Canadian Alpine Journal

2008

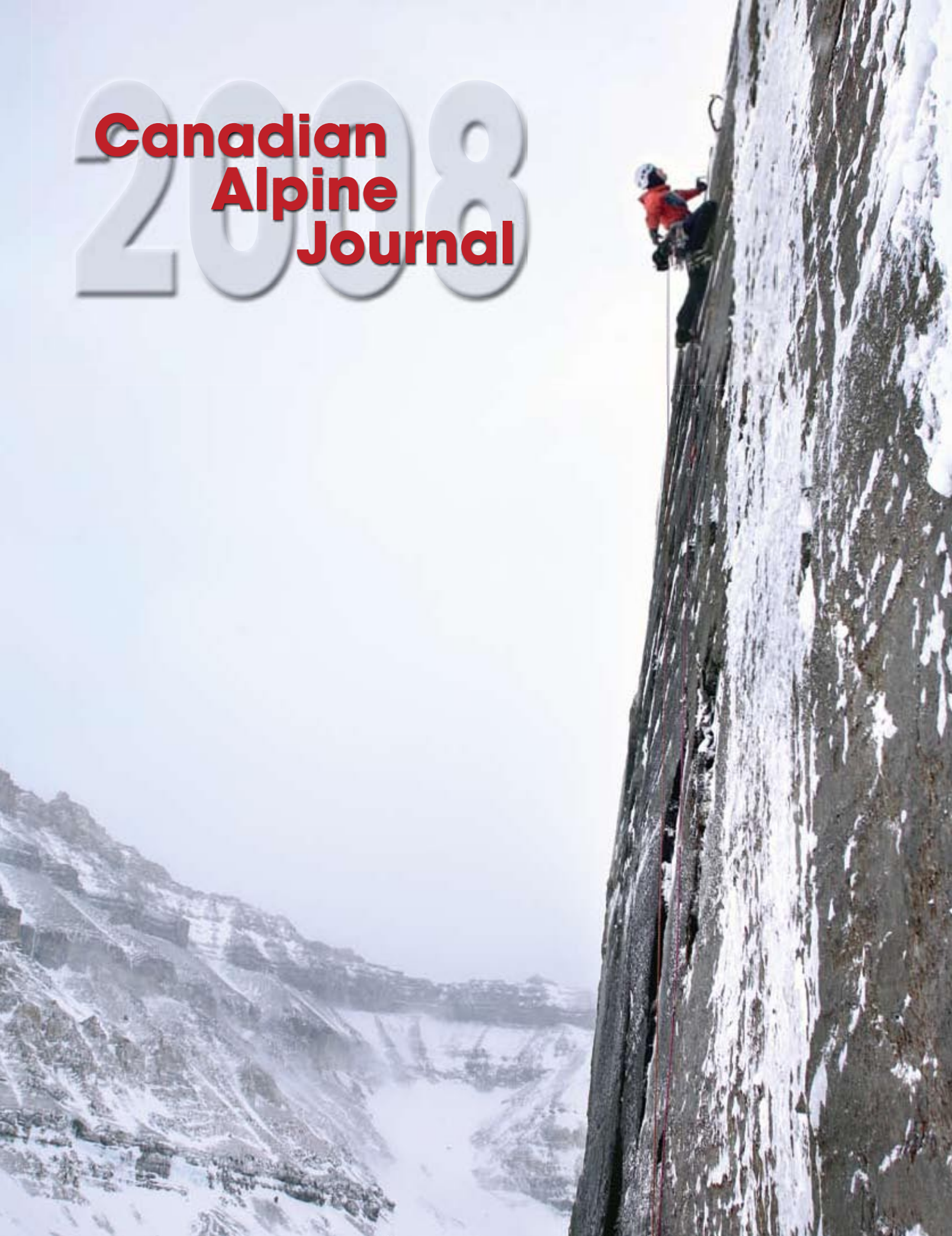

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Photo Sean Swarner Collection

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The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 91, 2008

Features

The Inner Ranges

Rens Horn ascending fixed ropes during the 2006 attempt on Copier Pinnacle in Stewart Valley, Baffin Island (see page 83). Photo: Martin Fickweiler

Cover: Raphael Slawinski during the first ascent of *Victoria's Secret Deviation* on the Stanley Headwall, Kootenay National Park, the Canadian Rockies, B.C. (see page 42). Photo: Wiktor Skupinski

Previous page: Self-portrait on the Mons Icefield during a solo ski traverse of the Great Divide from Jasper to Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies (see page 149). Photo: Janez Ales

Back cover: Eamonn Walsh bivouacking at the top of the first ice band on the *Moonflower Buttress* on Mount Hunter in Alaska (see page 86). Photo: Mark Westman

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Editorial

Taking the Reins

The Canadian alpine Journal changed my life. As a young, impressionable 19-year-old, I came across an issue at the public library in Saint John, New Brunswick. I had already been bitten by the rock-climbing bug, but mountains, the real deal, were an unknown entity. Images and stories from the Canadian Rockies were the catalyst that prompted me to quit university, buy my first of many beaters and drive west to the Promised Land to embrace the existence of the climbing bum. Since that pivotal day, I have become a dedicated aficionado eagerly anticipating the annual release each summer.

In 1997, I embarked on my first expedition. Partially funded by the inaugural John Lauchlan Award, the award committee requested a report for the *Journal* in exchange for support. I hesitantly submitted a short story and was pleasantly surprised to find it a feature article—plus one of my photos as the cover shot. This gave me the confidence that began my writing sub-career. For the past three years, I have been assistant editor of the *CAJ*, helping to collect material. Becoming the *grand fromage* seems like the logical and final progression from reader to contributor to assistant to editor.

This transition has not been easy—going from the person writing about adventures to the person editing other people's writings about adventures. Having said that, I have managed to sneak one last tale into this tome before capitulating to armchair status and accepting my fate as one who shall now live vicariously through others.

I am very excited about this project because the learning curve will exercise my atrophied brain muscle thus balancing the more physical sides of my life: climbing and guiding. I am also very nervous about accepting such a massive responsibility. As friends have so eloquently made clear: "Isaac, don't screw this up. You don't want to be known as the guy who sunk the *CAJ*."

Fortunately, I have surrounded myself with a very capable team of talented wordsmiths. This issue would surely be in a sad state of grammatical disrepair if it were not for the well-trained eyes of Lynn Martel, Helen Rolfe and Anne Ryall. In addition, without the creative skills of Suzan Chamney and graphic assistance of Hermien Schuttenbeld, it would just be a blob of words and pictures. Historical experts, Chic Scott, Zac Robinson and David Jones all lent a hand in fact checking so they also need to be thanked for their research efforts.

Last, but far from least, we owe a rowdy standing ovation to Geoff Powter for what he has done with the *CAJ*. In the past 15 years, he has showcased homegrown talent and swashbuckling tales from the front lines of Canadian alpinism. Before *Gripped*, the *CAJ* was the only game in town. It has been the voice of Canadian climbing for the past hundred years and will continue to be. My goal is to build upon the same high quality that Geoff brought to the *Journal* with my own slight refinements.

I have entered into this position at what I consider (and I think Geoff will agree) to be an "easy" period in the timeline of graphic design technology. When Geoff began his tenure as editor, luxuries such as Photoshop and e-mail did not exist. During those dark-ages of desktop publishing, articles were snail-mailed in analogue form, often handwritten. Chicken scratchings had to be typed out, then cut with scissors and taped into columns in order to be photographed for the printing plates.

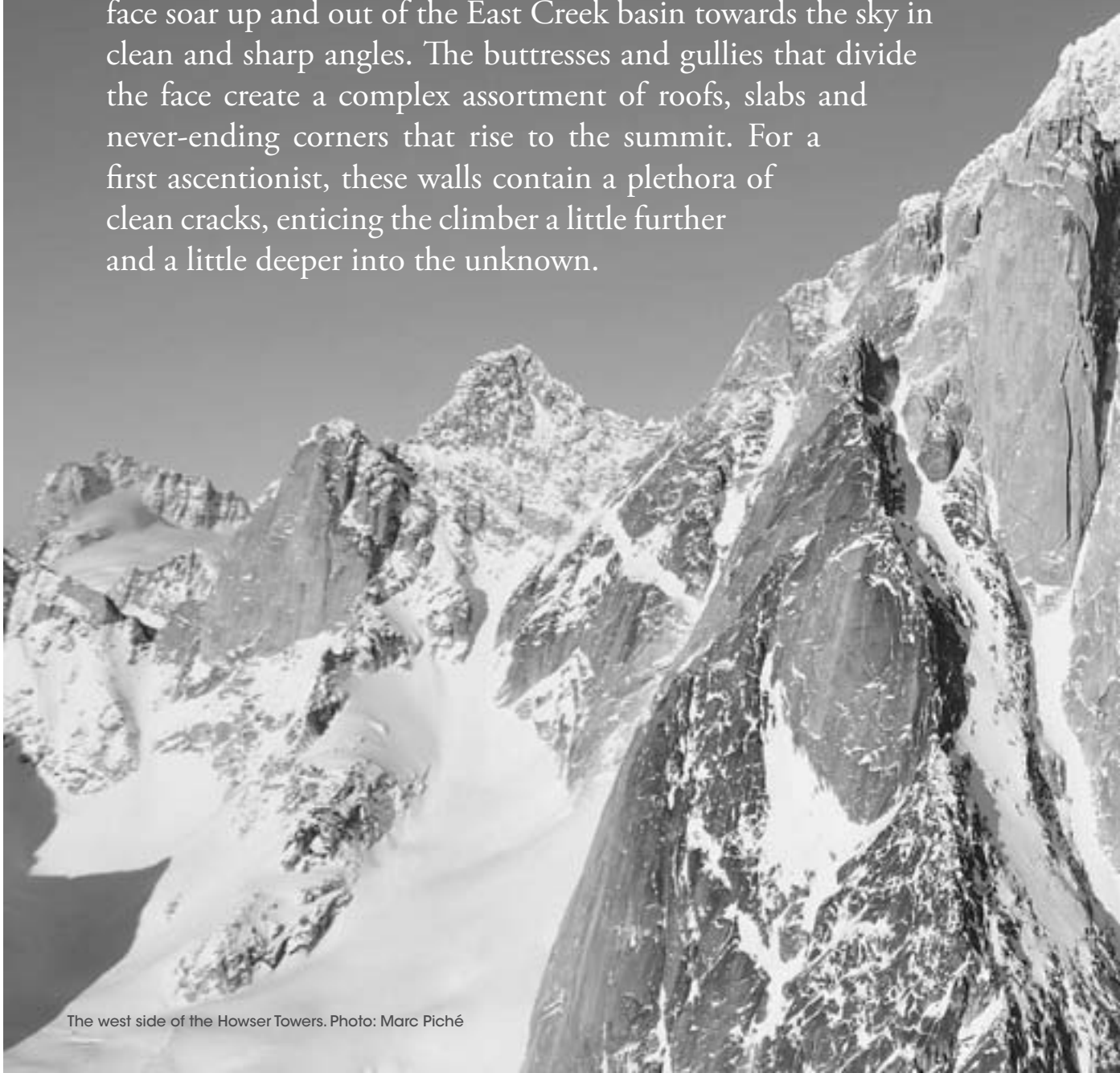
I shall not experience such antiquated techniques. This year, I received only one article with old-school slides—everything else was sent digitally. Articles were edited and photos tweaked on my laptop from the comfort of my couch, or lawn chair, or local coffee shop.

I have very large mountain boots to fill replacing Mr. Powter, but I rarely back down from a good challenge. At 101 years old, the *CAJ* is Canada's second longest continuous running publication (after *Maclean's*). So, I take the reins galloping slightly out of control into a new century for our revered journal. My only hope is that the past two months hunched over my computer were not in vain and that the volume you now hold will inform, inspire and entertain.

—Sean Isaac

The REAL

The north howser tower in B.C.'s Bugaboos embodies several eras of climbing with a history of cutting-edge ascents equal to any of the great ranges. The walls of the west face soar up and out of the East Creek basin towards the sky in clean and sharp angles. The buttresses and gullies that divide the face create a complex assortment of roofs, slabs and never-ending corners that rise to the summit. For a first ascentionist, these walls contain a plethora of clean cracks, enticing the climber a little further and a little deeper into the unknown.



The west side of the Howser Towers. Photo: Marc Piché

Mescalito

Joshua Lavigne

Crosby Johnston on the last pitch of *The Real Mescalito*. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

In July 1971, when Galen Rowell, Chris Jones and Tony Qamar stepped onto the west face it was a committing wall with no previous ascents up the main face. They were met with over 1,000 metres of climbing, which reared up from the glacier to the summit. With such a magnitude of terrain above them only the greatest weakness would succumb to their efforts; this turned out to be the main gash that divides the west face. After 500 metres of climbing they reached a spacious bivy site, which offered them the vantage point of access to several features above. They continued their ascent by connecting a second major gulley system in the upper face, which led to the summit ridge. In a continual push with only a couple of bivies, they established the first route on the west face proper: *The Seventh Rif e* (ED2 5.9 A2). This genre of route describes an era of climbing where the ascentionists looked for the greatest weakness in a face, usually a gully system. They carried enough gear for a couple of nights on the wall and worked their way up the face avoiding long sections of aid or dif cult free climbing.

In 1973, two Canadian boys, Hugh Burton and Steve Sutton, arrived from Yosemite with their big-wall climbing skills well-honed. They headed up the cleanest and most direct portion of the wall to the left of *The Seventh Rif e*. The tactics they used were more in tune with what was happening in the Valley. They spent multiple days on the wall, nailing up many pitches in the upper face and only free climbing to a 5.9 standard. There is very little information on the climb they established, but once again *Warrior* (ED2 5.9 A3) represents a genre of climbing that exemplifies an era of big-wall climbing.

Hugh and Steve were on fire during those years and they returned to the Valley in 1974 to finish their route *Mescalito* on the southeast face of El Capitan, now a well-established and highly revered aid route. However, in an editing error in the 1974 *American Alpine Journal*, their ascent of *Mescalito* on El Capitan got transcribed as a new route on the west face of the North Howser Tower (*AAJ*, 48, vol. 19 (1974), p. 166). To further the error, Randall Green and Joe Bensen then recorded it as such in their guidebook—*Bugaboo Rock* (The Mountaineers, 1990). Finally, the mistake made its way into the modern guidebook—*The Bugaboos* (Elaho Publishing, 2003) by Chris Atkinson and Marc Piché. The result of a 30-plus year oversight: a line drawn straight up the middle of the face for a route that did not exist.

All Along the Watchtower (ED2 5.12-) is a route that needs no introduction. The first ascent took place in 1981 by Ward Robinson and Jim Walseth and then was freed in 1996 by the formidable team of Kennan Harvey and Topher Donahue. It climbs over 300 metres of moderate terrain to reach an uncompromising corner system, which then rises continuously up the steepest part of the wall for another 300 metres. The upper corner system offers incredible free climbing up beautiful glacier-polished granite. There are no fixed anchors or gear on the route and the position is among the wildest in the Bugaboos. After struggling through the crux dif culties, a team cannot let their guard down thinking that the summit is in the bag. With many relic bivy sites tempting teams along the way, another 300 metres of convoluted ridge traversing presents itself before the summit succumbs. It will no doubt maintain its reputation as a pure, committing and aesthetic climb. Chris Atkinson describes the route as "a highly sought-after but rarely climbed gem that is a rite of passage to the big time." The freeing of this route and

the establishment of several other difficult almost-free routes on the face, such as *Spicy Red Beans and Rice* (ED2 5.12- A1, Greene-Tague, 1997) and *Armageddon* (ED2 5.11+ A2, Copp-Pennings, 1999) once again signified the advancement of the climbing tactics being used on the west face and in the greater ranges—hard free climbing with minimal aid, ascending up uncompromising lines in a light and fast fashion.

Over the next 10 years, little new routing was pursued on the west face but in 2005 this started to change. As attitudes towards the west face began to evolve, so did the style of routes. This resulted in *Hey Kool-Aid* (ED2 5.11+) put up by Bruce Miller and Chris Weidner. They first climbed their route over two days, freeing most of it except for a pendulum part way up the wall. They returned later that week to free the route in a day. This was only the second route on the face to go free and the first one-day free ascent. That same day Ulysse Richard and I attempted a one-day free ascent of *All Along the Watchtower*. After 19 hours of climbing, we got lost 50 metres below the summit in a hail and lighting storm, thus enduring a long and cold bivy. We rappelled the east face at 5 a.m. the next morning slightly dejected because we were unable to free the crux pitch but still satisfied with our efforts. After these ascents in 2005, an explosion of free routes were laid down.

In 2006, Simon Meis and I heard about the story of the non-existent *Mescalito*. This left a "blank on the map" right in the middle of the face, so we decided to attempt a line through said blank. We reached a high-point about 600 metres up the wall but after a restless bivy, loose and snowy conditions turned us around. Neither of us were too enthused about rappelling the entire face and then hiking around the north side of the tower, so we decided to make six rappels to *The Seventh Rifle* gulley and then continue up the route *Young Men On Fire* (ED2 5.11- A4, Gore-Hollinger, 1994). The result was a completely free route, *Under Fire* (ED2 5.11-), which combines the lower portion of *Shooting Gallery* (ED2 5.10 A2+, George-Synnott, 1994) with the upper pitches of *Young Men on Fire*. That same year Ulysse Richard and Manual Quiroga made the first continuous free ascent of *Seventh Rifle* (at 5.11), and Craig McGee and Brad White added a free variation (*Bunny Fu Fu* off-width variation) to the aid pitches of *Armageddon* (at 5.11+). This pushed the tally of free routes on the west face to a total of four.

These ascents foreshadowed the future of climbing on the west face. The original fear and commitment that had dissuaded teams in the past to attempt the face in a light and fast style was now being replaced by a better understanding of the intricacies of the wall combined with a more committing approach. The momentum that had been building on the previous ascents had finally reached a breaking point and the veil of mystery over the west face was lifted.

In 2007, this approach was put to the test when a sustained high-pressure window settled over the Purcells making conditions prime. Carlyle Norman and I made ambitious weekend plans to make the first continuous (and second) ascent of *Under Fire*. We hiked up to the Applebee campsite late in the evening planning on an early start the next morning. After five hours of sleep we managed to leave camp around 7 a.m. and by 11 a.m. found ourselves at the base. Surprisingly, even with the late start we were able to climb to one pitch below the summit in 11 hours.

Joshua Lavigne following pitch 11 of *The Real Mescalito*. Photo: Crosby Johnston

The author (left) with Crosby Johnston on the summit of North Howser Tower after climbing *The Real Mescalito*. Photo: Crosby Johnston

This ascent solidified my attitude towards the commitment required to climb the face and how much time it takes to access it. I hadn't anticipated reaching the summit of the west face with such a late start, especially from Applebee. With little fuss we were back in Canmore 48 hours after leaving.

Bolstered by this successful summit blitz, I made plans with Crosby Johnston to attempt the line that Simon and I had tried the previous year. We only had a couple days to spare during our busy summer schedules so we decided to take the same fast and light approach. The planned line that I had sketched together from four previous trips connected the lower corner system of *Under Fire* to the *Seventh Rifle* gulley and then upwards into the centre of the face where the fictitious line of *Mescalito* had been drawn. We hoped the climb would provide a free route straight up the middle of the face and a direct line to the summit ridge. Carrying only the essentials was critical if we seriously intended on establishing the route in a single-push. We brought light approach shoes, a single set of crampons, one ice tool, one headlamp and of course, no bivy gear. A 3 a.m. start from the Pigeon-Howser Col brought us to the base of the west face via the bolted rappels in three hours. Our choice in footwear resulted in a death-defying descent down the glacier to the base of the face. Going light is always a good idea in theory, but as we descended 55-degree glacial ice with only a single crampon, our brash decisions nearly resulted in an exciting glissade into the rocks below.

We started our ascent at 7:30 a.m. and dispatched the lower part of the face quickly climbing clean and enjoyable cracks. We followed the lower pitches of the now-freed route *Under Fire*, which provided a moderate and direct alternative to gain access to the upper face. Crosby and I swapped leads on the lower face and then simul-climbed the *Seventh Rifle* gully establishing ourselves on the upper face by early afternoon. As we crossed the gully we collected water in our single water bottle and scoped out the access to the upper pitches. Continuing up the face via 200 metres of perfect fist jamming in a clean right facing corner, we arrived at the bivy ledge below the upper crux pitches.

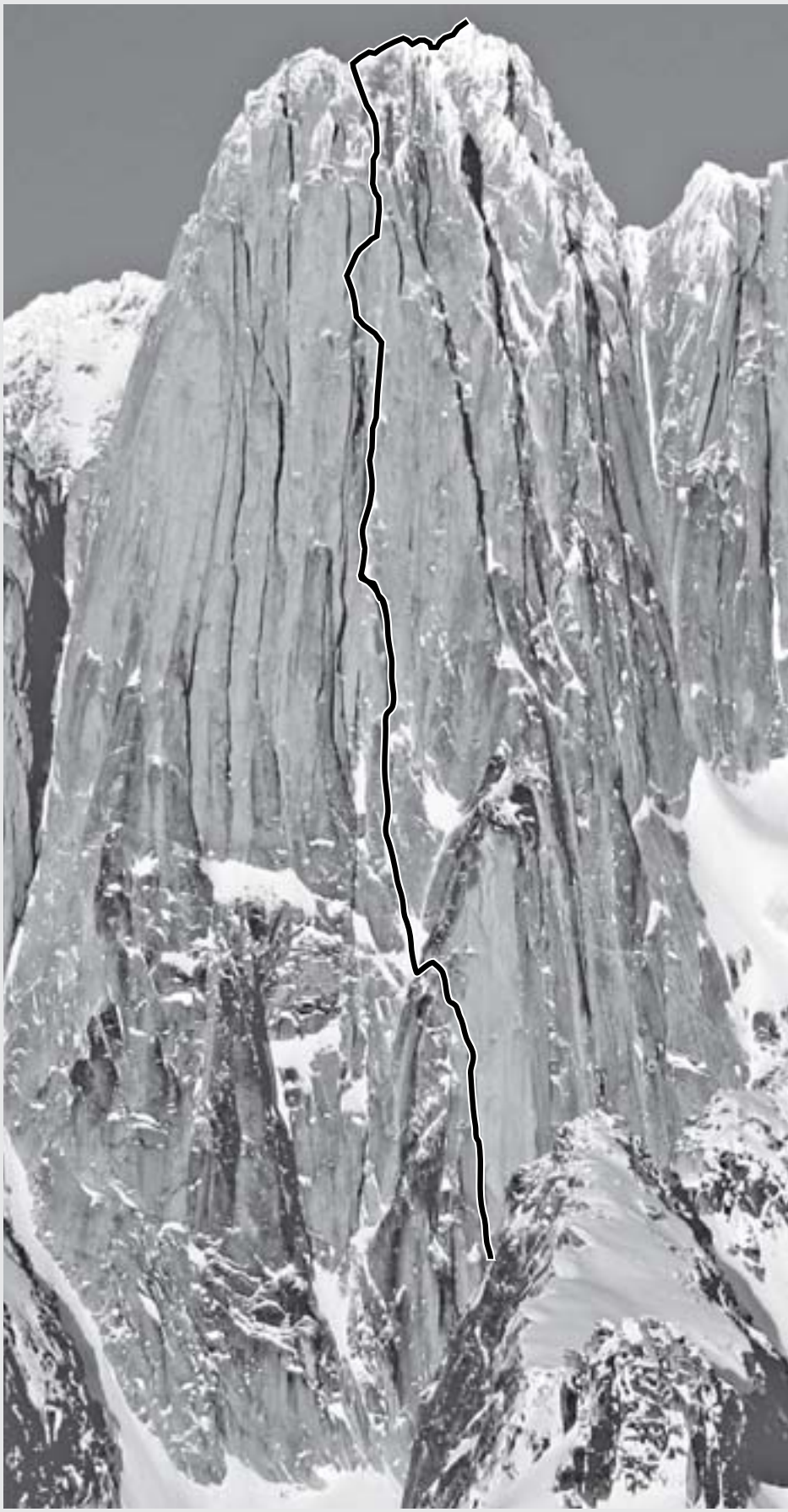
The upper pitches on the face looked to be clean and steep but getting to them would require climbing through several pitches of horrendously loose and wet granite. For Crosby and I, the crux of the route turned out to be avoiding exfoliating death flakes that precariously hung in our path. We worked our way to the right side of the upper corner system managing to stay out of the way of most of the carnage. Finally, we found the steep, clean finger cracks we had hoped for. The climbing was sustained at a solid 5.11 grade and only required some sections of aid, which were to prevent the leader from dropping rocks onto the belayer. As we got closer to the top we got diverted out of the main corner system being forced to traverse left in order to prevent the continuous bombardment from the leader. Dents in my helmet and a particularly disconcerting bruise on my inner thigh galvanized our decision to escape out of this gauntlet. Crosby pushed the last pitch to the summit ridge in the early evening with only a hundred metres of scrambling to reach the top. Eleven-and-a-half hours after starting the climb, we had successfully completed a one-day first ascent of the North Howser Tower's west face. We didn't manage to seize the free ascent, but there's always next year. As the light started to fade on the towers below we rappelled and stumbled back to the col—the day's events still pulsating through our veins.

In recent years, the fast-and-free ascents that have been laid down on the North Howser Tower have removed the notions of remoteness and commitment that were previously associated with the west face. Like the *Beckey-Chouinard* (V 5.10) on the South Howser Tower—a route that was once considered a remote multi-day adventure—the west face is now commonly done from Applebee in a day. Several elements have resulted in removing this veil of commitment. The addition of bolted rappels down from the Central Howser bivy boulder reduces the approach time drastically (formerly a full-day ordeal). The guidebook stipulates that in order to stand upon the summit of the North Howser via the west face a team must climb at least 30 pitches, but I've discovered one can easily climb the face in 15 to 20 pitches. And finally, unlike its neighbours, the west face is riddled with crack and corner systems thus offering an assortment of options. The combination of all of these elements will surely result in many more free lines being done on the west face. One-day ascents will become commonplace and potentially a strong, visionary team will throw down a complete link-up of all three west faces of the Howser Towers—South, Central and North—in a day.

About the Author

Joshua Lavigne is an ACMG Assistant Alpine Guide based out of Canmore, Alberta. He has made more than 20 trips to his beloved Bugaboos and has climbed the remote 1,000-metre west face of North Howser Tower five times.

The Real Mescalito (ED2 5.11 C1, 1000m, 18–20 pitches), the west face of North Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains.
FA: Crosby Johnston, Joshua Lavigne, August 2007.
The climb starts about 15 metres left of *Young Men on Fire* at the left edge of a steep white wall in a right-facing corner (the same start as for *Shooting Gallery*).
P1–3: 5.8, 5.10, 5.8. Climb up and left via a groove towards the main right-facing corner then continue up to the main corner system above.
P4–5: 5.10+, 5.11. Climb the corner and cracks with the main difficulties on pitch five. Watch for loose flakes on pitch four.
P6: 5.9. Climb left of the arête, traversing behind a large squeeze flake.
P7: Low 5th class. Traverse left on a large mossy ledge behind a large flake and down 20 metres to *The Seventh Rifle* gully. There is usually water here.
P8: Follow the water-worn grooves straight up for about 150 metres.
P9–11: 5.10. Continue up the fist cracks above until it gets wide and wet, then climb thin cracks to the right and then back left to the bivy ledge.
P12–13: Loose and wet climbing leads to clean cracks on the right side of the shaft.
P14: 5.11. A sustained pitch of technical tips laybacking. Belay in large alcove on right side.
P15: 5.11+. Climb the thin-hand crack for 40 metres then traverse left for five metres to avoid the overhanging roofs above (freed on top-rope).
P16: 5.10 C1. Climb a small right-facing corner to a finger crack in the left wall, then pull around the arête and trend left to a groove.
P17: 5.10+. At the top of the groove, angle rightwards up a slab to a large detached flake. Climb behind the flake and down to the right then traverse back into the main shaft. Be careful of rope drag.
P18: 5.10. Climb a series of cracks to the right and over the top out of the shaft.
Scramble the last 100 metres to the summit ridge and then another 50 metres to the summit.



The Real Mescalito on North Howser Tower.
Photo: Marc Piché

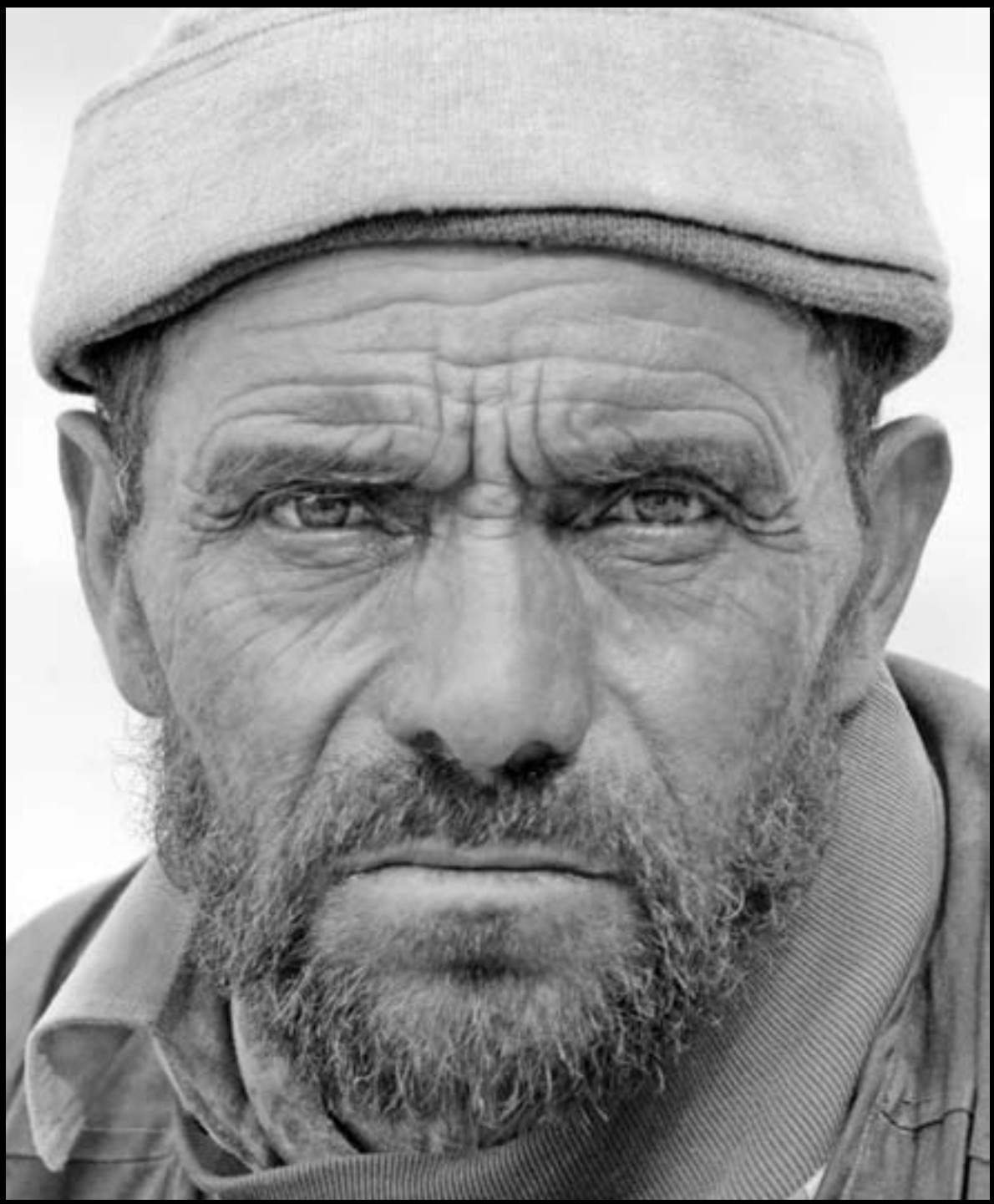


Photo: Jeremy Frimer

WIDE ANGLE

Jeremy Frimer

I'm not the first person to get cold feet upon arrival in the Karakoram. Not only is there exposure to weather and altitude, and falling rock and ice to contend with, but also illness and the notorious gatekeeper known as the Karakoram Highway. All defend access to the big peaks. So who wouldn't be scared? But now, in the era of George W. Bush, getting to the Karakoram requires passage through a deteriorating political gauntlet—"the world's most dangerous place" (*The Economist*, January 2008). We arrive in Islamabad the night that the Pakistani military storms the Red Mosque. Contrary to what our popular media convey, the vast majority of Pakistanis are politically moderate and tolerant of different peoples. Just one in 20 Pakistanis advocate for terrorist tactics. Backed by popular support, President Musharraf takes measures to crack down on the schools that breed extremism by requiring all religious schools to register with the government. The Islamabad-based Red Mosque (Lal Masjid) leaders refuse to do so and a standoff ensues. Just five kilometres from where we sleep that night, negotiations break down, tanks roll in and the standoff ends in bloodshed. Mortar sings lullabies. Gunfire counts sheep.

Loyalists to the Red Mosque descend upon the Karakoram Highway to vent fury and retaliation. Pakistan has become a major battleground between radical Islam and Western imperialism. Overnight, the world becomes a less tolerant, less peaceful place. But we have important business here (ahem) and good weather allows us to fly over the blockades in a jet plane and continue towards our mountain.

Strangely enough, political, logistical and mountainous danger has only tangential relevance to my shilly-shallying. This is my 13th expedition in 10 years; I feel ready to contend with whatever lies ahead. But the rush that I once got from discovering something new or doing something that I previously didn't see as possible has dulled. Somehow, I've become one of those commentators that survived the deadly first five years of his climbing career, got away with some stupid decisions, lost some friends that didn't, and remembers vividly when Nirvana smelled like teen spirit. I find myself in the Karakoram again—this time, not out of passion, but instead out of habit. I secretly hope that seeing our objective will rekindle a flame for this sport.

Seventy kilometres to the east of K2, Broad Peak and the Gasherbrums are the Latok and Ogre peaks forming a tight, isolated cluster up to 7,300 metres in height. Tucked under the west face of Latok II is our objective: an unclimbed, unattempted 6,500-metre rocky bastion that we dub Latok II¾. Its west face stands 1,500 metres tall—a wall of near-vertical granite. We brashly plan to link the features of least resistance in alpine style. Indeed, audacious plans are my norm. I pick something that I think is just out of my realm of possibility and *become* the climber that can pull it off along the way. The process gives me a transcendental taste, the feeling that I am, in some sense, irreversibly transformed for the better in its passage.

Our logistical guide is Little Karim, a "five-foot-nothing" legend and local of the Karakoram. He has climbed with most of the big names in Karakoram climbing and has summitted many of the big peaks: K2 nine times, Broad Peak four times and the Gasherbrum peaks seven times. In fact, he has done more Karakoram expeditions than anyone else in history, and only once had a minor headache from altitude. By Reinhold Messner's standards, he was one of the strongest climbers above 8,000 metres on the planet. And he learned to climb by watching what the white guys were doing on his first K2 expedition with Chris Bonington and Doug Scott. Not only has he no formal alpine climbing training, he never went to any sort of school and is completely illiterate. He lives under the long shadows of Masherbrum in the type of destitute poverty that is typical in Pakistan—a dirt shack packed with family, chickens and cattle. In his prime, he could make it home from K2 basecamp in a day. But he has paid a price for his lifestyle: at the age of 56, he has lost some 160 friends to the Karakoram. In 1999, Voytek Kurtyka pleaded him into retirement before the Karakoram called him number 161.

In quitting, he lost the most significant source of meaning in his life. Running this small guiding company, he now struggles to make his life make sense. He's put on weight. And, months before, as he puffed at the 5,000-metre scarcity of atmosphere of Broad Peak's basecamp, his normally joking, light-hearted spirit became lost in heavy nostalgia. He sat on a boulder outside of camp and cried.

I struggle to keep up as he hops along the loose rubble that is strewn about the Uzun Brakk Glacier. As we reach its middle, we see Latok II¾ for the first time in three dimensions. After travelling 15,000 kilometres, I gaze at its snow-plastered flanks and know in my gut that I want no part of it. I can pick the thing apart into achievable chunks, reason a line through each, glue them back together and narrate a grand strategy. But I know deep down that Latok II¾ isn't a go for me. I fear disappointing my teammates but fortunately they see its snowy condition and dismiss it as well before I embarrass myself.

Soon enough, we are planning a real objective. My ambivalence to the Karakoram is no longer concealable. Ken, Sam and Ryan all want the northwest ridge of Latok II. Some 2,100 metres high, the ridge is a massive alpine undertaking. Its primary challenge is in exposure, altitude and commitment. It looks like a harder version of some of the ridges that I climbed on Mount Logan—the *East Ridge* and the *Orion Spur*. I feel prepared and able to manage its challenges. Only, I strangely feel no urge to be on its flanks. What's going on with me? Have I sold out my adventure spirit to the comfort and security of a stable job, a steady girlfriend and a neurotic cat named Trango?

I reason through my disinterest in Latok II. The danger and commitment that comes with the ridge are what make it nonsensical to me. Given all the recent snowfall, the conditions are ripe for avalanches and cornice drops. The weather has been predominantly unsettled or poor thus far—getting high and committed on a mountain during a brief stable spell feels foolish to me. I secretly know that I could just as easily spin a tale with the opposite conclusion. The motivation behind my explanation remains unclear to me.

I find fancy with a 1,200-metre-tall south-facing rock buttress on a 5,750-metre peak near Latok II¾. I try, to no avail, to politick one of my expedition mates into joining me while the other two try Latok II's snowy ridge. After a week of frustration, sitting out heavy and steady rain, the sun finally shines. I sit alone in advanced basecamp below Latok II watching my teammates start up the ridge without me. In retrospect, will I see this decision in the same light as Kai Hirvonen's prophetically last-minute call to not join John Millar and Guy Edwards on the Devils Thumb, the climb that ended in tragedy? Or will I see this in the same light as Jay's decision to not join Sam, JC and me on our first ascent of Trango II's *Severance Ridge*—the most rewarding adventure of my life.

Ken develops attitude sickness low on the route forcing a retreat. The three agree that Sam and Ryan will make a second try. Meanwhile, Ken and I rack up, grab a single sleeping bag, a stove and a light tarp for shelter then start up the sunny rock of peak 5,750. Our style is fast-and-light, not out of some desire to impress the purity pundits at *Alpinist* magazine but instead because it's the way we like to have fun. The notion of lugging ropes and spending weeks on a mountainside sounds more like work than play to me.

We set out to piece together the easiest line we can find.

Around each blind corner, we find another miraculous crack system. Around each wall is a ramp, a chimney or a hand crack. As night falls, we reach a sandy ledge at two-thirds height in time to melt ice, lie down and watch the clouds roll in. By late morning, we reach the base of the final headwall—a steep castle of buttresses, gendarmes and recesses. We try our usual traversing trick only to get stumped for the first time. Ken grabs the sharp end following a line of weakness into unprotectable slab country high above an ankle-crushing ledge. He backs off. We traverse into a snowy recess and I take over the lead finding a hidden ramp behind an ominous gendarme which gains us access to the final summit cone. Ken takes over again and leads us to the summit of our new route—*The Outside Penguin*.

Snow begins to fall. We had scoped two lines of descent beforehand, but each is less accessible than anticipated. We resign ourselves to the arduous task of rappelling over a kilometre back down our route. A blizzard catches us immediately. Snow sticks, melts and soaks. Still near the summit, we hide under our light tarp, close our eyes (not to be mistaken with sleeping) and wait for dawn.

The descent the next day is slow and deliberate. We stay patient, searching out solid anchors and make methodical progress as the snow melts to rain. We reach the base having taken on much water and leaving behind many nuts and pins, some 40 metres of rap slings and the tail end of what will be the final high-pressure system of our expedition. I am grateful for our making the most of what the weather allowed, for the opportunity to live out a vivid experience with a friend, and for our safe return. But unlike after past expedition experiences, I feel disappointingly untransformed.

My unravelling began a few weeks before the expedition. My good friend, Vance Culbert, was in town for a visit between jobs. Since the Coast Range ski traverse in 2001, Vance's focus moved from the alpine to humanitarian work. Just back from overseeing the basic welfare of one million people who sought refuge from the genocide in Darfur, Vance would soon be en route to negotiations over child soldiers in Uganda. During his visit, we met up for a day on sunny rock in Squamish. On the drive up, he told me about life in Africa and about the stubborn refusal from western nations to provide the small intervention necessary to prevent genocide and end the conflict. It was as if he was speaking about climbing, only the content was altered: metres above sea level became head counts; crux moves on rotten rock became crux negotiations with corrupt officials; cold became heat. Many similarities but the threat of harm was unchanged. The difference to me was that the outcome of Vance's leads meant more than just personal fulfillment or height on a cliff—human lives were hanging in the balance.

Then he listened to my story, to my aspirations, to my confusion with my life. After finishing a degree in engineering physics, I struggled to spin a story about how an engineering career would have a measurable impact on some of the things about which I cared most. I questioned the urgency of the "need" for stronger, cheaper steel in a world of materialism, pre-emptive war, cultural imperialism and disease. Feeling an urgency to become a player in real progress, I stepped away from engineering and began grad school in research psychology. I now study how moral motivation develops while keeping an eye out for how my research could influence education and social policy. How climbing now fits into my new life, I was no longer certain. "I don't see you doing expeditions in five years," Vance prophesized.

None of this makes any sense. I had always seen "retiring" from climbing as a euphemism for selling out, being on the outside of something awesome. Since those idealistic university days in the Varsity Outdoor Club at UBC, many friends have dropped out of the dirtbag, "purist" lifestyle and become high-earning, metro-sexual yuppies. I swore myself to never fall into the money trap. I swore to remain pure at heart. I was dedicated to my sport, to my lifestyle and to all that it represented.

And now I drive up to Squamish with Vance and wonder what it really means to be on the outside. What exalts "the climbing life" over the life that is concerned for humanity? By questioning climbing as the be-all-and-end-all of life, am I

Jeremy Frimer on *The Outside Penguin* with Latok IV in the background. Photo: Ken Glover

Jeremy Frimer on the summit of peak 5,750. Photo: Ken Glover

selling out or am I buying in? Vance and I arrive at one of my favourite climbs, *The Great Game*. I've climbed it a dozen times but when I reach its base, the rock feels different, strange. I lead the first pitch feeling calm, confident and in control but when I reach the crux, I fall off as my concentration flutters towards Africa.

Perplexed, I search for some understanding of what in the hell is going on with me. What has happened to my zeal for climbing? Why does the rock feel different? Why am I distracted by Africa? I am reminded of a taxonomy about which my friend Kelly Cordes told me. His idea is that when we start climbing, we are drawn by the excitement, the movement, the air, the acrobatics and the athleticism. These are all instances of what Kelly calls "Type I Fun"—the traditional type where it's actually enjoyable during the act.

As one develops as a climber, he/she ventures into more challenging, colder and more complex places where suffering begins. Climbing loses its innocence and one has a harder time explaining it to relatives. Afterwards, one would look back at the adventures *as if* they were fun. This is what Kelly calls "Type II Fun"—fun only in retrospect.

But then ambitions continue to evolve into a place where pulling off something crazy in the alpine had weight unto itself and was rewarding even in the absence of enjoyment. One walks away from adventures still terrified by where he/she had been and shudders at the thought of memories of close calls but climbing is still somehow rewarding. This is what Kelly calls "Type III Fun"—not fun at all. Kelly's taxonomy ends at Type III Fun. I propose a "Type IV Fun" —Postmodern Fun, which is, by definition, dif cult to describe.

Thinking about what motivates these types of fun, Type I makes good sense to me. The immediate reward from doing an act serves to reinforce the pursuit. What leaves me perplexed by Kelly's taxonomy is why I would ever be compelled to pursue Type II and Type III Fun adventures in the first place. Given that neither of them are rewarding in the simple, pleasurable sense, there must be some other form of reinforcement built in. Reflecting over my past adventures, I sifted past all the pleasure searching for any other nectar that I sought in the hills. I noticed that the items of my list fit loosely into four "baskets" of goodness. As I examined these baskets, I began to see where my interest in climbing had gone and why my passions over greenhouse gas, the Red Mosque and child soldiers had emerged.

What brought me to climbing was an interest in the first basket: *The Personal*. I think back to that feeling of flow that comes after pulling off something at the edge of what I previously thought was impossible. Personal development is the transformation that comes with pushing myself to my limit. It is freedom, creativity, personal exploration and self-knowledge. An introspective person by nature, climbing offered me what seemed like opportunity for development without end.

But before long, I felt limited by climbs where I could anticipate what lay ahead. To advance my climbing, I needed to venture into unexplored terrain. New routing became my drug. Grant proposals would ask about the significance of my proposed new route, which struck me odd. I had never thought of a new route as being significant in any real sense but the folks behind the Mugs Stump Award are authorities so they must know what they are talking about. This led me to identify the second basket of goodness: *Conquest*. This basket represents venturing into the unknown, the final frontier and going "where no man has gone before." Picture Norgay and Hillary on Everest, Mallory's "because it's there," and the Russian Big Wall project sieging the daylights out of Jannu.

Steve House has been a vocal critic of the singular goal of conquest. Cutting through his slander, his main point seems to be that doing something of note not only means climbing a big, unconquered beast, but slaying it with grace. This basket of *Purity* tells us not so much what to do but how to do it. It tells us what is kosher and why a splitter crack is so beautiful. It helps us tell a redpoint from a pinkpoint and alpine style from the siege. It tells us that style counts and that less is more: gear is in, bolts are out; fast is in, heavy is out; leashless is in, spurs are out; and it ain't over until you reach the "tippy-top". The rules of purity are ever-changing conventions that predefine for us what it means to do something properly, the climber's subjective experience of the climb aside.

The fourth and perhaps least prevalent of baskets in alpine climbing is that of *Community*. Beyond concerns for conquest, purity and the personal, the ethic of this basket is about the meaning that exists between people. Often, it comes with pleasure enough to qualify as Type I Fun but sometimes connecting with others comes as a sacrifice. Good examples include: showing a friend the ropes; allowing a partner to take an extra lead as Giardia eats away at my insides; or building a school in Pakistan. The point of this basket is that we are each better off if we share our existence, if we empathize with another's plight, if we function as a unit.

Of course, any single alpine adventure draws from several baskets. The point of drawing these distinctions is not to figure out which adventure falls into which basket. Rather, the point is to get real about the legitimacy of my motives in alpine climbing and my life in general.

With a wide angle view, I wonder about what really counts in this world. Regarding my expedition to Pakistan, what statistic measures its purity: the 15 kilograms of gear in my climbing pack on *The Outside Penguin* or the 3,400 kilograms of greenhouse gases that I produced in air travel? Or did I make up for the lack of purity by mightily vanquishing a Karakoram mountain? Beyond my own jollies, what real good does my conquest do for the betterment of humanity, for little animal critters or for the planet that sustains us? Do conquest and purity make this world a better place in any meaningful sense? With the minor exception of the few (i.e. Sir Edmund Hillary) that inspired the many to pursue their own dreams, conquest and purity seem to be a great distraction from the real deal on planet Earth.

The personal and community baskets are where I see the real goodness in alpine climbing. Personal development builds the essential character that later becomes the foundation for making some good use of myself. Alpine climbing was: the venue for me to explore; the opportunity to discard convention and think for myself; the challenge that demanded that I persevere; and the confusion that drew out creativity. It seems as though Little Karim and I have focused much of our lives on the baskets of the personal and conquest. We now turn to community for future meaning.

As I arrived in Pakistan, my angst came from the emptiness of my basket of community. I look around and see people like Vance, now the country director for Norwegian Refugee Council in Ivory Coast, I see people like Greg Mortenson, founder of the Central Asia Institute (which has created 61 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan). And I see people like Lizzy Scully who put up *Bad Hair Day* in the Bugaboos but has also founded Girls Education International (promoting education of underprivileged girls in places like those near Little Karim's village in the Karakoram). They are each promoting causes that count to me. But I see that these community endeavors are not just a sideshow for them; it's as if they have become the central axis of their lives. I think I understand why I arrived in Pakistan wondering what I was doing there.

Acknowledgments

This expedition was generously supported by Mountain Equipment Co-op and the American Alpine Club Lyman-Spitzer Award.

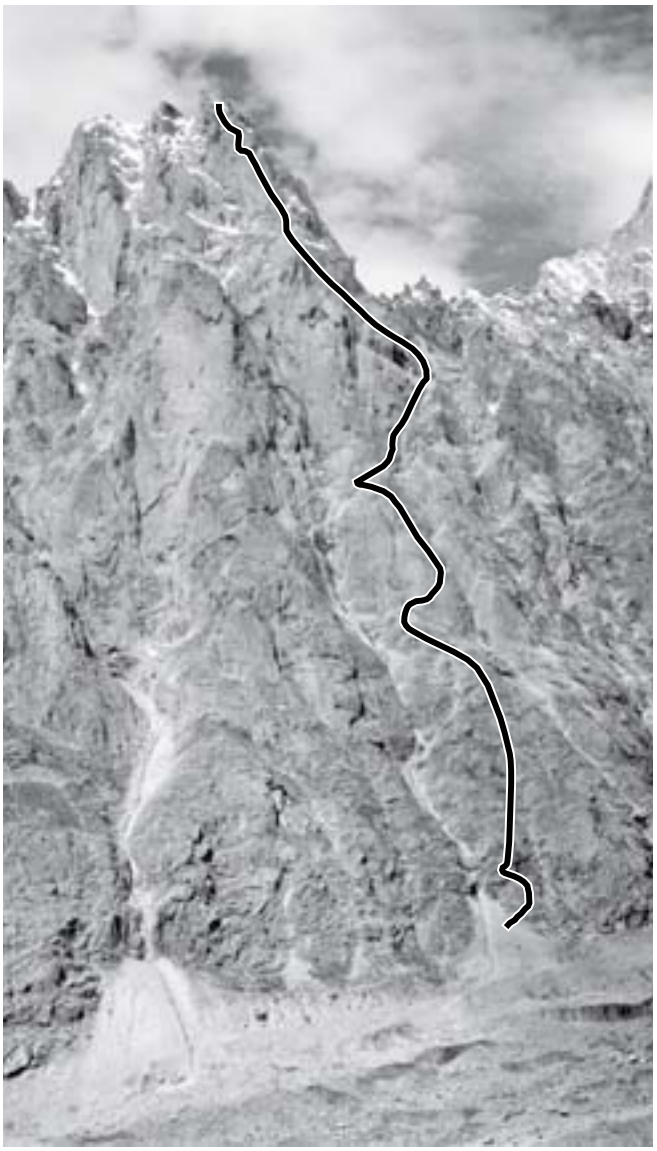
Summary

The Outside Penguin (V 5.10 A1 M3, 1200m), peak 5,750, Panmah Muztagh, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Jeremy Frimer, Ken Glover, July 30–August 1, 2007.

About the Author

A PhD student in developmental psychology at UBC, Jeremy Frimer is on the road to becoming a professor and then prime minister if he can get around to it. Advocacy for social justice of unsolvable global issues has become his focus these days—namely the genocide in Darfur. He resides in Vancouver with his SPCA feline orphans, Trango and Latok.

The Outside Penguin on the south face of peak 5,750, Biafo Glacier, Karakoram, Pakistan. Photo: Jeremy Frimer



Ice Porn

Ian Welsted

Ueli Steck climbing through the serac at the top of *Polarity* on the second ascent. Photo: Simon Anthamatten

Inset: Dana Ruddy and Cory Richards at the bivy. Photo: Cory Richards collection

"Ice porn is in!" said Dave Marra as he pointed toward the unclimbed north face of Mount Snowdome. Around the corner from *Slipstream* (VI WI4+, 925m) was a thick stream of blue ice flowing uninterrupted from seracs above. What an unlikely spot for a clean line of ice—straight down a nearly vertical and unblemished dark expanse of limestone where nothing had ever formed before. Furthering the audacity of the line was the history of the fictitious ice climb we were referring to: Ice Porn. Five years ago, Joe McKay—a local guide—had spoofed the climbing media's incessant need for hyperbole by inventing the ultimate ice epic set in the very spot where this new line now appeared. He had photoshopped pictures of *Nemesis* (V WI6, 160m) onto the north face of Mount Snowdome after climbing the former with Dana Ruddy and Paul Valiulis. With over-the-top phrases like "Gather about three metres of extra slack . . . then like a coiled leopard, I launched myself out . . . aiming for the hole in the curtain out in space," the climbing rags reported it as fact. Ice Porn had been etched in the collective consciousness of the Rockies climbing community, and here was our chance to actually climb the real thing.

"But if you guys decide to go do it, I'm out," Dave continued, "'cause I'm a family man now." The three of us had different reasons for being on the hunt for a first ascent: Dave had a short break from family responsibilities to reassert himself in the mountains he so loves; I had just worked every day for six months; and Cory Richards seems enthusiastic about climbing big stuff in general. However, three years earlier Dave and I had nearly met our demise on the same day while climbing different routes in adjacent cirques off the Icefields Parkway. Dave had been famously spat off the final pitch of his new route *For Fathers* (V WI6, 1000m) when the serac he was climbing up exploded. Meanwhile, I had been avalanched on at the base of *Cerca del Mar* (V WI5+, 160m). For this reason I felt a spiritual connection with Dave although we'd never climbed together in the mountains, and deferred to his advice on the subject of seracs. With the possibility of heading up as a threesome ruled out, Cory and I bid him adieu. He put us in touch with Dana Ruddy, and made us promise not to touch the blue glacial ice if we got that far.

Dana had been on a send-fest for the past few years in the Rockies. Judging from the state of his boots, I believed him when he casually stated, "I don't think anyone has put on more miles in the alpine in the last couple of years." No surprise that he agreed to climb the Emperor Face on Mount Robson with Cory and me. We marched the 20-something kilometres to Berg Lake, saw the snow-covered face and walked out again. Nothing beats a backcountry marathon with full packs to make one want to travel vertically rather than horizontally. Over the next three days the discussion centred on whether we'd get scooped on Ice Porn. One day we saw Celtic Reforestation trucks cruising the Parkway. "Oh my God, it's Guy Lacelle," I worried. Luckily, it turned out that the trucks were simply on their way to a poorly paid beetle-probing contract based in Canmore, and the world's foremost ice soloist was not scooping us. At the time it only managed to put more fire under my desire to get going on the route. Dana didn't seem worried as he argued that we were in Jasper and climbers there weren't competitive.

"Yeah," I reasoned, "but if JR sees that thing he'd be up it in an hour without a backpack to slow him down," referring to one of the Rockies' better-known speed demons—Jonny "Red" Walsh. With a whiteout up high and continued bad weather in the forecast, Cory and I hiked gear into the base the next day in an effort to scope the route. From below we convinced ourselves that the seracs were not overhanging and actually rather benign. Dana spent the day hanging out at home, unsure of whether to go due to the obvious objective hazard. Earlier I'd said to him that the desire to climb the route, "depends what you have to live for." Given that he enjoys a nice lifestyle as a "legendary" Jasper local complete with a lovely girlfriend and a slack work schedule, I imagined it would take some convincing. I was happy to hear upon our return that he was keen and considered the climbing "no problem."

If the climbing was no problem I thought, the length of the route might be, with its 1,000 metres of vertical rise from the glacier to the summit, 600 metres of which looked to be WI5 or harder. Had any of us climbed that much steep ice in a day? Never having climbed ice by headlamp I figured we could be shut down by time rather than technical difficulty, so I convinced the other two to bring light bivy gear. Dana was most concerned about minimizing time under the seracs so he suggested going over the top and descending the glacier instead of rappelling the route. We tilted the odds in our favour by taking a few luxuries and going as a team of three, bucking the present fashion to be fair to the mountain.

First thing in the morning we climbed 300 metres of easy ice. Dana successfully rope-gunned four 70-metre pitches of beautiful ice while I silently prayed he would somehow continue. Pitch one: "I would have been off that one." Pitch two: "Wow, my arms aren't working." Pitch three: "Yup, my arms are non-functional but I think I can take over somehow. I'll find an easy way up but hope it's not vertical." Dana brought me back to reality: "Nope, I saw it and it's vertical, but I think

Cory Richards leads the last pitch before the serac during the first ascent of *Polarity*. Photo: Cory Richards collection

I've got another pitch left in me."

A couple of weeks later at the opening night of the Banff Mountain Film Festival, I recognized the same team dynamic in the film *The Alps*, in which Robert Jasper guides John Harlin Jr. up the north face of the Eiger. Robert Jasper (Dana) does all the hard leading, his wife (me) belays while John Harlin Jr. (Cory) feeds the slack. This may sound a bit harsh, but let's be honest about what happened up there: Dana was "the man" and Cory and I were the belayers. To be fair, Cory led the last WI4 pitch up to the base of the serac, while Dana and I discussed how to surmount the overhanging glacial ice-cliff. It was obviously the steepest ice either of us had ever seen.

"I know," I offered. "I've seen photos of Jeff Lowe aiding the serac on the north face of Temple. We'll just sit on screws."

"I've never aided," responded Dana, so I thought my chance had come to pay him back for his consecutive leads. Being the slower of the two, I arrived at the belay behind Dana to hear that we were pulling the plug. Cory had decided that the risk was too great. If the serac came off from the force of a climber, we'd be crushed. A more usual level of risk aversion had returned to our team and it didn't take any convincing to decide to rap. "Not the worst idea ever," became our rally cry.

We were glad for the bivy gear two pitches down as we settled onto a comfy protected ledge, which was better than rappelling slowly in the dark. We had done the "first team-of-three ascent to the top of the rock buttress on the north face of Mount Snowdome and shiver bivy at 3,200 metres with associated smoking of a large celebratory hash joint"…ever! It was the most memorably enjoyable night I have spent in the mountains.

Descending to the valley the next morning, we returned to a different climbing reality that includes all the details, which I suppose matter but didn't seem to at the time. Four days later, Ueli Steck and Simon Anthamatten from Switzerland repeated the route but climbed through the final serac adding 50 metres to our effort. However, they didn't climb off the top of the mountain either, as it was blocked by a cornice. This prompted the question about who, if anyone yet, had done the first ascent. At the time, Cory had chatted to Will Gadd and Barry Blanchard and both seemed to think we'd done the first ascent of the waterfall, but not an alpine first ascent. Unfortunately Cory's correspondence with the climbing media resulted in Climbing.com's Hotflashes (coincidentally sounding pornographic and thus perhaps appealing to the same male instinct) reporting it as the first ascent of the north face of Mount Snowdome (Cory had not told them any such thing). As expected, people let their opinions be known and correctly pointed out that it was not the first ascent of the north face since it did not top-out. Then again, *M-16* (VI WI7 A2, 1000m) on the northeast face of Howse Peak didn't top-out either. Does that just make it some kind of cragging route?

Then there's the nature of our climb—serac threatened. Barry points out that there are various reasons for grading a route commitment grade VI. Difficulty and objective hazard are a couple of the criteria. Clearly the climbing was not that difficult, at least not for someone in shape like Dana. Does it deserve grade VI commitment just because the entire team could be obliterated? It is definitely not an alpine grade VI but is it a waterfall grade VI? I don't know. Barry says he's climbed through seracs only once—on *Borderline* (VI WI5, 800m)—and won't ever do it again. We didn't, and Dave Marra on *For Fathers* didn't either (but he tried). So why is a European climber willing to accept the risk that modern-day Canadian alpinists won't (or, in Dave's case, have their sanity questioned for even trying) *Arctic Dream* (VI WI6, 500m) below the Quadra Glacier shares a similar history. Canadians did the first ascent of the waterfall but it took Europeans to go through the seracs. The exception is Eric Dumerac and Shaun King's ascent through the seracs above *Gimme Shelter* (VI WI6, 500m). I can relate when Ueli says he didn't know if he "would ever get a chance to climb something like that ever again in the alpine." Looking back, in a way I wish we had tried the serac pitch. Having said that though, I've learned to be happy for what I manage to do in this life.

Summary

Polarity (VI WI5+, 800m), north face of Mt. Snowdome, Columbia Icefields, Jasper National Park, Alberta. FA: Cory Richards, Dana Ruddy, Ian Welsted, October 13–14, 2007. FA through serac: Simon Anthamatten, Ueli Steck, October 18, 2007. Note: Anthamatten and Steck did not top-out either due to a large cornice blocking access to the summit plateau.

About the Author

Ian Welsted is lucky to have witnessed great feats of rope-gunning prowess in a variety of conditions, predominantly in the Canadian Rockies' winter season of late. Ambitions centre around dreams of permanent retirement from compulsory employment with B.C.'s thriving forestry and mining industry.

The Ice Porn Hoax

Ice Porn (VII WI7+ M9 A3, 915m)
FA: Joe McKay and Paul (not real name), December 8–10, 2003.
Usual mixed rack required, a few extra blades and stub screws helpful. Hook could be useful in one or two places.
Approach: As for *Slipstream* but follow the top of moraines until you come to a 300-metre wide curtain where the bottom of *Ice Porn* spills into the valley. Best to gear up here behind some large blocks. It is evident that anything that falls off the top runs a long ways out. Best attempted with good avalanche conditions and longer spring days. Solo about 200 metres of WI3 ice of varying quality to the beginning of the route.
P1: WI6+ M9, 70m. You will come to a large pillar completely detached from the wall. There is good ice inside the cave for an anchor. Start up the wall (M9) for about 20 metres. There are two really good tied-off knifeblade placements. The pillar is rotted-out at the base so this seemed like the safer thing to do. Swing out on fairly chandeliered ice so leave anything that you don't need at the base or in the car. I was sure that if I had kept my car keys, I would have ripped a tool because the ice was so bad. After about 10 metres, the ice gets better and you can get a decent screw in.
P2–3: WI5+, 135m. Climb two full pitches of steep cauliflower ice. You can get gear in if you get creative.
P4: WI6+/7 A3, 65m. A steep series of icicles pour form under a super obvious ice roof. At some point, coliseum-sized pillars broke away and the new pillars formed about three metres inside. Climb the steep free-standing column that is there now for about 35–40 metres. Here you come to the roof and it gets a bit tricky. About 2.5 metres out on the lip of the roof is a hole in a well-attached piece of ice coming off the roof. Best to place a screw here to protect this move. Aid up by hooking your tool into the carabiner (the aid part). Gather about three metres of extra slack until it is draped well below you. Work your feet up. At this point, I unclipped my leash, then like a coiled leopard, I launched myself out with my remaining tool extended aiming for the hole in the curtain out in space. It was a big hole but there was the odd chance that I could have missed it. I recall it seeming like forever before I came to a sudden stop, my arm ripping three-quarters out of the socket. I relaxed my grip letting my nerves calm a little, then I reached back, grabbed my third tool (you may want to switch tools before pulling that last manoeuvre if you are not comfortable climbing with your second tool). I pulled up, locked-off and was relieved to feel the security of a well-placed tool in good ice. A few more pull-ups and I could get my foot into the hole and take a well-deserved rest. The screaming barfies sent waves of nausea through my body, probably much like what you are feeling now as you read this. Push it another 10 metres to a hanging belay.
P5–7: WI6/6+, 165m. Climb vertical sustained ice to hanging belays. Generally, the ice is of good quality with the odd pillar capped with a mushroom roof. Good fun and a welcome relief from the "Gong Show" pitches below.
P8–9: WI2/3, 120m. Follow a cave that leads back into the mountain. A headlamp would be useful but not really required. The tunnel is horseshoe-shaped but with a spiralling upward twist. You are deposited back out on the edge of the mountain at the base of the most enormous free-standing column I have ever seen, even in *Star Wars*.
P10–11: WI6+/7, 115m. Climb this incredible display of nature. At the top of first pitch, set up in the middle of something that can only best be described as an upside-down Grand Sentinel made of ice. The belay is hanging in the middle of this suspended solid.
P12: WI4, 45m. The top kicks back with excellent ice to finish.

2003: The photoshopped Ice Porn image that tricked climbing magazines. Photo: Joe McKay

2008: *Polarity* on the north face (right face in shadow) of Mount Snowdome. Photo: Sean Isaac

BAFFIN

l'île aux

Des fjords immenses où tombent des big-walls encore plus grands, des couloirs encaissés où la neige reste froide — cette île du Nunavut, perdue entre le Groenland et le continent canadien au carrefour du passage du Nord-Ouest, est la destination alpine où tous les jeux sont possibles. Six copains sont partis avec le matos de big-wall, les parachutes, les parapentes, les kites, les skis et les planches à neige pour 45 jours de délire.

