaks on the way. Later, on Nimbus Peak, we found a cairn I had built in 1971; it had remained undisturbed all that time! We ended the trip by coming down the logging roads north of Shale Creek and going immediately to the hotsprings on the edge of the Pitt River.

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Mount Currie — A First Ski Descent

Mount Currie looms above the town of Pemberton, BC. With a vertical drop of nearly 8000 ft. to the shore of the Green River and a relentlessly consistent slope angle, its northern aspect holds some of the longest and steepest continuous ski descents in the world. For years, these lines were protected by doubt and fear; even though the face lies in plain view of Pemberton, the quality of skiing on the mountain remained a secret of the local mountaineering community. Now the secret is out, and more and more people are skiing Mount Currie every year. But the descents are committing, usually requiring a rappel to enter and sound routefinding to exit, and skiing Currie's north face remains a sacred rite of passage.

This past season, Kevin Smith and I raised the level of commitment by skiing and snowboarding Mount Currie's complete west face. The face is aesthetic and dangerous and falls directly from the north summit at 8550 ft. It had spoken to me for some time, and I would often stare towards it, contemplating the absurdity of its challenge. But during a week of high pressure this past January, commuting back and forth to Whistler, I heard the mountain's voice calm, its message softened to an invitation. I saw the face more clearly than I had before, and I felt that the time was right. Kevin felt this too, so at the first opportunity we made an attempt.

The west face averages 45 degrees for 3500 ft. and is trisected by two 200-ft. bands of rock; the first presents a mandatory rappel, and the second is broken at the extreme right of the face. The first 1000 ft. off the summit are the steepest — fifty-plus degrees — and on that first pitch the exposure is serious. We dropped in just below the north summit and skied the central chute into the first open slope. We then traversed to skier's left and skied down to a notch where we could pass the first cliff band with one double-rope rappel. We found a good stance and got two solid knifeblades in. After rapping to another good stance atop the second open slope, we pulled our ropes, strapped in and headed for the gap in the second cliff band. Shooting through that, we rode out the bowl and cut to skier's right over the northwest ridge into the main drainage of the north face.

The surface snow in the top chute was sugary; with thinly covered rocks threatening to knock us off balance, we linked up conservative, shorter-radius turns. On the first open slope, however, the snowpack deepened and the surface was perfect, consolidated powder. With nothing but the slough to worry about, we made fast GS turns. And after the rappel, on the second open slope, we quickly lined ourselves up with the break in the lower cliff band and ripped high-speed turns to the bottom of the face. Moving over the ridge and into the drainage, we eased the adrenaline out of our bodies, working the lower-mountain terrain in deep, perfectly preserved pow' all the way to the bottom.

First descent of Mount Currie's complete west face. John-David Hare, Kevin Smith. January 28, 2000.

JD Hare

Fragments from a Coastal Season

Drew Brayshaw

Spring — the whitest in hundreds of years perhaps. A new ice age? Global warming, evaporating the oceans and spreading them onto the local mountains like butter off a knife? Mike and I go climb some snow routes. We get hyped. Off to the Skagit. Hidden away up a side drainage lies the face: a mile-high wedge of crumbling rock and pocket glaciers. I have never looked up at it in the flesh and stone, though I have seen it from above. Jumbled memories of white steps and rotting grey gullies. On the air photos, it looms like a Matterhorn. Reverse the photos, and it gapes more deeply than the deepest open pit. From the summit, at sunset, its shadow flares and dies on an untracked forest.

We arrive at the campsite on a sunny afternoon. The Skagit is flooding the trail we were going to hike in and scan from. We laugh, wish for a canoe and decide to hike in on the other side. Along an ancient roadbed that vanishes into windfall thickets, out onto rock slides wrapped in primaeval moss. Further into the silence of a growing, breathing world without humanity. Amidst the shadows of these twisted, dying, rotting giants that are sprouting new life without and within, red and pink rhododendron fireworks flash and die on a sunbeam. Who would have imagined this? Eventually, we have to admit that we have travelled too far, too fast; we are lost again, and darkness falls before our path is retraced.

Rising before the sun. Finding the proper path, then up and over and under and through — a canyon, windfall, waterfalls, alder thickets and devil's club, a sunrise. More swimming than walking, propelled by curses and a need, eventually finding the snows. Above soars a white mirage, cresting like a breaking wave: a page on which to trace lines of our hopes, desires, fears—but in general not fearsome, easier than imagined, a stroll, a cruise. White lines on a red and grey pyramid leaning back into a cloudless blue.

Up and up, pulled down only by the weight of too much unused gear in monster packs, pulled down by our plans for what isn't here, prepared for an alternate reality, for the wrong universe. Snow strolling, step plodding with two legs and a pointed cane — old before our times.

Slowly, slowly up the face. Back and forth, snow and slush, wet and dry rock, tree bands and heather mantels, mud and moss. More than halfway sprawls an off-white patch cradled by the mountain's rotting ridges. Pausing, eating candy, discussing our fear, our desire, the softness of the snow. Turning, watching as the standing wave collapses, tons of slush flowing down in a deadly river, erasing our line — time to run. So we run away. In another universe, we died. In yet

another, we climbed under the eye of the moon and watched the sun rise as we climbed down to the safety of a nearby ridge. In this one, we fled through gullies and thickets and eventually staggered down a gravel road to our car and headed home humbled, chastened, already dreaming again.

A month of rain goes by, and a friend calls to rave of huge, ugly, crumbling faces and ridges that tower free of snow. Awaking memories, digging through a musty archive for slides and notes telling of a line seen long ago. Once again Mike and I gird ourselves — undubbed knights of the wild ranges beyond roads, beyond trails, beyond the boundaries of the known, saddling up the Subaru and riding to meet our destinies, the clouds parting, the sun streaming through again, the rocks drying, the snow melting.

Our plan, invented through common desire, is to go fast and sleep high; this is often attempted but seldom achieved. Our first close sighting of our objective — thar she blows, the white whale!- results in an increase in our fear and a questioning of our sanities. Can we? Will we? Are we sure? Hence we stride even more heavily loaded through trees and snow and pumice, slowly approaching the base of the great towering wall. The rock, chameleonlike, reveals its quality only when close - the crumbling facade dissolving like a mirage, a chimerical illusion of light and colour. Following a line of wolf tracks in the snow leads us to our campsite.

Unanimously exchanging "go fast and sleep high" for "go light and sleep low", we level beds at the base of the wall. Over dinner we argue over the choice of routes: hard-looking but potentially classic versus easy up. I sway Mike with my ego-driven pleas to climb the sweetest line we see — up which we must go to prove something about an eye for quality. So we rest and wait for the dawn. Mike lies easy and snores. I curl around a rock, shiver and catnap. The moon, serene, breaststrokes through the Milky Way.

Again away ere break of day, we choose a path up a sharp-cut ridge of stone wellendowed with cracks and holds. In shadow, we climb towards the light up the dark face of a giant sundial's needle, following our hands towards the sky. Rock shoes in snow, plastic boots on rock, sew-ups and long run-outs. The day races faster than we do; burning sunlight floods down as we ascend the second great tower on the ridge's spine. Its summit is naught but a pile of rocks why build a cairn when you are already standing on one? The rocks are loath to see us go; as we rappel, one of them, anxious to join us lest we depart for good, bounds down and nearly breaks my shoulder. Flying down white snow, we become human avalanches ourselves, racing to the car and

home faster than thought, faster than the dream we have dreamed. The names we create show our respect for a pioneer of the mountains who loved the valleys as much as the summits and icefields we seek today, and for the breathtaking vistas we have been privileged to witness.

Weeks of rain. Touring the province with one of my alpine heroes, seeing much and climbing little. Back in town and a weekend coming. Some friends join together to discuss an escape - away from crowds, from people, from the known, and towards adventures, the unexplored, the unseen. What a choice, what a chance. Of course we go; who wouldn't? Climbing with friends is always a synergy - energy and talent contributed to a common goal. Robin: young and always keen. Jeff: quietly competent. Fern: super-driven. Me? I was the only one who knew where we were going. Over a mountain of mushrooms, our plans were cemented and dreams took wing.

Dawn, Day 1. Up in the cold to swat bugs and eat gruel. Hiking roads, scaring bears, seeing new peaks on every side. Into the trees, into the snow — too much! Rock faces pour with melt, ledges are hidden and cold with whiteness. So up a ridge we snake — scrambling, bouldering, jumping for joy like goats in a granite playground — spreading wings on the summit, turning in the sky; then back down by a different route, clutching rocks and trees, sliding, skidding, falling, tumbling and bouncing upright, crawling over and slipping under vast boulders to regain the trees, the road, our camp.

Dawn, Day 2. Again the same. Up into the trees, heading north: new peaks, new ridges. Fern, sick, drops out and falls back the first stage of our rocket making an ocean landing. Now three, we stride, we glide, we climb. Up and over to a red rock summit - no name, no cairn. We build a stone man to stay after we have gone, to watch the wheeling of the stars, the smoke of the burning forests. Another peak - higher, more difficult. Jeff struggling to climb onto the huge summit block and slipping, wiggling, falling short. I encourage him to try it packless, so he takes off his pack and commits himself to succeed by throwing it up onto the summit he does not yet know whether he can reach. Following, I am forced to reverse the classic shoulder stand by grabbing his ankles and climbing up his legs. Jeff, human etrier — a new technique for Freedom of the Hills? Lacking rocks for a cairn, we scratch our initials into the lichen à la Gratwhol and Kempter on the Engine. Goodbye to the summit. Descending through a maze of ledges and cracks, some so good as to be irresistible. Alpine bouldering hard moves in big boots, a snowpack for a spotter. A different route back, through rockslides and steep trees — cursing bugs, out of water, secretly enjoying it all. Back to camp well before dark. We decide to leave, to climb in the canyon. Goodbye, mountains: I will return.

Summer, late, is finally here. I get a job working with my friends, working for the dead bird — no more easy weekdays flowing up the sun-warmed rocks at Squamish. But working with a motivated crew means that no weekend will be wasted. Back to Salal more things to do there, for sure. Most definitely. Grahame: money guy. Matt: talking guy. Me: box guy, pack-man, ship(per)-of-fools. Killer weather — melts the snow, makes the alder grow. We become lost in a green world, seeing neither ground nor sky, following tunnels, secret passages an organic maze for human mice, where mountains are our cheese. Eventually we find our way, threadless, through this labyrinth onto snow, onto pumice, which we excavate to make a platform that becomes our home, nestled on a ridge crest with the world at our feet.

Waking before sunrise, groaning, reluctant to rise, to leave our warm cocoons for cold snow and sharp rocks. Hiking, scrambling, chipping holds in an icy snowpatch with a pin hammer, scared, excited, regretfully abandoning a planned line for an accessible one - racking and ready. Three young men, two thin ropes, one sweeping wing of rock rising like Icarus towards the sun, passing the crescent moon in flight. Swimming over stone, up flights of holds zigzagging through a cold stone face. Ledges, gullies, corners, chimneys, pillars, staircases and ladders, hieroglyphics and bas-reliefs — all the wonders of natural architecture. Stepping from the utmost tippety-top of a creaking tower across a slender, arching bridge of stone to the shelter of a cave and a continuation. Emerging from a shadowed face to a blaze of sunlit snow, dark grey to bright white light, vertical to horizontal — climb over.

Burroughs once said that you have to be in hell to see heaven. On this descent, our paths reversed: from a heavenly climb to a hellish descent. Rolling rocks, sliding scree, choking clouds of volcanic dust; loose holds, no holds, holds hidden under lichen, under dirt, under a blanket of ashes. All avoidable with the addition of one common additive — the mountaineer's friend, the ice climber's lover — the crampon. Our jilted crampons sulked at home, and laughed when the dirty ropes told them stories, weeks later, of how we had crawled down awful rocks when we could have skated down sweeping chutes of ice and snow.

What next? It seems that no matter how much you climb on the Coast there is always something left to do. No one has been everywhere. With all this choice, potential, possibility, it seems almost counterintuitive to keep going back to the same places over and over again — so that's

exactly what I did. A Robin, a Fern and the "Dru" (animal, vegetable and mineral?). Our destination: red rock towers and ridges mounded into a semicircle, named after an ancient shack dweller, an ancestral pioneer — the Old Settler.

The first day. Approaching, setting camp, enough light left to fly up the classiest route on the mountain and dance with an eagle on the summit before darkness. Back in camp by nightfall, cooking dinner, watching stars fall, looking for familiar pictures in the sky and arguing gently about their locations and meanings. Is that a goddess, a monster, or the hoof of a hero's horse? A chair or a dragon? Sleeping inside a pyramid, a harmonious force focused on our dreaming bodies — our minds flying free up the rocks we will climb a few hours hence and struggling with difficulties that will vanish in the sunlight.

Red rock in the morning, climbers need take no warning, for this is amongst the finest stone around. Black streaks and green mosses flash on an orange wall warmed by early sunlight; beside a white snowpatch, melting crystals remember the forgotten winter. Cracks and corners, flakes and ledges; nuts slotted in pockets, cams flexed in pods - everywhere perfect holds, and rock like Velcro underfoot. Following our noses, up and right, a series of good cracks and faces leading one into another, across ridge and gully, solid arête and loose dike, up steep walls on good holds to island-in-the-sky ramps, up a few more pitches of cracks and corners again to a familiar summit once more — can it get any better than that?

In fact, I'm always slightly disappointed on the peak; having wings would be better, to keep on going, up into the sky, to the stars. But returning to the ground — back to the city, to jobs, to life — is our only option (yet why would anyone want to choose that?). The one consolation is that, when permitted, one can escape again to cherish a brief experience of reality beyond the noosphere, a temporary autonomous zone that Bey never imagined.

Summer dying — the last days. Doug and I hold a wake in the mountains, on Scuzzy Mountain. And let it be said that in 1999 the last days of summer were also the best: warm nights; long, dying days; eagles soaring and marmots burrowing while on a few mountains humans pretend they are goats. Sliding, slipping, boulder dancing almost stopped by the easiest obstacle of many due only to our conceits while planning, then racing unroped up the hardest section of the climb, frightened but forced to this expediency by the lack of any opportunity to change our situation. Then walking softly, lightly on a narrow edge, balancing like boulders, clinging to a granite crest, roping for some pitches up a steepening gradient, over towers and through chimneys. The upper face, almost as steep but delightfully easy and strangely featured — the strike face of a limestone wall cast in granite, huge

joint planes diving into it. A mammoth ladder of friendly holds: a jug farm? And on the summit rests a giant's footstool — a stone couch for a sybarite's orgy, a hard bed for a mountain nap. Adding a stone to a tumbled cairn. Then back down the west ridge — slabland, warm pools and cold fountains, oriental gardens in tiny stone dales, steps to scramble and grassy meadows to tread, bugs to flee. Back to the road, the car, a dusty drive and an ice-cream reward. End of season. End of story.

Climbs Discussed in This Article

Silvertip Mountain. East face attempt, foiled by avalanches. May 1999.

Salal Creek, west face of Mount Athelstan plateau

Lillarête. IV, 5.8. About 18 pitches, of which 14 are fifth-class, on the "Randy Stoltmann Buttress" (northwest ridge of Peak 8357). F.A.: Mike Buda, Drew Brayshaw. June 1999

Moonraker. III, 5.7. About twelve pitches, of which six are fifth-class. On "the Fantastic Wall", left across gully from the RSB. F.A.: Grahame Quan, Matt Nikkinen, Drew Brayshaw. August 1999.

Scuzzy Creek headwaters

Fraser Peak, east ridge. Repeat ascent. More like Class 2–3 than the "low Class 5" it's given in Fairley's guide. An amusing scramble.

Fraser Peak, north ridge. Steep, somewhat bushy fourth-classing for 50 m at the toe. First recorded descent?: Fern Webb, Robin McKillop, Jeff Martin, Drew Brayshaw. August 1999.

Peak 6900 ("Schist Cap Mountain", fourth peak south of the Nipple on 92 H/13). West and north ridges both easy. F.R.A.: McKillop, Martin, Brayshaw. August 1999. Peak 7200 ("the Vulva", third peak south of the Nipple on 92 H/13). South and west ridges both Class 2–3. Summit block requires a difficult, exposed mantel to attain; easier if 6 ft. 4 in. or taller — or use a shoulder stand, pile of rocks or other classic A0 technique. F.R.A.: Martin, Brayshaw. August 1999.

Ninja Tiger Arête. III, 5.8. Northeast buttress of Scuzzy Mountain. Begin with two pitches of almost unprotectable slab (5.8) to snow bowl, move left and scramble 200 m of Class 3 to crest of arête, then climb five pitches of up to 5.7 on and left of crest to junction with east ridge. Finish up east face for another 300 m of Class 3–4. F.A.: Doug Wilm, Drew Brayshaw. September 1999.

The Old Settler

West buttress of south peak. Repeat ascent. Superclassic fourth- to low-fifth-class scrambling — go do it! Ten stars.

Mars Western. III, 5.8. Southwest face to south face of south peak. Nine pitches. F.A.: Fern Webb, Drew Brayshaw, Robin Beech. September 1999.

Whitesaddle Mountain

Don Serl

Whitesaddle Mountain stands south of Bluff Lake, boldly announcing the transition from the Chilcotin Plateau to the Coast Mountains. Like most of the Niut Range peaks, the rock is trash and the allure lies in the great snow and ice lines. In particular, the north face boasts a fine, slanting couloir on its right-hand margin and supports in its centre a pocket glacier calving from an impressive serac band into the dihedral that splits the bottom of the face. The couloir is the most obvious line on the face, but the central groove draws the eye, too — the mystery of this line being less how to climb it than how to survive it.

No big deal, actually — avoid it. Except in very dried-out conditions, icy ramps angle left from the northwest shoulder to join the central face just below and right of the seracs. Climb the ramps, sneak past the seracs; and the rest, as they say, is history.

So Gord Betenia and I did exactly that. We had to endure the tiring uncertainty of a Coastal "summer" before the superb, clear, crisp September alpine season arrived, but it was dead obvious when the time was right. We had flailed through the swamp above Middle Lake and up the boulders and forest to the base of the mountain with Rob Nugent and Shirley Rempel on an abortive attempt the previous year, and we had no desire to add to our bankroll of ethics points; so we choppered over the bush and scree, dropping camping gear by the western glacier before being deposited way up on the ridge, mere metres from the point where the crampons went on.

The climbing was superb. Most of the snow had melted off, leaving damp, stonepocked water ice. We traversed out onto ascending ramps and within a few hundred metres, because of the way the base of the face drops away from the ridge, were at least that far off the ground. There was a bit of water running, and the snow and ice surfaces were riddled with stones, but the temperature was low and we felt confident soloing. Two hours after setting out, we were on the summit. We lazed on the top for a couple of hours, ambled down to our camp by suppertime, rambled about on the ridges to the west and south the following day and eventually descended to the inevitable swamp and the road. It had been a fine outing, worth waiting for through a long, unsettled

That might seem like the end of the story, and in a way it is. But back home, rereading the account of the first ascent, I realized that there was another story in this ascent — a story of speed, fitness and incredible mountaineering competence. A story, and a lesson. These qualities belonged to the foursome who made the first ascent of Whitesaddle; if you'll bear with me,

I'd like to tell a little of their climb in order to put them (and us) into perspective.

The first ascent was made in July 1939. The party was formidable, and a microcosm of period Canadian mountaineering can be gleaned from studying the careers of its members.

Numbered amongst this group was the prolific, durable Rex Gibson. The record of his activities includes 30 articles in the Canadian Alpine Journal spanning 1926 to 1956, with numerous winter ascents as highlights. He was to die as a result of an unexplained fall (perhaps caused by a stroke?) on Mount Howson in 1957 at 64 years of age, the only serving president of the Alpine Club of Canada to suffer this fate. His obituary states that the record of his ascents "is probably unsurpassed by any amateur climber in Canada", numbering "over two hundred climbs, including many first ascents".

Gibson's partner was Stirling Hendricks, from Washington, D.C. Hendricks loved mountaineering in remote places and spent many summers exploring back corners of the Selkirks and Monashees, as well as making two trips into the Waddington Range. His physical strength and toughness came into play again and again in these adventures, and one imagines him being a hard man to keep up with, especially in foul conditions or when disaster struck.

Accompanying them were the Bostonian, Henry S. Hall Jr., and his usual Coast Range guide, Hans Fuhrer. Hall began climbing before the First World War and continued until well after the Second. His span was worldwide, including Europe, the Caucasus, New Zealand, Japan, Colombia, Mexico, Alaska and Canada. During the 1930s, through the Mundays, he discovered the Coast Mountains, and many trips followed. In '31, '32, '33 and '34, Hall worked out the approaches to, made probes upon and actually circumambulated (in 1934, with Ernest Feuz) Mount Monarch, the dominant peak of the Bella Coola end of the Coast Mountains; its first ascent, guided by Fuhrer, would wait until 1936. In 1932, there was the first approach from the northern side towards Waddington, followed by the first ascents, with Fuhrer, of Blackhorn and Razorback. The following year culminated in the first ascent of Waddington's neighbour, Combatant, with the Mundays, Fuhrer et al. In 1934, Hall made an attempt on Waddington from the Franklin Glacier. The ascent of Monarch in '36 was followed by 1000 km of travel to join the Mundays in climbing Mount Silverthrone, just 50 km to the south. The ascent of Whitesaddle in 1939 was preceded by three weeks in the Waddington Range which saw the first ascents of Hickson, Tiedemann and Geddes.

In 1942, he was back on the Coast making the first ascent of Queen Bess with the Mundays, who also accompanied him on his final Coast Range foray, the first ascent of Mount Reliance in 1946. Given his breadth of interest and his access to the talents of a professional guide, Hall was perhaps even superior to the Mundays in his accomplishments regarding the initial opening of the range.

As for Fuhrer — well, he was the guide, and for the most part the guides back then didn't get much attention (and still don't). It is obvious from the accounts of the various climbs he accomplished with Hall that Fuhrer was strong, proficient and expeditious, but one gets little idea of the man aside from that. The obvious abilities of the rest of the party notwithstanding, he was undoubtedly the strongest of them all.

Such was the party — and, boy, did they move! They left their bivouac site, at about present-day treeline, at "4.40 a.m. and reached the base of the cliffs at 6.20. [They climbed] really steep snow-slopes for two hours [and] came out at the western end of the summit ridge. Half-an-hour saw [them] on the highest point after some amusing climbing on a knife edge of snow." After two hours spent on top, they departed "at 10.45 [and] made fast time down the [south]west face mostly on scree ... to the west col (12 noon) and thence to [their] bivouac camp (1.10 p.m.). [They ate, then went] down in one and a half hours to the lake where [the] horses awaited"

Compare these times to ours. Gord and I were lazy enough to fly in to 8000 ft., although the previous year the four of us had spent five hours getting up the rockslides (easy) and bush (not so easy) to 7000 ft. We thus completely avoided the hour and 40 minutes of approach that the earlier party undertook. We spent two hours and 35 minutes on our (admittedly more technical) route; they climbed theirs (the snow couloir on the right margin of the face) in two. They spent half an hour getting to the summit; we reached it in 25 minutes (from a higher starting position), avoiding the one difficult step on the upper ridge by a long traverse across the upper south face. They got down to the west col (8200 ft.) in an hour and 15 minutes; we spent two hours. They spent another hour and 10 minutes getting to their bivy at 6200 ft.; we took one hour to walk across the scree-covered glacier to our camp at 7200. They somehow plunged down to the lake in an hour and a half; we spent three hours, from a position only half an hour higher.

It's not just our times which pale in comparison. Fred Beckey and Reid Tindall made a considerably more time-consuming ascent in July 1985. Starting from the alpine

lake just northeast of the peak at 5800 ft., they angled up beneath the north face to "the very prominent snow and ice couloir that begins from the head of the cirque glacier, at the ridge connecting Whitesaddle from the north." This ridge is none other than the one Gord and I started from, and the couloir can only be that climbed in the first ascent. The icy conditions caused them to belay carefully, "using a few ice screws and the occasional rock piton". Warming snow forced them to descend straight down the south face, wherein a rib would have forced them to below 7500 ft. before they could break west. They then endured a very long, toilsome, up-and-down trudge (including a bivy) over the west col and north ridge

before their camp was regained — more than 24 hours after they set out. Conditions had not favoured them, but once again the old-timers come out looking pretty good.

So, hats off to Gibson, Hendricks, Hall and Fuhrer. I think most of us tend to drift into thinking pretty highly of our capabilities, especially as we tick off ascents of significant challenge year after year, In parallel, it's easy to start to underestimate those who came before us, and, worse yet, to fall into the trap of underestimating the challenge and potential hazard of every climb we undertake. I cheerfully acknowledge these four as my superiors in sheer physicality, and I thank them for the lesson in continued humility. I work hard at maintaining respect bordering

on fear for every mountain I set off up. This attitude, tinged with no small measure of luck on several occasions, has allowed me to survive 25 years of knocking around in the mountains; but frequent reminders that "you're not that damn good" are no bad thing. It pays to remember that, while it's unlikely, any outing could be one's last, and that humility, not hubris, is the secret to long-term success and a key ingredient for survival in the hills. Thanks for the lesson, guys. You were fast, tough ol' buggers, and you've sure got my respect.

References: CAJ 1939, pp. 13-14; CAJ 1986, p. 55.

Juneau Icefield David E. Williams



John Baldwin and Matthias Jakob approaching the summit of Peak 2280, near Ogilvie. Photo: David E. Williams

The Juneau Icefield extends from Juneau to west of Atlin Lake and north to Skagway and is bordered by three bodies of water: Stephens Passage, Taku Inlet and the Lynn Canal. The icefield consists of a large expanse of ice punctuated by numerous peaks ranging in height from the low 1000s to 8584 ft. — the elevation of the highest peak on the icefield, the appropriately named Devils Paw.

The spring traverse we had planned for May this past year was unusual in that the Juneau Icefield had been traversed north to south, and I believe east to west, on several occasions, which meant that the bulk of our intended route had already been travelled previously. Nevertheless, the allure of this immense icefield, which is ideally suited to ski touring, held our imaginations.

So, in early May 1999, our group of

three — John Baldwin, Matthias Jakob and I — began a traverse of the Juneau Icefield on skis. We placed a two-week food cache just to the west of Mount Ogilvie and were dropped by Jim, of Coastal Helicopters out of Juneau, at the toe of the Taku Glacier on beautiful Taku Inlet. The snow on Grizzly Bar at the snout of the Taku Glacier was covered with moose, bear and beaver prints. Within 15 minutes of starting the trip,

we bumped into a family of three moose. What a delightful start! From there, in a little under three weeks, we skied north 168 km to Skagway, with a total elevation gain of only 12,800 ft. We did, however, climb an additional 21,190 ft. in elevation while covering a further 83 km on side trips to climb peaks along the spine of the icecap.

The Taku Glacier is one of the few Alaskan glaciers currently advancing. In spite of this, we had no problems getting onto the glacier from its western perimeter, where the ice enters the forest. We skied and sledded up the Taku Glacier until we reached its junction with the Matthes Glacier. We then travelled north to the Alaska-B.C. border. At the divide of the Matthes and Llewellyn glaciers, we travelled past Mount Ogilvie to the northeast and north to Mount Nesselrode, From Mount Nesselrode, we travelled northwest to the head of the Meade Glacier and then down this glacier to the 2600-ft. level, where we altered course and headed north to the west of Snow Top Mountain. We continued northwest to the west of Mount Bagot and to the head of the Denver Glacier. Just to the southwest of Boundary Peak 109, we skied west and then southwest around Peak 6615 via a series of hidden benches to the south of this peak, then onto the névé of the Kasidaya Glacier. From there we travelled west to the col between peaks 5330 and 5900, which sit directly 1.5 miles west of upper Dewey Lake. Getting down from this col presented the only technical difficulty of the trip. We dug our way through a cornice, then used a snow bollard to lower ourselves and our gear to easier ground. After that manoeuvre, getting to upper Dewey Lake involved a relatively straightforward ski descent, although the map indicated otherwise. From a small log cabin on the lake, a trail descends to Skagway, where we were greeted with numerous questioning stares.

We climbed a good number of peaks en route. These included Vantage Peak; Peak 5700 (3 miles northeast of Exploration

Peak); Mount Ogilvie and several of its promontories; Peak 2280 m (4 km northeast of Mount Ogilvie); Peak 2320 m (2.3 km north-northwest of Mount Ogilvie); Mount Nesselrode; Peak 2275 m (2.3 km northwest of Mount Nesselrode); Mount London; Mount Service (attempted via its north ridge — turned back 40 m from the summit due to weather); Peak 6250 (7 miles southwest of Mount Hislop / Boundary Peak 103); peaks 7300 and 7255 (sitting north and south of the glacial basin 8.5 miles west-southwest of Mount Hislop; Peak 2225 m (7.5 km northeast of Mount Bagot; and Peak 6900 (3.7 miles north-northwest of Mount Bagot)

All the peaks were straightforward climbs on snow and rock. The two dominant peaks, peaks 7300 and 7255, made for a truly delightful day of skiing and climbing in a land of massive snows and ice. Throughout the traverse, the incredibly rugged scenery to the west was augmented by the more mellow scenery to the east, out to the interior plateau and Atlin Lake.

WEST COAST ROCK UPDATE

Marc Bourdon

I t can't rain forever, right? This was the big question on climbers' minds during the spring of 1999. The Coast was being hammered as if it were Manila in typhoon season. When the chalk dust finally settled in the fall, Squamish had firmly established itself as an international destination. Foreigners were a common sight at the crags, and licence plates from across the continent seemed normal. The publicity in the magazines and a new bouldering video ensure that this trend will continue. The Americans are finally taking advantage of our great summer conditions while the crags south of the border sizzle in the heat.

The Grand Wall forest now hosts around 400 boulder problems, the result of lots of hard work by a few dedicated moss scrubbers. Despite the contributions of many, information is still hard to come by, as there is no standard for recording it.

A few locals managed ascents of the area's hardest problem, No Troublems (V10). The honours go to Victor Ting, Nick Goodall, Nick Gibbs and Tim Doyle. Jordan Wright put up The Backseat; at V10, this is one of the harder local additions. A group of well-known climbers from the U.S. showed up in July to repeat test pieces, add desperates and film a new video. The famous Chris Sharma was among them, and he didn't disappoint. Chris on-sighted No Troublems and put up some ridiculously hard additions of his own. After a few days of work, he polished off his swan song, The Proposal (V13?). This overhanging prow is an exercise in power squeezing. For move-by-move beta, and a nice sample of what the Grand Wall forest has to offer, check out Rampage from Big Up Productions. We're all bracing for what we expect will be the biggest bouldering season yet, now that the video is out and a new guidebook is on the way.