« Regardez ! Au milieu du fjord, c'est un ours, c'est sûr ! » Blutch vient de sortir de la tente. Il hurle et rebondit dans tous les sens. Branle-bas de combat, tout le monde scrute l'horizon. L'ours vient droit vers nous, il vise le camp de base. Bien sûr qu'il nous a vus ; il a flairé notre odeur depuis que nous sommes arrivés, il y a trois jours. Les traces fraîches que l'on a vues le long

Sam Beaugey
Photos par David Ravanel

enfants

de Scott Island — c'est lui, c'est certain. Gibbs Fiord, où nous avons posé le camp de base pour se tenter un big-wall, est réputé pour être bourré d'ours au printemps. C'est la saison des amours, où mâles et femelles se retrouvent dans le coin pour les débats ; ça tombe bien, j'adore les plantigrades.

« Le fusil, vous l'avez mis où ? Il se rapproche ! Est-ce qu'il est chargé, au moins ? Détendez-vous, ça va bien se passer », bégaye Martial.

De toute façon, on a l'arme imparable de Mimouse, la trompette ! Je sou e dans ce truc de gamin en plastique rouge, car le bruit insoutenable pour nos amis en peluche est censé les faire fuir. Tiens, il se rapproche malgré tout ; il n'est plus qu'à 60 mètres du camp et se dresse sur ses pattes de derrière ! Qu'est-ce que cela signifie, attaque ou observation ? On met en place la deuxième stratégie avec une fusée de détresse tirée dans sa direction. C'est à peine s'il lève la tête. Il est maintenant de l'autre côté du camp vers les trous à phoques, coincé entre la paroi et nous. Le fusil en joue est posé sur un bidon. Martial s'extasie lorsque l'ours commence à faire son numéro. Il plonge dans une fissure pour prendre un bain et ensuite ressort

Photo : David Ravanel

tranquille en se frottant le dos contre la glace comme un petit caniche. « Regarde, c'est trop mignon ! » « Ouais, ouais, c'est trop mignon ; je te laisse dormir avec lui ce soir… » Au dire des Inuits, c'est un gros mâle bien dodu. On peut donc s'attendre à une attitude pacifique de sa part. Effectivement, il s'éloigne après une heure de ronde. Nous savons maintenant à qui appartient ce territoire. Bienvenue au pays des ours polaires.

Nous sommes cinq pour les quatre premières semaines : Blutch, Martial, Mimouse, David et Sam. L'idée est d'essayer d'ouvrir une voie parmi toutes les possibilités qui existent ici. Le premier projet était de grimper sur le Great Sail Peak dans la vallée Stewart, mais les retards de cargo nous ont fait réaliser qu'il faut viser un mur avec moins de portages. Aucun problème, il reste ici des murs vierges pour les dix prochaines générations, et la plupart tombent dans l'eau. Après une discussion avec Chris McNamara, que nous croisons à Clyde River, et quelques infos prises sur Internet, nous apprenons que Mike Libecki a ouvert une voie en solo, il y a quelques années, sur Scott Island, un gigantesque îlot au milieu de Gibbs Fiord. Il semble que de nombreux murs attendent d'être grimpouillés.

Chris a pris sa retraite de l'escalade ; il est uniquement ici pour sauter en parachute avec une dizaine d'autres Américains. Leur voyage sera écourté après l'accident mortel d'un des sauteurs.

Le cap est mis sur Scott Island. Après une reconnaissance autour de l'île, on se jette, dès l'arrivée au camp de base, sur deux lignes qui nous paraissent évidentes. Bilan de la journée : 20 mètres en six heures pour moi sur la droite de la face, dans du rocher bien pourri qui est plein de blocs prêts à décoller, et 20 mètres pour Mimouse, dans un mille-feuille hyperlisse avec des colonnes qui sonnent creux. À ce rythme, dans un mois on ne sera toujours pas sortis.

La plus belle ligne reste celle de gauche, et on décide donc de jeter toute l'équipe sur cette voie. Après deux longueurs sur trous de crochet pour rejoindre les premières fines fissures, la bastonnade commence : Birdbeak party et crochets péteux, que du bonheur ! Un nouveau constat : trois longueurs de fixées en quatre jours avec du rocher digne des Drus, version éboulement sur un dévers constant à chaque relais. Déments, on n'a pas fini de se marrer.

Il fait –27°C en ce début mai, et le temps est gris sans être trop méchant, mais le rythme de grimpe s'en ressent fortement ; nous sommes de vraies tortues. Les équipes tournent 24 heures sur 24 sous un soleil permanent ; c'est la règle de grimpe dans le coin. Les rythmes de sommeil, vue notre envie limitée à regarder la montre, s'en trouvent un peu chamboulés. En bref, c'est du grand n'importe quoi, avec des couchers à 4 heures du matin et des levers à 2 heures de l'après-midi, ou des 20 heures non-stop. Au bout de quelques jours, plus personne ne dort ni ne mange en même temps.

Le souci majeur est pour l'assureur, qui doit rester huit heures au minimum sans bouger. On décide donc de monter un portaledge avec une bâche, ainsi qu'un duvet, un bouquin et des moufles, pour celui qui poireaute avec son Grigri. Résultat : L'assureur s'endort fréquemment, et se fait ensuite réveiller par un grand coup sur la corde, ou une demande express de coinceurs supplémentaires. Le leader fait donc souvent de grandes longueurs jusqu'à 70 mètres, droit dans le pentu.

Pour ceux qui font la pause, c'est une ballade au sommet en passant par les couloirs, et un vol en parapente ou un joli saut en base-jump. Sam, au deuxième saut, se fait surprendre par le côté uniforme de la neige au sol, qui fausse les distances pour le temps d'ouverture. À une demi-seconde près, les conséquences auraient pu être définitives. Quant à Mimouse, il réalise ses premiers grands sauts de falaise. Quoi de plus classe que de faire ses premiers sauts en terre de Baf n — le rêve de tout sauteur. Toute l'équipe s'est remise au parapente pour l'occasion, ce qui permet aussi des prises de vues aériennes du camp capsule, maintenant fixé à 300 mètres au-dessus du sol.

C'est maintenant l'heure de hisser les sacs et de partir pour un petit voyage d'une semaine dans le mur, les cinq grimpeurs ensemble. Pour tirer les sacs au pied de la paroi, pas de souci majeur, car le terrain est tout plat en neige, et 800 mètres nous séparent du mur depuis le camp de base. Il suf ra d'un coup de pulka, tiré par l'un des meilleurs chiens de traîneau du pays d'abondance ; j'ai bien sûr nommé Blutch. Pour ne pas se sentir coupables, on se met sur l'attelage et on tente de l'aider avec nos cordes nettement moins tendues…

Et là, sans portage, on attache les sacs directement du traîneau et on attaque le hissage, avec 10 mètres de dévers pour la première longueur. Vu que les cochons à tirer ne touchent jamais le rocher, nous entamons des hissages de 100 mètres. Rien de tel pour passer quelques bonnes nuits de sommeil. Mimouse réalise l'une des plus belles longueurs de la voie, dans un grand dièdre avec de fines fissures super raides sur 60 mètres. Une petite réflexion sur l'escalade libre le laisse rêveur quant aux possibilités de libérer la longueur. Deux questions restent en suspens : la protection et la température. À part des beaks et trois Friends, rien n'est valable pour se protéger. La température ne permet pas facilement de se mettre mains nues, et avec les moufles ça devient tout de suite moins réalisable.

Le premier camp est installé au bout d'une journée de travaux digne du goulag, avec 10 sacs de hissage et trois portaledges. Une véritable armada. Le lendemain, une avance fulgurante nous propulse deux longueurs plus haut. Notre plus gros problème reste les grosses expandings absolument ingrimpables, qui font penser à la phrase de Christophe Moulin et Jérôme Blanc-Gras: « Encore des autobus pendus par les essuie-glace. » Nous louvoyons gentiment au milieu de ces douces soucoupes de cinq par dix mètres, en espérant qu'elles n'ont pas envie de prendre leur envol au moment où nous passons dessous. Parfois nous sommes obligés d'en évaluer le poids, afin de savoir si nos petits muscles les soutiendront, et de les envoyer par-dessus bord sans toucher l'assureur ni le camp en dessous. Un jeu psychologique qui pimente enfin les longueurs d'artif monotones sur beaks, coppers, Aliens noirs et couplage en chou-fleur de petites lames.

Un rien nous amuse. Martial torche une longueur sans un seul point correct, en seulement cinq heures. Blutch prend en charge un projet digne des purges de travaux accrochés au-

dessus d'une autoroute en circulation et décide de moufler un petit monolithe qui surplombe l'arrivée au relais. Il sangle et empaquette le bébé de 80 kilos avec des cordes fixes et, aussi têtu qu'il puisse être, décide non pas de le vacher mais de le mouliner au-dessus des autres soucoupes instables. Tout cela au-dessus du camp avec tous les portaledges. Martial, David et Mimouse se planquent sur la gauche pour tenter de se protéger sommairement. Descente magistrale jusqu'à hauteur du camp sans aucune casse, et un coup de couteau le libère dans les airs jusqu'à la glace : sept secondes avant l'impact — ouf !

Au matin du cinquième jour, nous décidons de remonter le camp, quatre longueurs avant la sortie. Là, le temps déjà mitigé se dégrade. Le montage du camp se fait avec un petit vent parfois rafaleux, avec de la neige et une température fraîche pour la saison. Emmêlement des sangles sur les portaledges, et envol des bâches et des cordes, qui se baladent à l'horizontale. Ce qui se présente au-dessus de nos têtes n'est pas rassurant ; la sortie du mur n'est qu'un enchevêtrement de gros blocs de la taille d'une voiture, et cela sur 30 mètres. À moins de penduler vers la gauche dans du mixte, la partie semble scabreuse avec à nouveau le camp exposé droit en dessous. C'est donc à l'aide de deux pendules, et de crampons et piolets, que nous rejoignons un terrain mixte qui maintient les blocs entre eux. Et, ô miracle, après une cheminée et un toit, nous arrivons dans une brèche facile jusqu'au sommet — *déééement !* La voie s'appellera *Nassariit* (« Fous ta cagoule » en langage inuit).

Il fait jour blanc, avec un soleil diffus qui pointe à travers. Nous réalisons enfin que depuis une semaine la neige s'est accumulée au moins sur un mètre. Chose que nous n'avons pu constater jusqu'à présent vus le dévers et la protection du mur. Rapidement c'est l'organisation pour la descente. Après une super journée de beau sans vent, c'est l'arrivée rapide du vrai blizzard du Grand Nord. D'abord on s'en amuse avec les kites à petite surface ; skis aux pieds, on rigole toute la journée. Puis, en pleine nuit, les pointes à plus de 100 kilomètres/heure menacent d'arracher la tente dôme. Un des arceaux casse et déchire la toile. À nouveau, tout le monde dehors avec les pelles pour construire un mur de protection, arrimer les tentes avec tous les skis et les bidons et dégager toutes les demi-heures l'accumulation de neige sur le toit. Nous réalisons avec quelle stupidité nous avons laissé la tente montée avec toutes nos affaires dedans pendant qu'on grimpait. Si la même chose s'était produite quelques jours auparavant, nous nous serions retrouvés en slip au retour du mur…

Jean-No, qui vient nous rejoindre ce soir-là pour les quinze derniers jours, est coincé à Iqaluit à cause de la tempête. Une bonne occasion pour faire encore un saut avant de changer de fjord.

Le problème reste l'accès, avec toute cette neige. Blutch décide de venir avec nous, accompagné de son parapente, pour une nouvelle forme de ski-base. Nous partons à trois en ski de rando au sommet du Ship's Prow, le fameux mur grimpé par Libecki et qui sépare les deux côtés de l'île avec sa proue démentielle. Une colonie de phoques se fait bronzer au soleil rasant ; la lumière est incroyable. Pour la hauteur, c'est une surprise comparée aux dires de l'Américain, comme quoi le mur ferait 650 mètres ; il en fait plutôt un petit 500. Un beau saut quand même. Celui qui a pris le plus gros risque reste Blutch, qui décolle dans les cailloux sur l'autre versant, râpé par le vent. Il transporte nos skis et nos bâtons pendus à son baudrier ; ceux-ci vont traîner une centaine de mètres avant qu'il ne décolle vraiment…

Retrouvailles avec Jean-No, qui nous amène quelques surprises du pays, et notamment une bouteille de pastis et des cigarettes — trop bon ! Départ pour le fameux Sam Ford Fiord, un des plus grands fjords de la région, où les plus beaux sauts et les plus belles ascensions continuent de défrayer la chronique. Nous ne sommes pas seuls. Une autre équipe franco-suisse, venue aux mêmes dates, est installée juste en face de nous sur l'autre rive du fjord. Ils sont ici pour la glisse et le base-jump. Quand nous débarquons, ils ont déjà réalisé les sauts mythiques du coin, et ils vont continuer leur lancée en ouvrant de nouveaux sites majeurs du secteur — comme le Broad Peak, ou encore le sommet du Polar Star, qui ont des dénivelées en wingsuit de 1 800 mètres !

Histoire de se requinquer après la grimpe, on organise un banquet d'Astérix sur le pulka en guise de table, avec saucisson, fromage et pain à l'huile d'olive et à l'origan. C'est Blutch, notre maître cuisinier pour l'expé — avec également Philippe Rochat, un très bon restaurateur suisse —, qui nous a concocté deux ou trois menus pour les jours de fête. Cela nous permet d'oublier les repas lyophilisés que l'on mangeait tant bien que mal dans le mur.

Le premier jour dans Sam Ford, Mimouse et moi, nous allons faire un « petit saut » de 700 mètres — The Beak avec Jean-No, notre chef aérien — pendant que les autres décollent du sommet en parapente. Ambiance superbe avec les ombres des tours qui se découpent sur le fjord enneigé. Le 10ème saut de falaise pour Mimouse est un beau saut à deux en wingsuit. Jean-No a aimablement pris le même modèle de wingsuit que moi, histoire de rester un peu à mes côtés. Ça ne l'empêche pas de m'enrhumer gentiment en me laissant quasiment sur place à la fin du vol.

Le deuxième jour, toujours grand beau ; on en profite pour remonter le couloir Polar Star et se payer à ski l'un des plus beaux couloirs du coin. Mille mètres encaissés entre deux murs énormes, et une neige poudreuse monstre. Nous attaquons juste sous le sommet, car les accumulations des derniers jours nous laissent perplexes au niveau de la rupture de pente.

Arrivés à skis et à planche à neige sur le plat du fjord, nous regardons la face mythique du Polar Sun, haute de 1 500 mètres ; demain, ce sera pour nous.

Après une montée à pied sur l'autre versant, dans une neige à gobelets typiquement canadienne, nous atteignons le col en quatre heures, puis la brèche sous le sommet où se situe le site le plus utilisé. Un petit rappel et une main courante nous permettent d'accéder au cirque gigantesque de la face. La neige fraîche vole au sommet, mais le vent semble correct. Mimouse rate son départ mais récupère bien. Nous partons pour plus d'une minute de vol en wingsuit, en jouant avec l'arête avant d'ouvrir le parachute. L'atterrissage se fait juste à côté du camp de base. Un mythe enfin sauté 10 ans après notre projet initial

Photo : David Ravanel

de venir ici, qui n'avait pu se faire. Une pensée pour ceux qui n'ont pas pu venir : Erwan, Jérôme et autres.

Après une tentative de neuf heures aller-retour au Broad Peak, avortée pour cause de vent, nous séparons les équipes. C'est à ce moment que « Mike Blutch » (entendez le fils spirituel de Mike Horn) va commencer à s'exprimer en solitaire. Il débute par un tour à skis du plateau glaciaire derrière le Broad Peak et les sommets du Polar, et ressort vers le Walker Citadel, pour un petit tour d'une vingtaine d'heures. Pendant ce temps, c'est kite pour les autres, avec le vent qui s'est levé.

Nous retournerons, Blutch et moi, sur la vallée Stewart en rentrant par les plateaux glaciaires, avec une tentative de kite sur le lac Stewart, et un décollage à la verticale pour moi à cause des rafales trop violentes.

Les conditions dans le fjord prennent parfois des tournures délicates, notamment quand le vent katabatique souffle à 60 kilomètres/heure au sol, alors qu'en altitude, au sommet des murs, le vent est nul. Blutch en fera les frais en parapente, obligé de se poser vent arrière, avec les skis heureusement. Il doit se jeter sur sa voile pour ne pas se faire arracher de nouveau.

Le fjord a maintenant bien changé, avec une hausse des températures ; des lacs se forment en surface de la glace, transformant le camp en piscine et donnant aux boissons un goût fortement salé. Ce n'est pas encore la débâcle, mais juste les premiers signes.

Après un dernier saut sur le Polar Sun, il est temps de rentrer sur Clyde River, où nous attendent nos amis — notamment Jake, un homme du coin qui nous a hébergés et a fait beaucoup pour nous faire découvrir la vie inuite. Blutch, lui, décide de rentrer à pied, parcourant 160 kilomètres en deux jours non-stop. Malgré les subventions de l'état canadien, la vie au village n'est pas toujours rose, surtout pendant l'hiver, où la nuit règne 24 heures sur 24. Certains ont gardé le rythme des ancêtres avec la chasse et la pêche, mais c'est le chômage pour la plupart. Le message d'espoir, c'est la population rajeunissante qui explose dans la majorité des villages de l'île, ce qui signifie aussi que des projets se concrétisent pour que la vie sur place puisse répondre à leurs désirs. L'aspiration de ce peuple reste moderne, avec les envies culturelles et matérielles que nous connaissons, au même titre que celles du continent canadien, tout en gardant un œil sur l'espace qui borde leurs habitations, l'un des derniers paysages sauvages au monde.

Un voyage marquant, où la vie dure et les espaces incroyables nous laissent une envie terrible d'y retourner, pour continuer notre vie d'enfants gâtés et prendre à nouveau tous nos jouets pour de nouvelles aventures !

Remerciements

Merci à Petzl, Eider, Chamonix, Grenoble, La Sportiva, Béal, Philippe Rochat, TV Mountain, Seven Doc, Le CAF, Dynastar, Esat et surtout François Calavarin.

Résumé

Nassariit (A4, 650m, 14 longueurs), paroi nord du Ship's Prow, Scott Island, Gibbs Fiord, île de Baffin. Première ascension: Sam Beaugey, Martial Dumas, Jean-Yves Frederiksen, Jean-Noël Itzstein, Yann Mimet, David Ravanel, du 12 au 26 mai 2007.

À propos de l'auteur

Un grimpeur depuis l'âge de cinq ans, Sam Beaugey est guide de montagne, sauteur BASE et réalisateur de film. Il vient du berceau de l'alpinisme — Chamonix, France. Cette expédition a été le sujet du film *L'île aux enfants*.

Photo : David Ravanel

Photos: Jason Kruk and Will Stanhope

An Alpine Education

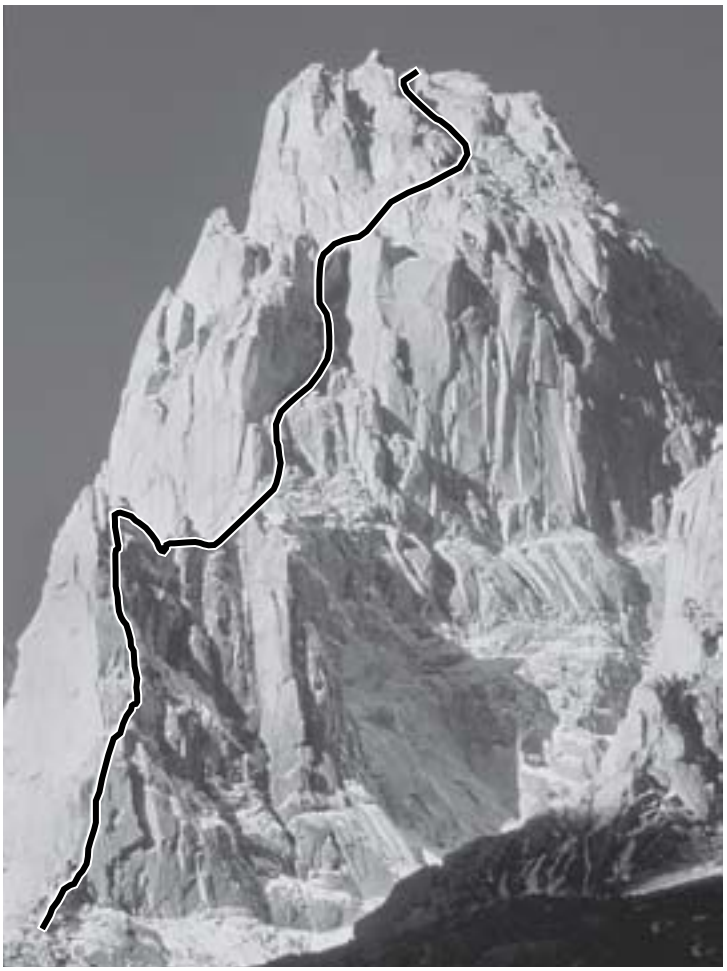
Jason Kruk

"I hate this route,
I hate Patagonia,
and I hate climbing...
You can quote me on that."

—Will Stanhope

"I think I'm going to throw-up," I groan as I stagger one step further up the trail. It's 3 a.m. and I feel like I'm hung-over. Will is up ahead; he looks about as good as I feel. Our fragile state is not due to a wild night of debauchery or consuming too much alcohol but from a 36-hour non-stop bus ride from Bariloche to El Chalten. The past four days have been spent in a frustrating battle with the Aerolineas Argentina airline strike, and our mangled Spanglish had negotiated a connection that left us half-delirious on the edge of Bariloche—days away from El Chaltén—with our bags piled in the dirt.

Finally arriving in at the base of the mountains, we were in for an unusual surprise—very unusual for Patagonia. The wind was calm and the sky was crystal clear. Will had spent most of his trip here the previous year bouldering in town while the fierce Patagonian weather nuked the spires. Between sets of pre-trip pull-ups in the climbing gym, we had often discussed the importance of never wasting a potential weather window. With clear skies above us, we know what we have to do. Despite being the middle of the night, our inner nocturnal takes over. Our enormous packs are sobering as we begin the long hike into the Torre Valley basecamp. Sunrise comes a few hours later at the Rio Fitz Roy Tyrolean-crossing and we catch our first views into the Torre group. Exhausted from our push directly off the bus, we are somewhat relieved that the weather is closing in—forced rest days. Our high camp is now well stocked and we are poised to commence my alpine education.



DNV Direct on Aguja Poincenot. Photo: Rolando Garibotti

Will Stanhope is my best friend. We met about 10 years ago at a climbing gym in North Vancouver. Several years passed before I realized Will was the only other kid in the gym who wanted to climb outside. Detached from the greater community, we grew up climbing in Squamish together in our own little world and using the guidebook to gauge our progress on the area's friendly granite. That first big season was life changing, and our diligent preparation got us up the Grand Wall at age 14 and 15. It's with less frequency now that we get to tie in together, but every time we do I can feel the bond that was formed in those first years. It was Will's idea to go to Argentine Patagonia and I signed up as soon as he asked me. What better way to try out expedition climbing than with the partner I started climbing with?

With a mental checklist of different routes to attempt in both extended and small weather windows, the long-term forecast looked good and we knew it was time to go big game hunting. There was no way to predict this would become the "season of dreams," with a perfect 15-day window of clear weather. One particular objective that inspired Will on his last trip was the complete west ridge of Aguja Poincenot. The route involved climbing an initial steep tower to gain the long ridgeline that led to the bulk of the massif. The lower third would be uncharted terrain while the middle and upper thirds would integrate existing routes: the 1968 *Fonrouge-Rosasco* and the 1964 *Whillans-Cochrane*. I was excited about the atypical-style of climbing to come—the heavily gendarmed ridge looked like fun with technical traverse work that would certainly hold our attention.

We slept fitfully, waking up in half-hour increments to a half-dozen parties walking past our tent on their way to the *Compressor Route*, but still somehow managed to sleep through our 3 a.m. alarm. At 8 a.m. we were choking down the dregs of our instant coffee and boulder hopping across the dry glacier that led to the 600 metres of approach scrambling.

We reached the first of the 5th-class terrain at the base of the initial tower, which we opted to 3rd class for a bit of a jump-start. Approach shoes were traded for rock shoes and Will was first up. It looked moderate, but burly off-widthing was discovered around the corner. No words were exchanged as the free end of Will's rope snaked down into view. I tied in and Will belayed me up to his stance.

Pitches passed quickly with some loose rock but never harder than 5.10. Four pitches up, we found ourselves huddled together at a decent stance, anchored to a marginal belay. Above us was a horribly flared and leaning off-width. We managed to convince each other that it didn't look too bad and that gear would go in halfway up at a narrowing deep in the back of the crack. Will cleaned our biggest piece from the anchor, which I would now be trying hard not to weight.

Will shu ed quickly up the layback, showering me with a constant stream of gravel as he reached the midway stance. The piece went in, but was adhered to the kitty-litter granite so poorly it would surely be useless in holding any sort of fall. The situation was now critical—unable to reverse previous moves and unsure of the steep laybacking above. No real choice but to go for it. As Will's feet started to skate off chossy smears near the lip, hand jams appeared. Salvation.

We switched packs and I racked up, ready to relieve Will of the lead. Chossy pitches of 5.10 followed and I progressed by the subtle tactic of equal weight distribution among limbs. Finally I was able to get bomber gear in at a belay on a nice ledge. The crack above looked solid and splitter, albeit a tad wide. We were both pretty freaked out to have committed so much already so early on. To our relief, the granite above looked okay.

"We've already risked too much on this. We can't risk it like that again—not up here."

I started up the next pitch, jamming hands deep in the crack. Leaving my biggest cam behind, I wormed my way into a flaring off-width pod. I could tickle hand jams just beyond, but couldn't quite sink anything locker.

The Sound and the Fury on Aguja Desmochada. Photo: Jason Kruk

"I'm going for it." I switched to layback mode with feet pasted—standard Squamish tactics to get around wide bits. Things are always harder in the alpine though (so I was told). With rubber smeared to crumbling rock and a pack weighing me down, I was off. I felt the rope grate against the coarse granite and when I came to a stop, the tell-tale white fuzz revealed a core-shot one and a half metres from my tie-in. I lowered me to the ledge, we chopped the rope and six-foot-two Will led up, lanking his way past the off-width pod to the good jams.

Another steep pitch of jamming put us on top of the first tower. Beyond, the narrow ridgeline was ornamented with fang-like gendarmes before it connected to the headwall on the southwest aspect of Poincenot. With the enormous mass of the route now laid out before us, we prepared mentally for the granite overload and the cold, sleepless bivouac(s) to come. This long, complex traverse was time consuming with many pitches of belayed climbing and only a few opportunities for simuling.

The day turned to night as we navigated the ridge and searched for the best bivy spot at the base of the headwall. The night was far colder than I anticipated. A hot-water bottle and a Powerbar for dinner were followed by a sleepless night in the open on top of our flaked-out ropes.

Day two was a battle of attrition—both on our bodies and minds. Pitch after pitch of steep 5.11 jams drained what power we still had in reserve. The bad rock made trusting cams to hold bodyweight unnerving while French-freeing past them. Dangling at a hanging stance below another overhanging corner, I set my camera to video and pressed record.

"Tell the folks at home how you really feel about this route, Will."

"I hate this route, I hate Patagonia, and I hate climbing… you can quote me on that," he shot at me, only half joking but adding, "I just hope we make it down the raps alive."

Neither of us can remember how many pitches it was before the angle relented and we were able to cruise easy 5th-class climbing to the *Whillans-Cochrane*, which led to the summit.

We lingered only briefly on top with no outbursts of exuberance or quips about what we got away with. My first Patagonian *cumbre* was a very silent experience. We knew the descent was going to be long and complex and would require another frigid open bivy—very soon.

After shivering in hunger for another night, then fixing a couple of dozen single-point rappel anchors down the *Carrington-Rouse*, we eventually crawled into camp. It would be a full 24 hours before either of us stumbled out of our tent to prepare to hike back to town. We named the route the *DNV Direct*, after our happy suburb: the District of North Vancouver. In the end, about half the terrain covered was new. We climbed in the vicinity of the *Fonrouge-Rosasco* on the headwall but managed to avoid it by taking what appeared to be virgin cracks (pitons were discovered in a system to our right).

While we descended to town, we mused about the route, trying to rationalize just what had happened. It happened, but it really shouldn't have. We crossed the level of acceptable risk, and vowed to play safer from that point on. With that in mind, our next objective became clear. The views of Aguja Desmochada from our vantage on Poincenot were too stunning to forget. Despite its proximity to the Niponinos basecamp, Desmochada, the steepest tower in the range, had seen very few ascents and had never been free climbed.

Our original plan was to attempt a free ascent of the Huber-Siegrist line *Golden Eagle* (V+ 5.11 A1). It started on the south face, but avoided the steepest part of the headwall. Looking up from the base of the wall, it just didn't look as good as the cracks splitting the overhanging face further to the right so we settled on trying to free climb the Wilkinson-Sharratt line, *The Sound and the Fury* (V+ 5.11+ A1), with variations if required.

The 700-metre route featured steep climbing on impeccable granite with most pitches checking in around the 5.11 range. The crux pitch went free at mid-range 5.12 and featured wild laybacking on the outside edge of a shallow corner to avoid a slammed-shut crack, and finished with a punishing finger and thin-hand crack reminiscent of the *Optimator* at Indian Creek. The tag line hung in space tracing a perfect arc from belay-to-belay. The higher we climbed, the better the rock got. We hit the flat-topped summit at dusk after a full day of frenzied free climbing for the eighth, and first free, ascent of the peak.

The entire route was redpointed free from stance-to-stance with the second following free as well (without jumars). One of the last pitches (5.9) wasn't sent clean by me as I followed on toprope; I hung on the rope to shakeout a cramped leg. It is important to make this distinction because one day this tower will receive the perfect ascent with both climbers onsighting and swinging leads. This was our dream—an inspiring ethic to take to the mountains. Our descent was made extra rattling by the high winds, numerous stuck ropes and another open bivy. We touched down on the last rappel with only about 35 metres of our lead line and 15 metres of tag line—the rest was chopped while dealing with the stuck ropes.

Blood on the Tracks on Aguja Innominata. Photo: Jason Kruk

Thankfully, this was followed by a bit of downtime in town to wait out bad weather as January turned into February. If given the chance with weather, we were unsure of what to climb next. We decided on a face that I had taken a photograph of while on Poincenot—the beautiful north aspect of Aguja Innominata (a.k.a. Aguja Raphael Juarez). Freddie Wilkinson drew us a topo for his route *Blood on the Tracks* (V 5.12, 500m; Sharratt-

Wilkinson-Tureki-Miyamoto, 2006). Freddie and his friends initially sent the line with a mixture of free and aid, then went back to free it, doing so to about three pitches from the top of the route and then bailing. On our first attempt, we were joined by Colorado hardman, Mike Pennings, but got shut down by high winds. On our next go, Will and I swung leads and each followed free thus sending the route for its first continuous free ascent. Sustained pitches of steep crack-work culminated with a thin-fingers crux high on the wall. The only fall of the day came on the onsight attempt of the crux pitch. The rope pulled, the gear removed, Will nailed it second try.

We had a few weeks of our trip still remaining but we were already feeling climbed-out. We humped the contents of our basecamp out of the Torre Valley in a single monstrous load, planning on shifting to the east side of Fitz Roy and the Paso Superior camp for a fresh perspective. Typical Patagonian weather arrived. The high wind and fierce rain in town pushed the idea of climbing far from our minds. Days were spent bouldering, eating and enjoying the company of friends in El Chaltén. We did attempt another route, but that is all it was, an attempt. We bailed off the *North Pillar* of Fitz Roy after one of the worst nights out of our lives, the psyche-meter having hit rock bottom.

A couple of days later we loaded our gear onto the bus headed for the Calafate Airport. At the time, I couldn't quite remember the feeling of home creature comforts. The total paradigm shift that modern travel allows is truly amazing. Forty-six hours later I was lying in my bed on the other side of the globe thinking back on the season.

I am so proud of the climbers and their climbs of the 2007–2008 season. All too often in this range it's impossible to leave town, let alone actually drink your fill of granite. I won't only remember our adventures in the mountains, though. Hanging in El Chaltén with all our friends was a constant party. These people truly made the trip for Will and me. Without them, it would have been full of only that nasty alpine climbing stuff.

Will Stanhope (left) and the author on the summit of Aguja Innominata. Photo: Jason Kruk

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the generous support of the trip sponsors: Mountain Equipment Co-op, Metolius, Five Ten and Power Bar.

About the Author

Jason Kruk, 20, lives in Vancouver for the "bad half" of the year and Squamish for the "good half". An ACMG Assistant Rock Guide (with ambitions of becoming a Mountain Guide), this was his first international expedition and he has more planned for the coming year "even though alpine climbing really sucks."

Summary

DNV Direct (VI 5.11 R/X A1, 1700m), Aguja Poincenot, Torre Valley, Argentine Patagonia. FA: Jason Kruk, Will Stanhope, January 22–24, 2008.

The Sound and the Fury (with variations; V+ 5.12b, 700m), Aguja Desmochada. FFA: Jason Kruk, Will Stanhope, January 30–31, 2008.

Blood on the Tracks (V 5.12b, 500m,), Aguja Innominata. FFA (continuous): Jason Kruk, Will Stanhope, February 9, 2008.

The Endless Wave

I'm asleep on my feet at the base of the west face of Snowpatch Spire, high on the Vowell Glacier in the Bugaboos. Hearing yells of "Rope!" I picture climbers all over the 300-metre wall rappelling from full-day adventures. My obsessive mind tries to keep me on track. Forcing my exhausted eyes open, I begin scanning the wall. I just have to make it up one of these routes before dark but it is already 5 p.m. Without a rope, 5.8 seems impossible since I am having trouble even picturing myself scrambling the talus to the base. Dropping my axe I attempt to sit down to take my crampons off my running shoes, my throbbing feet demanding attention, but I fall from the pain in my knees, the talus biting into my ass. The spires of Bugaboo, Pigeon and the three Howsers protrude magnificently from the glacier all around me. I start to think I made a big mistake. How did I expect to get up Snowpatch after climbing four other mountains today? An overwhelming urge grabs me: Applebee camp is much closer than the top of Snowpatch. I had caught the perfect wave in Squamish a few days ago and I am determined to surf it to its end. Turning my back to the easy out, I trudge up the talus towards the wall.

Matt Maddaloni

Photos by Paul Bride

Matt Maddaloni on pitch three of *University Wall* during the Squamish link-up.

Matt Maddaloni soloing the *Becky-Chouinard* on South Howser Tower during his Bugaboo link-up. Photo: Paul Bride

Four days ago, I began a 37-pitch link-up on the Stawamus Chief in Squamish—my second attempt in under a week. I was so amped on our first attempt that I didn't take time to properly warm up, resulting in a monstrous whipper on the first pitch of *University Wall* blowing the whole link-up before the sun had even risen.

This time I pace myself on the trail to conserve energy and decide to warm up on *Seasoned in Sun*, a one pitch 5.10 finger crack that conveniently splits the slab under *University Wall*. The straightforward crack feels really awkward, the rock is cold and sharp and tears at my knuckles, my shoulders feel stiff and my feet are constantly slipping. My body's resistance to climbing is making it hard to imagine that by the last pitch today I will be wanting more.

Reaching the start of *University Wall* at 5:30 a.m., 100 metres above the forest, I take off on one of the hardest pitches of the day. I have not redpointed it yet this year and now I need to by headlamp. From several weekends of rehearsal I know the overhanging crack moves well: a bad finger jam to a stab at an overhead flake, then reach for two crimps, get a foot jammed high in the Bomb-bay slot and dyno into the chicken wing. The second pitch: undercling the expanding and run-out traverse flake until I can get a knee-bar, grope for the hidden jug and drop down to get a cam. The third pitch: push my back against the wall while working my fingertips overhead under the roof, find the best jam with my right hand and spin around until I can just reach the horn out in space, then cut loose. The fourth pitch, fifth pitch, sixth, seventh, eighth… I'm leading every pitch and haven't fallen yet. Standing on Dance Platform, I pull up the rope for Paul and notice the time is 8:45 a.m. I can't help but think of climbers just now arriving at Starbucks, planning their day over hot coffees. Paul and I finish up *The Roman Chimneys* for another five pitches and leave our rack and rope on the trail as we race to the top of the first summit. It is now 10:30 a.m. and we're running down the backside trail for the first time today.

In [illegible], Sig Isaac completed a huge endurance link-up on the Chief. In 1999, I was invited to belay Sig on a photo shoot for an article about his feat. Seeing a truly great crack climber at work and getting a glimpse into what took place that day has inspired my climbing ever since. I played with the idea of repeating his link-up over the years and finally took it seriously after soloing *Angels Crest*, *The Ultimate Everything* and *The Squamish Buttress* one too many times. I knew it was time to experience Sig's "Triple Crown" for myself.

The real crux to climbing with a rope is to find the right partner to hold it. I really lucked out when Paul Cordy stepped up to the challenge with superhuman determination to see me succeed. Paul is a big guy. He looks more like a football quarterback than a rock specialist. Even if Paul weren't such a natural climber, his tripping-over-himself excitement for climbing would see him through. Boisterous, loud and opinionated, he makes for unforgettable company and friends have told me you can hear his booming laughter from high on the wall.

We ride bikes from the trailhead to the start of our next line, *Northern Lights,* a sustained route with most of the 12 pitches rated 5.11 or harder. The humid air below the North Walls sticks to us as we hike the steep trail weaving through the colossal old fir trees. In these conditions the second pitch spills over into sandbag territory and past experience has taught me to forgo tape gloves. The tape glue combines with sweat making them ooze off the backs of your hands. This resulted in my second fall on our first link-up attempt. This time I manage to finish this first major crux and as I reach the belay I try to keep thoughts of the route's hardest crux—seven pitches away—out of my mind. "One pitch at a time," I remind myself.

At 2:30 p.m. we reach dreaded pitch nine. To this day I've never been able to do the bouldery moves. My short five-foot-nine frame and unfortunate ape index (of minus one) leaves me two feet below the finishing jug. During my initial attempts I had written off this pitch as one I couldn't free during the link-up day. I had long ago accepted this as my fate and it essentially had taken the pressure off redpointing it. The reason I wanted to try the Triple Crown in the first place wasn't to meet or beat Sig Isaac's feat, but to become as fit as I could while enjoying the process of working towards climbing such an amazing enchainment. But the pressure was back on when earlier in the summer I discovered moss-covered holds to the right of the crux. After a little scrubbing, I had worked out a new sequence.

Without having fallen once today and an entire summer of working up to this moment, it's almost too much to bear. If I fall here would I come back and try again? A couple of foot matches and a high step put me in contact with the thumb Gaston. Things feel muggy and the sun is now upon us. I set my foot on the nonexistent hold and apply pressure. It feels bad, really bad. But it's too late. I can't downclimb from this committed stance so it's now or never. It seems if I don't hit that next hold I just might burst into tiny pieces. I bump for the flake edge with absolutely everything I have. My foot slips off but my hand makes contact and isn't letting go for anything. Sliding across the wall on one hand I cross over at the end of my pendulum and match. My feet are smearing uselessly against the vertical wall so I throw a heel hook up and power through until I'm securely standing on the ledge above. Fuck! Now I have to get up *Freeway* without falling.

Paul and I sprint across the third summit and down the backside trail for the second time today, reaching the base of our last climb in the link-up by 3:30 p.m. *Freeway* (5.11c), with its short 5.11 cruxes and 10 pitches of crack climbing, presents our final obstacle. By the time we reach the crux roof on pitch seven even the easiest moves begin to challenge my seized body. I bury my fingers into the overhead finger slot and lay my head

Matt Maddaloni searching for the endless wave in the Bugaboos. Photo: Paul Bride

against the wall. The stress of wanting to succeed has become overwhelming and I can't see myself freeing the roof moves without falling. Sonnie Trotter's face pops into my head. He has completed two impressive enchainments on the Chief—one included *The Shadow*, *The Grand Wall Free* and *The Black Dyke* all in a single day and all rated 5.13b. "There will always be someone better than you," I remind myself, "So all you can do is your own personal best." With that I place my hand into the crux hand jam and begin stabbing from hold to hold to the belay. I have just finished the final crux and essentially have the Triple Crown in the bag. Tears run down my face as I yell "Off belay!" My whole body trembles in sobs of relief, jubilation and amazement. The process is over.

If I hadn't previously committed to a trip to the Bugaboo Range, I never would have found the willpower to leave the very next day. As Paul drove my beat up Honda Accord through Rogers Pass I stared out the window at the snowy summits feeling highly relieved and content over the Squamish link-up. My arms and legs aching from the previous day, I searched the ragged peaks for more inspiration. I found little need to do more climbing that summer but I knew I was the most fit I'd ever been in my life. This wave still had momentum so I knew I had to try to keep riding it.

I chose to free solo in the Bugaboos for several reasons. Electrical storms move in rapidly in the late afternoon and climbing fast and light is key to surviving them. Granite is the safest stone to free solo on and the Bugs has some of the best in the world. Free soloing in the mountains offers more freedom and flow than any activity I've ever taken part in. But most of all, Peter Croft and Aaron Martin had both free soloed in the Bugaboos before and had proven that many routes on many mountains could be done in a day in this style. Without their achievements I would not have guessed that climbing five Bugaboo mountains in a day would be possible.

Four days after the Squamish enChainment, I traverse the base of Crescent Spire at 4 a.m. looking for the start of *McTech Arête*, a route I have never climbed. A few false starts and eventually I find the correct flake and start up. Immediately I'm hand jamming a stellar corner and about 30 metres later I come across a finger crack that shoots left. I can't see more than three metres above with my headlamp but intuition tells me this must be the way. The wall bulges and I can't tell if there will be any rests. The route has a well-established 5.10a rating so there has to be something above that bulge. Giving up on the less than desirable jams, I start laybacking—a free soloist's last resort. Above, I find several wonderful edges and even a hand jam. Grinning from ear to ear, I yell into the night from the sheer fun of it. At that moment a party answers for the dark below.

"Are you alone?"

Looking down I can see two headlamps peering up from the glacier.

"Yeah!" I holler.

"I bet you're having fun now!"

"Hell yeah! What route are you going to climb?"

"*Northeast Ridge* of Bugaboo Spire!"

"Cool, see you there!"

With that I continue on, tomahawking perfect hand jams. In total, *McTech Arête* takes about 30 minutes and I'm running off the summit towards the saddle that splits Crescent and Bugaboo Spires.

The *Northeast Ridge* of Bugaboo Spire sweeps up from the col like a gigantic old-school roller coaster trestle supported by vertical 500-metre faces on either side that plunge into cracked glaciers far below. By the time I'm on pitch five, the sun hits in full alpine glow brilliantly illuminating the sheer east face. Having climbed the route before, I make good time and by 8 a.m. I have climbed over the top and down the other side via the classic *Kain Route*. Choosing to free solo has taken away the pressure of redpointing and I'm having a good time. It's great to be back in the zone and I'm glad I have come here so soon after Squamish. Clipping my crampons onto my trail runners, I jog across the Upper Vowel Glacier towards Pigeon Spire and the Howser Towers.

By 8:30 a.m. I'm on the *West Ridge* of Pigeon Spire. The dragon-back ridge feels like a really exposed jungle gym and I bound across giggling to myself like a child. I downclimb Pigeon and descend into the East Creek Basin to the west buttress of South Howser Tower. Having soloed the 900-metre *Becky-Chouinard* before, I expect to get up without a hitch. Several pitches into the climb I run out of water and the sun is in full force. My knees are sore and the lack of water and exhaustion from endless pitches is making me climb as though I'm at altitude—slow and stupid. I try to pay attention for the correct variant out the crux roof but the fog in my mind makes it difficult. After 10 minutes of trying, I succeed and I'm glad the exposed moves are over.

By noon, I'm at a snail's pace on the headwall—the endless pitches becoming a blur. A loud crack makes me look over my shoulder and I see a large dark cloud quickly advancing up the valley. The billowing thunderheads shoot bolts of lightning from their underbellies. Dehydrated and exhausted I dig deep to move faster. Without another look I reach the top 30 minutes later and see that the storm has strengthened. I immediately begin rappelling down the east face, dismayed by the fact that the coming rain will destroy my chances on Snowpatch. Disheartened, shivering and delirious I slowly wander down the glacier towards camp, having completely given up, expecting the storm to rage on. Five minutes later the thunderclouds pass and the sun begins to glare off the snow.

At the base of the west face of Snowpatch Spire, I can't believe I've come this far but I still don't know which way to go. One possible line is *Surfs Up* but from this vantage point the initial pitches don't seem to have any continuous cracks and the random flakes on the ribbed face lack obvious secure jams. I turn my glossed-over gaze leftwards to the corner system of the *Kraus-McCarthy*. Yes, a deep safe corner! Looking closer my tired mind picks out rounded seams and the crux overhang, which is sopping wet. I remember the guide listing it as 5.8 but maybe I made a mistake. I convince myself that this is the only choice

and I'll just have to go move-by-move. Like in a dream I make my way towards the sheer wall, pushing my hands against my knees to surmount each step. A loud whiplash crack from a rope demands my attention and looking up I see climbers rappelling all over the route. A few shared words like "Excuse me," and "Soloing here, please don't move," gets me past several climbers on the initial pitches. Some don't figure out I'm soloing until I've passed by. I sometimes catch their whispered exclamations. Reaching the first roof I stop in frustration, the wet overhang looking harder than 5.8. I call out to a gentleman on a ledge above: "Hey there, are there any holds through that?"

"Oh yes, lots of hidden buckets. The gear is good too but make sure to keep a #3 Camalot for the top."

"Thanks."

Heading for the roof, it is strange to consider protection again. The last time I thought about "which piece went where" was back in Squamish. Now everything seems black and white, either I could climb higher or I couldn't. Simplicity is a wonderful thing.

The overhanging slot drips on my shoulder as I search for the "hidden buckets" and my mood improves as I find them one by one. I climb the next six pitches slowly in a euphoric state. I feel I can go on like this forever. Seven pitches into the route and I arrive for my final performance—a mandatory off-width. Dropping my pack, I flake out my rappel rope and clip it to my harness. Squeezing into the slot I know the end is coming so I try to enjoy the last moves of the day. I mantle over the top and I'm finally able to peer over the summit. The site awakens me from a trance. I feel the wave cresting—time to straight-line it for shore.

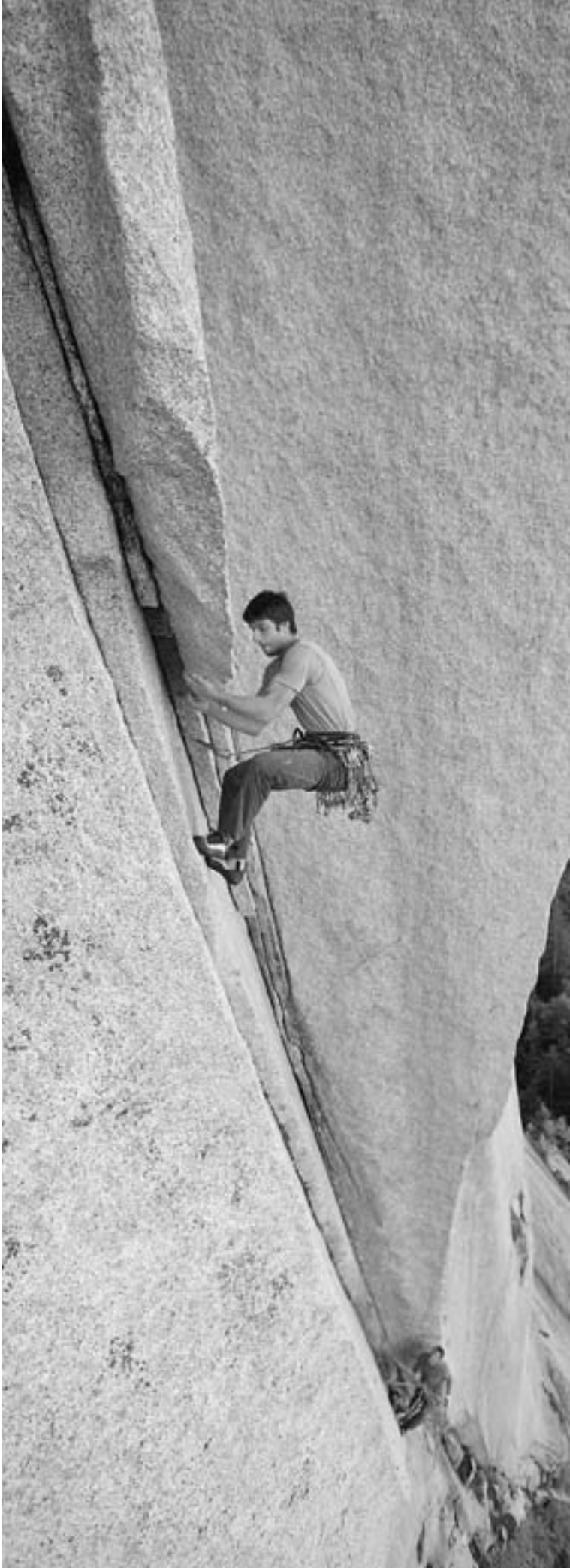
Summary

Squamish "Triple Crown" link-up: Three routes on the Stawamus Chief totalling 37 pitches in 16.5 hours, August 11, 2007. *Seasoned in the Sun* (5.10), *University Wall* (5.12a) and *The Roman Chimneys* (5.11d) on the Grand Wall; *Northern Lights* (5.12a) on Zodiac Wall; and *Freeway* (5.11c/d) on the Dihedrals.

Bugaboo link-up: 50+ pitches in 15.5 hours, August 15, 2007. *McTech Arête* (D- 5.10a-) on Crescent Spire, *Northeast Ridge* (D- 5.8) on Bugaboo Spire, *West Ridge* (PD 5.4) on Pigeon Spire, *Becky-Chouinard* (TD+ 5.10) on South Howser Tower, and *Kraus-McCarthy* (D- 5.9) on Snowpatch Spire.

About the Author

Matt Maddaloni is an all-round adventure rock climber whose latest forays have him pushing his free climbing on alpine rock routes and deep water solos. He has climbed more than 40 big walls around the world with first ascents in Baf n Island, Pakistan, the Bugaboos, Yosemite and his home area of Squamish.



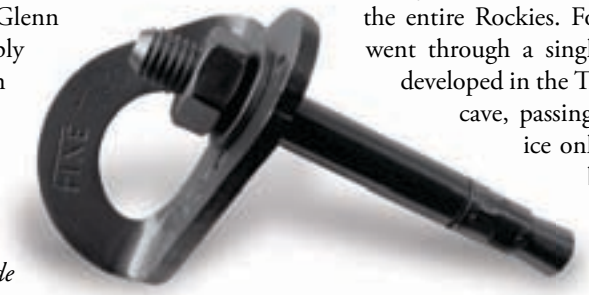
Matt Maddaloni on pitch two of *University Wall*.
Photo: Paul Bride

Past the Bolt

Raphael Slawinski

The Stanley Headwall, or simply, the Headwall: the premier hard ice and mixed crag of the Canadian Rockies and a testing ground for winter climbing since 1974. That was the year when Bugs McKeith spearheaded the first ascent of *Nemesis* (WI6, 160m) brandishing Terrordactyls, etriers, fixed ropes and all. Six years later John Lauchlan, Albi Sole and James Blench made the second ascent and the first free ascent of the climb.

Their effort, however, did little to dispel the Headwall's intimidating aura. It was not until the early '90s that the other blindingly obvious ice lines began to be picked off, like *French Reality* (M5 WI6+, 145m) and *Acid Howl* (WI6+, 320m). It was also around this time that people began to approach ice with the attitude that "it doesn't have to be formed to be formed." Jeff Everett and Glenn Reisenhofer were the first to apply this new vision to the Headwall in 1991 when they hand-drilled their way to the hanging dagger of *Suffer Machine* (A2 WI5, 200m). Three years later, Francois Damilano and Joe Josephson upped the ante on *The Day After les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (a.k.a. *Mr. Hulot*; 5.9 A2 WI6, 270m), a sustained *mélange* of traditional mixed, aid and ice climbing. In 1997, Matt Collins and I made the second ascent and the first free ascent of *Mr. Hulot*, onsighting the aid pitches at M7 in a classic display of beginner's luck.



That same year marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Headwall. Sean Isaac and Dave Thomson imported the weird and wonderful concept of bolt-protected mixed climbing from the crags of Colorado to the grand arena of the winter Rockies. Armed with a new vision and a power drill, the two more than doubled the number of routes on the Headwall. Some of their efforts were direct starts to existing routes (i.e. *Teddy Bear's Picnic* (M8) to *Suffer Machine*). Others were largely or completely independent lines like *Nightmare on Wolf Street* (M8 WI6+, 175m)—one of the finest routes in the entire Rockies. For a period of time the Headwall even went through a single-pitch phase, with a flurry of routes developed in the Thriller Cave. Every time I went up to the cave, passing soaring limestone walls streaked with ice only to bury myself in a chossy hole with bolts in the ceiling, I was vaguely aware of the perverseness of what I was doing. At the time though, it made perfect sense. After a few seasons of unquestioning enthusiasm, I began to see bolt-protected mixed climbing in a different light. The big moves and inverted gymnastics on bolted routes were a lot of fun, but they also gave one the strength and skill to venture onto steep terrain with no bolts. The lessons I learnt in the cave served me well elsewhere in the Rockies. However, it was not until this winter that I came back to apply them to the Headwall.

In late October 2007, Eamonn Walsh and I headed up the Stanley Glacier trail for our first taste of ice of the season. Located

Raphael Slawinski
on the first ascent of
Victoria's Secret Deviation.
Photo: Wiktor Skupinski

past the Headwall proper, *Ice Cannibal* (5.7 WI5, 480m) is a long rambling route below a mostly benign serac barrier. As neither of us had climbed it before, we were pleased with our outing. "Well, here's my obligatory day on the Headwall for this season out of the way," I thought to myself as we walked down the trail. But less than a month later I was back, enticed by news of some rarely formed routes being in. A week earlier a friend had lost his life in the mountains. I was sad, angry and confused. Perversely, I looked to climbing to clear my mind.

Originally Eamonn and I were intent on *Uniform Queen* (M7 WI5, 170m). But when I saw the route, first ascended at M7, I turned to my partner: "I can't climb that, there's too much ice on it." Instead we turned our attention to a thin smear between *Uniform Queen* and *Suffer Machine*. A few steep moves past a nest of pins and cams, feet pasted under a roof, gained the ice goatee. After another two pitches, our line merged with the blue ice of *Suffer Machine*. For lack of a better name we called it *Clucking* (M6 WI5, 200m). An Internet search will reveal the genesis of the name. The following day I was back with Scott Semple, this time bound for a discontinuous smear between *Suffer Machine* and *Nemesis*. I had my doubts about whether it would go on natural gear, but in the end the bolt kit stayed on my harness. To begin with, gear placements appeared when needed; and, when they failed to materialize, we gently tapped our way up without such comforts. Like the reasons for climbing, the reasons for the name were ambiguous: *An Ideal for Living* (M6 WI5 X, 100m). Looking back, I think that was where the inspiration for exploring the possibilities for traditional mixed climbing on the Headwall came from.

Ian Welsted knew that over the years I had worked my way through most of the routes on the Headwall. As we cast about for something to do on a weekend in December, he considerately suggested something appropriately obscure. Conrad Anker, Scott Backes and Joe Josephson had climbed *Extreme Comfort* (5.11 R A3 WI6+, 180m) in 1995 to access the spectacular pillar now more commonly climbed as part of *Nightmare on Wolf Street*. However, our interest was piqued by the guidebook description of the first pitch and the leader hanging from a hook to put his crampons on. Luckily we did not have to resort to such esoteric tactics. Instead, a vein of sn'ice (frothy snow ice) in the back of a corner offered excellent mixed climbing and gear. Running out of time, we finished up the upper ice of *Mr. Hulot*. But two weeks later we were back, enticed by a ribbon of what looked like ice above the initial corner. While sn'ice in a corner makes for good climbing, sn'ice on a bulging wall makes for scary climbing. Finding no gear above a stretch of thin ice climbing I was not keen to reverse and with the bolt kit back in my basement, I had no choice but to continue into the unknown. We finished up *Drama Queen*, clipping bolts and swinging onto a wild hanging dagger by headlamp. We called our link-up *Comfort Queen* (M6 R WI6, 180m) deeming the other possible combination of names too melodramatic.

It was Christmas and I was just getting over a cold. In other words, a mellow day seemed in order. That was how, in spite of the route sporting excessive amounts of ice, I ended up ticking *Uniform Queen*. While climbing the crux middle pitch, I was constantly distracted by a sinuous crack splitting the clean vertical wall to the left. I had just read about the hard new route *The Secret* (Scottish X 10) on Ben Nevis. Could this be the Rockies' version of it? One thing was clear: I wanted to try the line onsight, using only natural gear. In the end the onsight attempt came to naught, as a combination of pump, thin ice, spindrift and frozen hands sent me for three increasingly long whippers. I had to be satisfied with coming back the next day and redpointing the line. But I did succeed in my other goal, which was to puzzle out the climbing and the protection from the ground-up. Given that the inspiration came from across the pond, *Victoria's Secret Deviation* (M7+, 50m) seemed like an appropriate name.

By now I was full of self-righteous zeal for traditional mixed climbing, but I could not think of another new line like *Victoria's Secret Deviation*. Instead, a few weekends later, I headed for *Dawn of the Dead* (M8+ WI6, 150m). The route, essentially a direct start to the upper ice of *Mr. Hulot*, had been established using a mix of bolts and gear. Could one do it without clipping any of the bolts? The initial crack went well enough. It was on the discontinuous splatters of ice higher up, with the last gear hidden below a big roof, that my determination was put to the test. However, by now I was climbing in a separate reality, the bolts I was bypassing all but invisible to me as I nested together a cam, a pin and a wire. My perversion reached its apex on the way down. While hanging next to a bolted station, I equalized two V-threads in thin ice. Steve Swenson, my long-suffering partner, could only shake his head.

Do not misunderstand me. I love sport climbing in both its summer and winter incarnations. Bolts can open up fantastic terrain, allowing us to play with gravity on big overhangs and big daggers. However, bolts should add to the adventure, not diminish it. If a line looks even remotely feasible without bolts, then before reaching for the gun we owe it to ourselves to simply walk up to it and start climbing.

The beginning of February found me yet again on the Headwall. Jon Walsh and I have both long been eyeing the daggers above *French Toast* (M7 WI5, 130m), so we teamed up to explore them. A few weeks earlier I had backed off the glaze of ice on the first pitch of the original route when the bolts ran out. Instead, we climbed the mixed chimney on *French Reality* and traversed into *French Toast* on a narrow snow ledge. Above the final pillar of that route an ice-filled crack split a bulge. Another pitch up a thinly iced overhanging corner took us to the proverbial end of the difficulties. As we rappelled our *French Roast* (M6 WI5, 180m) variation, I sadly realized that I had nothing left to do on the Headwall. Then again, that was what I had thought back in October.

About the Author

Raphael Slawinski, doctor of physics and alpinism, originally hails from Poland by way of North Africa. He has been living in Calgary off and on since the early 1980s, where he is married with cats, teaches physics at Mount Royal College, and commutes to the Rockies on the weekends.

Clucking (M6 WI5, 200m (140m of new ground))
FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, November 2007.

This route climbs the ice strip between *Suffer Machine* and *Uniform Queen*. Gain a small goatee of ice either from the right (fixed pins), or directly. Continue for another two pitches on sometimes interesting ice to where the route merges with *Suffer Machine*, which is followed to the top. A few cams and pins may come in handy for the first pitch, after that it is all ice screws.

An Ideal for Living (M6 WI5 X, 100m)
FA: Scott Semple, Raphael Slawinski, November 2007.

This route climbs the discontinuous smear between *Nemesis* and *Suffer Machine*. Thin, chandeliered ice on the first pitch leads to a snow ledge. Belay on the right. The second pitch trends left to a series of flakes paralleling the ice on the right. Belay below the hanging curtain on the left (fixed rock belay). The last pitch heads up steep detached ice that eventually backs off to a lesser angle but remains fairly thin. The route ends at a fixed rock belay on the right at the base of a small snow gully. Take a full rock rack and some screws (mostly short).

Comfort Queen (M6 R WI6,180m (60m of new ground))
FA: Raphael Slawinski, Ian Welsted, December 2007.

This is a linkup of the first pitch of *Extreme Comfort* (excellent mixed climbing at M5), with the last two pitches of *Drama Queen*. Start up a left-trending groove that leads into a right-facing corner. A vein of sn'ice may be present in the back of the corner. Continue up and left on lower-angled ground until level with the start of an ice strip on the right (belay). The second pitch traverses right to the ice strip and climbs it (occasionally with poor protection) to the snow ledge below the last tier of *Mr. Hulot* and *Drama Queen* (fixed piton on the right). *Drama Queen* is closer and so makes for a more natural finish. Take a full rock rack for the first two pitches; the last two require only screws and quickdraws.

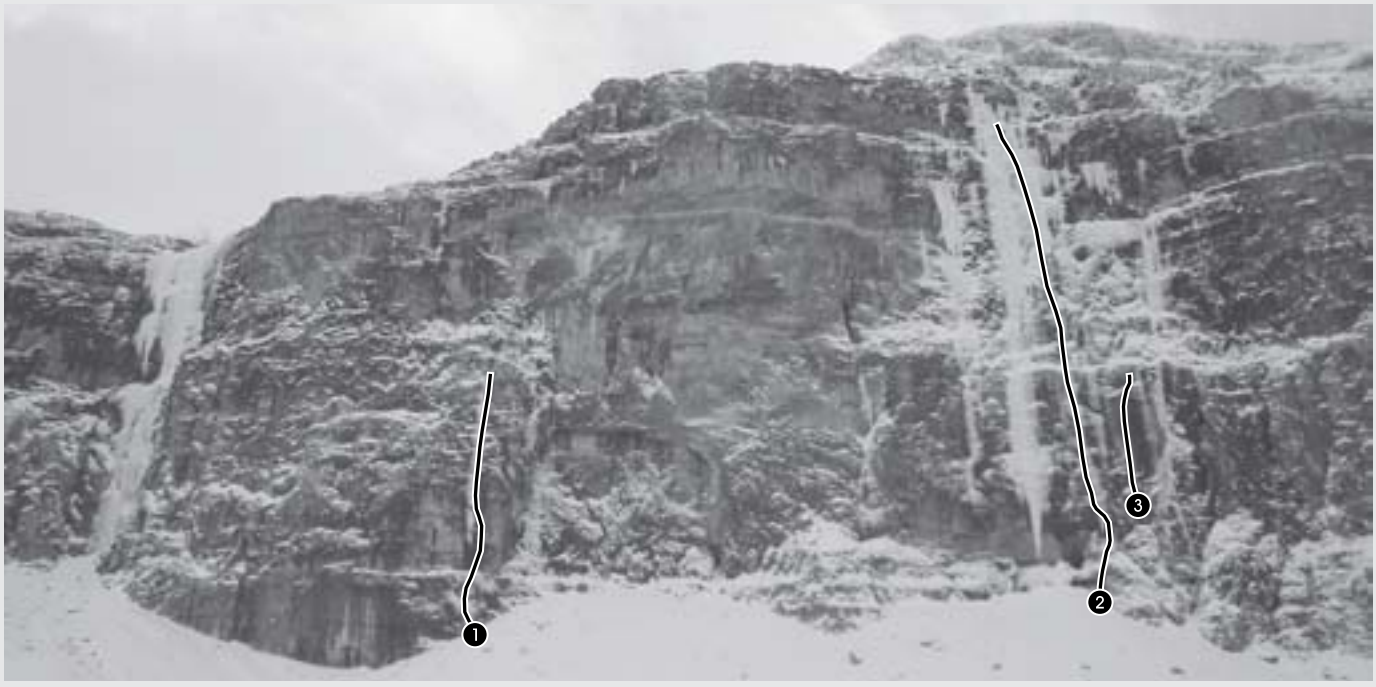
Victoria's Secret Deviation (M7+ WI5, 170m (50m of new ground))
FA: Raphael Slawinski, Ian Welsted, January 2008.

Climb whichever of the two variations on the first pitch of *Uniform Queen* that tickles your fancy. From the fixed piton belay (not the bolted belay up and right), the crux second pitch climbs a very sustained crack/seam in the clean vertical shield of rock above the belay. Some fixed gear is in place but take a full rock rack, doubling up on cams up to red Camalot. Exit the pitch up an anemic ice smear or a seam on the left. Belay from the rock a few metres back from the edge. From there, 70-metre ropes make the top of the ice on *Uniform Queen*.

French Roast (M6 WI5, 180m (50m of new ground))
FA: Raphael Slawinski, Jon Walsh, February 2008.

This is an extension to *French Toast*. From the top of the ice on that route, continue up an ice-filled crack to a ledge (belay, fixed pecker). Climb an iced-up left-facing corner above to a bigger ledge. Trend right and up on interesting ice to where it pours from a fat snow ledge. This extension may be accessed by climbing *French Toast* (the first pitch of which rarely forms); by climbing the first two pitches of *French Reality* and traversing left on a snow ledge (making for a very classy combination); or by climbing a left-trending rock ramp (insecure M6) between the two that gains *French Toast* near the start of its second pitch. Take a full rock and ice rack.

The left side of the Stanley Headwall showing the *Nemesis* (left) and *Suffer Machine* (right) areas: (1) *An Ideal for Living*. (2) *Clucking*. (3) *Victoria's Secret Deviation*. Photo: Raphael Slawinski



The X Factor

Jacqui Hudson

Luisa Giles, Sarah Hart and Furman (assistant cook) look southwards across the Choktoi Glacier towards the Latok group. Photo: Jacqui Hudson

“I need your knife!”

“What?”

I dusk-dream, clipped in at the belay, while Luisa fights with our stuck rope 20 metres above. Sarah belays her out on our other line. I stare down, across the Choktoi Glacier almost a kilometre below us, and watch the slow-moving clouds swirl north over 8,000-metre peaks to the east where they are swallowed by the dry air of western China.

After so many days of snow and rain during our early time in basecamp, the weather finally has stabilized. When we first arrived on the Choktoi, we had three days of fantastic weather. We made our first attempt then, but we were anything but acclimatized, so when the weather turned foul, we retreated. After more than a week of rain and snow (and a second attempt on the route, denied again by poor weather), blue skies finally split the clouds. Our cook, Abbas, a man who has lived his entire life in the Karakorum, told us that we now had four days of good weather before the next storm. We did not have a working satellite phone or a reliable altimeter—something we discovered only after arriving in basecamp. Abbas was the best weather report we had, and his prediction would be right.

"I need your knife!"

"OK, OK, lower me your free end of rope."

It is the end of our third day of stable weather, and we're making our first rappel. I feel like I watch it all happen, just an observer. I force this sensation of detachment because my stomach is cramping and my body is shivering. Yet I am neither hungry nor cold. Perhaps I am both. We have been trying to free our rope for the past hour and a half and the sun has nearly disappeared.

Our bivy gear is low on the wall. We left it there after spending our first night on a series of ledges. We went lightweight even to the bivy: no stove, minimal water and only a small amount of extra clothing. With our only real warmth for the night still far below us, we are feeling more than a little vulnerable.

The air is heavy with the heat of Islamabad. The night smells of cardamom, two-stroke engines, and cotton soaked with human sweat. We feel the artillery (there is no sound yet) shake the windows of our hotel room.

We've been travelling for days, around half the world, away from cool, temperate, sedate Vancouver (where, back in December, my anesthesia residency program director amazingly granted me two months to climb here).

With me now are my two climbing partners, finally sleeping quietly after so long in airports, airplanes and buses. Luisa is an energetic British ex-pat who makes her home now in Vancouver as well, and cycles over 200 kilometres per week to work and back. Sarah, a business student, is quieter, more introspective, a recent and already very competent convert to alpine climbing from a path previously focused on bouldering and competition sport climbing. I asked them to join me on this trip to Pakistan because they are wonderful women, and happen to be pretty damn good at "getting the rope up there." They also could drop everything to fly into the unknown for two consecutive months.

We couldn't be further from Vancouver. It is 4 a.m. on July 11, and the standoff at the Lal Masjid Red Mosque in Islamabad intensifies. The tension between radical and moderate Islam—the former represented by Wahabi Taliban types and the latter by the popular government—has come to a head in Islamabad. The government decided to monitor radical, militant youth training programs but the militants refused, resulting in this conflict. After a week of failed negotiations, the government has had enough; artillery flies and tanks roll in. My half-asleep brain tells me there is little I can do except believe what the hotel staff told us in pidgin the previous evening: "Red Mosque is far from hotel." This claim at least relied upon a loose interpretation of the notion of "far" with respect to artillery. One hundred and two people inside the Red Mosque perish that night.

The next day, we take the Islamabad-Skardu flight on "perhaps it arrives airlines", better known to air traf c controllers as Pakistan International Airlines, escaping the very real

Sarah Hart contemplating the upper headwall and pitch 15 (the crux). Photo: Jacqui Hudson

possibility of crashing into Nanga Parbat—which is level with the right-hand windows of the plane while we are at cruising altitude. And out of some western idealized madness, we have left our nice stable jobs, our comfortable existence with espresso coffee, socialized accessible medicine, working traf c lights and people who obey them, to come climbing here.

"The knife!" Breaking out of my forced dreaming, I tie the knife I keep around my neck to the rope's end for Luisa. We've tried coaxing, flicking, pulling (so hard we burnt our hands). Luisa eventually bat-manned the fixed rope to reach the source of the problem, and still unable to free the five centimetre portion jammed behind the flake, she opted to cut the rope free on either side. In the end, we lose very little actual length out of the rope—but do two hours of daylight. We tie the tattered ends together and finally continue moving down. The sun sinks behind the 7,000-metre frame of the Ogre to the west, and its long shadow overtakes the Choktoi Valley.

A full moon rises and walls of granite glow in the nighttime light. Although cold, we're steadily moving down the wall, and my earlier feelings of apprehension wane as we progress back to our bivy. By 11 p.m. we are at our ledge again.

The X-Factor

After two months of spending every minute with each other, night after night, close enough that we could hear each other Cheyne Stoke breathe through endless hours of poor sleep at altitude, we return to Vancouver and our lives separate. Instantly we feel the separation, and miss each other terribly.

There were many instances during our time in Pakistan when we felt particularly exposed: our first morning in Islamabad; the reality of being without any reasonable method of contacting the outside world from the Choktoi; and our rope stuck at the top of a 5,200-metre peak. We coped by communicating well, and openly expressing our fears. I wonder if our expressive style in challenging times, and the resulting strengthening of our friendship, had to do with camaraderie characteristically female. Our challenges were not, of course, dependent on us being women, but were our responses to them?

After returning to work, I was discussing the topic of gender roles—specifically women entering into traditionally male-dominated arenas such as alpine climbing and medicine—with a female anesthesiologist mentor. As she set about taking control of all the physiologic functions of the anaesthetized patient, she put it to me simply, "Not until men can carry a pregnancy to term will we ever really be the same."

She has a point: there are some undeniable and fundamental gender differences. Obviously, men and women will never be the same. But the question of equality is quite independent of the question of sameness. Men and women can be different but still be equal. The question of to what extent our differences affect our abilities and judgment is both slippery and elusive. However, this question is an important one for the alpine community to consider. After all, our expedition would not have been possible were it not for a generous grant available exclusively to females.

In the 2006 *Canadian Alpine Journal*, Katy Holm approached the topic by interviewing leading female climbers asking them specifically about their experiences and perceptions ("Exploring Women", *CAJ*, vol. 89 (2006), pp. 27–31). The review was eye opening to me in several ways, most notably for some of the stronger claims about gender differences. For example, the late Karen McNeill stated: "I believe the bottom line is that men and women are different. We have different strengths and attributions. We think, talk, and discuss issues in very different manners. This isn't ever going to change."

In Pakistan, cultural gender expectations diverge even more than in the West, provoking me to question the extent to which these sensed gender differences are innate as opposed to culturally scripted. Dare I ask the question of whether our perceived differences are simply the propagation of a cultural stereotype, and at odds with the inherent nature of gender?

Photo: Jacqui Hudson

How should I go about making heads or tails of this question? Katy's narrative approach was revealing of popular opinion, but stopped short of uncovering the nature of what's really going on. Given that cultural myths (if they exist) would bias the opinions of cultural members (such as the leaders that Katy interviewed), an evidence-based approach seemed the better bet.

I consulted a friend, Jeremy Frimer, who apart from being a climber is also a PhD student in developmental psychology. He explained that researchers are interested in these same questions, and have launched thousands of empirical investigations in response. He pointed me to a professor at the University of

Wisconsin, Janet Hyde, who is an expert on the topic of gender differences. Having dedicated much of her career to gathering the many thousands of studies on gender differences, she published several articles in which she considers what the evidence says when taken en masse. The gist of her conclusion (explained most succinctly in "The Gender Similarities Hypothesis", *American Psychologist*, September 2005) is that the conventional "differences model", which argues that males and females are fundamentally different, is contrary to the bulk of evidence. The differences model dominates the popular media, and is evident in Karen McNeill's position (cited above). Hyde's conclusion is that on most (but not all) physical and psychological variables, men and women are remarkably similar. (Hyde's claims about gender differences and similarities are generalizable to Western culture. The applicability of these claims to non-Western cultures remains an open but testable question.)

Hyde did find some data that fit with the differences model: on average, males scored higher on physical aggression, grip strength and throw velocity, whereas females scored higher on tender-mindedness and physical flexibility. However, for the vast majority of variables that the differences model predicts divergence between the sexes, the evidence, in contrast, suggests that the sexes are equal. To name but a few, these areas include math ability, self-esteem, assertive speech, helping behaviour, leadership effectiveness and balance. Hyde points out that within-gender variability is typically much larger than between-gender variability. Thus, Hyde concludes that the differences model is vastly a cultural myth.

Sarah Hart, Luisa Giles and Jacqui Hudson (left to right) at their highpoint on *The Partition*. Photo: Jacqui Hudson

Beyond the problems of being contrary to evidence, Hyde also considers the potential costs of overstating gender differences. In one line of investigation, male and female participants write a standardized math test that, in actuality, is gender-neutral (as shown by pre-testing). Only, the research participants are randomly assigned to either be told (a) that males tend to score higher on the test, or (b), that males and females tend to do equally well. In the group that believes that a gender difference exists, the females score lower than the males. In other words, the very act of telling females that they are different from males causes females to perform poorly, spiraling females downwards into a self-fulfilling prophesy. This type of study has been conducted many times with consistent results. One example is D. Quinn and S. Spencer's 2001 article in *The Journal of Social Issues*, titled "The interference of stereotype threat with women's generation of mathematical problem-solving strategies."

So what does all this research tell us about potential gender differences in alpine climbing? Many women (including the majority of Katy Holm's interviewees and women with whom I have spoken) believe that they learn better from other women, and often feel more empowered when climbing with the same. Is this a reflection of a perpetuating myth or are there important and relevant gender differences at play? After reviewing Hyde's work and giving the matter more thought, I believe that it is a bit of both.

At the heart of climbing, there are substantial physical gender differences to consider. For pure (pack-less) rock or ice climbing, strength-to-weight ratio, flexibility and balance seem to be the most pertinent (empirically tested) attributes (reach length, core strength and headspace seem to be additional relevant variables). While the sexes are a toss-up on balance, males on average have a strength-to-weight advantage juxtaposed against females' flexibility advantage. These differences would be consistent with the common observation that most men and women use different climbing styles (power versus finesse). When it comes to alpine climbing (carrying packs), pure strength enters in. After all, stoves, tents, and cams weigh just the same for women and men alike. Regarding pure strength, there is no comparison between the sexes: males are generally significantly bigger and therefore stronger. To illustrate, the weight of our packs in Pakistan was a major factor when deciding on objectives and style—Luisa, Sarah and I are rather small (Luisa standing just five-foot-zero).

I know there are small male climbers too. I make the point because it was this similarity, regardless of gender, that helped unify us. With equivalent size came a sense of equal ownership to our limitations in carrying capacity. But what makes empathizing with and learning from fellow women easier may, in fact, be a direct offshoot of the physical differences of the sexes, rather than any psychological one. That is, women are used to and understand what it's like to be a female climber and alpinist (the same would go for men in terms of flexibility). If I am right, then the way forward as an alpine climbing community is integration and education on gender issues, rather than segregating (as some current programs do). Perhaps we need to educate the male climbing community about the female

climber experience, teaching male teachers how to teach females (and vice versa).

Conclusion

On the bigger sCreen of alpine climbing, our little route on our no-name peak might be a rest-day outing for household-name alpinists—male or female. But to us it felt challenging, real. Before we left for Pakistan the prospect of putting up a new rock route longer than a single pitch was a far-fetched ideal. We are, by all accounts, "small fries" who keep too many "paid rest days" per year to ever register on the climbing radar.

But our ability to work as a team, listen to one another and communicate our differing perspectives allowed us to surpass our own expectations of what we thought capable. Perhaps our commonality as women allowed us to form a firm, solid, trusting relationship that gave us a wild ride and a safe descent; maybe it was simply just being little people, both physically and on the international climbing stage. Or perhaps it is the nature of climbing to facilitate these kinds of trusted relationships, facilitated further by similarities that allowed us to get out there, and up there (at least most of the way).

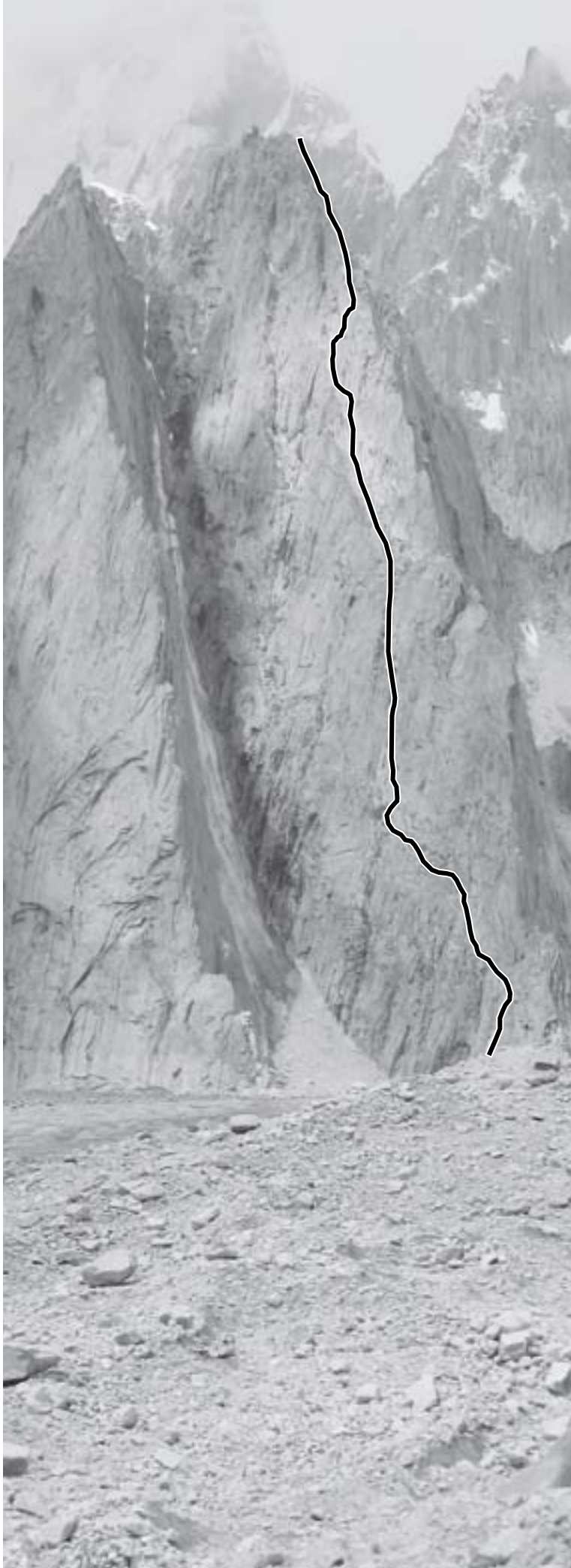
I don't have answers. I can only reflect now on my memories of our trip to Pakistan: the sound of our cook singing in the still morning air around basecamp, the evening light on the Choktoi after a storm had passed, and the smiles and laughter of Luisa and Sarah as we climbed yet another splitter pitch of alpine granite. Philosophy and science aside, I can safely say I love climbing, for the people I meet, the places it takes me, for the lessons it teaches me, and the questions it makes me ask.

Summary

The Partition (TD 5.10b, 19 pitches, 900m), peak 5,200, Choktoi Glacier, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Luisa Giles, Sarah Hart, Jacqui Hudson, July 2007. Note: Route terminated on a northern sub-summit approximately 50 metres below (200 metres lateral distance) the true highpoint. This unnamed 5,200-metre peak is the westernmost of two similar north-facing rock buttresses joined by a high col and an ice couloir. The other buttress holds *The Indian Face Arête* (5.10 A3), established in 1990 by Doug Scott and Sandy Allen.

About the Author

Jacqui Hudson is currently on the scenic route though a five-year residency in Anesthesiology with the University of British Columbia. In the past she also managed to convince the University of British Columbia to grant her a B.Sc. in Immunology and a Medical Degree, despite principally spending her time on rock and snow.



The Partition on peak 5,200, Choktoi Glacier, Karakoram. The left-hand rock peak holds the route *The Indian Face Arête* established in 1990 by Doug Scott and Sandy Allen. Photo: Luisa Giles


Glen
Boles
May 08

The Art of Rope-Soloing

Stéphane Perron

L'art du solo encordé

Climbing writers and magazine editors have long debated the question; even the most pragmatic climber will eventually stumble upon it and try like everyone else to answer the great enigma: Why do we climb? Why in the world spend time and energy in order to practice this totally useless activity? The question struck me during a miserable rainy day of a long road trip. I hadn't seen my girlfriend for two months, my bank account was in the red, the roof of my van was seeping and I was cold. In short, I was going through one of those little depressive periods that are an integral part of every long trip. I began to question the choices I made in my life—a lot of them based on climbing. For example, I take long unpaid vacations to travel across the continent from one climbing site to another in an old 1984 van that's falling apart. In order to remain free to travel, I don't have a house, or children, or any career plan whatsoever. Because my salary is incomplete, I don't have most of the material comforts commonly owned by people of my age. I train, climb and plan my climbing trips. I stuff my brain with movement sequences instead of useful and practical knowledge. Why did I make these choices?

Although apparently frivolous and useless, playing is the best way to learn, improve and perfect oneself. Young animals play. They learn and develop to become faster and stronger. Adult animals don't play anymore because their development is over. They have reached their maximum potential in the activities they practice. Humans, on the other hand, have managed to retain this juvenile behavior throughout their adulthood (evolutionists call this process neoteny). Humans play all their life—but playing is so puerile! Why waste energy and lose precious time that could be spent doing useful things? Well, it just happens that natural selection, in all its ingenuity, managed to give this extraordinarily curious and intelligent being the opportunity to learn, innovate and develop throughout his entire life. This thinking animal thus has fun making new experiments, inventing strange technology and practicing eccentric activities. Isn't it wonderful? I think, therefore I play!

And I climb. And I learn more and more. And I become stronger, faster, better. Evolution is to blame: it has given me genes urging me to forget everything else and satisfy this irresistible desire to play and explore.

I have just recently found a new game—rope-soloing. Out of necessity (partners are sometime scarce on the road), but also just out of curiosity. Just for fun. Since soloing without a rope scares me, thus not fun, I wanted to know how far I could push myself rope-soloing. I had done some self-belayed climbing in the past but far below my maximum level. So I began refining my belay system to be able to climb closer to my physical limit. It was in Indian Creek, Utah, the famous crack paradise, that I embraced this technique. After some practice, I was able to climb to the top of some 5.12s onsight, which is about the best I can do with a partner. I was thrilled to see that I could climb this close to my limit, alone, without compromising my security. Climbing solo requires sound judgment and a rich background, as well as more effort. It also involves complicated rope management and remains more dangerous than climbing with a partner. Yet I consider it as another interesting aspect

Les auteurs de récits ou d'essais sur l'alpinisme, aussi bien que les rédacteurs de revues d'escalade, ont longtemps débattu la question. Même le plus pragmatique des grimpeurs se la posera un jour ou l'autre, et il tentera alors, comme les autres, de résoudre la grande énigme : Pourquoi grimper ? Pourquoi diable passer son temps et dépenser son énergie à pratiquer cette activité totalement inutile ? La question m'a assailli un jour, alors que j'étais en voyage sur la route, durant une journée misérable et pluvieuse. Je n'avais pas vu ma blonde depuis deux mois ; mon compte en banque était dans le rouge foncé ; le toit de ma fourgonnette prenait l'eau ; j'avais froid ; bref, je passais par une de ces petites périodes dépressives que l'on affronte inévitablement durant les longs périples. Je me suis alors mis à réfléchir sur mes choix de vie, qui ont été faits en grande partie en fonction de l'escalade. Je prends, par exemple, de nombreux congés sans solde pour parcourir la route d'un site d'escalade à l'autre, dans une antique fourgonnette 1984 qui tombe en ruine. Afin de rester libre de partir, je n'ai pas de maison, pas d'enfants, pas de plan de carrière. À cause de mon salaire réduit, je n'accumule pas de conforts matériels tels que les gens de mon âge le font en général. Je m'entraîne, je grimpe, je planifie mes voyages d'escalade et je me bourre le crâne de séquences de mouvements plutôt que de connaissances pratiques et utiles. Pourquoi ces choix ?

Bien qu'en apparence frivole et inutile, le jeu est la meilleure façon d'apprendre, de s'améliorer, de se perfectionner. Les jeunes animaux jouent. Ils apprennent, se développent et deviennent plus vifs, plus forts. Les animaux adultes ne jouent plus, car ils ont terminé leur développement. Ils ont atteint leur compétence maximale dans les activités qu'ils pratiquent. Les humains, quant à eux, sont parvenus au cours de leur évolution à conserver ce comportement juvénile jusqu'à l'âge adulte (on appelle ça de la néoténie, pour faire savant). Les humains jouent toute leur vie. Mais le jeu est pourtant une activité si puérile ! Pourquoi gaspiller de l'énergie et perdre un temps précieux qui pourrait servir à autre chose de plus utile ? Eh bien, c'est que la sélection naturelle, dans toute son ingéniosité, a su fournir à cet être extraordinairement curieux et intelligent l'occasion d'apprendre, d'innover et de se développer sa vie durant. Ainsi cet animal pensant s'amuse-t-il à faire de nouvelles expériences, à inventer des technologies insolites, à pratiquer des activités originales. N'est-ce pas merveilleux ? Je pense, donc je m'amuse !

… et je grimpe. Et j'apprends encore et encore. Et je deviens plus fort, plus vif, plus agile. C'est la faute à l'évolution : c'est elle qui m'a pourvu de gènes m'incitant à tout laisser tomber pour satisfaire à cette irrésistible envie de jouer et d'explorer.

Ces derniers temps, je me suis adonné à un nouveau jeu : le solo encordé. Par nécessité (partenaires parfois rares sur la route), mais aussi simplement par curiosité ; pour m'amuser. Comme le solo intégral (sans corde) me fait trop peur et ne m'amuse pas du tout, j'ai tenté de voir jusqu'où je pouvais me pousser en solo encordé. J'en avais déjà fait un peu dans le passé, mais à un niveau bien en deçà de mon niveau maximum normal (avec partenaire). J'ai donc entrepris d'améliorer mon système d'assurage pour pouvoir grimper plus près de ma limite

of this marvelously diversified and fun activity called climbing. My neotenic genes vigorously urge me to explore all possible avenues. Soloing also fits my personality pretty well: far from being a misanthropist, I am nevertheless of a solitary nature. I also feel much better when I am in command than when I sit in the passenger's seat. Climbing solo, I get to lead every pitch (I unfortunately have to rappel and jumar every pitch as well, which is a little less fun).

I shall pause here to describe my self-belay system since it is not common knowledge. I use a Soloist, made by Wren Industries. This device is fitted with a cam that lets the rope run freely when it pulls from below but stops it fast when the rope pulls from above. So, when attached to my harness, the Soloist automatically gives slack when I climb, and catches me if I fall. One important drawback of the device is that it doesn't catch an upside-down fall, so one has to be very careful about that risk factor. Before climbing, I have to build an upward-oriented anchor at the base, tie the rope to it with a shock-absorbing quickdraw, and run the rope through the Soloist. Then I can lead the pitch, and after that, I rappel back down and clean the pitch on jumars. This is the general procedure. There are of course a certain number of additional precautions including backup knots, Soloist orientation, the shock-absorbing quickdraw and rope weight on each side of the device. There are other self-belay devices (most notably the Silent Partner) that I haven't tried yet.

Following my experiments with rope-soloing in Indian Creek, I wanted to see if I could play my new game on long Yosemite routes. I climbed some of them in order to test my system and my abilities, and I was very pleased to realize that I could climb reasonably fast alone. I climbed the 12-pitch *Astroman* (5.11c) in eight hours and onsighted the nine-pitch *Crucif x* via *Mary's Tears* (5.12b) in nine hours. These are far from being record worthy, but I probably wouldn't have fared much better with a partner, unless they were much stronger than I.

Ever since I first visited Yosemite about 10 years ago, I have been fascinated with El Capitan. This gigantic cliff is amazing, and I really wanted to climb it again this year. But my aid climbing exploratory phase is over, and as for free climbing it, the easiest route is *Free Rider* (VI 5.12d, 35 pitches), and it is not a walk in the park. It's rated around 5.12d, which would be very accessible for a sport route, but I have suffered the Yosemite sandbagging tradition often enough to be wary of that number. I was far from convinced that I could free this route. Besides, in my mind only rock stars free climb El Cap, not ordinary climbers—not me. But I was nevertheless very curious; I wanted to see how it felt. I would try to free climb as much as possible and pull on gear if necessary. Just exploring, being curious, having fun.

Since I didn't have much time left in the Valley, I decided to climb the route in one push, leaving the ground hauling all my gear along. I brought food and water for about a week and started climbing, all along thinking we'll just see what happens.

I wanted to give it the best shot I could so I chose a strategy

physique. J'étais alors à Indian Creek, le paradis de la fissure. Après un peu de pratique avec mon système, je suis parvenu à me hisser au sommet de quelques 5.12 à vue, ce qui est à peu près ce que je fais de mieux avec un partenaire. J'étais tout à fait emballé de constater que je pouvais grimper aussi près de ma limite, tout seul, sans compromettre ma sécurité.

L'escalade en solitaire exige bien sûr une solide expérience et une grande concentration, ainsi qu'un peu plus d'effort et d'organisation, et elle reste un peu plus engagée que l'escalade avec partenaire ; mais elle constitue néanmoins pour moi une nouvelle facette de cette activité merveilleusement diversifiée et amusante qu'est l'escalade. Mes gènes néoténiques me poussent vigoureusement à en explorer toutes les avenues. L'escalade en solitaire correspond en outre assez bien à ma personnalité ; loin d'être misanthrope, je suis tout de même de nature assez solitaire et je me sens beaucoup mieux lorsque je suis aux commandes que lorsque je suis dans le siège du passager. En grimpant en solo, je suis toujours en tête, ce qui me plaît énormément. Je dois en revanche seconder moi-même toutes les longueurs, ce qui est un peu moins amusant…

Je m'arrête un instant pour décrire sommairement mon système d'assurage en solitaire, car je sais bien que ça ne fait pas partie du savoir courant. J'utilise un Soloist, fabriqué par Wren Industries. Cet appareil est attaché au baudrier et il comporte une came qui laisse filer librement la corde lorsqu'elle tire vers le bas et qui la bloque lorsqu'elle tire vers le haut. Je n'ai donc pas besoin de donner du mou en grimpant, et lors d'une chute normale, le Soloist bloque la corde. Il est à noter que le dispositif ne fonctionne pas lors d'une chute la tête la première. Par conséquent, il faut être très prudent quant à ce facteur de risque. Je construis donc un relais au sol (orienté vers le haut), j'y fixe la corde par le biais d'une dégaine explosive et je la passe dans le Soloist. Je peux alors grimper presque normalement la voie jusqu'à son sommet. Je descends ensuite en rappel et je remonte aux poignées d'ascension en déséquipant la longueur. C'est la procédure générale. Il y a, bien entendu, un certain nombre de manipulations supplémentaires importantes (nœud de sécurité, orientation du Soloist, poids de la corde de chaque côté du dispositif, dégaines explosives…). Il existe également d'autres dispositifs d'auto-assurage (notamment le Silent Partner) que je n'ai pas encore essayés.

Suite à mes quelques expérimentations en solo auto-assuré à Indian Creek, j'ai voulu voir si je pouvais m'amuser à mon nouveau jeu dans les longues voies de Yosemite. J'en ai donc grimpé quelques-unes pour tester mon système et mes capacités, et j'ai été encore une fois très satisfait de réaliser que je grimpais raisonnablement vite en solitaire. J'ai grimpé les 12 longueurs d'*Astroman* (5.11c) en huit heures et les neuf longueurs de *Crucif x* via *Mary's Tears* (5.12b) en neuf heures à vue. C'est loin d'être un record, mais je n'aurais probablement pas fait beaucoup mieux avec un partenaire, à moins que celui-ci eût été beaucoup plus fort que moi.

Depuis que j'ai mis les pieds à Yosemite il y a une dizaine d'années, je suis fasciné par El Capitan. Cette paroi gigantesque m'impressionne au plus haut point. J'ai eu envie de la gravir à nouveau cette année. Mais j'ai passé outre ma phase

that allowed me to climb when my energy level was at its highest. I brought five ropes, which meant I could free climb all morning without hauling. I left my ropes fixed behind, and I went down in the afternoon to jumar back up and haul. This plan still required a lot of work since I had to climb and follow each pitch, and then go back down the ropes to jumar back up and haul the bag. When the haul bag snagged, I had to go back down again, free it, jumar back up and continue hauling. Climbing El Cap solo, free or aid, is hard work.

In the end, I was agreeably surprised to discover that Yosemite ratings are not always sandbags. The pitches' difficulty corresponded to the topo ratings, except maybe for the Monster Crack. This notorious off-width took more tenacity and drained more energy out of me than any other pitch on the whole route and the prospect of having to re-lead it in the event of a fall was the only thing that kept me going all the way to the anchor. In total, I spent six nights on the wall, and I freed all 35 pitches (three of them second try, which proves that you're allowed to fall while self-belayed). Before the ascent, I did not believe I could free climb El Cap (even with a partner) without spending a lot of time working the route.

The author rope-soloing *Double Identité* at Pont-Rouge, Québec. Photo: Benoit Dubois

L'auteur grimpant en solo encordé dans la voie *Double Identité* à Pont-Rouge, Québec. Photo : Benoit Dubois

d'exploration de l'escalade artificielle, et quant au libre, la voie la plus facile, *Free Rider* (VI 5.12d, 35 longueurs) n'est pas donnée du tout. Elle est cotée 5.12d, ce qui serait très accessible si elle était une voie sportive, mais j'ai subi assez souvent la tradition yosemitique de la sous-cotation intentionnelle pour me méfier de ce chiffre. J'étais loin d'être convaincu que je pouvais grimper *Free Rider* en libre. En plus, dans mon esprit, ce sont les vedettes qui grimpent El Cap en libre — pas les grimpeurs ordinaires, pas moi. Mais j'étais tout de même curieux d'aller voir. Je me suis dit que ça pourrait être amusant. Je pourrais grimper en solo, essayer d'enchaîner le plus de longueurs possible et tirer un peu sur les pros dans les sections trop difficiles. Ça n'engage à rien…

Comme je n'avais pas beaucoup de temps, j'ai décidé de grimper la voie d'un seul trait, à partir du sol, en hissant tout mon matériel au fur et à mesure. J'apporterais de la bouffe et de l'eau pour environ sept jours et on verrait bien ce que ça donnerait.

Je voulais quand même me donner toutes les chances de réussite, alors j'ai choisi une stratégie qui me permettrait de me consacrer à l'escalade au moment où j'avais le plus d'énergie : j'ai apporté cinq cordes, ce qui me donnait l'opportunité de pouvoir grimper toute la matinée en libre, sans avoir à hisser mon matériel. Je laissais simplement les cordes fixes derrière moi, et durant l'après-midi, je redescendais et je hissais ensuite mon matériel. Cette stratégie exigeait malgré tout beaucoup de travail, puisque je devais grimper et seconder chaque longueur, pour ensuite redescendre et regrimper toutes les longueurs aux poignées, afin de hisser mon sac de halage. Quand ce dernier s'accrochait, je devais en plus retourner le décoincer, puis remonter et hisser. Grimper El Capitan en solitaire est toujours épuisant, que ce soit en libre ou en artif.

Finalement, j'ai été agréablement surpris de découvrir que les cotations de Yosemite ne sont pas toutes trompeuses. La difficulté des longueurs de *Free Rider* correspondait à peu près à la cotation du topo, mis à part peut-être le fameux Monster Crack. Cette impitoyable fissure hors-largeur m'a en effet demandé plus d'énergie et de détermination que toute autre longueur de la voie. Ce n'est que la sombre perspective d'avoir à la grimper de nouveau en cas de chute qui m'a incité à tenir bon jusqu'au relais. Au bout du compte, j'ai été six nuits en paroi et j'ai enchaîné les trente-cinq longueurs, dont trois au deuxième essai (ce qui prouve que l'on peut se permettre de chuter en solo auto-assuré). Je ne croyais pas pouvoir grimper El Cap en libre (encore moins en solitaire) sans devoir consacrer pas mal de temps à travailler la voie.

Le plus drôle avec le solo encordé, c'est que, puisque c'est un domaine assez obscur qui compte très peu de participants, mes quelques succès m'ont permis d'acquérir une petite renommée que je n'aurais pas obtenue autrement. Je pense

The funny thing about soloing is that since it is a pretty obscure aspect of climbing with only a small number of participants, my few successes contributed to a little fame that I wouldn't have acquired otherwise. I think that my realizations have the merit of being original and eye-opening regarding the possibilities of rope-soloing; but like any exploration of a new field, pioneers, whose qualities are mainly curiosity and a taste for innovation, will eventually be followed by truly gifted individuals who will really push the limits of what is thinkable. At that point, we will see some true feats. That said, soloing will probably never be very popular. It is yet another aspect of the climbing game that offers interesting possibilities and new ways to satisfy the exploratory instinct of the curious climber.

Back in Québec, my own exploratory instinct has pushed me to live some additional solitary adventures. *Les Grands-Galets* (5.12d/5.13a, 8 pitches) at the Cap Trinité went as well as *Free Rider*. I also wanted to see how rope-soloing could be applied to ice climbing. I climbed *la Pomme d'Or Directe* (WI6, 350m) in -20 to -25 C in January to learn that the technique not only applies well to ice climbing, but as an added bonus, one avoids freezing at the anchor belaying a partner—a very significant advantage. That said, *la Pomme d'Or* is not particularly difficult (it has been soloed unroped), but it will be interesting to see how far the technical limits can be pushed in ice or mixed terrain. There are still a lot of possibilities ahead for the solitary climber.

que mes réalisations ont le mérite d'être assez originales et d'ouvrir les yeux sur les possibilités de l'escalade en solitaire. Mais comme dans toute exploration d'un nouveau domaine, les pionniers, dont les qualités principales sont surtout la curiosité et le goût de l'innovation, cèderont éventuellement la place à des successeurs réellement talentueux qui repousseront véritablement les limites de ce qui est envisageable. On sera alors témoins d'exploits véritables. Ceci étant dit, l'escalade en solitaire ne sera probablement jamais très populaire. Mais c'est une variante de plus au jeu de la grimpe, offrant des possibilités intéressantes et fournissant l'opportunité d'assouvir l'instinct d'exploration du grimpeur curieux.

De retour au Québec, mon propre instinct d'exploration m'a d'ailleurs poussé à vivre quelques autres aventures en solitaire. *Les Grands-Galets* (5.12d/5.13a, 8 longueurs) au cap Trinité, s'est aussi bien déroulé que *Free Rider*. J'ai aussi voulu voir comment le solo encordé s'appliquerait à l'escalade de glace. J'ai donc grimpé *la Pomme d'Or Directe* (Grade 6, 350m) par un froid de -20° à -25°C en janvier, pour me rendre compte que non seulement la technique s'appliquait bien à l'escalade de glace, mais qu'on évite en prime de geler au relais en assurant son partenaire. C'est là un avantage considérable. Cela dit, *la Pomme d'Or* n'est pas très difficile (elle a d'ailleurs déjà été gravie en solo intégral), mais ce sera intéressant de voir jusqu'où on pourra pousser la difficulté technique en glace ou en mixte auto-assuré. Il y a encore beaucoup de possibilités à l'horizon pour le grimpeur solitaire !

Summary

Rope-solo ascents by Stéphane Perron:
Onsights of *Court Summons* (5.12) and *Strike and Dip* (5.12-), Indian Creek, April 2007.
Crucif x via *Mary's Tears* (5.12b, 9 pitches), northeast face of Higher Cathedral Rock, Yosemite, May 15, 2007.
Astroman (5.11c, 12 pitches), east face of Washington Column, Yosemite, May 22, 2007.
Free Rider (VI 5.12d, 35 pitches), southwest face of El Capitan, Yosemite, May 26–June 1, 2007.
les Grands-Galets (5.12d/5.13a, 8 pitches), Cap Trinité, Parc du Saguenay, Québec, September 23, 2007.
la Pomme d'Or Directe (WI6, 350m), Parc des Hautes-Gorges de la rivière Malbaie, Québec, January 4, 2008.
Double Identité (M7+, 30m), Pont-Rouge, Québec, January 19, 2008.

About the Author

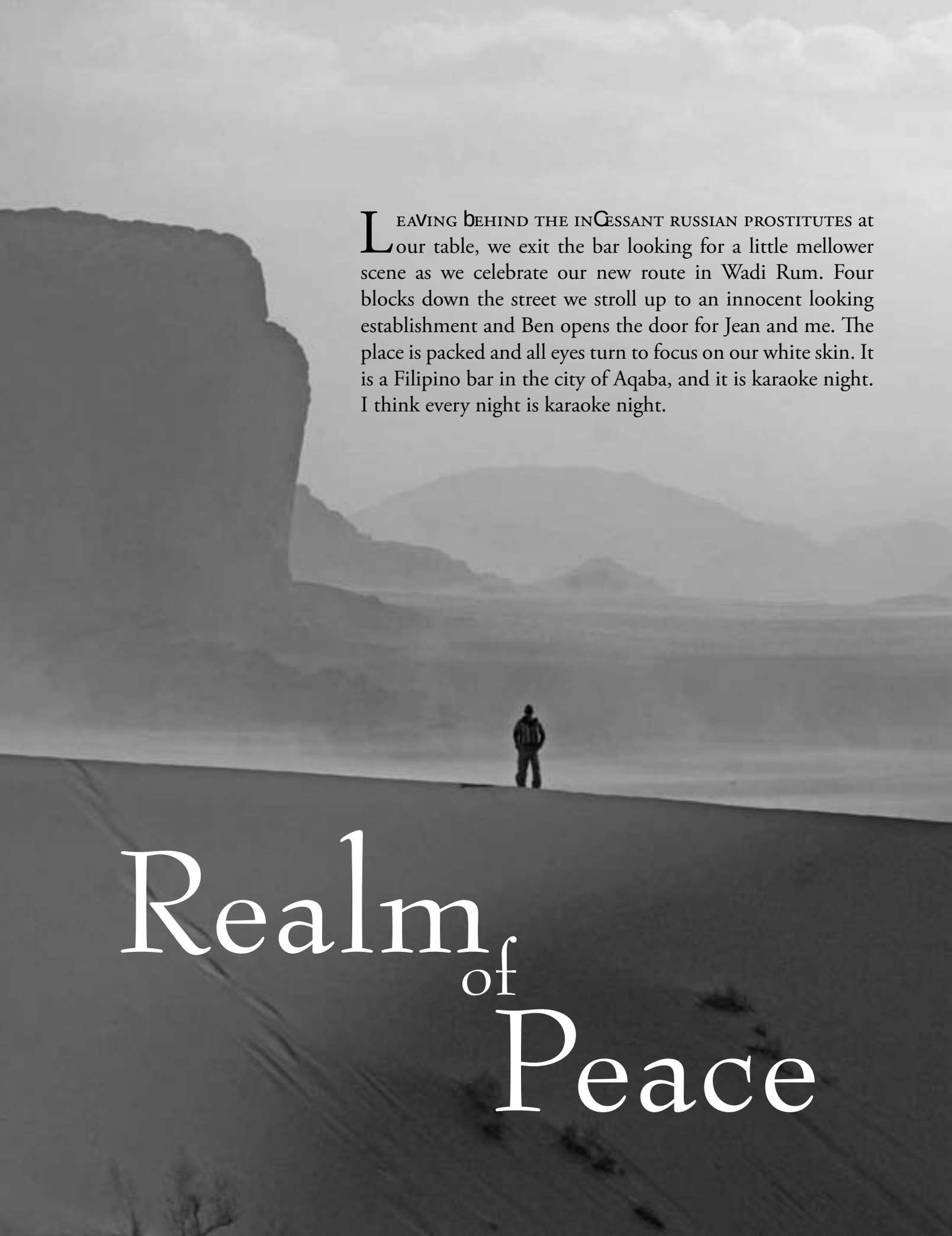
Stéphane Perron is a physics teacher living in Québec City. He is also the editor of *Grimpe*, the new French insert in Québec-sold *Gripped* magazines.

Résumé

Ascensions en solo encordé par Stéphane Perron:
Ascension à vue de *Court Summons* (5.12) et de *Strike and Dip* (5.12-), Indian Creek, avril 2007.
Crucif x via *Mary's Tears* (5.12b, 9 longueurs), paroi nord-est de Higher Cathedral Rock, Yosemite, le 15 mai 2007.
Astroman (5.11c, 12 longueurs), paroi est de Washington Column, Yosemite, le 22 mai 2007.
Free Rider (VI 5.12d, 35 longueurs), paroi sud-est de El Capitan, Yosemite, du 26 mai au 1er juin 2007.
les Grands-Galets (5.12d/5.13a, 8 longueurs), Cap Trinité, Parc du Saguenay, Québec, le 23 septembre 2007.
la Pomme d'Or Directe (Grade 6, 350m), Parc des Hautes-Gorges de la rivière Malbaie, Québec, le 4 janvier 2008.
Double Identité (M7+, 30m), Pont-Rouge, Québec, le 19 janvier 2008.

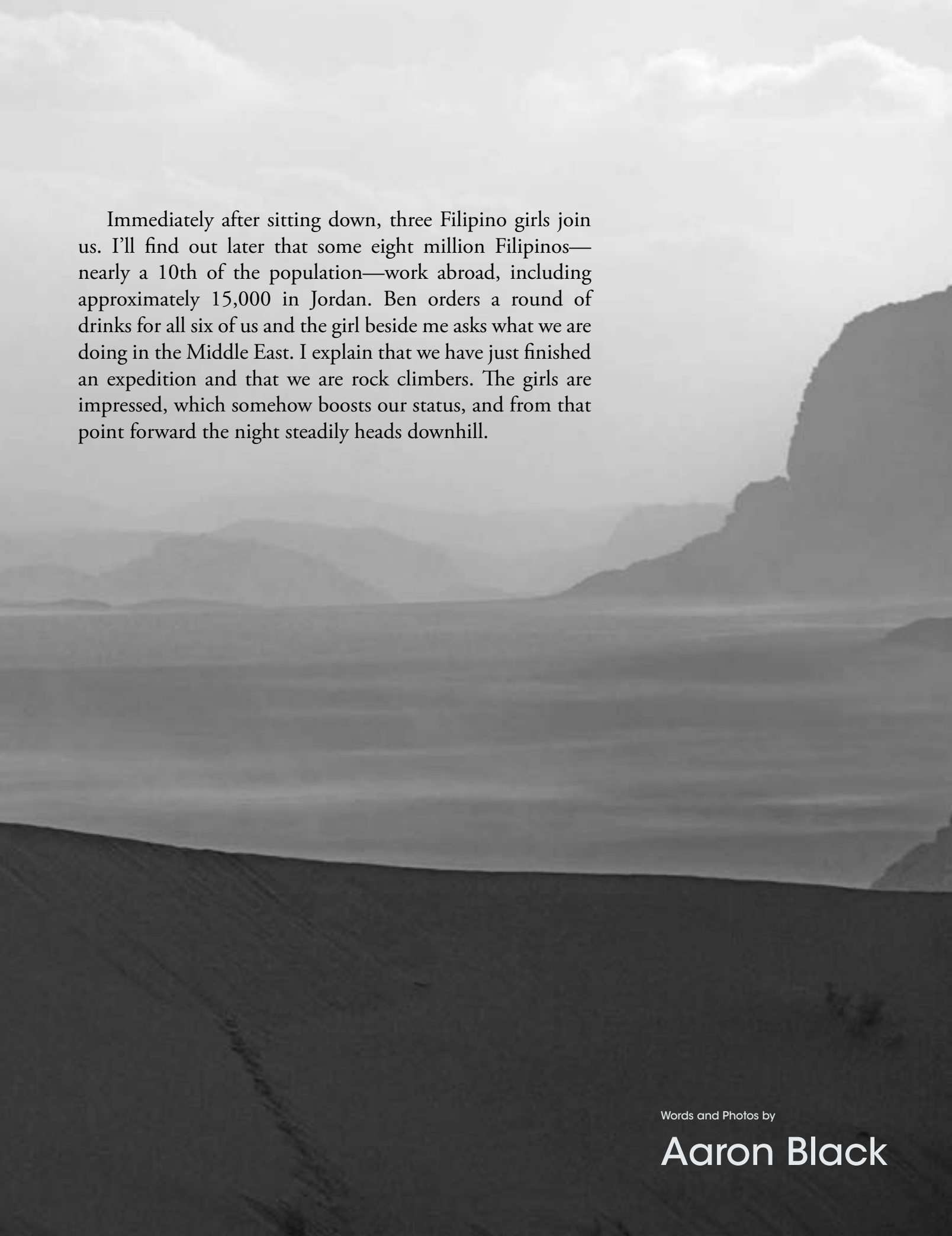
À propos de l'auteur

Stéphane Perron est un enseignant de physique qui habite à Québec. Il est aussi le rédacteur en chef de *Grimpe*, le nouveau supplément français dans les exemplaires de la revue *Gripped* vendus au Québec.



Realm of Peace

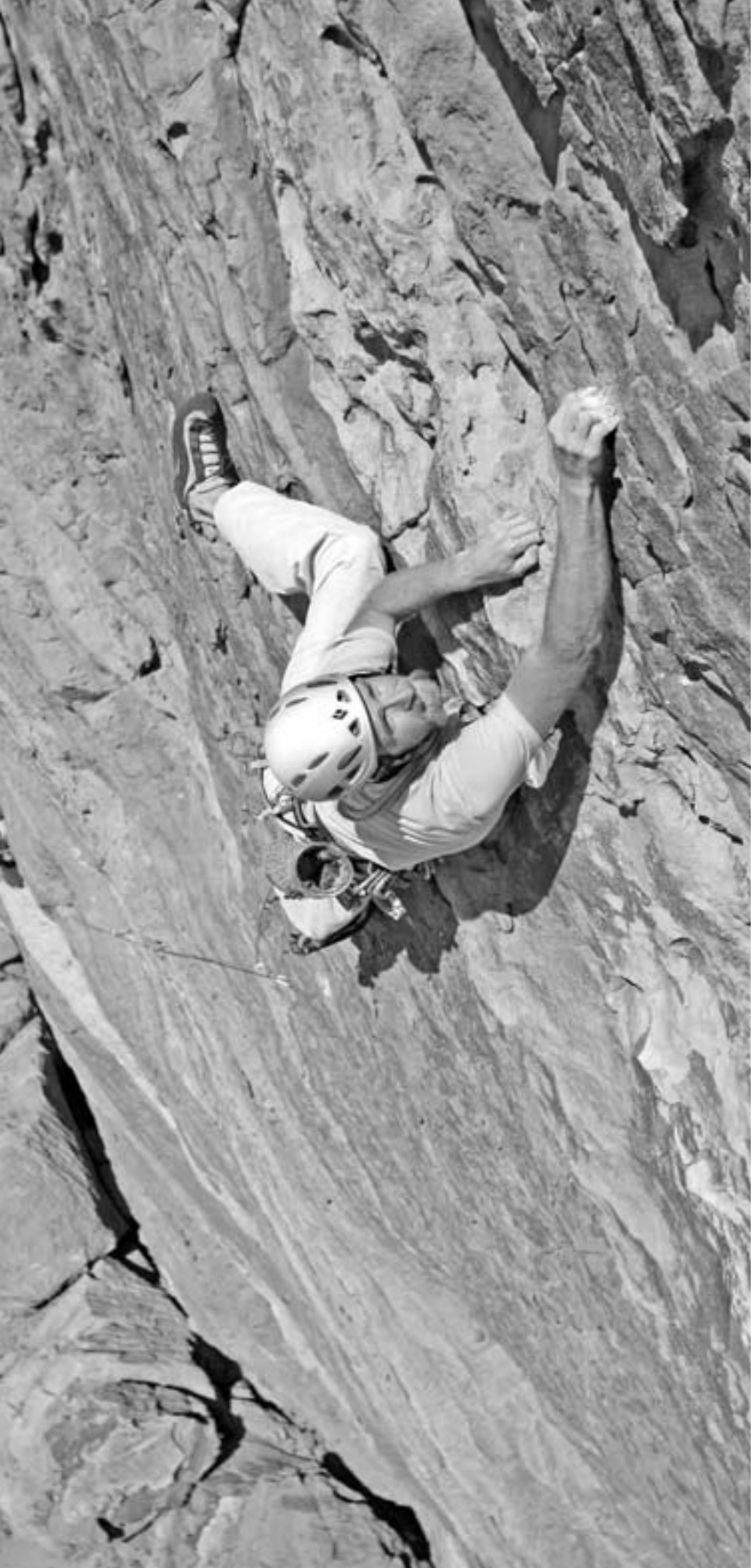
Leaving behind the incessant russian prostitutes at our table, we exit the bar looking for a little mellower scene as we celebrate our new route in Wadi Rum. Four blocks down the street we stroll up to an innocent looking establishment and Ben opens the door for Jean and me. The place is packed and all eyes turn to focus on our white skin. It is a Filipino bar in the city of Aqaba, and it is karaoke night. I think every night is karaoke night.



Immediately after sitting down, three Filipino girls join us. I'll find out later that some eight million Filipinos—nearly a 10th of the population—work abroad, including approximately 15,000 in Jordan. Ben orders a round of drinks for all six of us and the girl beside me asks what we are doing in the Middle East. I explain that we have just finished an expedition and that we are rock climbers. The girls are impressed, which somehow boosts our status, and from that point forward the night steadily heads downhill.

Words and Photos by

Aaron Black



For most Canadians, Jordan is not high on the list of countries to visit. It is on the other side of the globe, and in many ways it is culturally opposed. Surrounded by war-torn countries places it fairly low on the tourist circuit. However, for the traveller with an adventurous bent, Jordan is a window into a region that the world is currently focused upon. For climbers though, the country is home to an abundance of large sandstone walls with infinite new route potential.

While researching the Lost City of Petra—an ancient site of massive temples carved into sandstone cliffs—I discovered a valley of large sandstone walls called Wadi Rum. During my sleuthing, I also stumbled across the contact information for a man named Attayak who was labeled "the best rock climber in Jordan." Overly curious, I contacted Attayak and to my surprise he responded. His e-mail was short but to the point. He spoke of large unclimbed walls in a region near the Wadi Rum village that were too dif cult for him to climb. This was enough detail for me to solidify my plan to visit the area. I put out the word that I was looking for a team of professional climbers to join me.

Three climbers got back to me: Ben Firth from Canmore, and Heidi Wirtz and Chris Kalous from Colorado. An interesting thing about this trip was that it came together over the Internet. We were all strangers meeting for the first time at 6 a.m. in the Amman Airport in Jordan. Additionally, I had convinced filmmaker Jean Gamilovskij of Vancouver to come on the trip so whatever we found would be well documented.

The Wadi Rum is a vast, silent landscape of ancient riverbeds and pastel-coloured stretches of sandy desert shattered by towering sandstone mountains and sheer cliff faces. Leaving the hardened village road in our rented 4x4, we drove onto the sand for the first time. Along for the ride was Attayak, who, although he didn't know we were coming, had mystically appeared to greet us when we arrived in the Wadi Rum.

Ben Firth climbing pitch seven of *Dar al'Salaam* on Nassrani North, Wadi Rum. Photo: Aaron Black

Attayak, a thin man with pointy features, served as our guide during the initial scouting days.

The first day in the valley the temperature went above 30 C. We were concerned that by arriving in March we had missed the climbing season. With Ben at the wheel, we rallied the 4x4 through the desert directed by Attayak. Jumping from one valley to the next we found that most of the rock was too soft to climb. It was an underwhelming day and our spirits were low.

We had come to Jordan with hopes of finding a naturally protected crack line on a large wall. We had visions of this area being like Indian Creek in Utah—but larger. As a back-up plan, Chris had flown with a few hundred bolts and I had brought my Bosch drill in case the area was to yield a big-wall sport climb.

After a week in the valley, we finally found something that excited us. Rising above a large pillar of rock was a 350-metre wall with a line of shimmering red stone. From the little experience we had in the valley, we knew that the shiny red stuff was the most solid. Based out of the Wadi Rum village, we set to work organizing gear and supplies to be ready for an early start the next day. We had returned our rental jeep so we needed to solicit transport from the village to the base of the wall in the desert. We found a man by the name of Abdula who owned a jeep and would work as our driver for the remainder of our stay. Abdula's jeep was able to get us to within a couple hundred metres of the wall and from there we ferried loads on foot. Camp was erected on a large dune. That night we found out why the dune existed. The area was routinely hammered by strong winds, which deposited sand everywhere including inside our tents. The wind also brought cooler temperatures and with the exception of the first couple of days, the month of March offered pleasant climbing conditions.

We climbed as a party of three rotating through the duties: one person led, another belayed and the third hauled. The forth would rest and keep an eye on camp. The wall was set behind a large pillar of rock—the space between made for some cavernous chimney climbing. Swallowed by the dark chimneys, we enjoyed the protection from the sun. Three pitches of easy climbing brought us to the top of the pillar relatively quickly.

The face above was heavily featured but offered little in the form of natural protection. Bolting on lead means climbing with the five-kilogram power drill equipped with a hot, sharp bit anxious to spear you. Ben's climbing talent really stood out when drilling on lead. He launched into uncharted territory onsighting moves up to 5.11+, and maybe even 5.12-, while carrying the extra weight. The nature of the rock produced thought-provoking climbing. The stone was unpredictable with even large solid-looking holds breaking. The looseness on the Canadian Rockies had prepared Ben—he climbed with the faith that his years of experience would guide him to make correct decisions. Many holds were ripped off during the first ascent but luckily nobody fell with the drill.

The route was climatic with each pitch incrementally more difficult. The chimneys started easy pushing up to 5.9 climbing. The first face pitch was 5.10+, then 5.11-, then 5.11, then 5.12- with the last pitch at 5.13-. All of the pitches, with the exception of the last, were established ground-up. The final crux pitch followed a body-wide streak of bulletproof black varnish that we nicknamed Bahka Lahka Dahka Street (a *Team America* reference). Because of the difficulty of the last pitch, we toproped it first and then placed the bolts on rappel to make sure they were properly located. Since I drilled the bolts, I was the first to try redpointing it. The footholds were so friable that any twisting of my feet would cause them to crumble resulting in a fall. Being 300 metres off the ground climbing on small holds that I did not trust made the challenge of the final pitch more mental than physical. After repeated whippers, I descended without climbing a three-metre section of the 45-metre pitch.

Ben Firth cooling off on a rest day. Photo: Aaron Black

Basecamp below the walls of Wadi Rum. Photo: Aaron Black

Due to its position high on the wall, arriving at the penultimate pitch with enough energy to give it a fair go was part of the crux. After touching all the holds, I was confident it was climbable. If this last pitch was on the ground I am sure that everyone on the team would have made quick work of it. However, after five weeks in the valley, our time was up and success on the crux would come down to a last-ditch effort from Chris. Prior, we had made a team ascent of the wall yet not completely free. To all of our relief, Chris redpointed it on the final day. The holds were nonexistent so he devised a series of minuscule movements to overcome the crux section, sometimes moving hands and feet in opposition several times to gain just a handful of centimetres. The name given to our new route was *Dar al Salaam*, which means Realm of Peace in Arabic.

While there, Ben and I also climbed *La Guerre Sainte*, a route on the same wall put up by the French climber Arnold Petit. The route is mostly sustained 5.11 climbing and has three 5.12 pitches up to 5.12b. I onsighted everything until the final pitch (5.12a) where a hold snapped and I fell onto the belay. I felt that our new route was significantly harder than the French route.

After the third round of drinks the Filipino girls want to dance. On the dance floor, Ben shakes with a '70s disco style and Jean jitters with stiff knees. I'm not into it but the girls lure me to the floor with their hips. It seems like everyone in the bar is cheering for the three tourists busting moves. Sunburned and exhausted from the previous five weeks, the alcohol is quick to take affect causing the faces to spin around me.

Luckily the music shifts to a slow song and we sit again. Ben makes sure that everyone's drinks are topped up. The next few hours are a blur of karaoke, dancing and more drinks. We close the bar down and outside the girls ask if they can come over to our hotel. We decline the kind offer and find our way back to our downtown hotel walking the quiet streets of Aqaba. It is 4 a.m. when we find the front door locked with a sign stating: open at 5:30 a.m. We pound on the door but nobody answers. Jean and I walk to a 24-hour café but Ben stays put. When Jean and I return the hotel open. Ben is crashed out face down on the bed and cannot be woken. We leave him to his hangover and head for Petra where we enjoy our last day in Jordan wondering the ancient ruins.

About the Author

Aaron Black is a Canadian climber and photographer who has made a career avoiding the 9-to-5 for the past decade by documenting climbing culture and putting up new routes around the globe. This trip, minus the Filipino bar fiasco, was documented for the climbing film *The Wadi Rum Expedition*.

Dar al Salaam (5.13a, 8 pitches, 320m), southeast face, Nassrani North, Wadi Rum, Jordan.
FA: Aaron Black, Ben Firth, Heidi Wirtz, Chris Kalous, March 2007.
Approach: Nassrani North lies just southwest of Wadi Rum village. Start from the right side of a large ledge (3rd class) beneath a chimney formed between the main wall and a 150-metre-tall partially detached tower.
P1: 5.4, 50m. Stem up the chimney (threads for gear) to a ledge with a two-bolt anchor. The route *Silent Sands* goes left from here.
P2: 5.6, 50m. Continue up the chimney with occasional moves on the arête. Finish on a large ledge with a gear belay or an in situ thread on the left wall.
P3: 5.9, 30m. Move the belay into the chimney (4th class) so you are under the final cracks near the top of the chimney. Stem and jam (#.75–#2 Camalots useful) to a ledge and two-bolt anchor.
P4: 5.10d, 35m. Face climb huecos and edges past several in situ threads and two bolts to a large ledge and a two-bolt anchor.
P5: 5.11b, 35m. Face climb left from the belay trending into a scoop. Pull the roof out of the scoop (crux) then continue to a ledge with a three-bolt anchor. This pitch completely fixed with bolts supplemented with in situ threads.
P6: 5.11c, 25m. Continue up good rock on pockets and edges past bolts. Trend right then left to a ledge and a two-bolt anchor.
P7: 5.12a, 40m. Climb slightly right from the belay then continue up steep rock to a large ledge that crossed the route *Muezzin*. Traverse right on the ledge to a pillar connecting with the upper headwall. Pull difficult moves up and onto the headwall end at a large hueco and a two-bolt anchor. This pitch has 18 protection bolts.
P8: 5.13a, 30m. Follow a line of bolts straight up the varnished trough above the belay to a two-bolt anchor. Finish by climbing into a gully behind the belay. Circuitous 3rd- and 4th-class scrambling gains the summit in about 30 minutes.
Descent: Rappel the route with double 60-metre ropes, using an intermediate belay on pitch five to go straight to the top of pitch two.

Dar al'Salaam on Nassrani North, Wadi Rum. Photo: Aaron Black

Meltdown

Kate Sinclair

In the early days of mountaineering, alpine science and climbing were intertwined. Glaciologists were hardy, bearded outdoor types who roamed the world's mountain regions taking pictures and making some of the first mass balance measurements on glaciers. They were interested in observing and recording changes. Mountaineers were just as exploratory and many of the first forays into remote ranges were made in the name of science. More often than not, these people were one in the same. English physicist and natural philosopher, John Tyndall, not only made the first ascent of the Weisshorn in Switzerland in 1861, but returned to Europe many times to climb and investigate glacier motion. Since the genesis of both of these disciplines, climbing has evolved into a technical, goal-oriented activity where pushing new boundaries gets more press than journeys. Alpine science, at the same time, has become more removed from mountain environments. An array of remote sensing tools—satellite images, radar, laser altimetry, to name a few—provide a huge amount of data without the need to poke around in snowpits and crevasses to learn about the world's cold regions.

The divergence between climbing and alpine science has left us at an impasse. The anecdotal evidence of climate change gathered by climbers, who spend much of their time in the alpine, does not reach the academic community. Likewise, the state of knowledge in the science community is not easily extracted from scholarly journals and distributed to the people who need to use it as advocates for the environment.

The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), recognizing the need to foster new dialogue between scientists and climbers, organized a workshop (Climate Change Impacts on the Alpine: The Future of our Mountains) at the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) meeting in Banff in 2006. This initiative called for alpine clubs around the world to act as a voice for climate change. Climbers are in a unique position with respect to this issue and, by working together, alpine clubs can make a huge contribution to the public awareness of what is fast becoming the biggest environmental issue facing our planet. After all, if the climbing community does not respond to the biggest threat facing our mountain environments, who will?

Alongside initiatives by the ACC/UIAA, an array of new scientific information has hit the newsstand, the most prominent of which is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) 2007 report, which synthesizes our current understanding of climate change and the knowledge gaps, of

1941: Muir Glacier, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Alaska. Photo: William Field (from the Glacier photograph collection, Boulder, Colorado, USA: National Snow and Ice Data Center/World Data Center for Glaciology)

which there are many. As someone who climbs and does alpine science, I decided to summarize the latest, and not so happy, state of the world's mountain regions.

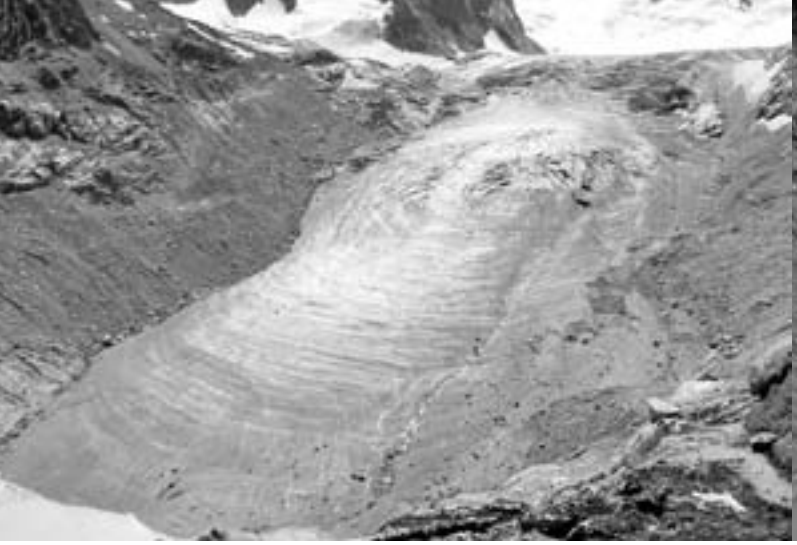
The State of the Meltdown

Climate fluctuates naturally between warm and cool periods and, over millennia, the world's glaciers and ice caps have responded to these temperature variations. What stands out about our current warm phase is that the rate of warming is very likely to have been unprecedented in more than 10,000 years. The world's top climate scientists now have a "very high confidence" (greater than 90 per cent) that the rise of greenhouse gases expelled by our energy hungry societies has had a net warming effect. The years from 1995 to 2006 rank among the warmest in our instrumental record of temperature (since 1850), with 1998 being the hottest on record. Furthermore, the global temperature is expected to continue to rise by 1.1-6.4 C by the end of this century, with this range reflecting uncertainty in climate model projections and different emission scenarios. Somewhere in the middle of this expected warming lies a 4.0 C threshold, beyond which it is projected that most of the world's alpine glaciers would disappear into thin ice. Because most of the world's ice is locked up in Antarctica and Greenland, these ice caps could play a major role in future sea level rise, though it is the mountain ranges at mid-latitudes and in the sub-tropics that are responding most rapidly to a warming world.