Although not in Squamish, the most significant roped ascent of the season would have to go to Jim Sandford for his accomplishment at Horne Lake. Many trips on the ferry to Vancouver Island finally produced a contender for Canada's hardest sport climb. Driven is an amazing experience in the horizontal world of roof climbing. At .14b, it's Horne's newest test piece. Driven climbs Globetrotters to the roof and then branches left. Jola Sandford managed the third ascent of Globetrotters (5.13d), which is probably the hardest by a Canadian woman. Without a doubt, Horne Lake contains Canada's best limestone cache to date. The cliff band is home to solid, compact stone and has a cave at one end that has to be seen to be believed. There's not a lot here for the sub-5.10 climber, but a few motivated Hilti owners could change that pretty quickly. There's still lots of room for development, so if you like bolting limestone get yourself out here!

The hardest new single-pitch routes in Squamish were done by Marc Bourdon and Dan Poggi. Fitness World and Super Panini, both .13c, proved that hard sport routes can still be produced in the Cheakamus Canyon, although interest in the area has definitely died down. Tyrone Brett gets credit for finding yet another good crag, the Sport Temple, which is located very close to Cheakamus and has some great power-endurance climbing. Jordan Wright repeated Pulse (5.14a) for its fourth ascent to date and made progress on a new link-up.

The Chief received a new multi-pitch worth noting. The result of two seasons' work by David Harris, Eric Hirst and Susan Bolton, Borderline is a direct start to the popular Angels Crest. At 5.10d A0 or .11c, it is bound to see traffic. The complete route to the summit consists of around 16 pitches, providing one of the longest excursions up the Chief.

Farther over, on the Grand Wall, the popular aid-climb Uncle Ben's saw some freeclimbing action. Jim and Jola Sandford spent many days working out the moves. One short pitch succumbed at .12b, but the main difficulties are still waiting for a redpoint.

A trend that seems to be catching on in recent years is the retrofitting of older routes. Because of the rain and the salt air, anything except stainless steel rots in a couple of years. Replacing these old bolts is a thankless task; kudos to all who have done their part. The crags are slowly becoming safer. In particular, Jeff Thompson has done a huge amount of bolt replacement with the help of Mountain Equipment Co-op's "manky bolt fund". Jeff also continued his commitment to adding new routes to the area by putting up at least 10 new pitches this past summer.

Although not a new climb, the development of a rock-climbing strategy plan by B.C. Parks and the local community was a major event this fall. With the Chief's new status as a provincial park, management issues were inevitable. The draft should be available for public viewing some time this spring. All input is welcome. The future of climbing at the Chief is literally in our hands, and everyone should try to do his or her part.

A Couple a' Fosters

Mount Colonel Foster

LINDSAY ELMS

The grip of my left hand was slowly weakening, and I knew that my right had to find something really soon or I would be coming off. I desperately searched for the hold that Peter Ravensbergen had found, but my reach wasn't long enough. I warned Pete that I was going to attempt a lunge for the hold and that he could expect a sharp tug on the rope. I pushed off but still couldn't reach the hold. The tight rope ensured that I didn't fall too far, but I was left there shaking my arms out and looking at the moves again. A few minutes later, I managed to figure them out and climbed up to where Pete was anchored to the rock.

Early that morning, we had left camp at Iceberg Lake and moved up through the rock bluffs towards Mount Colonel Foster's south col, but then at the last minute we had turned off in the direction of the Snowband route. It was the end of August and late in the season for this route, but we were hoping that the snow accumulated from the previous season's heavy snowfall at the bottom of the rock break would still allow us relatively easy access onto the rock. Unfortunately, nothing is ever easy on Colonel Foster. The top of the snow was quite undercut with deep moats, but we decided to trust the snow and moved up to the upper lip. A 3-ft. leap across the moat and onto a narrow, gravelly ledge saw us on the rock and ready for the first pitch. The rock there had been worn smooth by the retreating snow and ice, but there were enough small holds to get us to the bottom of the overhanging rock band.

We looked up at the rock break that had first been attempted by Adolf and Ulf Bitterlich from Vancouver in 1955. Their failure inspired a number of attempts by other strong climbers; however, it wasn't until June 1976 that Joe Bajan and Mike Walsh were able to overcome the barrier. They tried several different starts to the climb before succeeding. Joe described the rock break as being made up of three sections: the first, 5 ft. long; the second, 80 ft. long; and the third, 160 ft. long. Those first 5 ft. took Mike Walsh 35 minutes to climb and were rated overhanging 5.10 on loose blocks. It also took 35 minutes for Joe to second that section, and he said that the main hold, which he called the "thank God hold", was loose and came out when he put his weight on it. However, after replacing the hold, he was able to follow Mike's lead. It took Mike an hour to lead the next 80 ft. through a series of overhangs with dicey holds going in the wrong direction. Joe led the following 160 ft., which were easier, in 20 minutes.

Pete and I hadn't wanted to try this route, but there was a variation that,

although a bit longer, we knew would go. At the bottom of the rock break, we moved leftward to the base of a gully descending from the mountain's south ridge. It was on this first pitch that I had trouble making the move.

The next five pitches, however, went fairly smoothly up to a narrow ridge leading up to the southeast summit. Here we found an old sling that I later discovered had been left by Joe Bajan and Ray Paine when they were climbing the gully in 1972. (It appears as though there is not a route on the mountain that Joe hasn't attempted.) Joe and Ray retreated in a whiteout and left the route unclimbed. We descended 10 m down the ridge and found a solid anchor rock. From there we lowered the ropes, hoping a 50-m rappel would bring us down to the upper snowfield. Rocks were falling from higher up the mountain as we hastily rappelled to within 10 m of the snow.

The weather was good, so there was no need to stop. We traversed across the steep, firm snow, our crampons doing perfectly the job they were designed for, and then climbed 250 m up the snow and onto the summit ridge, next to the gendarme. Out to our right, we could see a couple of rappel stations where old webbing was attached in a steep gully. We decided to take a shorter route up onto the ridge and thus avoid the big gully; we could save it for the rappel on the way down.

The ridge continued to surprise us, though with nothing too serious, and a few false leads forced us to look for the correct route. A couple of tricky moves into a notch led to another steep pitch. Here, the rock was more solid then elsewhere on the mountain and we found the climbing enjoyable, for a change. After another steep pitch, the ridge flattened out and the summit seemed to be in the bag. We decided not to start gloating yet; as the old saying goes: "It's not over till the fat lady sings." Anyway, our throats were too dry for singing.

We took our packs off and moved with just the rope and a camera towards the ultimate point. The rock was again the loose stuff we were used too, but we made short work of it up to the summit bivy site. Here we found a pair of old undies drying in the sun and exposed for all to see. It wasn't hard to imagine what had happened and why they were there, so we didn't pick them up to see whether they were good enough to take back to the Goodwill Store. Ten minutes later, we were finally standing on the Colonel's main summit and digging into the summit register. According to the book, we were the first ascentionists of the year, although

I know that climbers had been to some of the other summits that season

Pete and I spent only five minutes on top before beginning the descent. It was already 7 p.m., and our shadows were getting longer. We realized that we would probably be forced to bivy for the night somewhere, but we wanted to get off the summit ridge. We quickly retraced our steps, rappelling the steep pitches and moving confidently over the now familiar route to the big rappel gully we had seen earlier. Once the rappel was set up, Pete began descending in the rapidly fading light and eventually got down onto the upper snowfield. Without a headlamp, I began the rappel in the pitch dark. By 10 p.m., we were both on the snow, filling our water bottles from a small melt trickle. We hadn't found anywhere to fill our bottles since leaving the lower snowfield in the morning, and we were a tad dry.

After half an hour, we resumed our descent down the snow towards the rock barrier with the aid of a full moon. We decided to first go to the bottom of the snow, where there was an abundant source of running water. We filled our bottles and finally ate our lunches. Here we found a nice flat spot and decided to spent the rest of the night. We were really short on warm gear, as we hadn't expected to bivy; luckily, it was a reasonably mild night. We climbed into our packs and snoozed through till 3 a.m., when we began moving around to warm up. Finally, by 6 a.m., there was enough light to begin climbing again.

We ascended the snow and traversed across to the top of the rock barrier. Here we got the two ropes out and set up the first 50-m rappel. This rappel required us to angle across to the middle of the rock break to find an anchor from which we could rappel straight to the bottom of the barrier. The second anchor was a little dubious, so we backed it up with a piton and then rappelled. Pete went first and when he got to the bottom called back up to me, "You're going to like this rappel — it got me to the bottom with one foot of rope to spare!" I clipped my figure-8 in and took off. As I neared the bottom, I could see that the red rope didn't reach all the way. I mentioned it to Pete, but he said that it was no problem as there was still the stretch in the rope. At 12 ft. from the bottom, I was at the end of the red rope. Pete scratched his head and said, "I guess it's because of the 45-pound difference in our weights!" I got Pete to hold the end of the purple rope and asked him to be prepared to grab hold of me as I dropped the last 12 ft. Fortunately, the red rope didn't start running through the anchor and I got down safely.

We both tugged on the purple rope, and down it started sliding without a single hitch.

One more rappel got us onto the snow, but we also had to rappel into the moat because the snow from which we had first stepped onto the rock had collapsed. Once we were at the bottom, Pete belayed me as I climbed the vertical ice out of the moat onto the lower snowfield. Here we put the rope

away before racing back down to our lonelylooking camp at Iceberg Lake for a welldeserved brew and brunch.

The drizzle began early that afternoon, and by 6 p.m. it was pouring. The next morning, we awoke to the continued sound of rain on the tent, but by 8 a.m. it began clearing. I looked out the tent door and said to Pete that it looked like fresh snow on the

summits. Pete poked his cranium out but said that it must be the wet rocks glistening. Half an hour later, the summits cleared; sure enough, we saw a fresh coating of snow covering the rocks where we had bivied. We were sure glad we hadn't been up there that night.

Mount Colonel Foster — Northeast Gully

CHAD RIGBY

he winter of 1998–1999 brought huge The winter of 1770-1777 snows to the mountains of Vancouver Island. Snowpacks of 20 m were measured in various places within Strathcona Park. Near the end of May 1999, the snow had consolidated enough so that access into Strathcona returned to a manageable ski rather than an armpit-deep swim. On May 29, 1999, Chris Lawrence and I had just finished a nine-day semester course with the COLT program at Strathcona Lodge, and we were itching to go out and do some recreating of our own. The previous week's weather over the south B.C. coast had been a stable high-pressure system; with any luck, it would hold for another few days. Over beers at the lodge, Chris and I figured that, with the persisting winter conditions in the alpine, the winter routes on the east face of Mount Colonel Foster might still be in shape. If this turned out to not be the case once we had committed to travelling in, Chris had the idea of climbing a deep gully system to the col between the north and northwest summits, a line he had spotted years earlier during previous climbing forays on the mountain.

Leaving in fair weather after breakfast, we started the 12-km slog up the Elk River valley, headed for Landslide and Foster lakes and eventually the towering east face of Colonel Foster. The day was good, and we found the travel in the old-growth forest reasonable. At around dinner time, we arrived on snowshoe-laden feet at our bivy site and a frozen Foster Lake (formed in a glacial cirque 60 m above the larger, yet still frozen Landslide Lake). Looking through our binoculars in the fading light of May 30, we concluded that the previously established winter routes on the face had started to rot out but that the unclimbed northeast gully looked doable. While wolfing down boiled perogies, we timed the serac fall down the lower run-outs of the gully. At twentyminute intervals, blocks of ice came crashing down the lower third of the mountain. This kept us entertained over dinner while we looked for other routes in condition. The constant bombardment of seracs the size of refrigerators had created a perfectly tubular groove that was 10 ft. across and continued in the run-out of the gully. Each time an ice block calved off and exploded in the centre. it was funnelled immediately into the tube. Chris and I briefly discussed following the edge of the snow tube but quickly came to

our senses. A line up snow slopes to the right looked good; it traversed in left on rock ledges above the serac fall. We spent a beautifully calm and clear night getting little sleep while gazing up at the Milky Way and later the moonlit east face.

The next day began with a flash of the stove at 2 a.m. After some thick oatmeal, with three cups of coffee to wash it down, and we were off. We started climbing by headlamp up the snow slopes east of the gully in order to gain the rock ledges going in leftward. A thousand feet of snow angling up to 45 degrees brought us to the first difficult climbing. Three rock steps choked the gully, the first one my lead. I started up a mixture of rotting water ice and 5.8 rock climbing with good protection and ended at a solid belay in alpine névé. The second rock step was a large overhanging chockstone and Chris' lead, thank God. The right side of the chockstone was impassable, and the left was spewing with a dreadful hose of ice-cold water. Chris first attempted to climb up the gully wall, trying desperately to stay out of the brutally cold water. Failing in this, he decided rather quickly that the only way up was the ice hose direct. Without drawing his hood up over his helmet and with water pouring over his head, Chris handjammed under the overhang and wet-tooled (a Coastal term) up the groove to the top. The water went instantly under his suit and down his back and ended up pooling directly in his plastic bootshells. At a small stance above, squinting through fogged glasses and attempting to wipe the water away with his fingers, Chris turned and said, "Man, that's terrible — it's all gone to my feet."

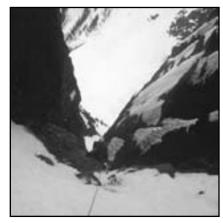
"Now how about some gear, Chris," I shouted from below.

"There is really nothing here, maybe a large hex placement, but I can't quite get it to stay."

"Hit the fucker," I blurted. "Like a piton — hammer it hard."

Chris smashed the hex in and continued over another section of rock to fifty-degree névé before bringing me up. The final mixed climbing was a shattered rock rib still frozen together that I rock-climbed and tooled up to reach yet more beautiful plastic alpine névé. Chris came up, and we simulclimbed the final névé to the castle's towers and the top.

The descent was interesting - a



45-degree snow gully with open 'schrunds at the bottom. Chris wanted to solo downclimb, but I convinced him to lower me several pitches since my downclimbing skills on steep, frozen snow are not yet honed. After several pitches, Chris gave me some pointers on trusting my tools and crampons and we blasted down the back side of Colonel Foster and returned to camp. Another few cups of coffee, and we were on our way back to the truck and cold beers.

The entire route took seven and a half hours up and two hours down, and I believe the rock sections would have been mostly good water ice earlier in the season. Nevertheless, upon our return to the lodge, Rob Wood, one of the pioneers of winter climbing on Colonel Foster, confirmed that the gully system leading to the col between the north and northwest summits had indeed not been previously climbed. Furthermore, there are many winter ice routes and mixed lines on the east face waiting to be done. The supercouloir, an ice streak 10 ft. wide and 2500 ft. long leading directly to the main summit, has vet to be climbed. Rob claims that if this impressive face were situated in Britain, of course with better access, it would boast over a hundred winter ice climbs. However, due to its remoteness in the Elk River valley and the constant bombardment of winter monsoons from the Pacific coast, Colonel Foster remains protected by its own dubious appeal — isolated and wet. M

Northeast gully of Colonel Foster. III, 5.9. Snow and ice from 45 to 60 degrees. F.A.: Chris Lawrence, Chad Rigby. Spring 1999

MOUNT LEWIS CASS TO THE EULACHON/UNUK DAVID E. WILLIAMS

 Γ lying high above the Chickamin and Leduc glaciers, I sat, jostled, mentally tracing our steps from May 1998 (see CAJ 1999). With the intense microterrain surrounding Lake Creek flashing by, we flew over the Unuk River and yonder to Blue Lake. Below lay the ancient lava flows of the Volcano, and our destination near the Alaska-B.C. border just to the west of Mount Lewis Cass. We landed on the snow, and soon after Trevor Devine of Vancouver Island Helicopters, Stewart, B.C., left in a rumble of noise and spindrift. Eventually, the noise was replaced by silence; we sat and ate lunch and took in the immensity of the remote, unroaded wilderness we had just entered.

My thoughts returned to two previous summers when Peter Celliers and I traversed from the Iskut River (see CAJ 1998) to Blue Lake (5–10 km northeast of the Unuk River). We had fleetingly passed, in clouds and whiteness, a couple of hundred feet below where we now sat as we raced in desperation below the southwest face of Mount Lewis Cass in order to arrive on time at Blue Lake for our float-plane pickup.

This afternoon with Greg Statter seemed worlds apart. We left our packs and with harnesses, ice axes and a rope casually headed off to climb Peak 7055, the highest summit in the area. First we wound our way between two nearby nunataks and onto the south-southeast ridge of the peak, across the southwest face and on over to the west ridge, with a final short scramble to the summit. To the north we could see much of the country Peter and I had traversed, and further beyond to Hoodoo Mountain north of the Iskut, and to Kates Needle and the Devils Thumb west of the Stikine River.

The trip that Greg and I had envisioned and were now about to commence involved continuing along the divide in a southerly direction — from Mount Lewis Cass initially, between the Bradfield and Unuk river valleys and then the EuLachon and Unuk Rivers until our arrival at the confluence of these two rivers. Peter and I had planned to travel some of this route before being forced, primarily by bad weather, to take a shorter path out to Blue Lake in 1997. After the fiasco of that trip, this year Greg and I planned to err very much on the side of caution. Fourteen days were planned to cover a mere 65 km, with a food cache placed at the halfway point. A full 9-mm rope, along with a small selection of hardware including two snow flukes and one pair of rock shoes, was included as part of our gear in anticipation of several steep and difficult-looking sections of ridge that the U.S. 1:63,360-scale maps indicated we were going to have to negotiate. In fact, I had been putting the latter part



Greg Slatter and the spur ridge connecting Peak 6185 with the main divide.

of this trip off for a couple of years because I doubted that several sections would be passable. However, I now felt that I could interpret the U.S. maps a little more accurately after having successfully negotiated a descent off the Juneau Icefield and down to Skagway in May 1999 (see CAJ 2000).

The morning dawned beautifully on July 31, 1999. We packed up and trudged off to below and south of the two peaks of Mount Lewis Cass. Dropping the packs, we cramponed up the frozen snow to the very loose eastern summit of Lewis Cass, where we discovered that the western summit looked a little higher. The main summit also proved to be a more serious undertaking that involved a climb of a short but steep icy couloir climaxing in an airy and stiff fourth-class scramble onto the summit pyramid.

The rest of the morning saw us traversing below the south face of Mount Lewis Cass. This turned out to be a much more straightforward stroll than on my earlier visit here in '97 with Peter. The immense snowpack of the previous winter was still covering slots and blue ice, which made the route easily passable. Furthermore, we could see where we were heading thanks to the sunny skies. Shortly before lunch, we left our now invisible footprints and started south along the divide between an eastern branch of the North Fork of the Bradfield River and the Blue River. We skirted around and ascended Peak 6192 from the east. From down in the Blue River valley, this spire dominates the skyline. I was very happy to find that what had been anticipated to be a crux of the trip involved no more than

stumbling across a bench hidden on the east face and dropping over the east ridge. The evening was spent bivying high on the ridge crest a kilometre or so south of Peak 6192. What a grand place to spend the night! Over 1000 m of relief dropped precipitously to the east and west into the Blue and Bradfield river drainages. There was a gorgeous display of pink and golden evening light, and Blue Lake glistened way below.

We continued south along a wonderful, snaking ridge that afforded secretive views of our next objective, Peak 6185 to the south. This peak had been on the agenda, so to speak, back in August 1997. The peak is unique - surrounded on all sides, except for one spur, by various tributaries of the Bradfield River. On the map at least, the spur in question appeared to connect to the main divide that we were traversing. We set up camp at lunch on a flat névé just off the ridge crest of the divide at the head of a glacier that drains towards Peak 6185 4.5 miles to the south. After a relaxing afternoon walking out along the ridge to peaks 6000 and 5700 to the west of camp, we spent another lovely evening under pink hues. I, however, found it difficult to relax, as I was mentally contemplating a notch in the spur that we had momentarily spied that afternoon. I was very excited; would this sheer and narrow spur allow us to climb the peak the following morning?

We were up and off before 7:30 a.m. on August 2 in an attempt to avoid trudging around in too much soft snow at the end of what we anticipated to be a long day. First we travelled south down the glacier, then we made a level traverse over to the top of the spur ridge. The notch was easily bypassed, and the rest of the narrow crest proved to consist of a delightful walk on smooth granite interspersed with heather-covered benches. The surrounding views were outstanding. We enjoyed incredible relief, a spectacular icefall at the snout of the glacier we had descended, shear cliffs below this and all around, the sound of running water both violent and gentle, goat hair and fresh prints, and a little vegetation — Coast Range ruggedness at its best. From the heather and granite we were soon back onto snow for the remainder of the climb, except for a short rock scramble to the summit. We stayed on the summit for a considerable period of time, using our binoculars to scan for goats and view the traverse route for several days ahead. We also observed a haze band that crept slowly towards us until it partially obscured the sun late in the day. Greg concluded that the source of this haze was a large, distant forest fire. Our so-called early start did not help us on the return to camp. The afternoon became very hot as, exhausted, we plodded slowly back to camp in the soft snow — but what a fantastic day!

During the following day of ridge traversing, we spotted goats and a very fresh set of bear prints. We overcame a few more of the cruxes of the trip and arrived wearily at our food cache; located on a knoll five miles directly east of Peak 6185, it had been placed six days previously just before we were dropped off. We very much enjoyed our dinner of boiled fresh potatoes and onions smothered in butter, cheese and salt. That evening we wondered around with bare feet on warm, smooth granite slabs, relaxing and enjoying ourselves in a golden light, watching a goat meander above us and taking in the impressive peaks of mounts Olatine, Lehua and Dunn to the northeast of the Blue River valley. But I think we were both a little wary as we kept an eye out for the source of the fresh bear prints. The prints were unusual in that, instead of simply passing over a col from one drainage to another, this bear appeared to be deliberately heading up and over the peak we had come down just before arriving at the cache. We saw nothing, however, and a thunder-and-lightening shower that struck out of the blue sent us dashing to bed as we grabbed our gear, which was spread all around.

Moving southeast, we made a big haul up a steep and icy glacial tongue. This brought us through another question mark on the route and to Peak 5660. After lunch we dropped a couple of hundred feet. Leaving the backpacks, Greg asked "Shall I bring the bear spray?" I replied "Oh, I don't think there's any need up here, do you?" and we headed northeast for an afternoon wander out to a lovely-looking, cone-shaped summit, Peak 5635. Greg was a short way back down the ridge. I was stepping from the glacial snow at about 5400 ft. back onto the rock of the ridge crest when I heard a rushing sound.

Looking up, I saw a young grizzly sprinting towards me. However, the bear was slowing — perhaps he was a little confused. I continued walking up a short rock bench, and the bear came to a halt at the bottom of the bench, 3 m away. The beautiful animal then took a step onto the rock bench. At this moment I thought about banging my ice axe against the rock. Instead, I uttered a few quiet words: "Hey, hey, hey!" At the same time, a light breeze passed over me towards the bear and six days of human sweat and stench worked some magic, because thankfully for me at this point things clicked for the bear. Turning away from me and continually looking back at me, initially walking and slowly building to a sprint, the bear careened down the ridge crest on the snow. "Greg, there's a bear coming!" I was now yelling. Greg recalls a huge ball of fur and flying snow hurtling towards him. At about 3 m away, the bear took a suddden perpendicular trajectory off the snow up and over the rocks of the ridge crest and was gone. After checking each other out and catching our breaths, we quickly made our way up a minor bump. Within perhaps five minutes the bear had travelled 2 km, and he showed no signs of slowing down as we watched the little speck blend into the snowy landscape.

A group of us had watched a large grizzly stalking a herd of goats in May 1994 in the Boundary Ranges north of the Iskut River (see CAJ 1995). There we had watched this wonderful spectacle from a safe distance. This bear was in goat mode and had probably thought that a lucky moment had arrived. I was very grateful that the animal had clued into the fact that I was not a goat before anything unpleasant occurred. My most vivid memory of the whole incident is of the bear standing just below me, seeming confused, with absolutely massive paws and with brown golden fur bristling up on his neck and shoulders. A fascinating living moment in which there was really no time to be scared. We think this was probably the same bear that had left the prints the previous evening.

Following the "big bear incident", we continued along the ridge to Peak 5635. After returning to our packs, we dropped down a few hundred feet, made camp and enjoyed another lovely evening. The five days that followed saw us travelling up and down southwest along the divide between the Bradfield and Unuk rivers and then south along Spur Mountain to the east of the EuLachon River. No significant peaks lie along this stretch of the ridge system. Although the route was very Coastal and rugged, the problems that I had lost sleep over were all surmountable. One entailed a short rappel, and others required some careful, binocular-aided routefinding with lots of bum sliding on steep heather, both controlled and uncontrolled. We were treated to dramatic, cloud-swirled views of Burroughs Bay, the deltas of the Unuk, EuLachon and Klahini rivers, and a pair of

golden eagles circling as they caught the thermals overhead. We lost one full day to the weather. The tent gradually sank down onto our faces as the snow melted all around - uncomfortable. Several other evenings were spent huddled in the damp interior of the tent, but in general we loved being in this very remote and wild place. There were hilarious moments and incidents. Greg was convinced that the only way to enjoy the evening while eating his hot food - i.e. to maintain a comfortable temperature and keep the black flies, horseflies and mosquitoes away — was to stand in a half-frozen pond, fully clothed and with the water up to his lower thighs. This sight was made all the more bizzare by the halo of mosquito netting he wore to cover his head and face.

On Day 12, August 10, we woke to rain. After our porridge, however, we found ourselves in the misty interior of the clouds with little real precipitation, so we broke camp. On the map, the contours on the ridge down to the confluence of the EuLachon and Unuk rivers appear as squiggles rather than smooth lines; as expected, the travel was fraught with small, shear bluffs, and benches leading to nowhere but trouble. The severe microterrain was a little daunting in the fog, but thanks to a detailed examination of the map, the help of Greg's altimeter and our attention to the compass needle, we made good progress. By lunchtime we were down in the mature, open timber of a gorgeous and very wet forest. Near sea level we broke our rule of staying faithful to the compass needle and made directly for the Unuk River, coming out of the alders 200 m upstream of the EuLachon. It then took us 45 minutes of traipsing back and forth to get around several meandering sloughs in order to travel a straight-line distance of perhaps 400 m. Lesson: stay true to your needle.

Later, we finally emerged from the ferns and skunk cabbage looking very bushed and then walked over to the Unuk River Post, the idyllic home and fishing lodge of Charlie and Gale Pinkipank and mother Dorothy. Although initially a little surprised to see us, they invited us to spend a wonderful evening with them as we watched bears strolling along the opposite riverbank, caught a delicious salmon or two, and chatted and got to know one another in the wood-stove warmth of their log cabin. Afterwards, with another great trip drawing to a close, we went to our own personal cabins and to bed.

Perhaps of interest to some is that with the completion of this trip, an initially unplanned but now fairly continuous traverse (ignoring the odd gap imposed by rivers and inlets) that began in May 1991 has now been completed from the Skeena River, B.C., to Dry Bay at the mouth of the Alsek River, Alaska. Travel took place both on foot and on skis and primarily involved pioneering traverses (see CAJ 1992–2000).



SOUTH FACE OF SNOWPATCH — FREE! GUY EDWARDS

With high-quality New England tobacco and the friendly, one-arm-chin-upping ranger, the rainy days didn't pass by too slowly. Scrabble was my game of choice, but nobody else ever plays by the rules; it should be renamed "Rationalization" or "Justification for Cheaters". Yoga classes were given by Kate from Boston after she'd spent the mornings hiking in the rain. Bouldering antics by Luke and Dan on the wet boulders outside the hut provided comic relief. And thank you, rainy days, for influencing those of weaker minds to bail out — and stock up the "free food" cupboard for more carefree souls.

With the arrival of a high-pressure system, all foul moods were swept away and the rock dried quickly. Micah and I had the get-up-and-go, the drive and determination, to try for a goal. A significant goal. Something really good, something challenging: the complete South Face of Snowpatch Spire.

The upper part of the South Face of Snowpatch Spire was freed by Tom Gibson and Rob Rohn in an amazing tour de force in 1980. Our quest was to free the bottom half — to create a long and continuous free line up this most stupendous, spirelike, 2000-ft. wall of clean white granite.

On the approach, we followed a languorous mountain goat — what a good omen for the route! Micah won "rock, paper, scissors" for the first pitch. A beautiful, run-out lead up a weathered corner system. A full 60-m rope-stretcher without much of a rest anywhere. The pitch after that presented a choice of three dihedrals; how about one with just a smidgen of gear, please? The rock was starting to look good for aid-climbing; a rivet ladder would go well up this smooth wall.

Pitch 3 was challenging climbing, with challenging gear. But where to go? It took Micah two hours of going up left, up right, straight up, down left — until, finally, down right worked. Down right, then up to a roof. Out the roof, much like a reversed Grandaddy Overhang at Squamish. A brilliant lead! Pitch 4 was classic Squamish: a thin finger crack (after I cleaned the moss out onto Micah), followed by some good laybacking. Two more moderate pitches took us to the midway ledge.

The essence of freeclimbing: hard moves near our freeclimbing limits on steep, clean rock, with "make you think" protection. And if you don't know whether it'll go free, or if it doesn't even look as if it'll go free, the challenge is much more than gymnastic — it's completely mental.

We bivied on the halfway ledge (or so we said to our friends at Applebee that night) and continued up the upper South Face the next morning.

The rock quality on the upper South Face of Snowpatch Spire is incredible! Ergonomically weathered cracks in glowing-white granite! Better than the Rostrum! Instead of six pitches to 5.11, we found eight pitches — with the crux second pitch definitely 5.12—. (Has anybody ever led this pitch



Micah on the 3rd Pitch. photo: Guy Edwards

perfectly clean, I wonder?)

In the continuing sunshine, the pipe was filled and inner peace was reached for a few moments. Micah relaxed with his book, while I teamed up with Sean Neufeld to do a great little route up the Donkey's Ears to the right of Thatcher Cracker. We caught the very visible splitter hand crack at midheight, then attempted to stay as close to the arête as possible (III, 5.10+).

The ante has been upped: the complete South Face is now a freeclimb (14 pitches to 5.12–, with lots of 5.11R).

Frog Peak, North Face — New Route David Lussier

West Kootenay Area

In the month of September 1999, my good friend and climbing partner Tom Dool and I completed the first ascent of the north face of "Frog Peak". The north face of Frog Peak (officially known as Mount Wilton) is a beautiful, Half Dome-like granite wall sitting just south of Valhalla Provincial Park in the Norns Range and easily seen from Winlaw in the Slocan valley. To our great surprise, nobody had ever climbed the actual face. The dark granite didn't seem to excite the local climbing community, so Tom and I didn't have to worry about anybody else "slogging" up there and climbing it before us. There were rumours of moss-filled cracks and lichen-covered rocks, but closer inspection revealed potential for some good climbing.

In general, the climbing was well-protected on solid granite with some quartz intrusions. The upper part of the face is quite sheer, with many vertical crack systems, and is marked by a big roof. The lower part is broken by horizontal ledges, and there the dirty cracks aren't as continuous. The route we followed takes the major roof to the left via four "sweet" aid pitches. The climb was 10 pitches long and rated IV, 5.10 A2. With some cleaning, one could probably free the



Michelle Hegmon and Bruce Sinclair on Wolverine Ridge, Purcell Mountains.

Photo: Roger Laurilla

aid pitches in the low 5.12 range. The lower part of the route will be a treat only for the lichen lover, but the classic upper pitches will make you want to return. The upper part of the face has potential for many high-quality

variations, but you'll always have to deal with the lower-angle stuff to get there.

For access information, see Passmore map $82 \, F/12$.

THE GOLD RANGE — 1999 Steven M. Horvath

I am in my little tent, listening to the rain and wind outside and envious of Hamish's amazing ability to sleep as long as it takes to wait out the weather. I turn to the other side, and my back immediately lets me know what it thinks of my pitiful attempts at locomotion. Time for more vitamin I and Robaxisal.

I puzzle over why I have a strong feeling of déjà vu, and then realize why: we have been here before — only three years ago, during the summer monsoon of 1996. The tent had been on the very same spot, the weather even worse, and our consumption of various medications higher and more prolonged. We had started with high hopes and tried for a a great line on the first day. The huge bulk of Mount Odin was sheltering us from the west wind, so we did not see the approaching storm until it was on top of us. By the time we were setting up the last rappel, the rain changed to thick, wet snow. The wind was driving the snow and our ropes horizontally off the ridge. We both managed to wrench our backs while retrieving the ropes, so it was just as well that the storm lasted four days; we were in no shape for climbing, anyway. Then it cleared, and we set out for the southeast ridge of Frigg Tower only to be psyched out by the intimidating summit headwall capped by seemingly impassable overhangs. We decided to settle for the devil we knew rather than one we did not, so we downclimbed and headed for the ridge that we had been stormed off four days previously. We had a great day on good granite; there was a summit register thanks to which we found out that the peak has a name, Little Asgard, and that our "first ascent" had been done several years before by Bob Bauman from Nakusp. The next day, we hiked out past Burnham and Grady — a somewhat lengthy but scenic route (could be a challenge in wet weather). Driving home, we agreed that we had some unfinished business here and would return.

Thus the déjà vu. I knew that I was in trouble when, two days prior to this trip, I woke up and could not put my socks on. Too much tennis and not enough common sense had proved to be my undoing once again. After two days of chiropractic treatments and more medication than I care to remember or repeat, I was more or less ready to go climbing. Thus I was not too unhappy when our first day was rained out: more time for my back to recover.

The next day dawned clear and cold —

time to start stretching those stiff joints and muscles. We enjoyed a pleasant snow walk up Mount Odin and an opportunity to look for good lines. We spotted one right away: the northeast ridge on Peak 9200, a short jaunt from camp. This is a fine-looking peak that deserves a good name, so after considering the options we decided to name it Mount Hugin and the one next to it (east) Mount Munin after the two ravens that sit on Odin's shoulders as he sits on his throne in Valhalla. The rock faces are quite black, and the two peaks do sit, quite literally, on Odin's east shoulder.

The next day, my back was feeling slightly better, so we set out to attempt the line. The climb proved to be just what we needed — 16 pitches of mostly Class 4, with sections of up to 5.6, pleasantly exposed and with spectacular views. Descent was fast and easy via the Frigg Glacier.

Feeling more confident, I spent the next day, which was designated as a rest day, wandering around the Frigg Glacier and scrambling up yet another unnamed summit. Hamish puttered around the camp and when I returned informed me that the southeast ridge of Frigg looked not that bad after all and that we should give it a try.

And so we did. It proved to be a long day — 14 hours return. We found 11 pitches of quite sustained climbing up to 5.9 with challenging routefinding. When we finally reached the summit headwall, we almost turned back; it looked even more intimidating than from our camp, and it was getting late in the day. The evening sun, however, proved to be unexpectedly helpful as it cast shadows on the previously blank wall. Hamish, ever optimistic, claimed that he saw a possible way up for about half a pitch and was off before I could talk some sense into him. When I joined him I had to agree that the climbing was indeed magnificent: clean, white granite with occasional diagonal ledges that made it possible to get around blank sections. The summit overhangs looked more intimidating than ever, but by then we were getting pumped, in a middle-aged sort of way, and three pitches later I was able to slither through the overhangs and belay Hamish from the grassy summit plateau.

The sun was setting fast, and the way back to our ice axes and big boots was distinctly unappealing. On the way up we had resigned ourselves to another summit bivy, but the summit register mentioned that it takes only two raps to get down to the notch on the other (northwest) side. We knew that this choice would involve a scramble up and over the unnamed peak to the northwest and then a walk in our rock shoes back to camp across steep snow and heather, but it sure beat the alternatives. It turned out that we only had to make one 165-ft. free rap. We got back to camp before it turned completely dark, and celebrated our good luck with a flashlight dinner.

The following day, we retrieved our gear from the foot of the climb and wandered around, still not believing our good fortune. We felt that we needed a rest day before making our way out to the car. We were confident that we would make it in good time; after all, the route had looked fairly straightforward when we sussed it out on the flight in. Wrong! I almost got swept away when I stepped on a large ice floe as I was crossing the outflow of the ice-filled lake below Mounts Burnham and Grady; my crampon broke; one of my pack straps broke; and it rained, oh how it rained. What looked like clear sections from the chopper were in

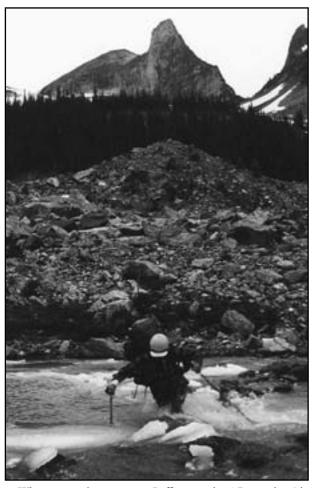
reality long stretches of wet Kootenay bush and slide alder. Hamish got stuck on a nasty little cliff and realized that downclimbing vertical wet grass while carrying a big pack was perhaps not such a good idea. In short, we got ourselves our annual mini-epic.

Northeast Ridge of Peak 9200 (proposed name: Mount Hugin), Gold Range. Approach from a camp at Mooncastle Lake (below south face of Frigg Tower), cross the Frigg Glacier and gain the lowest point of rock. From there, the summit is reached in 16 pitches, some on snow. Much of the climb is fourth-class; there are a few 5.4 to 5.6 sections. Descend on snow via the Frigg Glacier. A scenic route. F.A.: Hamish Mutch, Steven Horvath. July 31,

Southeast Ridge of Frigg Tower, Gold Range. Approach from a camp at Mooncastle Lake, directly below the ridge, by scrambling up slabs above the lake. The climb starts in a treed area above the slabs. The

first seven pitches follow the ridge proper and meander a bit to bypass difficult sections, providing fun routefinding. The last four pitches go up the summit headwall on good granite; one can use occasional diagonal ledges to bypass blank sections. Linking these ledges is fun, as is finding a way through the summit overhang. Rappel down the other side (northwest ridge) using one 165-ft. rap or two shorter ones.

We feel that this is at least a four-star classic — great rock, a spectacular setting (except



Who says you have to go to Baffin to explore? Icy work, with southeast ridge of Frigg Tower in background.

for the views of extensive logging activity in the Pingston Creek valley to the east) and interesting routefinding. We thought this was a first ascent, but Hamish, conscientious researcher that he is, was eventually able to contact Bob Bauman in Nakusp. In a rather monosyllabic manner, Bob stated that he and Mavis Bauman did the first ascent of this ridge in August 1996; thus ours seems to have been a second ascent. I suppose we should've just climbed on in 1996.

Hamish Mutch, Steven Horvath. August 2, 1999.

New Route — Mount Farnham

Pollowing the trademark of all good routes and religious experiences, Kari and I started the southeast ridge of Farnham at the crack of noon. We slipped and skidded our way up the phyllitic shale ridge to the base of the steeper quartzite arête. Many pitches were climbed on dry good rock and snow-covered good rock, as well as a few on wet bad rock. Simulclimbing in an attempt to race the sun, we arrived at the summit as the last of the pink lances were bounding from peak to peak. We spent a chilly night running on the spot and shivering;

this all builds character (so I've been told) and allows the mind to believe in all sorts of visions. The descent from 11,000 ft. via the west side of Farnham and the walk around and over Mount Peter had me vowing to always start before noon in the future and to always take a sweater.

Southeast Ridge of Mount Farnham, Purcell Mountains. IV, 5.9. F.A.: Kari Medig, Guy Edwards.

GUY EDWARDS



Mount St. Bride — A Narrative History

RICK COLLIER

1998: There was blood, lots of it, dribbled in patches all over the wall. And if Reg hadn't been strong as a damned horse or if the rockfall had cut our ropes — if somehow we'd been trapped in that water-worn slot, that terrible dark prison, praying for rescue — well, no one would have found us there, not ever. — Climbing log; August 2, 1998

1997: At 10,000 ft. we perched on the tip of the ridge, the precipice dropping away from us on three sides. Cloud mixed with snow eddied below like some foul witch's brew. John suggested we try nailing two or three raps down to the notch. Reg thought getting to the notch would be a lot easier than getting up out of it. While they debated, I ran my fingers over the rack, longing to hammer home a pin and get on with our climb of this mother of all mountains. But, no, it was cold, too cold to face 5.10 climbing, much less an unexplored descent from the notch. We knew it was time to head home. — Climbing log; September 1, 1997

1988: That night we camped next to Tilted Lake while the heavens poured down their wrath on our nearly unprotected heads — lightning, thunder and torrential rain continued until about five in the morning. Bob and I emerged from the tent to a land-scape transformed from green to white — although we would continue our traverse, the attempt on St. Bride would have to be aborted. Later in the day, as we marched past the snow-shrouded massif on our way to Black Douglas, I heard Bob mutter, "Those cliffs look impossible; something must have collapsed since Hickson was here." — Climbing Log; July 3, 1988

1910: As we were proceeding up the gap, a large mass of rock fell on our right from the main body of Douglas [the name originally used for St. Bride] and warned us of the danger of keeping close to the wall An hour later we gained the cliff ... where the really difficult climbing began. — Hickson, "Two First Ascents in the Rockies", CAJ 3, 1911

General Background, the First Attempts and the Approach

Mount St. Bride, a broad pillar of black rock, thrusts skyward in the dry ranges far to the northeast of the Lake Louise ski hill; also known as White Douglas, it can be seen clearly from Boulder Pass and dominates the panorama as one hikes towards Deception Pass. It rises to a height of 10,867 ft., surpassed in elevation in the general area only by Cataract Peak (10,935 ft.) and Mount Hector (11,135 ft.), both to the north. J.W.A. Hickson, "a young philosophy professor from McGill University" (Dowling, p. 107) who was in the first-ascent party, estimated its elevation to be 11,200 ft.; this supposition was, however, based on an inaccurate Topographical Survey measurement of Mount Douglas to the north at 11,015 ft. But Black Douglas, as Mount Douglas is popularly known, is only 10,614 ft. Both of these early elevation values overestimate the true heights of their respective peaks by approximately 350 ft. It is likely that St. Bride would not have generated as much interest at the beginning of this century had its true elevation been known. Similarly, the mountaineering community would quite probably not have neglected this peak so thoroughly since its original ascent — and since the accurate determination of its height — had it exceeded the magical elevation of 11,000 ft.

St. Bride was first climbed in 1910, but at least three unsuccessful forays preceded this triumph; it was not ascended a second time until 1999, when members of the Old Goats Group stood on the summit. Even this victory, however, was built on a decade of earlier failures. This article chronicles the story of these many attempts and few successes.

Although the "loss" of 350 ft. from its height — 133 of them being critical — must certainly have played a part in why St. Bride has been ignored for the better part of eighty years, the decline in the practicality and popularity of extended horse camps suggests an additional cause. Hickson, for example, in his second assault on the peak in 1910, mustered what today we would call an expedition: "Two packers and four pack horses to carry our tent and ten days' supplies completed the outfit. It was my intention to spend a week, if necessary, in laying siege to this mountain."

More recently, however, almost all peaks in the mountain parks have been approached on foot, and the hike just to get close to St. Bride may have served as a disincentive. It is a solid day's walk — especially with a pack well provisioned with bivy gear, climbing equipment and food — of over 20 km and involving elevation gains of almost 3500 ft. in total. Such an effort can be a daunting obstacle, particularly to climbers lacking the leisure of extended holidays such as Hickson enjoyed.

At least three attempts were made on St. Bride prior to Hickson's successful expedition. The first, in 1904, consisted of only two people, the guide Kristian Kaufmann and an unnamed American alpinist. According to Hickson's inference in the historical review that begins his article of 1911, this party failed to attain the summit because "three persons are necessary to overcome one of the first main obstacles." Later, however, he discussed the matter with Kaufmann himself and revised this conclusion: "Kaufmann informed me that he and his employer did little more than inspect the peak, the condition of the ice excluding any serious attempt to climb it."

A Mr. L.M. Earle of the English Alpine Club made the second attempt in September 1907. In addition to Earle, the party consisted of "two ladies, accompanied by the Swiss guides Edouard [a.k.a. Edward] Feuz, Sr., and Gottfried Feuz" (Editor, p. 318). The two ladies, who remained unnamed, apparently stayed in camp while the other three followed a route on the lower part of the peak later attempted by the Old Goats Group in 1998: "[They ascended] first over the glacier flowing northwest from the base of the peak, the last slope being very steep and covered with treacherous snow, and then across a little rocky bay." (Editor, p. 319). At the top of this bay, the party faced the first of several major difficulties, "a rather repellant looking chimney" (Editor, p. 319), a feature to which we will return later in more detail. It was

here that what Hickson refers to as "the three-man trick" was first employed on St. Bride: "Edouard Feuz stood upon his nephew's shoulders and he on Mr. Earle's." (Editor, p. 319). They continued somewhat further but eventually reached an impasse from which they were forced to retreat "leaving eighty feet of Buckingham's best rope hanging from the chimney" (Editor, p. 319).

During the third week of August 1909, Hickson, enticed by stories of "a virgin peak, popularly reported to be impracticable", rode from Lake Louise "with two Swiss guides, a packer and several pack horses [to] ... Baker Creek Valley", where they camped. However, unpredictable weather was as much a problem then as now: "Almost hourly snow flurries succeeded one another for the next thirty-six hours, which on the higher peaks deposited a foot of fresh snow" After a few days of making minor ascents and scouting the route on St. Bride, they returned to the Bow Valley.

Nevertheless, only 11 months later, in July 1910, Hickson and a substantial support party rode back "up the Ptarmigan Valley" and camped once again at the headwaters of Baker Creek. His account reveals an anxious intensity about making a first ascent of what he supposed was an 11,000-ft. peak: when they stumble across "a former camp", he remarks that it contained "a couple of suspicious pitons, quite suitable ... for mountaineering purposes". He clearly feared they might have been scooped by a previous and unidentified expedition. His apprehension was unfounded, however.

On July 12, they left camp at five o'clock and proceeded "at an easy pace up the short bit of spruce wood above the camp, and over the rough grassy slopes ... [to] reach the plateau [i.e. the meadows next to Tilted Lake] which affords an entrance to the first pass [i.e. Lychnis Pass] of our route [We then climbed] partly over screes and partly over snow ... to the summit of the pass about 8,900 ft. A short sharp glissade brought us down to the snow-covered glacier which was easily traversed."

The Later Attempts

1997: Any way you cut it, it's a long slog in to St. Bride; but only the recce in 1988 by the Old Goats took more than a day from the Fish Creek parking area to the bedrock that now bisects the névé (popularly known as the Douglas glacier) east of Lychnis Pass. On the second day of our effort in September 1997, we climbed to the col between the southwest shoulder of St. Bride and the lower summit of Mount Adrian to the south (Castle Mountain map, 82 O/5 719055) in order to explore Hickson's original route to the massif. From the col, "a steep descent [on snow] of at least 500' ... [leads] to the névé basin on the south of ... [the] peak." Since 1910, however, global warming has taken its toll: now scree, dotted with snow patches, angles down to a sheer, glacier-scraped cliff of at least 150 ft. After peering timorously

over this edge, we retreated back to the col, hoping the previous expeditions had overlooked the obvious — that the southwest shoulder would provide a more inviting route. It didn't: after some 700 ft. of easy scree bashing, we arrived at the terminus of the shoulder, which was "separated from ... [the St. Bride massif] by a perpendicularly cleft gap several hundred feet in width, forming a large rocky bed or trough". We were also getting some of the weather Hickson had experienced on his first expedition; the cloud had moved in, and it had begun to snow. Reluctantly, we retreated.

1998: Once again we hoofed in, but this time in August and with a new plan; given the meltback of the glaciers and the snowpack, it seemed logical to find a different route up to Hickson's notch. Our explorations of the previous year and the summer's beautiful weather encouraged us to investigate Mr. Earle's northerly approach. We crossed the second flow of the Douglas glacier and ascended talus to the far end of the northwest ridge, whose most prominent feature is a huge, detached tower (Barrier Mountain map, 82 O/12 720067). On the northeast side of this ridge hangs the substantial north glacier of St. Bride, up which we had all too blithely assumed we could, like Mr. Earle's party, kick steps. Above the glacier, a traverse leading across the broken ground of "the bay" to a couloir appeared from a distance to be the key to gaining the notch. Excellent theory, infeasible practice - exceptionally dry conditions had created a horrendous maze of crevasses and ice cliffs on the glacier, making it impassable.

There was little alternative but to try the rock face of the tower rising above the glacier. We scrambled the ridge for several hundred feet; I then led a lengthy pitch on shaky rock (5.7) to a series of transverse ledges, which John and Reg negotiated around the tower to a point close to the apex of the glacier. My second lead snaked up "a steep slope of loose rocks embedded in mud to gain the yellow col" (climbing log, 1998). Even though the climbing had become unpleasant and time was slipping away, we marched south across the easier broken ground of the bay; one more tricky scramble up a crumbly couloir, and we had, at last, reached Hickson's notch and the base of the Hickson-Feuz route, "where the really difficult climbing [begins]". We looked up, impressed and amazed. Those turn-of-thecentury dudes must have been tough; above us glowered two off-width cracks - the first overhanging, the second almost as fearsome - and there was no telling what lay beyond. I glanced at my watch and did a double take; it was 4:30 p.m. I looked at John and Reg and sighed. We'd run out of options; it was time, once again, to bail.

On the way down, we decided to abbreviate our descent time by rapping the northernmost crack and couloir system of the 250-ft. cliff that drops away below the broken ground of the bay between the glacier

and the notch. The first of two double-rope raps required a drop into a dark fissure followed by a long free fall in what amounted to a narrow, vertical cave to reach a steep, rubbly ramp. The rockfall caused by pulling the ropes was horrendous: John got whacked on the helmet, I was slammed hard on the ankle, and Reg painted the wall with a pint of blood drawn by a big rock that gouged out his thigh. Yeah, this was a mountain with an attitude!

1999 and 1910: When John called me in July to plan for our annual St. Bride suicide attempt, I was not at all sure that I wanted to pound back in there just to risk my neck yet again, especially since the summer was proving to be the rainiest in years. But John was already organizing the party, and resistance on my part was futile. Unfortunately, Reg Bonney, who had been on the '97 and '98 trips, would not be with us; he had already arranged his holiday time to hike the Chilkoot Trail. However, his place would be taken by Bob Saunders, who had run out of Arctic islands to circumnavigate.

We organized holidays, jobs and spouses to take advantage of a window of high pressure forming in early August. On the first of the month, we tramped back up to Boulder Pass, past Baker and Tilted lakes and over Lychnis Pass, carrying humongous packs replete with ropes, crampons, Friends, pitons, Big Bros and two lengths of two-by-four (more on this later). Because it had so far been a cool, damp summer, we planned to bivy close to the north glacier, crampon under starlight up what we hoped this year would be easier ice and smaller crevasses, and be at the base of the off-widths by early morning. But conditions were more extreme than we expected — the June thaw had not yet occurred. From Lychnis Pass, an almost unbroken expanse of white stretched from just below the col across the Douglas glacier and on up much of the shoulder. It was still winter in the St. Bride valley, and we were almost convinced that our efforts would again be in vain. However, the conditions that provoked this gloomy prognostication ended up working in our favour.

We camped on one of the few rock islands protruding from the snow. In the morning, after some debate, we decided to re-examine the Hickson-Feuz approach before committing ourselves to Mr. Earle's more convoluted route up the north glacier. Soon, in the light of a clear, crisp dawn, we were creaking up the frozen snow to the Adrian-St. Bride col. What we saw there must have been close to what Hickson and his companions experienced in the earlier, colder part of the century; snow was draped from the col down to the top of the cliff, and in the valley it was mounded high up against that cliff. The descent had been reduced from two rappels to one of 110 ft. But this good fortune came with a price: we could not see around the buttress to the north and therefore could not tell if the snow rose unbroken by cliffs from the basin to the fabled notch. Since the precipice we now peered over was smooth and undercut, we would - once down in the basin with our ropes pulled be committed to attaining the notch. The only other way out was a long and arduous slog down to the Valley of the Hidden Lakes, north to the Red Deer River and then back up the Douglas valley to our camp an epic day, possibly two. Our decision about whether or not to rap the cliff bristled with serious consequences.

But there was little hesitation; we fixed the anchor and the rappel, and within minutes all three of us stood on the snow, coiling ropes. Shortly, we turned the corner that had blocked our view and could look up towards Hickson's notch — and we almost lost our nerve. It didn't look good: 50 ft. of black cliff running with water separated the lower névé from the upper. Nevertheless, we toiled upward onto a high snow apron and into a huge dihedral. There our mood lifted, for luck had preserved our attempt, at least for the moment; on the right reared a gloomy but broken face capped by a short chimney. Running lustily with a frigid waterfall, the rock was crusted with a rime of ice. It was, indeed, a nasty bit of scrambling, and we emerged from the chimney soaked and shivering. But we now basked in warm sunshine, and the way up was a simple matter of post holing through 500 ft. of wet snow. Soon we had once again reached Hickson's notch, at 10,000 ft.

All the way up, I had been hoping the first crack would be less severe than I remembered. But it wasn't. Hickson had remarked some ninety years earlier that there he and the two Swiss guides "commenced the stiff part of our day's work" (p. 45). And for them, that meant something other than climbing the overhanging, off-width and holdless crack directly; it meant, instead, employing Mr. Earle's "three-man trick": "With Hickson at the bottom of the column and the elder guide on his shoulders, Edward climbed over them both." (Dowling, pp. 112-3) He "grasp[ed] a couple of slender holds on the outside of the roof ... pull[ed] himself over it ... [and made] a quick movement to the right around a sharp corner ... to reach the foot of the less difficult [second] crack" (p. 45). What this account omits is that the stance for the "trick" is exceedingly precarious; if Hickson's knees had buckled under the weight of the two guides and they had pitched to one side or the other, the Rockies might well have lost several of its early heroes. I had therefore hauled all the way to the notch several Big Bros, two sections of two-by-four and a small hand saw. Rather than risk being the top man (since I was the lightest of us three) of a "trick", I would cut the two-by-fours into lengths and use them to aid the crack.

Such ingenuity proved unnecessary, however. Technology - and perhaps technique and height - has improved since 1910; Bob, who is 6 ft. tall and was wearing rock shoes, soon worked his way up this first

crack (5.10b) and stood below the second. Hickson recalled the ascent of this next crack as requiring "considerable bodily strain and accompanying breathlessness" (p. 46). Apparently he rejected the assistance that could have been provided by the "eighty feet of Buckingham's best rope" left behind in 1907, even though "the end of the rope [hung there] ... the reminder of the operations of the party of three years ago." (p. 45)

Bob made short work of this second crack (5.7-8) as well and soon advanced to "a good platform" (p. 46), where he proceeded to belay up John and me. From this vantage, we could at last spy out answers to two nagging questions: Why, at this particular point, had "Mr. Earle's party ... stuck?" (p. 46) And whose description of the pitch — Hickson's or Earle's — was correct? An unravelling of the second question answered the first. Hickson calls the pitch "a chimney of about 25', quite vertical and bulging forwards at the top". "Vertical" and "bulging" are certainly accurate modifiers and may be part of why the 1907 party retreated. However, Mr. Earle's description differs substantially from Hickson's: "A neck of easy rock [was] connected with the base of some steep slabs [above which] ... the only possible way up was by a short [emphasis added] but slightly overhanging chimney." (Editor, p. 319) Mr. Earle himself suggests that their party's impasse resulted not only from this chimney but also from there being "few handholds and no anchorage" (Editor, p. 319) below the chimney.

Our observations suggested that both descriptions were flawed: the pitch is in actuality a wall 40 ft. in height, with an outward-jutting slot - hardly a chimney of some 6 ft. at the top. Cracks for anchors, at least modern-day anchors, are plentiful. Hickson's description of the pitch is the most confused of the two, perhaps reflecting how the excitement and drama of the climb affected his ability to later recall the original events. Mr. Earle and his companions appear merely to have inspected this wall without investing much effort or agitation in attempting its ascent; this may, in its own odd way, account for his more exact written portrayal. In any case, the difficulties posed by the wall were sufficient to turn back Mr. Earle, as well as to threaten the Hickson party with defeat.

The senior Feuz, who had been a member of Mr. Earle's party, undoubtedly recalled the perils of the 40-ft. wall when he set out for St. Bride with his son and Hickson in 1910. It was here that he hoped to use a special ascending device, a device that was one of the oddest and most curious innovations in mountaineering history. "Near Baker Lake, some distance from the mountain [i.e. about 6.5 km] Edward [Sr.] found a jack pine [sic] of the right size, cut it, and nailed it with spikes to prevent it from turning." (Dowling, p. 112) He was hoping that this "tree" "would be helpful at the most difficult chimney". However, hauling this unique piece of pro' up the mountain

presented its own special frustrations: "During this detour [into the basin and up to the notch] Edward [Jr.] had to expend considerable energy ... [on] the burden of carrying the heavy ... pole." Something of the relationship, both professional and familial, between father and son is revealed by the fact that it was Feuz Sr. who packed the pole to the Adrian-St. Bride col but his son who was required to wrestle with that beast once the terrain became increasingly uncompromising. Nevertheless, the two of them, separately and together, managed "with ... much toil ... to drag [it] up nearly 4000 feet" to the second belay, assuming that the pole "would ... enable ... the leader to climb up it into the chimney without using its precarious sideholds". But it proved to be useless: "There was no possible chance of resting the end ... on any secure foundation" (p. 46), and, since the exposure on both sides of the belay station was considerable, "a slip of it would have assuredly meant disaster." Our group in 1999 had hoped that we might find remnants either of this legendary tree or of Mr. Earle's rope; but both had vanished in the intervening years.

For the Hickson party of 1910, this wall was the crux. For the Old Goats of 1999, armed with pro' unavailable to the Feuzes, it appeared difficult but no more so than the first crack. True, there were "smooth and slippery slabs of rock on the right [and below] the chimney" where water dripped down from above, and this short chimney would clearly force a climber into several offbalance moves. But Friends, cams and chocks would afford us a far better safety margin than the earlier party enjoyed.

According to Dowling, "Feuz senior then donned his rope-soled climbing shoes and twice attempted the chimney and was twice defeated. Edward [Jr.] immediately took the lead" (p. 113); however, a careful reading of Hickson's account suggests that the elder Feuz had in fact never attempted to lead the crux (and therefore was not defeated). Instead, he "had climbed up to the top of the ... slabs" in order to better belay his son up the chimney, where the younger Feuz engaged in "about an hour's work at this place" without progress. The two guides were on the verge of telling Hickson that "there was no prospect of success, and ... it was advisable to turn back ... [and] retire from the cliffs of Douglas [i.e. St. Bride] discomfitted." However, the younger Edward gave it one more shot: he "pluckily took a chance and made the crucial move ... [drawing] himself into the chimney" where he found a secure stance. These and subsequent acrobatics impressed Hickson, who had remained on a safe platform below both the other climbers: "The remainder ... is not so dangerous ... but every bit of it is hard; knees and fingers being much in demand, while to pull one's anatomy over the inclined top ... demands strong fore-arms and generally good muscles".

Eighty-nine years later, John Holmes seized the opportunity to emulate the younger Feuz by leading this pitch, and did so in excellent style, placing a perfect line of pro' to the base of the slot (Hickson's chimney). Here, indeed, there is some awkwardness, especially when lugging a pack, and the exposure is inspiring; however, the rock at this point is sound and the handholds adequate, making this bit of 5.8 climbing relatively safe. Within half an hour of commencing his lead, John had disappeared out of sight over the upper lip. He never revealed whether he completed the pitch as smoothly as he had negotiated the lower section or whether he finished like Hickson, who, in a characteristically self-deprecating fashion, describes himself as scrabbling up "in rather a floundering way on[to] a broad scree-covered ledge".

I ascended the wall next; then, while John belayed Bob, I pushed the route on up through easier ground — scree to a corner, then a wide traverse on steep snow that required good step-kicking around a horse-shoe shelf and across a black couloir. This task had somewhat unnerved Hickson, who observed, again with gentle self-mockery, that all their ice axes had been left behind, "one of them unintentionally". The last obstacle was the short southeast arête. Although in his account Hickson provides no details of the ascent of this jagged ridge, we found interesting scrambling and one step of 5.5.

The upper plateau is a "shaly bed that forms the remarkably broad slope of the summit [and] would afford room for a good sized hotel" (p. 48); this plateau rises another 500 ft. from the crest of the southeast arête to the peak's apex at the far eastern edge, a simple half-hour stroll rendered almost bizarre by contrast with the dangers and exertions below. Hickson claims that "two cairns were built and a record left" at the

summit; but, when we reached this point, we found only the ruins of a single cairn, and no record. Ninety years of wind, winter and storm had eroded the evidence left by these three mountain pioneers. We did discover, however, a handful of rusted railroad spikes, perhaps what remained from their attempt to turn the "jack pine" into a climbing ladder. We rebuilt the cairn and left behind a register, and I deposited my own version of the Hickson-Feuz "tree" — the lengths of two-by-four, which had travelled farther and higher than the "tree" but which were similarly useless.

Hickson discusses his party's descent from the peak at length — an understandable digression, since rappels were limited to a primitive form of lowering, making "the descent of a difficult mountain ... more trying than ... its ascent". Getting down the 40-ft. wall was not a happy prospect for him: "My state of feeling was not wholly pleasureable as I knelt on the edge of the overhanging rock ... [and I] shot into it [i.e. the small chimney] rather too quickly for my bodily well-being ... [where I] bruised [a] knee ... [and later] swung out over the cliffs." He dangled there for a few moments before Feuz Sr., who had gone down first, could pull him back in. This method of descent also meant that "the last man had the more dangerous work to do of coming down unassisted on the single rope, one end of which he tied around his body." It also required that the rope be left behind.

After a few moments of searching at the top of the wall, I located several weathered loops of the original rope wound around a stubby rock bollard, an anchor that none of us three would ever have trusted. What these early climbers may have lacked in equipment and modern climbing technique, they made up for in guts and good fortune.