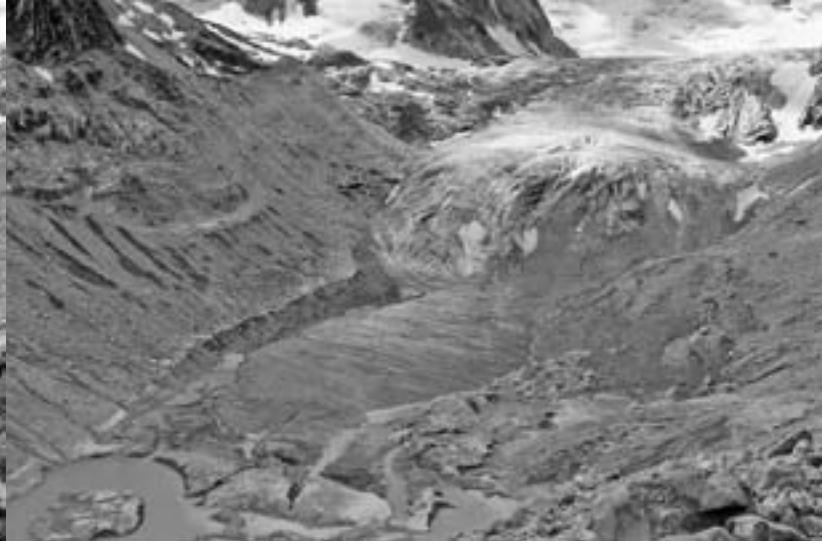
Alpine glaciers in areas such as the Andes, the Rocky Mountains, the European Alps and the Himalaya maintain a delicate balance between accumulation and melt. They rely on cold temperatures at high elevations to sustain their ice volume, and minor amounts of warming at these elevations have an immediate and profound effect on the entire system.

These glacial systems also respond far more quickly to climate change than their polar counterparts due to their fast "turnaround" time. The ratio between their annual flow rates and total mass is higher, so that they have a more touchy response to temperature fluctuations. That being said, it may still take decades to see the true response of the world's glaciers to the warming of the 1980s and 1990s. Even if all atmospheric warming could be stopped in its tracks today, we would still see the widespread loss of ice in the mountains in the next few decades as glaciers adjust their volume to account for the warm years that we've already experienced.

2004: Muir Glacier, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Alaska. Photo: Bruce Molina (from the Glacier photograph collection, Boulder, Colorado, USA: National Snow and Ice Data Center/World Data Center for Glaciology)



2000: Vowell Glacier, Bugaboo Provincial Park, British Columbia.
Photo: Paul Lazarski



2007: Vowell Glacier, Bugaboo Provincial Park, British Columbia.
Photo: Marc Piché

The rate of ice loss is also surprisingly difficult to predict. As glaciers respond to the new climate reality, meltwater that reaches the bed surface increases the flow rate, accelerating ice flow into lower elevation zones. This, in turn, speeds up the rate of glacial retreat. Given that these alpine systems are the water towers for continents and the lifeline of river systems, their continued loss will have devastating impacts in highly populated countries that rely on this water for almost every facet of daily life.

A review of the most current glaciology literature takes us on a global tour of the world's iconic mountain ranges and the consensus is grim. There has been widespread retreat throughout the 20th century and this has accelerated since the 1970s in most parts of the world. There are some exceptions to the widespread pattern of retreat. A warmer atmosphere can also hold more water, and a shift to warmer, wetter conditions in some regions has led to glacial advance, but this only occurs if the precipitation falls as snow, not rain. Some glaciers in Scandanavia and the New Zealand Southern Alps, for example, advanced during the 1990s in response to increased snowfall. However, the effect of warm temperatures tends to dominate in the long term because warmer, wetter conditions also lead to a longer summer melt season. This generally overshadows any mass gains from increased snowfall.

In other regions of the world the pattern of retreat has been unequivocal. The decline in ice volume started after 1800, towards the end of the Little Ice Age. This accelerated throughout the 20th century, gaining even more momentum after 1970 when temperature increases ramped up to new levels. The loss of ice in both hemispheres was more than twice as fast in the 1990s compared to previous decades and the strongest mass losses per unit area have been observed in Patagonia, Alaska, northwest United States and southwest Canada.

Early visitors to Glacier National Park, Montana, coined the area the "Little Switzerland of North America", and when the Park was created in 1910, it was home to about 150 glaciers. Thirty now remain, and the ice-covered area of these survivors shrunk by 73 per cent from 1850 to 1993. Dan Fagre of the United States Geological Survey has devoted his career to observing these changes and predicts that within 30 years, most, if not all, of the Park's namesake glaciers will disappear. This will be the first time in at least 7,000 years that this area has not had glaciers draping the valley walls.

Ice in other parts of North America tells the same story. Alaska's spectacular glaciers are losing an estimated 96 cubic kilometres of water each year; an enormous contribution to sea level rise. Close to home, glacier cover in Banff, Jasper and Yoho National Parks, decreased by more than 25 per cent during the 20th century. This is a response to major changes in the distribution and timing of snowfall across the Rocky Mountains. There have been significant decreases in spring snow cover over western North America and the time of maximum snowpack is two weeks earlier than in 1950. The upshot of this is that spring runoff is also earlier, so that glaciers have to sustain streamflow for a longer part of the summer.

The Himalaya encompasses the world's third-largest glacier system after Antarctica and Greenland. Similar to most other alpine regions of the world, the vast majority of all Himalayan glaciers have been retreating and thinning over the past 30 years, with accelerated losses in the past decade. In Central Asia, glaciers are wasting at exceptionally high rates. Glaciers in the Ak-shirak Range of Kyrgyzstan have lost 23 per cent of their area since 1977, similar to area losses in the northern Tien Shan (29 per cent from 1955 to 1990). Since the 1960s, the average retreat rate on the north slopes of Qomolangma (Mount Everest) is 5.5-9.5 metres per year and on Xixiabangma (Shishapangma), 4.0-5.2 metres per year. The Chinese Meteorological Association predicts that China's northwestern mountains will lose more than a quarter of their current glacier coverage by 2050. These glaciers supply 15-20 per cent of the water to more than 20 million people in the Xinjiang and Qinghai Provinces alone.

The 1991 discovery of Ötzi, the 5,000-year-old iceman preserved in the Schnalstal Glacier in the European Alps caught the world's attention, yet his emergence meant that this glacier had reached a 5,000-year minimum. In fact, researchers have calculated that glaciers in the European Alps lost 35 per cent of their total area from 1850 until the 1970s and almost 50 per cent by 2000. It was in 2003, however, that the continent really began to wake up to the effects of glacial recession. During the long, hot summer of that year, 10 per cent of Switzerland's glacial mass simply disappeared.

Tropical glaciers occur in Irian Jaya of Indonesian New Guinea, on the East African Mount Kenya, Kibo (Mount Kilimanjaro), and Ruwenzori, and in the South American Andes

1924: Athabasca Glacier, Jasper National Park, Alberta.
Photo: Byron Harmon (The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies)

2001: Athabasca Glacier, Jasper National Park, Alberta.
Photo: Peter Lemieux

between Venezuela and Bolivia. The last 15 years have been characterized by the synchronous retreat of ice on all tropical mountains. The famed snows of Kilimanjaro have melted more than 80 per cent since 1912, from 12 square kilometres to just more than two square kilometres in 2000. In Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, shrinking glaciers supply water year-round to major cities. In Peru, for example, thousands of people rely on the Quelccaya Ice Cap for drinking water and electricity. If it continues to melt at its current rate, it will be gone by 2100.

Where does this story of doom and gloom leave us as climbers? Even if we continue to climb and do little to try to influence public policy on climate change issues, the impact of global warming in our alpine playgrounds will simply become impossible to overlook. There are reports worldwide of increased rockfall hazards on many well-travelled alpine routes. Changing weather systems and more extreme precipitation events will make avalanches less predictable, and the summer climbing season will become shorter in many areas due to impassable bergshrunds and crevasse fields. Alpine clubs have the dual role of promoting access to alpine regions along with ensuring their environmental protection, but understanding and responding to climate change impacts is a responsibility of the entire climbing community.

Glaciers are often referred to as "global thermometers" because they are some of the most visible indicators of climate fluctuations on the planet and the mountaineering community is in a unique position to report on their state of health. The level of public knowledge about the state of the world's mountains is simply low to non-existent because, let's face it, most of the western world's population spends their working hours in an of ce and weekends in the city. Mountaineers, on the other hand, have both the environmental savvy and experience necessary to contribute significantly to shaping public attitudes about climate change in alpine regions.

As Bob Sandford, Canadian Chair of the United Nations Water for Life Initiative and leader of the 2006 ACC climate change workshop concluded: "By working together through the UIAA, the world's mountaineering community may well be able to extend their influence into the domains of public action on climate change issues that could in time result in the strengthening of public policy world-wide in response to this most dangerous threat to our collective mountain heritage." If anything is sure in a world that is experiencing such rapid change, it is that alpine clubs will need a strong, coordinated vision to achieve this, and climbers will need to commit to playing an active role in voicing our concerns about this critical issue.

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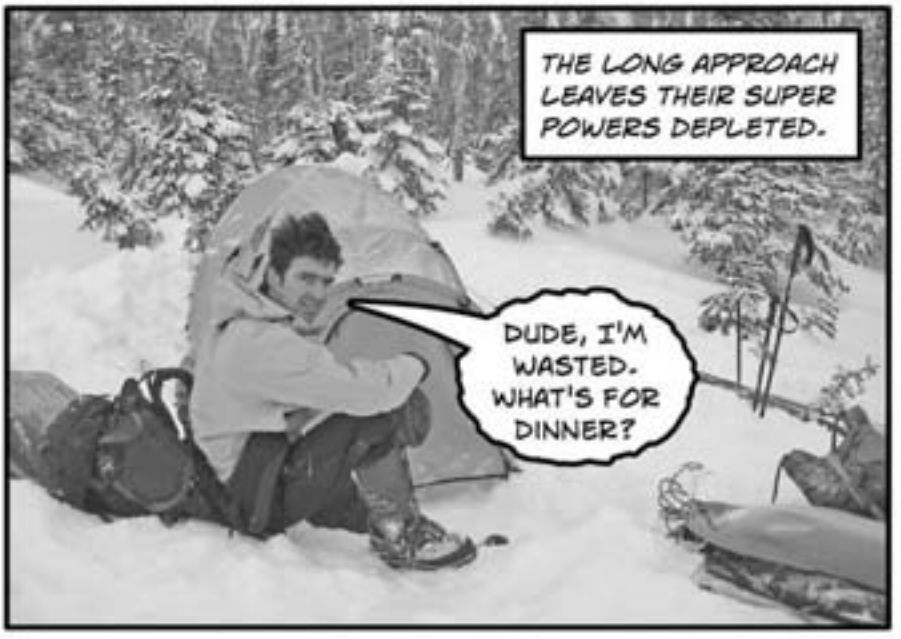
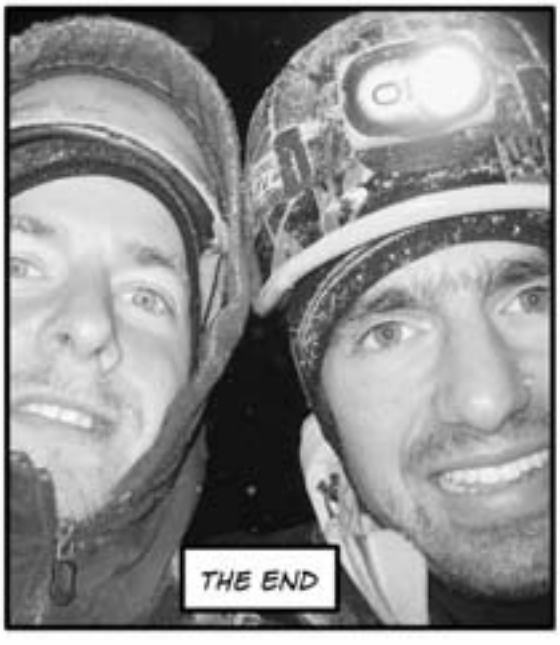
About the Author

Kate Sinclair, originally from New Zealand, is currently based in Calgary, Alberta. When not out exploring the crags of the Canadian Rockies, she is working towards a PhD in glaciology at the University of Calgary.

ADVENTURES IN NEWFOUNDLAND

PHOTOS BY LP MENARD AND YAN MONGRAIN





Summary

The second ascent of Baby Beaver (M6+ WI5, 200m, Shimberg-Terravecchia, 2003) and Tundering Lard (M7 WI5, 200m, Shaw-Terravecchia, 2000) on the Cholesterol Wall in Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland by LP Menard and Yan Mongrain, January 2008.

The Inner Ranges

Preachings from the Converted

Sarah Hart

Breaking through the bubble of Ontario's sport and plastic-pulling competition scene three years ago was adventure enough for me. Like many other liberated Ontarians, I ventured west with visions of Chris Sharma's magical Squamish boulders. By my own humble reckoning, I was the shit. After crawling out from the underside of a dark, "slug trail"-painted boulder, I would race up the Chief's backside trail and make jokes about all the "trad daddies" who came clanking down the trail. "Weak dorks," was my general sentiment. To me, climbing was about "making juice from stone." The point was not so much about connecting with nature as it was to dominate it.

Two years ago, I was bouldering my own business in Joshua Tree when I met some trad daddies in camp who irreversibly expanded my perception of climbing. I was drawn to their warm fire, Katy's ripped forearms and the stories and adventures from a strange place beyond called "alpine." Perhaps Jeremy Frimer, Katy Holm, Kelly Franz and Lena Rowat were just good liars, or perhaps I just wasn't your average boulderer. Either way, I was in love (yes, with Jeremy but also the alpine).

I entered the trad industry with some transferable skills. I had climbed 5.12d and V8 during my rounds on many of the Squamish sport and bouldering classics. When it came to trad, the whole stopping-to-place-gear thing was scary in the exciting sense, but the low-angle (as in less than 30-degree overhanging) of the rock took the sting out of it.

"Have you tried multi-pitch yet?" Katy was looking for a partner. Since I hadn't, Katy took the first lead on *Freeway*—the classic 5.11d on the Chief. "It's just 5.10c," I repeatedly tried to convince myself as I over-pawed (the equivalent of over-gripping, but on a slab) my way across the run-out traverse. Sweating and shaking at the second belay, I began to have the sense that this trad stuff takes more strength—or maybe just a different kind of strength—than I had anticipated. Katy reassured me as I wavered. She took the sharp end and dragged me up the final 10 pitches.

My first real alpine experience was a trip to the Bugaboos, which resulted in a similar mental overload. On the *Northeast Ridge* of Bugaboo Spire, as the grades got easier, I, for some reason, got more scared. At the end of the so-called dif culties, I watched Jeremy move quickly away from me and sought comfort by mentally rehearsing his instructions: "Just follow the knife-edge. I'll weave the rope this way and that around features on the crest to act as pro. It's easy climbing. But Sarah, be sure not to fall off. OK, Love?"

The rope came taut so I started straddling the knife-edge ridge like my life depended on it. I'd been open-minded to just about everything that the trad daddies served up. But I drew the line here. I was not interested in testing the if-I-fall-off-one-side-you-jump-off-the-other style of protection. I missed my bolts and crash pad, if only for a moment.

All the "practicing" in Squamish and the Bugaboos left me wanting of something bigger. Feeling confident with a summer of firsts under my belt, I joined Jeremy's expedition to the Indian Himalayas. He assured me that it would be just like the Bugaboos, only somewhat bigger, more remote, less visited, colder, and inhabited by exiled Tibetans. I was game. To balance things out a little, I invited him on an expedition of my own. In the spring of that same year, I was flipping through John Baldwin's book *Mountains of the Coast*, when I happened upon his description of the Tahumming Traverse. Baldwin reported it to be among his favourite Coast Range traverses. The Tahumming became the centre of my lust. Along with Mark Grist, the three of us flew by float plane into Toba Inlet, and began the two-week, unsupported horseshoe traverse. Aside from the two-day bushwhack and the blood-sucking bugs, I was living the dream.

I carried my equal share of the weight, but I weighed a good 50 pounds less than the boys. By the third day, I was tired of lagging behind. So I took a short lunch and got a head start into what would end up being the first interesting terrain of the trip. Without any real knowledge of snow travel (aside from driving Highway 400 back in "On-terrible"), I chose the wrong route and slipped at just the wrong moment. Two hours later, the helicopter arrived to extricate my bloodied, broken body.

Sitting in a Himalayan base camp, I nursed my busted ego and broken wrist, and tried to be of some support to Jeremy and the boys as they climbed. I was only able to climb one 5,000-metre peak on the expedition. Fourth-class terrain felt hard with one arm. In the months that followed, my arm healed but my ego didn't. Sport climbing and bouldering had been comfortable and had come easily. Fear had seldom registered. Fear now paralyzed me. The joy left my climbing; it became a chore instead. Jeremy felt guilty for not teaching me how to self-arrest before the Tahumming Traverse and I felt pathetic for backing off well-protected 5.7s. Like my ascent, my descent

Katy Holm (leading) and Sarah Hart on the crux of *Freeway*, the Stawamus Chief, Squamish. Photo: Jeremy Frimer

from alpine climbing began at a similarly rapid clip. Having been instrumental in my ascent, Jeremy, and his encouragement, only made matters worse. I envisioned a life outside of climbing.

"Whose lead is it- Will you take it, Luisa?" Jacqui looked upwards with uncertainty. Luisa looked up too with an inquisitive look, but was silent.

While still struggling with my demons, a golden opportunity had come to commit or bail on this climbing thing—an expedition to the Karakoram. This was a different kind of commitment than a powerful lunge for a Gaston well above the last bolt. The commitment would not be to a move or to the defiance of gravity, but to my friends Jacqui and Luisa, and to myself. I decided to go and trust my fear-purging process to work itself out. The goal of dominating as a sport climber left me disconnected from the natural world and from those I called climbing partners. In the alpine, I came to appreciate the dance, the balance, the cooperation.

"I'll take this one, Luisa," I blurted. "You can get the next one."

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the support of the Alpine Club of Canada's Jen Higgins Award and Mountain Equipment Co-op for her trips to India and Pakistan.

Re-examining the First Ascent of Mount Robson's Southwest Ridge

Glenn Reisenhofer

A friend of mine, Davis, owns a 1974 copy of *The Rocky Mountains of Canada North*. The fine cover photo of Mount Robson has fallen off, and due to the excessive mountain searching and page flipping, a permanent greasy thumb streak is visible across the midsection of the book. In perusing through this book, one inevitably turns to Mount Robson. This particular edition has a unique shot of the mountain not found elsewhere, a photo by G. I. Bell of the southwest side with the Patterson couloir clearly shown. This is one of Davis' favourite photographs. Bell must have taken this shot from an airplane for the vertical relief on Robson is staggering.

Over the years Davis and I have examined this photo several times. In wondering who made the first ascent of the southwest ridge, we eventually came to realize that there is some ambiguity here. Perhaps the time has come to revisit the ancient accounts of yore.

The historical debate that has overshadowed all other first ascent accounts on Mount Robson is the Kinney versus Kain argument. The current wisdom is that the summit was first successfully reached in 1913 by Kain, Foster and MacCarthy via the Kain Face.[1]

As for the southwest ridge of Mount Robson, it came very close to receiving its first ascent in 1913 by Basil Darling, Conrad Kain, Albert MacCarthy and Walter Schauffelberger. We do know that they certainly did not reach the summit because as Darling writes: "I began to realize despondently that we could not reach the summit, now only five hundred feet above us, and was not surprised when Conrad declared that it would be too dangerous to go on."[2]

Fast forward to the year 1924. A. O. Wheeler and the Alpine Club of Canada return to Mount Robson for some more fun. In July, Kain along with M. D. Geddes, T. B. Moffat and M. Pollard complete the first ascent of the southwest ridge of Robson—a route that would one day sport a comfortable hut and become the standard way up the mountain. *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies, The Rocky Mountains of Canada North*, and *The 11,000ers of the Canadian Rockies* all acknowledge this party's first ascent.

However, when the dust is blown off an old *Canadian Alpine Journal*, a surprising realization emerges. In a 1923 article written by Windsor B. Putnam, an American climber, it is clearly evident that Putnam and Jack Hargreaves[3] climbed the southwest ridge of Mount Robson in 1922—two years prior to the 1924 ascent. The essay is simply called "Mount Robson—1922" (*CAJ*, vol. XIII (1923), pp. 39–52). The 15-page piece contains a few passages that state with certainty that Putnam and his partner reached the summit of the mountain. "Scaling the inclined snow bridge forming the connection, we bounded back a few yards and at a quarter to five clasped hands, in mutual congratulations, on the highest summit of Mount Robson."

"The writer of the story," Putnam begins, did "the second complete ascent of Mount Robson…." He goes on to acknowledge, "The 1914 number of this Journal is a compendium of information concerning Mount Robson and proved invaluable on our trip. Without its help the second ascent of the peak would, in all probability, remain an unattained ideal." The article is further accompanied by a photo with the route marked and the exact location of where they left their summit record: "…a brief memorandum of the expedition in a George Washington coffee can." Putnam concluded the article by stating, "I have no doubt but that this southwest approach furnishes, if not the safest, certainly the most expedient route."

If Putnam and Hargreaves climbed Mount Robson by a

new route in 1922, why are they not credited with a first ascent? Understandably, Kain deserves credit for working out the terrain in 1913, once during his descent from the Kain Face with Foster and MacCarthy, and again on his attempt to climb the southwest ridge with Darling, MacCarthy and Schauffelberger, but does Kain deserve the credit of a first ascent when clearly someone had climbed the route two years earlier?

At present, there is little debate associated with this route. The 1926–27 *Canadian Alpine Journal* contains an essay by J. Monroe Thorington entitled "A Mountaineering Journey Through Jasper Park". A footnote states "It is difficult to record exactly the early ascents of Mt. Robson… The reported ascent by Putnam and Hargreaves, in 1922, has not been universally accepted. The writer considers that the ascent by Geddes, Moffat, Pollard and Kain" is the first ascent of the southwest ridge. The article does not reveal any details as to why Putnam and Hargreaves' ascent is not accepted. Kain and his parties did sort out the difficulties of the southwest ridge in 1913, but credit for a first ascent is usually reserved for the individuals who completed the route from bottom to top, particularly in this time period when reaching the summit was the all-important goal.

I wonder if there is an underlying reason why Putnam and Hargreaves are not given credit? Perhaps a closer look at Thorington's condemning statement may reveal some answers? Who knows? What I do know is that a new yellow hardcover now graces Davis' copy of *The Rocky Mountains of Canada North*, and that he continues to flip through his favourite guidebook. Maybe one day he'll even have a new cover photo of Mount Robson.

Footnotes

[1] For an in-depth investigation, see Chic Scott's *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering*, Rocky Mountain Books (2000), pp. 70–82.

[2] *Canadian Alpine Journal*, vol. 6 (1914 and 1915), p. 44.

[3] Jack Hargreaves and his brothers operated a packing and outfitting business from a ranch house in the Mount Robson vicinity.

The ascent route of Putnam and Hargreaves is quite similar to the route attempted by Kain and party in 1913, with a major variation occurring near the top. Putnam freely remarks that he used the data available to aid his party to the top.

Climber Kabob

Mark Senyk

T'was out one day
Clippin' some bolts
Hangin' around
With some lycra-clad folks

Was on a route
Through the crux and all
Until I had a feeling
I was going to fall

With a glance between my legs
I was ready to be
Flying through the air
And skewered by that tree

This great gaping hole
Adorning my inner-thigh
Meant all I could do
Was kiss my sex-life
Good-bye

Kananaskis Country Accident Report

Date: May 13, 1995
Location: Cougar Canyon, Canmore
Province: Alberta
Park or Region: Bow Valley
Topo Map: 82 O/3 Canmore
Route: (5.11) Catseye Cliff Left
Type: Rock climbing
Persons Killed: 0
Persons Injured: 1
Type of Injuries: Puncture/laceration of the inner thigh.
Description: The climber had fallen off a 5.11 route three metres above the second bolt, onto a broken treetop and had impaled his inner thigh on the tree, sustaining a three-centimetre flesh wound.
Rescue Mode: Assisted to the trailhead by rangers.

The Agony

Jerry Auld

High on a blunt of dolomite, out of sight of the road, two men scaled a new and hard line.

They had quarrelled on the midsections as the difficulty increased, and as they worked the final pitches the leader grew impatient for victory as the second grew exhausted. At a belay stance on a small ledge, Peter brought Cary up and stepped aside for him to lead; the wall above seemed impossible. Peter proposed a traverse out under a hanging bulge to a crack system. Cary wondered if they were off route.

Peter said. "It's our route, how could we be off it?"

Cary told him that it was too hard. Peter was tired too, and grew angry, questioning Cary's commitment. They shouted, pressed arm-to-arm, their voices smashing each other from inches away and then evaporating into the vacuum at their backs. Cary was the type who would never do something if pushed. He needed the pull of his own conviction to take risk. The more Peter urged, the more Cary doubted.

Peter grabbed the gear off Cary's harness violently, glared and told him to watch close and then started the traverse. Cary watched bated and knew he couldn't lead it, fearing trying to follow. Peter managed only one piece of protection, then reached the crack and started up.

Cary asked him if he could see the top.

Peter said, "I can't see anything higher."

His feet disappeared and Cary watched the rope tug and he fed it out carefully. It was very hot and they were out of water. After a long time, Cary studied the mesmerizing shift of the rope braid against the rock until he couldn't remember how long it had been since it moved. He yelled for Peter. A thunder of rockfall poured down from the corner with sparks, dust, the smell of burnt lime, leaving long white scars. The rope swayed. Cary held the belay tight and called. There was no answer; the rope stayed the same—not slack, not weighted. With no way to hear each other it would be jerks on the rope. Cary looked around. The trees looked like wet fur spread out.

The forest is not so far below that birds are aliens.

The memory of an old poem came to Cary like a voice from a calm stranger. Cary held the belay. Cary's mind scratched at the poem. He dozed in the heat watching the rope blur. He heard tapping, metal on stone, intermittent, trailing off. Cary wondered what he should do, as if he could force his question along the rope like a telegraph pulse. The day was fading.

Cary thought: If Peter is anchored, why doesn't he call or tug? Is he furious waiting for me? How long should I hold the belay? Was he injured in the rockfall? Cary looked at the rope pooled at his feet. There wasn't enough to climb or descend. If I move up the rope on a sling would I dislodge Peter? I need the rope tight for that traverse. What would a guide do? All he could imagine was the imperturbable façade of a guide.

Then it was dark, and he felt relief that he would not have to do anything. But he hadn't bargained for how long the night would stretch, how cold he would become, how the rock would turn to ice and how his hips would ache and how his will would plead for dawn.

A mountain is too huge
She hears the cries of birds.

That poem kept occurring to him. Then he remembered at an Alpine Club party, beneath crowds of lean rock climbers, a quiet room of alpinists sipping scotch, a fireplace in embers. A man stood reciting a poem by rote. He slapped the mantle with a worn and heavy hand.

"On a ledge not much bigger than this, mind you." he growled. "They were an accomplished couple, the Stones, but also fond of camping. He was president of Purdue University in an age when that was very respectable; a scandal could ruin a man's career and prospects then instead of starting it, as it does today."

Cary remembered: it was the story of the Stones—a true story.

"Winthrop Ellsworth Stone was a stern man, but Margaret was one of those rare mountain flowers. Unremarkable in a city, but out here in her battered Trilby hat, very quiet and reserved, and with eyes dark with patient regard…."

"Ahem," said someone and everyone laughed.

"Yes," he said, "I suppose everyone was a little in love with her."

"At the Club's 1920 camp below Assiniboine, there were lots not yet climbed and the Stones were anxious to bag 'one of the big ones.' Just to the south, over Wonder Pass and Marvel Lake, rose Mount Eon. They attacked the southeast ridge.

"Both were in first-class condition, and late afternoon had them near the summit. One obstacle remained: a solid wall split by a chimney. Dr. Stone started and climbed out of sight. Margaret called and Winthrop said he could see nothing higher.

"Then a rock dislodged and took Winthrop with it. Margaret braced herself, expecting to be pulled off, but Winthrop had untied to explore further. Margaret watched him fall a thousand feet.

"Everything was in his pack. Evening came before she recovered her wits, so she endured, without water or jacket, forty feet from the summit, which is near 11,000 feet.

"It took two days for her to descend the ridge. Then she saw a talus slope that led off. She used the rope to lower to the last ledge. The rope was not enough, so, exhausted, she dropped the last six feet.

"Only then did she realize the ledge didn't connect. She could not reach the rope. She was trapped. She waited seven days for a rescue."

Cary imagined what he would look like, retrieved after a week. The arguments in editorials, letters explaining what they did wrong, in his imagination he tried to read those. He thought to become a rock of determination. He had always imagined a more immediate situation in which to be heroic and suffer. He had never considered suffering to take so long. His dream was

foggy and fragmented. In the fog he saw Dr. Stone wedged in the chimney.

"It's just within our grasp, Margaret!"

"I only see this chimney as a way up."

"We'll have to be careful; it is very loose here…."

"Are you near the top?"

"I can see nothing higher."

Cary woke with a start, shivering uncontrollably. Someone stood beside him. Cary scrambled to resume the belay, alarmed. "Peter?" The figure was too small, wore no helmet—only a soft brim curved like Swiss farmhouse gables.

Cary squinted. Finally, he whispered, "Margaret?"

She stood in bare feet with shreds of a heavy skirt in silhouette, and spoke as if deeply sad.

I always fall, never climb.
Break rock, sooth skin.
Why is a person not a rock?

He woke next when the stone froze him through his thin pants and he shu ed to turn against the anchor shackled to his hips. The rock didn't move—he couldn't push his fingers into it. When he slapped it there was no sound other than his own flesh.

More words of the poem came as he chattered in the dark.

Puffed eyes, burnt arms, stiff and thickening f ngers
No longer thinks about thinking
his death.

Long after he'd given up on dawn, when his ears and toes and fingers felt like growing wood, the horizon and then the staggering drop reappeared. His lashes gritty with dry salt, the rock moist with dew, like a miserly sponge.

A mountain is too huge
She hears the cries of birds
The forest is not so far below that birds are alien.

By mid-morning, he stamped the cold out but the sharp thirst in his throat was pushing him like a knife to the edge. His call to Peter frightened him with its sound. He dismantled the anchor, smeared with sore toes and crept fingers to a crack. His balance swayed out and dropped away. He shook so badly that he knew he could not hold the first move. He rebuilt the anchor, vomiting nothing, terrified to slip off the small shelf before he could lock himself to it. He squatted and stared at the traverse. He did not question that he had spoken to Margaret. Whether imagination or spirit, she was as real as his impossible position. Instead he wondered why she would speak in riddles. The broil of the sun seemed equally impossible after the frozen night—a night so cold that it should break rock. Then he understood her riddle: what could break rock, but smooth skin? What falls and never climbs? It was water. Without it we are no more than a rock, dead. Under the sun, his eyes blurry, water became his only thought.

Thinks about the water bottle in his pack
Things become more important than thoughts.

He opened his eyes. Beside his knee he saw another's pressed tight on the ledge. Every stitch rubbed fierce against his burnt, frozen and dehydrated skin. Her eyes were soft under the brim.

If you sit in this place you will f nd it.
If you go down it will f nd you.
If you leave you will meet later.

When he realized she was not there, he tried again to make the traverse, but his fear would not let him release the last sling and the loose rope pulled relentlessly on his hips. He listened to her words. Who was he supposed to meet?

What had happened to Peter? He imagined him struck by rockfall, hanging by a jammed wrist like a chock, the slightest weight pulling him down. Then he imagined the rope tied off to a piton anchor, next to the trail leading down. Would Peter have abandoned him, thinking he would just climb the rope?

He watched a contrail boil across the sky. In 1921 she would have seen nothing.

It startled him when night fell behind darkening clouds—the cold wind and the realization of another night. He was frantic, tugging the rope, wishing he had tried something. Even dying might be better than another night. He froze on cramped legs. Was that what Margaret warned? If he stayed he would find his death, if he tried to go down it would find him. His only chance at longer life was to go up. Easy to say, he thought.

He was hallucinating, pondering Peter's empty harness swaying in the wind, a victim of abducting aliens, when he felt her again beside him at the anchor.

"I can do it," he said. "I can wait."

"It gets harder," Margaret Stone said. "Nice rope."

"I can't climb out of here," he said.

If you have one,
you have two,
until you have none.

It was an eternity, he thought. Riddles were easy when you have so much time. Or maybe when you live a decision between a terminal fall, an agony of waiting, or an agony of movement?

He knew she referred to choices. He still had the rope, the choice that she never had. If he had a choice, he had two outcomes—until he committed.

With dawn, he stood, stretched without plan, then pulled the anchor. He led himself out with a long runner then stepped hard on the gritty sweating rock, his fingers like wires.

He slipped and caught, mumbled and screamed. He moved slowly under the bulge in lunging stiff moves clawing his will into the stone.

"I am not rock," he said. "I am water."

At the crack he wiggled his fingers in deep to the stone until he could feel its ribs. He looked up and saw the rope trailing higher over a lip. Then clear pale sky.

"I can't see anything higher," Cary said aloud in the silence.

He moved up, slowly, pulling on a finger jam.

"I can't see anything higher."

Balance

Myrna Mattice

(dedicated to a climber I met in 1991)

(i)
she stretched relaxed
laced her climbing shoes
chalked her fingers
started up the face

her fingers played that rocky instrument
felt which cracks would hold her weight
would lead her to the tiny ledge
to the next friction hold

her feet flowed from flake to crack to knob
and as she danced this primitive ballet
the rhythm of the climb was hers
her mind her body
agreeing not to conquer or subdue
but to be in tune
in balance

(ii)
her cast is white heavy plaster
mine turquoise lightweight fiberglass
"A couple of months," I say
"another one to go; how 'bout you?"

"Two years," she says
"and another year or two to go."

(iii)
a sport climb
a wall of granite in the Yukon
she had led he'd followed
watched her grace her way
up to the top
laughed as they rappelled
coiled the rope sorted gear
changed to hiking boots
started to walk away

suddenly far above
the rock sheared off the cliff face
sliced through the lengthening shadows
cut the ground

he heard the thud felt the rumble
saw dust rise
and the sun shimmer through it

he saw the boulder
the splotch of rusty-brown
saw drips of red mixing with the dust
saw her leg off by itself
her boot the grey wool sock
the calf the knee
the mangle of thigh
the whiteness of bone
scarlet marrow oozing

he looked at her looked away
and turned to stone

she too looked at her leg
and what was left
sweat poured down her face
as the rock her leg her friend
mingled in a dream

she snapped
shifted to a steady cool

"Hey, rip this shirt.
Tie it around my thigh, not too tight,
to stop the bleeding.
Pick up my leg.
I'll carry it
but you'll have to carry me.
I might pass out
but you can't."

he did as he was told
wet his shirt in a stream
wrapped smashed nerves
torn vessels splintered bones

they made it to a hospital
the first of many
she counted the operations
remembered every one

(iv)
now I see a shadow dull her eyes
I see her shoulders slump
and just for an instant
I bear the weight she's borne

but then she brightens
points to her heavy cast makes me look
"See, I can wiggle my big toe!"

The Curse of the Alpinist

Brandon Pullan

As I load up my pack, my partner and I don't say much. The wind howls, and the snow blows. It's 3 a.m. The weight of the climb ahead leaves us with a sentiment that isn't worth talking about. Drifts of windswept snow blow across the inhospitable landscape and cover up the glacial till beneath. My boot prints leave the only signs of life, and soon the wind and snow remove my short-lived imprint. I feel very alone. I turn off my headlamp and try to adjust to the dark. The stars in the heavens above prick through the inky black canvas. I feel *very* alone.

I try to make out the silhouette of Mount Snowdome. No matter how hard I focus my eyes I can't see a horizon anywhere. It all looks like a mess of indistinguishable white. How could a 3,451-metre mountain just vanish from sight? I know the general direction of the peak so I keep slogging ahead. I let my mind wander to pass the time.

Should I have called my mom before I left? Did I bring enough food? If I get benighted and miss another day of work tomorrow, would my boss fire me? I wonder if the serac is feeling merciful towards me. I wonder how loaded the cornice is becoming with all the fresh snow. I hope the wind lets up.

As I try to make out a skyline I get lost in the stars above. Despite the wicked wind and the insufferable spindrift blowing in my face, the stars are beautiful tonight. I spot a shooting star and say a small prayer.

It's now 6 a.m. and I still can't see the skyline. My partner and I discuss our game plan. Trying to find the base of the route is deemed an impossible endeavour at this point. Best to wait for daybreak. I pull out my sleeping bag, and crawl inside searching for warmth.

I slowly open my eyes to a new morning. I don't remember falling asleep, but evidently I did. As my eyes focus, I still can't make out the mountain. Just white swirls blowing around. It's not going to happen. This will be my fourth failed attempt at a route on the Columbia Icefields. When will I succeed? Maybe I should just give up. I hate this game. I close my eyes and fall back to sleep.

When I arrive back in Calgary, I get a call from my friend Katie. She and some friends are going skiing at Lake Louise tomorrow and she invites me to join. Skiing would be fun. I quickly agree.

A smile spreads across my face as I weave down the slope. The snow is dumping and it is grand. I feel the rush of speed. On the lift back to the top I share my delight with the rest of the gang. A pitcher of beer is ordered with lunch. We clang our glasses together and ring in the new ski season. I go to bed that night tired and feeling satisfied.

Today, however, I find myself looking at the weather forecast for the Columbia Icefields. I am looking at maps and refining my approach. I am staring at pictures of the north face of Snowdome. I had hoped a fun day of resort skiing would keep me content. There was beer, cute girls and fresh powder. Snowdome is desolate and instills fear. There are no cute girls. There are no jugs of beers. Still, I feel compelled to return. I fear that until I climb that blasted thing I will feel no contentment. I fear that this is the curse of the alpinist.

Eamonn Walsh (leading) and Jay Mills feeling the curse of the alpinist during an attempt on *The Wild Thing* on Mount Chephren in the Canadian Rockies. *Only* 20 full-length rappels brought them back to the base after bailing. Photo: Dana Ruddy

Musings on Adventure

Margaret Imai-Compton

Barry Blanchard summed it up beautifully as we prepared to leave our basecamp at the head of the Ishinca Valley in Peru's Cordillera Blanca range. "A fantastic trip, great weather on our climbing days, everyone got a personal best and a full moon—what else is there to say?"

Indeed, what else is there to say? While Barry's comments are accurate, allow me to share some of the unabridged stories.

Morning Meditation

As our Camp Cook, Epi, announced breakfast on our first morning at basecamp, I stumbled out of my tent to a spectacular full-on view of Tocllaraju (6032m), one of the most beautiful mountains in the range. The broad undulating Cordillera Blanca was larger than life—cascading glaciers, jagged skylines and the deepest azure sky. I felt small, insignificant, unworthy, just another creature in the tableau of nature's universe. Like the feral dogs, the tethered burros and the docile donkeys with who we shared the Ishinca meadows, I moved slowly, I breathed deeply; I gazed upwards to the spires. I was blissful as I greeted morning.

Epi graciously and happily served our breakfast. One course after another was passed from the cook tent to the dining tent: fruit salad, yoghurt, Peruvian pancakes, fried plantain, coffee, maté tea and more coffee. What a sublime and rich breakfast this was—rich with the pride and pleasure infused by the cook; rich with the love and affection of friends and guides who shared the meal; rich with the anticipation of climbing these classic Peruvian peaks.

Were I not to climb even one mountain, I would have been happy and content to live for 10 days in the presence of this magnificent mountain range. How privileged are those of us who fly to foreign destinations, outfitted with the latest gear and climbing clothes, who have the leadership of excellent and experienced guides, who have the resources to participate in a great adventure.

Morning Meditation
Tocllaraju shines,
Inhale a misty morning
Warmth and love abound.

Peruvian Culinary Highlights

While our guide Barry Blanchard's headlamp bobbed happily along above me illuminating the rocky trail on Mount Urus (5420m), my pre-dawn breakfast of coffee and watery gruel sloshed tentatively in my stomach. The twinkling celestial majesty above us was a good distraction but there was no denying it—the waves of nausea were coming more frequently. With every burp, the Peruvian gruel was getting closer to its original point of entry.

Barry was in good spirits, despite my warning as I trailed behind him. "Ummm, Barry, I'm not feeling so good… breakfast didn't go down well…. I really don't think milky gruel and coffee was a good mix."

He turned and caught me in the orb of his headlamp. He crinkled his eyes and said good humouredly, "Hey, Margaret, you know in ancient Rome after their council meetings they'd have these huge feasts then retire to rooms called vomitoriums…."

No sooner had he said the word, my breakfast hurled on the shrubs by the side of the trail. Pause. Another longer pause. When the heaving stopped, I looked down tentatively at his boots to make sure they weren't in the line of fire. Whew, no trace. His boots were unscathed.

Haiku for My Esteemed Guide
Barry's boots are clean,
Mountain quiet, all serene
Up up to Urus!

The Chicken Slaughter

Continuing with the theme of Culinary delights, we had a marvelous roast chicken dinner towards the end of our stay in the Ishinca basecamp. It was fresh, succulent moist and tender—everything excellent roast chicken should be.

Tasty as it was, I had some regrets about the meal. This was a chicken that had been carried up alive, nestled in a cardboard box to live out its last week in a small rocky enclave behind Epi's cook tent. Each day I had peered into its stony coop and murmured some words of greeting, knowing all along that it was to be our dinner some evening.

The previous week when our Peruvian outfitters had loaded our gear and basecamp essentials onto the burros, I saw the white, fluffy chicken in the arms of a little girl. "This must be a family pet," I thought as I smiled sweetly at child and chicken. In the next moment, Epi swooped away the bird, encased it in cardboard and loaded it on to a burro. It took a few seconds before it dawned on me that it was part of our food supply. And of course, it only took a moment longer for me to realize, being an ignorant urbanite, that there would be no refrigeration facilities in basecamp; thus, we were transporting our animal protein in its living form.

I was told our chicken died of altitude sickness. Curious that our fellow Canadians in the adjoining camp also had chickens that died of altitude sickness the previous evening.

Ode to a Peruvian Chicken
Dear f uffy chicken
You're sweet, moist and succulent,
How did you perish?

Conan's Mother Will Never Forgive Me

A gorgeous moon on the cusp of its fullness glows overhead as we begin our ascent of Tocllaraju at 2 a.m. This is the highest of our three mountain objectives at 6,032 metres, and my first climb over 6,000 metres. I have no expectations, just to be in the company of these wonderful men and to have the opportunity to share the day with them is a privilege.

I am roped with Steve Holeczi, a strong competent guide and John Blakemore, a proficient and experienced alpinist from Cleveland, Ohio. Barry, guiding Bryce Jardine and Conan Blakemore, who is John's son, leads the other rope. "Man, it's cold," says Steve, as he leads up the glacier.

The first hour of ascent is breathtakingly beautiful. We climb in the darkness, in silent rhythm with Steve's headlamp pointing us upwards and his measured steps forging a trail on the glacier. I start to feel the cold in my feet, so for a distraction from my discomfort I make some light conversation.

"Is it my imagination? It feels like it's getting colder. Shouldn't it be getting warmer as we get closer to daybreak?" I ask.

"We are getting higher and if the wind picks up, it's going to feel colder," Steve replies patiently. "Remember, Margaret, you're going up to over 6,000 metres."

I look back to John and he's looking chilled with his toque pulled way down over his head, a neck scarf pulled up to his nose and his breath billowing behind him with every step. My toes are starting to tingle. In fact they're getting pretty cold. I'm wearing leather boots because they're more comfortable and forgiving on my old knee injury than plastic boots. But my feet are cold. At our next stop we pull up parallel to Barry's rope and John checks in with Lou, Conan's nickname.

"Hey Lou. How's it going? You cold?" he asks Conan, who is also in leathers.

"Yeah, my toes are cold. These boots aren't cutting it," Conan shouts back.

Barry demonstrates a wild leg swinging motion that brings circulation into the feet. It definitely helps Conan and me, but by daybreak, Conan is undeniably frigid. His slim frame is buffeted by the wind and his expression is grim.

At the next stop John decides to take parental control after checking in with Conan. "Hey Lou, let's you and I go down. We'll go back together. Let's go Son!"

Conan's response is firm and somewhat impatient. "I'm OK. Let's just go. I'm going to keep going." John's expression is pained and incredulous as he shouts into the wind. "What did you say Lou? You're going to keep going? Come on, we'll go down together."

I'm not sure if it occurs to John that we're on a glacier and in fact, on different ropes from Conan, and it wouldn't really be safe descending without a guide. But it soon becomes apparent why there's so much urgency to his concern. John mutters over and over again to no one in particular, "Man, if anything happens to Conan, his mother is never ever going to forgive me."

Despite John's reservations, we do forge ahead as a team, and in the early afternoon we eventually top out on Tocllaraju's summit. John's only comment as we descend is to say, "Lou's feet better not be frozen. His mother is never going to forgive me."

Reflections on Cold Feet
Conan's feet are cold,
Bring on the warmth of mother,
Forgive his father.

The Swedish Tent-mate

Happily and coincidentally, our Canadian friend Peter Albinger arrives in basecamp with his Peruvian outfitters and another client. I saunter over to their encampment to visit and I'm introduced to Angelica, a delightful young woman from Sweden. After being invited to tea in their camp, I report back to my team and update them on Peter's situation.

The boys in my camp are a little wrangy when they learn that Peter has a female Swedish tent-mate.

"Are you kidding me? Peter has a Swedish girl in his tent?" one of the boys shouts over the chatter.

"Well, I don't think she's actually in his tent. There were two client tents in their camp," I answer.

The details are lost for the moment. I'm amused at how quickly the idea of a Swedish woman spirals into bedroom fantasies. Understandably, the boys have been away from their women for almost two weeks.

Scandinavian Woman
Sweet Angelica
Comes from Sweden to Peru
The boys are agog!

More Canadians in Ishinca Basecamp

One of our daily activities on rest days is to watch "Burro TV," an expression borrowed from Barry's wife, Catherine, who described life in a Himalayan climbing camp as "Yak TV." With no particular agenda, we sit by our tents and watch the comings and goings of various burro convoys as climbers arrive and depart from one day to the next.

One rainy afternoon our Burro TV takes on a very familiar feel as another Canadian contingent, led by guide Jim Gudjonson, saunters into the basecamp meadows. "Hey, I know these people," I say as I watch my friends Paul, John and Stephanie arrive with Jim. This is the perfect occasion to swap scotch, trade route beta and compare our Spanish.

Having been on numerous past trips with Jim and my friends in his group, it is surreal to know that we are sitting together in Peru and not in the tea tent of an Alpine Club of Canada General Mountaineering Camp or in a hut in the Canadian Rockies. The marvels of modern travel.

Merry Meeting!
Friends are wherever,
A sip of scotch; a warm embrace,
We climb together.

The North

Kiguti

Lars Nessa

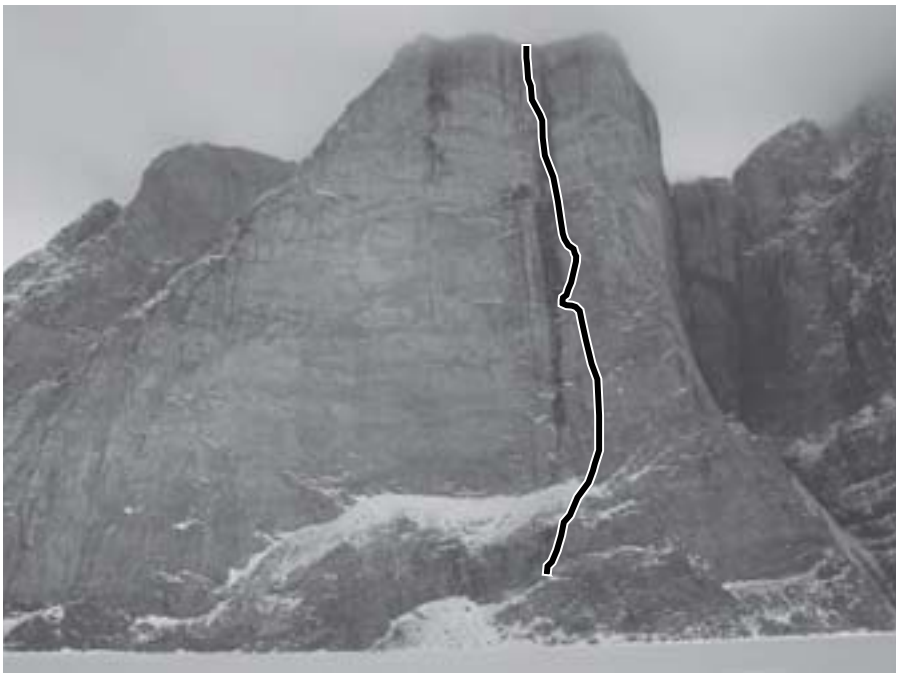
In early april ⊠⊠⊠⊠, Ole Lied, Sigurd Felde, Audun Hetland and I left Norway, for the Sam Ford Fiord on Baf n Island. We had previously seen pictures of the great wall of Kiguti from a different Norwegian expedition in 2000 so we wanted to have a closer look. We knew that the wall had been climbed before, but we did not have any detailed information.

Arriving at Clyde River, we had already received a bonus for being skinny, undernourished climbers. The ground crew at the Ottawa airport were more interested in our body mass index than the heavy haulbags we where dragging onboard the plane. Levi Palituq, a local Clyde River outfitter, provided us with private accommodation and made us feel welcome in the small community. He also arranged the snow machine transport into Sam Ford Fiord, which was an experience in itself—bumping on the back of a sledge for 10 freezing hours. The last three hours of the trip, the walls became visible and replaced the deep cold with a feeling of fear and humbleness. The walls of the Sam Ford Fiord were steeper, higher and more compact than we had ever dreamt. However, they also had a great power of attraction. We were speechless and in awe as we lay in the tents that night.

Camp was established in a sheltered bay between Kiguti and the Fin. We spent the next two days carrying gear and scrutinizing a possible route. There was one obvious, continuous line through the wall that caught our attention. Although the line looked attractive, we were afraid it had already been climbed; so we searched for a less conspicuous but more direct line. There was one that had the same start as the first option but after two to three pitches it slightly headed to the left through a compact slab. This potential line reached a visible half-moon-shaped dihedral that continued through one-third of the wall. From the top of the dihedral, the route seemed to follow thin cracks through the steepest section of the face extending to the summit.

Two pitches of mixed climbing led us up onto a large snow ledge under the main wall. From there, the aid climbing commenced. Within six days, we fixed ropes all the way to a small ledge 300 metres above the f ord. After 10 days, the comfort of living on the f ord came to an end. We used up an entire day to move onto the wall. Packing, intricate hauling and the ever-exhausting jugging kept us occupied for hours before we could climb into our tents around midnight. We brought food for 16 days and two barrels (150 kilograms) of ice from an iceberg for making water.

The first pitch above camp one turned out to be the crux. The thin crack accepted Peckers and copperheads but, in many places, the face only allowed hooking. A long pendulum into a dihedral and a ledge below were serious threats if a fall were to occur. The line offered us many pitches of exquisite A2 climbing only interrupted by some A1 and A3 pitches in between. In some places, the rock was quite porous with wind-eroded holes. Many cracks were compact and shallow which meant we often had to use a hammer to clean the rock in and around the cracks.



Facing page: Lars Nessa descending Kiguti.
Photo: Audun Hetland
Left: *The Norwegian Route* on Kiguti, Sam Ford Fiord, Baffin Island.
Photo: Audun Hetland

The friable rock sometimes made the hooking pitches a real challenge offering interesting climbing. A flake would explode or a cam would pop, and we'd suddenly find ourselves airborne.

The lower half of the wall was vertical and slabby, while the upper half had a slightly overhanging character. A rock dropped from the top of the route would hit the big snow ledge near the base without touching the wall. This provided exposed and airy climbing.

The midnight sun meant darkness never obstructed us from climbing. A normal day would start at 6 a.m. and end around 10 p.m. We split into two teams, each team only having to climb every second day. This gave the opportunity to rest and recover between the climbing days and to enjoy the delight of hanging out on an Arctic wall.

After 15 days and 1,000 metres of climbing, we finally reached the summit of Kiguti. The line was engaging to the very last pitch and gradually got steeper and steeper until we could crawl onto the plateau. In one way, it was relieving to leave the vertical (and overhanging) element because living isolated on a big wall is not very comfortable. Yet, it is a very simple life. Everyday worries are not an issue, allowing time together with best friends.

After some time on the ground entertained by skiing and reading, we started to look for other suitable objectives. Audun and Sigurd wanted to try a 400-metre long aid line on the Fin; however, they gave up after three days because of strong, cold winds. Ole and I did an alpine line on the same massif which provided us with 700-metres of continuous crack and dihedral climbing on the beautiful pillar.

We had a great time on Baf n Island enjoying the spectacular walls, the harsh nature and getting to know some great characters in the local communities.

Left: *Gud har ikkje gløymt oss, han gir bare faen* on the Fin, Sam Ford Fiord, Baffin Island. Photo: Lars Nessa
Below Lars Nessa during the first ascent of *The Norwegian Route* on Kiguti. Photo: Audun Hetland

Summary

The Norwegian Route (VI 5.9 A3+, 1000m, 23 pitches), Kiguti, Sam Ford Fiord, Baf n Island. FA: Sigurd Felde, Audun Hetland, Ole Lied, Lars Nessa, April 16–May 7, 2007.

Gud har ikkje gløymt oss, han gir bare faen (*God hasn't actually forgotten us, he just doesn't give a damn*) (5.10 A0, 700m, 12 pitches), the Fin, Sam Ford Fiord. FA: Ole Lied, Lars Nessa, May 19, 2007.

Attempt on new route (5.8 A4, 220m, 7 pitches to highpoint) on the Fin, Sam Ford Fiord by Sigurd Felde, Audun Hetland, May 19–21, 2007.

A Struggle with Loneliness

Martin Fickweiler

On april ⊠, ⊠⊠⊠, my best friend, Hans Copier, died. We had a strong relationship and shared an interest for climbing together. We made many climbing trips through Europe in addition to more remote climbing areas in Southern Greenland. Hans' physical strength and mental awareness made him an excellent partner when trying dif cult and dangerous routes. I felt lonely with him gone.

Two weeks after his cremation, I had to face my next expedition—one that would surpass all other trips I had done. Together with Roland Bekendam, Rens Horn and part of Hans' ashes, I headed to Baf n Island. The objective of the expedition was clear: an unclimbed mountain via a new route. However, I had a second goal: to place the ashes of my best friend on top.

The journey, with all its burdens, provided me with the necessary distraction, but the moment we were left by the Inuit on a frozen lake in Stewart Valley, loneliness once again came over me. We pitched base camp under a dark and cloudy sky. Low clouds obscured the walls so all we could do was wait for the weather to clear in order to figure out which mountain to climb.

Three days after we arrived, the storm cleared, revealing amazing scenery. We began looking for a mountain, then a wall, and finally a route to climb. The next three days were spent shuttling gear and food up the 900-metre slope to the base of the wall. By the time we started climbing on May 20, the weather had deteriorated again and remained miserable for the entire 10 days we spent on the route. We tried to make upwards progress every day, dealing with low temperatures and dif cult climbing on sometimes questionable rock. When time ran out, with the summit still far away, we went down, but I left Hans on a tiny ledge at our highpoint—about 300 metres above the ground. Back at camp, I stashed ropes, gear and fuel because I hoped to return the next year to complete the route. The moment we began walking out of Stewart Valley, I knew that I would be back. I also understood it would mean a lot of hard work. Not only are expeditions expensive, but it would be hard to find a suitable partner in the world's flattest country, The Netherlands.

At home, I corresponded with 10 capable Dutch climbers and two American climbers. For various reasons, none of them were interested. I considered going solo, but was spared the solitude after Niels van Veen saw Rens' beautiful black and white photographs, which convinced him to join me. With no big-wall climbing experience, Niels and I had a lot of work to do before flying up north.

By early May 2007, we arrived in Clyde River, Nunavut. We were told by some local Inuit to be prepared to walk into Stewart Valley instead of driving because the entrance to the valley might not have enough snow for the heavily loaded snow machines. Another expedition visiting the region decided to change objectives and head for the more accessible Scott Island. We had to stick to our plan since Hans' ashes, as well as the gear, were already in the Stewart Valley.

Upon leaving Clyde River, one of the two snow machines broke down and had to be replaced. Our Inuit guides left us on the frozen bay with quick instructions about polar bears, the rifle and where to aim when shooting at them. A few hours later, they returned and we continued the journey through Sam Ford Fiord, across Walker Arm Fiord and eventually to the entrance of Stewart Valley. Bare rocky ground blocked our path. At various sections, we had to unload the sledges and carry all 350 kilograms of gear to a place where the snow machine could haul it again. Those five kilometres took many hours to get through, but thanks to our Inuit companions, we finally arrived to where I had left my cache.

It was -20 C while we unloaded our gear. When the snow machines disappeared past the horizon, we quickly put up a tent and crawled into our double sleeping bags. I felt tired from the long journey, but I also felt motivated for the challenge ahead. Preparing food, melting snow for water, moving camp and climbing the mountain had to be done by us. Nothing would happen by itself.

For the next three days, we carried

A Little Less Conversation on Copier Pinnacle, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. Photo: Martin Fickweiler

heavy loads up the 900-metre approach slope. At the base of the wall, we pitched a small tent. I discovered that my fixed ropes were still in situ. They were a little faded, but upon closer inspection we decided they were safe, and thus commenced a 300-metre jumar to my previous year's highpoint. It was a relief to find Hans' ashes still sitting on the ledge in the jar. I felt content knowing Hans would be continuing up to the summit with us.

We spent a long day hauling more than 100 kilograms of gear up the 300 metres of rock. We carried provisions for nine days, bivouac gear including a portaledge and 30 kilograms of snow and ice to melt for water. The portaledge, would be our home for the next seven nights. The days were long and the weather miserable as we put all our effort into climbing the upper part of the wall. We took one forced rest day, staying in our sleeping bags while snow continuously poured down the face. Nights were cold and sometimes scary as sporadic rockfall woke us up more than once. Luckily, our hanging camp was under a small roof protecting us from danger.

Most of the route negotiated compact rock with reasonable aid cracks. Some pitches were too wide for any piece of gear, so free climbing these sections was the only option. Frigid temperatures meant all free climbing was done wearing thin gloves and special insulated rock shoes. My toes and fingers took weeks to recover after the expedition.

On May 20, we arrived on the summit, exactly one year after I began the climb. There was no sign on top of prior ascents so we named the mountain Copier Pinnacle, in loving memory of Hans Copier. We constructed a small cairn in which I placed his ashes. I was overwhelmed by intense joy and sadness at the same time.

Two days later, back at base camp we discovered that our satellite phone was not working. Our means of communication for arranging a pick-up was cut. On our trip in three weeks earlier, we had seen a base camp in Sam Ford Fiord. Hoping that the camp and its residents were still there, we packed three days' food, sleeping bags, a stove, our small tent and of course, the rifle.

It was novel to realize that in this age of technology, we had to walk 90 kilometres just to make a phone call. Fortunately, our trek was not in vain. We found a team of six BASE jumpers with a luxurious base camp and lots of great food. Oh, and I almost forgot, we also found a phone.

Acknowledgments

The successful 2007 Stewart Valley expedition was generously supported by Arc'teryx, the Dutch Mountaineering Foundation, Gore-Tex and Granger's.

Summary

A Little Less Conversation (VI 5.11a A3, 800m), southeast face, Copier Pinnacle (suggested name by first ascentionists), Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. FA: Martin Fickweiler, Niels van Veen, May 2007. Note: Probable first ascent of the mountain, which is located across the valley from Great Sail Peak.

Lowell Peak

Simon Richardson

We talked long and hard about going to Alaska, but at the last moment, Dave Hesleden and I changed plans and decided to visit the St. Elias Range. We were tempted by the south faces of Pinnacle Peak and Lowell Peak that stand on the north side of the Lowell Glacier about 15 kilometres northwest of Mount Kennedy. Our impression was that the majority of expeditions to the range focus on classic mountaineering lines on the higher peaks, but these two mountains appeared to offer possibilities for more technical alpine mixed routes. We guessed that the best ice climbing conditions would occur on the south faces where winter spindrift runs down the gully lines and then consolidates during warmer temperatures in May.

Pinnacle Peak (3714m) has seen several ascents from the north, but is unclimbed from the south and its 1,200-metre-high south face is seamed with possible lines. Lowell Peak (3630m) lies six kilometres to the west and its south side has several potential new routes, including its long south ridge. We were attracted by the 1,000-metre south buttress, which is cut by a series of steep gullies on the crest and leads directly to the summit.

We flew in from Kluane Lake at the beginning of May, and made a camp on the Lowell Glacier at approximately 2,000 metres from where we could easily access both mountains. The scenery was spectacular but we found that the mountains had encountered unusually high levels of snowfall during the winter and spring, and as a result there was extreme avalanche danger everywhere. Slopes on all aspects were producing huge windslab avalanches. We even saw a slab avalanche originate from a point on a ridge and slide off both sides—something neither of us had ever seen before. The situation wasn't helped by a big storm that raged all day after we arrived, followed by a day of strong winds blowing from the west, and then a second day blowing from the east. A perfect way to load every slope around.

After a week of dodging storms, skiing and checking things out, we decided to climb a series of runnels on the south face of Lowell Peak that would enable us to get good rock belays and not expose us to climbing long unprotected snow slopes. It was a short-lived effort. About 100 metres below the bergschrund, the whole approach slope slid about a metre with us on it, and then stopped. We turned tail and fled!

A long ski tour the next day gave us a view of the west ridge of Lowell Peak, which is more of a pronounced rib than

a ridge. It looked like a safe line; plus it faced into the prevailing wind so there would be less chance of windslab. We climbed it the next day in a 12-hour round-trip from basecamp. Overall the route entailed 1,400 metres of ascent, initially on skis, then scrambling along a horizontal ridge before skiing across a snow bowl, and finally climbing the rib itself. The climbing was straightforward, but loose deep snow over hard rotten ice made it difficult work. The weather deteriorated but we continued upwards in a whiteout. This was a real concern, because on the flight in, we'd seen that a huge cornice capped the summit. You could see it from several kilometres away when flying in the plane. It is easy to exaggerate these things but it must have stuck out horizontally at least 15 metres. With the full rope out, we belayed each other from down slope, and heart in mouth, tiptoed to the highest point. We reversed our route and descended on V-threads getting back to the tent that evening feeling relieved to have finally climbed something.