We fixed three rappels (one off the southeast arête) to reach the notch. The

Hickson party had hoped to descend from the notch by following Mr. Earle's route down the north glacier rather than retracing their morning's approach since "this would have been a shorter way to ... camp." Once again, their hopes were frustrated by the limitations of early Canadian mountaineering: the couloir on the north side of the notch "was both too icy and steep [and would have] entailed considerable stepcutting". But we three, living ninety years later, had been able to stash high-tech crampons at the notch; quickly and safely, we rapped down the ice and then kicked steps across the snow-covered bay above the three couloirs. When we reached the top of the north glacier, our luck continued to hold: what in 1998 had been a terrible tangle of ice and crevasses was now a steep but firm snow slope, down which we plunge-stepped and glissaded with ease. A pleasant meander through the scree and snow below the tower and across the Douglas glacier brought us back to our camp just at sunset but still with time to reflect on what had made this a magnificent climbing day: the second ascent of a high, difficult peak and the opportunity to understand better through direct engagement a significant chapter in the colqurful mountaineering history of the Rockies.

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THE HOUSE OF YOUTH — THE GATHERING ROB OWENS

I recall having this conversation all too often last winter:

"Hey Steve, what you been up to?"

"Not too much, just working a lot. And you?"

"I've been doing a few cool ice routes. I'm planning on doing _____ tomorrow."

"Oh yeah, Eamonn did that last week."

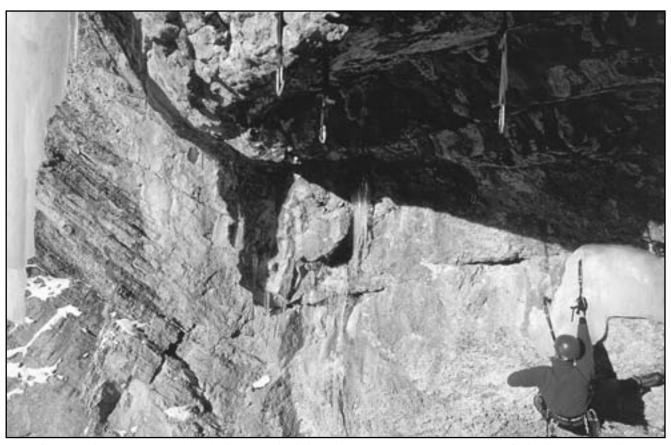
I heard about Eamonn through Steve Holeczi. Steve was, at that point, just an acquaintance I knew because he worked at a local climbing shop. I was climbing full time, and so, apparently, was Eamonn. It seemed that he had done every ice route in the Rockies, and always before me. Who was this

One morning at the parking lot for the Weeping Wall, a van pulled up and I heard

my partner mention Eamonn's name. I knew he would be there with the intention of doing the upper wall, as were we. I practically ran up to the base of the lower wall and was half a pitch up, trailing the ropes, by the time my partners finally showed up. I was not going to let this guy scoop me again!

We beat the other party to the top of the lower wall and ended up with the plum line on the upper wall. As I was





Left: Ben Firth on Beer to Burn (M9); above: Raphael Slawinski on Power to Burn (M9). Waterfowl Lakes cirque. Rob Owens

belaying my partner up on the last pitch, Eamonn climbed up and stood beside me.

- "Good route, eh?"
- "Yeah, man really fun!"
- "You're Eamonn, right?"
- "Yeah, and you're Rob, right?"
- "Yeah. We should go climbing some time."

Not two days later, Eamonn and I did get together — on the hardest ice route that either of us had ever done. Two months after that, we were together on the slopes of Denali. It is now not uncommon for us to find ourselves in a basement littered with climbing gear, smelly socks and dirty dishes, with half a dozen or more pungent males, talking about future climbs and past epics. Conversations often turn to the abundance of new lines to be had and the lack of people doing them. We are all anxious to start filling this void.

We are a group of mostly single, usually jobless, nomadic guys in our mid-twenties who seem to have found a niche in Canmore. We have come from places near and far, mountainous and flat, for one thing only: "the mountain life". We have been dubbed "the House of Youth", and this is a glimpse of what has been going on. Stay tuned for more!

Pity Us Fools 70 m.** V, WI5+ 5.7. Located up the Murray Creek drainage on the

right-hand side of the large bowl (82 J/l1 203225). A pitch of 5.7 with thin ice, followed by a 40-m pitch of overhanging and chandeliered ice with good rests and good gear. Take a few pins and ice screws. F.A.: Graham Maclean, Rob Owens. November 1999.

Long Enough 25 m. IV, WI5+. Located high in the bowl to the right of Auto de feu. Overhanging consolidated chandeliers for the whole 25 m. F.A.: Graham Maclean, Rob Owens. November 1999.

The Silver Saviour 60 m.* IV, WI5+. On the north face of Mount Cromwell (83 C/6 738915). Located a couple of hundred metres to the left of the Arbic-Robinson route. Mushrooms to steep, chandeliered ice. F.R.A.: Steve Holeczi, Rob Owens. October 1999.

W.W.F. 100 m.** II, M6 WI4+. Located 20 m right of Coal Miner's Daughter on Mount Field. A pitch of solid M6 with a constant mix of rock and ice, followed by a pitch of WI4+. Take a standard mixed rack with extra cams to 3". F.A.: Steve Holeczi, Rob Owens, Eamonn Walsh. December 1999

U2 60 m.** III, M7+ WI5+R. A rockclimbing start to Uli's Revenge on the Bow Lake headwall. Take quickdraws and ice screws. Done in two pitches. F.A.: Ben Firth, Rob Owens, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh. December 1999.

With or Without You 60 m.** II, M6+ WI4+. Located 15 m to the left of U2. Start with a pitch of M4+ and continue with a pitch of M6+. Take quickdraws and ice screws. F.A.: Rob Owens, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh. January 1999.

Beer to Burn 30 m. II, M9– WI5+. In the "One Ring Circus" (the southernmost gully) of the Waterfowl Gullies, across from Waterfowl Lake on the Icefields Parkway. Climb a smear in the back of the cave to a bolt line that leads to the prominent dagger on the left. F.A.: Ben Firth. December 1999.

Burning in Water, Drowning in Flame. The prominent pillar, used on the first ascent was broken off, so the party climbed the steep roof to gain the icicles on the right (M7+). Take a standard mixed rack, with extra cams in the 1.5–2.5-inch range. F.F.A.: Ben Firth, Rob Owens. December 17, 1999.

Red Man Soars. A direct variation (M6). Avoid the step out left and go directly onto the dagger. Better than the original way! F.A.: Rob Owens, Jeremy Dunning.

— Two Classic Climbs —

Mount Lefroy — The Lemire Route Reconsidered

MICHAEL BARTIER

In August 1999, Stan Sabourin and I climbed the Lemire Route (southeast ridge) of Mount Lefroy (IV, 5.7; suggested to take 5-8 hours). Despite our best intentions, our "alpine" start landed us below the massive walls of Lefroy at a not very alpine hour. The route has changed in its lower section because the Horseshoe Glacier no longer reaches as high as at the time of the first ascent or as shown in the route photo in Sean Dougherty's guidebook Selected Climbs of the Canadian Rockies. Consequently, rather than romping up some easy snow to gain the toe of the route, we scraped up two pitches of wet, compact rock, finding every ledge balancing about a metre of loose rock and gravel. We finished these pitches just as the sun loosened up some rocks well above us, causing the area we had just passed through to be peppered with some sobering rockfall.

On the other side of a small stream, we crossed a short talus/snow slope to reach the base of the ridge. This was the last available water on the route for some time, as any water higher up was in the fall line of some

serious rockfall. We passed the initial section of the ridge (a detached white pillar) on the left while some very unnerving, very continuous rockfall came down immediately on our left from a long way up. We followed the book's advice and "deked" the hard climbing on either side to the big traverse ledge. The climbing to this point was almost continuous 5.5-5.7, with some pitches being beautiful and solid and others wandering up vertical rubble. We also came across a fair assortment of vintage bail-out gear. Considering how easily this old booty was removed — and the fact that no other parties had taken it we figured that it had been a while since someone had been on the route.

We had looked to the left on several small ledges for the "big" traverse, but once we found the right ledge there was no mistaking it: it was 3 m wide, downsloping by thirty degrees and located below a 5.13-looking headwall. We scooped some snow there and hurried one pitch up the slabs to a five-star, 60 x 100 cm bivy ledge. Luckily, the night was warm(ish); we had beautiful, moonlit views across to the Ten Peaks.

An easy pitch in the morning brought us back to the ridge crest and a disappointing view of some hard, wet climbing ahead of us. This final section took seemingly forever up either soaking-wet aid pitches or, as we looked for drier rock, pitches that held absolutely no resemblance to 5.7 whatsoever. We hit the summit snow slopes late in the afternoon and trudged to the summit ridge sometime after dark. Deciding to forget about the summit and thinking more about the Abbot hut, we downclimbed the first ice slope we found, assuming (incorrectly) that it would deposit us at Abbot Pass. Instead, it intended to deposit us in the Death Trap. A blind traverse across a rotten rock band eventually landed us on the right slope, and we humped our tired little bodies down to the pass for an early-morning arrival at the hut. Fortunately, no one was there to laugh at our two-day ascent of this "five- to eighthour" climb.

The Lemire Route seems to be one that is often considered but rarely climbed; nonetheless, it is definitely a quality route.

THE NORTH FACE OF TEMPLE

Andrew Murdock

A decision to go off route from the Northeast Buttress on Mount Temple brought about not only a true mountain adventure but also a first ascent up a spectacular, mile-high face in the Canadian Rockies — and this at a time when many people might suggest that new routes up easily accessible big walls can no longer be found.

I remember looking out at the rest of the north face on our third night out. On the face of the ridge directly to our west was an odd shadow, darker than the rest of the wall. The first image that jumped to mind was a man hanging from a noose. At the time, I didn't share this thought with my partner, Scotsman Domhnall O'Dochartaigh. But I pointed out the shadow, and we both agreed that it was a man on the mountain watching over us. It wasn't until we got off the mountain that I shared my initial impression, and he agreed; we decided to name our route Hangman's Ridge (V, 5.7 A2).

When I look back at the climb, I have very detached memories of the experience, as if it were a summer hike down a well-marked trail — unemotional and uneventful. But somehow I doubt that was the case. Only when I recall the specifics of the climb do I imagine what was going through my head.

I had skied with Domhnall before, but

although we had spoken of climbing together I had never roped up with him. So we both must have been equally bored when I suggested the adventure and he agreed without hesitation. Getting to the base of the north face of Temple was routine; we did one pitch and then scrambled up to a good bivy ledge just below the beginning of the technical climbing. We had completed the first portion of our plan. Unbeknownst to us, this would be the only thing we would do according to plan.

We had just enough food for one day — and even less water — but we were so close to civilization and to snow that we both thought we would not be suffering long. Oops!

Morning yielded a decision to head up a short, wet corner. Domhnall opted out of his first lead on this section, a move I would make him pay for higher up. It was not until quite a few pitches later that we began to understand our level of commitment, and the meaning of W15 on a north face in the Rockies. We started to hit consistently steep rock, some of it covered in snow and ice. Icefall and rockfall became more frequent. Our belay stances were unprotected from the falling debris, and there were scant opportunities for proper anchors. We reached what

turned out to be our first bivy site in the stormy mid-afternoon, and Domhnall asked, "What do we do?" Going back down wasn't even mentioned

We sat out the storm, slept the night and awoke to slim rations. After a couple of pitches, we were at what I thought was the crux and the last of the technical pitches. When I began to aid up on loose rock and found very few cracks, I had no problem bailing out of the lead and handing the rack to Domhnall. He then methodically pounded in a couple of pins, found a crack and made a belay only 15 m higher. Not only was his pitch the hardest part of the climb to that point, but it led to the worst boilerplate limestone of the climb. My lead, thanks. The next pitch — Domhnall's once again — now had the hardest free section of the route. It was only 15 ft., but it was totally vertical, with loose rock, no good place to set protection, and exposure to over 4000 ft. of air.

The sun was setting, and we still had steep rock ahead. I remember that I was shaking and required babysitting, I filled our water bottles in a drip conveniently located just beside my seat. Domhnall put his crampons on and climbed the ice in the back of a narrow chimney to fix a line for the next morning.

I slept that night seated, facing directly north, with a view I wish I could describe. We were up at first light with clear weather. We jumared up the rope and began the last of the technical climbing. This time, though, it was me taking care of Domhnall. I felt good, but I could tell that he had overextended himself the day before.

It was only when we got to a short ice slope before the snowfield and the east ridge to the summit that we both noticed the weather. I'm not exactly sure how such a radical weather change occurred without our being even peripherally aware of it. The thunderheads were towering directly above us and we could hear thunder, but it wasn't on top of us yet. I don't think I was all that concerned until just below the summit ridge, when our helmets and ice axes began to hum.

We sat down, both of us at a level of exhaustion that I can't recall ever feeling before. There was no obvious way to the summit and to the easy walk off; to stay where we were would mean exposure to the electrical storm with no shelter. The ridge was corniced in both directions and showed signs of recent cornice fall. And there was a large crevasse guarding the bottom of the slope. It was by sheer luck that we found the only bridge over the crevasse which led to directly below the only uncorniced part of the ridge. We headed straight up as fast as we could. We may have been yelling at each other by this point. But we made the ridge and then reached the summit, and I don't think I have ever been as happy to see footsteps in the snow.

The route starts the same as for the Northeast

Buttress, past the first headwall, to the site of our first bivy. Instead of heading to the buttress we moved right, up a steep gully to a steep, wet corner. The climbing eased off to small steps for four to five pitches. The route then became very steep, with snow and ice. We headed up and right to another buttress (one pitch) to our second bivy. Two pitches of steep climbing on the buttress led to the short aid section (15 m) and then to beautiful cracks on boilerplate (one pitch). We then gained the large bench almost directly below the hanging glacier and climbed mellow steps leading to a short steep section on the ridge separating the glacier from the northeast face(one pitch). One more pitch led to the next bivy. The pitch following was the final aid section(though it could go free). One more pitch of moderately steep climbing led to easier pitches, then the east ridge and the summit.

SUMMER RENTALS GREG CORNELL

There is nothing like a good flick, a box of popcorn and some beer for getting back down from the mountain highs. Our Canadian monsoon kept us indoors far too often last summer; on the odd day a summit did fill our pocket, a Hollywood movie ticket followed suit. This may have had a shaping effect on some of our pursuits.

Titanic

Every climber I've driven with through the Banff park gates gawks up at that wild numbered buttress. We nearly either flatten our tin can under an eighteen-wheeler or smoke some game in the ditch as we dream of ourselves perched on its sides. The painted yellow line weaves unlawfully under the tires as the driver gazes at the titanic prow docked beneath Mount Rundle's highest peak. "Boundary Buttress", as I call it, appears as a beached ocean liner parting two creeks, the sides too high for water splashes to touch the gunwales. It is undoubtely the most awe-inspiring among the row of numbered buttresses.

After a few hours of bushwhacking up a treacherous creek, this landlubber felt it best to salt his wounds with the chilly waters emerging from the jungle underfoot. Once the jungle ended, an expanse of Rockies beach scree began, which boarded me onto the left side of the ship. I hiked its fastdwindling girth, scaring a herd of horned deck scrubbers to starboard, then strolled out to the bow. Not a sign along this maiden voyage of other Christopher Columbuses touching this new land, and no flag perched upon the summit. Proudly, I erected a conquering pile of pebbles, then peered through my binoculars down to the trade routes of the Bow Valley, where move the wayward travellers and pseudo-Magellans, to bellow "Land ho!" Circumnavigating, I retreated via the muddy stern to the creek and met civilization.

"Boundary Buttress", or the tenth buttress, counted off from Canmore. New scramble. Allow nine hours return from Banff.

The Route That Shagged Me

Grr, baby! Grrr! For 40 minutes off the shag-adelic Kananaskis highway, Gav and I hike. I drag him around like a Mini-me every summer. The big slabby face above Kilowatt Crag presents two groovy humps once an obvious gully is followed from the valley bowl where two fast creeks join. Our evil lier is the right ridge of the west hump.

A near-vertical brown water runnel snakes beside a bolt to a bulge — yeah baby, yeah! The stem move to place the very important #4 Friend here is so horny, baby. Continue up the big crack to the ridge proper via a set of wild, in-your-face ribs to an open-book bolt/nut belay. About 50 m of very shagadelic 5.7.

Shag two more pitches of 30 m each, both 5.6. The second powers up a corner past a pin to a two-bolt belay on a grassy knoll. After 25 m of 5.4 up the ridge to a horny horn belay, scramble up to the summit mojo.

Ivana Humpalot. 5.7. F.A.: Greg Cornell, Gavin Macrae. July 1999.

St. Elmo's Fire

I scream Geoff's name repeatedly but get no response. The fear of responsibility creeps into me as I scream again. Horror at the possibility of losing my friend on an afternoon that he wanted ended long ago in the overgrown creek below. Then a shaky voice: "I'm O.K." Geoff says nothing more. As I instruct him on reaching my belay, his speedy gear retrieval would make any instructor happy; the guy is so relieved to be away from the site of impact. He clips to my bolt, and the rain begins contradicting our decision to continue upward.

Everything along the ridge was going fine until about the sixth rope length. A tease of rain upset Geoff. I insisted on continuing, and soon I found myself drilling a bolt at the end of the seventh pitch. The Kananaskis was dry and quiet. But as I hunted for a second anchor and prepared to bring Geoff up, the black cushion in the sky was sending us a message.

Leaning out down the ridge so that Geoff could hear me better, I began telling him about my lack of a second anchor point. Before I could finish, a ball of opaque blue fire came cracking towards us. It blasted behind the ridge and terminated in a fireworks of sparks. The stir of a rock avalanche followed, and then dead calm returned to the Kananaskis.

Had Geoff been burnt off his belay and knocked down to the scree? The possible chain of events following the fireball's drop from heaven terrified me, as Geoff gave no response for over a minute and a bend in the ridge put him out of sight.

Thankfully, my analysis of the fireball's path was wrong; Geoff is beside me, upset but alive. After being baldly informed of the potential consequences of rapping off a single bolt, he speaks simply: "Please drill another bolt." To pass the time, he reconstructs what happened at the end of the rope.

Geoff explains that the lightning bolt charged to a spot 100 m down the ridge from him. It struck and exploded a fridge-sized boulder, which created the incredible sparks I saw. The flash lit up the ridge, shaking Geoff's heart more than the rock he was tied to. I didn't get a response in the windless air because after the attack Geoff stood zombielike, releasing just one syllable: "Fuck." As hard and as rudely as possible.

"We gotta get off this," I say, fumbling with knowledge while tightening the nut on the second bolt. After a half-hour, the small black cloud still clings above us, not releasing any further signs. Opting to climb into the sky up this new ladder on Mount Lorette, we traverse to the scree bowl that we saw from the parking lot earlier in the morning.

After we drop our attracting metal pieces in a pile, I solo the juggy, vertical yellow corner to eye our point on the mountain. The well-trodden east ridge now comes into view, as does the summit cairn. A gurgle of thunder resurges, convincing Geoff to follow.

The north-ridge descent is a scree free fall; as he ponders the revolting, four-hour east-bound creek approach, Geoff clambers up just another pitch — the last pitch.

Together we amble to the summit then dart down the descent. The black cloud mutates into a sea of bad sounds blanketing the range. It hovers above, hunting for us — a constant booming accompanied by stinging rain marks its search.

As I sit quietly typing at work the next day, my co-workers ask me what I got up to on the weekend.

"Oh, I saw St. Elmo's Fire."

"That old show — Rob Lowe was excellent."

Mount Lorette, West Ridge Direct. Eight to ten rope lengths of 5.4. F.A.: Greg Cornell, Geoff Langford. August 1999.

Mount Gita — South Ridge

JOHN MARTIN

Mount Gita, with its vertically tilted strata, is one of the most interesting-looking roadside peaks along the Kananaskis highway. Lynda Howard and I climbed it in 1979 by a pleasant route on the west side. During that trip, we discovered Hans Schwarz's 1948 first-ascent record. He had called the peak Mount Gita, and so we did too. Sadly, it is now known by the prosaic and dubiously appropriate name Gap Mountain.

In 1999, Lynda and I decided to do a sort of 20th-anniversary climb of Mount Gita by a new route, the south ridge. This ridge is formed by a single long rib of rock which, although it is quite low-angle in profile, is very steep on both sides and thus offers few opportunities for escape. The rocky part of the ridge rises in three distinct steps.

We had a lovely sunny day in late September for our trip. After leaving the Little Highwood parking lot at 1 p.m., we followed an obvious route to the ridge crest at a prominent, treed, flat spot. By two o'clock, we were at the base of the first step and putting on our rock shoes.

We soloed up in the sun and the warmth over delightfully sound and staircase-y rock, soon arriving at the top of the first step. The next step, beyond a short level section, was steeper. We roped up for a 5.6-ish pitch capped by a few tricky moves past a loose block, then continued unroped up to another level section. From here the third step looked intimidating, but difficulties melted away when we came to them as we soloed again on highly textured rock. Above, the ridge levelled out for a third time and then dropped off in a short cliff, where we roped up to clean off loose rock. This done, we climbed through a notch and up to the ridge beyond, joining the east- and west-side routes for the last 100 m or so to the summit. We arrived on top at 5:15 p.m.

It was a beautiful evening to be lunching on a summit. The low sun made Upper Kananaskis Lake a sheet of light and picked out the detail along the lines of strata jutting up in the Opal Range to the north. It was still warm enough to be in shorts and tank top, and we had a nice long stay.

Our logical line of descent was by the east-side route described by Alan Kane in Scrambles in the Canadian Rockies. This seemed moderately horrible for quite a long way after the pleasures of the south ridge. But soon enough we reached easier going, and we were back at the car by 7:30 p.m. We recommend Mount Gita's south ridge as a pleasant half-day roadside moderate with a bit of extra atmosphere.

RETURN TO BREWSTER CREEK

John Martin

Every time I do a climbing trip up Brewster Creek, I get back late. This year was no exception. It wasn't supposed to be like that. But then, it never is.

I'd planned a simple excursion: a nice bike ride up to Sundance Lodge, a climb up a peak in the Sundance Range, a nice bike ride back. As I rolled out of the parking lot at nine o'clock, I figured on over 11 hours of daylight, it being late September — lots of time for what I had in mind.

The weather was glorious, and by the time I reached Sundance Lodge I had convinced myself that there was enough time to do a more ambitious project, one I'd conceived during my first trip up Brewster Creek in 1985. This was to climb an unnamed 9500-ft. peak at GR 963485 on the Great Divide, midway between Og Mountain and Nasswald Peak. The peak was 30 km from the parking lot, but 25 of that was by bike. How hard could that be on this most splendid of days?

Well, pretty hard, actually. The trail is so badly damaged by horses that it took me three and a half hours to cover the 25 km. Parks Canada can nuke the brookies in Moraine Lake, ask CP Hotels to get rid of historically incorrect, non-native vegetation

(a.k.a. the lawn) at Chateau Lake Louise, and build a propaganda centre in Banff to teach visitors the politically correct way of interpreting the park, but apparently it can't arrange for trail maintenance where horses travel. But I digress.

The bike portion of the trip ended at a large meadow at the base of the Allenby Pass hill. I followed a packer's trail around the north side of the meadow and continued through woods up a headwall to a small lake not far below timberline. A little farther, and I reached meadows where I could see my peak for the first time. There seemed to be two route options — the east buttress and the south ridge — and I decided to incorporate both of them in a traverse of the peak. The east buttress looked potentially the harder of the two routes, so I chose it as my line of ascent.

I followed easy slopes to a col at the base of the buttress, continued up reasonably consolidated scree and then angled left to a major gully breaching the cliffs above. This was a typical, rubble-filled Rockies gully that would have been easy except that one of my legs began cramping. Progress became laborious as I attempted to keep that leg straight. Then my other leg began cramping,

too. How inconvenient. I hobbled up the gully, hoping for a walk-up exit. But no such luck — I had to climb some slabs to top out. It was hilarious.

By the time I reached the top, it was 3:30 p.m. After building a small cairn, I headed down the south ridge on easy scree almost as far as a col. The col is cut off on the east side by cliffs, and so my route had to diverge left down a subsidiary southeast ridge. From above, it looked much steeper and more exposed than it had from below, and I felt quite seriously intimidated. With some searching, I eventually found a place to start down safely, and after a few uncomfortable moments it all unfolded with unexpected ease. Within 40 m the angle dropped off, and I was able to rejoin my ascent route at the lake without further difficulty.

By 5:40 p.m. I was back at my bike; by 6 p.m., after a well-deserved rest, I was ready to face the ride out. Despite going pretty well as hard as I could because of the lateness of the hour, it was nearly 8:30 p.m. when I rolled into the parking lot just as the last light was fading. Let's see now: that works out to 10 km/h, downhill. Hmmm. Memo to self: get a suspension bike before going back to Brewster Creek — and start earlier!

New Ice Routes

E ver since spotting "the waterfall" in late September, we had been waiting for the weather to get cold enough for it to freeze into a new ice route. Being ever-impatient for the ice-climbing season to start, I had already conned my partner for these adventures, Scot, into hiking into the base of "the climb" on two previous occasions. After one wet start that was too early, on the second occasion there was more snow and more ice, but the water waves running between the rock and the ice suggested that the ice was too poorly attached, so Scot practised a few mixed moves instead and I grumbled at the cold, the damp and the wasted trip.

A week or so passed. It got colder in the mountains. This would be it. Off again, but now with more snow it truly looked and felt like winter. Once more we reached the trail beneath Linda Ice Nine. Such is the lure of a new route that we hardly hesitated at the sight of the grey bulges of ice and we continued up the valley. A little further up the trail, we saw more walls and seeps of ice; they were probably in bad avalanche terrain normally, but now with little surface snow the hazard was minimal. After a brief discussion, we still elected to go and look at "the waterfall" higher up; after all, we had already expended energy in that direction. Up to the tea house once more and onto the trail beyond. Lots of snow now, so the trail was no longer obvious. As luck would have it, we could not see our intended destination from there. Still determined, we retraced our steps a short way then headed down to a rocky ridge that had less snow and was safer. But we had to regain the height we had lost, at each step thinking we would be able to see the climb. Then it was there. Well — rather, it wasn't! We had seen more ice on "the route" on our previous visit. Now what? Well, there were always those lines we had so purposefully walked by already that day, and they weren't in the guidebook... So back down we marched.

We selected a route holding the promise of a pillar in a narrow groove above. From the trail, it looked quite big and a long way up. Secretly I was wondering if we could climb it so early in the season, but we had to at least get our crampons on and our tools into ice after three trips into the area, especially on what was turning out to be a beautiful day. Starting right from the trail, we soloed a short 5-m curtain to a ledge, where we roped up. Scot, in the lead, attacked the next, higher curtain and some rolling bulges above, completing a full pitch. Three climbers were already descending from Linda Ice Nine and crossed our path. "Hey, this looks good. What's this climb?" "It isn't in the book," we replied quickly, anxious to continue. I headed into what turned out to be a narrow groove in the rock with ice in the bottom, complete with wires for protection. Once I was through this, a few more bulges in a more open groove led to a belay on ice. Scot came up and continued up more bulges of easy ice to the right. My turn to lead again - some ice but mostly snow, now heading for the rock band and the gully with the attractive upper pillar.

The gully turned out to be about 4 m wide. There was a great sheltered belay stance right at the bottom and a thin ribbon of ice leading up and into the gully, where two steps of ice stood. Scot headed in, soon to be bemoaning the trickles of water he was forced to endure and the absence of his oh-so-new shell, carefully folded in his pack below. Up the first step on the left, then back across to the right, bridging off rock to a sheltered spot out of the shower before swinging to the left to gain the upper step and some good ice pro'. After questioning the stability of the upper structure (well, he is a framer) and the amount of water, up Scot went, getting thoroughly soaked in the process: water down the arms, under the fleece, into the boots — everywhere. With the security of a top rope, I was able to blast through the wet section with much less discomfort.

Oh yes, this route was quite the find! Walking off happily into

the sun as it set over Mount Victoria to the west, we made a quick descent down a few ledges and snow slopes, then did a rappel off an hourglass to reach the bottom. Brewsters was in the bag! (Well, there are restaurants, a bus company and even people with the name, so why not an ice climb?)

Brewsters 250 m. WI3-4. Near Lake Louise. F.A.: 1999.

Reads Tower is the prominent rock tower skirted by the scramble route up Mount Sparrowhawk; its north face is split by a gully. We found steps of W12 ice, some loose scrambling, and a short rock pitch to avoid a chockstone that resisted any direct attempt. Walk off downhill to the right to regain the scramble route. Easy late-fall entertainment.

Reads Tower Gully 200 m. WI2. F.A.: October 1995.

Most of the creeks off Highway 40 in the Kananaskis are named on signs, but not this one. Even after a look at the map, it remains anonymous. Dig deeper, and finally it's Ripple Rock Creek. Why the interest? In December 1998, there was ice on the south end of the peak that forms the north side of the creek. It is most clearly visible from near Hood Creek to the south, or even from the south end of the Smith-Dorrien. After a few more years on the regular routes, it was time to get off the beaten track and chase new ice.

We parked the truck by the 90 km/h sign on the highway and headed straight up the hillside towards the route. Safely in a little gully/cave below, we had a great place out of the wind to get ready for the climbing adventure ahead. Once ready, I scrambled out on the right side, up some snow, to the start of the climbing proper, which was on thin ice and on rock in a short corner. I reached a comfortable ledge below a little bay with thin runnels of ice leading up to fatter ice above. Since the spot was ideal for a belay and I didn't have enough rope for much more, I stopped.

On the next lead, Kevin entered the bay. The most promising line was to the right, but he couldn't find anything to protect the crux move and retreated after a few swings of the tools. After probing two others spots on ice that detached from the rock rather too quickly, he was back at my side. Switching ends of the rope, I took a quick look, but darkness loomed and it was time for home. We elected to slide down the snow and then hike out the creek; as a result, we got back to the truck in the dark — very wet and totally bushwhacked (not recommended).

Two weeks later, back we went. This time we stayed left of the ridge, avoiding our previous error. Now all we had to contend with was a little too much powder snow for quick progress. Sometime later, we were in the shelter of the cave and ready to go once more. In front again, I got myself onto the still-thin ice and was precariously balanced and ready to move, when snow poured down over me, threatening to dislodge me from my perch. That fun over, I continued up to the sanctuary of my ledge.

Somehow I found myself in the lead again, at the right side of the bay, tackling a very short but very narrow seam of ice, protected by a marginal wire in the rock. After one high-step, I turned left and headed up the ice above. It proved to be thinner and much less solid than it had looked from below, particularly on the short curtains. One curtain even tried to push me off, but I won the battle and ran out the rest of the rope, ending at the top of the ice at a large block below a bare but enticing groove in the rock above. In went the pegs. As Kevin followed, I saw a loop of cord over to the left — beaten! But that's life.

Dodge Ram approx. 100 m. WI3-4.

Ian Hunt

Precarious Climbing Conniptions — Old Goats '99 Rick Collier

1. Elbow Falls to Kananaskis, possible first winter traverse. February 13–15, 1999.

Although occasionally done in the summer, this traverse, which follows the Little Elbow and Evan-Thomas drainages, may not have been skied previously. And with good reason. We three set off rather late on the February 13 and found, not too surprisingly, that the Elbow Falls road was, within a kilometre of the gate, bare pavement; skiing turned to hiking for the rest of the day. That night, at our camp near the Little Elbow River, powerful chinook winds rattled our tent continuously. More hiking ensued on the 14th until, finally, under the brow of Mount Romulus, we were able to ski - well, sort of: the trek across the stream and up into the Evan-Thomas valley quickly degenerated into bottomless snow and fearsome bushwhacking. We camped late on the

14th in a deep part of the valley which never sees the winter sun; a blown Thermarest added to the -25°C temperatures was all part of the "fun". More thrashing took place on the 15th until we at last climbed up out of the willows and into the sun in the meadows east of Evan-Thomas pass, where we ate breakfast. Afterwards, a well-deserved packed trail took us back to the parking lot off the Kananaskis highway in two hours. With the right conditions and extra headlamp batteries, a masochist could probably do this trip in a day. Rick Collier, Sandra McGuinness, Kumo (one very wasted dog).

2. Chrysler Peak (8450 ft./2548 m), possible first ascent. July 13, 1999.

Located southeast of Top of the World Park and just northwest of Empire State, near Summer Lake, this peak is formidably protected by walls and ridges on all sides (Queen Creek, 82 G/14 161162) and is not listed in the various guidebooks as having had an ascent. On July 12, Bill and I humped our way up Galbraith Creek on an old logging road for 7-8 km, encountering a few washouts and one major stream crossing (which would likely be trivial later in the year). We doubled back southeast above the creek on an overgrown road that climbs the slopes to the east of the objective and camped near the stream descending northeast of the peak (GR 178170). The next day, we followed a hunter's trail up the true left of the drainage to the northeast bowl. Easy meadows and snow led up to imposing cliff bands. To the left (south), however, a long



The couloir on Chrysler Peak — Route No. 2. Photo: Rick Collier

(1200-ft.), snow-filled couloir brought us to a small col. From there we attacked the massif directly, climbing a pitch of steep, solid rock (5.7) to the upper scree, which took us easily to the summit just after noon (no evidence of a cairn). An excellent climb with delightful views. Bill Hurst, Rick Collier.

3. Mount Nicholas (9260 ft./2822 m), possible first ascent. July 26, 1999.

As are so many of the mountains in this area. Mount Nicholas is named after a member of the Canadian Armed Forces who was killed in action in World War II. The ascent of this peak reverses what is typical in the Rockies by coupling an easy finish with a difficult approach. From the Kootenay bridge on Highway 3/93 some 50 km east of Cranbrook, drive north on the Bull River road and take the Queen (a.k.a. Quinn) Creek turnoff (stream crossings — fourwheel drive recommended). Follow this road for close to 30 km and stop just north of both the intersection with Blackfoot Creek (Queen Creek map, 82 G/14 209392) and the staging point for Mount Mike. Cross the stream on an old logging bridge and follow skid tracks west up the slope, eventually traversing north and west around the end of the ridge that descends from Peak 9050. Then thrash and bash your way in heavy bush with only intermittent game trails up the drainage to the west to delightful open areas, and a beautiful unnamed lake at 7450 ft. (GR 180393). We found good camping here. The next day, we ascended the slopes on the north side of the lake and followed goat trails to the west; once on the main ridge, a 1.5-km stroll to the north across high alpine meadows and scree brought us to the summit (Mount Peck map, 82 J/3), where we found no evidence of a previous ascent. On the way back, JA and I climbed the two summits that border the lake to the southwest (Peak 8650, GR 174388) and southeast (Peak 9050, GR 186386) and then descended a steep snow couloir between the two to the lake, before contouring the shore back to camp. JA Owen, Marion Owen, Mardy Roberts, Rick Collier.

4. Limestone Peak (9442 ft./2878 m), possible first ascent. August 9, 1999.

A 2500-ft., east-facing wall runs from Wolverine Pass (Mount Goodsir map, 82 N/1) north and west until past Mount Hurd. Although penetrable around Sharp Mountain, it is a formidible barrier elsewhere, embracing to the west several smaller icefields and glaciers, including the littlevisited Washmawapta. Limestone Peak (GR 494702) is the most massive point (but not the highest) along the first 5-km section of this wall north of Mount Drysdale. The wall to the east and the complexity of access from the west account for this peak (which is little more than a scramble) remaining unclimbed until this summer. Approach by driving up the Beaverfoot valley, taking the Moose Creek road, and hiking the trail on the west side of the creek for 5 km to the drainage descending from the Washmawapta (GR 455668). Acend this drainage for some 2000 ft. into the bedrock retreat plain of the glacier. Scree and moraine for 2.5 km bring one to the west slopes of the peak, which can

then be easily scrambled up via intersecting shelves and more scree. Snow travel is probable, but the glacier proper can be avoided. No cairn on the summit. Rick Collier.

5. Mount Mollison (9687 ft./2952 m), new route. August 11, 1999.

First climbed in 1900 by the redoutable J.H. Scattergood, along with C. Hasler and J. Muller, this peak is usually given only a passing glance by mountaineers heading in to the Goodsirs. However, as with so many mountains dwarfed in size and reputation by their neighbours, this neglect is entirely undeserved. The approach is up the Beaverfoot valley road and via the Moose Creek turnoff; instead of parking at the Moose Creek staging area, however, one drives up a road leading to a small slate quarry on the south side of the objective. At about 5700 ft., the road is gated; from here one hikes through the quarry and up old logging roads. When the roads end, a relatively easy bushwhack leads to pleasant meadows. The climbing starts 1000 ft. below the summit, where the final rock pyramid thrusts up from the surrounding scree. We ascended the direct south face and couloir, staying just east of the true summit. Careful routefinding on ledges and towers (loose rock) and climbing with crampons in the couloir bring one to the summit in about two hours. Excellent views in all directions. Frank Campbell, Rick Collier.

6. Mount Frayn (9557 ft./2914 m), possible first ascent. August 18, 1999.

This is a time-consuming peak to get to, which may be why it has remained unclimbed until now; however, it is not difficult and lies in a beautiful and rarely visited area. Bill and I met in Sparwood on August 17 and drove north to the Cummings Creek turnoff (Tornado Mountain map, 82 G/15 513148). Unfortunately, after only a few kilometres, the old logging road up Cummings degenerates into an ATV track; mountain bikes (which we did not have that day) would be ideal after the first big hill. We hoofed it up the track on the north side, crossing the stream on a good bridge where Telford Creek intersects. At Km 9, one has to ford the creek (which can be deep and swift) to its north side. At Km 15-16, after two more crossings, there is a good meadow for camping (Queen Creek map, 82 G/14 394205). Despite the formidable walls guarding the eastern flanks of Frayn, the route up to the western (and highest) summit is straightforward and passes through an intriguing series of ecological zones. Simply follow the old logging road as it wiggles its way northwest; after it peters out, bushwhack easily up to an array of alpine meadows and an unnamed lake (GR 378237). The westernmost scree cone is attained from the lake over meadows, snow and rock to the col (GR 371248); a pleasant ridge leading west completes the climb. Superb views in all directions, and no cairn at the apex. Bill Hurst, Rick Collier.

7. Mount Gydosic (9180 ft./2798 m), possible first ascent. August 19, 1999.

While Bill enjoyed a rest day, I set out in

mid-morning to explore the headwaters of Cummings Creek. An old logging road extends a further 0.5 km south from the meadow where we camped (see item No. 7); another 1.5 km of bushwhacking through old-growth forest, tangled avalanche slopes and the occasional meadow brought me to the glacial debris at the end of the valley. From there, I ascended scree and bedrock to the west into a high cirque between Gydosic and Washburn containing several waterfalls and a frozen lake. The north Washburn glacier, perhaps the most southerly of such icefields in the Rockies, is a magnificent sight from here as it glowers overhead for a thousand feet. Gydosic is easily ascended from near the west end of this cirque by marching back north up grass slopes and scree. No cairn found on the summit. Rick Collier.

8. Clawson Peak (8780 ft./2677 m), possible first ascent. September 16, 1999.

This ascent was part of an ambitious attempt to traverse the ridge that runs from the Ice River warden cabin to Chancellor Peak. The first 2700 ft. to timberline involved a demanding and waterless bushwhack (in fact, the only water on the ridge comes from the odd snowpatch). From there, rock towers interspersed with pleasant ridges led to the first well-defined summit, Peak 8550 (Mount Goodsir map, 82 N/1 373665). We bivied in a congenial rock garden nearby. The next morning, after ascending a dihedral and wriggling through a keyhole, we followed relatively easy ridges to Clawson. More difficult scambling and traversing (that might have been impossible had we not had a goat trail and even the goats themselves to follow) brought us to our second bivy, in the valley just southeast of Aquila Mountain (9450 ft.). We ascended this peak without difficulty the next morning. Unfortunately, a series of cliff bands to the northwest slowed our progress towards Butwell Peak (9650 ft.) and, since our plans allowed for only three days of travel, we were forced to abandon the project two-thirds completed. We retreated 5500 ft. down Steep Creek to the Ice River fire road without difficulty. Steve Tober, Rick Collier.

Honourable Mentions I. Junction Mountain (8850 ft./2699 m

1. Junction Mountain (8850 ft./2699 m), second ascent. June 28, 1999.

Ascent from Indian Oils on the Sheep River (first ascent by John Martin). A great early-season climb. Mardy Roberts, Rick Collier.

2. Phillips Peak (9580 ft./2920 m), new approach and route. July 20, 1999.

From a camp in meadows at the head of Weigert Creek (Queen Creek map, 82 G/14 402358), we ascended to a notch at 8000 ft., south of the peak (GR 393357). Intricate traversing and some snow bowls and couloirs took us diagonally across the west face of the objective to the summit ridge. Mardy Roberts, Rick Collier.

3. Mount Washburn (9970 ft./3039 m), new approach. August 20, 1999.

Bill and I ascended this complex and difficult peak from our camp on Cummings Creek (see item No. 7 above) by bushwhacking south to the headwaters of the creek, climbing over the ridge that extends east and north from Washburn (Queen Creek map, 82 G/14 394175) and then sidehill-gouging around most of the rest of the peak to its south ridge. Although one party has ascended the east ridge, the best scrambling routes though they look formidable from afar - are on the northwest corner. The register on the summit listed some six ascents: a few up Burns Creek from the Bull River, but most from Telford Lake. The approach up Telford Creek is clearly the best option. Our return time was 18 hours; this route is therefore not recommended. Bill Hurst, Rick Collier.

4. Split Peak (9610 ft./2929 m), retreat 400 ft. from summit. August 28, 1999.

We had to abandon our attempt on this peak because of time constraints that had accumulated as the result of a new and much longer approach. The bridge that used to span the Vermillion River (Mount Assiniboine map, 82 J/13 707329) has recently been pulled, and it is now necessary to cross at McLeod Meadows. We cycled up the old fire road, but there is a lot of deadfall and Daer Creek is unbridged. Just 2 km past this crossing, we were forced by deteriorating road conditions to switch to foot travel. Using a raft or canoe to cross the Vermillion remains a possibility. We were most of the way up the central couloir on this peak and perhaps 400 ft. from the summit when we turned back. Christine Grotefeld, Carmie Callanan, Rick Collier.

5. The Marshall (10,465 ft./3190 m), unsuccessful attempt. September 12, 1999.

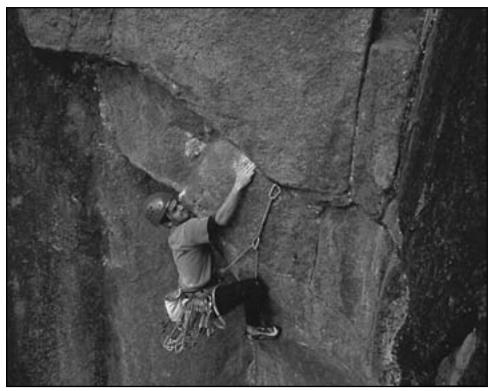
From a camp at the north end of Assiniboine Lake (Mount Assiniboine map, 82 J/13 929345), we ascended the cirque at GR 920356 and attempted the cliffs and ridges above. Exceptionally unstable rock, deep notches in the south ridge leading to the summit, and dwindling daylight forced a retreat that included several rappels. Frank Campbell, Reg Bonney, Christine Grotefeld, Rick Collier.

6. Mount William Booth (8950 ft./ 2730 m). October 4, 1999.

This peak, located on the far east side of Kootenay Plains (Whiterabbit Creek map, 83 C/1 466710), is worth a note simply because it is such a delightful autumn ascent when the air is crisp and the leaves have turned. Start at the Siffleur Falls staging area on the David Thompson Highway and cycle to the point where the old fire road bends and parallels the Whiterabbit River (GR 434682). Stash the bike and walk 0.4 km to the river, which at this time of year can be easily forded. Then ascend through fine, open forest into the drainage at GR 455700 or the one just south. Although the ridges are pleasant, they contain impassable cliffs that necessitate a loss of elevation. The final 0.75 km along the summit ridge can provide some good mountaineering if covered in snow. Excellent views of a littlevisited area. Rick Collier.



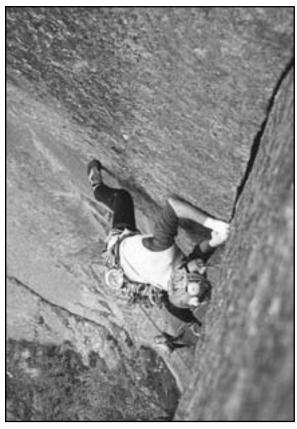
LES GRANDS GALETS EN LIBRE — Un reve, un projet, une réalisation Jean-François Beaulieu



omme beaucoup d'autres aven-✓ tures, l'idée d'escalader en libre la voie classique d'escalade artificielle du fameux Cap Trinité nous est venue tout simplement autour d'une petite bière avec les copains. Le Cap Trinité garde, du haut de ses 300 m, le magnifique fjord de la rivière Saguenay au Québec. Les premiers commentaires furent : « Impossible ! ». Aussitôt, nous fûmes piqués au vif, et le rêve se transforma alors en un grand défi, notre projet de l'été 1999. Nous -Jean-Pierre « Pee Wee » Ouellet (20 ans) et moi, Jean-François « Jeff resole » Beaulieu (21 ans) — sommes amis et compagnons de cordée depuis nos tous débuts en escalade.

À partir de la fin du mois de juillet, six semaines de dure labeur nous seraient nécessaires pour trouver et réussir tous les mouvements de la voie. Pour nous faciliter la tâche, nous nous étions imposés de placer toutes les protections en tête, de ne pas ajouter de plaquettes dans les longueurs et de ne rien placer d'avance. (Nous avons même retiré une bonne quantité de pitons et coinceurs fixes qui n'étaient pas nécessaires.)

Le 12 septembre 1999, en un temps de neuf heures et demie, nous



avons réalisé la première ascension en libre de la voie Les Grands Galets (5.13aR). Pee Wee s'est acquitté des longueurs 1, 4 et 7, et moi des autres. Cette voie est un véritable joyau; les mouvements y sont d'un esthétisme peu commun, et l'ambiance vertigineuse. L'engagement, la force et l'endurance sont des qualités incontournables pour quiconque espère relever ce défi.

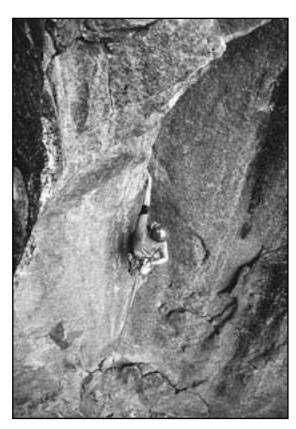
Voici une description sommaire des longueurs 2, 4, 5 et 7 — les points forts de la voie. La seconde longueur (cotation 5.13aR) se présente sous la forme d'un grand dièdre légèrement surplombant dont les parois sont parfaitement lisses. La fissure qui s'y trouve est peu profonde et très peu large, à peine 5 mm. Le danger y est réel : au septième mètre, une chute se terminerait à coup sur à l'hôpital ou au cimetière. Pour la quatrième longueur (5.11d), le passage clef est un vertigineux changement de fissure se passant les pieds dans le vide et le bout des doigts sur un « sloper » peu accueillant. Pour ma part, il s'agit du plus beau passage de la voie. La cinquième longueur pourrait sans gêne porter le titre de « test de VO2 max ». Une fissure à main et à doigt de 40 m en 5.11d dans un dièdre fermé et légèrement surplombant — préparez-vous à suer et à saigner.

La septième longueur, une traverse en 5.12b/c R sous un toit, se passe les mains dans une fissure fuyante et les pieds sur un véritable miroir. Ce passage, délicat et exposé à l'extrême, est protégé par un mauvais « TCU bleu » placé à l'aveugle. En cas de chute, vous gagnez un autre voyage à l'hôpital.

L'aventure s'est terminée tout comme elle avait débuté, autour d'une bière avec des « chums ».

Je voudrais remercier tout particulièrement Yannick Béland et Stéphane Perron, qui ont su s'acquitter avec professionnalisme de la tâche ingrate de photographe, ainsi que North Face et La Sportiva pour leur soutien.

Top left: Jean-Pierre Ouellet on Pitch 4; Bottom left: J.-F. Beaulieu on Pitch 5; Right: Jean-Pierre on Pitch 4. All photos: Stephane Perron



Montréal Area Update

Peter Gernassnig

This past November, my partner and I spent two weeks climbing in Arizona. We climbed in two areas, both of which are of some repute. At one point during the trip, I found myself comparing the quality of the climbing to what we have at home, and I remembered something I had forgotten along the line: there is a lot of good climbing around here! To be sure, no blackflies and a longer season would improve things — but hey, I didn't say the Montréal area was perfect.

The biggest recent news has definitely been the development of an entirely new area. Montagne Argent is approximately one hour and 45 minutes north of Montréal, near the town of Saint-Jovite. This area is already very "developed". There are clearly marked parking areas, trails, toilets and campsites. There is also a day-use fee of \$5, used to further develop the area.

Montagne Argent is ideal for the beginning lead climber. The routes are predominantly slabby and between 15 and 25 m long. The cracks protect well, the bolts are close together, and there are top anchors wherever required. Fully two thirds of the 180-plus routes are in the 5.5 to 5.10 range, so for the less than hard person this area is well worth a couple of days.

Two classic lines are M & M, a 5.8 hand crack, and L'arête des urubus, a fine bolted 5.10 edge. There are also great beaches and swimming only five minutes away on the

Rivière Rouge. A rudimentary guidebook sells for ten dollars at local climbing shops.

For those of us still seeking solitude, Weir remains the sleeping giant. With the publication of a guidebook in 1998, Weir has experienced an increase in traffic, but on most days it is still uncommon to see more than a handful of climbers. Fifteen new routes were put up at Weir this year, bringing the total to more than a hundred. The majority of these new routes are sport climbs in the 5.10 to 5.13 range. There is still much potential for new climbs, and Weir will soon have the greatest concentration of hard routes in the Montréal area.

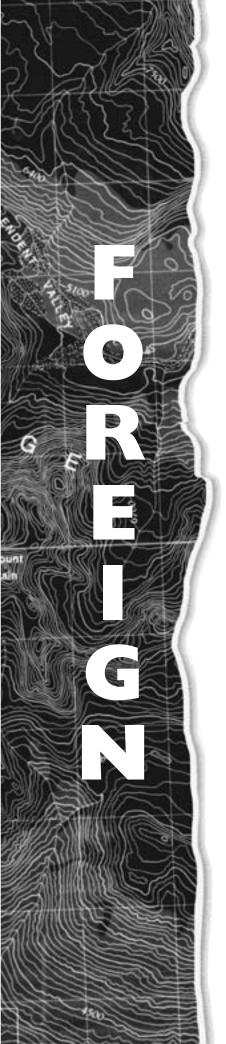
Weir is an early-spring and late-fall crag, with April, May, October and November being the ideal months to climb. Due to the constant increase in routes at Weir, there is talk of creating a Web site for new-route info. This might be in place by the summer of 2000; if you are in the neighbourhood, check with local climbing shops.

A few classics should be on anyone's to-do list: Adagio, a three-pitch 5.8 with great exposure; and Black and White, the 5.11– route with the biggest name at the cliff. The vast majority of the sport routes are excellent, so pick a line and go for it! (On a cautionary note, though, beware the poison ivy at the base of the crag!)

Other big news is that the five cliffs of the Val David climbing area have been purchased by a local non-profit organization. The oldest and most famous climbing area in Québec, Val David is now protected against any future land development.

On the flip side of the access issue, however, Mont-Saint-Hilaire has been closed to climbing and, according to my sources, all bolts have been stripped from the routes. Saint-Hilaire had over 100 routes, ranging in style from two-pitch crack climbs to more modern, bolted face routes; it will be missed. This is the third area closed in five years; access is definitely becoming more of an issue in Québec, and the provincial climbing federation, the FQME, seems unable to address the issue in any comprehensive manner.

Which brings me to the last part of this update. Six new areas that I know of have been developed in the last couple of years, and some of the best and hardest sport routes in the province are on these cliffs. None of these are "secret" crags, but due to access concerns - especially regarding liability and parking - they aren't well known either. Asking locals will typically get you access to these cliffs. Most of the route development yet to happen in the area will probably take place on small, privately owned crags like these, and I hope that future reports will be able to describe these kinds of areas in greater detail. In the meantime, there are over a thousand easily accessible routes to enjoy in and around Montréal which should be enough to keep climbers of all levels honed and happy! 🔼



ENTRENCHED IN PERU Karen McNeill



Rime high on Tauliraju. Photo: Sue Nott

I love spontaneity, so I was really excited when Sue Nott — a friend and fellow ice climber from the Winter X-Games — invited me to join her in Peru with only 16 days' notice. I accepted immediately, despite knowing that I didn't have much time to book tickets, get the appropriate vaccinations and find someone willing to spend six weeks working alongside young offenders two hours from civilization. But the Big Cheese above must have wanted me to go, as everything fell into place very easily.

I was overjoyed at the prospect of going on another big trip, but it turned out I had misunderstood the routes we were about to attempt. I remembered Sue mentioning "Tauliraju" and "Fowler" and thus assumed we were going for the Southwest Face / East Buttress of the great Tauliraju wall, first ascended in 1982 by Mick Fowler and Chris Watts. That route is an impressive rock line, described as an "absolutely classic test piece which has defeated many competent parties" — I suddenly understood why Sue had been spending so much time in the Valley recently. Although I had never aid-climbed before, I was positive that I could follow Sue. Still, as a safety measure, I copied the aid section from Freedom of the Hills! I was relieved, however, when I realized that we were to attempt Charlie Fowler's line on the mountain an ice climb more to my liking and ability.

After meeting in the Lima airport at midnight, we made our way downtown to a hostel and the next morning boarded Cruz de Sur to Huaraz. My last trip to Peru had been ten years before; during that bus trip, many of the locals had vomited in the aisle. The vomit had then proceeded to run up and down the bus as we negotiated various hills. The buses there are now a lot more civilized, with in-service toilets, cheap American movies and a

lunch. And the locals seem to have developed stronger stomachs.

Shopping was the priority in Huaraz; it took the entire day to find six weeks' worth of food. Sadly, we couldn't find a lot of instant food or quality chocolate and this meant that we would have to construct our own meals — not exactly my forte.

The following morning, we took a minivan to Casapampa, the start of the Santa Cruz circuit. It took two days and three burros to reach the pass of Punta Union, where we had decided to base ourselves for Tauliraju. Camping on slabby rocks at the east end of the mountain, we were a mere half-hour from the glacier. A few days later, we moved closer, motivated by the fact that we didn't find waterbeds comfortable or desirable at this elevation.

For the first couple of days, entertainment took the form of basic house duties such as filling the tent pockets with the valued items that need to be close at all times: chocolate, lipstick, more chocolate and the all-important but scarce books. I had remembered Huaraz as being like Kathmandu, a place where you can find unlimited numbers of English books, but I suppose ten years is a long time!

It took two attempts to discover a good route over the glacier — we had to hug the rocks to stay away from any big holes — and it wasn't until six days after our arrival at the pass that Sue and I were finally off to tackle our objective. Attempting to "go light", we took only one sleeping bag between us, a small fuel bottle and several energy bars. The pack still felt heavy. At the base, I felt overwhelmed by the enormousness and difficulty of our objective, so Sue took the lead and continued to do so for two days. The climbing was on ice up to 85 degrees, thinly spread over granite, and most of the time

protection was strictly psychological. At the end of seven pitches it was time to bivy, and we settled into a small, cavelike feature we had discovered. I wasn't that impressed, but it was luxury compared to things to come.

We suffered a slow start on Day 2 as we teetered over mixed terrain, then moved back onto a different line. The ridge was in sight at this point, but night found us floundering in deep, unconsolidated snow. Unable to get to any ledges, we were forced to spend the night standing, with the sleeping bag half-wrapped around us. At one point I noticed Sue's headlamp still on; when I commented, she explained that that the light was comforting. All those extra batteries for her night light must have been the reason our pack was so heavy.

Our uncomfortable night left us motivated to be climbing early, but the mountain had other ideas. The guidebook's description — "South-facing slopes in Peru seem to contain bottomless fluffy snow" forgot to specify "which never consolidates". Sue spent hours gaining 30 ft. Eventually I took the lead and started aiding (I learned quickly) up an overhanging snow slope. My efforts took me three hours, and I finally emerged on the ridge wet and exhausted, but into the sun for the first time in three days. Unfortunately, this relief didn't last long, as clouds raced across the sky, blocking out any warmth. We fashioned a bivy ledge, and Sue and I drank our first liquids in 18 hours.

Sue attempted to lead the following morning, but we were still weak from the work of the past few days. Our intended route to the summit involved either ascending a double-corniced ridge, or a rappel followed by the traverse of another face. Unfortunately, our weakened state obliged us instead to descend the mountain completely. We consoled ourselves with the thought that by reaching the ridge we had completed the majority of the climbing and had missed the summit by only about two hundred vertical feet. (For those interested, this line is now a sport route!)

An hour after arriving back at our tent, we were hit by a storm that continued for two days without reprieve. During that storm, we began to feel the surprising intensity of the effects of having left our boots on for four days — and it was remarkably painful! Soon, however, it was time to hobble on again, and after hiring an arriero and some burros we continued around the valley to Vaqueria. The effects of a long day hiking in the rain and mud combined with a huge elevation loss compounded our foot injuries; we were now limping quite noticeably.

From Vaqueria we took a minivan to our next destination: the Pisco basecamp. I quickly gained sympathy for sardines as our driver squished too many gringos into the van and stacked our luggage 6 ft. high on top. Still, everyone was making the most of an uncomfortable situation and was chatting merrily — until the van drove through a rock

pass. On the other side there was dead silence as we all shuddered, looking down thousands of feet to the valley floor. The van barely managed to negotiate the tight hairpins on the road. Forget climbing — this is the side of Third World travel that I find the scariest.

At the bottom, we were dropped off in the middle of nowhere and we entertained fellow campers as we ferried endless loads down to the campground (lipstick takes up a lot of space). The efforts of this ferrying left us incapacitated for two days, but luckily we wanted a break anyway to visit with two fellow Canmorons who had just ascended Pisco. Not bad for what was Hermien's first mountain ever!

Our next objective was Chacraraju. A friend of Sue's had drawn the route we

were aiming for on a postcard. We used her beta to get to the base of the climb, but unfortunately didn't get to the right spot. The following day was spent making our way over to the correct high camp. There we watched fresh snow cascade constantly down the peak, so we teamed up with two American boys and decided upon a lowerstress peak, Pisco. To do that climb we had to ascend and descend a pass to a high bivy. High it was, as I spent the night stoned on Tylenol 3, trying to combat the pain from my still-aching feet. Despite the pain, we were the first on the summit the following morning and got fabulous views. As we descended we realized that we needed some R & R because our feet were suffering badly, so we all caught the next bus to town.

In Huaraz, we were once again in the spotlight; everyone noticed the two girls limping around. Most painful were the nights, when the T3s did little to combat the pain; it felt like a thousand pins piercing your feet all at once. We learned that the name of our problem was "trench foot". Five days later, the pain had subsided and we caught a bus out of town.

Our first day back in the mountains took us back to our Chacraraju high camp, still



Below the face of Tauliraju. Photo: Sue Nott

untouched after seven days. Our progress slowed the next morning as we broke trail across the glacier to the 'schrund on the face of our intended route. Our scheduled wake-up time was three in the morning, but it wasn't until six that we began the running belays over sixty-degree snow slopes. Later on, the route turned to steep ice, which was a welcome change from the snow. We waved at the summit from below the cornice and began our descent, rapping off snow stakes. After downclimbing the last thousand feet without gear because we had none left to use, we finally arrived back at the cave.

Back at the Pisco basecamp, our motivation began to dwindle. Eventually we were forced back to town when the cows ate most of our remaining food and defecated on anything uneaten, rendering salvage impossible. Surprisingly, the crux of the trip happened in Huaraz when we rode the roller coaster and Peruvian-style Ferris wheel while trying to get some good photos. We were given front seats, and once again we provided entertainment for the locals; I wasn't sure that I would make it back to Canada in one piece!

Our thanks go to Mountain Hard Wear and the Canadian Hin wayan Foundation, who

Bolivian Mountain Saga

Jane Weller

The bus was sweltering and very crowded. I was squashed against a grimy window. The clouds wheeled and swung overhead as we bounced past dusty villages.

Beside me, a mother wearing three petticoats and a bowler hat balanced on shiny black hair was breast-feeding a snotty two-year-old. I was incorrigibly thirsty. We hadn't drunk much since the day before, after reaching the summit of 6400-m-high Illimani. The bus lurched, and another five campesinos clambered on, each with sacks of what appeared to be potatoes or yams or onions. The air smelled dry with dust and sweet with sweat and onions.

Six hours later, our bus was finally lumbering up La Paz's narrow, cobbled streets. Six hours and only 37 km! Definitely the slowest bus I've ever been on. But this was Bolivia, a country of superlatives. Here was the highest navigable lake in the world, the world's highest commercial airport, the highest ski run, the highest slum in the world (El Alto, whose poverty even stunned the Pope), the highest concentration of cosmic rays on earth — and the world's slowest buses.

Nevertheless, this was definitely a mountain kingdom and La Paz was indisputably its centre. Here, the Andes sweep upward into the clear, thin air and the quality of the light is astonishing. At times the solitude and the vastness of these mountains overwhelms you. It was early May and the start of a two-month climbing holiday with three good friends.

Most of the interesting peaks in Bolivia stand along the east rim of the altiplano (meaning "high plateau") on a roughly northwest to southeast chain of the three cordilleras: the Apolobomba, close to Peru; the Cordillera Real, Bolivia's principal mountain range; and the more compact granite needles of the Quimsa Cruz.