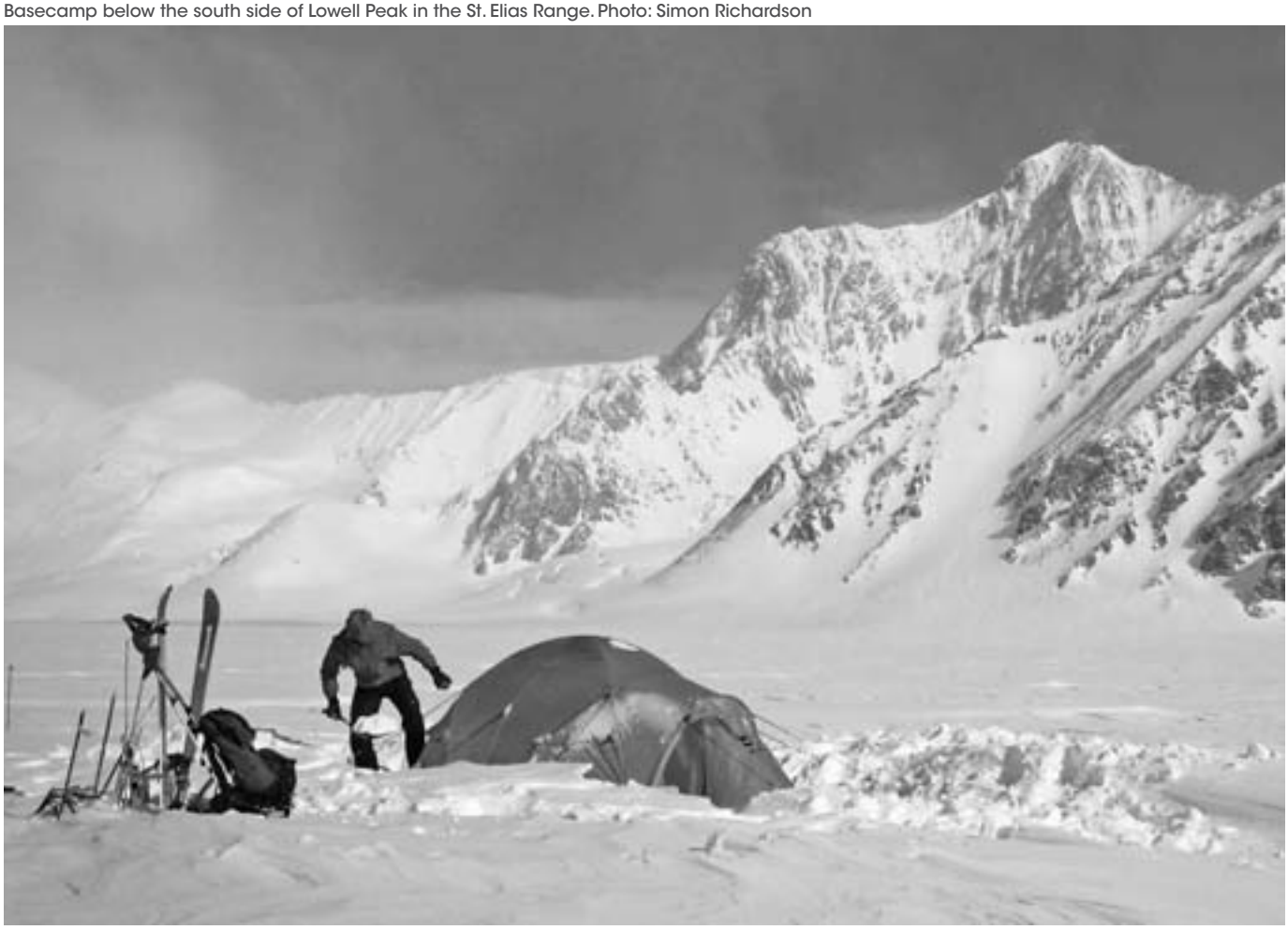
Lowell Peak was first climbed by Larry Stanier and Rodden McGowan on May 7, 1993 by the east face and north ridge (*American Alpine Journal*, 1994, pp. 154–155). We believe this was the only ascent of the mountain prior to ours. Like most of the parties climbing in this general area, the pair was based on the south arm of the Kaskawulsh Glacier to the north of Pinnacle Peak. The south pillar of Lowell Peak, our original objective, remains a fine climbing target. There are numerous lines up the steep buttress rising up to the summit, as well as the runnels on the left. Pinnacle Peak has seen several ascents from the Kaskawulsh Glacier side, but has not been climbed from the south, which looks a fine mountaineering challenge. The best line of ascent appears to be the tapering gully on the right side of the face. This steepens to a left-trending fault line on the summit tower that leads to easier summit slopes.

We decided that there was nothing else we could safely climb, so we flew out the next day. When we got back to Kluane Lake, there was a queue of 40 climbers sitting out the poor weather waiting to fly in. All things considered, we'd been extraordinarily lucky. We had planned to climb something technical but safe, but we ended up doing the complete opposite. The summit was a bonus, but more importantly, we came back stronger friends and had spent time amongst some of the most beautiful mountains we'd ever seen.

Summary

First ascent of the west ridge (and probable 2nd ascent of the mountain) of Lowell Peak (3630m), St. Elias Range, Yukon. FA: Dave Hesleden, Simon Richardson, May 8, 2007.

Basecamp below the south side of Lowell Peak in the St. Elias Range. Photo: Simon Richardson



The Classic Ice Climb of North America

Eamonn Walsh

As anyone who has gone through the Kahiltna International Basecamp (KIB) knows, the *Moonflower Buttress* sits front and centre. Every eye is drawn to it, if not for the enticing smears, then for the noise of the seracs constantly disgorging massive avalanches down its outer flanks.

I first tried this exquisite line in 2001 with Rob Owens, but only made it up 11 pitches before turning back. Though we failed, we did go on to do one of the biggest climbs of our lives—*The Infinite Spur* on Mount Foraker. Mark Westman, my partner for the *Moonflower Buttress* this time around, had also made an attempt in a different year making it to the same spot as Rob and I had.

The season of 2006 started off badly. The morning I was leaving Canmore, I received a phone call from Mark. Right away I could tell by his tone that something was not right. A friend of ours had died in the Ruth Gorge. The death of Lara-Karena Kellogg struck deep, especially for Mark. Though I had climbed with her only once, we had shared more than a few drinks. Back in 1999, on my first trip to Alaska, I had met her and her-then-to-be husband, Chad, high on the west ridge of Mount Hunter.

Mark and I had a couple of days in Talkeetna before we were to fly in and help Lisa, Mark's wife, set up KIB. During this time, there was a definite funeral-like feeling in the air. Shortly after landing on the glacier, we were very happy to see that the route was actually in because the year before it was as bare of ice as El Capitan. After setting up basecamp, we packed four days of supplies, then waited out the typically unsettled weather. Luckily, we did not have to wait long before the weather stabilized.

It was interesting to be back on the beast five years later. I was perhaps not as strong a drytooler as I was back in 2001, but my alpine mileage was much greater, thus I felt more qualified for the task. We made good progress; the runnels on the first rock band were mostly sn'ice (frothy snow-ice) with the odd bit of water ice. We found the Prow to be well sn'iced up, which makes the climbing easier than when it is dry—but more run-out. It was while Mark was following this pitch that he dropped a tool. This may not seem like a big deal, except we were only nine pitches into it with up to 25 more pitches to go, one of which was Tamara's Traverse. We decided to go to the next bivy and see how things were flowing. We managed the long horizontal traverse without incident but it was slow going. That night, we made a bivy below a rock outcrop partway up the first ice band and it wasn't until after the spindrift started that we realized it was not the

Eamonn Walsh on the third pitch of the Shaft on the *Moonflower Buttress*.
Photo: Mark Westman

The *Moonflower Buttress* on Mount Hunter, Alaska.
Photo: Mark Westman

Eamonn Walsh leading Tamara's Traverse on the *Moonflower Buttress*.
Photo: Mark Westman

best location. We each had a sleeping bag and a bivy bag as well as a guide's tarp for a bit of extra protection against the elements. It looked like the weather was turning, so we slept in our boots just in case we needed to bail quickly. The only thing that did was cause me excruciating leg cramps so I shall never sleep in boots again.

The next morning we descended. Rapping over the large roofs above Tamara's Traverse, we were too far right so had to swing over to reach the ice runnel. In doing this, we did severe damage to our lead line. Seeing the deep cuts in the rope sent a chill through me. It is not the first time I have had damaged ropes whilst descending, but this seemed different in light of the recent tragedy. Our 70-metre rope became a 60-metre rope. We made it down just in time to observe the large spindrift avalanches cascading down the lower part of the face. We returned to camp with the feeling that we would not try again.

But as the famous mantra goes, a good alpinist must have a poor memory. By the end of the following day, we had decided to try again. Mark rounded up a fresh set of tools and then we waited for our window.

While waiting, a good friend of Mark's tried to convince us not to return and that Mark should actually quit climbing. This was akin to someone suggesting a fish should live in the forest. He believed that since Mark had dropped his tool, he was not thinking straight, and because there had been losses of people close to the community, he should reconsider. It offered many evenings of discussion between Mark, Lisa and me, but in the end probably strengthened our resolve to climb the thing. It is quite strange to have someone go out of their way to convince you that what you are about to do is foolish, even if the person is genuinely concerned.

Eventually, after dropping the ball on a couple of decent days, we set off on May 10 at 4 a.m. and arrived at a better bivy atop the first ice band by 6 p.m. Our ascent was sped up due to some key pitches being cleared of snow from our first attempt. At this time of year, the sun bathes the elevation of our bivy site for perhaps three to four hours. Our timing was perfect. We ate dinner and melted snow in the warm rays of the setting sun. The next day we were off by 9 a.m., and the climbing continued to by outstanding. The Shaft was fantastic: a 120-metre narrow vein of ice giving passage through the steep second rock band. This feature on its own would be an über-classic. When we topped out on the Shaft we noticed the weather seemed to be changing. A quick call to Lisa in KIB revealed an OK forecast: the day and that night were to be good but poor weather for the following day. We decided to continue with our goal being the top of the buttress where we could dig a snow cave and wait out the bad weather if need be.

The third rock band, known as the Vision, offered a fantastic mixed gully with five metres of aid. On the third ice band the wind was getting stronger. We got through the final rock band via the Bibler Come Again—a short burly off-width that was an ab-ripping affair. It was atop this that the weather really turned sour. Strong winds and snow made the final five pitches of 50-degree ice feel like the crux. We had to reach deep into our reserves, as much as either of us ever has had to before, just to continue upwards. Though it does not get very dark at night in early May, the storm had turned things very dark and we had only one little pretend headlamp between us. We finally topped out at 5:30 a.m. the following day and spent another five hours digging a snow cave during which time the snow continued to intensify. When we had a partial snow cave dug, we showed some good discipline by jamming into the small space to brew up and then continued digging to eventually produce a very comfy little home for our stay.

The rest of the day was spent hydrating, eating half-rations, sleeping and attending to our frostbitten fingers. It is remarkable how suddenly one can feel committed, especially when the stove suddenly malfunctions—a very key component to alpine survival. The next morning, the snow eased off. The decision to abort our summit push came naturally; we were too battered and there was way too much new snow on the wind-loaded slopes above. We hoped for a good forecast to descend the following day, but when we heard the news of more snow, we gave each other a hunted look and began packing to leave right away hoping to get down before the storm re-intensified. We started down the first rap by 1 p.m. It was below the Bibler Come Again when a massive spindrift avalanche tried to swallow us that I started to think we had made a mistake leaving the security of our snow hole. Thankfully, once we traversed over and began descending the more prow-like feature of the buttress, the conditions improved. As we neared the bottom, we noticed two figures approaching up the glacier below. They were a Swiss couple that had heard through Lisa we were on our way down so they were coming to meet us with tea! After our 29th and final rappel, we experienced our scariest moment: the lower slope was loaded with armpit deep snow. Luckily it was all fluff, but I have never felt like I could drown in snow before. To get anywhere, we needed to swim, but soon found that rolling like a log in slow motion worked better. We eventually arrived at our skis and the Swiss couple by 8 p.m. feeling somewhat traumatized. Never has hot tea tasted so good! Even better was the six-pack of beer and burgers awaiting us back at KIB.

Though we had not reached the summit, we were quite happy with reaching the top of the buttress and getting away with only frostbitten fingers. It had been a challenging and rewarding experience—one that required us to dig deep in order to succeed. The *Moon*f *ower Buttress* is a beautiful and dif cult climb that, with good weather and conditions, would be an absolute joy. It truly is *the* classic ice climb of North America.

Summary

*Moon*f *ower Buttress* (VI WI6 M6 A1 or M7 free, 1200m, 34 pitches), north buttress of Mt. Hunter (4415m), Alaska. Climbed to the top of the buttress (not to the summit) by Eamonn Walsh, Mark Westman, May 10–13, 2007.

The West Coast

Hunted by Waters

Bruce Kay

The ice climbing started to get good mid-January—something you need to jump on out on the coast if you're half inclined and don't want to miss the moment. I took a break from the powder to do a route and then another, and another. Before long I'd hit my stride and as Frank Zappa would have put it, "I surrender to the feeling." All thoughts of skiing faded to second fiddle while that old glorious glow of amplifying psych meshed with developing conditions, a slack work/family schedule and an equally psyched set of partners. When was the last time the stars lined up like that?

Spring had sprung but I wasn't close to being finished. I heard that North Joffre Creek, a notorious approach of classic alder-choked logging roads, had been recently reactivated. Having duked it out in there no less than four times, all attempts given up in disgust without even seeing any ice, I had written it off completely. However, with this bit of news I could see an extension to the season. An afternoon recon with dog and sled confirmed the easy access and revealed a smorgasbord of waterfall ice—some looking quite attractive though ominously threatened by some pretty big avalanche terrain. What I really wanted to see, however, was the big wall another kilometre up the valley. I could vaguely remember the boys talking about some lines up there somewhere. Sure enough, a one-hour skin brought me below a granite wall split by two systems: a likely looking deep slanting chimney and, more intriguing yet, a discontinuous white dribble running a Comici-style plumb-line down steep slabs and corners.

Bruce Kay on the first ascent of *Rhapsody in Floyd*, Mini Moose, North Joffre Creek. Photo: Chris Christie

Craig McGee and I are racking up on pitch one. The moment of truth is at hand. Drum roll please… The white stuff is... ice! He shoots… He SCORES! The rock is Squamish boilerplate granite, bulletproof solid but a bit short on cracks other than slam shut RURP seams. A full 60 metres of thoroughly enjoyable ice hose brings me to a ramp where I manage to lash together an anchor and bring Craig up to survey the next obstacle, which I slyly line him up for.

It doesn't look good. Thin whiteness snakes a suspect line up vertical corners to a roof with just a vague hint of more white stuff above. No sign of any significant protection. What to do? Cast loose *à la Sea of Vapors*? Not me man. I've got kids to feed. Craig's future is still a mere twinkle in Laurie's eye yet his enthusiasm is also distinctly lacking, so without further ado we turn to descend. I despondently wonder if the ice will ever fatten up enough for screws, which is the only way I'll likely get up it.

"You know, a few bolts would work wonders here."

Huh? Now why hadn't I thought of that? Mired in the past, my sensibilities had failed to consider such an abomination but now the possibilities light up like krieg lights. Ah yes, I can see it now: our own little backwoods sport crag. I dream of gracefully flitting ballet-like from bolt to bolt, all without that nagging feeling of death's hand crawling up my leg. Hell, it might even get repeated.

We're back within a week with courage in our rucksacks, big guns Brad "Bubba" White for reinforcement and an incoming storm to beat. Brad quickly goes off route but saves the pitch with some heinous moves to gain our old rappel anchor. He then sets the tone for the day with the soothing hum of the Bosch Annihilator. It's snowing lightly but so far nothing's coming down the route.

"See? No spindrift. We'll piss up it!"

Craig sets out and we settle in. A couple of stubbies get him to the corner where he fiddles in some more junk.

"Send up the Bosch!"

Once again the rattle of the drill soothes our delicate nerves and all is well. No one will be decking out today. Craig engineers his way upward, kitchen sink dangling from his harness, while Bubba and I watch the spindrift develop.

"Wish I had a #4 Friend! Guess I'll just fire in a bolt or two next to this perfect hand crack."

Craig lowers back down then cranks out the overhang, levering off a fist to a series of one-arm lock-offs up a moss seam, all the while making peculiar, primordial judo-style vents like you hear all the time at the sport crag. Another blast of the drill and we're staring up at the next pitch—and the clock. It'll be dark soon and the spindrift is flowing for real now. I fire in a bolt and set off up the 80-degree ice hose. A nest of gear at 20 metres, then a screw, a short ice wall, another chicken bolt at a two-move rock slab covered in hoar and then the rope comes tight at the base of a vertical ice column. Brad comes up while Craig thrashes around on slipping jumars and frozen prussiks before eventually oozing back down to the belay. Another 10 metres and we're on easy street but the light is fading fast and the fire hose is flowing freely. Down we go once again to the joys of goggle-less skiing in the teeth of a blizzard, sodden iron-laden packs, fading headlamps, breakable crust and

last but not least, beers at the van.

Craig is ski guiding for the next three weeks, so Bubba and I dutifully await his return for round three. Jia calls. His spies are everywhere.

"So, wutchabin up to?"

He knows all about the routes of course and is jonesing to get in, but his stars are not so perfectly aligned until maybe April. I give him sincere assurance that I'm back to skiing for now, but like any self-respecting junky I'm lying through my teeth. Now then, how about that chimney feature left of the smear? I go through the list and eventually recruit Mr. Christie for the mission.

"Two or three pitches—we'll waltz up it."

Normally Chris Christie is no fool, but he totally falls for it. Perhaps just a bit too much time spent digging out sleds and watching celebrities hurl themselves off cornices. True to form, the first thing that pops into his head is to hike to the top of the route, chuck a rope over and get the killer cover shots. I suggest a more timeless, classic image of fuzzy butt shots while managing a belay.

"It's authentic; not like all that poser bullshit. Patagonia will love it! I'll wear some of their tatty old leak-tex."

The white stuff turns out to be one-hit Styrofoam with the occasional mushroom tunnelling session but by the time we are three pitches up it's looking like I won't have time to stop for lunch after all. Although not nearly as slow going as the neighbouring rig, somehow the pitch count has grown to seven or eight by the time we top out at dusk. In search of a friendly descent, I embark on an ominous traverse across a 40-degree snowfield perched above a 300-metre drop. Chris ties the two ropes together and gives me an optimistic belay as I plow my way above the sucking void. Some Hail Marys and good stability see me across. Chris follows over.

"So I guess that's alpine climbing, eh?"

"Yup. Now just a little nocturnal ski tour before we crack those beers."

A week later and Craig's back, Brad goes off shift and miraculously, a three-week layoff lands in my lap—but the weather has other ideas. A typical spring pattern develops with a cold upper-low parked off the coast sending waves of convective cells across the range. The seductive siren-call of spiking ski quality proves irresistible. Thoughts of flowing spindrift on a cold, brooding wall leads to procrastination and complacency. The momentum slips away but the clock is a-ticking. A few hits of a strong spring sun on those first couple of pitches and the show is all over. Before heading back to work, Craig and Brad graciously release their stake in the route so I hit the phone book again.

"Fully bolted. A mega classic! Five or six pitches so you'll be back in time for dinner."

Jim Martinello finds an opening in his work and family schedule, and the weather stabilizes into a cool high-pressure pattern. As we ski up to the base we see that the sun has definitely been nibbling away at the wall but our route appears to remain intact. In fact, conditions are perfect with temperatures just barely freezing and scattered cloud-

The northeast face of Mini Moose: (1) *Rhapsody in Floyd.* (2) *Free Tibet!* Photo: Chris Christie

cover keeping the sun at bay. Pitch one falls easily. The brief sun exposure has metamorphosed the ice into an even finer medium of perfect one-swing sticks. This continues at a subtly increasing angle up to the crux roof. I give it a concerted effort resulting in a couple of falls but in the end pull through on two bolts to the moss seam. This is no joke either, as it and the following ice plaques are dead vertical and fully pumping. I glance over my shoulder and marvel at the clean vertical drop of the haul line down to the belay.

Jimmy makes short work of pitch three and I launch into what we expect to be the final real obstacle—an innocuous but curiously white-looking 12-metre column. Shortly thereafter, I find myself paralyzed on dead vertical froth wondering if this is the sort of crap you find on the summit mushrooms of Patagonia. Slow progress is made only with oh-so-very-careful tunnelling to barely adequate tool sticks while making full use of load-distributing stemming. Terror grips me throughout until I miraculously uncover a bomber screw placement, and with relief, pull into the laid back upper gully.

As it turns out, "easy street" produces five more pitches of WI2 to WI4 gullies of Styrofoam before we pull onto the summit ridge. Completely whipped, we plow our way across the "traverse of the idiots" under a setting sun. We are drawn on by thoughts of beer, home and the satisfaction of realization of the improbable by murdering the impossible (but who needs to get hung up on details?).

A warm opiate contentment permeates my soul; nothing quite like mainlining for a while. At any rate, I think maybe, just maybe, it's finally time to hang up the spurs.

Summary

Two new routes on the northeast face of Mini Moose (GR 291819), North Joffre Creek, Duffy Lake Road, Coast Mountains. *Rhapsody in Floyd* (WI4, 8 pitches), FA: Chris Christie, Bruce Kay, March 8, 2008. *Free Tibet!* (WI5 M6 A0, 9 pitches), FA: Jim Martinello, Bruce Kay, April 4, 2008.

Note: Previous attempts on *Free Tibet!* with Brad White and Craig McGee. Bolted belay stations to the top of the 3rd pitch. Craig freed the crux on the 2nd pitch (M7/M8, seven protection bolts) from a stance. Avalanche hazard is limited to the approach slopes and the traverse off at the top (which should be completely avoided if stability is at all suspect). Rappelling the routes is an option with a mix of V-threads and rock anchors. The suggested rack for both routes is: a set of nuts and cams to two inches, eight pitons (KB to baby angle) and eight ice screws (including stubbies).

Prow Wall Free

Will Stanhope

This past summer, with the help of a variety of partners, I managed to make the first free ascent of *The Prow* (originally 5.9 A2) on the Squamish Chief. Dick Culbert and Bob Cuthbert first climbed it in 1968, but nobody really knows for sure where it went. It basically took the path of least resistance up cracks and bushy ledges. Jean-Pierre Ouellet a.k.a. Peewee—Québécois crack master—got me excited on the project when we met on the Grand Wall.

My friend Jeremy "Bear" Blumel and Adam Diamond had put most of the work into turning this aid wall into a free climb. In the fall of 2003, they established *Teddy Bears Picnic* (5.12d, 6 pitches)—a modern free route in which all the individual pitches were freed but never in a continuous push. In addition, it was a rappel-in route, meaning climbers had to hike to the second summit of the Chief and rappel to the start of the climbing. The route began about 12 metres above the ground in "no man's land."

Jeremy is approximately twice as strong as me. He has twice my firepower, all packed into a small five-foot seven-inch frame. His footwork is laser precise and he can read blank granite like Braille. Jeremy had freed all the individual pitches, but never in a single push. Given his granite wizardry, and the fact he hadn't linked the route together, I gave myself little chance for success. Nevertheless, I began hiking up there to suss it out.

The route is steep, packed with three back-to-back 5.12d pitches. The first pitch is 5.12a and is an arching splitter, culminating in a tricky boulder problem before the anchor. The first 5.12d pitch is a laser-cut corner up the "Elevator Shaft". I deviated from the original route here, partly to make it a little harder, partly because my variation is more plumb-line straight. The second 5.12d pitch is a laser-cut splitter resembling *Tales of Power* (5.12) in Yosemite, but harder. The last crux is also 5.12d and involves a crimpy crack switch—this one bolted.

Throughout the summer I got on the route periodically, a couple times with Peewee and once with Colin Moorhead. With Colin, it's always a party. He brought speakers and Players cigarettes, puf ng away while blasting Biggie at top volume. Though still recovering from a catastrophic ground-fall the previous season, he was cranking hard—pulling down on the 5.12 and screaming with all his might. When trying hard, Colin screams in panicked gasps, "BAP! BAAHHH!" I was inspired.

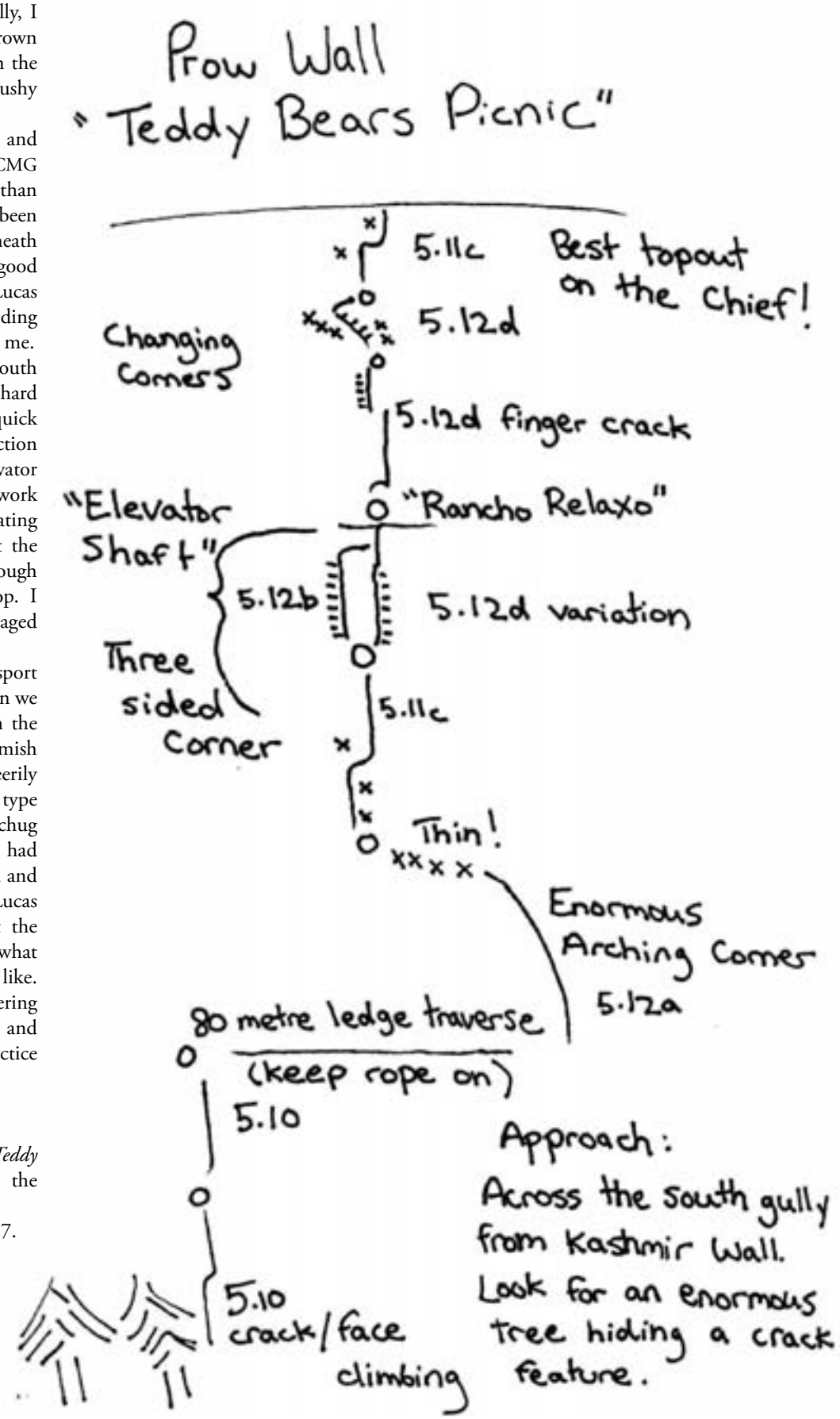
One question mark remained: how to put the route in from the South Gully? As it stood, you still had to access the

route from the top down. Eventually, I talked to Graeme Taylor and Jesse Brown who recommended coming in from the left via two 5.10 pitches and a bushy traverse. It was ready to go.

By this time it was September and I was scheduled to take my ACMG Assistant Rock Guide exam in less than a week. Though I should have been practicing reversible hitches underneath Zombie Roof, I convinced my good buddy and fellow aspirant guide, Lucas Holtzman, to bow out from the guiding practice for a day and jumar behind me.

At 6 a.m. we started from the south gulley and soon arrived at the hard climbing. The first 5.12a pitch was quick and soon I was in the business section of the three stacked 5.12ds. The Elevator Shaft went well: laser-cut corner-work with tricky TCU placements culminating in a desperate boulder problem at the end. The splitter went well also, though both feet blew off at the very top. I shock-loaded my shoulders but managed to hang tough.

The last 5.12d corner-switch sport pitch fell after a couple tries and soon we found ourselves on top, basking in the late summer sunlight. Back in Squamish I had bought an energy drink eerily named MONSTER ASSAULT—the type motocross psychopaths regularly chug back at the X-Games. Originally, I had kept it in the pack in case I bonked and needed a pick-me-up. Instead, Lucas and I drank the orange liquid at the top of the Chief, which tasted like what I would imagine rocket fuel tastes like. We jittered down the trail, jabbering about future projects in Squamish and elsewhere, for once content to practice hitches underneath Zombie Roof.



Summary

First free ascent of *The Prow* via *Teddy Bears Picnic* (5.12d , 8 pitches), the Stawamus Chief, Squamish.
FFA: Will Stanhope, September 2007.

The Heathens

Chris Barner

If it wasn't for Don Serl, whom I've known for some dozen years, and who told me it was high time we did something for the *CAJ*, I'd be keeping this to myself. But he mentioned a dearth of information about our club and our favourite areas, and something about the importance of recording mountain history: that it would serve some purpose for the alpine community to hear something of far west mountaineers. Like a fool, I went for it.

Campbell River is the northernmost city on the east coast of Vancouver Island, sandwiched between the uniquely beautiful Island Ranges and the spectacular Coast Range. I have lived here since I was a boy, as has my climbing partner Paul Rydeen, and we have rambled together over the fine peaks that surround us for over 20 years. In 1988, we founded the Heathens Club—a loosely organized but effective group of adventurers. The club features several committees: safety and education, leadership and youth development, and "rec and con" (maintains several facilities and is active in regional access and conservation issues). We have fun. Campbell River is a great place to be a climber.

Our affair with the Coast Range began at different times. I was bewitched by the Lillooet Icecap and Garibaldi Park during the '70s when my folks owned property at Alta Lake near Whistler. Paul's romance began on the North Shore and Garibaldi in the '80s. On a bluebird day in 1992, while flying from Squamish to Mount Waddington with Colin Banner, we became excitedly aware of the vast potential of the many dramatic spires that surround the mighty icefields that occupy the lesser-known corners of the range. For almost a decade now, we've been particularly fascinated with the northeast corner of the Homathko Icefield, specifically the Queen Bess area and Reliance Glacier, as well as the compelling knot of peaks between Doran Creek and the Jewakwa Glacier east of the Homathko River valley.

We visited Queen Bess first, in 2001, and agreed that the summit featured both the most interesting summit register [see photo on page 113—Ed.] and the most inspiring vistas imaginable. Before long we visited Mount Reliance, another giant with its own little cirque of charming peaks, good approaches and some attractive meadows. We climbed several interesting peaks and routes there in 2003 before moving on to meet friends at another location, but it was the view across to the mountains just south of Doran Creek that permeated our thoughts all winter, and in 2004 we found ourselves flying into a tight hanging valley in extremely poor visibility to camp at the foot of the westernmost of the massifs—what became known to us as the Witches Hats.

The Witches Hats are a cluster of extremely steep spires about 2,700 metres in elevation. From the valley to the north we made several climbs in the area, some of exceptional quality. On one trip up-glacier, spectacular views to the south revealed some attractive peaks and lines, including more 2,500-metre-plus peaks festooned with eye-blue glaciers and a red fin of fine rock we dubbed the Dent Rouge. From the north, these wild peaks appear to lean against each other like drunken frat party chums. We visited here in 2005, making the first accent of peak 2,652, which we dubbed Sinister Tower; and the second accent of its slightly higher sister peak to the west. Paul observed, "Nobody else has seen this exact view except us and John Clarke." Eventually, this group of peaks has become known to us as the Silent Towers.

In 2006, we flew to the backend of Government Reserve Creek and the mountains to the east of Mount Klattasine, or as Paul puts it, the "Un-Klattasine." Here we found a beautiful campsite near a small tarn where two moraines converged. We had two great weeks climbing the peaks above camp and wandering across the Klattasine Glacier, to viewpoints above Jewakwa. We were looking down on the great bend, just where a large tributary enters the main flow and shifts all the shimmering seracs into a chaotic jumble. Scenes were so nice there that every time we attempted to descend from a climb we wound up just lounging about taking it all in, planning future projects and generally getting nowhere at all. Then we bounced over to the benches southwest of Mantle Peak to spend another 10 days rambling ridges over there. I remember there was a family of goats, standing along a skyline, long coats backlit brilliantly by the afternoon sun. We stood there for some time, we mammals all inspecting one-another, curious in a mutual way about these other species we so rarely see.

Last summer we visited the west side of the Silent Towers to climb a small wall on a feature nicknamed the Talon. We fixed 180 metres of difficult aid climbing over a week or so. Unfortunately, I broke my ankle when I popped a nut, taking a routine but costly fall. It was enough to send us home—a first for us so far. No complaints. In a mammoth effort, Paul stripped the wall by himself and carried the lion's share of the gear back to camp. The Piss and Crawl Wall would have to wait until next summer. We'll be back….

On many of our trips we've been joined by a crazy cast of characters. Darren Wilman and Alana Theoret have been with us on several adventures, and James Rode (nephew of Coast Range legend Howard Rode), has accompanied us a couple of times. Many others have been along here and there, and our expeditions often turn into large celebrations of life where what gets climbed is secondary. These are fine humans. In groups like these you could climb a slag-heap with a length of dental floss and have a good time. Paul is a rock. He is a level-headed man of balance and reason, and I appreciate him especially for his sense of humour, which is inexhaustible. He is

physically and mentally strong, and he can climb every day, but is not foolishly driven. We've been climbing together for so long that we just set out in the morning and the climbs just happen.

One of the most pleasant aspects of our mountain trips has been getting to know our pilot, Mike King, and his family, better. Their idyllic environment at Bluff Lake is the perfect venue for their particular brand of legendary Chilcotin hospitality. Audrey dies every time I say, "It's Piss and Crawl calling," over the phone. One evening on my birthday, we shared a campfire with them and some of their friends. It was a gentle kind of fun—down by the lake under uncertain but charitable skies. I fondly remember long talks with Gran, delicious breakfasts at Dave and Lori's and the strange feeling of leaving home to go home at the end of each trip.

We've had our moments. At Queen Bess the wind howled for a week, at one point flinging small pebbles from their perches atop large boulders. At times it was impossible to stand. We got pretty much skunked in the Pantheons the same year by grey, soggy weather, frittering away the days playing cribbage and partying. But there have also been perfect days, like the day we climbed the Couplet Towers and smoke from the great fires of 2004 turned the skies magenta and reduced the tumbling icefalls of the Radiant Glacier to pastel obscurity. Or the day we lay for four hours, shirtless and in shorts, on the very summit of Mount Waddington, like laundry drying on the rocks.

Then, as we hiked to the Reliance-Determination Col one day, four of us spotted a family of goats frolicking on the sunny snowslopes. The kids were doing backflips over each other and playfully butting their older siblings and parents. We stopped right in our tracks and watched for 20 minutes. At the col, we soaked up views of the Doran-Tiedemann-Mosely-Homathko confluence and marmoted on big fat rocks in the sun. Later that same trip, as it snowed lightly during a descent, we took some time to explore a really beautiful glacial stream as it wore in sculpted twists and turns down the ice slope towards the lake, here and there covered over by large boulders barely perched on melting pedestals and then sinking into cold blue bottomless wormholes. It was absolutely amazing!

We would build elaborate domiciles in the moraines with our tent and a three-metre by four-and-a-half-metre tarp. It takes a full day or so of rolling boulders to create a level space covered by the tarp that encloses the tent door, a kitchen area and room for us and all of our stuff. Walls fashioned out of the rocks provided shelter from the wind. We would bring the food we like, none of that dehydrated rubbish, and eat things

The unclimbed Piss and Crawl Wall on the Talon in the Silent Towers located in the northern Homathko Icefield. Photo: Paul Rydeen

like cheeseburgers, blueberry pancakes and fresh vegetables. Stoked in our little shelters, we undertake the best-looking outings within day-trip range, weather permitting; or lie about relaxing if we so choose. Mountains must be for enjoying as much as for enduring.

Because I'm not much of a believer in the "light is right" approach to mountaineering, it is somewhat ironic that I believe it is absolutely necessary for ef cient administration. The Heathens are not so much a "climbing club" as we are just a bunch of heathens! Our club was originally about a certain outlook on life, humanism and our relationship with nature as opposed to simply engaging in a particular set of activities. For us, climbing and the mountains are the tools and the venue, but the aim is to encourage that development of the climbing human. Respect for the environment where these events take place is intrinsic to the experience. We must care for the cliffs and the glaciers where we capture the great confidence we will later release into our everyday lives.

Being a member means adopting a state of mind and manner, involving partnership in a clan of comfort—a society of support. From time to time, we've had to evolve a little to avoid becoming too much of an organization; to remain more of a tribe, and to steer clear of what makes clubs top-heavy and cumbersome. We've always wondered why cash should be in the introduction of a person to the climbing community and the natural environment where they live. We believe that the dispersal of mountain knowledge should be of a folkloric nature with the focus more on the campfire than the marketplace. Membership dues, annual general meetings and tedious record keeping seem ridiculous. Our club, above all, is inclusive and we shall always accept those climbers or otherwise who feel excluded by everyone else. These rare folks are often the hidden gems of our societies. The only question we ask is, "Do you know how to have a good time?"

We spend much of our time in the Island Ranges—the misty mountains of the far west. They don't offer the scale of the Coast peaks but they do present graceful and compelling lines and are amongst the most beautiful mountains I have seen in this world. There is tons of snow each winter to cover up bush and bugs and you can climb all year. The glaciers are small but plentiful and full of character, spawning picturesque streams of pure water that is as clear as a simple idea. Myriad lakes decorate the landscape like inlaid jewels. The wind is fresh.

There is a fine rock climbing area at Crest Creek on Highway 28 between Campbell River and Gold River within Strathcona Park. We have been maintaining the routes, staging areas and access trails at the crags since the early '90s. There are now some 250 aid and free climbing routes served by three parking lots and outhouse facilities. We are proud of our work there. The club also maintains several routes in Strathcona Park and beyond.

The years drift by. Hopefully, Paul and I, and the Heathens, can continue to make Campbell River a place where climbing lives. We continue to put our time and energy into young people, into access issues and the protection of wilderness. We will always ramble into misty Island mountains and take a custodial role at the Crest Creek Crags. We spend as much time as we can in the "Go Strange" each summer, looking for goats and glaciers, eager for laughter. I haven't seen another place like this coast, where forest and icecaps marry, spawning the cool, blue-green peace that permeates these mountains and my soul as I live among them.

Summary

2001: Homathko Icefield
West face of Mt. Queen Bess
West face of Diadem Peak
Peak 2,200 and peak 2,250 (Marblerock Peak)
2003: Reliance Glacier
Southeast ridge (5.7, 1060m) of Mt. Reliance
Northeast ridge of Mt. Silver Swan (new route)
Southeast face/ridge (5.7) of Furrowed Peak (FA)
Peak 2,700 (NTD)
West ridge (5.7, 450m) of Mt. Oriana (new route)
2004: The Witches Hats
South face (III 5.6) of Cyclopes Tower (2500m) (FA)
Southeast ridge (low 5th class) of Gilman Peak (FA)
Wolverine Tower (NTD, FA)
Nowhere Buttress (III 5.9, 300m) on Peak 2400m (FA)
2005:The Dent Rouge Glacier
Southwest face (low 5th class) of Peak 2350
Southeast face (5.7) of Sinister Tower (2652m), (new route)
Southeast face of Gilman Peak (new route)
Southeast face (5.7) of Dislocation Peak (FA)
Northeast ridge (5.7) of Wildcat Peak (2520m)
Southeast face (5.6) of Lonely Tower (2654m)
The Reliance Glacier (again)
Southeast buttress (5.9 A1, 350m) of Determination Peak
Southeast ridge (5.6) of Mt. Reluctant (2760m)
Peak 2,700 (NTD)
2006: The Un-Klattasine Area
West ridge (5.8, 300m) of Un-Klattasine (2350m), (new route)
South face (low 5th class, 300m) of the Blade (2360m)
Mantle Peak Camp
Mantle Peak Traverse (5.7)
Peak 2,545 (low 5th class)
Peak 2,560 (low 5th class)
Southwest ridge (low 5th class) of Mt. Silver Swan
2007: Silent Towers
Attempt on the Piss and Crawl Wall on the Talon

Note: "FA" means first ascent of the peak; "new route" means the route is a first ascent but the peak has been climbed before; and "NTD" means no technical dif culties.

Sprung Cock Erect

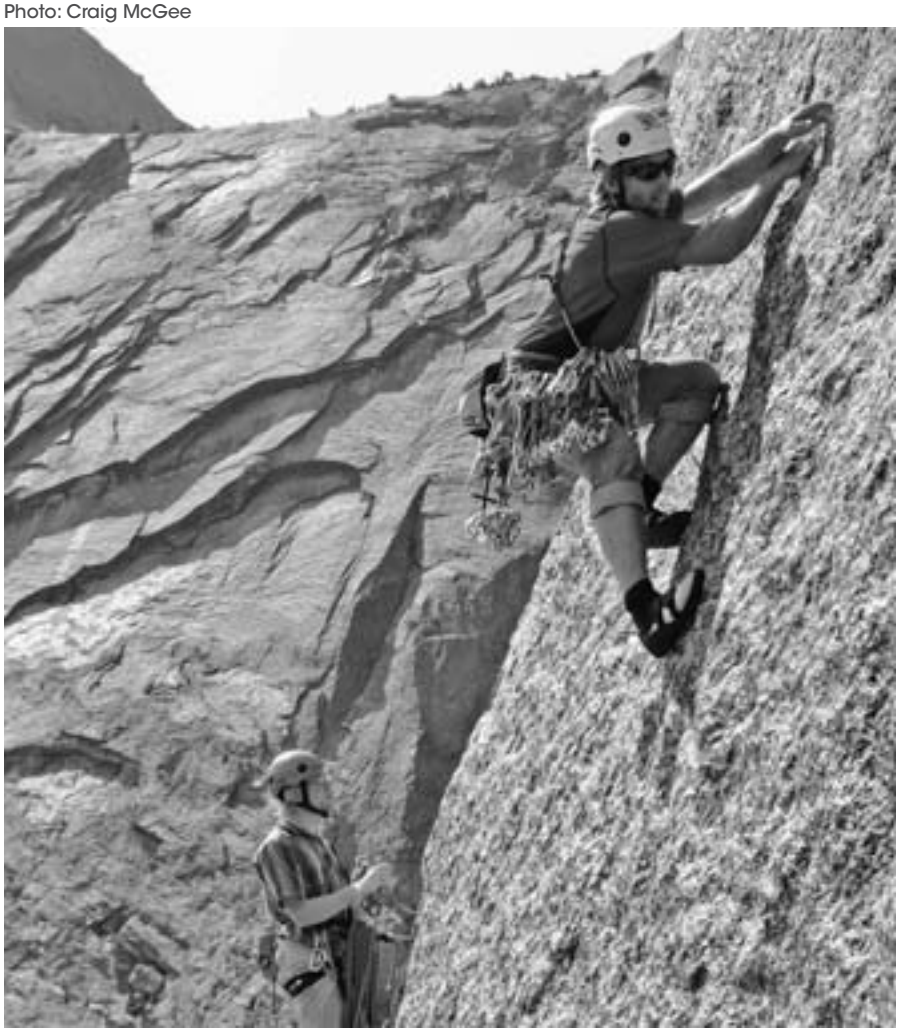
Jason Kruk

Craig, bubba and I walked out of the Anderson River Valley in early September with a great consolation prize. We hiked in with a free route on the unclimbed east face of Steinbok Peak in our sights and spent two days realizing our objective probably wasn't going to garner "modern classic" status in the next edition of Kevin McLane's *Alpine Select*. We crossed the valley to the neighbouring Les Cornes and succeeded on a great new line.

Although Craig McGee is a full decade older than I am, he definitely accounted for the youthful exuberance of the team. His inability to just sit still borders on a serious medical condition. If it didn't make him the amazing climber and skier he is, I'd beg him to seek professional help. I like climbing with Craig not only because of his ADHD, but also because he is a great friend. I can shoot the shit with him and he'll sling it right back; but he is loyal and will stick up for his friends even at times when it would be easier to keep his head down and mouth shut.

I don't know how Brad White got the moniker Bubba, but I can guess. It just seems to inexplicably suit the guy in the same way the nickname Dubya has transcended all meaning to exemplify the United States' president. Bubba has a great talent for alpinism. It is his ability to consistently onsight pitches at his physical limit in the mountains that sets him apart from the rest of us. To label him solid is akin to describing a Squamish winter as a little damp. While following his lead low on our aborted attempt on Steinbok, I had a hard enough time sticking to the holds (the kind that all seem to point the wrong way) making it clear that I was not cleaning the knifeblade he had somehow driven in mid-crux.

Brad White (leading) and Jason Kruk on pitch seven of *Sprung Cock Erect* on Les Cornes. Photo: Craig McGee



It was day two on the east face of Steinbok. Bubba, in the lead at our highpoint, was bombarding the belay with dirt, moss and small trees.

"It's like an Italian nun's pelt up here," hollered Bubba, a man with 50 words in his vocabulary for underwear. Craig and I looked at each other. We both knew this route was crap. Free climbing is slow when you have to garden extensively on lead. Those splitter headwall cracks we were gunning for now looked green too, further disheartening us. It had taken considerable effort and resources to get to this point, all of us having endured engaging leads. Craig gave Bubba an out: "If it doesn't look worthy up there we can bail and try for a new route on Les Cornes."

"Nah, I think it's pretty worthy."

Craig looked incredulous. I'm sure I did, too. I laughed. Craig got more to the point: "Fuck it! Brad, we just gave you an out! You're supposed to say, 'It's too dirty up here. Why don't we cut our losses and try and top out something else?'"

Sanity prevailed and we did just that. Bubba and I tried to keep pace with Craig's frenetic march through the convoluted talus that led back to our bivy. When I arrived, Craig and Bubba had already tucked into the bottle of cheap Scotch I had carefully siphoned into an old water bottle days before at the trailhead. As the youngster of only 18, my Scotch apprenticeship was still in its fledgling stages of development. I was steadily falling further behind in my attempt at playing catch-up with these

seasoned veterans. By the time we had packed up camp, my partners were half drunk and noticeably less stalwart under the burden of heavy packs. This may have been the cause of our interference at the camp of three Squamish and Vancouver climbers we stumbled upon on our way to the base of our new objective. I can't really elaborate, but trust that we are sorry.

Craig had scoped the line on Les Cornes in the spring when he established a route on the same peak with Colin Moorhead. Craig took off up the first pitch—poxy face climbing protected by a small TCU led to a shallow layback corner protected by the most badass spider I have ever seen. More mixed face and crack climbing made up the next pitch with one protection bolt placed near the start. Belay two was made on top of a cool hanging-flake feature that you must step off of to reach pitch three: an overhanging flake that turns a lip and opens to lower-angle, splitter hands and fists. At the top of the splitter, Craig buried a cam around the corner, and fighting rope drag and the rapidly fading light of the day, boldly felt his way right across sloping face holds to a large ledge system. We used our power drill (I know… what outrage!) to bolt the first three belays and we added two bolts to the traverse at the top of pitch three to cut down on rope drag and fear factor. We left our two ropes strung up to our high point and descended in the dark. These pitches link into the *Springbok Arête* (5.11-, 13 pitches) and would make a far better start to that route as its early pitches really do suck.

An early start the next morning saw us re-ascend to our high point and I took over the lead. We followed *Springbok Arête* for three pitches to the top of the right-hand Spagnut-Shef eld variant. From there, our route broke rightwards up a steep right-facing corner. This feature gradually turns into a perfect hand and finger crack that splits the outer edge of an arête—rock architecture that really shouldn't exist. I climbed with total and unsuppressed rapture and played up the pitch like a child, giggling uncontrollably. From the belay, it looked as if a direct face pitch led right and could link into a corner system that would take us to the top. I handed the sharp end over to Bubba.

Bubba stepped onto the face, testing the probability of the moves. This pitch was either going to require the use of our power drill, which was handily back at camp, or a climber bolder than Bubba. Unfortunately, the only one living is probably hiding out somewhere playing cards with Bigfoot and the Ogopogo.

Craig has a great eye for a line, thankfully, and he had the vision to turn us around from our dead-end. He spotted a dyke that ran down and right to a ledge system. I put him on belay and lowered him as he swung across, buf ng the holds and offering beta. Bubba led downwards, and was surprised to find good gear to protect the burly moves. When the rope came tight I followed on what felt more like the sharp end. Off-width dues were collected on the next pitch—number nine. Luckily, face features appeared keeping the grade at 5.9.

On pitch 10 we were lucky that Bubba is so adventuresome while in the lead and that Craig can spot a line instinctually.

"Hey Brad, how's about heading for that corner system up and left?"

"Will do, Doctor."

As it turned out, the corner would deposit us perfectly in the upper systems we wanted. Linking the features involved a considerable section of bold sloper moves climbed without hesitation by Bubba. Future parties will find this section more than manageable with the knowledge that the feature they are gunning for is quite a sinker. A belay was made at a cool perch where a chimney met up with the corner we were climbing.

The pitch above looked steep, wide and dirty. Due to the fact we had endured enough of the latter two adjectives on Steinbok Peak over the two previous days, Craig did what any enterprising climber would do. Utilizing an incredible, magically appearing solution pocket and a series of Houdini-like contortions, Craig switched to an improbable-looking corner about five metres up. Staring at the slammed-shut corner in front of him and fearing that he may have climbed himself into quite the pickle, he hiked his feet up and reached as high as he could. Much to everyone's surprise—most of all Craig's—his fingers slotted into the unexpected safety of a perfect finger lock. Another mighty span of blank corner yielded yet another textbook lock. And so the pitch continued, lock after lock, until the corner opened to perfect hands, then abruptly switched to a tight chimney for the last five metres to the belay ledge.

The last pitch, our 12th of the day, linked into the final pitch of *Springbok Arête* to the left. A pleasant romp through corners and over blocks led to the minor summit of Les Cornes followed by the exciting *au cheval* downclimb. The rap from the notch can be casual if you hit the correct station over a bulge to skier's right.

We were back at our packs as the sun was setting. Our route was of the highest quality for Coast Range rock climbs in the mountains. The rock was clean and the situations fine. On the midnight drive home to Squamish, topics of conversation all returned to just how lucky we were and how great the route turned out. All that remained was to title our creation.

I think it was I who offered the name *Sprung Cock Erect* (rhymes with *Springbok Arête*). At least it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Summary

Sprung Cock Erect (5.11, 12 pitches), Les Cornes, Anderson River Peaks.
FA: Craig McGee, Jason Kruk, Brad White, September 2006. [See complete route description on page 98—Ed.]

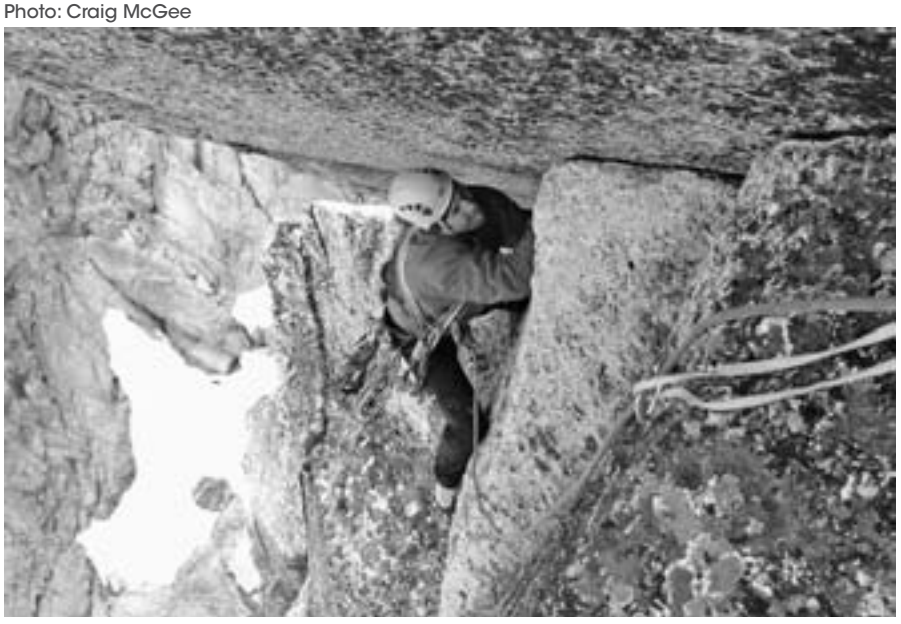
Les Cornes

Craig McGee

Over the past few years I have been involved in some new route activity in the Anderson River Range just north of Hope, B.C. Contrary to most of the other peaks around the area, Les Cornes (also known as *Springbok Arête*) has some extremely good, steep and clean rock. Someone has buffed out the trail from the parking area and now it is a casual two hours to the base. The climbs are well worth the effort to get in there and it would be possible to climb a few routes in a weekend if you made a small camp in the moraine and boulders below the wall. Good water can be found throughout the summer and fall.

The Gatekeeper (5.12a or 5.11d A0, 8 pitches), FA: Andre Ike, Craig McGee, Brad White. September 13, 2007.
Begin at the giant chockstone in the approach gully below the southwest face.
Gear: Double cams from small TCUs to #3 Camalot plus #4, single set of nuts with extra in the smaller sizes for the second pitch.
P1: 5.12a, 32m. Climb the V-slot and hand crack to the first bolt. Crank up wavy barn-door laybacks clipping four bolts to a ledge rest (this part yo-yoed from one hang and top-roped clean, but not properly redpointed). During times when the gully is filled with snow this part is buried. Finish up a steep finger crack (5.11d) to a ledge with a bolted belay.
P2: 5.11b, 40m. Head up and right (three bolts) then back left into a finger-crack groove. Climb the groove then step right and up to a bolted belay on a diagonal ledge.
P3: 5.10b, 30m. Climb straight up towards a left-facing corner which leads to a ledge with a bolted belay.
P4: 5.10d, 20m. Head improbably out right across an exposed face. A hidden nut (fixed to show the way) and cam placements get you up and across to a splitter crack in the headwall. A very cool pitch.
P5: 5.10c, 45m. Climb straight up the corner to small bomb-bay roof (a bit chossy for a couple metres at the top) then up right to join the traverse from *Springbok Arête* to a two-tree belay.
P6–8: 5.11b, 40m; 5.9, 60m; 5.9, 60m. Continue up *Springbok Arête* to the top.

Colin Moorhead following pitch four of *Voodoo Child* on Les Cornes, Anderson River Peaks. Photo: Craig McGee

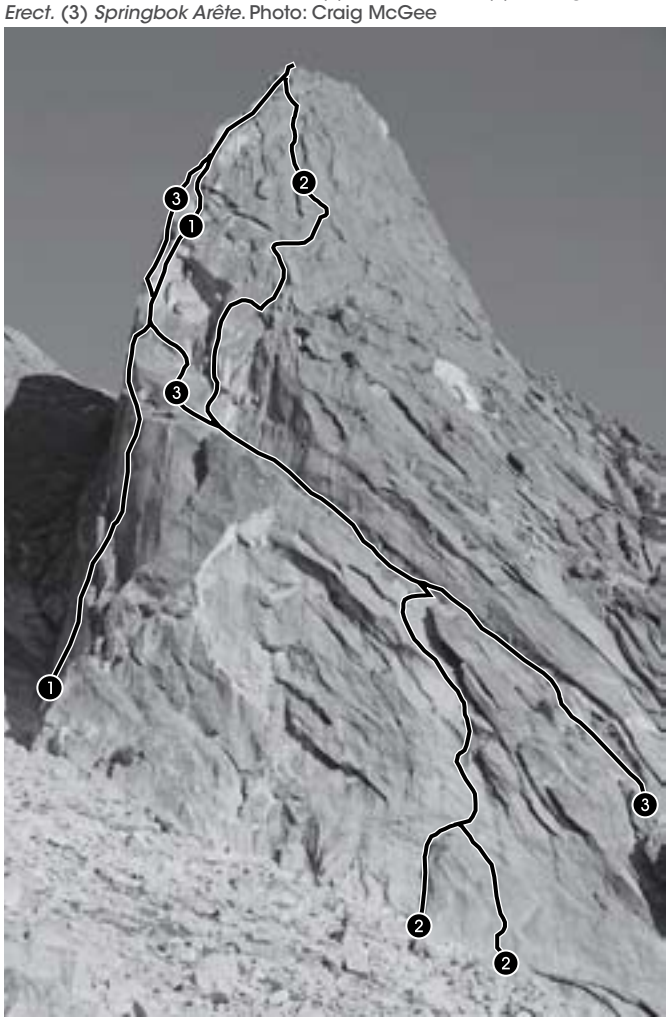


Voodoo Child (5.10+, 6 pitches), FA: Craig McGee, Colin Moorhead, June 2006.
Start up the obvious left-leaning corner 10 metres downhill from *The Gatekeeper*. When snow fills the gully it is possible to start from a stance three metres up (as done on the first ascent). Make sure not to start in the very chossy gully around the arête to the right—it's only 5.6 but very loose.
Gear: Double set of Camalots to #3 plus #4, single set of nuts.
P1: 5.9–5.10+, 50–60m. Depending on how high the snow is the first pitch can range in difficulty and length.
P2: 5.10d, 40m. The money pitch! Crank up an awesome split-pillar. Near the top (#4 Camalot) step right when possible to a sloping belay ledge. This pitch is like the Split Pillar in Squamish but a harder size.
P3: 5.10b/c, 50m. Head awkwardly out left up a sloping ledge/corner system to join *Springbok Arête* below the overhanging hand-crack/off-width.
P4: 5.10d, 55m. Start up this pitch (oh so good!) but instead of escaping out left, follow the crack up and right to under a roof. Crank right out a finger crack to a good belay beside a dead tree.
P5: 5.10d, 60m. Go directly up the hand crack to the roof. Pull out the left side of it then up again and out left following the corner to a junction with the last pitch of *Springbok Arête*.
P6: 5.9, 60m. Climb the last pitch of *Springbok Arête* to the top.

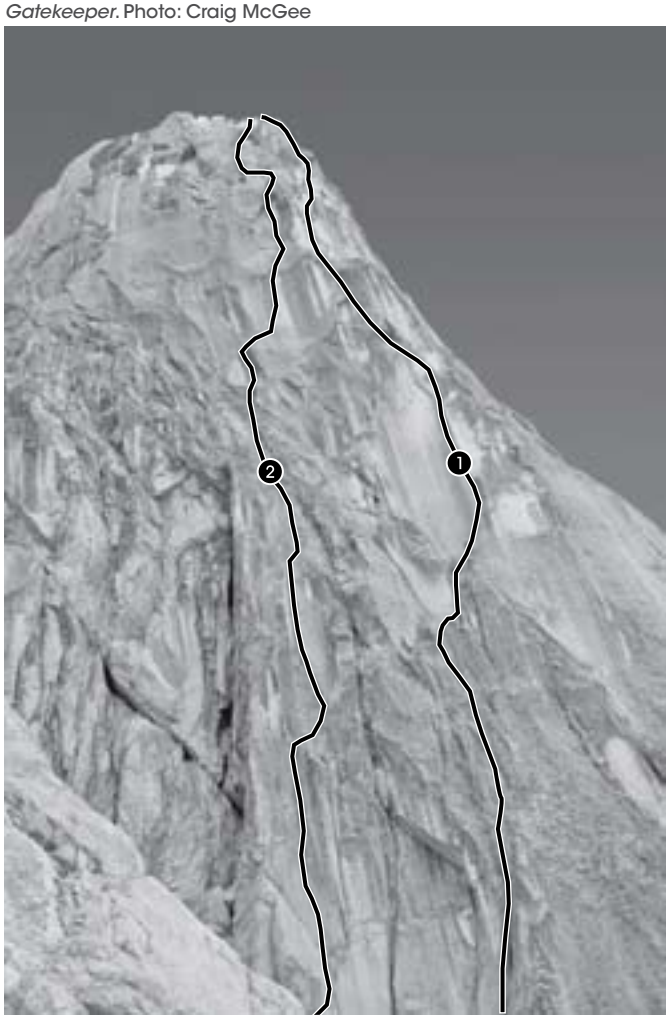
Sprung Cock Erect (5.11, 12 pitches), FA: Craig McGee, Jason Kruk, Brad White, September 2006.
Start 60 metres downhill from a large obvious rock scar on southeast face. The first pitch begins on the right side of the small pillar/buttress. The first three pitches are an excellent alternative to the start of *Springbok Arête*.
Gear: Double rack from small TCUs to #3 Camalot plus #4, extra mid-size nuts and TCUs for the last pitch.

P1: 5.10b, 30m. Climb up to a bolt and make bouldery moves into the corner above. Great laybacking and finger jamming will get you to the ledge and bolt belay. During times of high snow the bolt is buried and the pitch becomes 5.9.
P2: 5.10b, 30m. Move right to a bolt then straight-up and slightly rightwards to a cool bolted belay on a giant hanging flake.
P3: 5.10c, 45m. Head out left to a slightly overhanging hand crack that becomes a low-angled off-width. Where the off-width ends at a small stance, dance out right past two protection bolts to a bolted belay.
P4–5: 5.6, 120m. Same as for *Springbok Arête* to a belay below a steep corner.
P6: 5.10a, 30m. Continue as for *Springbok Arête* to small tree and #3 Camalot belay below the first 5.9 off-width pitch on that route.
P7: 5.11a, 45m. It's hard to spot this one. Head back slightly right (east) across blocks to the steep, overhanging corner directly on the arête itself. Start the corner with hard moves then enjoy the rest of this splitter crack. At around 25–30 metres before the end of the crack, look out right for a down sloping dyke. Leave the crack early and climb up to the dyke and then back down five metres to a small stance below the large left-facing off-width corner.
P8: 5.9, 40m. Climb the off-width to a belay ledge.
P9: 5.11a, 50m. Not so easy to piece together. Move right and up a steep left-facing corner. Do not attempt to go left were there is an off-route nut—instead head up the next left-facing corner for about three metres. When possible place your last cam then pull a committing move out left to a sloping rail. It is not obvious but once you're out there you can place two "bomber" #0 TCUs. Continue up and left on an exposed handrail until it's possible to pull up into an alcove with a finger crack on the left and a hand crack on the right. Take the finger crack out left to a small pedestal and belay here. Do not head up the chimney to the right (*Lumberjack Wall*, Barley-Howe, 1982).
P10: 5.11, 50m. From this belay crank up the corner until it's possible to step out right for a quick rest before a hard pull back left into the steep left-facing corner. Belay at the end of the corner while standing on top of the short off-width/chimney section. A stellar pitch!
P11: 5.10b 60m. Pull a hard mantel leaving the belay and head out left to join the last pitch of the *Springbok Arête*. If you manage your rope well you will make it to the top, or do it in two pitches.

The southeast face of Les Cornes: (1) *Voodoo Child*. (2) *Sprung Cock Erect*. (3) *Springbok Arête*. Photo: Craig McGee



The southwest face of Les Cornes: (1) *Voodoo Child*. (2) *The Gatekeeper*. Photo: Craig McGee



Tourists From Scotland Visit Canada

Des Rubens

Glencoe, ☒☒☒☒, the usual question: which mountain range to grace with our presence? Steve and I pondered the problem and came up with the Waddington Range. This range had lost out in 2004 to the Andes. The other members of that party were not available for 2007, so we considered going as two. A few days later, I told Steve that Mike King had bought a larger helicopter and we needed another member to reduce costs to within reason.

Several days later, he'd rounded up a substantial proportion of the outdoor folk of the county of Argyll, some of whom were fairly new to this game and were extremely enthusiastic. Despite my respect for Steve's judge of character, I had a few misgivings, not least as they were all west coasters. As it turned out, I could not have spent time with a finer bunch of folk. We had become a party of six: educationalists, engineers, a lawyer and a prawn fisherman, mostly on the wrong side of 50. The team consisted of Bob Hamilton, Billy Hood, Steve Kennedy, Neil McGougan, Dave Ritchie and yours truly.

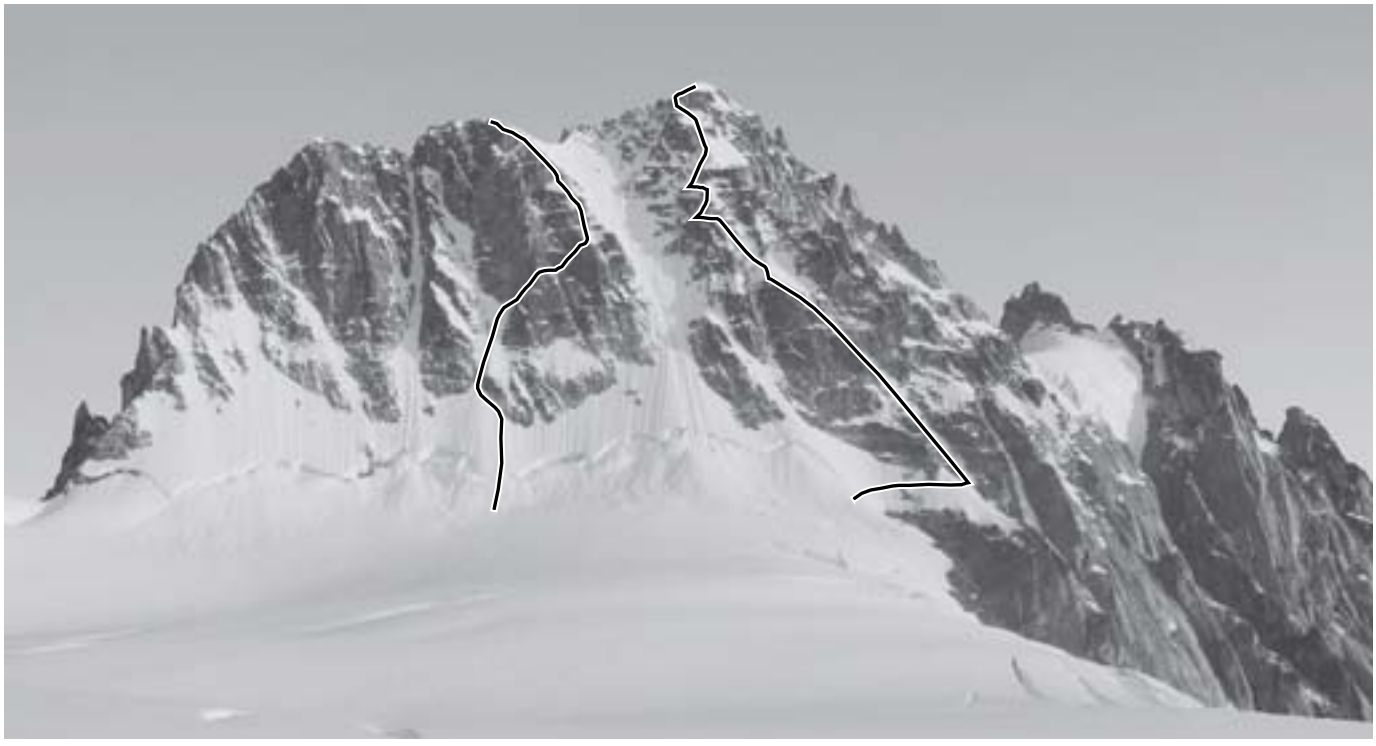
All were from the Glasgow side of Scotland apart from myself, who hails from the classier city of Edinburgh on the east coast of the country. In spite of this gulf, we all got on remarkably well.