After several acclimatization hikes, we bought pasta and sardines at the market, hired a minivan plus driver and bumped our way towards big mountains. The tiny settlement of Tuni is only a few hours' drive from La Paz, and two more hours of walking through stunning mountain scenery will get you to Laguna Chiar Khola (literally "Black Lake"). Here are a variety of peaks ranging in height from 5000 to 6000 m. As our entourage of two ponies and four Westerners approached, we were suddenly greeted by a beady-eyed, hawk-nosed apparition. "My name is Alfonzo and you must pay here: \$3 for camping. And look! No garbage! Beautiful water over here!" He beamed at us. We tried to be suitably impressed. What graft could have landed him in charge of this wilderness spot? However, our camp could be a strong temptation to a campesino.

It was better to pay up and have Alfonzo on our side.

Climbing Pequeño Alpamayo (5330 m) was pure pleasure; we crunched up the glacier just before dawn, sidehilling against the moderate slope and panting in the waferthin air. A mist hung near the summit; it drifted, silver-grey, through the bright blue world above. Lake Titicaca yawned in the distance. Pequeño Alpamayo reminded me of perfectly shaped mountains in coffeetable books. The sky's reflection glistened on the lake, and llamas pranced on the steep, grassy slopes below. A lovely place.

Illusion Mountain (5330 m) featured interesting rock bands punctuated by steep snow. It was early May—the beginning of winter here. The temperatures dropped well below freezing at night, yet the days were generally sunny and warm. Because of the cold, dry conditions,

we rarely experienced the insidious balling-up of crampons that occurs on Canada's west coast. The fresh snow was surprisingly stable and we saw no sign of avalanches. We always left well before dawn in order to return to camp by about noon. Mist and cloud often drifted through in the afternoon.

The flimsy monorail of ice on 5648-m-high Condoriri's southwest ridge was made for goats — exposed and exhilarating. A rope is a nice benefit for the psyche, yet even it cannot prevent a deluge of potential hazards from running through one's head. "Just don't fall — that's central," a small voice kept reminding me as I crept along. Condoriri's summit was not a pleasant place in which to linger; the demon wind rattled our hardware, and the ropes writhed like snakes. The mountain was in firm control of us. This was the Big League.

An alternative to retracing your steps back to the highway is to walk east to the Yongas valley. "Quantas horas a Chacapampa?" I asked a campesino in my poor Spanish as we humped over the first of



The route up Pequeño Alpamayo. Photo: Jane Weller

two passes. The fact that he had no idea where it is was we wanted to go did not deter him in the least; he rattled off detailed directions and times to our destination. This is pretty standard in South America. I guess this tactic was used by the Incas to put the gold-crazed Spaniards off the scent when they were pillaging Bolivia. The practice of confusing the gringos with directions is merely an extension of this habit...

Illumani (6439 m) is a big mountain. Really big. It punctuates the skyline with its huge bulk and measures 8 km from one end to the other. It's easy to hire ponies and then porters for the two-day journey to high camp at El Nido de Condors ("the Condors' Nest", except there are no condors!). A nice and cheaper alternative, however, is to hop onto local transport to Cohoni and walk in from there along grassy paths through mediaeval villages with smoke seeping through the thatch and nooks of the stone-and-mud dwellings. Our packs were heavy, but who cared? We had a huge supply of sublimes: delicious, nutty slabs of Peruvian

chocolate.

Illumani is a fairly easy 6000er by its standard route, yet the summit is by no means guaranteed. Several years ago, six Chileans fell to their deaths just above camp. The air is so thin at 5400 m that you find yourself gasping for breath at the least exertion. Sleep is difficult, and melting water and eating a chore. I crawled to the freezing summit, thrilled at my new altitude record yet feeling strangely insubstantial on this huge bulk of a mountain.

Sorata is a pretty place tucked in the groin pocket of a green valley. We ate corn and artichoke pizza while baleful dogs regarded us. Hummingbirds hovered briefly in the air above tree-sized poinsettias. The scarcity of motorized vehi-

cles was welcome relief from La Paz's mayhem. Acahuma floated incongruously above the palms trees in the central square. We stared at it for several days then decided that the mountain was there to be climbed. It was time to find ponies to help with our loads, and to scour the markets for fresh supplies of tomatoes, avocados, hot peppers, sardines and pasta.

Camped at Laguna Glacial, we listened to the ice above the pretty blue lake crack and growl. The wind roared. Snow fell in little Styrofoam pellets. We heaved our packs up another 900 m — to our final and third camp at 5300 m. That night, I lay awake wondering whether it was time to get up, whether the alarm had forgotten to go off and how I would manage through the labyrinth of crevasses. I dozed in fitful bursts. Two in the morning. I fumbled at my harness in the dark. My fingers felt like frozen



Condoriri. Photo: Jane Weller

carrots. The glacier was a seascape of luminescent bumps and silver pools of water. Above was the infinity of space, darkness pinpricked with light. Acahuma (6427 m) is a very cold mountain, far colder than the others we'd been on. The wind picked up as dawn approached. Was it –25? Maybe colder? How I yearned for the sun; like the Incas, we worshipped it. We lurched through the mélange of ice and mist and half-light, which, thankfully, hid the exposure. The sun finally emerged, then crashed into the mountain to explode into pink and red. Mount Illampu leered at us across the valley. I vomited on the summit.

The standard route on Potosi (6088 m) was a relatively easy six-hour walk from the road. This was our final climb; our trip was nearing its end, and our energy for these 6000-m giants was diminishing. Soggy noodles and sardines cooked on an MSR stove was, by now, a dreaded thought. The

four of us had simply had enough for the moment. We had all lost a lot of weight. We were like people who continually burn their mouths on the first bite of pizza and do not learn from the past.

So it was nice to get back to Vancouver, to the rain, to my teaching job, to a normality where the world is again one of microwave food and SUVs and cellphones. For a time, it's okay that the only risks are dodging car doors on my cycling route and eating margarine containing hydrogenated vegetable oil. But I already miss Bolivia: the simplicity of day-to-day existence; the lonely, hushed valleys; the huge mountains of unforgettable severity and beauty. Above all, I miss the contented and optimistic campesinos — people who have a special relationship with these mountains. A luego, Alfonzo. We'll meet Aain. I've been seduced by

Magical Mount Ollivier

Lynn Martel

As we strapped our snowboards onto our packs on the front steps of the Hermitage Hotel at the gateway to New Zealand's Mount Cook National Park, my buddy Dale Bartrom and I managed to attract the scrutiny of a middle-aged bus-tour group from South Carolina. We readied ourselves for the inevitable barrage of questions.

"Are those SNOWboards?"

Well, as a matter of fact, they are.

"You goin' snowboardin'? Ah didn't see no lifts 'round here."

Lifts? We don't need no stinkin' lifts!
"Y'all goin' hikin' up the mountain

with those boards?" "Isn't that heavy on your back?"

Only when we're standing still.

It felt funny reciting the mantra "Smile, you're a tourist attraction!" so far away from home. Eager to escape the inquisition, we hiked towards the toe of Mueller Glacier, the northern skyline dominated by the shimmering slopes of Mount Cook, which at 3755 m is New Zealand's highest peak. That doesn't sound very high until you consider that the Tasman Sea is little more than 32 km to the west as the crow flies. Our destination was the Mueller hut, planted on a ridge less than 125 m below the 1918-m summit of Mount

Ollivier, reportedly the first peak Sir Edmund Hillary ever climbed.

New Zealand is a common-sense, no-unnecessary-frills kind of country. Most shops are closed on Sundays, and many restaurant washrooms are accessed by going outside and around the back of the building, regardless of the weather. Houses do not have central heating — even on the South Island, where winter temperatures dip below freezing. Many households have dishwashers but rarely use them, and laundry is more likely to dry on an outside line than inside the dryer. The country has three television stations, and most locals agree that's enough.

The hiking trail started off flat and gentle, with a user-friendly boardwalk covering the swampy sections, but that didn't last long. Twenty-two minutes, to be precise, and then it took an abrupt left turn up Mount Ollivier's steep slope, which sprouts hardy thorn bushes and mamuku trees. It was then that we discovered that New Zealanders have a no-frills approach to hiking, too. No sense wasting valuable time on gently climbing switchbacks - no, this trail was 1000 m of vertical stepladder, constructed of metre-high boulders and heavy planks similar to railway ties. We climbed higher and higher into the cloud hanging low in the valley which obscured the surrounding peaks and made our ascent all the more gruelling by revealing no hint of when it might be over.

When the clouds finally cracked apart, the valley dropped rapidly below us to reveal a scattering of sapphire and azure glacier-fed pools dotting the gravel moraine. The rush of the outlet river rose up to us; other than our own breathing, panting and grunting, it was the only sound to be heard. The sturdy bushes bordering the rough path resembled those of a tropical forest but were laden with heavy, wet spring snow; as we climbed higher, the temperature dropped and the snow stopped melting and trickling to stay glued to the drooping leaves.

We trudged along, our packs loaded with food for two nights and three days. My sleeping bag and snowboard grew heavier with every thigh-high step. When the "tourist track" ran out, we picked our way onward and upward from one island of loose rock and coarse tussock grass to the next, sinking into waist-deep patches of rotten spring snow. Finally, after nearly six hours, we cleared a bulge that delivered us onto the crest, a mere 12 yards from the hut.

Inside the hut we were cordially greeted by Daniel, a university student who had been living there for three weeks and who was counting the hours until his return to civilization in three days — a point he mentioned about every three minutes. Neither a skier nor a climber, Daniel had been working on a snowmelt study for potential use by power companies, so all work and no play had given him a case of cabin fever. Although November 1 is considered late spring, it was below freezing even inside the hut I could see my breath. A solar panel provided us with some electricity, but I would have much preferred a solargenerated heating system, since treeline and the nearest woodstove in New Zealand were 800 m below us

The three of us shared "tea", which is New Zealand for dinner but can also refer to a hot beverage. We also shared a few quality mountain stories. During Daniel's first week, a pair of skiers had arrived at the hut just in time to hear the DOC (Department of Conservation) weather forecast on the standard-issue hut radio. The forecast wasn't good, so the pair immediately retreated down the mountain in near darkness, and Daniel was left alone to sit out a howling storm that persisted for five full days. Winds topped 200 km/h and blew over his weather-observation tower. Using the toilet, a mere 20 m away, became a life-threatening expedition.

We were all relieved that the wind blew very softly that night; countless stars were scattered in bunches and clusters, while others illuminated the moonless sky with their solitary brilliance. Morning broke as a rush of sunlight poured through the window panes delicately etched with feathery frost. We stepped out of the hut, hiked out to a ledge of large boulders and discovered much to our delight that we'd walked about as far as we needed to - all of 200 m. Below us, to the left and to the right, plunged a series of rock-bordered gullies, each centred with a corridor of untouched snow. Springtime snow stability in the Southern Alps is an annual delight, so the hardest part was deciding where to begin.

On a cloudless day in a part of the world where the hole in the ozone layer is very noticeable, the sunlight pierced through our clothes like a laser in a James Bond movie. Directly in front of us rose Mount Sefton, its massive, 3160-m semicircular face plastered with half a dozen hanging glaciers forming a jumbled mess of grey and blue ice. We strapped in and made a few jerky turns on a funky surface that felt a lot like Crisco shortening under our bases. After we modified our riding technique, however, our next turns became a set of graceful movements, accompanied by a soundtrack of rumbles and booms and crashes as avalanches dropped one after another from Sefton's precipitous north face

Each run dead-ended in a boulder field where we snacked on crackers and Marmite and peeled off as many layers as we dared for the hike back up. Avalanches continued to plummet directly across the constricted valley, while the snow on our south-facing slopes softened to a cushy spring sponge. Gradually, the first of the predetermined clouds began to make an appearance, punctuated by the ensuing silence as the cooler air brought all avalanche activity to a halt. More and more clouds gathered around the nearby weather magnet, Mount Cook, and we reluctantly climbed back up to the now busy hut.

Daniel had invited a couple of friends up to help usher him back into the civilized world. An Australian couple, Ian and Beth, had hiked up with the intention of climbing to Ollivier's rocky summit the following day, as had Rob, a telemarker and DOC ranger whose summer job it was to oversee the dozen or so huts in the 7000-square-km park. The lively conversation was interrupted by the crackling of the radio as the ranger at the base shared the weather forecast and

took roll call.

New Zealand sits vulnerably between the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and in terms of weather anything and everything can — and frequently does — happen. A two-hour sightseeing trip in Mount Cook National Park has been known to extend itself into a ten-day hut exile, and the huts are considerately stocked with food staples. Originally, a number of huts in the park were approached by hiking; but now, due largely to the retreat of the glaciers, nearly all are accessed only by small airplanes. In 1991, a large section of Mount Cook's summit broke off during a storm, which trimmed its height by 21 m. The massive landslide carried on for 12 hours; its incessant rumble was heard by people in nearby huts, but as the mountain was buried in cloud no one could determine exactly what was going on out there.

Such events are cause for sleepless nights in a Mount Cook hut. In the mid-'70s, one hut was blown right off its mountaintop perch during a storm. Unfortunately, three people were inside it at the time. Their bodies were found huddled inside the doorway dressed in outer wear, suggesting that they had been anticipating the worst and had been readying themselves for a desperate escape attempt.

With the nightly headcount completed, the radio operator signed off, reminding me of mission control before Apollo 13 disappeared behind the dark side of the moon. The wind began to howl outside while a Kiwi card game broke out inside. The rules seemed to change with every hand, but then so did the winner, and a bottle of ginger wine was passed around by Chris and Mike, South Island fruit farmers and avid mountaineers. The hut log book was also passed around, and we were all entertained by entries commenting on the weather, which seemed to be pretty wonderful or absolutely dreadful. Many complained about the arduous hike up, but no one mentioned having accomplished it with the added weight of a snowboard. There was also much disgruntled mention of hutmates' snoring talents; miraculously, however, when the ten of us bedded down in the bunk room that night, all inside was peaceful, with only the sound of the wind rocking us into a dubious dreamland.

Much to everyone's relief, the hut didn't shift locations during the night and the wind was mellow the next morning. Visibility, however, was grim, and Dale and I realized how fortunate we had been to worry about sunburn the previous day. We packed all our gear, which should have felt lighter without all that food but didn't really. Riding as far down as we could, we joked that we had invented a new sport we could call "rainboarding"; when we ran out of slush we hoisted our boards back onto our backs and stepped our way down the mountainside to be greeted by another round of questions from the bus-tour crowd.

SUMMIT! SUMMIT! SUMMIT! BERNARD VOYER

Il est 12h10, le 5 mai 1999. Dorjee Sherpa, mon compagnon de cordée, prend le walkie-talkie et me regarde, les yeux brûlés par le soleil mais surtout allumés d'une lueur intense que je n'oublierai jamais. Il répète ces trois mots lentement: «Summit, summit, summit!» Nous venons d'atteindre le sommet de l'Everest, et j'entends Nathalie, ma femme, qui est à l'autre bout du walkietalkie, crier sa joie. Je voudrais pleurer, mais les larmes m'étouffent. L'émotion que je ressens d'avoir réussi est si intense, mais à quel prix. Tant d'efforts - et il faut redescendre vivant... Je prends quelques photos, et je pense ramasser un peu de neige du sommet en me disant que je termine aujourd'hui une collection des eaux les plus pures de notre planète : celle du Pôle Sud ; celle du Pôle Nord ; et maintenant celle du toit du monde, de l'Everest.

Je commence à redescendre vers le col sud. Enfin, épuisé, j'arrive au camp IV, à 8000 m, vers 18h, et je m'installe dans la tente avec Dorjee et Chwangba. Elle est trop petite pour trois personnes ; je passe la nuit à voir défiler chaque seconde. La tension est tombée, et mes yeux brûlent comme du feu. J'ai de la peine à respirer tant ma gorge est enflée, et j'imagine les autres, chacun dans sa tente, dans un état aussi piètre que le mien. Je pense aux Suédois Göran Kropp et Renatta, avec qui je viens de partager ce sommet, et à mes amis sherpa qui ont grimpé avec Pete Athans : tall Dorjee, Mingma, Ang

Dorjee et tous les autres qui doivent redescendre chargés de tout le matériel que nous avons monté.

Le matin du 6 mai, vers 8h, nous commençons la descente vers le camp III; vers 16h, nous arrivons finalement au camp II. Denis Brown, un médecin canadien et un très bon alpiniste, me suggère de soigner mes yeux et m'offre des gouttes ophtalmiques qu'il a laissées au camp II dans sa tente. Cela calme l'impression abrasive laissée par la brûlure. Je lui en suis très reconnaissant. Après une nuit au camp II, nous repartons vers le camp de base. Ce qui auparavant me prenait trois heures à

faire me prendra aujourd'hui sept heures. J'arrive enfin! Nathalie m'attend, et elle me répète « Tu es vivant, tu es vivant, tu as réussi! ». Mon ami Inaki, un alpiniste basque, est là lui aussi et me serre dans ses bras. Je suis surtout soulagé d'être enfin revenu, et je mesure mon état de fatigue en voyant qu'il ne me reste que 500 m à parcourir avant de m'étendre dans la tente et me reposer et que je n'arrive pas à marcher plus rapidement.

Je me revois au 30 avril, lorsque nous quittions le camp de base pour la tentative sommitale. Le 3 mai, nous sommes arrivés au col sud pour tenter le sommet le soir même. Mais Nathalie nous a appellé du camp de base pour nous informer que les conditions météorologiques n'annonçaient rien de bon.



Elle avait vérifié auprès des Suédois et des Américains, et tous étaient d'accord. Il fallait prendre une décision — redescendre, ou passer la nuit à 8000 m sans pouvoir compter sur l'oxygène puisqu'il n'y en avait que pour la tentative sommitale. Après avoir consulté Göran, Pete Athans et les autres, certains ont décidé de redescendre alors que nous avons décidé de passer la nuit et de tenter le 5 mai, même en sachant que cette nuit supplémentaire allait nous coûter beaucoup d'énergie.

Je quitte le glacier et enlève mes crampons. Je vois les tentes de notre campement si proche, mais mes pas sont lents — tellement lents qu'ils résistent à l'envie que j'ai de courir. Je ressens cette fatigue comme si elle ne va jamais plus me quitter. Jusqu'à la fin ce sera difficile, mais le plaisir et la fierté d'avoir réussi m'habiteront pour toujours.

HIGH RISK?

Andrew and Shelley McKinlay

We call it the Killer Mountain. Every year, climbers die on it. You must be very careful." That was the gist of our briefing from the Ministry of Tourism in Kathmandu. We shrugged and smiled. We'd soon see for ourselves. We were on our way to climb Manaslu, at 8163 m the eighth-highest mountain in the world. It was true that many climbers had been killed on Manaslu, but the same could be said for any of the world's highest peaks. Just as on any other climb, we would go and see. If the risks were too high, we'd simply turn around. Of course, in reality, it gets a bit more complicated than that.

The three of us, all from Saskatoon — Andrew McKinlay, Shelley McKinlay and Peter Burgess — arrived in Kathmandu on March 24, after forty hours of mindnumbing air travel. The rest of our seven-person team arrived over the next few days: Fred Ziel, Jeff Alzner and Erik Eriksson from the United States; and Martin Minarik from the Czech Republic.

After a few minor skirmishes with Nepalese bureaucracy, we flew by helicopter to a town called Philim. Philim seemed to have a much larger population of lizards than of people. On the four-day walk to Sama, the trail followed a steep valley through beautiful forests and spectacular scenery. Monkeys screeched at us from trees beside the trail. After a rest day in Sama to acclimatize to the altitude, one more day of steep trails took us to basecamp at the foot of the mountain.

Manaslu is one of the less frequently visited 8000-m peaks. This was a nice change after our last trip, which was to Cho Oyu, where there had been 18 other expeditions, many of them large commercial ones. On Manaslu there were only three other teams besides ours: a German, a Spanish and an American team. One of these teams only had two climbers. None of the expeditions was commercial, and none of us had climbing Sherpas or oxygen. We all shared in the work of finding the best route and putting up the fixed ropes.

Our first glimpse of the dangers came

during our initial stay at Camp I. A large, steep icefall between camps I and II was one of the more dangerous parts of the mountain, and we weren't sure of the best way through it. Some of the other climbers had been up above Camp I exploring. The route they planned to take crossed a large avalanche path, but they thought it looked safe enough. Later that afternoon, a huge avalanche of ice blocks scoured the proposed route. It shook us up, but we decided that as long as we climbed early in the day we'd be safe. The next morning, another avalanche roared down, barely missing two Spanish climbers who were just starting up the route. Obviously, morning was not much safer than afternoon. We decided that maybe that particular route choice wasn't so good and instead found a route that wove in and out of the seracs (ice towers) and crevasses on the other side of the icefall.

At first this route seemed relatively safe, but as time went on it became more and more treacherous. An avalanche cut a 20-mwide path along almost the entire distance



between the two camps, wiping out much of our fixed rope. We had barely enough rope left to replace it. The crevasses were noticeably wider every day. We had to dangle from the fixed rope to get up and across one of them, taking our packs off and hauling them across separately. On one section of the route, there were so many crevasses that we wondered whether a certain house-sized piece of icefall was going to break off altogether from the rest of the glacier. "Don't worry," Jeff joked, "the fixed rope and anchors will hold it together."

After three weeks of working our way up the mountain, we were ready to make our summit attempt. We had established our first two camps, stocked them with supplies, and spent enough time up high that we should be acclimatized. We spent three days resting at basecamp, where "resting" consisted of consuming as many calories and sleeping as many hours as possible. Then we headed up the mountain, hoping to go all the way to the top this time. Two days of climbing put us back up at Camp II, our previous high point. Pete, suffering the effects of altitude with an extremely bad headache and upset stomach, decided this was as far as he would be going.

Nine hours after setting off from Camp II, we arrived at the site of Camp III — at least we decided it had to be Camp III, because we were too cold and tired to go any further. It was the best spot we could find, but that wasn't saying much. The ground was hard ice at an angle of about forty degrees. We managed to find a spot for one tent on the lip of a crevasse but were forced to set up the other tent on the bare slope.

We had planned to try for the summit the following day, but it was late when we arrived and even later by the time we got camp set up, so we decided to wait a day first.

We spent the day in the tent, hiding from the wind and trying to rest. The slope we were on was steep and icy. Unlike at our lower camps, here you couldn't leave the tent without putting on all your clothes and equipment. The vestibule of the tent was forced into use as our toilet. We spent much of our time melting snow and ice for water. We tried to sleep, but nylon sleeping bags are very slippery on a sloping nylon tent floor so it was a constant struggle to not end up crammed into the bottom end of the tent. Nonetheless, we still managed to doze off a few times. When the alarm went off at 3 a.m., no one felt much like moving, especially with the wind howling and hammering at the tent. We forced ourselves through the motions of melting water and getting dressed. Having had a bad night, likely due to the altitude, Martin was even slower getting ready and so would start later.

At about 5:30 a.m., the two of us crawled from the tent and roped together. Dawn was just arriving and the sky was clear. But it was very cold and the wind was worse than ever. It was impossible to talk unless we shouted in each other's ears. Taking off mitts for even a moment turned our fingers to icicles. We communicated with silent gestures. In any case, there was little to say. Our chances of summitting in these conditions were almost non-existent, but we had to try. Perhaps the wind would drop. We knelt beside the other tent and shouted to Fred, Jeff and Erik that we were heading up.

They were still trying to get ready. It was a short climb to the edge of the summit plateau, but the slope was hard, polished, blue ice — beautiful but dangerous. Each step required concentration, which was hard to achieve with the wind howling and every breath a struggle. It was useless to be roped together since we were placing no anchors; it simply meant that if one of us slipped we'd both fall. The rope was a link between us and provided some psychological support if nothing else. We moved slowly upward, gauging our progress from landmarks left by previous expeditions. Just above camp, a lone wand marked the route; above that lay the remains of a tent shredded by the wind. Next, we headed for what looked from a distance like the remains of another tent. As we got closer we realized that they were the remains of a person. The wind and snow had scoured the body down to the bone. A pair of boots capped the bare bones of the legs. A camera was still slung over the shoulder. The skull stared down at us. It was a grim reminder of the dangers up there. We huddled beside it, debating whether to continue or go down. The wind showed no signs of abating, but we decided to push on a bit further to where we could at least see the rest of the way to the top. Reaching about 7600 m, we could see that the way up was clear and easy. But the weather was not on our side, and we reluctantly turned around and headed down. Further down, we passed Martin, Fred and Erik. Seeing us descending, they too turned around. Jeff had perhaps been the smart one. Immediately on getting out of the tent, he had decided that it was too cold and windy to go up. He was waiting in camp for us when we returned.

Andrew: After that first summit attempt, it was as if a switch had been thrown in my head. I no longer wanted to climb. It was a strange, puzzling feeling. The only explanation I could arrive at was that unconsciously I had decided that the risks had become unacceptably high. To be quite honest, I was afraid to go back up. But the fear seemed rational and realistic — the conditions had deteriorated and the dangers had increased. Bravery may mean continuing on in the face of fear, but continuing on in the face of unnecessary danger is more stupid than brave. It was a bit like Russian roulette: doing it once was crazy enough, but doing it over and over was suicidal. I did my best to convince the others that the safest choice was to not go back up. But obviously their judgment of the risks versus their drive to get to the top differed from mine. Even Shelley was determined to go back up, so I agreed to join them. Perhaps this was a stupid choice given my view of the risks, but if my team and my wife were going, I had to be with them where I could help, not sitting safe but powerless at basecamp.

Shelley: I was terribly disappointed after our first summit attempt. Although we had been moving slowly, according to our watches and altimeter we'd been making pretty good time despite the wind and cold. I'd felt really good and strong. I knew that without the fear of frostbite we could have made the summit. I was even willing to wait at Camp III to try again the following day. This wasn't even a consideration for the others. The longer you stay at higher altitudes the weaker you get, and everyone was already pretty debilitated. By the time we got back to Camp II, I knew that Andrew was not interested in going for a second summit attempt. This lack of drive and motivation was highly unusual for him, so I was surprised and wasn't sure how to react. I knew he was worried about the risks so was I — but I wondered whether it was something more than that. Perhaps he had a premonition that if we went back up something serious would go wrong. For me, I knew that if I didn't try again I would regret it. And I was stubbornly determined to make my own decision — not to play the role of the good little wife and not go back up simply because Andrew didn't want to. In the end, he was the good husband and went along with my decision. Of course, this made me worry even more. What if he was right and something went tragically wrong? I could never forgive myself.

After another three-day rest in basecamp, all of us, except Pete, headed back up again. Conditions were continuing to get worse — crevasses were wider, and the glacier was unstable — but the trip back up to Camp II was uneventful. Each morning, we set off early while the snow was still hard in order to increase our safety. Above Camp II, fresh snow made travel slow and difficult. On top of this, Shelley had spent a couple of bad nights with headaches and very little sleep and wasn't feeling 100 per cent. The two of us could have continued, but we decided to



return to Camp II and try to get to Camp III again the next day. It turned out to be probably just as well that we didn't go up with the others, as the camp was buried and our tents damaged by the high winds and heavy snows. They managed to get one tent standing; the four of them spent a crowded night.

The next day was very windy, and Shelley was still not feeling 100 per cent. At Camp III, the others were pinned down by the wind. We decided to head down. It was a difficult decision since we had already invested so much effort into this second summit attempt. But the chances of success seemed remote, and neither of us was totally sure we should continue. The final factor was that we knew it would take a lot of effort just to get down safely. If we continued on, we knew we would only be weaker when it came time to descend. As the saying goes, climbing is a round-trip package — if you don't get down, it doesn't count. We had seen other climbers barely making it down after their summit attempts. On Broad Peak in Pakistan, another 8000-m peak, we'd come close to not making it down from the summit ourselves.

The trip down was tough. We had to carry down our tents, stoves and leftover supplies, so we had very heavy packs. And the crevasses were a nightmare. Several of them had grown so wide that it was questionable whether you could jump them with a heavy pack. Shelley missed one jump and ended up dangling over an abyss. She managed to pull herself out with the rope but hurt her leg in the fall, adding to the difficulties of the descent. From Camp I, we radioed down to basecamp to let them know that we were coming. It took a long, nerve-racking time to pick our way down; so many new crevasses had opened up that it was impossible to follow our previous route. We were pretty happy when we finally stepped off the end of the glacier onto solid ground, especially as we knew that we were off the glacier for good this time.

Although we hadn't had any radio contact with our teammates, we assumed that they were attempting to reach the summit. The weather looked good most of the day, but in the afternoon it began to cloud up and we worried that they wouldn't be able to find their way down. The summit plateau is quite featureless, and climbers in the past had been lost when the clouds rolled in.

We learned later that they did reach the summit but that on the descent they had to sit on the plateau for over an hour in whiteout conditions until there were enough breaks in the clouds to navigate and return safely to Camp III. We were happy that they had made it to the top, and even happier that they were back safe at camp. We were also a little jealous, wondering if we'd made the right decision to come down. We felt better about our choice when, two days later, they staggered down to basecamp on the last vestiges of their energy reserves. Erik had frostbitten both thumbs and one big toe. Martin had a wild, wide-eyed look to him that signified extreme exhaustion. They had made it down with no problems, but pushing that close to your limits is asking for trouble.

Now that we're home again and can look back on the expedition, how do we feel? Overall, we're pretty happy. As a group, the expedition was a success, with no major accidents and four out of seven of the team reaching the summit. As leaders, we feel good about having successfully organized and run the climb. In the back of our minds, there will always be that nagging doubt and regret about turning back without reaching the summit. But the real accomplishment is that we had a great trip, overcame countless challenges and came home safe and sound and ready to plan our next adventure.

We would like to thank the following organizations for their assistance: the Canadian Himalayan Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Arc'teryx Equipment, and Onsight Mountaineering in Saskatoon.

TUPUNGATO: THE HARD WAY, OR THE ONLY WAY? GREG HORNE

Pinned down on the rock ridge, I was jabbed with needle-like currents of electricity in my shoulders, neck and head as soon as I tried getting on my hands and knees to crawl upward. Dick tugged on the rope joining us and asked if I was okay. To me, it seemed a slightly silly question. I'm being electrocuted, and he asks if I'm alright. We're in a raging blizzard and thunderstorm; Dick is standing up, not bothered at all, and I'm lying prone on the ground in the only position in which I can avoid being jolted out of existence.

Slowly I crawled, on my belly with a full pack, out of the electricity zone, and finally I could stand up. The already bright whiteout sky and snow flashed blinding white as yet another lightening bolt blasted nearby Nevado Sin Nombre. Involuntarily, we flinched and ducked our heads — as if that would do much good if we were vaporized by a direct hit. The wind and wet snow chilled us quickly; we had to make some kind of shelter. A pocket of fresh snow was stomped down for the tent platform. Afraid of attracting more electrical currents, we ruled out using the metal tent poles. We simply opened the tent, put our packs inside and crawled into the flapping sack.

This was the 14th day of our Volcán Tupungato expedition. The mountain was not going to let us retreat without reminding us who really runs the show. Tupungato, a Quechua word for "high mountain", is the highest peak (6550 m) south of Aconcagua in the Andes of South America. While climbing Aconcagua three years before, the peak had caught my attention. Later I learned that a friend, Dick Ratliff, also had similar interests in Tupungato. We met in Santiago, Chile, in late December 1986.

Tupungato is a very old, inactive volcano with extensive glaciers on its east side and smaller ones on its south and southwest slopes. Nearby Tupungatito, a partly filled glacier crater, is active and belches out smelly sulphur gas regularly. Tupungato lies on the border between Chile and Argentina and on the divide between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. We decided to make the approach from the Chilean side for several reasons: Since we were arriving in the region via Santiago, we could save time regarding further border crossings and extra travel. From our reading and our previous experience in the area and from discussions with local climbers, we thought that the approach from the Chilean side would be shorter, easier and less hot and dry.

Luckily, we had the assistance of a Chilean mountaineering friend in Santiago to explain the proper procedure for securing most of the necessary paperwork. The drainage of the Rio Colorado was developed as a hydroelectric project. Previously, there

was a rough road to El Alfalfal (1300 m), and from there one proceeded on foot or by mule up the spectacular canyon of the Rio Colorado. A modern asphalt road now leads to the same village. Several road checkposts require permits and documents to pass. Security was high; the nervous military government of Chile at the time wanted to monitor and control public access near power installations, a favourite former target of terrorist attacks. The first post, a military one, checked our permit from the military governor of the region. Next came the carabineros (police) post; they wanted to see our permit from the governor, our passports, and a safety registration from the Cuerpo de Socorro Andino (CSA), a national voluntary mountain-rescue orga-nization that performs most technical and high-altitude rescues in Chile, with logistical support from the military and/or police. They asked that we make sure to check back with them when leaving so that they wouldn't start looking for us as overdue. Forget that idea; I went back after our climb to find that we had been signed off in their logbook after only three days! But for sure check back with the CSA because they are the only ones who take the registration seriously.

At the end of the paved road, our last checkpoint proved to be the most challenging to pass. For this control, run by the power company, we didn't have any special paperwork, and this caused us three or four hours' delay. We were told the policy that no one could drive or walk on the road further up the valley without permission from the main office in Santiago, so please go back and get that piece of paper if you want to go on. Needless to say, we weren't impressed. There appeared to be no chance for our taxi to continue, so we unloaded and paid the driver. Dick went shopping for an arriero (mule driver) and mules while I went looking for the jefe (boss) to try to strike a deal for permission to walk on the private road.

The jefe listened to me whine and almost come to tears about how we had travelled thousands of kilometres to climb Tupungato only to be turned back for lack of a piece of paper. He gave me condolences now and then as I waited in his office, and he celebrated in another room at a New Year's Eve staff party. With time on my hands in his office, I was able to browse through site plans and detailed topographic maps of the hydroelectric project under construction and learn how far the road went up the Rio Colorado towards our objective, Tupungato. So much for terrorist security. I'm not sure why he finally agreed to let us use the road — possibly it was the fact that I told him a friend in Santiago had recently gone up to the end of this road in his own private jeep with no paperwork, so why couldn't we?

Dick was having better luck with his task of finding mules. But again the important rule was, Don't give up when told no. After going to just about every house in the tiny village of El Alfalfal, a guy took pity on us and helped set up a deal with an older man, José Brado.

At 5 p.m., with new shoes on his animals, José had all our gear and food for two weeks (80 kg) loaded on one mule while he rode on his horse. We set off, Dick and I walking with day packs. At noon the next day, soon after crossing the Rio Museo, we encountered our first serious obstacle, the Rio Azufre (Sulphur). This river was a brick-red soup flushing boulders down its course. Several climbers in Santiago had mentioned that the Rio Azufre could be a problem to cross, and this was certainly the case. The consensus was to camp by the river and hope for less water the following morning. There was too much risk here even for horses or mules to cross; a spill would mean disaster as the gradient was very steep.

Early the next morning, New Year's Day, the river was assessed again. There appeared to be no change at all in the water level. Using a photocopy of a 1:100,000 topo map from 1956, with 300-m contour lines, we devised an alternative approach to Tupungato. The plan was to have José take us as close as he could to the Azufre Glacier (the source of the river), climb the glacier, cross an icefield plateau to the south col of Tupungato and then climb to the summit. We planned to return the same way so as to cache food and gear and not have to worry about crossing the Rio Azufre. Our original plan, to make a basecamp at Vega del Tunpungato and climb the normal route via the north ridge, was scrapped.

The Rio Azufre was followed upstream for several hours. We passed a huge meadow called Vega de la Luna, where countless cattle and horses grazed. The first side stream we reached, from El Bastion, was almost equal to the water coming from the toe of the Azufre Glacier. José took our gear down to near the mouth of the stream but would not cross with his animals because the banks on each side were nearly vertical and the creekbed was filled with huge boulders. The crossing had great potential for his animals to possibly break a leg.

Again it was noontime and we were faced with another difficult river crossing. We divided our gear into four loads and, using Dick's pair of ski poles, managed to force our way across the raging stream. A combination of wading and boulder hopping got us over to the other side in two trips each. We cooked over a cow-dung fire to conserve fuel; the climb was beginning to have that drawn-out feel to it.

January 2 began with carrying all our remaining gear to the toe of the rubble-covered glacier. The initial kilometre of the glacier was a jumble of unstable boulders and nasty mud flows that had slid down from the bordering lateral moraines. One step we could be on firm ground, and the next up to our knees in quicksand-like mud. Once on the bare glacier, we quickly moved up the broken ice to 3700 m, where we established Camp II in the middle of the glacier at the firn line.

Over the next week, we ferried loads and moved camps up and across the 5000-m-high icefield, past the steaming crater of snow-filled Tupungatito. A gravel platform on the northeast slopes of Tupungatito, overlooking the south col of Tupungato, was the site of Camp V. Rising above the 5000-m col, the upper cone of Tupungato presented a large glacier on its southeast flank; the southwest flank was broken snowfields and boulders.

I heard the alarm and poked my head outside to see the summit of Tupungato wrapped in clouds, with high winds at camp and even clouds above us on Tupungatito. The temperature was –25°C. So I rolled over, writing off that day for the summit. At 9 a.m., Dick woke me up; the tent was warming from the sun in clear skies. Quickly we scrambled to try for the summit. Leaving camp at 10 a.m. seemed very late, but we had a nearly full moon to light our return that night if need be.

A route was chosen to the right or east of the scree slopes, up snowfields and the glacier east of the south ridge. At 5300 m, we decided to jettison the rope, harness and ice screws and go light with ice axe and crampons only, hoping for no crevasses or serious technical climbing ahead.

The snow slopes were scoured enough by the winds of the previous day and night that crampons could be used to good advantage. Switchbacking up the snowfields, we reached the glacier in whiteout conditions, so traversed left to the south ridge, where we had some reference points and left the now deepening snow. On the ridge, crampons were removed. We ascended the ridge in full conditions over third- and fourth-class terrain. The seemingly endless ridge finally levelled off, and we staggered along the rubbly summit crest as strong winds buffeted us. Thankfully, ahead I spotted the top. Numerous flags and two register books were found. No writing instrument and too cold anyway for summit poetry, so some quick photos, handshakes and hugs, then time to depart. The altimeter read 6400 m exactly. The Chilean maps list it at 6570 m, and Argentine ones say 6800 m! Who knows? The thought of descending the exposed south ridge didn't appeal to us. Instead, we



Traversing Tupangatito, with Juncal and Aconcagua in background. Photo: Greg Horne

opted for a direct descent down the glacier, hoping not to be avalanched off or swallowed by a crevasse. I led off trying to make the slope sluff off the fresh snow in front of me. In total whiteout, gravity was our only reference.

Rocks soon appeared faintly below, and we slowly continued down towards the col, searching for our cached climbing gear. By 8 p.m. we gave up on the equipment and concentrated on finding camp. Under clearing skies and a bright moon, we dragged our exhausted bodies up to the tent and collapsed for another night, too tired to cook or eat.

It took us a couple of hours the next day to retrieve our cached rope and harnesses needed for the icefield recrossing. Before starting across the icefield on the 14th day of our climb, in deteriorating weather, I took a few quick compass bearings before all the summits disappeared. We plodded across the flat white expanse, guided only by the compass. Our ice axes began to buzz and ring, then so did our heads. Was the altitude and fatigue taking its toll? I raised my ski pole to point to something and got a strong shock from the screw in the end of the hand grip. Soon thunder could be distantly heard and we knew what was happening. We were the only objects on the icefield. A sharp tingling feeling passed over our heads and necks while standing, but if we sat down in the snow it stopped. Then the electricity would pass and we could continue for another half hour until it was becoming too painful. Light snow turned heavier; trail breaking was knee-deep and getting worse.

Finally, the top of the ridge leading down to Camp III was reached. Now flashes of lightning and blasts of thunder were over top of us. A short way down the ridge, the rocks ended; in the whiteout conditions on the featureless ridge, we risked wandering off either side into avalanche terrain or over ice cliffs. The decision was made to backtrack to the first flat place and set up camp. As I started back up the ridge, strong electrical shocks were hitting me in the head and right shoulder. It only stopped if I laid down on the ground. As soon as I got higher than on my hands and knees, I was blasted again.

A clear morning at a spectacular campsite revealed all terrain over 3000 m dusted with fresh snow. We descended straight down the ridge in knee- to crotch-deep snow. Fortunately, as the angle of the ridge decreased so did the snow depth. Camps III, II and I were passed. Our packs grew in size and weight, as clothes were peeled off at lower altitudes. A pair of condors circled above us, probably attracted by our body odour as warmer temperatures started things fermenting.

Our final day saw us stagger back to the road carrying enormous packs. En route we met our arriero, Jose, at Baños Azules; he was working for the military, who appeared to be in the area setting up survey stations. At the end of the road, we luckily met a work crew that gave us a ride back to El Alfalfal. After only a few minutes hitchhiking, a couple picked us up. During the first few minutes' conversation with the husband, I learned that we had a mutual climbing friend in Santiago. Dick and I soon found ourselves being asked what foods we most desired, then were wined and dined by the couple at their home in Santiago. The perfect end to a 16-day trip. 🛆

Summary

Ascent of Volcán Tupungato, 6570 m, Central Andes, from the Chilean side via Glaciar Azufre and "Tunpungatito" south ridge and glacier (previously unrecorded). Greg Horne (Jasper, Alberta), Dick Ratliff (Sacramento, California). December 31, 1986, to January 15, 1987.

Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering by Chic Scott Rocky Mountain Books, Calgary

A lovely book. A big, bursting book that bounds out at you full of the pleasures and agonies of the wonderful and entrancing world of mountaineering.

No matter how jaded your perspective on the world of climbing, you are going to find something to love in this book. Maybe it will be the rediscovery of the old legends seen in a slightly new light — just how important Outram was, for example, and how suddenly his brilliant campaign of first ascents of the giants of the Rockies quietly ended: "Never before or since has a climber had such an impact in such a short time. In only three seasons he ransacked the store of unclimbed peaks. Then, after three blistering years in the Rockies, he simply retired and contented himself with pleasant outings at Alpine Club of Canada camps."

Or perhaps it will be the carefully considered treatment of an old friend - John Clarke, let's say, the sort of person who is simply and naturally a friend to all fellow climbers, even those who have met him only briefly. You sense that Chic Scott has captured this quality of this unusual and instantly likeable individual rather nicely childlike in some ways, but so important because in an age of technique his career has been built really on qualities such as wonder and beauty, and he reminds us of their connection to the roots of moutaineering: "... on winter evenings we dare not go near the maps if there's anything else to be done around the house. When we do finally get to them, they are spread on the floor and our eyes glaze over as a new area is identified and we just 'know' we're going there."

A lot of rubber was consumed to get this book into print. Chic Scott says that he crossed the country three times in the course of gathering research, and the end product shows it. Of course, you can't include everyone, and the author actually apologizes in the introduction for any omissions, but pretty well all the essential climbers and climbs get loving treatment.

A brisk opening chapter rattles through the earliest mountain travellers: David Thompson, David Douglas, James Hector and the like; we then pass to the Glory Years in the Rockies and Selkirks, in some ways the acid test for a writer who wants to do the whole story of Canadian Mountaineering, since so much has already been written about this period. The tale is told in a crisp, refreshing manner that certainly held my interest even as someone who has read all the original accounts. Scott handles the material on the early years assuredly and includes a few new perspectives, emphasizing the uniqueness of Hickson, for example, and the importance of Hans Führer as a guide who operated at a

high technical level. His account of these seminal years passes the test. Balance and good, tight writing are two virtues that should ensure this book a favourable market. I like the fact that we pass immediately from the founding of the Alpine Club to the first ascent of Mount Garibaldi in the Coast Mountains; there is an obvious concern on the part of the author that all regions of Canada receive fair treatment. There is a fine chapter that discusses virtually all the early ascents in the St. Elias Mountains, and for English-speaking readers at least, an account of the evolution of rockc limbing in Québec which I believe is the first really comprehensive treatment of the subject. The author is much more generous to Americans in this book that in his infamous (and I believe regretted) comment in Dougherty's book Selected Alpine Climbs in the Rockies, acknowledging their dominance in exploring the St. Elias Mountains and the Columbia Mountains, and their importance in opening up the great era of the 1970s, when so many of the great Rockies north-face testpieces were first climbed

The book teams with characters and it is very fine to see some neglected figures finally get their due: Alice Purdey, as Chic says, probably the finest female mountaineer of her day in North America; or the neglected Dave Jones, the leading Canadian highaltitude climber of the 1970s and surely one of the most prolific Canadian climbers ever (his new routes in the Selkirks alone must be pushing a hundred by now, including many of the hardest ones). These and others like Andy Taylor, Basil Darling, Roger Neave, John Ricker, John Brett or Michael Down come to mind as figures in our climbing history we should know about, but who had the misfortune not to operate out of Banff and the Bow Valley and whose achievements therefore have never become widely celebrated.

Moments that have passed into legend are well handled, such as the epic retreat from the summit of Logan during the first ascent, or in a lighter vein the amusing story of the founding of The Alpine Club of Canada. (One small quibble: the correct name, by a statute of the Alberta legislature, no less, is The Alpine Club of Canada with a capital "T". Always. Wheeler was never one to do anything by halves). The discussion of Rev. George Kinney's disputed first ascent of Robson was of special interest to this writer. Here Scott has done really a first-rate piece of detective work. Many writers have skated around the evidence that Kinney failed to make the summit without really coming to grips with all the facts; Scott has gone and dug for clues. His analysis is the most thorough we have ever seen; it deals carefully and completely with all the evidence and handles Kinney — the central, tragic protagonist with sympathy. His final conclusion, which now seems pretty unassailable, is certain to interest everyone who has even a passing interest in Canadian mountain history.

A conscious effort is made in this book to move beyond the focus on Swiss Guides. Conrad Kain, the founding of The Alpine Club, and the Mundays. Of course, all of these stories are in here, and are deftly told. But they have already been told many times. The story of climbing since the 1960s is what takes centre stage in this book; of the many pages of fine photographs that make up the first dozen or so pages of the book, all are of modern climbers and routes, and there is nary a Swiss Guide to be seen. And the text is really packed with detail: ice climbing, the Squamish hardcore, Putnam and Kauffinan in the Seikirks, Don Serl, Peter Croft, sport and competition climbing, Blanchard, Robinson and Cheesmond, and on and on — all get their due.

Admittedly, the title of this volume initially gave me reservations. I would not have been certain before reading this book that Pushing the Limits was quite the right approach to mountaineering in Canada. There's a strong exploratory element in Canadian mountaineering, and a strong institutional component; and one could certainly mount arguments that the essence of Canadian mountaineering lies more in that direction. But the book shows otherwise. It is really just astonishing how much has been done by Canadians in the Canadian ranges, let alone in the far ranges of Peru and Asia.

Chic Scott says in his introduction that his book is about "leading edge climbers who have explored the boundaries of what is possible. I know this is only one way to look at climbing history, but it is a valid one." It is gratiflying to encounter a climbing writer who appreciates that there are modes of interpreting climbing history other than by simply tracking technical climbing achievement through the years. If straight technical progress is the measure of climbing history, then one can easily lapse into a "battles, dates and kings" appproach that ignores the importance of other social and economic forces in shaping what we humans choose to do with our lives. And of course, with this kind of approach, the vast majority of climbers get left out of the history, which is certainly different from, let us say, a Marxist approach, where individuals don't count for much and what is important is the shifting and building of forces and movements that sweep all individuals before them.

Thus it may be that some Coastal climbers will feel that the distinction between the ways in which climbing evolved on the Coast and in the Rockies and Interior Ranges is not emphasized enough. The Rockies tended to be rather upper-crust, supported by guides and good hotels, whereas the early climbing on the Coast was strictly the province of rank amateurs, almost all of modest means and backgrounds, who just wanted to get out to the hills for a bit of adventure

and exercise and made up mountaineering as they went along. One might also say that other figures were very influential without really doing much climbing at all — one thinks of the Journal editors like Moira Irvine and Andrew Gruft, for instance. But in Pushing the Limits, and without getting into too much philosophizing about the meaning of it all, Scott and his publisher have caught the sense of what most readers are going to want in a climbing history and will find satisifing; although, inevitably, some dimensions of the story are barely hinted at.

If I have a criticism of the book (perhaps more of a disappointment), I would have liked a little more philosophy and a little more summation. At times, reading an account of the career of climbers such as Fred Beckey, Dick Culbert, or Barry Blanchard, I found myself wanting to read one more paragraph that wasn't there - the summary by the author of how we might today regard the achievements; the lessons, the meaning of the lives of these often extraordinary people. Many other readers will not feel this way, and after all the book is already more than four hundred pages. Scott himself speaks in his introduction of our tradition of modesty and understatement, though this is a tradition that he goes a great distance to correct, handing out the superlatives freely. But then, why not? Canadian climbers have been underrated for so long that we deserve some applause at last.

The publishers have not stinted at all to include every essential photograph. Photographs, photographs, photographs they are on almost every page. In this sense, the book is both a written and a photographic history. One begins to realize, looking through the gallery of fine images, that Canadian mountaineering has the beginnings of an iconography; there are photographs that have become part of the vocabulary of Canadian mountaineering and have entered into consciousness as helping to define the values that shaped this obsessive pastime: Lauchian setting off up Nemesis, for example, or the main tower of Waddington from the Northwest Peak, or Phyl Munday crossing Scar Creek

You can't dislike this book, even if you may disagree with some of its conclusions or even its overall approach. There is just so much love of life in here, so many little touches that show the thought and care that have been expended on the story: that picture of George Homer and Billy Davidson on the cover, for example, topping out on Iron Suspender, a lovely tribute. With a thoughtful forward by Hans Gmoser, and an entertaining one by Brian Greenwood; a cast of hundreds, sections on the Logan Mountains, Baffin Island and climbs from New Zealand to the Himalaya, Canadians in the Alps (who but Chic Scott would have thought of including that?) and even a Tami Knight cartoon, it's hard to imagine anyone but a misanthrope being disappointed.

A book to be read and digested, then sampled, then read and dipped into often, one suspects. A fine achievement for its dedicated author, and very much deserving of its subject.

Bruce Fairley

From Everest to Enlightenment by Alan Hobson Inner Everests Inc., Calgary, 1999

Alan Hobson is a Calgary entrepreneur who has named his business "Inner Everests Inc." based on his association with Mount Everest. From Everest to Enlightenment is his account of very ordinary, though elaborate, expeditions to Mount Everest. Hobson reached the summit in 1997 after unsuccessful attempts in 1991 and 1994.

This book is a terribly detailed description of Hobson's thoughts and experiences during the last few years of his preoccupation with Mount Everest. Hobson pours his heart and soul out onto the pages, and no matter how you feel about this sort of self-help disclosure in mountain writing, you're left with no doubt about the intenisty of Hobson's focus and motivation to become a member of that less and less exclusive list of Everest summitteers.

But therein lies the problem with this book: that motivation to be on the list seems to be the whole story. Chapter after chapter divulges tedious detail on fundraising, Hobson's personal impressions of Sherpa life and character, his excruciatingly conflicted relationships with partners in business and romance, training regimen, packing — in step-by-step, vomit-by-vomit, gasping-breath-by-gasping-painful-breath detail.

Although the book suggests that the eventual climb was a noble effort completed in good style, all three of Hobson's trips were in fact undertaken in the grand and expensive style long distasteful to most established high-altitude climbers. Hobson's final expedition was underwritten to the tune of several hundreds of thousands of dollars by Colliers International and Lotus Development Corporation, and his progress was marked by considerable, self-generated media attention.

These facts and the style of the writing both rankle; Hobson repeatedly turns to dubiously overblown melodrama to make a sales pitch about the significance of his ascent. He dwells on possible disaster in every situation, anticipating that epic conditions will result from even the smallest decision. As a reader, I was left with a sense that Hobson does not like climbing and is uncomfortable in the mountains — and that left me wondering about his place in the mountains altogether.

The pages of Everest to Enlightenment host dozens of "walk-on" personalities. Some of these — including Laurie Skreslet, Lloyd Gallagher, Dwayne Congdon, Sharon Wood, Mother Theresa, Bill March, Alan and Adrian Burgess and Jon Krakauer — are identified as mentors and heroes. Strangely, while acknowledging each of their "contributions" to his ascent, Hobson backhandedly manages to render each of them at least mildly incompetent in the book. Many of his descriptions of these people describe their limitations, their weaknesses, or their own walk on the edges of disaster. It is unclear whether Hobson is attempting to portray his own limitations in a more favourable light (e.g. "I share the same traits with them", and whether he actually respects these people as genuinely as he claims.

Despite the title of the book, I found nothing in the 300-plus pages that validated or clarified the spiritual transition Hobson claims to have undergone. Instead, the surfeit of detail about the author's experiences and his emotional states suggests an apparent confusion of self-observation with enlightenment.

The book fails in a number of other ways: The intent is not clearly evident, and, thus, the content is not focused in any particular direction. Instead, there is a muddle of subplots with questionable importance for the reader: Hobson's tormented relationships with women, friends and partners; the perils of fundraising; his dubious, oftenclichéd observations of Sherpa life and character.

The style of the book also jars: the author's own narrative is frequently broken up with quotes from others, many of which are inserted in awkward relationship to the proximate text. (Tenzing Norgay is quoted so frequently he should be credited as coauthor.)

And, sadly, Hobson's penchant for hyperbole and his baroque writing style obscure the bones of what could have been an interesting and possibly instructional story: a mediocre climber who sets his sights on the highest peak in the world, approaching it with the reverence the title suggests he might have, and learning from his lessons — some of which should have been humbling.

The tone of From Everest to Enlightenment suggests that nearly everything about Alan Hobson's affair with Mount Everest was part of a long-term business plan. Everything - from the manner of travel and accommodation and the complex communications technology on the expedition, to the distribution of the self-published book — appears as a series of steps in realizing Hobson's business objective: to market himself as an "adventure-preneur" on the corporate speaking circuit. Hobson has been wildly successful at that self-promotion (he has developed quite a career on the personal motivation circuit), and as a result the book hasas become widely "consumed", distributed to attendees of the Inner Everest corporate presentations. Sadly, From Everest to Enlightenment — an ordinary, "not much about climbing" story - may consequently become the best-selling Canadian mountaineering book.

If you know nothing about climbing, glaciers, travelling overseas, life in foreign lands — and you have never had a broken heart — From Everest to Enlightenment might do a simplistic job of filling in some of the gaps. But if you are interested in reading about climbing, or the role that mountains can play in changing a person's life, look elsewhere. There are many books about "enlightenment" by authors truly qualified to address the topic — look for Thich Nhat Hanh, Mahatma Ghandi, Sogyal Rinpoche, Chogyam Trungpa and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama — and there are much better books about the mountains.

Colleen Campbell

Bolivia: A Climbing Guide by Yossi Brain The Mountaineers Books, Seattle, 1999

"High mountains, clear cobalt-blue skies virtually every day during the season, no peak fees or added bureaucracy, and easy access to great climbing. Sound great? Welcome to Bolivia!" As the introduction to this book, it is no exaggeration.

This guidebook covers the four principal glaciated Andean mountain ranges, all located in the west of landlocked Bolivia. In the past there had been limited guidebook information about two of these ranges, the very popular Cordillera Real, and to a much lesser degree the Cordillera Occidental. However, concise route descriptions were lacking for the Apolobamba and Quimsa Cruz ranges. Brain's guide does a very good job of giving an English-language overview of the latter two areas.

Orientation, climbing history and preparation chapters bring first-time Bolivia climbers up to speed. Then each of the four ranges are detailed with approach and route descriptions, sketch maps and route-marked photos. A full range of alpine route grades are featured up to ED1+, but the majority are intermediate in difficulty.

The guidebook is not a full chronicle of all peaks or routes but a well-chosen selection. With about a thousand summits over 5000 m and a dozen or so 6000-m peaks in Bolivia, only the cream of the crop are highlighted.

As with every guidebook to an area I've previously climbed in, I first reviewed the Bolivian routes I've already climbed to see how accurately they are written up. Brain's book satisfied my normally nit-picky desire for accurate yet concise information.

Brain had previously written a suitable companion book, Trekking in Bolivia: A Travelers Guide, also published by The Mountaineers. Although I've not reviewed it, I expect it would be of similar quality given The Mountaineers' book standards. The trekking guide will give lots of options for pre-climbing acclimatization outings or worthy goals in themselves.

As a sad afternote, the author of this

book was killed in an avalanche in his beloved Bolivia last year. We can only hope that the publication of the book will be a suitable tribute to his feeling for the place.

Greg Horne

The Ghosts of Everest — The Search for Mallory & Irvine By Jochen Hemmleb, Larry A. Johnson, Eric R. Simonson as told to William E. Nothdurft The Mountaineers Books, Seattle, 1999

It was on his third expedition to Mount Everest in 1924 that George Leigh Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappeared several hundred vertical feet from the summit. Over the years this fact vaulted the two to legendary status, with speculation that they, and not Hillary and Tenzing nearly thirty years later, were the first to climb to the top of the world. One of the great, unsolved mysteries of 20th-century exploration, it would take until nearly the end of it before the most chillingly compelling evidence in this intriguing enigma would be discovered by the 1999 Mallory & Irvine Research Expedition.

Ghosts of Everest — The Search for Mallory & Irvine impressively tells the tale of this ambitious team effort led by veteran mountaineer Eric Simonson, and it is a must-read for aficionados of the subject and any who would be riveted by a recounting of the courage of the 1924 expedition and the high drama of the 1999 team in searching for its two most famous members.

Seattle writer Bill Nothdurft, through conversations with expedition members Jochen Hemmleb, Larry Johnson and Eric Simonson, has crafted a powerful story, neatly combining the adventure of both expeditions until their two destinies converged with the discovery of George Mallory's remains. The result provides a sharp contrast of the two eras in which both expeditions climbed and an invaluable appreciation of how ultimate success in the costliest human endeavours stands nobly on the shoulders of those who tried first.

Although Nothdurft's text effortlessly reads like good fiction, it is artfully woven with sepia-toned images from the pioneer Everesters and the more brightly spun Fuji and Kodachrome photography of the 1999 team. The images of the artifacts recovered from George Mallory's body are utterly compelling. While not the Shroud of Turin, their collective impact comes close, and in viewing them one has the sense of the mythical Mallory made tangibly, warmly mortal.

Although the reverence for Mallory-in-Death held by Simonson's team is always clear, there seemed something still naggingly vexing in this book's portrayal of his remains. There is no question of the coldly historical relevance of these images, and the depiction of his final resting position is almost as effective as the magic of an oracle in helping to reconstruct the circumstances of his fatal fall. It is clear, too, that remnants of his body's

graceful majesty still survive the ravages of his darkly capricious mountain adversary. And yet, I wondered at the cumulative impact these images may have had on Mallory's surviving family members. There are probably many who would disagree, but the wistful romantic may not, feeling that less would have been more in honouring the process of portraying this legendary father and grandfather.

Ghosts' eighth chapter is perhaps the most compelling, with a wonderfully written account of the expedition's newly discovered evidence in an effort to circumstantially reconstruct the events of Mallory and Irvine's last hours. Both fact and intricate inference lead to plausible scenarios, though in the end most of them seem to argue against summit success.

I was especially fascinated with the book's conjecture putting Mallory and Irvine above the crux Second Step — and perhaps even the Third - when they were last sighted by teammate Noel Odell "going strong for the top". This conjecture is crucial to an assessment of the likelihood of their summit success, because it locates them relative to the top and clarifies the time it would take to reach the summit and return. This conjecture is a point of continuing controversy, however, given Odell's revision of his initial sighting - placing his two friends above the First Step, and not the Second, as Odell originally suggested. Despite this indulgence, Ghosts allows that even a charitable analysis of Mallory and Irvine's progress, given their potential oxygen supply and climbing speed, indicates that it is improbable they reached their great goal.

Interestingly, perhaps, there is now precedent for a new scenario which nearly doubles the climbing speed most optimistically estimated by the Ghosts authors - and at least anecdotally providing evidence more for the what-if category of this decades-old mystery. Ironically accomplished by George Mallory's own grandson, and teammates Jeff Hall and Chirring Sherpa in 1995, this expedition climbed to the summit and returned to their north face high camp in under nine hours, traversing the final distance from above the Second Step in just ninety minutes. Critically, George and Jeff were in agreement with the Ghosts contention that Odell must have seen Mallory and Irvine above, and not below, the Second Step.

Presuming Mallory and Irvine had reached the Second Step, and not withstanding difficulties posed by time, altitude, weather and fatigue George and Jeff leaned to a position not entirely dissimilar from Ghosts — that the technical problems presented by this section of the route were moderate, and potentially within Mallory's range as the accomplished mountaineer of his day. And if Mallory had surmounted this crucial section, his grandson affirms it is likely he went the rest of the way:

"From the top of the Second Step, the summit appears to be about 350 meters away. This distance must have seemed entirely manageable to Mallory who would have looked up at just after midday. As confirmation, we now know this 'home straight' of the "Mallory Route" has taken at least two climbers no more than 90 minutes. It is difficult to imagine anyone turning around in those circumstances, let alone someone as summit-oriented as George Mallory. His friend and mentor Geoffrey Winthrop Young expressed it well: "After nearly twenty years knowledge of Mallory as mountaineer, I can say . . . that difficult as it would have been for any mountaineer to turn back with the only difficulty past - to Mallory it would have been an impossibility. My own opinion (is) that an accident occurred on the way down (as most do) and that if that is so, the peak was first climbed, because Mallory was Mallory."

In the end, the magnitude of the tragedy of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine still teaches, with Ghosts offering not only insight into the circumstances of their youthful passing, but of the players themselves in this Golden Age of high-altitude mountaineering and exploration. As the first astronauts, with travel through Tibet analogous to space travel decades later, Ghosts paints a wonderfully compelling tribute to the determination of two expeditions separated in time, with Everest's First Knight, George Mallory, never far from Earth's highest center stage. The gift of this book reminds that any great endeavour begins first in the imagination, where the seed that may one day bring it fully to life is enriched and then empowered by a brightlyspun dream. This most certainly was the force within Mallory and his wool-clad, hobnailed teammates, and Simonson's team, too, as they both struggled against great odds in reaching for the summit of their highest expectations.