Steve Kennedy and I had been considering the Waddington Range for some time and encouragement from Simon Richardson, a well-kent name in both Scotland and Canada, and Don Serl had persuaded us that we couldn't go wrong. Don's fine guide minimized research efforts and the only real decision was whether to go for classic-but-known routes around Mount Waddington itself or for the unknown, with the risk of possible disappointment. The unknown won out and we were to be deposited near the foot of the north face of Mount Geddes, monarch of the Frontier Range, a few kilometres northwest of Waddington.

We'd enjoyed splendid hospitality from the King household. We were amused how Lori had been especially taken with six different Scottish accents. Hey, we Brits are supposed to be the ones recording the idiosyncrasies of quaint foreigners, not the objects of curiosity!

The next morning, I found myself alone on the glacier below the north face of Mount Geddes. A canny approach regarding victuals had lead to an excess of weight and dif culty in unloading, so Steve and Dave had been left for a few minutes on a neighbouring glacier while I unloaded the stacks of gear. Whilst awaiting their return, a discontinuity of memory and reality caused me to re-examine the map. I then had to confess to the others that we'd been dropped off near the wrong ridge. Map reading had been a bit dif cult, what with lots of glacier, crevasses and bits of crag rushing up at a fast pace, as well as being pinned down in flight by a substantial quantity of equipment. Flying over such grand

Central Buttress (left) and *Caledonia* (right) on the north face of Mount Geddes, Waddinton Range. Photo: Des Rubens



terrain was an unusual experience for me. Glencoe or Ben Nevis doesn't quite prepare one for the grand scenery of the Waddington Range. Fortunately for me, no one was much bothered about the different site, which was only a kilometre away from the planned venue and ultimately turned out for the best.

A few days of poor weather was enlivened by the digging of a kitchen snowhole, a job generating a little tension due to the presence of not one, but two engineers in the party. When the weather improved, we set out for the north face of Geddes. I had spotted a potential line in the guidebook dropping from the summit of Geddes, taking the line of three beautiful snow arêtes, interspersed with mixed ground. Accessing the initial gully necessitated an exposed traverse in high above a glacier, and then a fine climb up gullies and the arêtes with a hidden chimney concealing the final way through. Constant exclamations of delight accompanied the ascent. The cloud rose with us, and from the summit we only glimpsed the occasional view of Waddington itself. A chilly descent was made down the rocks to the side of *The Hourglass Face* with an Abalakov V-thread to finish. We had broken our duck and *Caledonia* was climbed. The snow and ice was in good condition, perhaps testament to the heavy snow of the previous winter.

Our two bottles of whisky—one Islay and one Speyside—had both survived the flights from Scotland, and the Canadian meltwater seemed to complement the robust tastes surprisingly well, much to our relief. The compatibility of Canadian water with our national drink had been a source of some anxiety to us. Naturally, with supplies so limited, drams were rationed to special occasions, of which the first ascent of *Caledonia* was well celebrated.

A day's rest was enlivened by rock ascents on Mount Haworth and on a nearby unclimbed tower, which gave us an easy scramble to an exposed summit with spectacular views down over the Roovers Glacier. It was impossible not to be impressed with so much untrodden ground around us. There was then discussion as to our next moves. Those of an exploratory bent won out and we resolved to go as a large and jolly party (to paraphrase our Victorian forebears) to attempt the unclimbed Roovers Needle. As we were two ridges, a glacier and an unclimbed peak away from the objective, it was perhaps a mite ambitious for a day out. I argued that the lay of the land suggested the possibility of easy snow slopes on the far side of the southeast ridge of our objective. We departed early and gained the ridge of Camp Inspiration of the pioneers of 1948 and the originally planned site of our base camp. We discovered no trace of their camp, nor, indeed, of the mentioned water source.

We then continued round the west end of Polydactyl Ridge and trod delicately along the snow arêtes forming Propyleum Pass to gain an unclimbed snow dome. Steve, yearning perhaps for the misty Bens of his native land, later suggested for this peak the Gaelic name Mam Beag, meaning in English "small breast" (although it seemed quite large to me). This was not just a sad old man's fantasy, but honoured the resemblance of this peak to those of our Scots heritage, where ancient names alluding to body parts are not uncommon. I digress.

We looked onward to our objective and some of the party expressed less than outright optimism at the prospects of success. There was an amicable parting of the ways and Steve, Bob and I continued. The southeast ridge of Roovers Needle proved to be devoid of the hoped for snow slopes and too time-consuming for success, but gave us some good rock climbing (amidst, it has to be admitted, generally pretty loose terrain). I asked Bob, our oldest member, how he was enjoying the alpine experience and how it compared. "Oh wonderful," he replied, then disclosed that this was the first time he'd climbed in an alpine environment. In honour of his age and inauguration into such territory, we christened the highest rock tower of our ascent Sgurr Hamilton.

The loose rock was not entirely bad as the retreat was enlivened by some of the finest trundling we have had the pleasure to engage in. In Scotland, such simple pleasures are hard to come by nowadays, due to the possibility of another human being in the path of the recently liberated boulder, never mind the environmental outcries. Our pleasure had the incidental benefit of improving the ground for future parties and, in geological terms, was "nobbut a ba' hair's" moment from occurring in any event. It was uplifting to study Steve's boyish delight as he strained against yet another unstable piece of British Columbia, his features lighting up as he successfully separated a large rock from its base and dispatched it to the Roovers Glacier with a whiff of cordite.

We celebrated our return to Mam Beag with an hour's doze and then retraced our steps, reaching the chilly comfort of the kitchen snowhole around sunset. Although the final summit eluded us, the joy of carefree exploration, of constant movement in such grand country in perfect weather, of uncertainty of outcome and the high spiritedness of the party made for an unforgettable day out.

Meanwhile, Billy, Dave and Neil had made the probable first ascent of the highest peak on the Umbra Ridge, which gave great views over Scimitar Glacier to the heart of the Waddington Range. This peak had given a fine climb on rock of about 300 metres. Sheepishly, they admitted to crossing the tracks of a large ungulate on the way, leading to unkind remarks about whether they had left any gates open. This kind of childish humour continued to the end of the trip.

On returning, Steve had spotted another route on Geddes, which took a fine traverse on the buttress below the central peak and thus became, prosaically, *Central Buttress*. On this occasion, the weather was exceptional and we moved together up the lower part of the face as the sun turned the snows a soft pink. The highlight was the exposed traverse—vertical above and undercut below. Higher up, a steep chimney gave us a fine steep mixed pitch after which we moved together to the summit.

Range after range of glaciated scenery spread out before us as we basked in golden rays for an hour or so. Waddington itself took on a Himalayan demeanour. Coming from a country

where ascents on snow and ice are often done on short winter days where one leaves the car or hut bent at 45 degrees against the wind, where the blast of spindrift is a common accompaniment, where the ascent often takes place in a shadowy gloom, where the sun may not be seen for days (weeks in a bad year), and where summer is often a wetter version of winter, these hours on Geddes made a deep impression on us.

More surprising to us was how seldom these peaks were ascended. According to the register, the last ascent of Geddes had been made five years previously. In the Alps, such a mountain would have been first climbed in the latter part of the 19th century and would now receive several, if not several hundred, ascents daily through the summer season. Obviously access and expense is part of the reason for the lack of climbers, but it still surprised us that more did not come to such fine mountains.

We did a little more exploratory wandering. On our final day, we visited, en masse, the Hermit Peak, ascended by the ubiquitous Beckey. We had some fun on the final pinnacle and then awaited our flight in the evening.

Steve Kennedy climbing *Caledonia* on the north face of Mount Geddes.
Photo: Des Rubens

Our routes are of course modest by modern standards (or even old standards, you may say). However, for us, it was an unforgettable experience to have had 10 days of high altitude wandering in such unspoiled and untrodden country. In more frequented parts, such as Squamish, we appreciated the friendliness of the Canadians. Perhaps you'll see a few more of us Scots as word spreads.

Summary

Caledonia (D+ 60° ice, 550m), north face, Mt. Geddes. FA: S. Kennedy, D. Rubens, N. McGougan, D. Ritchie, July 30, 2007. A fine mixed route that ascends the slanting open couloir and snow arêtes located right of *The Hourglass Face* finishing directly at the main summit. Start by making an exposed rightwards traverse well beyond the right-hand start of *The Hourglass Face* to reach rock belays. Traverse right and gain the obvious right-to-left slanting open couloir. Climb this for three full pitches until you can move left onto a prominent snow arête. Follow the snow arête to a rock buttress, which is avoided on the left. Mixed ground leads to another snow arête, which is climbed to reach another gully on the right. Climb the gully and open slopes to the left of the upper rock buttress. A hidden chimney leads up right to finish by easier snow slopes leading directly to the main summit.

South ridge (5.6, 350m) of Mt. Haworth, FA: R. Hamilton, W. Hood, July 30, 2007. Start from the col under the northeast ridge of Mount Geddes. The initial section has a number of slabby rock pitches before the easier upper section. The *South Face* route was joined a short distance from the summit.

Whisky Galore (5.8, 340m), southwest face, Mt. Haworth, FA: R. Hamilton, S. Kennedy, July 31, 2007. The rocky southwest face has a number of grooves and corners of good rock quality. The most prominent line is a large right-facing corner that faces the glacier overlooked by the north face of Mount Geddes. Start below a wide snow bay directly beneath the corner. The bay was entered from the left and followed to the top to a belay below a rock wall (80m). A long traverse left on slabs led to a belay (40m). A further pitch then led back rightwards via slabs and corners to the base of the corner (55m). The corner gave a fine pitch leading to a knife-edge arête (50m). From the arête, a steep exposed wall was climbed (crux) to reach slabs which were followed back left then directly up to easier ground (55m). The upper ridge was followed to the summit. Descent was made by rappelling the ascent route.

East ridge (F, 120m) of East Pinnacle, Polydactyl Ridge, FA: W. Hood, N. McGougan, D. Ritchie, D. Rubens, July 31, 2007. Scramble the easternmost (GR 371029) and higher (ca.2800m) of the two rocky summits on the serrated east-west ridge. The adjacent West Pinnacle was climbed in 1964 by D. Culbert and G. Woodsworth.

Southwest ridge (F, 150m) of Mam Beag (2680m), FRA: R. Hamilton, W. Hood, S. Kennedy, N. McGougan, D. Ritchie, D. Rubens, August 1, 2007. The southeast ridge of Mount Roovers culminates in a rounded snow dome (Mam Beag) at the eastern-most end of the ridge overlooking the Oval and Parallel Glaciers. A nice snow arête leads easily from the col between Roovers Glacier and Parallel Glacier (Propyleum Pass) to the summit (GR 396031).

Southeast ridge (AD 5.6, 250m) of Sgurr Hamilton (2720m), FA: R. Hamilton, S. Kennedy, D. Rubens, August 1, 2007. The jagged southeast ridge of Mount Roovers contains a number of rock pinnacles and towers, including the bulky Roovers Needle. Sgurr Hamilton is the first prominent pointed tower (GR 394034) approaching from Mam Beag near the easternmost end of the ridge and to the east of Roovers Needle. Descend steeply to the northwest from Mam Beag following grooves, then follow the ridge keeping to the crest as much as possible. After about 150 metres a large tower is passed by crossing a steep wall on the right. The pointed tower (the "Sgurr") was reached via a final short slab to a fine airy perch. Rappel from summit block then retrace the ridge.

West Buttress (AD, 300m), Umbra Ridge, Peak 2477 (GR 418018),

FRA: W. Hood, N. McGougan, D. Ritchie, August 1, 2007. This route was gained by climbing snow slopes above Parallel Glacier to an obvious col between Point 2477 and a subsidiary peak to the west. From the col climb the cleanest slabs keeping to the crest of the buttress. Seven pitches of varying dif culty were climbed to the summit up to 5.6 in dif culty. Descend by downclimbing and rappelling the route.

Central Buttress (TD- 65° ice, 400m), north face. Mt. Geddes, FA: R. Hamilton, S. Kennedy, D. Rubens, August 4, 2007. This is the rocky central buttress between *Bottleneck Couloir* and *The Hourglass Face*. Climb steep snow slopes via short ice steps to the top of the snow bay below a rock wall. Move up right to reach the start of the prominent snow ledge. Exposed ledges are followed to the right in a great position to a belay on the buttress edge. The upper buttress provided interesting climbing via steep chimneys and grooves before reaching easier ground finishing just west of the central summit.

Bottleneck Couloir (TD- 70° ice, 375m), Mt. Geddes, 2nd Ascent: N. McGougan, D. Ritchie, August 4, 2007. A leftwards slanting chimney was attempted from a point about half way up the couloir but not completed due to poor ice conditions. The party rappelled then finished up *Bottleneck Couloir* instead.

The Pantheons

Don Serl

On July ⊠, four of us flew into a region of mostly unclimbed 2,500 to 2,700-metre peaks in the far northwestern corner of the Pantheon Range, about eight kilometres south-southwest of Klinaklini Lake. Peter Renz and Mickey Schurr basecamped on a 2,200-metre knob, and climbed various easily accessible summits in the area. Meanwhile, Marcus Raschke and I were dropped off on the next ridge west, from where we planned to climb and traverse back to basecamp in three to five days. Our primary objective was the summit NTS mapped at 2,631 metres (now TRIM at 2,650 metres), five kilometres south of the Jobin Creek–Klinaklini River junction. This summit is called Demeter on Bivouac.com. After a frosty but very comfortable open-bivy night, we climbed Demeter via its north ridge, bypassing dif culties on the right. The summit sported a huge cairn, but who the earlier party was (or parties were) remains a mystery.

We spent a very buggy night in the col to the south, then followed the divide onward. Unfortunately, the initial part of the putative descent from the second summit (TRIM 2,278 metres) was a tottering mass of outsloping slabs and blocks, and we were forced to abandon the crest. We returned to the previous saddle and traversed east and southward across a series of snowfields, low-prominence ridges and side valleys back to the open, slabby main divide three kilometres southeast.

On our fourth day, we tramped easily up to the 2,200-metre pass next along the divide, then dropped to the 1,600-metre main pass at the head of the valley. Then it was just a simple matter of slowly angling and traversing upwards for four kilometres or so to reach basecamp. Then the rains came.

On July 30, Marcus and I set off to try Dionysus (NTS mapped at 2,620 metres, but TRIM at only 2,575 metres)—again, a Bivouac.com name—two kilometres north of camp. We followed the line of Mickey and Peter's earlier aborted attempt, northeast through a little pass, down-glacier a kilometre or so, then up easy rocky terrain onto the objective's northeast ridge. About 100 metres below the top we were confronted by the obstacle that had defeated the earlier sortie—a 15-metre vertical wall barricading the entire crest. We had come forewarned, however, and with rock shoes, a bit of gear and a hard tug on a well-set nut in a finger crack, we overcame the dif cult section (5.8 A0) and scrambled the rest of the way to the broad top. Here, in contrast to Demeter, there was no cairn, nor other sign of previous occupation. In fact, except for Demeter, none of the other summits that any of us reached showed any signs of prior ascents.

The area is quite attractive, although much of the rock is shattered granite. The 2,504-metre double-topped horn west of the valley-head pass looked to consist of very competent granite with obvious climbing possibilities. Bivouac.com peak Skoll (NTS 2,560 metres, TRIM 2,596 metres), five kilometres southwest of the pass, looks quite hard. Hati (NTS 2,568 metres, TRIM 2,586 metres), six kilometres south-southeast of the pass is sprawling and fairly heavily glaciated. I suspect there'll be adventure to be had in sections of the Coast Mountains such as this, even decades from now.

Summary

Northwest ridge (3rd class, 600m) of Demeter (NTS 2631m, TRIM 2650m, GR 284349). FRA: Markus Raschke, Don Serl, July 25, 2007.

Northeast ridge (3rd class with 15m 5.8 A0, 600m) of Dionysus (2575m, GR 341343). FA: Markus Raschke, Don Serl, July 30, 2007.

Southwest ridge (3rd class, 300m) of Friga (NTS 2517m, TRIM 2543, GR 352323). FA: Peter Renz, Mickey Schurr, July 24, 2007.

Northwest ridge (3rd class, 200m) of Mahisha (2360m, GR 325312). FA: Peter Renz, Mickey Schurr, July 27, 2007.

West ridge (3rd class, 200m) of Durga (2494m, GR 353306). FA: Peter Renz, Mickey Schurr, July 27, 2007.

Southwest face (3rd class, 300m) of Friga East (2477m, GR 354329). FA: Peter Renz, Mickey Schurr, July 29, 2007.

Western Dihedrals Exploited

Andre Ike

It's amazing it took so many years for the Western Dihedrals to be rediscovered. I realized this had begun when I got back from Europe in the late summer of 2003. *Brothers in Arms*—one of the steepest and cleanest routes—had been established on the Chief just left of *Freeway* by Colin Moorhead. He had confided to me years earlier that he put a belay in near the start of his futuristic climb and that he was saving it for when he was ready. I was impressed to see he finished it. A very intimidating and improbable looking line, it follows thin leaning triple-cracks up a broad overhanging buttress on what he likes to call "glacier licked granite." It clocks in at stout 5.12c. Also in the Dihedrals back in 2002, Colin and Kai Hirvonen had established a nine-pitch A3+ aid climb over two days called *Stellar System*, which features lots of thin nailing. Just right of that, Andrew Boyd and Derek Flett are seven pitches up a three-year project and breaking new ground in the 5.13 range.

In July 2005, Jon Simms and I decided to step up to the plate and give *Brothers in Arms* a go. As expected, we found the climbing sustained and difficult and it required the placement of RPs and small TCUs while hanging onto dime-edge laybacks. After a couple of good falls and some hanging we were satisfied to rap off after its fifth pitch—the crux.

On rappel I decided to pendulum over to my left as we spotted another vague but intriguing looking crack system. Little did I know this move was going to lead me into a project that would span three years. I grabbed a hold of the wall, plugged in a cam and clipped in before I was committed to the free hanging rappel. I was amazed to see the abundance of positive edges and weird holds that peppered the thin leaning crack system. I screamed to Jon, "There are holds!"

Funny enough, Colin was in the Grand Wall parking lot watching us through binoculars since he knew we were on his route that day. "No, you bastards! Don't go over there!" he cursed as he coveted the other possibilities that remained in the Dihedrals. Jon and I wasted no time and were racking our aid gear and drill the next morning.

Like *Brothers in Arms*, we followed the first two pitches of *Freeway*, but after Daylight Crack, we climbed straight up to a sloping ledge where the steep climbing began. This was later to be known as Sky Crag Ledge. My lead was the first and unfortunately the crack system oozed a nasty bubbling slime clearly marking the start of the route with a prominent black streak. I fired in a few bolts right away knowing this was going to be a tricky and bouldery start, then continued up into a narrow leaning dihedral. I squinted while peering up into the crack hoping I was going to find good finger locks and TCU placements, but instead found it slammed shut and had to settle for some knifeblades and RPs. Unfortunately, there appeared to be no footholds either. I began to question if free climbing it was within my grasp. The pro seemed adequate enough that no further bolts were placed. The lead was A2 and after 25 metres it conveniently ended at a small no-hands stance in the middle of space.

Grinning ear-to-ear, Jon began aiding up his even steeper and more incredible looking pitch with its golden coloured granite and a cool dike-system running through it. He too fired in the odd bolt as we knew this was definitely going to be a cool mixed route [mix of bolts and traditional gear—Ed.]. As he got higher, I had the feeling he was going to say it blanked out but instead it was, "Nice edge," and "Sweet lock," or "Oh yeah baby, this is going to go for sure!" It ended in a bushy corner and we rapped off knowing we had a very serious project underway.

Weeks went by and I was slated to go back to Europe to work by mid-August, but—after several attempts and lots of whippers—we still had not sent our route. We unlocked all the sequences but linking them was turning out to be a test of our endurance. The pressure was building and finally on August 15, 2005, Jon's birthday, we again took turns falling off the first pitch. After several attempts each, he finally sent. The same thing happened on the next pitch and on the crux move—The Thumb Ratchet—we both took a couple of 10-metre flights. However it was to be Jon's send day and again, he finally freed it. I reluctantly agreed, but couldn't help laugh, when he named our five-pitch route *Men Holding Hands*.

While our free attempts were going down we had moved our fixed lines off to the left to yet another great looking, clean crack system. This was the approximate line of Darrel Hatton and Cam Cairns' 1976 aid route *Getting Down on the Brown*. Up to this point very little cleaning had been required as the corners were steep and chiseled, but like almost all Squamish first ascents, you will inevitably have to launch the odd flake or cut a tree—such was the case in the early hours one morning that summer in 2005. It quickly became apparent that cleaning in the dihedrals in summer was obviously not cool. Clearly there are more boulderers swarming the forest now then there were when *Freeway* was put up. Safely cleaning a route on the Chief meant doing it top down in winter when the forest below was empty.

We did manage to get that one 35-metre stellar pitch done the day before my departure though. We rho-sham-bo'd. Jon won and went on to do an impressive flash at stiff 5.12a. We dubbed it The Getting Down Corner: a sustained 5.11 finger and thin-hand crack that eats gear but eventually slams shut and requires powerful stemming.

That winter I hiked several static ropes up the Chief and fixed them on the upper part of the route to begin cleaning. I removed the lower ropes, as I feared rock fall would decimate them,

so every time I had to hike up the Chief, rap, clean and then jug back out. From my house I could make it to my gear stash at the top of the route in under an hour. I lost count after doing this 20-plus times, several of which were in fairly epic winter conditions. As spring of 2006 rolled around, I fixed the ropes top to bottom and all that was left was some buf ng which meant scrubbing the odd hold or cleaning dirt out of a few sections of finger crack.

Finally, the falcon closure was lifted in July and the Dihedrals were open to climbers again. Jon was visiting from Golden so we started up our new nine-pitch route. It felt great to climb on what once seemed like an endless scrub fest. We placed our bolts on lead—some while hooking but mostly while just clinging to the rock from stances. Although bolting on lead seemed a bit contrived especially since the cleaning was done on rappel, we felt better about it than rap bolting; plus it was way more fun. In early August, on our first free attempt, the route was sent at 5.12c and named *Stone Free*.

With a lurking feeling in the bottom of my stomach, I knew my work in the Dihedrals was still not over and in October 2006, I moved my 200 metres of fixed ropes to the top of *Freeway*, linking them into the top of *Men Holding Hands*. With Damien Kelley and Jimmy Martinello, I rappelled in to climb two more new 5.10 pitches, which joined *Freeway* above the Truck Stop Roof. Now, all that was missing was a short pitch of hard face climbing that would eventually link the lower and upper parts of the route. Later that fall I up-jugged from the bottom and worked out the moves on the Link Pitch with a soloist. After placing three bolts, I rapped and pulled all my fixed ropes off the wall once and for all.

I sessioned the Sky Crag many times during the summer of 2007, getting more and more friends excited about it while chasing my old dream, but held off climbing to the top as best I could until Jon could make it out to the Coast. After a while I could wait no longer so Colin and I did the first continuous ascent to the top, albeit with a few falls.

Finally, in late September, Jon was briefly in town and at two in the afternoon—on the only day we would have to climb together that summer—we ran up the trail reminiscing of our adventures three years before. We raced up pitch after pitch and ended up leading the last by headlamp and in the rain for the first free ascent.

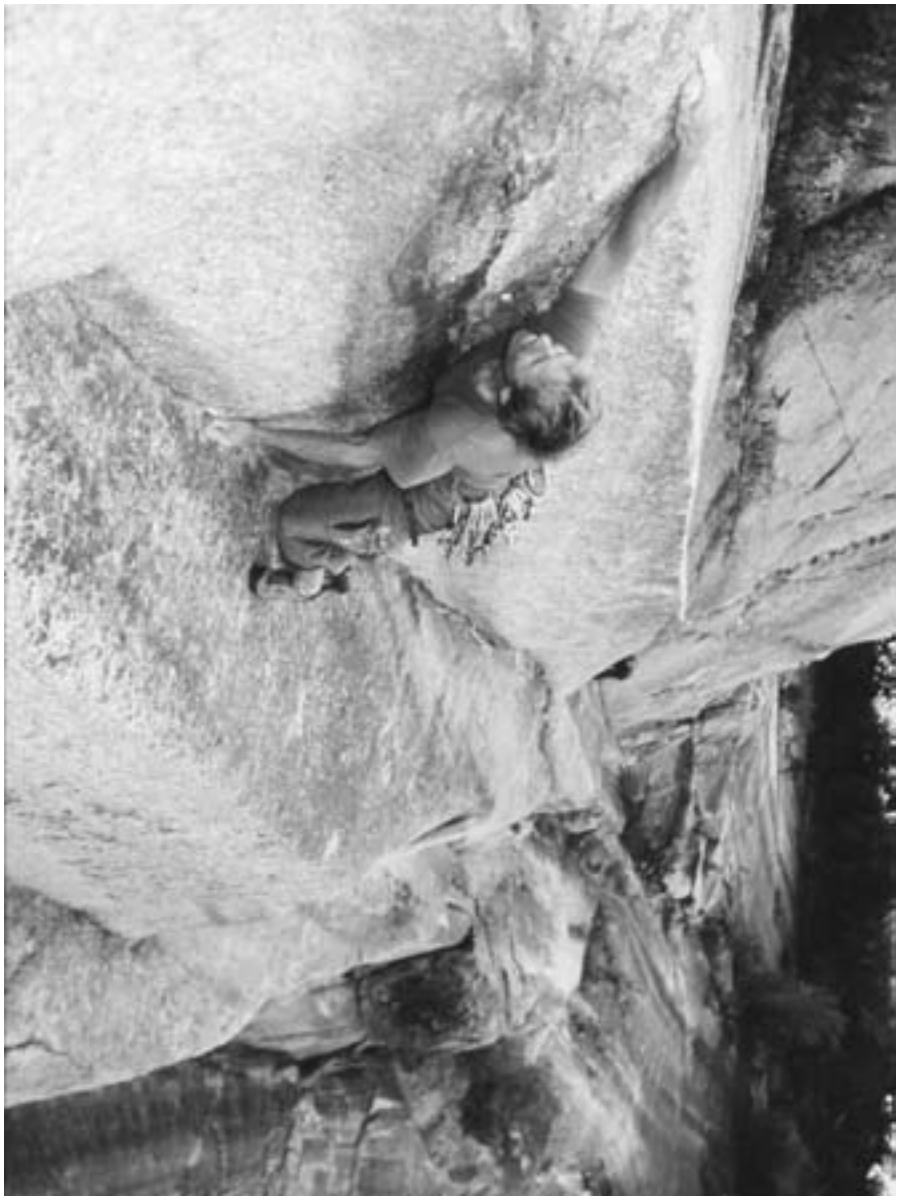
In retrospect, I am glad to be a contributor to Squamish climbing and even though our routes have had very few ascents, time will tell if they become classics that get regular traf c or just grow over with moss. Either way, the adventure was great and it seems the Chief will host many more for generations to come.

Summary

Stone Free (5.12c, 9 pitches), Western Dihedrals, the Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FFA: Andre Ike, Jon Simms, August 2006. The climb follows the general line of the old aid route *Getting Down on the Brown* (5.9 A2, Cairns-Hatten, 1978).

Men Holding Hands (5.12c, 6 pitches), Western Dihedrals, the Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FFA: Andre Ike, Jon Simms, September 2007. A six-pitch variation to *Freeway* that follows exposed ramps and crack-lines up the golden overhanging wall left of *Brothers in Arms*.

Andre Ike on the fifth pitch of *Stone Free* during the first free ascent with Jon Simms.
Photo: Jon Walsh



Revisiting the Stikine Icecap

David Williams

In may ⊠⊠⊠⊠, friends and I made the first complete traverse of the Stikine Icecap from the Stikine to the Samotua and Whiting River drainages (*CAJ*, vol. 77 (1994), pp. 79–82). Trips to the icecap—including ours, trips prior to ours (*CAJ*, vol. 69 (1986), pp. 58) and subsequent trips (*CAJ*, vol. 85 (2002), pp. 4–12 and *CAJ*, vol. 87 (2004), pp. 80–82), whether to climb peaks or to complete a traverse—have concentrated along the central spine and eastern edge of the icecap. This is where the higher peaks are located: Kates Needle, Mount Burkett, Mount Ratz and the infamous Devils Thumb. This leaves an immense region of lower yet exceptionally rugged peaks and intricate icefalls to the west that overlook the inlets of Thomas Bay, Endicott Arm and Tracey Arm. To the best of my knowledge the western edge has received little, if any, mountaineering exploration. With this in mind, Peter Celliers of Berkeley, California, and Glen Hearns of Squamish joined me (Vancouver) to fly by floatplane to the beach at the head of Thomas Bay, below the snout of the Baird Glacier on May 5, 2007.

Over the course of 17 days, we travelled north up the North Baird Glacier onto the most southern branch of the Dawes Glacier. Upon arriving at the main trunk of the Dawes Glacier, we travelled east for five kilometres before climbing directly north again for seven kilometres where we had to deal with the headwall below the high point of the icecap. We began a steep traverse to the west to gain the divide five kilometres to the east of peak 2,450 (8,095 feet)—the highest peak to the west of the divide between the South Sawyer and Dawes Glacier, 11 kilometres southwest of Sheppard Peak. Up to this point in the trip—day seven—we had had to deal with some relatively poor weather, which had frustrated our peak climbing hopes. Once up on the high point of the icecap at 1,970 metres (6,500 feet) we were effectively stormed in for three days. However, day four at the high point of the traverse dawned clear, and we headed out for a day of peak bagging just over the border in Canada. We had a great day but were thwarted twice in our attempts to climb peaks 2,232 and 2,343 (14 and 15 kilometres south of Sheppard Peak, respectively) by dangerous snow conditions. We did, however, manage one ski ascent late in the day in Alaska up the rather innocuous peak 2,125 (7,010 feet), three kilometres to the east of peak 2,450. From here we enjoyed great views of the terrain we had travelled 14 years previous. The following morning, day 11, we woke to harsh winds and decided the time had come to hightail it down to a lower elevation and give up trying to climb the impressive summit of peak 2,450 for the time being. The snow conditions were very wintry in spring 2007. At that point, we also decided that we could not safely manage our planned traverse down the South Sawyer Glacier to pick up the ridge system that runs east-to-west, south of Tracey Arm, which would have included an ascent of the

The north (left) and west faces of the unclimbed peak 2,450, Stikine Icecap, Alaska. Photo: David Williams

dominant Mount Sumdum, descending to Holkham Bay and Endicott Arm. I was disappointed with this, but was relieved that we had come to this conclusion and thankful that we were carrying a satellite phone as we would need to arrange to be picked up in Endicott Arm near the snout of the North Dawes Glacier—at least that is what we thought at that time.

With these decisions made, we quickly descended west for 6.5 kilometres under the impressive north face of peak 2,450 to the 1,600-metre (5,300-foot) level on the most southerly branch of the upper South Sawyer Glacier. We were hoping for a change in the weather to allow us to make camp for a few days to climb some of the peaks to the north of the lower Dawes Glacier. As we descended, the views of the peaks to the north and east of Endicott Arm were very impressive. We attempted to ascend peak 2,180 (7,200 feet), five kilometres northwest of peak 2,450, before the sun softened the east-facing snow, but were turned back again by the dangerous snow conditions and rime-covered rocks. A short rappel brought us back to our skis below, followed by a fun descent to our packs. During the late afternoon, we toured to the top of a prominent knoll at 1,820 metres (5.5 kilometres west-southwest of peak 2,450) sitting directly above majestic icefalls that descend 1,000 metres directly to the Dawes Glacier. In the morning Peter was not a well man, coughing and hacking painfully. He decided to rest for the day. As it turned out this was a good choice. With bold climbs planned, Glen and I endeavoured to tour around in the intermittent weather through some spectacular big-wall country. Blistering winds eventually forced us to return and seek shelter in the tent. We awoke to clearing skies on day 13 and were soon out on our skis heading to peak 2,130 (7,031 feet), eight kilometres west-southwest of peak 2,450. The ascent involved a wonderful ski up the north ridge, then through foot-deep powder up the west facing glacial slopes to arrive at the summit. Sitting directly above the lower Dawes Glacier, the shifting views were spectacular; however, due to the lay of the land, we were unable to see the toe of the Dawes Glacier and the saltwater of Endicott Arm. After a terrific descent we were soon heading up peak 2,125 (7,016 feet), three kilometres to the north. We then returned to camp and moved three kilometres north down the South Sawyer Glacier to park ourselves for the night directly below the beautiful pyramidal peak 2,365 (7,810 feet), seven kilometres northwest of peak 2,450. The evening turned cold and clear, giving us perfect conditions to ascend this peak first thing the next morning. After a glorious ski up the lower slopes we soon roped up to climb over a very unstable snow bridge straddling the summit bergshrund. With this behind us, a slow plod with ice axes in hand saw us ascend to the summit on a crystal clear day. We stayed on this summit for quite some time, picking out peaks from past trips and enjoying the views west out to the ocean over the top of rugged coastal terrain. After another fun ski down, we broke camp and, as with the day before, skied a few short miles down the South Sawyer Glacier to the junction with the North Dawes Glacier and made camp. Another day of peak bagging followed. We travelled south for 6.5 kilometres to the summit of the surveyed Stung Peak (2,000 metres; 6,605 feet). After lunch we skied north along an obvious ridge before dropping down to the upper North Dawes Glacier, a short distance above the headwall—the expected crux icefall of the route out. We went up the 1,635-metre (5,400-foot) bump to the north of the headwall to see if we could get a good view of the icefall. Although steep, either side of the icefall looked like it should go. From the bump we could see the entire length of the North Dawes Glacier all the way to Endicott Arm, and disturbingly, a three-kilometre-long lake that had formed at the snout of the glacier. Our 2001 updated US Forest Service map indicated a few small lakes on the ice, but nothing like this. Hemmed in on both sides by sheer cliffs, I doubted we would be able to find a route around this to the ocean.

Fortunately we woke to clear skies the next morning on day 16. We had hoped for a good freeze overnight to help in a safe passage down and around the icefall, but unfortunately the snow surface had frozen only very lightly. Initially we attempted to get down the headwall on the south side. This became treacherously steep so we boot-packed back up and went over the north side. This worked but the slopes down had become dangerously sloppy in the early morning sun and the three of us were greatly relieved when we arrived safely on the glacial flats below. It was then easy travelling while surrounded by spectacular scenery, until we arrived at the blue ice and the melted-out jumble of old slots. Hoisting the skis, we cramponed our way down through the type of terrain that always makes for such great photographic opportunities. We arrived at the glacial lake by late afternoon. On a previous trip in 2003 (*CAJ*, vol. 87 (2004), pp. 83–85) a similar scenario had unfolded, but on that trip we managed to negotiate a route around the unexpected lake. There appeared to be no realistic route around the impasse this time. Despondently we placed a few calls on the satellite phone that evening. We were in a wilderness reserve, so any pick-up there would have to be registered as an emergency. With this information our imaginations went into overdrive as to the possible resulting scenarios. Fortunately, the "emergency pick-up" only involved a little paperwork and nothing more. The evening was spent admiring the wondrous moraines and absorbing such a wonderfully wild place while contemplating the trip.

No float plane would fly into the silty lake of unknown depth, so the following morning Temsco choppered us across an immense wilderness to our intended pick-up spot, a delightful bay off Endicott Arm. From the window of the helicopter the east side of the lake looked impassable. The west side looked doubtful, but might just go if you could connect all the dots without the advantage of the birds-eye view. Regardless, it would take several days at best.

We arrived in Juneau and started to deal with the very solvable complications of getting the gear we left in Petersburg shipped up to Juneau. We then made our way south.

Graveyard Shift

Drew Brayshaw

In retrospect it had been one of those years where partway through you stop talking about how maybe the weather will improve and start talking about how you hope next year is a dry one. For climbers, this is never a good thing and as a result, it was December and I hadn't climbed anything noteworthy in ages. Sometime early in that month we had the rare combination of a dump of snow followed by a clear warm spell followed by a hard freeze with no more snow. Deep in my psyche, my inner climber (a snaⅹ ehound-like archetype) emerged from hibernation, preened its whiskers and sniffed the air. Maybe something was up.

Sunny? Cold? I made like Beckey and the proverbial payphone remixed for the 21st century—e-mails and text messages went off like fireworks.

SUP BRO U WANNA CLIMB ALPINE THIS W/E?

MAYBE WHAT U THNKNG OF?

SLESSE N COULOIR?

I drove out to the Chilliwack Valley and pulled out my binoculars. Slesse looked pretty damn white.

I THNK IT GOT LOTS OF SNO. U WANNA GO?

ILL ASK DON (pause) DON SAID IT WAS A 3 DAY ROUTE ON FA U WANNA BIVI?

FUK THAT WHAT ABOUT A NEW RT?

OK WHERE?

U WANNA GO 2 BRICE? PROB 4 HR APPROACH, B LK HARVEY NFR, WALK OFF, 14HRS C2C I BET

OK THAT SNDS BETTER ILL ASK GRAHAM 2 OK?

YA SURE. U BRING ROPES?

OK U BRING SUM RACK THN C U FRIDAY

And so it was that Graham and Jesse showed up at my door at the ungodly hour of 3:30 a.m. After shaking me awake and pouring coffee down my throat, we left half an hour later, stopped in Hope to gag down some cheap semblance of breakfast, and were parked at the Skagit trailhead at half-past five. Shouldering packs, we wandered down the Skagit River trail to Delacey Camp, past something large and frightening making a drumming sound in the forest, and then started bushwhacking up Twentysix Mile Creek at around the time the sun rose. It took us six hours to cover the next three kilometres. The valley of Twentysix Mile Creek is replete with cliff bands, thickets of rhododendron, devils' club and slide alder, rickety log crossings over fast-flowing water, deep chasms and other impediments to speedy travel. At times, we followed fresh grizzly tracks—the bear seemed to know which way it was going and avoided the worst areas of prickly vegetation.

Somewhere past noon we finally got to the base of our objective: a narrow gully rising in a pure line straight to the summit of Brice in a 1,000-metre sweep. From my distant views of the face I was expecting a long snow-gully type of climb, so we were a little bit nonplussed to find that the bottom of the climb consisted of near-vertical rock steps with a series of steep pitches of blue ice dribbling down them. I was weighing up my meagre ice rack (not planning on finding much ice, I had brought a grand total of four screws—two old aluminium ones and two slightly newer Russian titanium jobs) and giving Jesse the eye. He looked like he'd just found a bug in his soup and I could tell he was thinking of how much the seven-hour bushwhack back down the creek would suck with the added weight of failure loading down our packs. Then Graham spoke up: "Well, we don't have much time, so I guess we'd better solo it."

Jesse gave me the eye back. We both know that Graham is badass and we're journeymen by comparison, but neither of us were psyched on the Bushwhack of Shame either. A quick nod passed between us. "OK, Graham. I was just thinking the same thing...."

After soloing a couple of WI2 and WI3 steps we came to a little amphitheatre with a steeper pitch and a vague bush line up one wall. Jesse and Graham roped up and I made a beeline for the bush ramp.

"Aren't you going to climb this ice?"

"No, I think this bush'll go, and it'll be faster than waiting for my turn. See you up there."

Graham set out up the ice and discovered that my old aluminium screws have no helpful, modern features like taper, grinder knobs or sharp teeth. Meanwhile I was standing on steep, moss-covered rock coated with a foot of powder snow—my head gripped in a tree's armpit in a choke hold while another of its branches was giving me a facewash—and blindly waving my tool around higher up in search of something that would hold a pull.

"Hey Graham, how's that ice, it looks steep?"

"Not bad, a little insecure. How's the bush line?"

"Oh, well, you know... you just have to have the right technique, eh?"

We regrouped above the crux and continued up the gully over a number of additional WI2 steps to a fork. There was a pretty sunset and we found ourselves climbing by headlamp up the left fork of the gully having made an obscure but easy mixed traverse from not far up the right fork to bypass some steep rock at the junction. The snow got deeper and steeper as we progressed upwards. We took turns putting the postholes in and kicking off some shallow slab avalanches that fortunately did not propagate. Eventually Graham found a short snow overhang and we realized we'd hit the summit cornice. We pulled onto the summit ridge and into a cold breeze. It was nice to lie there and not have to put effort into slogging higher.

"So how do we get off?"

"Well, I took a look at the map before we left. I didn't bring it with me, but I think I have it memorized. The summit ridge is kind of a Y-shape. We can go down either one of the forks of

the Y—the northwest or southwest ridges. The northwest ridge is pretty steep at the bottom, though, so we'd better take the southwest. Follow the ridge crest down to the Skagit trail, then walk back to the car. Should take four or five hours—we'll be back before midnight."

We kicked more holes into the snow along the ridge for a while. Way, way in the distance, the lights of Chilliwack made a feeble glow behind the bulk of Silvertip, which let us vaguely orient ourselves. At some point I let my rational mind stop and veered off the ridge: "Feels like it's about time to drop down this way."

The descent went through little bands of forest and a couple cliff bands. A few bits were steep enough to face in and downclimb. We cut wide around one cliff, doubled back past another and soon found ourselves on a broad, flat area.

"See, this must be the skirt between the legs of the Y. Now, if we go this way, we should hit the lower ridge."

We wandered through more trees and soon came upon a sizeable cliff in front of us that dropped away out of headlamp range. Too far right, maybe? We followed the cliff left and found a treed slope to descend. Not far below, we found another cliff.

"Hey, I'm hanging on by my arms down here. I don't think this is the way!"

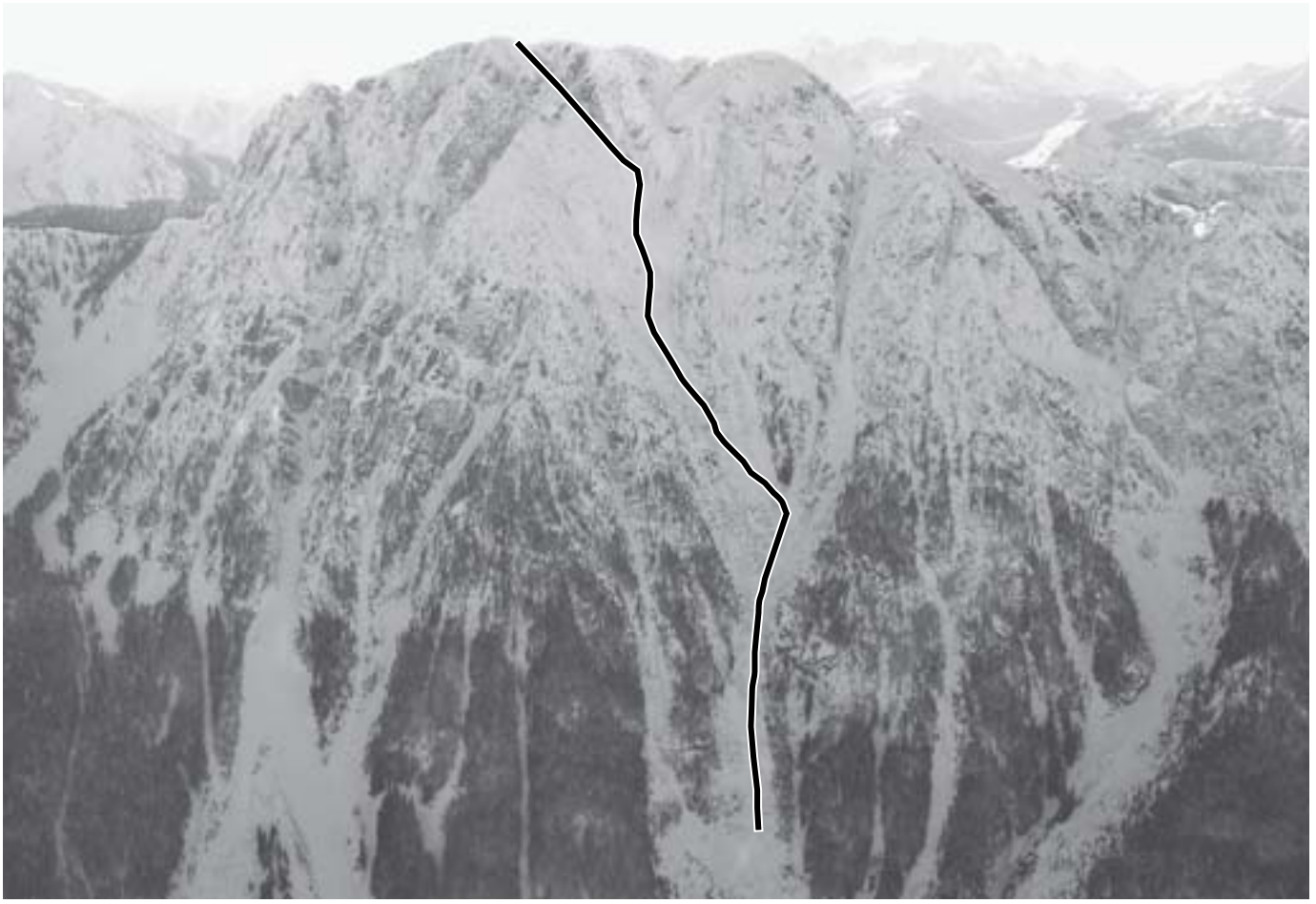
"So where should we go?"

"Back up and right!"

No one likes regaining elevation, especially in the dark in soft snow after 14 hours on the go. We grumbled our way back up 100 metres or so, then found a ramp we'd missed before. That dropped us into a gully under the cliffs and took us down into the forest. Now we found goat tracks that looked like they knew where they were going, and followed them for a few hours. By this time, lacking the extensive aerobic training regimens that characterize real alpine hardmen, we were all puf ng somewhat and taking frequent short rest breaks. All the water was gone and so was most of our food. I could taste that serious ketosis aftertaste in the back of my throat as my hungry body attacked fat and muscle for energy. Since I don't have much muscle to spare, I supposed I should feel some sort of accomplishment for having reached the fat-burning plateau those spandex-wearing models on late night TV are always hyping as the promised land.

After the goat tracks petered out we began to lose snow. Eventually we managed, in our intellectually diminished state, to figure out that the climbing might be over and that we might not have to rappel, so there was no good reason to continue wearing harnesses and crampons. Of course, right after we removed those items we hit the final set

Graveyard Shift on the north face of Mount Brice in the North Cascades. Photo: Drew Brayshaw



Graham Rowbotham on the crux pitch of *Graveyard Shift* on Mount Brice. Photo: Jesse Mason

of cliff bands and had to do some silly and not-fully-in-control dirt sliding and moss mantelling to get down intact. The sounds of the river grew louder and louder until we discovered we were standing on the snow-covered trail. It was about half an hour after midnight.

"Here we go boys, the trail. It's all over now. We'll be back at the truck in an hour or so."

"At this point all I can think about is cheeseburgers and beer."

Of course we had neglected our diminished capabilities once again and it took us four hours to walk the seven kilometres back to the highway. By the end of it we had regressed to walking for 10 or 15 minutes and then napping for five, by which point the cold would shiver us awake and lead to a repeat of the walk-nap cycle. On our way out we passed whatever it was in the forest, still menacingly drumming away, as it had been the previous day on our walk in. We briefly looked at each other—we all had different ideas about what it was.

"Going to walk in there and see if you can find it?"

"Dude. Do you really want me to? What would you do if I didn't come back? We're all too tired to run."

We elected to keep walking to the car. The sound gradually faded away behind us. By the time we reached the car it was a quarter-to-five. As we downed packs, the first flakes of snow began to fall. The weather window had shut. We snored in the car until the heater warmed up, then drove to Hope slavering with thoughts of a massive, greasy truck-stop breakfast. Again, reality disappointed. Every truck stop and diner in Hope was shut tight. We parked between two idling rigs at the Husky station and snored for an hour until the lights came on in the diner, then limped our way to a booth and informed the waitress she needed to bring us "two of everything, NOW!"

Summary

Graveyard Shift (IV WI3, 1000m), north face, Mt. Brice, Hozameen Range, North Cascades, B.C.

FA: Drew Brayshaw, Jesse Mason, Graham Rowbotham, December 2007.

Macabre Tower

Tyler Linn

A soggy weekend forecast on the coast for the Canada Day long weekend enticed us to the east side of the Cascades beyond Keremeos in Cathedral Provincial Park. The south side of the Matriarch-Grimface massif is an attractive destination, offering an easy approach, stellar granite and idyllic camping amongst the gurgling streams and flowers of Wall Creek Meadows. The crest right of the south buttress was unclimbed so we decided to change that on the second day of our trip, calling our new route *Beyond Hope*.

Most of the climbing was mid-5th class with a short section of grainy 5.11a underclinging at its crux. The climb is approximately eight pitches in length and is broken in the middle by a spacious shoulder that would provide a convenient place to access the upper (higher quality) half of the route or retreat into the adjacent gulley.

The route starts at a crack on the right side of the buttress (30 minutes from the meadow camp). After 30 metres it thins out and we were forced to climb easy, unprotected slab to belay below the roof that caps the right side of the buttress (5.9). A short and very dirty stretch of 5.11 climbing traversed underneath the roof to an easier crack on the right edge of the buttress. We belayed here to avoid rope drag. A very short pitch continued up lichen-filled cracks to a spacious belay with a few small bushes. From here, easy climbing took us up to the shoulder where it would be possible to descend back into Wall Creek. The fifth pitch moved left across an unprotected slab to a wide groove that continued for a full rope length (5.7). A short pitch of easy mid-5th class climbing up a groove led to a semi-hanging belay below an easy off-width crack. The off-width gained a traverse back right to where we downclimbed through easy terrain to a sandy belay (5.6). A scramble up the ramp to the ridgetop put us just below the bolt ladder to the summit of Macabre. We attempted a direct finish, but unfortunately the cracks blanked out a mere four metres from the summit and an easier finish out right was required.

Summary

Beyond Hope (5.11a, 8 pitches), Macabre Tower, Cathedral Provincial Park, Cascade Mountains, B.C.
FA: Nick Elson, Tyler Linn, Sarah Panofsky, July 1, 2007.

Beyond Hope located on Macabre Tower, Matriarch-Grimface massif, Cathedral Provincial Park. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

Good Queen Bess

Peter Hudson

The year was XXXX. Free love had been dead for a decade and people were about to find out that cocaine parties, poofy hair and leopard prints weren't cool. Nonetheless two Coast Range mountaineering hard men, Mike Down and Don Serl, were doing the first ascent of Mount Queen Bess's southeast ridge—a stunning line of clean alpine granite. They understandably aided parts of the route given they were climbing in leather mountaineering boots and rated the route 5.8 A2.

Much like Siberia, Mount Queen Bess, located on the north end of the Homathko Icefield, doesn't see many conquerors—the season is short and getting there and back can be a problem. So it is not entirely surprising that four young whippersnappers could postulate doing the free ascent of such a stunning line some 27 years after the initial ascent.

Cam Shute was the ringleader, with none other than Jay Burbee in cahoots. I joined the group to make three, and Brock Wilson made our fourth. Since we were all working stiffs with more money than time away from the office, we elected to fly in with White Saddle Air.

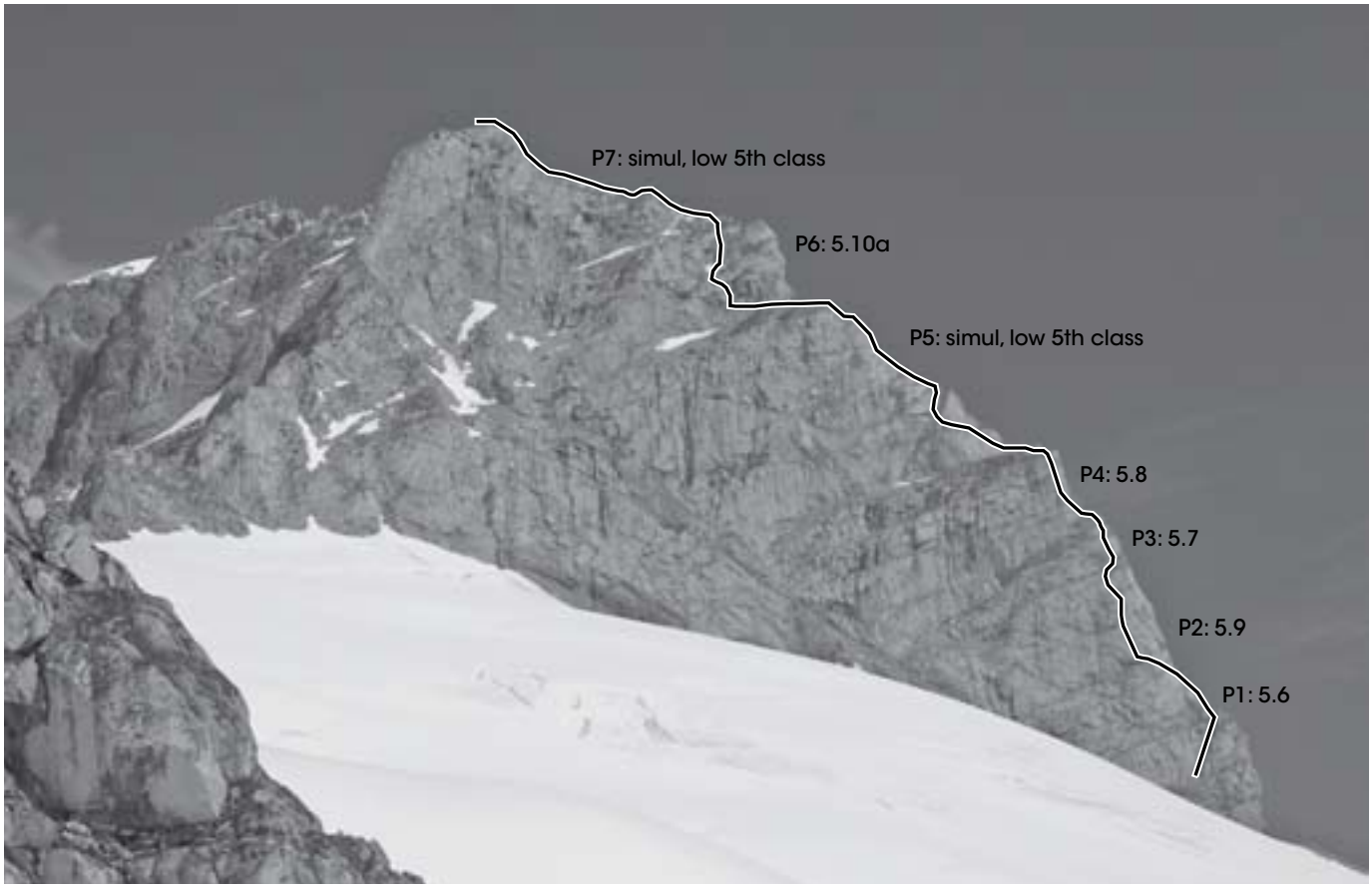
After an all-night 800-kilometre drive from Vancouver to Tatla Lake, we slept three hours. We had hoped to fly in early Saturday morning so as to maximize our climbing weather window, and so dragged our bags to the White Saddle helicopter pad just early enough to see the helicopter get diverted to fight forest fires all day.

Fortunately Cam's friend Steve was working at the Nature Conservancy a few kilometres down the road, so we drove off in the hopes of finding something to do while we waited. Steve wasted no time when three engineers and a physicist showed up at his door. The Conservancy's bridge over the Homathko River had washed out the previous year. The fellowship of Mount Queen Bess was commissioned to build another one. After much naked log wrestling we improvised a passable crossing.

The day had grown long and we'd all but given up hope of being flown in that evening when the radio crackled and the voice from White Saddle said it was time to go. After a short helicopter ride we were dropped off on the glacier southwest of Mount Queen Bess, just as the sun was dropping low in the sky.

We scrambled a bit on the granite close to camp that evening, then got into bed early in anticipation of the climb on

The southeast ridge (*Good Queen Bess*) of Mount Queen Bess. Photo: Cam Shute



the morrow. The next day dawned clear and we quickly crossed the glacier to the base of the southeast ridge. The buttress rose above us in a stunning bastion of granite blocks laced with crack systems. The base of the route was around 2,600 metres so our line was delightfully devoid of lichen. We climbed in two parties; Jay and I went first with Cam and Brock as a separate pair below so that I could get the best vantage for paparazzing Cam as he led the crux pitches.

The rock was stunning. Dif culty varied and the ridge was conveniently broken every 60 metres or so for belay ledges. There were also several fun sections of 4th- and low 5th-class climbing where we were able to simul-climb. The crux of the route was a short slab traverse (5.10-) followed by an overhang on hand jams. We were grateful to have sticky rubber climbing shoes, and a full rack of Camalots and Aliens.

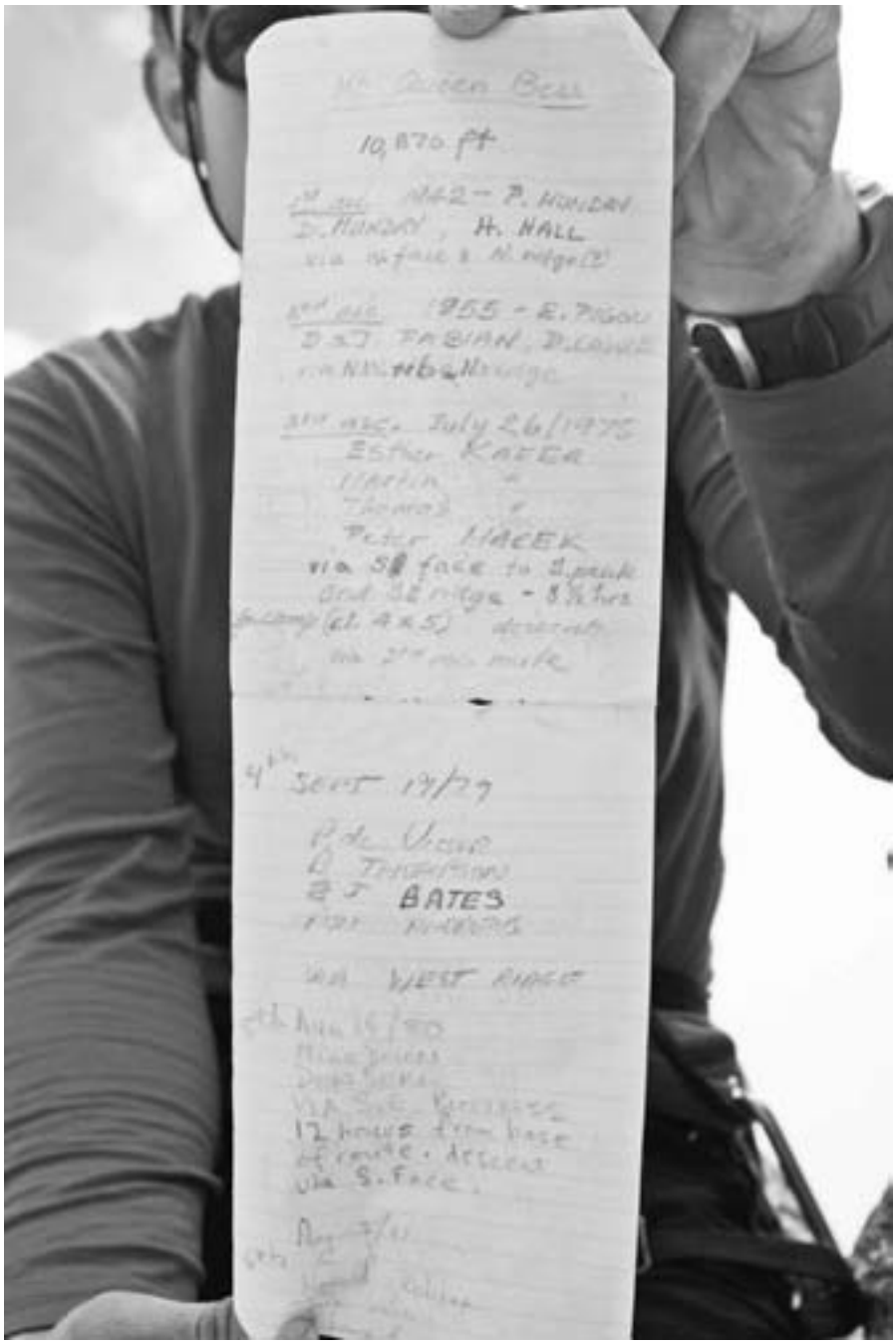
After about seven pitches of technical rock plus simul-climbing, the ridge eased off and we scrambled (roped up) to the summit. Our inspection of the summit register indicated we were only the seventh ascent party, and the first to free the southeast ridge. The first ascent was by the Mundays in 1942.

We didn't dilly-dally long on the summit and after scrambling back to our packs we rappelled down the south face and then downclimbed a long, rotten gully to the glacier below. The weather had held all day, and we had a stunning sunset over Mount Waddington as we trudged, tired but happy, back to camp.

The following morning we slept late and cooked eggs for breakfast before heading out to scramble up Mount Diadem. Jay, Brock and I elected to try the north glacier route, while Cam was smarter and went up the northeast snow slopes. Jay, Brock and I ended up soloing rotten bare glacier ice with a single alpine axe each above a gnarly 'shrund (my crampons fell off twice). All the while Cam had minced up a gentle snow slope and took a nap on the summit. Eventually we rejoined Cam before we all descended the northeast slopes back to camp.

Since the weather looked to be turning, we had hoped to fly out that evening. However forest fires once again foiled us and the helicopter was too busy to pick us up. As Cam put it: "Mountaineers are like the gravy, the meat still tastes good without it."

The weather held overnight and by early Tuesday morning we were picked up amidst the gathering lenticular clouds. From there it was just another 800 kilometres to drive home, which we did in one long push, arriving back in Vancouver around 6 p.m. to a steady rain that became all too familiar that summer.



The summit register from Mount Queen Bess showing the 1942 first ascent. Photo: Peter Hudson

Summary

Good Queen Bess (D+ 5.10a, 600m), southeast ridge of Mt. Queen Bess, Homathko Icefield. FFA: Jay Burbee, Peter Hudson, Cam Shute, Brock Wilson, August 5, 2007.

The Interior

Sir Sandford and Several Selkirk Summits —

Greg Hill

"Five to ⊠⊠ Centimetres of snow on Wednesday, 70 per cent chance of snow on Thursday, 60 per cent on Friday, 40 per cent on Saturday—the weather is not looking great boys!" We all knew things were not looking as "bluebird" as we would have liked, but it was the only feasible time to go on this traverse. We all have busy lives and our schedules were only in sync for these four days.

Immediately upon stepping out of the helicopter my spirits soared—I was knee-deep in fresh powder. The quality of skiing of late had been a little on the "not really good" end of the spectrum, and I had already accepted that we would not be getting any great skiing on this mini-traverse. But the second my boots started sinking into the Selkirk softness, I knew we were going to be lucky.

The first day went by quickly with a 600-metre skin track that ended in a boot-pack up to a high col. From there we skied down through 40 centimetres of light, deep powder; pity the pitch was not steep enough for us to really enjoy it. We then dropped our camping gear and skinned up towards Adamant Mountain. Adamant is the third highest peak in the Selkirk Range and has an incredible north-facing glacier that tumbles down for 900 metres. Looking up it, we became a little apprehensive about the potential of getting up it. The bottom 300 metres were 40 to 50 degrees and heavily crevassed. Days before, we all talked tough about how we hoped to ski this descent, but looking up I was filled with despair. The line was intimidating and in the evening light it looked virtually impossible. Feeling sheepish we skinned up to 3,000 metres on Austerity Peak for some deep evening turns back to our camp.

The five of us, Dave, Chris, Aaron, James and I, quickly set up a Megamid and began talking about tomorrow. It turned out I wasn't the only one who questioned the possibility of success on Adamant, and if we doubted that, what about Mount Sir Sandford?

The next morning the clouds obscured the summits and although our energies were low we packed up and headed up the glacier towards Adamant. It looked steep, but we have a habit of giving an honest effort and actually facing our fears rather than giving in to them. As we skinned upwards, the slope seemed to get steeper as we got closer. Soon enough I was standing below it and attaching my skis to my backpack. The first bergshrund was very steep and I had to dig out steps on the other side so we had something to climb onto. Looking into the dark hole, I tossed my fears into it and stepped across. From there I began boot-packing up, the rhythm of my steps helped keep all anxieties away. Although the snow was deep, the steps went quickly and I easily found a way around each crevasse. After 200 metres the angle lessened briefly for some skinning and then steepened again for some more boot-packing. After 350 metres I stopped in a safe spot and the gang caught up to me. Instead of hogging the ascent, I passed it off to Dave and he set a skin track and boot-pack to the summit. Following him I couldn't believe how easily it was unfolding. The terrain was intimidating but somehow we could keep relatively safe. Keeping our exposure to a minimum while ascending quickly, the excitement built as we neared the summit.

Meanwhile, the weather was improving and we stood on the summit under a patch of blue sky. We were all giddy with excitement. We were standing on the third-highest summit in the Selkirks with 900 metres of perfect powder awaiting us. How could we be so lucky? With the sun shining on our run, we all shredded down the glacier enjoying an endless quantity of awesome turns. Whooping and hollering our way back to camp, we were ecstatic. We wondered how many times this run had been skied and assumed that no one had ever had the snow quality we had just experienced. Sitting under the north face we stared up at our turns and sipped our soup contently. But not for long, since there was much more to be done before the day was over.

Packing up, we skinned towards Pioneer Mountain. On our way, we kept looking back at our tracks up and down Adamant Mountain. Such a beautiful line; but eventually we turned a corner and our tracks became an incredible memory. Soon enough we were on top of Pioneer and staring over at Sir Sandford. The 1,800-metre north face stared right back at us. Its gaze was a tough one to endure since it is the prize of our range and very rarely skied. Exhilarated by our morning success we couldn't help but be confident of our chances for tomorrow.

Down and up a smaller summit we got ever closer to Sir Sandford. It tantalized us in the evening alpenglow. A long east-facing descent followed, and we toured our way up to the Great Cairn Hut by 9 p.m.

The next morning we were on our way by 9 a.m., working up towards Sir

Ascending the southeast ridge of Pioneer Peak with Mount Sir Sandford in the background. A ski descent was made via the same route. Photo: Greg Hill

Sandford. The first 1,200 metres went really fast as great skinning brought us ever higher. I was buoyed by yesterday's success and assumed that within a few hours we would be sitting on the summit. I even began dreaming of climbing it again in the afternoon once the track was in, maybe even trying to set some sort of speed record. I was about to realize the hazards of overconfidence.

I passed off the lead to Dave a couple of hundred metres short of the "hourglass." It seemed an ideal time to sit in the back and enjoy someone else's boot-pack. We quickly approached this hurdle and began to realize that it may not be as easy as most other Selkirk summits.

Our false confidence had convinced us to bring a short 40-metre rope and to leave the ice screw at home. We had all overlooked the possible need of a longer rope and an ice screw to climb through the hourglass. Not to mention that we only had one set of crampons for all five of us.

We all hung out in the bergshrund for 40 minutes while Super Dave soloed the ice pitch and somehow set up an anchor above. Then he clipped our only pair of crampons to the end of the rope and threw it down to us. We would then put on the crampons and be belayed up the ice pitch with a single mountaineering axe in our hands. We each managed to get up the 10-metre glacial ice climb and wait above while the crampons were passed to the next person. Repeated four times, we were finally up the pitch. It took us two-and-a-half hours to climb 45 metres.

Above, the angle lessened and we boot-packed up the glacier until we could skin again. It did not take long for us to gain the ridge and walk to the summit. It was getting late, but we still had more hurdles to get over before we had safely skied this peak. Skiing off, we enjoyed some fine turns off our highest mountain.

The top 600 metres was great skiing, but the best was waiting for us below the hourglass. We were tempted to ski the hourglass and jump the 10-metre ice section but we all knew that if we did not stick the landing we could possibly tumble and roll down hundreds of metres before coming to a stop. Safety dictated the appropriate action. We sent Dave down to prepare an ice bollard. Chris joined him and within 20 minutes we had a solid ice horn to rappel off. Rappelling with skis on, we all scraped our way down the ice and waited by the bergshrund. Chris undertook the sketchy last rappel. Sketchy because our rope was so short that he had to rappel halfway, set up a new ice bollard and then rappel again. In sync with the setting sun, Chris was safely at our sides as the last rays drifted off the mountain.

We waited a few minutes and Chris took the lead down the final 1,200 metres of Sir Sandford. We all carved continuously down, enjoying the lightness of accomplishment, knowing we had safely skied something we had dreamt about for years and would now remember forever.

Summary

Various ski descents in the Mount Sir Sandford area of the Selkirks by James Bruce, Aaron Chance, Chris Delworth, Greg Hill and Dave Sproule.

April 2, 2007: *Northeast Glacier* (PD+ 45–50°) of Adamant Mountain (3345m), *Southeast Ridge* of Pioneer Peak (3245m) and *Northwest Glacier* of Azimuth Mountain (2500m).

April 3, 2007: *The Hourglass* (AD 50°) on Mount Sir Sandford (3519m).

April 4, 2007: *North Face* of the Footstool (3100m), *North Face* of Citadel Mountain (2923m) and *North Glacier* of Goldstream Mountain (2825m).

In Praise of Neglected Hills

Roger Wallis

Unlike the purCells, the Selkirks and Monashees, the Cariboos are not blessed with groups of scenic granite spires. There are no Bugaboos or Vowells, no Battle Range, Adamants or Remillards, no Goat Range to encourage the pursuit of excellence, to provide dramatic lines on which to feast the eyes or decorate magazine covers. The Cariboos do not have a "tick list".

Paved highways traverse the other three ranges, more or less, so access is no great problem. Climbing centres of Golden and Revelstoke facilitate the dissemination of new routes and opportunities. And, last but not least, the Bugaboos, the Adamants and the Battle Range have spacious modern huts lying close to their classic climbs, acting as bases to reach the wilder western sides of their granite massifs.

However, the Cariboos are a relative backwater—far from nowhere. Really, who goes to Valemount except to visit the two CMH lodges? There are great snow and ice peaks close at hand in the Premiers, but beyond the great trench of the Raush Valley the Cariboos roll on: a seemingly uninspired mosaic of deeply entrenched, primeval forested valleys, high snowfields and undistinguished peaks. It's a land of peace and tranquility but one full of opportunities, especially for those striving for mediocrity. A land clearly not at the cutting edge, but one where first mountain ascents and/or new routes are abundant, pleasant in aspect and varied in character. Ascents that involve the full spectrum of mountaineering skills, but which take place seemingly in a vacuum. This is not the land of the crowded circus, there are no other steps in the snow but one's own in the Cariboos.

Almost no one has ever heard of these mountains, the names of the peaks have zero recognition factor. This is not an egotistical land. There is only one peak higher than 3,000 metres but the relief is often well over 1,500 metres. The snow and icefields are large: Quanstrom-

Pierrway is 160 square kilometres and Lunn-Roberts 180 square kilometres. Though there are no granite spires, the rock is often far better than much of the Rockies or of the other three Interior Ranges away from their granite cores. Walls 300 to 600 metres high of solid coarse sandstone outcrop extensively. Though not the calibre of its time equivalent, the Miette quartzite of the Ramparts to the east, overall the rock is reasonable.

This spacious range has only been infrequently explored and climbed over the last 50 years. With more than 60 peaks higher than 2,740 metres (9,000 feet) spread over an area of 6,000 square kilometres, there is ground to explore in all directions.

Six weeks of climbing, spread over three summers, based on five campsites, resulted in 21 mountain first ascents and six new routes on other peaks (*CAJ*, vol. 88 (2005), p. 127; *CAJ*, vol. 89 (2006), pp. 152–153). Some climbs were mundane; others were fine climbs on fine peaks. Some went quickly but one took four days. Some peaks were near at hand with obvious lines but Mount Goodall is eight kilometres long, has 11 sub-summits and1,800 metres of relief—definitely more complicated than we could believe.

Most Cariboo peaks are unnamed and thus just grid references, but some ascents were of named peaks, which had never been climbed, like Mount Goodall and Mount Roberts. All were fun and, except for the joy of finding our predecessors' cairns and summit records, we were always the only people in a lonely, but lovely, land.

Many attractive mountains still remain unclimbed. As of 2007, there are at least 26 unclimbed peaks over 2,740 metres, though geographically, they are somewhat scattered; and many more difficult lines remain on the mountains that have been climbed.

Wells Gray Group

The following five climbs were made from a basecamp at 2,275 metres in a lake-filled cirque (GR 940785, TRIM Map 093H010 Cariboo Mountains). Grid References (GR) and heights are from the British Columbia 1:20,000 TRIM maps.

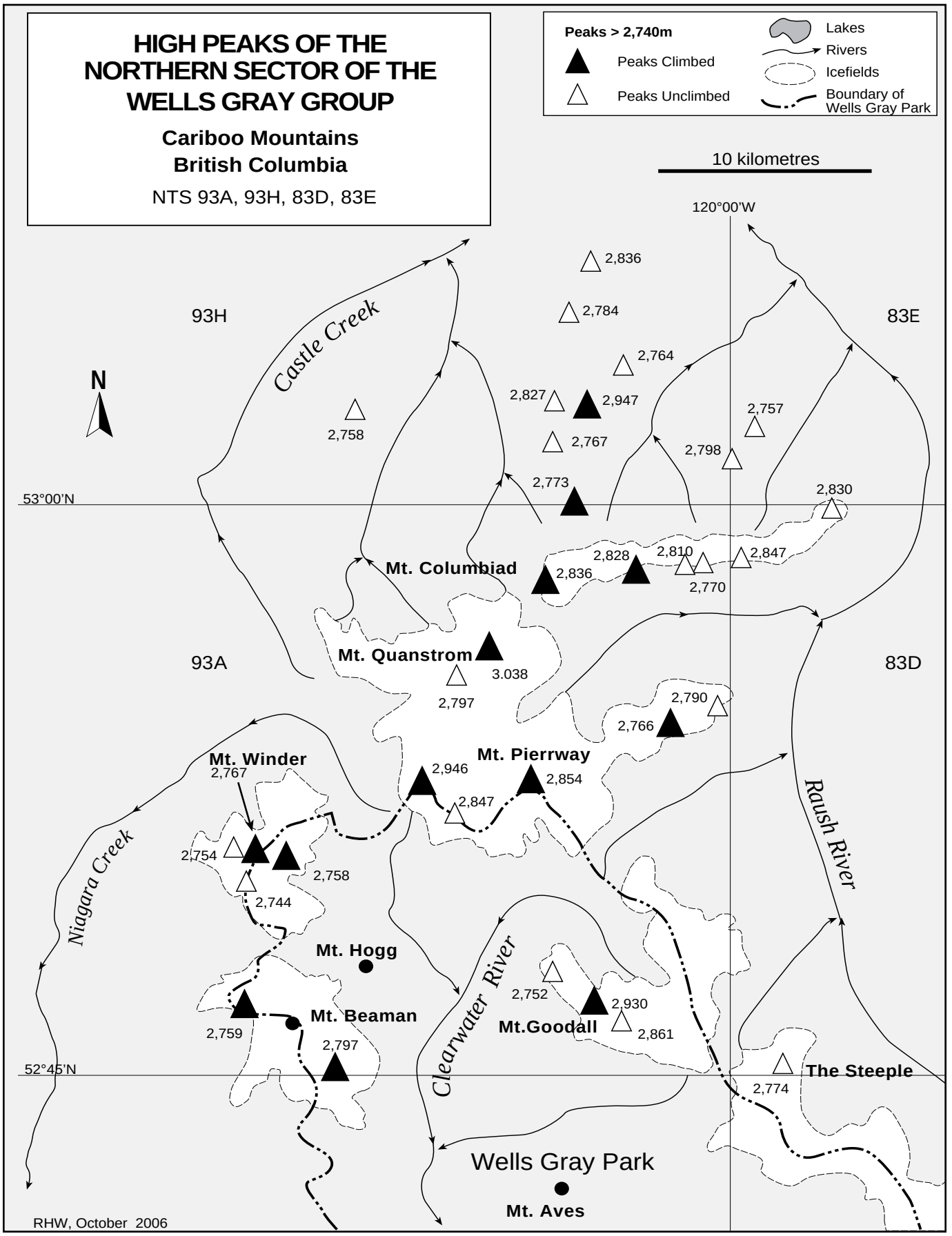
Peak 2,947 (GR 943812). FA: D. Chiasson, J. Lundy, B. McKenzie, R. Wallis, August 11, 2006. This is the second highest peak in the Wells Gray Group after Mount Quanstrom (3038m) and the complete south ridge involves a 600-metre rock scramble with some 5.0–5.2 pitches (10 hours round- trip).

Peak 2,670 (GR 934801). FA: J. Lundy, August 9, 2006. From the col with peak 2,827, climb the north-northeast ridge via steep snow with a final rock step (four hours).

Peak 2,827 (GR 933809). Attempt on the south ridge by D. Chiasson, M. McDermott, B. McKenzie, August 9, 2006.

Peak 2,773 (GR 940759). FA: D. Chiasson, J. Lundy, M. McDermott, B. McKenzie, R.Wallis, August 10, 2006. Approach by the northern snowfield then up northwest rock ridge. Descent was made via both the northwest and

The north face of the unclimbed peak dubbed the Steeple in the Wells Gray group of the Cariboo Mountains. Photo: Roger Wallis


HIGH PEAKS OF THE NORTHERN SECTOR OF THE WELLS GRAY GROUP
Cariboo Mountains
British Columbia
NTS 93A, 93H, 83D, 83E
Peaks > 2,740m
Peaks Climbed
Peaks Unclimbed
Lakes
Rivers
Icefields
Boundary of Wells Gray Park
10 kilometres
120°00'W
53°00'N
52°45'N
93H
83E
93A
83D
N
Castle Creek
Niagara Creek
Raush River
Clearwater River
2,836
2,784
2,764
2,827
2,947
2,758
2,757
2,767
2,798
2,773
2,830
2,828
2,810
2,847
2,836
2,770
Mt. Columbiad
Mt. Quanstrom
3.038
2,797
2,790
2,766
Mt. Winder
2,767
Mt. Pierrway
2,946
2,854
2,847
2,754
2,758
2,744
Mt. Hogg
Mt. Beaman
2,759
2,797
2,752
2,930
Mt.Goodall
2,861
The Steeple
2,774
Wells Gray Park
Mt. Aves
RHW, October 2006

northeast ridges.

Mount Goodall (2930m). FA: D. Chiasson, J. Lundy, R. Wallis, August 21, 2006. Mount Goodall is the third highest peak in the Wells Gray Group and is the highest peak completely within Wells Gray Park. From a camp at Turquoise Pass (NTS 83D/12, GR 975482), we spent two days bushwhacking along the north side of a west-flowing tributary of the Clearwater River. We eventually reached an excellent bivouac site on the Great Shelf—a prominent ledge lying east of the glacier. From the Great Shelf, cross talus slopes and then climb through the rock benches and towers to reach the moraine on the east side of the Southeast Goodall Glacier. The lower part of the glacier is steep and very broken; the upper part becomes a snow basin. Above the basin, the route is walled off by a major serac barrier extending eastward from a prominent rock sub-peak called The Sphinx. Snow ramps lead through the ice cliffs on the far east side of the basin and to the bergschrund at the base of peak 2,749—the third peak from the southeast end of Goodall's 11 summits. Traverse to the northwest on a high snow shelf for approximately two kilometres passing below peak 2,861 (the prominent black rock-peak that was assigned a height of 9,380 feet on the NTS 1:50,000 map). Climb a steep snow slope below a combination cornice/ice cliff to reach the base of the final summit. Goodall has twin summits—the highest being to the northwest. Climb the south-facing snow slopes to the summit (11.5-hour round trip).

The Halvorson Range

The Mount Lunn/Roberts Peak area is one of the most extensively glaciated areas in the Cariboos. There is continuous glacier and snowfield coverage for 15 kilometres north-to-south and 12 kilometres east-to-west. Our basecamp was located on a level bluff of environmentally robust moraine in the most central possible location (2250m, GR 678761). Grid references and heights are from TRIM maps 093H008 Cariboo River and 093A098 Mount Lunn. We were possibly the first group known to have visited the area in the summer since 1975 (*CAJ*, vol. 59 (1976), pp. 24–25).

Peak 2,705 (GR 632757). FA: D. Chiasson, N. Greene, J. Lundy, M. McDermott, B. McKenzie, R. Wallis, August 15, 2006. This is the extremely prominent horn-like peak just north of the head of the Matthews River. We crossed the Cariboo Glacier below the north face of Triplehead and climbed the east ridge (10-hour round trip).

Triplehead (2630m, GR 658738). FA: Jim Lundy, August 16, 2006. This is the prominent, triple-summit mountain that dominates the south side of the Cariboo Glacier (east summit (2625m), central Summit (2630m), west summit (2625m)). The northeast snow ridge on the east peak was climbed, then all three summits were traversed. The descent was made down from the col between the middle and east summits to the glacier (seven-hour round trip).

Roberts Peak (2704m). FA: V. Barsaukas, D. Chiasson, N. Greene, M. McDermott, B. McKenzie, August 17, 2006. Cross the Cariboo Glacier to the col between Triplehead and peak 2481 and continue west across the Roberts Icefield to the north snow ridge of Roberts Peak. Follow this over a peak (2589m) to the base of the east-facing snow slope that leads to the summit (19-kilometre round-trip (10-hour round-trip) from base camp).

Peak 2,824 (GR 721722). FA: J. Lundy, R. Wallis, August 17, 2006. This is the imposing snow/ice peak lying immediately south-southeast of Mount Lunn. Cross the upper cirque of the Cariboo Glacier to reach the base of the southwest ridge. Cross this and then traverse the entire cirque to the head of the Lunn Glacier. Gain the col east of peak 2,673, and then follow the west ridge to summit (10-hour round trip). Scott Duncan and Phil and Steve Smith first did this route, except for the final 200 metres, on skis in May 1982.

Peak 2,481 (GR 678728). FA: J. Lundy, August 18, 2006. Cross the Cariboo Glacier and head towards the col between peak 2,481 and Triplehead then ascend via a north-northeast snow ridge leading to the summit (four-hour round trip).

Peak 2,818 (GR 688803). FA: N. Green, B. McKenzie, August 18, 2006. A fine looking rock peak located in the northern part of the area. Follow the north side of the upper Cariboo Glacier until a glacial shelf and a steep snow couloir give access from the south to the col between peaks 2,751 and 2,824. This col was first crossed from north to south by Scott Duncan and Phil and Steve Smith in May 1982. Descend the glacier on the north side of the col to the foot of the south ridge of peak 2,818, which is climbed to the summit (8.5-hour round trip).

Mt. Lunn (2918m). 2nd ascent: V. Barsaukas, D. Chiasson, N. Green, J. Lundy, M. McDermott, B. McKenzie, R. Wallis, August 13, 2006. Cross the cirque at the head of the Cariboo Glacier to reach the base of the southwest ridge, climb this, rock at first, then rock and snow, then finally snow to the summit—a wide area of snow with a big cornice on the northwest side (six- to nine-hour round trip).

Peak 2,751 (GR 686768). 2nd ascent: J. Lundy, M. McDermott, August 14, 2006. Follow the north side of the upper Cariboo Glacier until a glacial shelf and a steep snow couloir gives access from the south to the col between peaks 2,751 and 2,824. From the col follow the east ridge to the summit (four-hour round trip).

Peak 2,824 (GR 711764). 2nd ascent: D. Chiasoon, R. Wallis, August 16, 2006. As above to col between peaks 2,751 and 2,824, then follow the west ridge to the summit (four- to seven-hour round trip).

Climbers: Vytas Barsaukas, Don Chiasson, Norm Greene, Jim Lundy, Bill McKenzie, Mark McDermott, Roger Wallis, Toronto Section, ACC, August 8–24, 2006.

Living Free at Applebee

Jon Simms

During the summer of 2007 there were multiple new routes and first free ascents done in the Bugaboos. As the cliché goes: it was a summer to remember. Good friends, challenging terrain and a carefree existence was a nice change from the hustle and bustle of low elevation living.

The *Midnight Route* on the east face of Bugaboo Spire is an obvious line that has always presented itself from the salivating viewpoint of Applebee campground. With rumors of choss and discouraging details from previous parties looking for a first free ascent, Chris and I decided to inspect the scene for ourselves. An alpine start had us on the "Banana Flakes" by early morning. Above we encountered difficult thin cracks with some light vegetation. Chris and I climbed to the obvious roof with some minor excavating. Upon reaching the roof, we encountered seeping moves so I aided this short section hoping it would dry out in the hot July heat for another attempt. This section turned out to be one of two prominent cruxes. Now, entering the start of the main splitter dihedral more thin free moves were mixed in with some sketch aiding. Hooks would have been useful but we were without so some sporty knifeblades and tipped-out nuts did the trick. After a full 60 metres in the main dihedral, we arrived at another daunting pitch. Yet another 60 metres of free climbing and brain-sizzling aid moves (again, hooks would have been helpful) provided more entertainment and another crux for a future send. At this point, we bailed. Sore brains and toes had us back at Applebee drinking beer by late afternoon.

Rest with a couple of days of chores and an entertaining beats party in G-town was the plan. Our second assault was early Monday morning. The nine-to-fivers were back on the project. We planned to free climb to our previous high point and continue from there. So far the findings where superb—clean splitter granite with minor cleaning. At some point we discussed a name. "No Emotion" came to mind with thoughts of the past weekend and late night adventures, but out of respect for the past the original name stuck.

Jon Simms on the second 5.12 crux pitch (pitch five) during the first free ascent of the *Midnight Route* on the east face of Bugaboo Spire. Photo: Chris Brazeau

Attempt two started smooth and freeing to below the roof was relatively easily. Chris fired the roof pitch running the rope the full length. Much respect goes to his effort considering the spicy 5.12 run-out sections on spacious gear. We thought this pitch would have taken more time considering its sustained nature but after seconding to his belay, we began thinking that just maybe we could finish this route in a day. Our difficulties weren't over yet though. Another high-calibre pitch with more sustained climbing and run-outs loomed above. I psyched up and sent to the rest before the proper business. Knowing what lay above, I switched the emotion centre of the brain off so the increasing difficulties and lengthy run-outs where met with Jedi mind power. I remember tips laybacking with the difficulty gradually increasing, placing a small piece, moving four or five metres more and reaching for a small grey TCU. Time slowed. I knew if this TCU didn't fit, my dreams were about to go sailing towards the glaciers below. Whether it was luck or a bit of skill, the micro-cam slid right in. "Oh shit," I remember thinking, "now I guess I gotta go for it." Some 5.12 thin-corner climbing led to a sobering mantel. Run-out and fried, I practiced a few more seconds of Jedi mind training, then committed to the slopey mantel finishing to one of our previous rappel slings. I clipped the sling and checked my underwear for a full diaper. Continuing the rest of the 60-metre rope length was uneventful. A clean second by Chris had our dreams coming true. We laughed a bit, talked about the love of climbing and drinking liquor with our friends—who were down below watching from Applebee.

The rest of the climbing to the ridge was a moderate 5.10 (at the hardest). Our only stress was the growing electrical storm brewing around us. Chris continued up to the end of the main dihedral pulling a roof to finish the pitch. Route finding was not straightforward. In the end, we decided to traverse hard right and continue up a corner system above *Divine Intervention* (TD 5.11b, 9 pitches) hitting the classic *Northeast Ridge* (D- 5.8, 12 pitches) route. The weather then improved and we continued to the summit for a picnic.

In August I had another adventure in the Bugaboos—this time with my lady Alisha Wedrick. After a nice morning at Applebee, we departed for the south face of the Donkey's Ears. Our intention was

the *Edwards-Neufeld* (D- 5.10+, 8 pitches) route to the left of *Ears Between* (AD 5.7, 6 pitches). I always find Guy Edwards' routes to be quite a challenge—never just a give away without a fight.

We started up the line in scrubby conditions: some 5.10 moss to the approach ledge and another 5.7 pitch before the good climbing began. The next pitch was a real gem. It was another Edwards' stout 5.10+ pitch, but three stars nonetheless. Above this, I decided to step left into another corner system, which followed some angling arête cracks. I climbed this crack system straight up (starting wide), pulled a roof and then worked back right through a tight-hands crack on the arête to a belay below a looming off-width.

Despite not being armed with any OW assault gear; I headed up the wide crack. Steep fist to off-fingers climbing deposited me at a rest with a big loose block. I continued up the chimney to some off-widthing with a lack of protection. This section could be protected if you brought the big stuff but I relied on creative stopper and micro-cam placements to comfort the mind. With limited options for gear and the urge to send, I made the best of it using body cams and chicken wings to solve this cruxy section. I stuffed my body deep inside the slot to where you can look straight through to the other side. A great place to raise a family! A bit more squirming delivered me to a small roof crux, which I pulled with absolutely no gear remaining on my harness. We finished just below the summit of the left-hand ear.

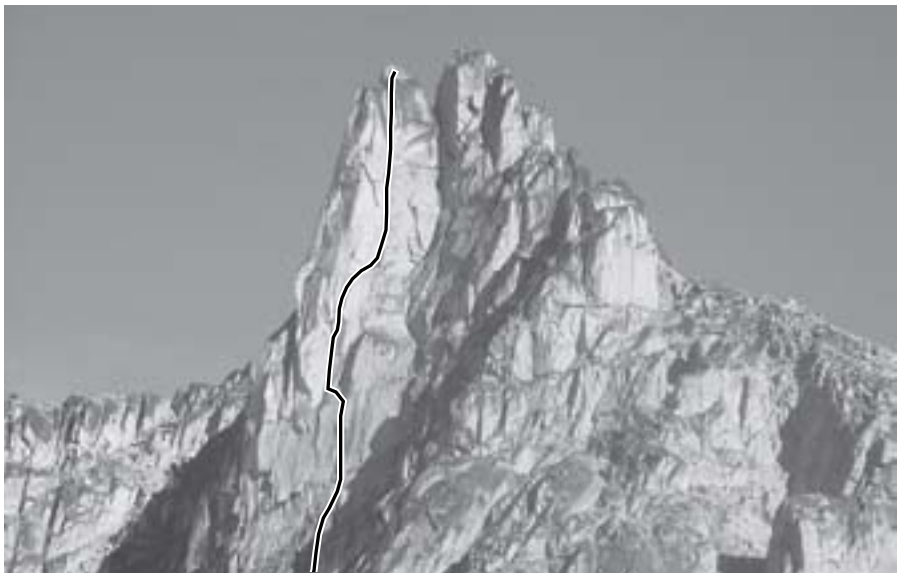
The name we came up with has great importance. My sneakiest friend, Troy, offered his best truth serum during a celebration at Applebee earlier that week during which some of my best friends gathered for my alpine birthday party. I'll always remember such great people and good times when gazing at our climbs on Bugaboo Spire and the Donkey's Ears.

Summary

Midnight Route (TD 5.12b R, 8 pitches), east face, Bugaboo Spire. FFA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Simms, July 2007.
Gear: Triple set of cams to #0.5 Camalot, double set to #2 Camalot and one #3 Camalot. Double set of RPs and nuts.
P1: 5.10, 50m. Start at obvious right-facing corner on the right side of face. Move the belay across the Balcony (left) to the Banana Flakes.
P2: 5.10, 45m. Climb the Banana Flakes to a small stance below start of main dihedral.
P3: 5.11b, 30m. Climb a flake (5.10c) to gain entrance into the dihedral. Stem, layback and palm to below the roof.
P4: 5.12b, 50m. Friction moves to a tips roof (crux) gains the main dihedral. Sustained 5.11 on thin gear and pins to hanging stance.
P5: 5.12b R, 58m. Continue up the dihedral to stem rest (5.11). Move through tight hands to run-out tips (crux) culminating with a tricky sloping mantel. A short section of thin finger jams to good hand jams ends at a belay on a sloping ledge. Note: All run-outs can easily be aided.
P6: 5.10, 40m. Follow the dihedral into a roof (hand jams). Belay on ledge above roof.
P7: 5.9, 55m. Exit right, traversing on ledges and flakes, to reach the main corner of *Divine Intervention*. Continue up the corner to a belay stance.
P8: 5.10, 35m. Vertical cracks lead to the ridge. Continue up the *Northeast Ridge* to the summit.

Sneaky's Truth Serum (D 5.10+, 5 pitches), south face of the Donkey's Ears, Crescent Towers. FA: Jon Simms, Alisha Wedrick, August 2007.
Gear: Double set of cams plus one four-inch and one four-and-a-half-inch cam for pitch five.
P1: 5.10, 60m. Start as for the *Edwards-Neufeld* by climbing a mossy pitch to main approach ledge.
P2: 5.8, 20m. Ramble up ledges to start of steep cracks.
P3: 5.10+, 32m. Continue up Guy's beautifully sustained fingers and tight hands pitch to obvious belay ledge.
P4: 5.10+, 45m. Leave the *Edwards-Neufeld* by stepping left to wide corner. Climb to roofs stepping right through roofs. Continue up cracks just right of main arête. Follow diagonal crack system to traversing hands ledge. Belay below obvious main wide dihedral.
P5: 5.10+, 58m. Climb sustained steep fist corner crack (beware of loose block). After 30 metres the pitch gradually widens becoming a chimney and exits through a delightful roof. Belay just below summit in wedged slot. Continue easily to the top as for *Thatcher Cracker*.

Sneaky's Truth Serum on the south face of the Donkey's Ears. Photo: Jon Simms



Kids These Days

Peter Green

You want to hear something crazy? A group of American teenagers decided that what they really wanted to do last summer was to climb mountains in the Canadian wilderness. More specifically, they decided they wanted to beat themselves up with a multi-day off-trail approach wearing packs larger than they were and climb little known peaks just because they were remote and beautiful. These kids could have stayed home and climbed at the rock gym, or gone sport climbing, or climbed the popular peaks along the Icefields Parkway. Instead they chose the Purcells because they figured that would be where the greatest adventure could be found.

These kids weren't part of any drug or alcohol therapy program, nor did they pay thousands of dollars to a large company to be led deep into the Canadian wilderness to learn greater lessons in life. They were part of a climbing Explorer Post from Portland, Oregon and they wanted to spend a week deep in the mountains because they were looking for a challenge, they wanted to climb some mountains and be far, far away from their world in the city. The location the students selected for their alpine adventure was International Basin in the northern Purcells.

"This is foolish," I told them. "It will take days to get in there, and it will probably rain the entire time."

"We'll take tents," they replied.

"Wet tents are very heavy and you're not very big," I said. Maybe I saw a trace of concern fleeting across their underdeveloped brows.

"But look at these pictures," was all they could say. And it was enough. The pictures showed dramatic and remote peaks with feasible climbing routes on them.

So in August 2007, we found ourselves in a pair of vans bouncing our way up the long road toward the Spillimacheen Glacier with nine students aged 15 to18 and four adult leaders.

Sandilands Peak (left) and Strutt Peak (centre) with the north face couloir marked.
Photo: Peter Green

After a night in the open at the trailhead, we began the long and memorable hike into International Basin. The route is described fairly well in *Hikes Around Invermere & the Columbia River Valley* by Aaron Cameron and Matt Gunn. Burdened with a week's worth of food and gear we hiked up the old road past the mine site and found a moraine that took us to the expansive slabs below the Spillimacheen Glacier. We dutifully trudged up the glacier to its southeast corner where there is a low pass. It seemed to be taking us well out of our way, and indeed it did. One of the many nice things about climbing with teenagers is that they're not afraid to suggest alternatives, and in this case they consistently proffered ways to get to our destination that varied from the one we were taking at the direction of the book. In many cases they were proved right.

The steep but elegant northeast snow ridge of Mount David had caught our eye on the way in, so we decided to drop our packs and have a go at the route. We roped up and headed across the top of the glacier for maybe a kilometre before the rain clouds descended and forced us to head back and set up camp. The next day was beautiful and we quickly found ourselves at a small pass just east of Mount David. We climbed the rubbly 45-metre rock step that put us at the base of the imposing northeast ridge. Over the next five hours we managed to get everyone in the party to the summit and back down again. The ridge is in a dramatic position, but never more than 45 or 50 degrees.

We shouldered our backpacks once again the next morning and began the long traverse toward our final destination. It took almost two hours for us to get all souls up the awkward and exposed section of cliff that occurs not long after dropping south from the ridge crest above the Spillimacheen Glacier. From there the going was pleasant, though tiring, and we found ourselves at our home away from home at the lower

lake by mid-afternoon. Teenagers recover quickly, and not half an hour after throwing down their accursed packs, they were ready to climb Mount Sibbald. We scrambled up the north ridge and were back for a late dinner.

International Peak, though attractive in a way, was deemed to be too long a scree-slab-glacier walk to justify the effort. Instead the kids chose an attempt on Strutt Peak via a steep and improbable looking couloir on its north face that led up west of the true summit. Joel—one of the adult leaders and the only one with a second tool—offered to take the lead. The couloir started reasonably enough, about 45 degrees, but got progressively steeper until the last 30 metres which was 60-plus degrees—perhaps more. Joel anchored a fixed line around some rocks at the crest and with a lot of careful front pointing and step chopping we got everyone safely to the top. It was hot work once the sun came onto the couloir, which was almost 300 metres in length.

The team lolled in the sun for an hour and then scrambled west to the top of an apparently unclimbed knob between Mount Sibbald and Strutt Peak. The rest of the afternoon was spent scrambling up Strutt Peak and Sandilands Peak. Our descent was made by a 120-metre rappel from a notch just west of Sandilands.

The adults decreed a period of rest for the next day. We played games, read aloud to each other, spent time in the water, watched mountain goats, worried about grizzly bears and napped.

Not wanting to let things get boring, the group decided to hike back to the vans by a "modified" route that would allow us to attempt two more peaks on the way out. We shouldered our hated backpacks and hiked back towards the headwaters of Bennison Creek. Instead of angling northeast at this point, we travelled northwest and struggled up the backside of Mount David until we reached a glorious small notch just west of David. Here we threw off our packs and made a delightful climb of Mount Cony and the small peak just east of it. Our attempt on Twin Towers Peak was thwarted by a steep ice face and a lack of time. Returning to our packs, we once again lifted them onto our tired backs and trudged across the Spillimacheen Glacier to the slabs where we had initially roped up six days before. That evening was spent eating, laughing and reflecting on our good fortune.

The next morning, after a few hours of hiking and driving, we found ourselves sitting in the hot springs in Radium looking at the wide variety of people that populate this world.

Summary

Various ascents in Spillimacheen and Carbonate Groups, International Basin, Northern Purcell Mountains:
Northeast ridge of Mt. David (2910m), August 13, 2007.
North ridge of Mt. Sibbald (2660m), August 14, 2007.
North face couloir of Strutt Peak (2700m), August 15, 2007 (new route).
West ridge (via Strutt Peak) of Sandilands Peak (2720m), August 15, 2007.
East ridge of Mt. Cony (2850m), August 17, 2007.
Students: Kip Beckwith, Mitch Burke, Joseph Carpenter, Maddy Case, Greg Conyers, Jack Lazar, Michal Orczyk, Ian Wayne, Sarah Wolf.
Leaders: Peter Green, Matt Henzi, Laura Laney, Joel Port.

Battlement Mountain

Roger Wallis

In [illegible], four members of the Harvard Mountaineering Club (HMC)—having climbed all the first ascents in the Spillimacheen Group—hiked south, crossed Bobbie Burns Creek and proceeded to clean out the Carbonate Group. Having made the first ascents of three major peaks, their final climb was to be the first ascent of Battlement Mountain (2,807 metres). However, on their attempt Bob West was knocked unconscious when struck on the head by a falling rock on an overhang, and the attempt was abandoned. Battlement's fine array of imposing towers has been neglected ever since.

Instead of emulating HMC's weeklong bushwhack, Don McTighe of Alpine Helicopters in Golden, B.C., flew us into a wonderful campsite situated below four spectacular hanging glaciers in just 12 minutes. After climbing the headwall above our camp we crossed the "lower" or West Carbonate Glacier to the base of the northeast ridge. This appeared to be a fine route leading directly to the summit, but from our vantage point there was much hidden ground so we traversed across the glacier to the northwest ridge—the route of the 1953 HMC attempt.

A rock scramble and a snow arête led to Bob West's overhang (5.2). Above, broken ground and numerous towers led to the final summit tower (5.3/5.4). With Mark McDermott, Roel Teunissen and myself in support high on the northwest ridge, Don Chiasson and Bill McKenzie made the first ascent. Despite the heights shown on the B.C. 1:20,000 TRIM map, the north summit is clearly the higher summit.

The Carbonate Group provides excellent climbing on Malachite and Horseman Spires, and International Mountain and Richards Peak. There are excellent campsites above the lake at the head of Carbonate Creek and on the meadows below the West Carbonate Glacier.

Summary

Northwest Ridge (III 5.4) of Battlement Mountain (2807m), West Carbonate Glacier, Purcell Mountains. FA: Don Chiasson, Bill McKenzie, August 2, 2007.

2007 KMC Climbing Camp

Doug Brown

I guess our luck had to end some time. I had organized the previous four Kootenay Mountaineering Club (KMC) climbing camps, and on all of those trips we had enjoyed virtually perfect weather from start to finish. This year we were scheduled to fly in on Sunday, July 22, and as blast-off day approached Nelson was basking in sunshine, but Revelstoke was being soaked. After consultation with our pilot, we delayed our planned departure from Sunday morning to Monday afternoon.

After my feeble attempts to arrange for all of the participants to get safely to the staging area, I looked forward to many relaxing years of herding cats instead. Suf ce it to say, there was some confusion on the various meeting spots, the various meeting times, which way is up, and the purpose of that pedal on the far right side at the driver's feet. I'm pretty sure more than one person may have used a word or two that would have met with my mother's disapproval.

Nelson was enjoying morning sun with cloudless skies when we hit the road on Monday morning; a few clouds started to appear north of Nakusp, and by the time we reached Revelstoke, the rain was varying between merely heavy and torrential, with ample electrical activity thrown in for good measure. Nonetheless, we all eventually made it out to the staging area for the gear weigh-in, with a few parties forced to do some trimming and repacking. The weather did not co-operate however, and we eventually rescheduled our fly-in for the next morning.

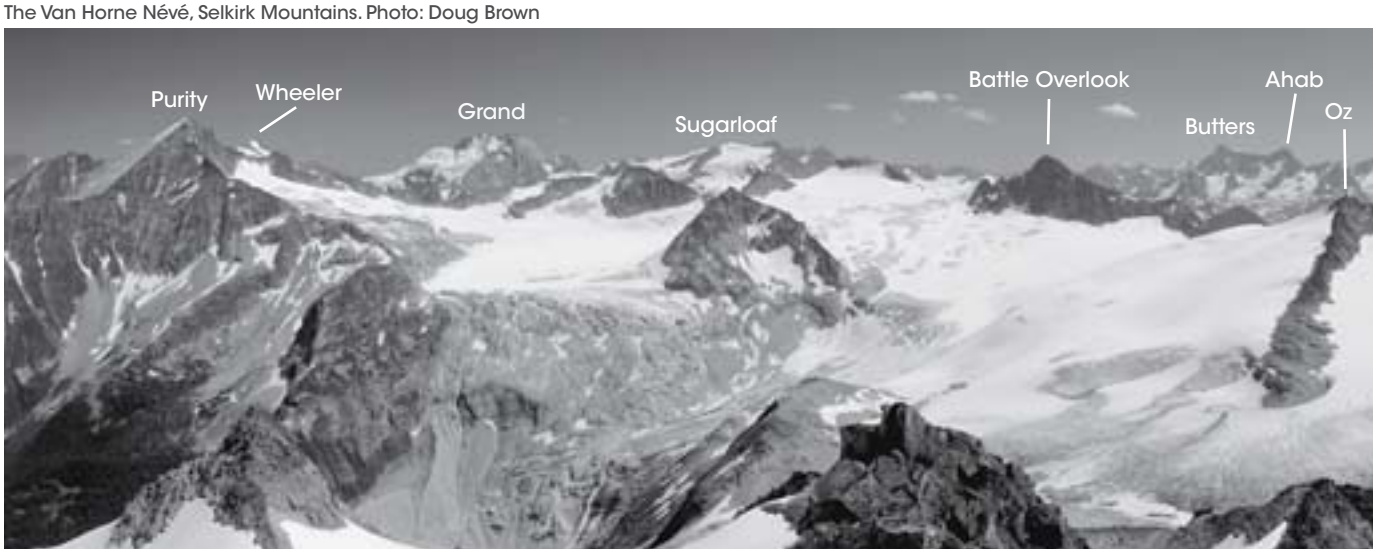
On Tuesday morning, we once again were all gathered together at the staging area (well actually, all except for two climbers, who shall remain nameless). This time the weather was favourable and we were quickly whisked into camp without further ado, the two tardy souls arriving in the nick of time to catch the whirlybird. As usual, camp was beautiful, everyone was happy, and it was time for me to stop worrying about organizing camp and to start worrying about someone hurting themselves.

Camp was situated in a beautiful meadow (82N/4 NAD 27, GR 627572) with babbling streams (which would all dry up over the course of the week) that provided many dry campsites, but was close to snow for refrigeration of perishable food items. Perfect. Once we got into camp, the weather co-operated quite nicely, thank you very much, with Wednesday through Monday being sunny and warm.

Accomplishments during the week were:

- At one time or another, everyone summitted the mighty False Findhorn (marked as Findhorn on the 1:50,000 NTS maps) via the pleasant moderate snow slopes of the southeast face.
- Everyone climbed the easy 2,790-metre (9,200-foot) snow peak at GR 640556.
- Almost everyone made the long trek over to Purity, taking between 11 and 13 hours to ascend the southeast ridge and return home.
- Almost everyone climbed Findhorn Peak (GR 621590)—labelled Mount McBean on the 1:50,000 NTS—via various lines on the south face, all in the 4th- to easy 5th-class range of dif cult y. Depending on route and perspective it received ratings from "fantastic" to "awful". Go figure.
- On the summit of Findhorn, we found the register left by our friend, Hamish Mutch. A small piece of paper signed by Hamish and Dick Culbert was left in a Dried Onion Flakes tin and was dated 1963. The tin was found on the north ridge a distance of maybe 50 metres from the summit. A separate tin, which was sealed with lead, was found much closer to the actual summit. The paper inside was much more weathered and only the word "Christian" was still legible.

The Van Horne Névé, Selkirk Mountains. Photo: Doug Brown



The first ascent was in 1914, and the party included the famous Swiss guide Christian Hasler.

• Everyone climbed the quartzite peak at the far western edge of the retaining wall of the Van Horne Névé (82N/3 NAD 27, GR 677567, 2880m/9500ft). The frightfully loose and exposed notch guarding the last two vertical metres turned back all but three foolhardy souls with initials D, S and R. This peak may be named Oz, or it may be named Beaver Overlook. Or it may be named The Great Green Petunia.

• Sandra, René, Dr. Delia and Doug summitted the rocky peak south of camp (GR 621542, 2665m/8800ft) via its south ridge—two roped pitches up to 5.6 on good granite. A cairn was found on the blocky summit, but it is unknown if our route had been climbed before. The north ridge would be technically easier, but by the looks of it the rock quality would be substantially worse.

• Brad, Axel and Tom managed to tire Jane on their long variation of the route to Purity. We're not sure if that has happened before.

• No one hurt themselves, unless you count Peter's poor battered feet and shins (the consequence of a 13-hour day in 20-year-old plastic boots).

Things we didn't accomplish:

• The summit of Tomatin was untrodden by our group. Tom was well on his way up the northeast ridge, but ran out of time. The other Findhorn summitters were discouraged from traversing to Tomatin by the steep loose descent to the Tomatin Col.

• Brad and Axel attempted to climb the main peaks on Van Horne ridge due south of camp, but were deterred by hideous rock recently exposed by glacial recession. Others heeded their warnings and stayed away.

• Doug, Sandra and René made an attempt on the north ridge of Beaver Overlook (GR 664561, 2800m/9500ft), but were turned back by very poor rock.

• No one climbed Oz (GR 643566, 2730m/9000ft), as we didn't imagine such an insignificant bump on the ridge would be named and didn't learn that it was indeed named until later.

• Ken ignored social pressure and refused to act his age.

Some hopefully informative notes include:

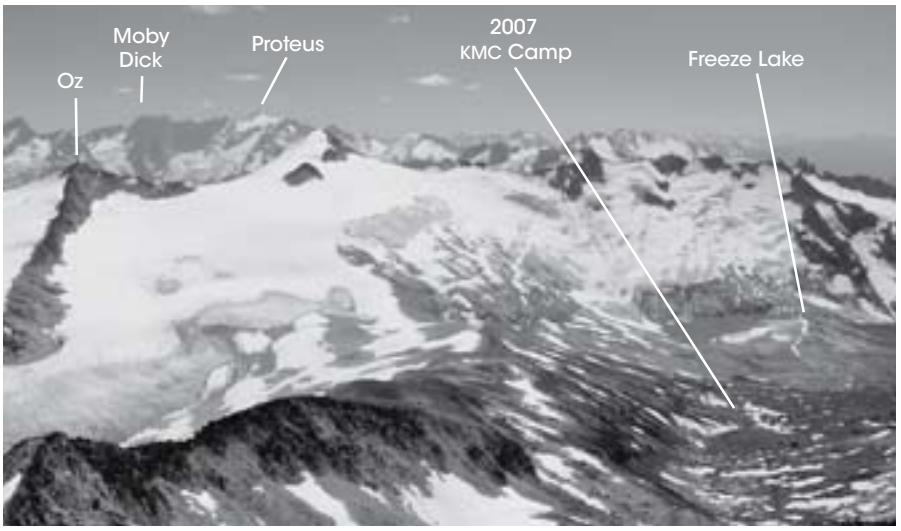
• Findhorn Peak is mislabelled on the 1:50,000 topo. As named by Wheeler, it is at GR 621590, currently labelled Mount McBean on the 1:50,000.

• False Findhorn is at GR 629585 (82N/4 NAD 27), and it is currently labelled as Findhorn Peak.

• The peaks Battle Overlook and Oz are incorrectly positioned in the otherwise excellent guidebook *Selkirks South* by David P. Jones. After consultations with old men of the mountains, David Jones and Hamish Mutch, it seems that Battle Overlook is the 2,880-metre (9,500-foot) peak at GR 665562 (82N/3 NAD 27). Oz is said to be the 2,730-metre (9,000-foot) bump on the ridge at GR 643566.

• The 2,880-metre (9,500-foot) peak at GR 677567 (82N/3 NAD 27) is in fact, not named The Great Green Petunia. It is, apparently, unnamed.

• *Selkirks South* references the comments of the first ascent party of the southwest ridge of Purity: "...forced to traverse smooth granite slabs beneath a band of seracs...." I think this is a rare case where glacial recession has made a route easier. A few variations were tried during camp, and I believe the quickest and most direct route to Purity from our camp was thus: traverse west around the northwest ridge of Oz, then descend below the first icefall of the Van Horne Glacier on moderate snow on the west, then traverse back east on steep snow immediately under the ice and slabs of this icefall, then descend moderate snow and loose rock down to "The Hole" of the Van Horne Glacier (82N/3, GR 655577), then climb up the climber's right of the cliffs on the other side of The Hole on mixed talus and snow gullies (ascending near 82N/3, GR 660576), and finally, easily traverse north to gain the upper glacier around GR 580662. Note that the easterly traverse above The Hole involves traversing steep snow above a long and nasty runout—a slip here would be most unfortunate. It is also possible that the character of this route could change significantly with continued glacial recession. A variation that is longer but technically easier involves staying high around the north side of Oz and descending the Van Horne Glacier starting around GR 656569. Note that this route, while easier, does involve a traverse on a crevassed glacier above a nasty run-out; you need to be roped for the glacier, so you would either need to protect the traverse, or be very certain of your party's abilities on steep snow.



Summary

Various ascents on the Van Horne Névé, Selkirk Mountains, B.C., July 23–30, 2007. Climbers: Axel Betz, Doug Brown, Vicki Hart, Ken Holmes, Caroline LaFace, Stephen Langley, René LeBel, Sandra McGuinness, Daniele Montandon, Delia Roberts, Brad Steele, Peter Tchir, Tom Tiedje, Jane Weller.

Steve House during the first ascent of the *Haley-House Route* on the Emperor Face of Mount Robson. Photo: Colin Haley

The Rockies

The Emperor's New Route

Steve House

When I first got the Call, Joe Josephson was on the other end of the line. The call was from Mount Robson. Joe and Barry Blanchard were looking for a third to join them on an attempt on the Emperor Face, and so began what we came to call "the annual attempt and failure to climb Mount Robson."

Over 10 days in March 1997, Barry, Joe and I made two attempts on the face. First via the central gully, but we were turned back at one-third height by that favoured climber's delusion: dry snow over steep rock (amazing how it looks climbable if you spend enough days staring at it). The second try a few days later was up the largest gully system on the right side of the face. We climbed for 700 metres to where we could traverse 25 metres to the *Emperor Ridge* and comfortable bivouac sites. There I discovered that I had somehow dropped a crucial part of the stove rendering it completely inoperable. Rather than huck myself straight off the cliff, as was my initial inclination, we spent a dry and cold night. At sun-up Barry led us calmly back down the *Emperor Ridge* with a dozen rappels and much downclimbing.

For the next 10 years, every spring I would go north for the month of March, hoping to climb the Emperor Face with Barry. Most years the forecast was too poor to warrant such an exhaustive approach. We climbed other routes: *The Silver Lining*, *M-16* and *Sans Blitz*. In 2000, Barry, Joe and I climbed to the same highpoint and descended the same way down the *Emperor Ridge*—this time thwarted by a storm. Later that summer a pair of young Slovenian climbers climbed precisely the same terrain and declared it a new route (without summitting). Barry and I didn't consider it done. In October 2002, the weather window arrived, so Barry climbed the route with Eric Dumerac and Philippe Pellet and named it *Inf nite Patience* for good reason. Even before that, I had already expanded my obsession spending seven nights in a tiny tent with Rolando Garibotti in July 2001, followed by another nine days in the Berg Lake Shelter with Vince Anderson in March 2007. In 1997, we'd helicoptered in and skied out. In 1998, we'd flown in and out. With Rolo and Vince I was determined to go by foot, but each time the weather window had closed by the time we had negotiated the 27-kilometre approach hike.

At this point I had slept 35 days below the face over a span of 10 years. It was time to do this thing. Upon returning home from the March 2007 attempt, I bookmarked all the Internet weather forecasts for Jasper, Valemount and McBride—Mount Robson being roughly equi-distance from these three locales. I checked the forecasts religiously. I created a spreadsheet to track the forecasted and actual weather so as to estimate their reliability. Weeks went by. Finally, in late May the weather looked good. Unfortunately Vince was in Alaska guiding. I needed to pull the trigger so I got on the phone to call around. Colin Haley is young and lucky and available. Good too. So I drove to Seattle, bivied in Colin's parent's loft, and on May 24 we drove to Valemount, B.C., hired a helicopter and flew to the Helmut-Robson Col. The flying accomplished two things: one, it got us there within the forecasted three-day period of good weather (the first day we burned driving and flying), and two, it allowed us a safe approach to the face by downclimbing the Mist Glacier to the start of the climbing. I had done the approach from Berg Lake and up through the dangerous Mist Icefall four times and my odds were not getting better.

We left the tent at 4:30 a.m. on May 25 and were climbing within an hour. Colin led the first block of seven pitches. We stretched the pitches by simul-climbing where reasonable, so averaged 80 metres per pitch. At over half-height the wall gets quite steep and my familiarity with the terrain came into play. There is a steep corner system just left of the apex of the face. I headed for that leading a block of seven pitches. In the process I wound around a bit to put us at the base of the corner. All the climbing was excellent as we had very good ice conditions. The last pitch through the headwall was exciting, steep M7 climbing that kept me on my arms. Over its 30-metre length, the pitch overhung about six metres! The rock varied from very solid to very suspect. The climbing comprised of excellent technical moves on thin gear—small cams and pins. But the greatest surprise was finding a tight Lost Arrow piton right at the exit move. The pin had to be from the '78 ascent by Jim Logan and Mugs Stump (*American Alpine Journal*, 1979, pp. 122–124). Of course I gladly clipped it and fired the final steep moves nearly pulling off a loose block onto Colin's head. A few metres higher I found two more pitons that had obviously been someone's belay.

I put Colin on belay. It was getting dark. I hurriedly led up and left to an ice arête that appeared to lead to the last 100 metres of climbing to reach the cornices of the *Emperor Ridge*. Arriving at the ice arête at 10:30 p.m. we hacked out a sitting stance, covered ourselves with a

lightweight tarp and alternately dozed and drank warm water while waiting for sun-up.

Illustrious oranges and dazzling reds made me feel like I was climbing out of a '70s Technicolor daydream as I led the final two moderate thin ice and mixed pitches. At the ridge we belayed down 30 metres and started simul-climbing across the top of the south face. Colin was moving slowly, due to cumulative fatigue, a recent viral infection or possible carbon monoxide poisoning in our enclosed tarp bivy; probably a bit of all three. Combine that with the fact that at 23, one's endurance simply isn't as developed as at 36. We un-roped. I went ahead pausing occasionally as Colin worked through his own personal suffering.

It's a long way across the south face to the *Wishbone Arête*. Once there, we soloed up it for a few hundred feet. The rime ice was spooky to commit to so we brought out the rope. I went ahead, winding over, around and through the incredibly wild rime formations. I got in an occasional ice screw but my confidence to continue upwards relied on the rope weaving between the many features down to my partner below.

There had not been any visibility for a long time. The rime lump got less steep and I started to go down. Confused, I turned around only to realize that I was probably on the summit. I dropped down a few steps and kneeled in the snow to keep from getting blown over. I wrapped the rope around my waist and started reeling it in. Soon Colin stood beside me. The wind seemed to tear a momentary hole in the clouds. We could see that we had in fact just come over the summit.

Colin had descended the *Kain Route* before. With the comfort of that experience and a compass bearing, we headed down. Eventually we broke through the clouds 300 metres below the summit. At the base of the face it was decided that I would go to the Helmut-Robson Col and retrieve the tent, sleeping bags and our skis while Colin waited. Our camp-to-camp time was approximately 36 hours.

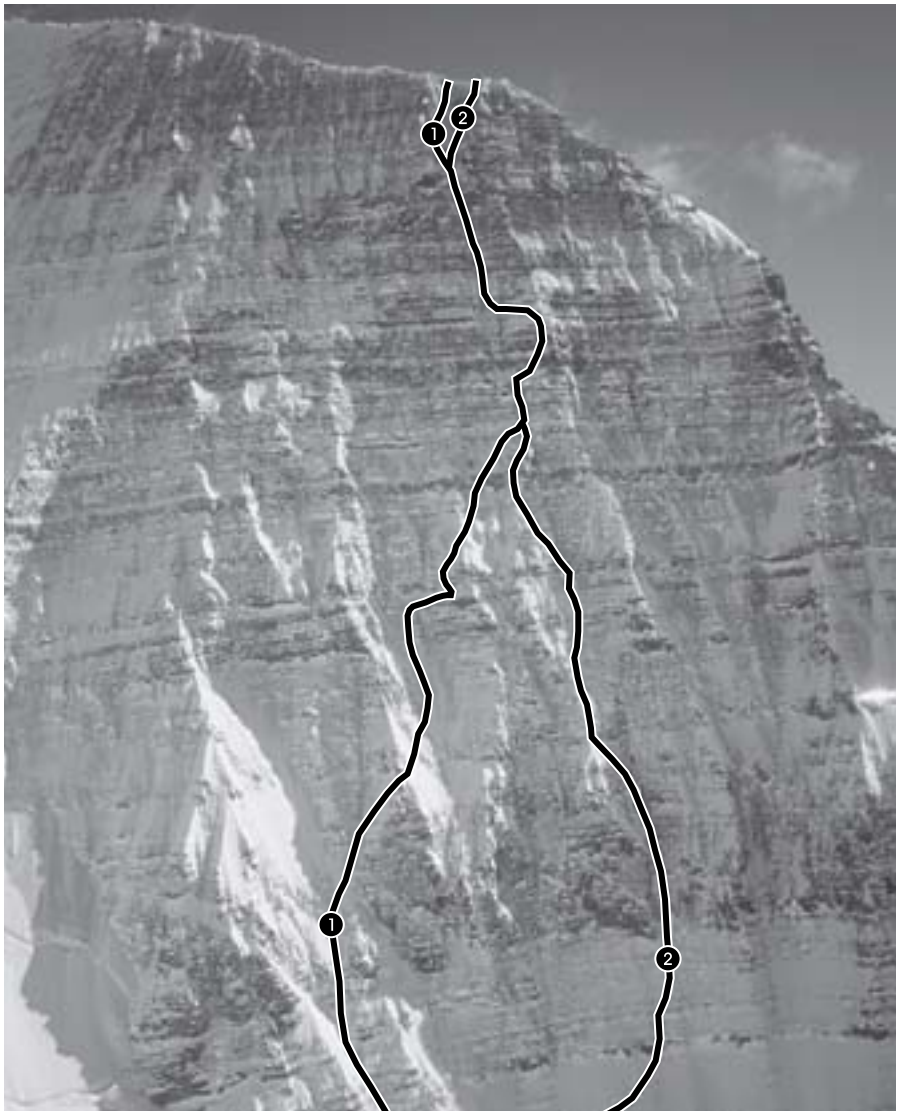
On May 27, we woke to lots of new snow. Feeling unwelcome, we packed up and descended the Robson Glacier sometimes getting dangerously off-route due to a lack of visibility and the continued driving snow. At the toe of the glacier, we lashed the skis to our packs and hoofed it down to Kinney Lake, leaving the last seven kilometres until the next morning.

It is interesting to note some of the similarities between Jim Logan's, Barry Blanchard's and my experiences with climbing this wall. Each of us made multiple attempts in winter, spring, summer and autumn. Those attempts were spread over many years but each of us finally managed, either through luck or perseverance, to be in the right place when the skies shone blue.

After getting home, Dougald McDonald put me in touch with Jim Logan. Jim concluded our phone conversation by saying, "I like the idea that somebody else has been there now. It's like Mugs and I knew what it was like up there. Now you guys know what it is like. It's kind of cool. Nobody else knows. I was getting to the point where I was wanting somebody to do that face. When you did, it made me really happy. I really liked it."

"Jim," I replied, "we liked it too."

The Emperor Face of Mount Robson: (1) *Logan-Stump*. (2) *Haley-House*.The *Logan-Stump* has been inaccurately drawn in previous guidebooks. Photo: Colin Haley



Summary

Haley-House (VI WI5 M7, 1750m) on the Emperor Face, Mt. Robson (3954m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Colin Haley, Steve House, May 24–26, 2007.

Shredding Popes Peak

Jon Walsh

The spring of ⊠⊠⊠ was the best snowpack in recent memory so many steep first descents were shredded by skiers and splitboarders in the Columbia and Rocky Mountains. One of my favourite outings came in mid-April, when Chris Brazeau and I set out to make what was probably the first complete descent of Popes Peak via its *North Couloir*.

We'd been inspired from previous seasons in Chamonix—cutting our teeth on the steepest couloirs we dared to drop into. The French combined skiing and climbing like they were meant to be together and we felt in our element doing the same. Technical descents involving belayed climbing and rappels are common in the Alps with guidebooks listing every line that has been skied including details of cruxes and even grades. These books by François Lebande and Anselme Baud were our sources for inspiration and stimulated our imaginations every time we looked at our own "Canadian Alps". It was also inspiring to see other adventurers mixing skiing and mountaineering to push their limits in steep remote terrain. In general, some impressive shredding was getting done.

On Popes Peak, two pitches of ice and mixed climbing through the small but overhanging serac had prevented skiers from making the complete descent from the summit. As the entire line was plainly visible from the highway and the approach was short, we had envisioned the obvious link-up for some time.

At the top of the main couloir—a classic descent in itself of about 500 metres at 45 to 50 degrees—Chris led a 15-metre pitch of WI3 ice with skis on his pack. With no possibilities for an anchor at the top, we simul-climbed the 55-degree hanging snow slope above until an ice anchor was available in the serac. I took the next lead which involved a couple of body lengths of M4 mixed climbing with crampons on limestone slopers and tools in overhanging glacial ice. I belayed Chris up on a single ice screw then we kicked steps and skinned to the summit. A mandatory break was in order to take in the spectacular 360-degree view before dropping back into the knee-deep cold smoke that waited below. Both climbing pitches were rappelled on the way down—one off a V-thread and the other off the biggest snow bollard we've ever made. The rest of the descent was straightforward and before we knew it we were back at the car enjoying the beautiful spring sunshine once again.

Chris Brazeau leading the ice pitch at the top of the *North Couloir* to gain the summit slopes of Popes Peak. This pitch was rappelled during the ski descent. Photo: Jon Walsh

The Classeeks

Eamonn Walsh

My year was filled with many of the Rockies' classic alpine routes. I also had the opportunity to do a few "classeeks"—routes that are not yet but should gain classic status. Here is an account of five such climbs.

Eamonn Walsh (left) and Greg Thaczuk on the summit of Diadem Peak during the first winter ascent of *Humble Horse*. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Diadem Peak

The north face of Diadem Peak is definitely one of the classic alpine mixed climbs of the range but it has fallen out of favour due to the melting-out of the permanent ice. The fact that it had never seen a winter ascent made it an attractive choice for a pre-vernal equinox attempt. With a good forecast, I suggested the plan to my fellow Man of Girth (MOG), Greg Thaczuk (a.k.a. the Original Beefcake), who was fresh back from a rock-climbing trip in Spain. Keen as always, it was not until we had done the 4.5-hour ski, bivied in -25 C temps, woke up, had soup and slogged to the bergshrund did Greg come to the realization that Spain was a much nicer place.

"I don't know if I can do this," he suggested.

However, I know Greg's legendary pain threshold and plain old stubbornness, so I felt he was just being a wee bit soft from all the olive oil, wine and other Spanish luxuries. With sympathy, I offered him some words of encouragement: "You'll be fine."

Rising 600 metres from the glacial bench, the route offered sustained terrain. After the lower ice slope, we did seven 60-metre pitches with the crux being particularly aesthetic—a narrow and vertical five-metre step of sn'ice (frothy snow-ice). The exit from the couloir was also good with interesting drytooling and slabby feet. Once on the ridge, we moved left into a snow bowl then wallowed up to the cornice, which required a short battle to reach the summit. It had taken us about eight hours from bivy to summit.

We rappelled back down the route to our bivy site, finished whatever food was left and then skied out. Over the next couple of days, it became apparent that we had both suffered frostbite. Greg's left big toe and my right one turned black. Mine had a very distinct crack, more like a crevasse, which was always open and sometimes bleeding. It was not until July that the last of the dead skin finally fell off. Yes indeed, it had been a great climb.

Mount Temple

Like Raphael Slawinski says, "No season is complete without an ascent of Mount Temple," (or Mount Alberta for that matter). Mount Temple is a great alpine day-hit: the approach is short, the climbs are long and the descent is easy. In mid-July we set out to repeat a line our friends, Josh "Squash" Briggs and Rob "Bones" Owens, had done in the summer of 2001 that climbs the obvious rib between the Aemmer Couloir and the Sphinx Face.

Much elevation is gained hiking to the base and then scrambling up to the start of the roped climbing. We did five pitches to reach more scrambling terrain. The first pitch was the crux at a solid 5.8; the rest was 5.7 with some good exposure to the left but low-angle to the right. Indeed it would be quite easy to traverse out right onto the snow and ice slope of the Sphinx Face if one needed to escape. This would involve one rap near the bottom and though faster than descending the line of ascent, it would be exposed to potential rock fall. After the above-mentioned five pitches, we put the rope away and scrambled on. Both of us love this type of climbing so we quickly covered the terrain to the junction with the *East Ridge*. Instead of traversing under the Black Towers, we followed the crest throughout. This is how the *East Ridge* was originally done and is actually quite good. The towers are mostly scrambling, though it is comforting to use the rope for the last half.