Ghosts proves to be a wonderful testament, celebrating both a man and legend for the Ages, and an expedition that, in effect, accomplished the near-impossible — raising mountaineering's Titanic.

Paul Pfau

Everest: The Ultimate Hump by Tami Knight Menasha Ridge Press, Birmingham, AL

I was barely 20 pages into this book before I started having some serious doubts about the integrity of this account and thus of the author herself. Everest, as many readers might know, is actually the highest mountain on Earth and is the source of many of the great stories of heroic climbing — so one would certainly assume that the great peak deserves to be treated with some degree of reverence and respect.

I was stunned, therefore, to realize that this book had a subtle, yet unmistakeable tone of sarcasm running through it. Ms. Knight, thankful though she should be for having had the chance to climb Mount Everest, seems instead to be one of those sad people who simply must poke their bitter spears of miscontent into everything. Rather than being able to read another compelling account about the travails of climbing the mountain king, we're offered a sad substitute in the form of an endless complaint about the others who shared the mountain with her.

Although any who follow Himalayan literature realistically accept the fact that one needs to raise money to climb in the great range, Ms. Knight whines throughout the book about the commercialism of the other teams on the mountain, as though their brave efforts to offer corporate motivational talks or fundraise for handicapped people were of lesser value than her own ascent (her lancing of The Frogmorton's Syndrome Team seemed particularly unfair — as I can personally attest, it's a horrible condition...).

Then, taking a look at some of the photographs included in the book - always a high point of any evening curled up with a good adventure tale - I was doubly disappointed. While it is always difficult to get good photographs on Everest (I have read that it is quite cold up there and, of course, one's noggin doesn't work up to par), I can only say that the images in this book were very much below expectations. Though the book includes a number of photographs, most are barely black-and-white outlines, and this interrupts the narrative nearly as much as Ms. Knight's almost cartoonish portrayal of the personalities involved in the climb. The most egregious example of this is Ms. Knight's actionable suggestion that some people climb Everest only to make money. My God, woman, not climbers!

No, this book was entirely a disappointment. Canadians have so rarely had the chance to climb Everest that to have one of our countrywomen represent her own expedition in such a churlish manner can only do us harm. While she could have taken her success on Everest and turned it - like most Everesters have — into a wonderful and fulfilling career bettering the lives of others by showing slides of her trip, she has instead thrown her future away with this caustic and degrading account. If you are one of those disturbed people who enjoy laughing at others and can't see the spiritual truth of all climbing, then you'll probably love this book in your own sick way. If you are one of those people who find callow succour in the tragedies of others (Ms. Knight's inclusion of a photograph of the souvenir stand set up beside the body of the great George Leigh Mallory is nothing short of reprehensible), then by all means buy this shallow and biting book. But personally, I think Ms. Knight owes the mountain, and all of us truer mountaineers, an Everest-sized apology.

Gottfried Poopoo

Mountains of the Coast by John Balwin Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park BC

It was a pleasure to see long-time CAJ contributor and Coast Mountain explorer John

Baldwin publish this wonderful homage to his home ranges last year. The book, subtitled "Photographs of Remote Corners of the Coast Mountains" proves to be far more than that: it offers a rich selection of scenic shots, but much of the best of the book is devoted to more precious details of life in the range — John's partners on trips; the beauty, flora and fauna; the day-to-day of backcountry living

John's book is part personal history, part backcountry-travel how-to book, but mostly inspiration. It would be very difficult to pore through this book, with its fine reproductions and scope of interest, without being motivated to pack crampons, skis and a few weeks' food and head to the mountains. Go get this book, but be prepared to get itchy feet!

Geoff Powter

Mount McKinley, Icy Crown of North America, By Fred Beckey The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1993 ppb 1998

This book covers the early exploration, pioneer ascents, modern climbs and natural history of the highest mountain in North America, and also details access for present-day climbs. For those considering a visit to the mountain, it provides an excellent introduction.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into this book. Knowing Beckey to be a meticulous and thorough researcher, I am sure that one can rely on the accuracy of the text — all the details and facts will be correct.

Although the book is dense with information, it makes for an easy read. Fred's style is clear and concise and flows with few hooks or catches. As well, the colour photographs in the book are excellent and I was impressed by the high quality of the reproduction.

My favourite section of the book deals with the early climbing history — the discredited ascent by Dr. Frederick Cook in 1906, the amazing climb of the North Peak by the Sourdough in 1910, the first successful ascent of the higher south peak by Rev. Hudson Stack in 1913, Erling Strom's ski ascent in 1932 and the tragedy of Carpé and Kovens later that same year.

Unfortunately, the book is not as comprehensive as I would expect of a book of this stature. I was disappointed to see that several major McKinley climbs were totally absent from the text — the first ascent of the Pioneer Ridge (by a Canadian team) in 1961 and the simultaneous first ascents of the Wickersham Wall in 1963 (by the Harvard team along the left flank and by Hans Gmoser's team along the right flank).

First appearing in hardcover in 1993, this volume is now available at a more modest price in paperback. I highly recommend it for those planning an expedition to Denali or for those who are simply interested in the human and natural history of "The Great One"!

Chic Scott

James Edward

HABERL

Jim Haberl of Whistler, B.C., died on April 29 while climbing Ultima Thule Peak (informal name) in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, near the Alaska-B.C. border. He was breaking trail up a low-angle slope (estimated at 20 degrees) when the snow fractured above him. Although the avalanche was initially very slow-moving, Jim was unable to escape and was carried down approximately 400 m over a series of rock bands. Alaska had experienced very poor snow conditions that spring, with winter snowfall amounts at fifty per cent of average.

Jim was an accomplished mountaineer with numerous major ascents and six first ascents to his credit. He participated in numerous mountain adventures in many of the world's great ranges. In 1993, he and Dan Culver made the first Canadian ascent of K2 without oxygen, for which they were later awarded the Meritorious Service Medal of the Order of Canada. Dan died in a fall while descending the mountain.

Jim was a professional Mountain Guide who had been certified by the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG). He was on its Board of Directors and also acted as president of the West Coast Section, a voluntary position. Part of Jim's portfolio included fundraising for the organization. Jim had become a leading figure in the guiding scene on the West Coast and a mentor to many aspiring guides. He was also active as an examiner on ACMG training courses.

An accomplished photographer and journalist, Jim had his photos and articles published in numerous books, magazines and newspapers throughout North America. He also published two books of his own, K2: Dreams and Reality and Risking Adventure. A third book, about Alaska, was in the works at the time of his death.

ountaineer, scientist, family man — on the pages of CAJ, perhaps the mountains have to be given precedence, but Edward (Ted) Whalley's life didn't easily fall into separate compartments. And, given the complexities of real life, why should it have? Ted knew who he was. His family, his science and the mountains were the three legs of a sturdy tripod on which he built a life of solid achievement.

Coming from Lancashire in the north of England, Ted grew up in a family that valued books but owned very few. Fortunately for us, one of the family's volumes concerned Canada's Far North and the search for the Northwest Passage. According to his younger brother, Bernard, that book was Ted's inspiration for both science and the mountains.

Jim devoted time and energy towards a variety of causes. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Brian Ebert Fund. He did a series of slide shows across the country after his K2 trip which helped raise money for Tatshenshini Wild. In the summer of 1999, he and his wife, Sue Oakey, were scheduled to guide a fundraising ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro for the Altzheimer's Foundation for the second time. Sue guided this trip with the assistance of a friend.

Jim was instrumental in the creation of a "Climbers' Festival" that was held in Whistler, B.C., for the first time in August 1999. His goal was to raise money for the Brian Ebert Fund. Jim did voluntary talks for many groups as well as motivational talks based on his experience on K2. He also contributed his time to the Boys' and Girls' Club in Vancouver.

Jim was modest, unpretentious, thoughtful and kind. He also had a great sense of humour. He accepted people the way they were and had a gift for making everyone feel that he or she was his friend. A memorial service was held at the Chan Centre at UBC on May 5. The hundreds of people in attendance and the messages of condolence sent by others attested to just how many friends Jim had.

Jim leaves behind his wife, Sue, whom he married in June 1997. Sue and Jim were an amazing team and had many goals and dreams they intended to pursue together. In their short time as a couple they had already turned some of their dreams into reality. Jim is also survived by his parents, four brothers and a sister. They were a very close family and all took pride in and supported Jim's endeavours.

We believe that everyone who met Jim feels fortunate to have known and spent time

TED WHALLEY 1925-2000

After earning a PhD in 1948, Ted came to the National Research Council (NRC) in 1950 as a post-doctorate fellow. Having already acquired a taste for the mountains, Ted soon became active with the Ottawa Section of the ACC, though with interruptions due to work and raising a family. His sister Margaret also came to Ottawa to work as a school teacher, and through Margaret Ted met the Scottish girl who became his wife.

By the 1960s, Ted was leading a research group at NRC, studying the physics of materials under high pressure, along the way accumulating a string of awards and honorary fellowships. In the spirit of free-minded scientific investigation that flourished then, Ted and his colleagues were always willing to share their knowledge and



Jim Haberl on Mount Temple Artwork by Angela Muelles

with him. His passing is a great loss, but his spirit will continue to be a gift to us all.

A fund has been established in Jim's memory. It will be used to further one of the many aims and goals that he pursued during his lifetime. Donations can be made to Owen Bird in Trust (Jim Haberl Fund), Box 49130, 2900 – 595 Burrard St., Vancouver, B.C. V7X 1J5.

Rob Rohn and Julie Timmins

enthusiasms. I gained from that generosity when I went "back to school" in 1968 to do a research project. Ted's "how-to" advice saved me a lot of time - and would have saved more if I had listened to all of it. Perhaps inspired by that old book on the Arctic, Ted's group discovered several new forms of ice, including his best-known work on "Ice 9" — a material created in laboratories at pressures hundreds of times greater than those found at the bottom of a glacier. While this might seem esoteric science, at least one of the unusual forms of ice Ted's group discovered has since been detected by astronomers in the rings of the planet Saturn.

In the 1970s, Ted once again became an active climber on the local cliffs. He served as Ottawa Section Chairman (1970-74),



Chairman of the ACC Safety Committee (1975-1980) Eastern Vice-President (1978-80) and four years (1980-84) as ACC President. He was a major influence on the ACC during this formative period of modernization. As his family grew up (and spurred by "competition" from his sons) he made a point of improving his skiing abilities, but lamented to me once: "There's no way I can impress them with my skiing." He was being rather modest, and I have a few pictures as evidence.

Ted organized and co-organized five expeditions to the eastern Arctic, with his friend Roly Reader and a variety of other partners. The CAJ accounts of these trips mostly follow scientific traditions, concentrating on essentials, because Ted wasn't given to exaggerating danger and discomfort.

But his account of the 1973 Sam Ford Fiord Expedition (CAJ 1974, pp 22-30) begins more prosaic and reflective than was typical for Ted: "Imagine yourself flying towards a range of mountains on Baffin Island. You have planned for two years. Now you sit next to the pilot as you are supposed to know more about the area than anybody else, and no-one has ever landed in the place you want to go." They had been told by three knowledgeable people that a landing there was impossible, but for three different reasons.

In the end, the plane successfully landed the party on boulder-strewn gravel at the head of the fiord. Ted and his team made 30 first ascents, added four new routes to peaks in the valley, and repeated eight other climbs. In addition to technical climbing on many of these peaks, there were long approach hikes, the

shifting ice-pack and difficult Fiord crossings in a rubber dingy.

In 1976, Ted managed another trip back into the kind of place he most loved — surrounded by the unclimbed mountains around Mackinson Inlet on Ellesmere Island. Even more than in 1973 his group was hindered by ice breakup on the fiord. They realized that midsummer was a time of access problems in the Arctic, and decided it was better to go earlier in the season, when it was possible to land an aircraft on solid ice and snow, and travel with skis.

In 1977, Ted organized another Baffin expedition, 20 miles east of the 1973 location, and in early May still in the grip of winter. (CAJ 1978, pp50-52). About 20 ascents were made in Stewart Valley and up the

branching glaciers, using skis on the approach, with rock or snow climbs at the top. By the first week of June, the snow was wet and hollow, but the group were socked in and had to wait an extra week on diminishing rations. Travelling by chartered aircraft had its limitations in any season.

In May 1978, Ted enjoyed a return visit to Mackinson Inlet. This time, the team endured a cold and very bumpy 160 miles in komatiks drawn by snowmobiles from Grise Fiord on the southern shore of Ellesmere. Based on that experience, there was yet another Baffin venture in 1979, using komatiks built in Ottawa by members of the group. In 1980, Ted's plan was to organize a climb of Mt. Logan, but he dropped out for family reasons. Giving up that dream was surely evidence that his family did, after all, come first when there was a need to choose between alternatives

Ted's slow decline into Alzheimer's disease during the 1990s was not the productive retirement that he of all people deserved, but a cruel blow to his family and friends. For Ted himself, there was some compensation — an apparent absence of pain or unhappiness, a kind of dream state, perhaps an extrapolation of his lifelong ability to ignore physical discomfort. For much of this period, he could still go on a hike, and still laugh at a joke, but more and more it had to be a simple one. Isabel passed away in 1999. She and Ted are survived by a daughter, Monica Kryska and two sons Brian and Kevin, who all remember with affection their introduction to the mountains. Ted's children and grandchildren, like the rest of us, will remember him the way he was in his best years.

Stan Rosenbaum

George Evanoff 1932-1998

eorge Evanoff died on October 24, 1998. He was out alone on a day hike in the mountains northeast of his home of Prince George, British Columbia, when he happened upon a moose carcass being guarded by a bear. The grizzly attacked in defense of its prey, taking George's life. George met his end while doing what he loved — those close to him knew a man who truly lived life to the fullest.

George was born on March 19, 1932, in Edson, Alberta. As a boy, he spent every available moment pursuing activities in the outdoors. Fishing, hunting, and tramping about the wilderness near his home were his favorite pastimes in the snow-free months. In winter, skiing was his passion.

George became an electrician, and he and his wife, Lillian, moved their family to Prince George in 1964. Weekends and holidays were spent introducing his family to the vast wilderness of north-central B.C. He trav-

elled several times with friends to remote northern mountain ranges for yearly hunting excursions. Early trips to places such as the St. Elias, Cassiar and Stone mountains instilled a strong love of the high country in him. As his family grew up, he passed along his appreciation of nature, skiing, mountains and mountaineering to his daughter, Delia, and son, Craig.

George was instrumental in the development of Purden Ski Village in the mid-'60s. He formed the first ski patrol there and served as patrol leader for several years, eventually becoming a director of the National Board of the Canadian Ski Patrol System.

George was continually drawn towards wild places and rugged mountains. By the



early '70s, he was exploring the mountain ranges east of Prince George. He discovered and made early explorations of Fang Cave, one of Canada's premier caves, and pioneered backcountry skiing in the local McGregor Mountains. He always had a positive attitude and maintained a cheerful outlook, regardless of the conditions; always

keen for a few more turns, he would outlast skiers far his junior.

George also became the main avalancheresource person in north-central B.C. and educated hundreds of backcountry travellers in avalanche safety, undoubtedly helping to prevent fatalities. He was a long-time member of the Canadian Avalanche Association and supplied avalanche-consulting and -control services for the transportation, forestry and mining industries.

In 1985, George constructed a lodge in the Dezaiko Range of the Rocky Mountains and formed North Rockies Ski Tours. As a member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, he and Lillian hosted groups of backcountry skiers for 13 years — guiding them to outstanding terrain, providing them with ample, home-cooked meals and entertaining them with colourful stories.

In 1991, the year of his retirement from his electrical career, George was diagnosed with cancer. He underwent surgery and radiation and chemotherapy treatments. Spending six weeks in Vancouver for radiation treatments, he made the best of the situation. He scheduled his treatments for the morning and spent the afternoons hiking the trails of the North Shore mountains. Not once did George let the disease get him down, and with his typical positive energy and regime of physical activity he fully recovered and had a clean bill of health for the rest of his life.

In later years, seeing the need for a voice representing self-propelled recreational back-country users, George sat on major land-use planning committees for the Prince George area. Through several years of committee meetings, he was instrumental in securing protected-area status for unique mountain areas near Prince George. One of these areas, the Kakwa, was particularly close to his heart. He made several trips to this spectacular,

remote place in summer and in winter and ascended the two major mountains in the area, Mount St. Alexander and Mount Ida.

In the summer of 1998, George organized and led an Alpine Club of Canada (Prince George Section) summer camp to the Kakwa. For 10 days, camp members revelled in the wild beauty of the area, making ascents of several peaks. George's enthusiasm, as usual, was contagious, and his organization and his attention to even the smallest detail ensured that everyone had an experience to cherish for a long time.

George Evanoff will always be remembered by the countless people whose lives he touched. He was an enthusiastic lover and protector of nature, a dedicated teacher, a great mountain man and a true friend to all who knew him.

Bonnie Hooge

DION HARRIS BRETZLOFF 1977-1999

Of the people I've met and had the opportunity to climb and ski with, few had such an impact on me as Dion. He was a dear friend to many people because of his selflessness, effervescent personality and positive attitude. He had his moments of being unbelievably stubborn, but he never let those around him down if apologies were in order on his part.

Dion was beyond his years in his level of commitment to the sport of climbing in all its forms. Hard repeats of non-trade routes on Yamnuska, mixed waterfall desperates and high-commitment ski traverses in remote regions of the Canadian Rockies were just a few of the activities for which Dion was equally adept. Dion's exploratory nature and open mind made him not only a unique personality but also an exceptional partner in these sports, which he loved.

On longer routes, Dion was able to

gather his strength and courage in order to take the reins when his partners could give no more. I was always jazzed to get a call from Dion upon his return from the CMH Bugaboos Lodge and listen to his ideas about what routes would be in condition, or about the deep fresh snow that begged our attention if the skiing was good.

In June 1999, Dion and friends Ben Firth and Andy Lecuyer set off to explore unclimbed alpine and rock routes in the remote Huayuash valley of the Peruvian Andes. While they were trying a new line on Yerupaja, an avalanche struck Andy and Dion as they were descending after almost reaching the summit. Tragically, Dion had just finished a rappel when the avalanche hit and he was only a few short steps from the safety of a cave, which was serving as a bivouac.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, the news came back and the shock of it was felt by many people who I am sure felt as close to Dion as I did because of the way he made everyone around him feel with his jolly laughter and perpetually rosy cheeks. Dion is survived by his parents, Harris and Suzanne, and his brother, Gavin. His family and friends were many as the church where we celebrated his life was filled beyond capacity.

They say that only the good die young — but this is only partly true. Dion, at his tender age, had some very important things in life figured out about taking care of yourself and the people around you. He understood what it meant to treat others as you would like to be treated. Perhaps our Creator took him because he was ready to move to the next level of existence. Dion was truly a wonderful person who I know made a difference in many people's lives. I will see you again, good friend.

PADDY JEROME

David Persson

On May 23, 1999, David "Perseus" Persson died in a fall while skiing down the Liberty Ridge on Mount Rainier following a successful ascent of the ridge. Although we will never know for sure, it appears that David lost an edge on a steep, icy slope and never regained his balance. As I write this, I glance out the window towards sunny skies resulting from a rare mid-winter Coastal high-pressure system. If David were here, he would feel I am wasting my time, for on days such as today "One should be in the mountains." Perhaps that is the best way to

describe David. A person of everlasting keenness to get out there regardless of what he was going to do, David loved it all — be it skiing, ice climbing, aid-climbing or mountaineering.

I had known David for only two years. He was a post-doctorate fellow in theoretical physics at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. David's motivation and drive emerged very quickly, and he made many new friends with whom to share



his adventures. Early on in our friendship, I began to greatly admire and appreciate David's willingness to literally drop everything, whether it be a physics seminar or a date, to go on an adventure. In fact, David always use to joke about being the black sheep of the physics department and about getting funding from Sweden to do "research" in Canada.

During the two years David resided in British Columbia, he amassed a list of remarkable and impressive ascents. Among his more notable climbs was a first ascent on Ossa Mountain in the Tantalus Range which consisted of sustained mixed rock and ice and was climbed in a thirty-hour round trip form the car. Furthermore, David was perhaps one of the few people ever to yo-yo ski the north face of Mount Shuksan. He also climbed further afield and formed an integral part of the team that completed a new high-level traverse from Mount Wood to Mount Steele in the St. Elias Range.

David was never much of a talker, but he did take the time to write an article for the 1998 Varsity Outdoor Club Journal entitled "Post-doctoral Research under the Spell of the Mountains". Although it is impossible to describe David in writing, I feel that what he himself wrote comes pretty close:

I do not know my motivation for climbing. But one thing I do know: having finished a good day of climbing, particularly ice or alpine, I feel as happy as a trouble-free little child, from head to toe. It could be that you are just happy still being alive, but I think it is more than that.

Paul Blanc 1903-1999

Paul Blanc, one of the founding members of the Montreal Section of the Alpine Club of Canada, died in Lutry, Switzerland, on July 17, 1999, at the age of 95. Paul had been an honorary life member of our section since returning to Switzerland.

In July 1992, the participants in the Montreal Section camp at Zermatt had the great pleasure of spending an evening with Paul and his wife, Henriette. At that time, Paul was still active with the Swiss Alpine Club in Geneva

Don Wighton

Paul Blanc's Skis

I recently read in Montagne that Paul Blanc had passed away in Switzerland. To most current members of the Montreal Section, his only claim to fame might well have been that his membership number (223) was the lowest on the section's list. I never met him personally, but when he left Montréal in the late '50s he gave Paul Gillespie (David's dad) his cross-country skis to sell. I bought them. They were good, light, wooden ABC skis — to me a significant improvement over the ubiquitous boards you could get at the Salvation Army for \$3 and which to this day adorn the mantelpieces of better Québec cottages. I enjoyed my ABCs for a few seasons

on the old Laurentian trails, with Geoff Webster, John Brett, Germaine Chauvin, Gordon Weetman, Doug Urqhart and of course Paul Gillespie (David was in diapers, if at all).

Then, in 1964, I left for Australia. I wrote to an ACC member stationed there, who confirmed that there was indeed snow in the Snowy Mountains but who also said that cross-country skiing was probably feasible, albeit virtually unknown. With some misgivings, I packed my ABCs and boarded the Canadian Pacific Airlines Electra turboprop for the two-day flight to Melbourne.

Paul Blanc's ABCs were an instant hit in the Australian Alps. Most of my new friends in the Melbourne Bushwalking Club had read about "Langlauf skiing" and set off to try it — on alpine skis, the only variety available Down Under at the time. The terrain we skied on was stunningly beautiful: eucalyptus trees don't lose their leaves in the winter, and all varieties of parrots nest in them throughout the year, flying away with great noise at the (then) unfamiliar sight of langlauf skiers. I can support my statement with hundreds of slightly out-of-focus slides of gum trees, taken mere seconds after the parrots had taken off.

I particularly remember one ski trip in the Bogong High Plains. The season there is rather short and the temperatures rarely go much below freezing during the day, so that on this trail-less plateau the snow was deep and heavy. It must also be remembered that, with one notable exception, the entire party was on downhill skis. This area, now a national park, used to be the grazing grounds for cattle in summer, when the grass in the plain was scorched by the sun. In the '60s, there were still a number of shepherd's stone huts with corrugated tin roofs which could be used as shelters. We settled for the night into one of them; it was practically invisible under the heavy snow cover. A roaring fire in the iron stove heated the place up in no time and soon turned it — on account of the roof, which in fact was more a sieve than a roof into something between a shower and a steam bath. As I recall it, the hazy scene of these sweaty Aussies, moving about slowly in their singlets and lit by a candle that cast enormous shadows on the stone walls, was straight out of a Fellini movie. I don't remember whether anyone slept that night.

I did not bring Paul Blanc's skis back to Canada. I brought back a didgeridoo instead. I donated the skis to the bushwalking club, and I was told later that they took them apart to see how they were put together so they could build their own. But this time, I don't have slides to support my statement.

ED POTWOROWSKI

Јо Като

Jo died in Edmonton on October 16, 1999. He was an exceptionally well-respected member of the Edmonton Section of the Alpine Club.

Jo joined the Club in 1951 after two years of solo climbing. Strong, intelligent, and resourceful, he became a climber's climber. His quiet philosophy and sense of humour carried him and others over many difficulties. He was a fine teacher of technique and a responsible leader in every way. He was first up, last to bed and last off the mountain. A doctor, he taught excellent

courses in mountain medicine. His leadership earned him the Silver Rope in 1954.

Jo favoured climbing with Robi Fierz, his closest friend in Edmonton. Their climbs included the first ascent, in 1961, of the central summit of Mount Bryce, the last of the 11,000-ft. mountains to be climbed in the Rockies. Over the years, the pair climbed Castle, Louis, Colin, Edith Cavell, Saskatchewan, Victoria, Hungabee, Huber, Odaray, Sir Sandford and Quadrant Spire, among others. During a climb of the northwest buttress of Outpost Peak in 1974, Jo

injured a knee that would later require surgery. Although he led a difficult, winter-like ascent of Bennington in August the following year, this injury slowly limited his climbing capacity. He packed in to Outpost Lake in 1976 but did not climb.

Jo loved to fish and supplemented camp food with fresh trout and his own freshly baked bread. The Tonquin was his "home" valley, and Amethyst Lake provided the fish. On one occasion, he attempted to smoke some fillets by hanging them in the chimney at roof level but the hanging broke and the fillets fell down the chimney into the fire. He and Robi had soup instead.

In 1962, at the spring camp in Little Yoho, Jo organized the rescue of John Dodds, who had broken his leg after skiing off a cornice. Jo set his leg on the cabin table (anaesthetic: a bottle of rum). The next day, the patient, complete with cigar, was ensconced in a rescue toboggan. A sizable party accompanied him to the head of the road. Jo and Robi then pulled the toboggan to the cars and drove Dodds to Field. In a feat of remarkable endurance, the two

returned to the cabin the same night.

Jo was quick to appreciate others and admired their achievements. After accompanying Hans Gmoser on his first Canadian ascent, he was among the first to support his guiding and film tours. He encouraged the founding of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. Although twice asked to accept the nomination for the Club presidency, he declined, saying that others were better suited for the job. Yet he influenced Club matters in important ways. He led site recces and hut-repair crews and organized

the party that constructed the hut on Mount Robson, a helicopter-supported effort. Afterwards he led the party to the summit — a climb that, with typical intellectual honesty, he did not consider a true ascent.

"Enjoy life!" was often his parting phrase, and he succeeded in this himself. He travelled on every continent with his loving wife, Elsa, who survives him, along with his three daughters, Betsy, Pat and Debbie, their families, and many loyal friends.

Phil Dowling

Dave Tansley

On November 18, 1999, David John Tansley died of a heart arrhythmia. He was only 55. Dave was an active member of the Alpine Club of Canada from 1973 until his death, participating mainly in Vancouver Island Section activities.

Dave started his mountain activity in the Fraser Valley, exploring the Golden Ears peaks on his own. He climbed the Pleiades above the Chilliwack valley with the Wyborns, in the process suffering a direct hit by rockfall. We first met on the following day; Dave arrived in the office with his cracked ribs taped up. We both were structural engineers for Willis, Cunliffe, Tait in Victoria. Later, he became a partner at Graeme & Murray, where he worked until the time of his death. He had a sound technical background and good judgement. Those traits, along with a good head for heights and the ability to handle rope, made him a good mountaineer also.

In the early '70s, Dave was pivotal in the rejuvenation of the Vancouver Island Section of the ACC, serving as instructor in the sec-

tion's climbing classes, organizing the climbing schedule and leading many of the trips himself. Indeed, he received the Vancouver Island "Section Leader Badge" — one of only four recipients to date.

In the Rockies, Dave was a peak bagger at the Adamants ski camps, pushing our ambitions towards summits in addition to tracking all visible slopes. In the summer, he climbed Mount Louis, Mount Victoria and Skyladder, the steep snow face on Andromeda, with Don Vockeroth and me. This was in 1974, before anyone used ice tools

While his trips included many of Vancouver Island's mountains, the peaks neighbouring the Fraser and Squamish river valleys were his real playground. Among his many "mainland" mountains were Slesse, Canadian Border Peak and Sky Pilot. There was also a memorable marathon climb of Garibaldi with Paul Erickson and me, culminating on the summit at 9:30 p.m. and concluding at midnight after we had descended through a pitch-black eclipse of the moon.

As a climber, Dave was always focused on the objective. With John Pratt, Dave reconnoitred the complex routes into Mount Robie Reid and the difficult Mount Judge Howay, climbing the latter in 1991 with John and Kris Holm. "He had all those qualities you'd want in a mountaineer," remembers John, "tough, a great goer, imperturbable, yet safe and cautious."

Expeditions took Dave's fancy. Four of us went to the Waddington region in 1976; despite doing three other peaks off the Tellot glacier, we had to "pry Dave off" the vertical and exposed Tellot Spire. His favourite trips were the week-long ski traverses: the Pemberton Ice Cap, the Lillooet/Manatee ranges and the Spearhead Range. He liked sleeping in a tent at -12°C.

Our sympathies extend to his wife, Cynthia, and to daughters Caroline and Rowena. We share your loss. Dave was a sincere and steady friend and is missed by many fellow climbers.

GIL PARKER

The Fall

A Poem for George Leigh Mallory

A torch, your passion, a pale glow on the dawning. As you crawl from your tent towards abyss, silent, yawning. And choke on the air, so frozen, so rare. For such beauty, sublime, "Because it's there," you are there.

So tilted, so icy, the track to your dreams. Endlessly, skyward, your nails grace the seams. Midst gravity, so lethal, indifferent, exact, whilst gusts, blinding, shaking conspire to distract. Your pathway, your secret, undaunted persists. A venture to finish, sequestered in mists.

So what is it then, that arrives so discreetly? To separate spirit and brawn so completely. Now you lie, clutch the grit of your heaven set wall, Your gentle heart answers...

It's the end the Fall

Jim Roberts

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The Begend of the Silver Ice Axe



On the summit ridge of Mount Alberta, July 21, 1925. Photo: Nagatane Okabe. Courtesy of the Japanese Alpine Club

IN THE SUMMER OF 1925, a Japanese-led expedition made the first difficult and dangerous ascent of Mount Alberta in Jasper National Park. A rumour later claimed that the "solid silver" ice axe they left on the summit was presented to the expedition by the Emperor of Japan. In 1948, an American party climbed the mountain and returned with the top part of the axe. In 1965, a Japanese party found the bottom part and took it back to Japan.

IN AUGUST OF 2000, Japanese mountaineers will be returning to Jasper Park Lodge. On the 75th anniversary of the first ascent, a joint Japanese-Canadian team will join the famous "silver" ice axe again on the summit of Mt. Alberta. After this historic ceremony, the famous axe will remain intact at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum and Archives, where it will symbolize the common history and enduring heritage that links the mountaineering communities of Canada, United States and Japan.

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