We continued along the upper *East Ridge* and were late enough in the day to have the summit to ourselves. On the descent, Raphael regaled a couple of tourists with tales of our daring and they graciously drove us warriors back to our car at the trailhead of Paradise Valley—the round trip taking 12.5 hours.

We found the climb to be harder than the classic *East Ridge* with more technical climbing, yet there is still no need for rock shoes. The climb would be

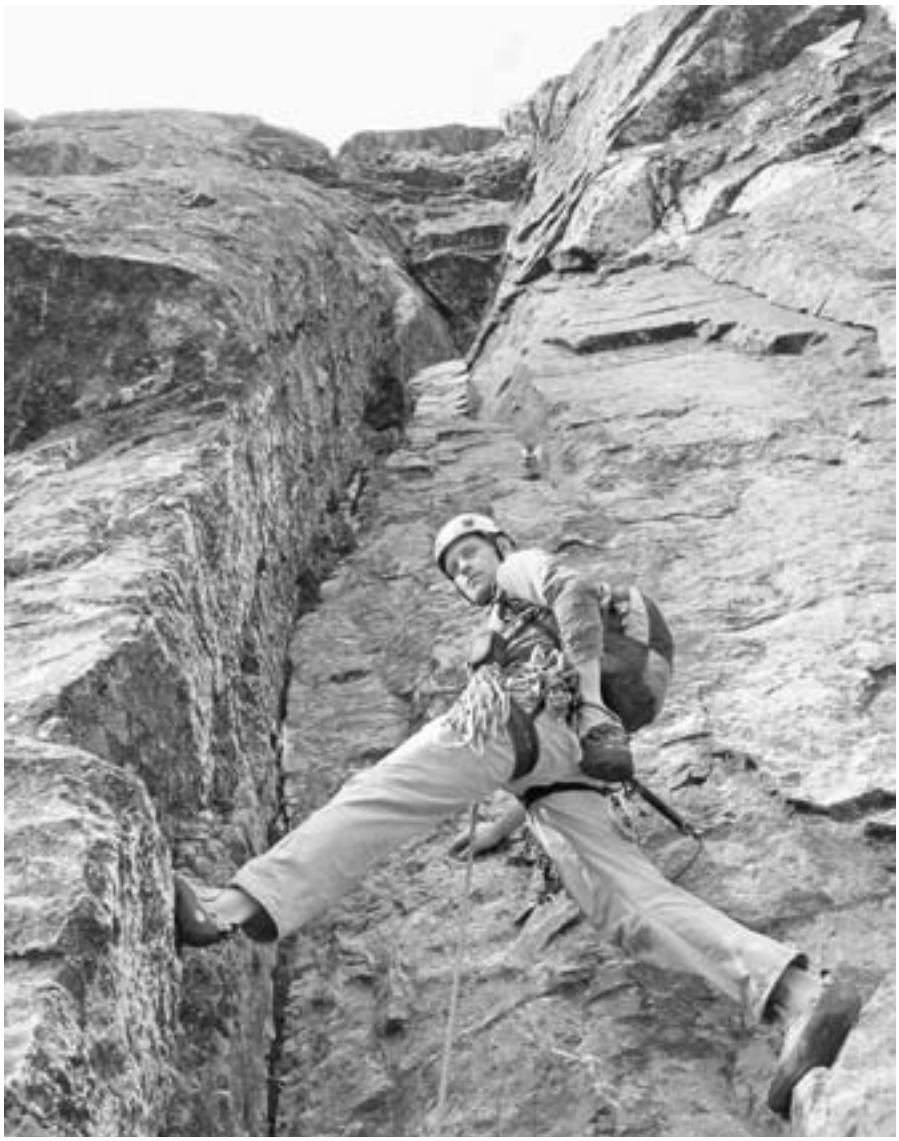
a great stepping-stone for those looking to do the more technical north face routes.

Fluted Peak

Jasper is mellower than Canmore or Banff, so I try to visit Dana Ruddy whenever possible. Dana's roots run deep here: his family on both sides goes back generations in the area. We decided on Fluted Peak, an obscure mountain that Dana had done the first ascent of the east face of back in November 2003 with Paul Valiulis. Fluted Peak is located above the Geraldine Lakes just south of Jasper and we were off to repeat the *East Ridge*, which was first done by Ken Wallator and Harvey Struss in August 1998.

On July 29, we hiked to Lower Geraldine Lake then cut across south towards the peak. In the dark we accidentally stayed too high and did lots of not-so-fun side-hilling in thick brush with clouds of bugs keeping us company. It took us about three hours to reach the base of the *East Ridge*. From here the ridge gradually steepens for 1,000 metres of quality quartzite. The first two-thirds are mostly scrambling with some easy 5th class until the final 350 metres where we took out the rope and rock shoes. Above there we did eight pitches, two of which were excellent (5.9) while the rest ranged from 5.6 to 5.7. The first 5.9 (pitch four) was a groove to a massive roof that was solved by climbing out left then back right on steep juggy terrain. The second 5.9 (pitch seven) angled left on intimidating looking ground but it is all there—just keep moving left then straight up through the notch. A final stretch of easy 5th class and scrambling with amazing views gains the summit.

The descent down the back is a nasty scree-covered affair, similar to descending the back of Mount Edith Cavell. We had lots of daylight and the weather was pleasant, so without stress we took our time enjoying the afternoon and eating natural lettuce that Dana found along the way. As per usual we had tall cans of good beer awaiting us in the icy creek flowing from the Lower Geraldine Lake. Nothing like a cold beer for a dry throat.



Dana Ruddy beginning the crux fourth pitch on the *East Ridge* of Fluted Peak.
Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Mount Bryce

A long desired new route for me was a variation to the *North Face* of Mount Bryce. It is so obviously visible in Sean Dougherty's *Selected Alpine Climbs* that I still cannot believe it went unclimbed for so long. When looking at the photo, there is a rock band to the right of the ice slope that hosts a 300-metre couloir gouging a passage to the upper face. It did not look hard, but it was a line.

I first went to try it in 2001 with Josh Briggs and Steve Holeczi but conditions and weather were not favourable. Instead, we slogged up the glacier past the north face and ascended a short ice slope to reach a col on the northeast ridge. From there we made our way in a whiteout to the summit. We descended—or rather tried to descend—the south couloir, but took a much steeper one to the east. After many rappels, we were near the bottom when the sun emerged from the summit cloud and began unleashing wet rock-filled avalanches. I remember sliding down our last rappel thinking the lads would want one more rap, so with great risk to myself, I laboriously beat two pins in the streaming rock. Whilst I was doing this, both had rapped to me, but it was not until I tried to pull the ropes that I realized I had been abandoned. I turned to curse with them about the stuck ropes only to see one distant and another very

distant figure plunge stepping with great speed down the glacier. I gave one more tug, then gave up and followed suit. Looking back up once safely away, we saw the straightforward gully we should have descended.

In early fall 2007, Cory Richards, Dana Ruddy, Raphael Slawinski and I left the parking lot at Bryce Creek by noon. We had a fortunate meeting with a couple of hikers who told us about a trail cut on climber's left of the creek, so with this beta we had a leisurely hike to the base of the face. Even in the Rockies, there are not a whole lot of faces with this kind of relief—2,500 metres base to summit. Pretty cool.

We only had to use the rope for one short section during the 1,600 metres to our bivy—the rest was scrambling and easy 5th class (six hours from the car). We spent the evening enjoying the sunset with an uninterrupted view over the range. It was quite beautiful.

The next day we started up the north face and then headed rightwards for the couloir. At its base, the rope came out and a thin-ice step gave access to the couloir proper. Easy ice for several rope lengths culminated in another steep step to exit the confines. The ice arête high on the face with the full 2,500 metres dropping off to the braided creek far below was quite memorable. We arrived on the summit right at noon, where we spent only a short time before the cold wind drove us down. This time we found the correct descent gully and, due to some cloud cover, we had not one bit of rock fall—a very different experience than when I was last there. Once back at the car, I brought out the six-pack, which was woefully inadequate for our thirst.

Mount MOG

I used to climb a lot with Rob Owens, but over the years, we got out less and less until many seasons would pass without tying in together. Lately, we have been making an annual occasion of climbing at least one day with each other and, like back in the day, we always have a blast. If you say "Rob Owens" fast, it sounds like raw bones, hence the lad is known as Bones.

For this year's reunion, he suggested a line that he spotted the previous spring while ski touring up Chickadee Valley. The proposed objective was on the north face of peak 2,680 metres, which is a subsidiary point of Mount Whymper in Kootenay National Park.

Hiking up the valley early on that frosty October morning under a brilliant full moon, we were not really expecting much to come of it but once there, it appeared to be in good shape. A low-angle shield of rock led for 200 metres to a massive ledge where things got steeper for the upper 400 metres. A huge right-leaning gully system splits the headwall leading directly to the summit. After a short jaunt up scree, we put on the 'poons and did some low-angle mixed scrambling to the large ledge, which we traversed rightwards to a corner that allowed entrance to the upper gully system. Bones' lead up this corner was awesome—the rock was mostly good but there were still some committing run-outs on challenging terrain to get to good gear. In summer it would probably be a 5.9 pitch, but snow, ice and cold makes things a lot harder.

I took over for several simul-climbing pitches; the ground was mostly easy with short steep steps to contend with. My block ended below the second crux, which Rob once again sent showing great patience and perseverance to unlock the problematic pitch. After that, I did a short bit of aid to gain access to easier terrain and from there we swapped leads, topping out as darkness fell. The descent went well with the help of a full moon. It was a most beautiful night to be thrashing around in the cold snowy hills of autumn.

The *North Couloir* on the north face of Mount Bryce. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Summary

Humble Horse (IV 5.7 WI4), north face, Diadem Peak (3371m). FWA: Greg Thaczuk, Eamonn Walsh, March 1, 2007.

Squashed Bones (IV 5.8), northeast face, Mt. Tempe (5343m).
2nd ascent: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, July 15, 2007.

East Ridge (IV 5.9), Fluted Peak. 2nd ascent: Dana Ruddy, Eamonn Walsh, July 29, 2007.

North Couloir (IV WI3/4, 2500m), north face, Mt. Bryce (3507m). FA: Cory Richards, Dana Ruddy, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, September 8–9, 2007.

Owens-Walsh (IV+ M6+ A1, 600m), north face, Mt. MOG (2680m). FA: Rob Owens, Eamonn Walsh, October 26, 2007. [See complete route description on page 134—Ed.]

The Spirit of a Generation

Rob Owens

Every september and October, the local mountains, made mostly of rotten sedimentary rock, begin to tighten with the cooling temperatures of autumn. Binoculars glass the big alpine faces: Howse, Chephren, Robson, the list goes on. As the ice starts to form, maybe, just maybe, conditions will ripen for an attempt before the snow starts to fly and the avalanche conditions become dangerous. A whole fall season can slip by without the proper weather for climbing the high faces. More often than not, ideal conditions do not happen when time-off has been set aside. After many disappointing days, weeks, months, seasons and even years, perhaps someday the proper timing will occur for a grand ascent of an amazing line. Until that time, there are many steep faces on lower peaks that are not as exposed to the nasty weather and early snowfalls of the big rigs.

The Canadian Rockies are lower in elevation compared to the Rockies of Colorado and the Sierra of California but climbing them is as burly as it gets—it doesn't have to be high to be big. There are hundreds of lesser-known peaks below the 3,400-metre mark with steep walls 500 to 800 metres high that offer very challenging and aesthetic climbing in snowed-up and iced-up conditions. The options for routes like this are literally unlimited. One only needs to look at a modern guidebook of the Mont Blanc area in Europe to see how naked our mountains are. We are ready to start drawing lines on these faces.

With the significant recent advancements in technology, winter climbing has no doubt become more accessible, even to those without a bizarre desire to suffer. The popularity of the sport and the standard of the average ice and mixed climber has increased dramatically. It is very common to see casual weekend warriors hiking the WI6 testpieces from yesteryear.

Bolted mixed crags have also been a prominent factor in the rising standards. Nearly every road-side drip has bolts, but for many of the devout Rockies' winter climbers, the idea of bolting another mixed climb or trying to climb the next "hardest M-climb in the world" has fallen out of favour. When ice climbing first caught on in the 1970s, it was with a vision that the skills learned would one day assist climbing in the high alpine environment. The same was for bolted M-climbing—it was a way to get strong so someday the skills could be applied to the larger alpine faces. Oddly enough, based on the number of successful ascents (or lack of), the hard winter alpine routes of the 1980s have not become popular.

The conundrum is that in order to alpine climb in winter in the Canadian Rockies there is a much more required to succeed than strong technical skills. To climb in the winter alpine environment you need strong headspace, to be able to fiddle for hard-to-find gear, analyze risky conditions and be able to fail and fail again without losing psych. You need an unprecedented level of discipline, patience and commitment.

Front country climbing, especially bolted M-climbing, can definitely build a strong level of technical confidence, but ultimately one that is based on a high level of success due to the obvious comforts of short approaches and lack of risk. This can become an issue when taken into the alpine. Failure can be hard to accept, the patience required may not be learned in order to spend three hours leading a tricky pitch or an hour making a bomber anchor. It seems that many seasoned veterans of the Canadian Rockies have realized this vulnerability and are now seeking out climbs that will prepare them for the alpine. These routes are traditionally protected on varied mixed terrain of ice, rock and snow. As with ice climbing in the 1970s, sport climbing in the 1980s and M-climbing in the 1990s, this new breed of alpine cragging is not only great training for the big picture, but proving to be a hell of a lot of fun in its own right. When, and if, the big faces come into condition, the practiced climber will be ready.

Rob Owens on the first ascent of the north face of Mount MOG. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Owens-Walsh (IV+ M6+ A1, 600m), north face, Mt. MOG (2680m). FA: Rob Owens, Eamonn Walsh, October 26, 2007.

Mount MOG is our name for peak 2,680 located just west of Mount Whymper in Chickadee Valley in Kootenay National Park. MOG is an acronym for Man of Girth, which Eamonn and I both are. It can also mean half-man, half-dog.

Gear: Two ice screws (stubbies), Camalots from #.5 to #3, eight nuts (full size range), six pitons (KBs to baby angle), ice hooks.

Route: Follow the main weakness in the face. It will hold a varying amount of ice and snow depending on the time of year. There would be many small variations depending on what looks most enticing. Ice splatterings were encountered on every pitch but only two ice screws were used on the entire route. A couple of hard pitches with lots of easier mixed (M4) in between. We took 16 hours with good travel on the snow and even névé in places. One short section—an overhanging, arcing roof corner crack with decent gear but no feet—was overcome with three points of aid to keep the pace. It would have gone free at a short but very physical M8. A direct finish for the last rope length looks great but we were in a hurry to get off before dark so avoided the last hard pitch by climbing low-angled terrain to the right.

Descent: We went down the drainage to the east (involving exposed downclimbing and one short rappel) but it is believed that a couloir on the west side of the peak may be a better option.

Zeitgeist (IV+ M7- WI5 R, 530m), northwest face, Mt. Bell. FA: Steve Holeczi, Rob Owens, November 8, 2007.

Zeitgeist ("the spirit of a generation" in German) took two attempts to climb and offers high quality quartzite mixed climbing. There was a lot of snow clearing on the pitches so bring multiple pairs of gloves. The route finished on the ridge, but could be continued to the summit.

Approach: Hike five kilometres along a good trail to Taylor Lake from the Trans-Canada Highway then go directly up to the face overlooking the lake (2.5 hours).

Gear: Ten screws (mostly short), Camalots to #3 with double #.75 to #2, six to eight nuts, six to eight pitons (mostly KBs), ice hooks.

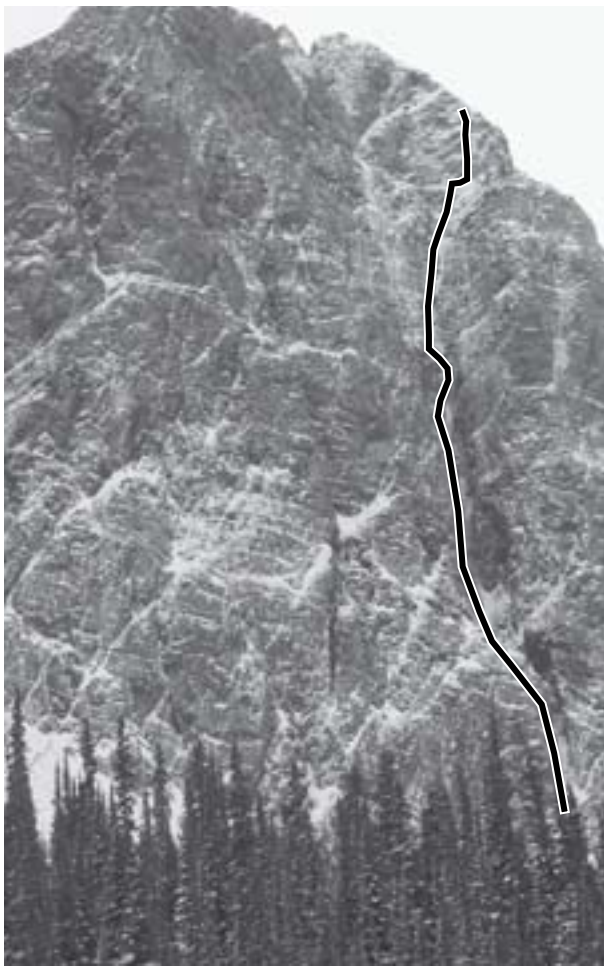
P1: WI4, 60m. A pitch of thin ice and compacted snow enters a low-angled snow gully and a two-nut fixed belay on the right.

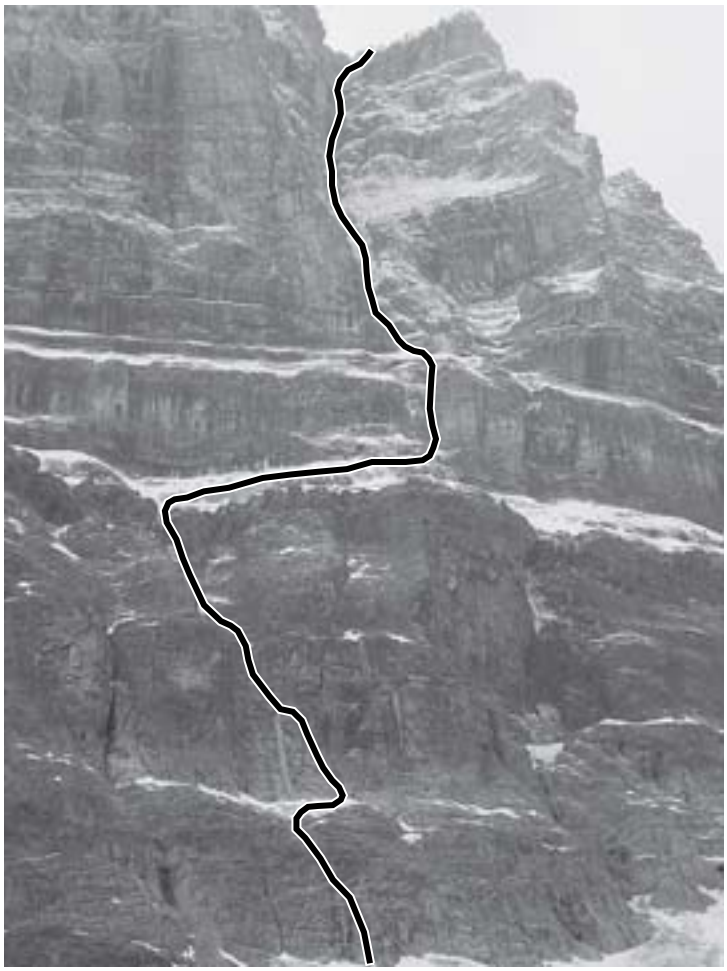
P2–4: M3, 150m. Snow gully with short mixed steps.

P5: WI4+, 55m. Beautiful narrow snow-ice corner to a belay behind a pillar.

P6: M6+, 30m. Short but steep drytooling around the fragile pillar. Belay in an alcove.

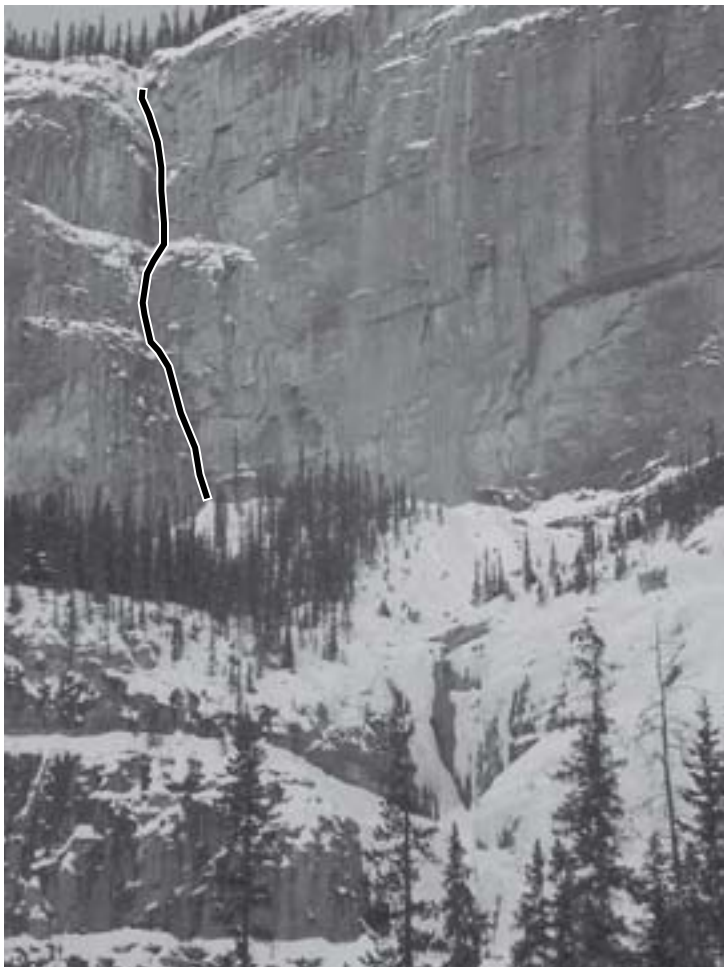
P7: M7- WI5, 30m. Excellent and





sustained pitch on the right wall. The crux is traversing back left to fixed two-nut belay.
P8: M6+ WI5 R, 55m. An awesome pitch through mixed roofs to a steep ice-veneer protected by cams.
P9–10: M4, 80m. Snow and easy mixed terrain.
P11: M5, 30m. Super positive and well-protected drytooling up a steep wall towards the ridge.
P12: M4, 40m. Climb up into the obvious alleyway around corner to finish on the ridge.
Descent: Rappel the route off rock and ice anchors.

No Use in Crying (IV M7, 205m), Upper Weeping Wall. FA: Rob Owens, Jon Walsh, February 13, 2008.
The route is a very high quality, naturally protected mixed line. The Weeping Wall area is one of the most well known chunks of waterfall ice climbing on the planet and it is surprising and rare to find such a great, unclimbed route on the upper wall. There appeared to lack any significant amount of ice but surprisingly 80 per cent of the tool placements were in ice (often ice-filled cracks). The climbing is never too desperate with good gear placements, but it is quite sustained. It is unknown how much ice this feature normally contains but it is expected to be icy most seasons due to the melt-freeze cycles that this wall is continuously exposed to.
Approach: The line takes the major rock weakness on the upper headwall about 100 metres to the left of the top of *Snivelling Gully*.
Gear: Six ice screws (mainly stubbies), Camalots from #.2 to #3 with doubles from #.3 to #.75, six to eight mid-sized nuts, six pitons (mostly KBs), ice hooks.
P1: M6, 60m. Follow a shallow, right-facing, iced-up groove to a big ledge below a short steep wall (piton and horn belay).
P2: M6, 60m. Climb the iced-up vertical corner crack for 20 metres to lower-angled terrain. Avoid continuing up ice to the big tree; instead trend along a snowed-up, sketchy slab to deeper snow below a dry, shallow scoop (two-nut fixed belay).
P3: M7, 25m. Climb the right side of the scoop to a small ledge. Once the appropriate protection is in place, launch over the first of two overhanging bulges with surprisingly good tool placements and good opportunities for gear. Belay on low-angled terrain off ice screws (rock gear can be found if the ice is too rotten for screws).
P4: M6, 60m. Start with 20 metres of drytooling up to a left-leaning, right-facing corner. Funky mixed climbing followed by a spectacular exit on ice gains the top of the wall (ice-screw belay).
Descent: Rappel the route off ice and/or rock anchors.



Far left: *Zeitgeist* on the northwest face of Mount Bell.
Photo: Rob Owens
Centre: The *Owens-Walsh* on the north face of Mount MOG.
Photo: Eamonn Walsh
Left: *No Use in Crying* on the Upper Weeping Wall.
Photo: Rob Owens
Below: Rob Owens on pitch one of *No Use in Crying*.
Photo: Jon Walsh

Unforgiven

Andy Genereux

Old school verses new school—it's all about ethics in the traditional world of Yamnuska, the crown jewel of the Canadian Rockies' trad scene. Smashing the last bolt home, I finally finish building my latest project: *Unforgiven*. It's been four long, grueling days carrying murderously heavy loads of gear up the approach trail to the top of the cliff under the unrelenting spring sun. A 35-kilogram pack and a 900-metre elevation gain is the burden of plying my trade. Doing so has gone against 50-plus years of tradition on Yam. This is not my first time going against tradition, and hopefully, not my last.

Climbers from the old school don't want things to change on Yamnuska. They strongly adhere to the value of ground-up advancement. They embrace bold climbing and support the minimal use of bolts—better yet, no bolts at all. In the end they hope these practices will slow progress and development on the mountain; maybe leave something for future generations to explore and climb.

On the other hand, I have staunchly promoted the new-school approach, which is a mixture of pure sport climbing and traditional climbing. Several climbers including myself have begun rap-bolting to build routes on the mountain. These modern methods are about having reasonably protected routes with high technical difficulty, not fear. Some old-school protagonists feel the growing trend to place bolts instead of pitons for fixed gear is somehow a step backwards. With this progression towards better fixed gear, the old-school enthusiasts feel that today's climbs are being brought down to a level were everybody can get up the bloody routes. They feel the need for skill, composure and judgment is missing from these modern routes. The new-school thinking has thrown a monkey wrench into traditional ideals on this sacred bastion of stone. They fear their ethics will be displaced, lost forever.

I, too, practiced these older values for 20-plus years on Yam. During that period I helped to establish more than 20 routes on the mountain. In that process, I survived big falls, rock failure, freaked out partners and chopped ropes. Being a bold climber was a beautiful thing in the "scary '80s". During those heady days, the sparse bolting was established by hand drilling from free stances. This practice required both hands to be free to work the hammer and drill. This original style of bolting often led to bolder climbing because the opportunity to drill wasn't always available when the leader needed protection.

Climbers moved forward using hooks to place the bolts somewhat more frequently. This development then evolved into using a power drill with hooks. For me, this eventually evolved into leading with a power drill without hooks. I incorporated all of these practices while rope-soloing ground-up. Lately, I have become a big proponent of rap-bolting on Yam, having installed my last four routes on the mountain using this new-school tactic. Breaking with traditional ideology was not an easy transition emotionally, but from a practical standpoint it made perfect sense since the mountain can easily be accessed from the backside. Bad rock can be cleaned and bolts installed from the safety of rappel. Applying these practices is efficient but, best of all, it allows me to work new routes by myself in relative safety. It eliminates the need to worry about dropping a loose block on my poor unsuspecting partner as they hold my rope for hours on end.

These modern schemes are a lot less risky when pushing new routes but still require a lot of skill, planning and good judgment to achieve a quality result. Most important for me is that after the process is complete, climbers will want to repeat my climbs and in doing so will have a good experience.

Since that first climb—*Grillmair Chimneys*—went up, climbers and their gear have greatly improved. Sticky rubber, modern cams and comfortable harnesses support the modern climber. They train year round at local gyms, which allows them to achieve improved fitness and ability. For me the single biggest factor corresponding with the rise in technical grades on the cliff has been the increased use of bolts to protect the modern trad routes of today. The fixed protection has given climbers the confidence and added safety to push the technical envelope. Does it really matter how they got there?

Maintaining the traditional ethics on Yamnuska is not so important to me. I have nothing to prove to anyone. During the prime of my career I climbed on par with the best from my generation. Although back then, it had been important to succeed using the ground-up approach. Today I see myself less and less using this traditional approach for new routes on the mountain. In the end, I realized the only person affected by these original terrifying experiences was me. Now when I clean and primp a new route, no climber will ever quite experience the same range of emotions, be exposed to the same level of danger or make the same potentially life altering decisions as I had to. Once the route is opened and the information divulged, the experiences of the first ascentionist can never be repeated.

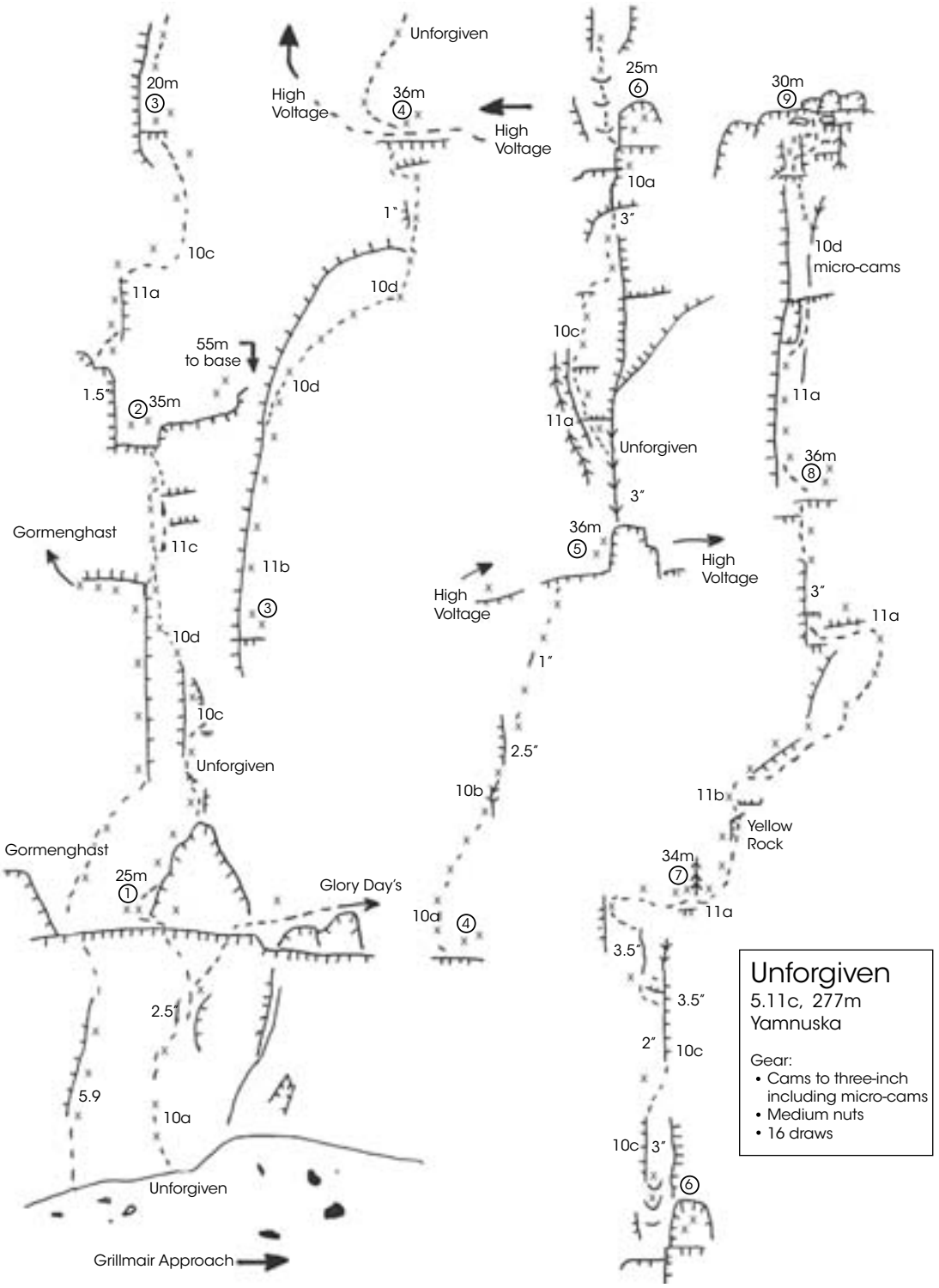
The modern ethic simply makes sense to me on a crag like Yamnuska. Hardly anybody does the scary old routes of the past even though they offer a unique perspective on our climbing heritage. I am not advocating that these climbs should be changed or improved or brought down to a lower level by adding more bolts. I do advocate the replacement of aging fixed gear. Retro-fitting seems to be happening on the cliff haphazardly anyways. With each passing year there seems to be extra bolts popping up on the older climbs. Many of these new bolts replace old fixed gear, while some do not, thus eroding the efforts of the original pioneers. I do not agree

with this unless the first ascentionist has been consulted or directly involved in the process.

Attempting to bring the cliff forward in terms of standards has caused much criticism to be levied over the years. I feel unforgiven. The ethics I have employed add a different experience to the Yam adventure. Some may disagree—that is OK. I feel there is still plenty of room for all styles to co-exist on this mountain. In the end, *Unforgiven* should prove to be one of the finer examples of what can be achieved with the modern ethic. Enjoy the climb, or alternatively put up your own statement. Be unforgiving and bitter, or welcome the new style. The choice is yours to make.

Summary

Unforgiven (5.11c, 277m, 9 pitches), Yamnuska. FA: Ruedi Beglinger, Andy Genereux, June 2007. FFA: Brian Balazs, Andy Genereux, August 2007.



Myths, Misnomers and Misadventures

Dana Ruddy

When entering Jasper National Park from the east, the impressive view of Roche Miette dominates the vista. The distinctive prow dividing the west and north faces can be seen from as far away as Edson, more than 100 kilometres to the east.

Roche Miette left a lasting impression with early Rockies explorer Arthur Coleman. As he exited the Rockies via the Athabasca Valley in 1907, Coleman referred to Miette's striking ramparts as the most impressive architecture along the Athabasca River, the mountain "pushing its bold front out into the valley like a commanding fort with unscalable walls."

And in fact, the steep cliffs of Roche Miette's north face had not been scaled until 1980, fortuitously, just 10 days before I entered the world.

It was in May of that year that Pat Paul and Peter Charkiw climbed the north face in a two-day effort. While at their bivy only 100 metres above the ground, they noted "…the huge semi-detached swords of rock hanging 500 feet directly over our little eyrie…" (*CAJ*, vol. 64 (1981), pp. 97–98). Aptly, the two named the route *Death From Above* (IV 5.8 A3). Hanging daggers aside, Paul commented that he was "…ecstatic about the quality of rock…."

In early July 2007, JP McCarthy and I climbed what we believe to be the second ascent of *Death From Above*. I would not have used the word "ecstatic" to describe my feelings regarding the looming pitch; however, like all Miette routes, *Death From Above* offers varying degrees of rock quality. The crux pitch provides vertical to overhanging climbing on beautiful rock with good protection. The exit pitch on the other hand, though not overly challenging, is a heap of stacked blocks and tottering pillars which, once beyond, will leave the climber grateful to reach the summit plateau. Though we climbed the route entirely free, it cannot be considered a true free ascent as we suffered a short fall on the crux pitch—a consequence of cold and tired hands.

Jody Sutherland seconding the crux fifth pitch of the *West Face* on Roche Miette. Photo: Dana Ruddy

On another cold day, in April 1989, Ken Wallator and Ric Costea managed the second ascent of the Miette tower. Following a series of corners on the west face, they established what has since become the most popular route on the tower at IV 5.9 A2. It took a second trip by Wallator and Kevin Christakos to free the route at 5.10 b/c.

Jody Sutherland and I were lucky enough to have our own misadventures with the west face this past summer. To avoid loose and unprotectable rock, after only three pitches on the left side of the west face, we were forced to join Wallator's west face route. Nonetheless, we felt after duelling with this second pitch for well over an hour that it was deserving of a name. We named our variation *Ain't No Granite Holiday* (5.10+ X). Continuing to the summit, we encountered by far the warmest day I have yet to experience on Miette, and while stopping to rehydrate on the large ledge below the west face crux, close inspection of an old self-drive bolt revealed it to be located in hollow rock. We took some time to add a new three-eighths-inch stainless steel bolt to back it up.

Twelve years before that ascent, in the summer of 1995, Ken Wallator had returned to Miette, that time with Harvey Struss. While the climbing community avoided the rain and cold that bitter season, Ken and Harvey were struck with a bout of cabin fever and decided to "get after it." As Harvey put it, "We were going up, and we were going to have a good time!" On the first day, blowing rain and sleet turned into five centimetres of snow, setting the tone for the rest of the climb. As it was too miserable to sleep on the face, they were forced to the ground each night. This time-consuming process took six hard days to complete and earned the route its fitting name—*Taskmaster* (IV 5.8 A3).

A fabled face it had become, and at the end of the summer of 2007, Matt Reynolds and I had the pleasure of making our own marks on Roche Miette's history. On a cold clear day in August,

we went to try our luck on a route I had considered while on a previous Miette trip. We eventually named the route *Grey Streaks*, a tribute to the defining feature of the route. The line follows the right-hand side of two parallel water runnels on the north face. The runnels are clearly visible from the Yellowhead Highway below.

On the first three pitches we found an assortment of old gear and bail tat. Harvey Struss, a local choss-wrangler, later told me that the gear was from an early '90s attempt by Ken Wallator and Kevin Christakos. The two were forced to abandon their effort after Ken took a nasty whipper on the third pitch and tore most of the skin off his hands trying to arrest a fall. The route was supposed to be named Fuck Lycra—a reference to the team's distaste for the trend at the time.

The lower pitches of *Grey Streaks* follow mostly moderate 5.7 to 5.9 terrain before crossing paths with *Death from Above*. There, after joining the right-hand water streak, the route takes a very lineal line through the upper headwall. The sixth pitch, the crux, is particularly brilliant. Despite its reputation for the opposite, Miette proved to provide excellent rock and solid protection. And though it was a cold late August day, it was not until above the crux that the sun finally made its way to the north face and encouraged us to remove our down jackets.

Above the crux, we placed one bolt at each of the two final stations, as the exposure is quite intense and the anchors are less than perfect. Typical of Roche Miette routes, the final pitch offered up the sting in the tail, with progressively loose and precarious climbing. At this point I happily turned the lead over to Matt, and he had the pleasure of scrapping it out with the route's final metres.

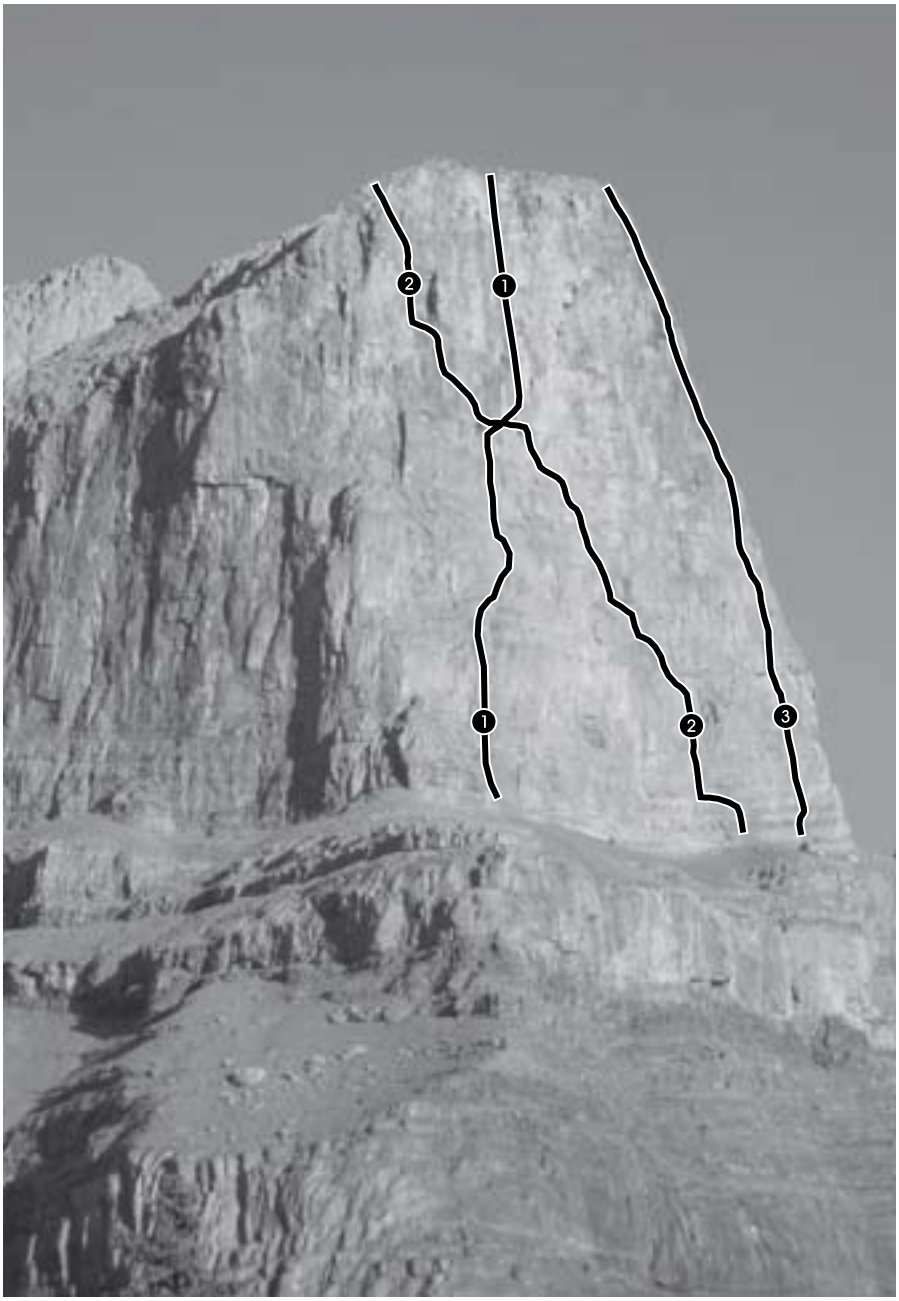
Years pass without the Miette tower seeing a single ascent—a testament to its dif culty. Many a strong-fingered sport climber has been frightened off by the first pitch of the west face, or the hand traverse that opens *Death from Above*. A sure head and good route finding skills will serve interested parties well, as Roche Miette represents great adventure rock climbing in a grand position. Although stories of poor rock and high winds keep the crowds at bay, Miette holds a number of true Rockies "class-eeks". For those interested in exploring its distinctive prow, there are a plenty of puzzles yet to be pieced together.

Summary

Death from Above (IV 5.8 A3 or 5.11b with one fall, 350m), north face, Roche Miette. *FA*: Peter Charkiw, Pat Paul, May 1980. 2nd ascent: JP McCarthy, Dana Ruddy, July 2007.

Ain't No Granite Holiday (5.10+ X, 3 pitches), variation start to the *West Face* (IV 5.10b/c), Roche Miette. *FA*: Dana Ruddy, Jody Sutherland, August 2007.

Grey Streaks (IV 5.11-, 300m), north face, Roche Miette. *FA*: Matt Reynolds, Dana Ruddy, August 2007.



The north face of Roche Miette: (1) *Grey Streaks*. (2) *Death From Above*. (3) *Taskmaster*. Photo: Dana Ruddy

Clemenceau: The New Norm

Rich Gebert

Have you ever dreamed of an unassisted or dirtbag approach to the Clemenceau area? One where you won't get your feet wet, never set foot on a glacier until you're there and spend most of the time in pleasant alpine country? Well, grab your paddles because this is it. How fast? I made it from the Lawrence Grassi Hut back to my canoe in under 10 hours. This blows away anything previous by days.

First a word about the Kinbasket and logging operations in the area. My approach started from Sprague Bay, a B.C. Forest Service recreation site about 16 kilometres north of Mica Dam. The dam is at the end of the paved road, Highway 23 from Revelstoke. It's a good idea to print off the map from the B.C. Forest Service recreation sites web page that shows the logging roads. It gets tricky near the end and you will probably get lost as I did. Be careful on the dirt road because the trucks are there at all hours.

From Sprague Bay I followed a canoe trip group of great folks to the campsite at the end of Wood Arm. The trip is over 24 kilometres each way so unless you canoe a lot, you will be happy when it's over. This camp is on the east side of Wood Arm (GR 205821) just before where the lake narrows and becomes muddy (about four kilometres before the truck bridge crosses it). Heed the warnings on the signs about weather, waves, water level and debris. Although the lake was glassy smooth for both my crossings, my first attempt to cross the Kinbasket to the Fairy Meadow Hut trail further down the lake ended with me shipwrecked on an island. I was very lucky to have been rescued at 10 p.m. by a passing boat. Expect to pass a variety of floating logs and stumps that can actually choke inlets such as Wood Arm. It might be possible to cross where the trucks ferry since the lake is only a kilometre wide at that point (GR 062713). If so, you could hike or mountain bike the excellent road. Parking might be a problem though. I found the truckers very friendly and helpful—they even checked on me when I returned since I was solo. A driver told me they now have new roads up the Wood River that are worth investigating. If you have a motorboat this whole approach may be possible in a day. Be sure to pull your boat well out of the lake. I saw two-metre pines completely under water.

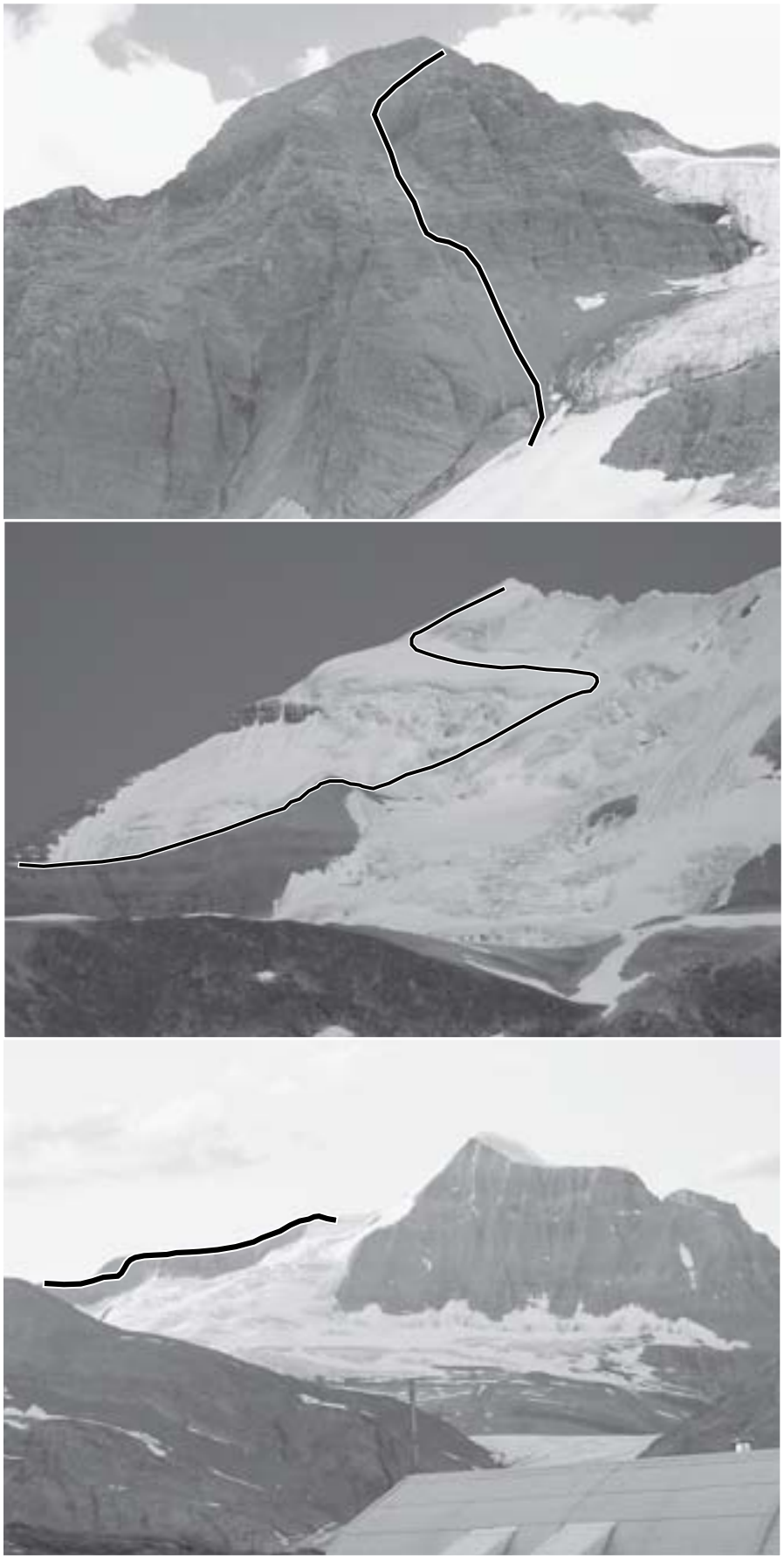
I spent over two years studying over eight different ways to get to the mighty Mount Clemenceau and at the last minute came up with this one while playing with Google Earth in my spare time. No partners were to be found but my neighbour was throwing out an old 12-foot canoe. It all came together. I bought a trolling motor and big battery hoping it would help in any rough seas for the main nine-kilometre crossing. My plan was for a solar panel to recharge the battery for the return trip. I knew nothing about the Kinbasket other than driving up Bush Arm to climb Mount Bryce and Mount Columbia. My only time at Mica Dam was in the early stages of construction, but I had done the Big Bend a couple times as a kid. I was very afraid of waves and cold water but was reassured to find a dozen people there for the same canoe trip. My motor worked as expected getting me into Wood Arm. Unfortunately, the recharging part did not, and I had to bring the useless weight back.

From the camp, walk up the short driveway to the main road; head upstream for a couple hundred metres and then hang a right (GR 205823). Follow this currently inactive road to an intersection (GR 211825) and go left, then stay left again at the next junction (GR 213828). Trudge up the hill for a couple of kilometres to the next junction (GR 222830) and go right. However, I took the sharp left here on my approach and will explain this detour shortly. After this junction you should be able to look up and see the only problem on the approach—a 300-metre steep section featuring a cliff band of smooth rock. Continue across the main stream (GR 224829) culvert and go a short distance to a smaller stream (GR 223829). This drainage is the way I returned. If you can get up the steep slippery mica schist talus through the cliff band, you are all set. Going further up the road will get you into logging debris and a burn that I found amazingly awful when I ventured over there while coming down. Back at the last junction, I went left instead of right. This unlogged road took me nicely around and above the cliff band but left me in thick woods at its end (GR 229833). I struggled up this side of the valley through the woods, above a cliff and over endless boulder fields. Somewhere in the woods I lost my rope and bear horn. Whatever way you go, the goal is to hit near GR 247811. If you go up the stream I came down, stay in or next to that drainage on the right until GR 232825. Future parties can improve on this and a trail should be flagged. Printing out the logging roads and studying Google Earth will be helpful.

Once the forest thins you will see the key to the route—Rich's Pass (GR 261805). The view of Clemenceau, its neighbours and the Cummins Waterfall is outstanding. From the pass the goal is to get across the deep valley to the ridge beyond. Head north giving up enough elevation to pass easily below the boulder fields and ridges. Aim for GR 273821 where my lovely bivi spot is found. Continue north at this elevation and cross a short boulder field. Soon after this warm up the really big boulder field blocks the way at GR 274825. It's not as bad as it looks but has some wiggly blocks. Probably the fastest way is to drop straight down and climb up the other side shooting for a meadow at GR 284831. A series of short cliff bands at the bottom will require good route finding. The way I went, which really isn't much longer, is to cross the boulder field toward the head of the valley near GR 278836. Then turn east and go up

to the start of a wooded corridor (GR 280834) that is followed to the meadow. Next, head towards GR 292829 because you will not want to miss the gorgeous lakes here. I traversed south from the lakes and almost walked off the edge into Cummins Valley. Traverse around the largest lake (GR 295828) on the left side and work up to the ridge crest at GR 302828). A fourth lake to the north will come into view as you gain elevation. An easier way to the ridge crest, but a little longer to the hut, would be to traverse south a little and gain a ramp up to the meadows after a cliff is passed. From the ridge the Lawrence Grassi Hut, or at least the outhouse, is visible near the end of the far ridge to the southeast (GR 322813). Depending where you landed on the ridge, either head straight down to the Cummins Ridge or cross the level bench and then up to the ridge. Just don't get too low near treeline where cliffs will block access to the hut. It's too bad the hut was allowed to deteriorate because it is an amazing location. Camp out with the natives and make the best of it.

I had been warned and re-warned about the Tiger Glacier. It didn't look too bad from afar but as I got closer it was truly nasty. My first order of business was to explore the mountain. I wanted to get a view of the north face of Clemenceau, which I had been awestruck by when seen from other peaks. I also wanted to check out the routes on Tusk Peak and Mount Shackleton. Crossing the Cummins Glacier is simple, but care was needed immediately on the Tusk Glacier. Going solo, I view glaciers as any other danger in the mountains and will not go where I don't feel in control. There are a lot of millwells and many were dry and quiet, reinforcing my rule about not travelling in the dark. Snow cover was reasonable and the Tusk Glacier went with only a short section of probing. I sacrificed some elevation to camp under the incredible Duplicate-Tusk Icefall. The next day I returned, having given up trying to get around to the north face. I followed the edge of rock under the Tiger Glacier that now stops on top of a 50-metre cliff and



The west spur variation (*The Tiger's Tail*) to the normal *West Face* route of Mount Clemenceau. Photo: Rich Gebert

is no longer attached to the valley glacier. I continued to the northwest end of Clemenceau and camped at what I called Windy Pass (GR 312881).

I had planned to repeat Dane Waterman's northwest ridge route (*CAJ*, vol. 73 (1990), p. 67) and thought I was on it until high up when I saw it off in the distance. First I made my way up and south to dead-end at the Tiger Glacier and the Normal Route (GR 325877) just to make sure. I backtracked. From the bivy the route is to head east toward the mountain crossing rock outcrops that slope away. Don't gain more than about 100 metres. You will arrive at the north tongue of the Tiger Glacier. Cross the flat glacier here and climb up into the drainage just safely north of the seracs. Stay left of a sharp buttress and pass a cairn at GR 325887. Finally, gain the crest of the spur (GR 326886). From here you won't get lost but I felt safer climbing the upper spur on the south face instead of the crest due to the daggers of loose shale. You have to see 'em to believe 'em! Downclimbing this section was a little difficult and dangerous. Eventually the ridge is nothing more than a sliver of rock outlining the glacier hanging off the north side. I bivied along this section at 3,170 metres (GR 331886). It was flat, protected, had water and the longest sat phone connection yet. After walking up to check out the spur ending at the main peak, I returned with little hope of success. The snow was soft and some poorly placed crevasses were blocking the way. I started unusually early for me the next morning at 8 a.m. and found the snow perfectly frozen. I again passed the cairn at the high point of the spur (GR 337884) then tiptoed onto the upper Tiger. Threading between the two dicey crevasses, I then out flanked a couple more and was home free on the upper bench. I only had to circle around the mega seracs and the rest was a romp. I climbed the summit mushroom and stood up but still no view of the north face.

Summary

The Tiger's Tail (III 4th class), west spur, Mt. Clemenceau (3658m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Rich Gebert, July 30, 2007.

Barbacoa

John Harlin

"Were we reckless yesterday?" Mark wasn't asking rhetorically, but I ignored the question anyway. Sometimes when you have as much fun as we did on the Goat Slab, you just don't want to face up to whether it was right or wrong, whether the experience could be justified to your mother, your wife, your daughter. You just want to revel in what you pulled off, to steep yourself in the joys of dangerous living. And then you cross your fingers that your luck will hold.

We had arrived in Banff for the mountain film festival, but had given ourselves a couple of days to climb something before watching others have all the fun. The previous year I'd become intrigued by a great swath of limestone to the left of Mount Yamnuska, which I'd had plenty of time to examine from a distance while panting up to Yam. My partners knew nothing of the cliff, but the guidebook called it Goat Slabs and revealed a stunning paucity of routes. Great chunks of cliff were a mystery, and what could be better than that? A year later, with a day of good weather and the mountains dusted in snow, we knew the time had come to explore the Goat.

Mark and I picked the largest expanse without a route line in the guide. In that desert we imagined features that would connect until they popped us out somewhere near the top. Our main necessity was to find cracks for protection, as we had no bolts (nor pitons, for that matter). We also hoped to climb fast, as days were cool and short, nights cold and long. We had come to watch films of other people suffering, not to experience it.

The first great pleasure of solving a mystery is imagining the possibilities. The Goat Slabs revealed something of itself to our monocular, through which we assessed our options during the hike in. Some cracks were obvious: those must be chimneys. Also obvious were roofs and blank spots. Certain corners led somewhere; others didn't. But an eight-power scope can't spot a stopper-sucking crack from a kilometre away. After a while we realized we'd learn little from a distance. Only touch could truly speak.

We scrambled for a few hundred feet before rock smashed scissors and I got the first lead. A few minutes later, while concentrating on unexpected difficulties, I started feeling the patter of pebbles against my back, then my helmet. Mark laughed, then he flung others. "Training," he called it.

The good thing about loose rock is that people don't like it. Sometimes you absolutely know that no one passed this way because if they had, a particular rock/block/ledge would already have shattered into the scree below. Dirt and gravel would have been dug—or have crumbled—out from beneath someone else, not you. Sometimes it's obvious where the hand of man has never set foot, and it's equally clear why. But the fact that no one else had wanted to climb our line provided Mark and me with the joy of discovery.

We did, in fact, discover some beautiful terrain, including perhaps the finest limestone I've ever caressed, with water-sculpted fluting I could wrap my fingers around, and little pleasure pockets made for the digit of my choice. Sometimes we could even slip a cam or stopper wherever we wanted to; occasionally I'd watch a cam's little wings open so beautifully that I'd pull it out just to watch it expand inside the crack all over again. On one of Mark's pitches he hiked up an impeccable sheet of limestone, which would have made a classic 5.9ish lead except that from

one piece of protection he could never see the next. Sometimes Mark climbed 10 or more metres of uncut slab before blindly stumbling upon a tiny slit that would take a nut. Such bands of solid rock stood out like diamonds.

And then there was the rest. Not all bad, mind you, and often safe enough, but demanding full attention. One lead of mine started with an awkward slither over a well-protected rooflet, then transmogrified into a delicate traverse on untrustworthy holds that made me feel like a cat in steep wet grass above a waterfall. Another reminded me of a bear tearing the earth to reach his quarry, which in my case was a trustworthy crack behind a façade of vertical rubble.

But that's not entirely fair, as most of the climb fit in the limbo between extremes, with mediocre rock of mediocre difficulty connecting patches of heaven with patches of hell.

Still, when you come right down to it, it's not about the rock. It's about a team of friends and the sublime joy of figuring things out together, of not knowing whether to turn right or left but always believing that together you'll solve whatever it is the mountain dishes out, and that your folly will also be your joy.

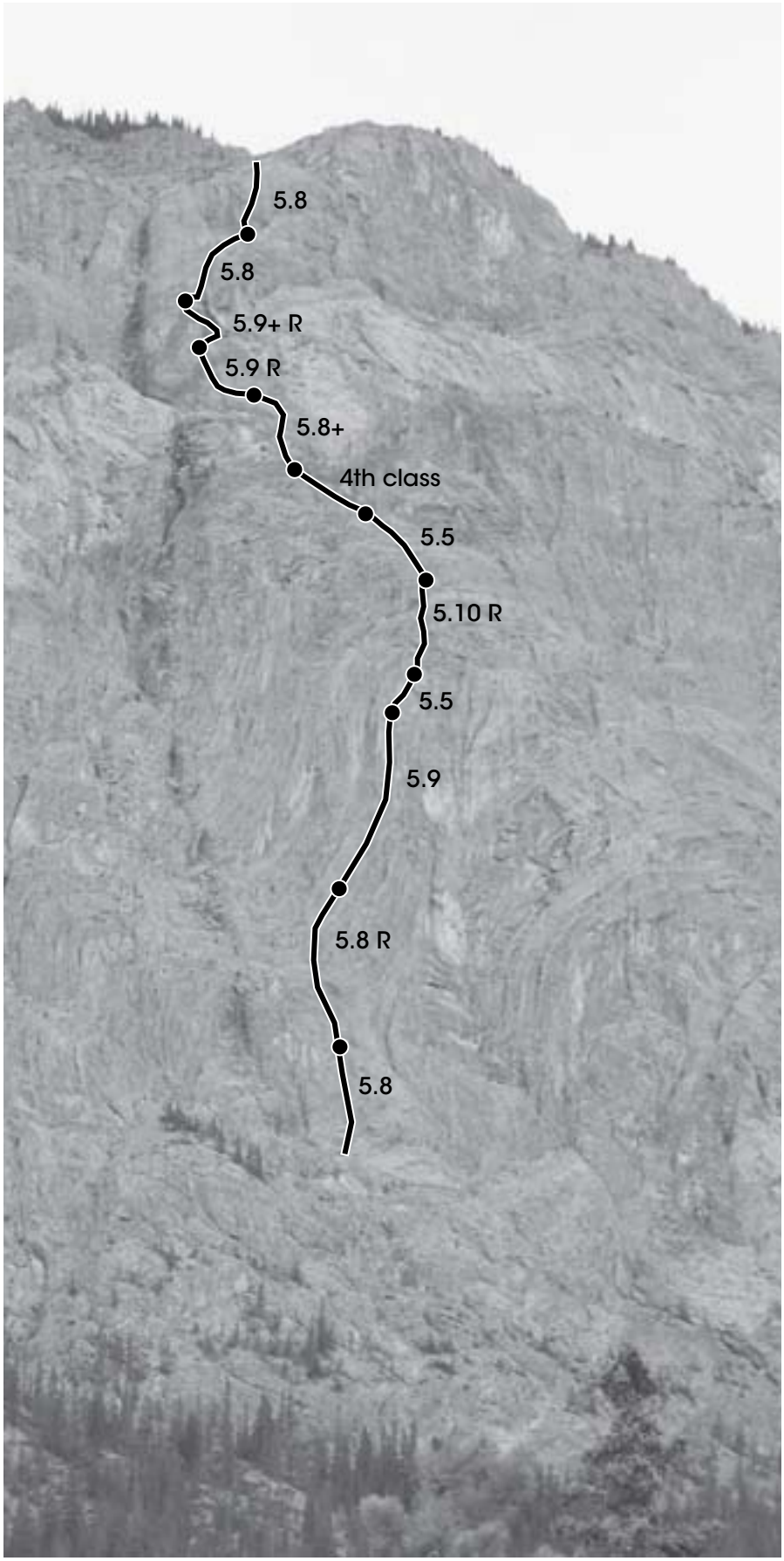
We prefer not to think about the wrong rock breaking off at a bad time and our lives going to hell forever. Mark and I have talked enough about that sort of thing. We've experienced such tragedies and never wish to visit them again. We know that hubris is dangerous, that gravity is not our friend, and that play can end in tears.

"Were we reckless yesterday?" asked Mark.

Didn't we have fun?

Summary

Barbacoa (means barbequed goat in Mexico) (5.10 R/X, 12 pitches), Goat Slabs, Goat Mountain. FA: John Harlin, Mark Jenkins, October 29, 2007. Note: The route starts between the *Grassman Route* (5.7, 625m) and *Dream of Electric Sheep* (5.8). See page 69 of *Bow Valley Rock* by Joe Josephson and Chris Perry, Rocky Mountain Books (2000).



Barbacoa on Goat Slabs. Photo: John Harlin

An Avenue for Adventure

Glenn Reisenhofer

From atop the highest peak in the Wapta Icefields one gets a pretty good idea of the surrounding area: glaciers, passes, cols, snow and rock. This is all very good, but how does one manage to create more from that which already exists? How can one squeeze something exciting out of an already well-travelled area? The answer started coming to me like the movement of a glacier, steady but slow.

Hux Johnson and I were examining a map of the Wapta Icefield. Excited fingers were pointing all over the topography. Hux pointed out to me that some folks had tried to access the Wapta by skiing up Bath Creek. This turned out badly for the party and they returned empty handed. Another friend knew a Parks Canada warden that had gotten buried in an avalanche in the upper reaches of Bath Creek. This particular area seemed like a difficult place to find a passage through.

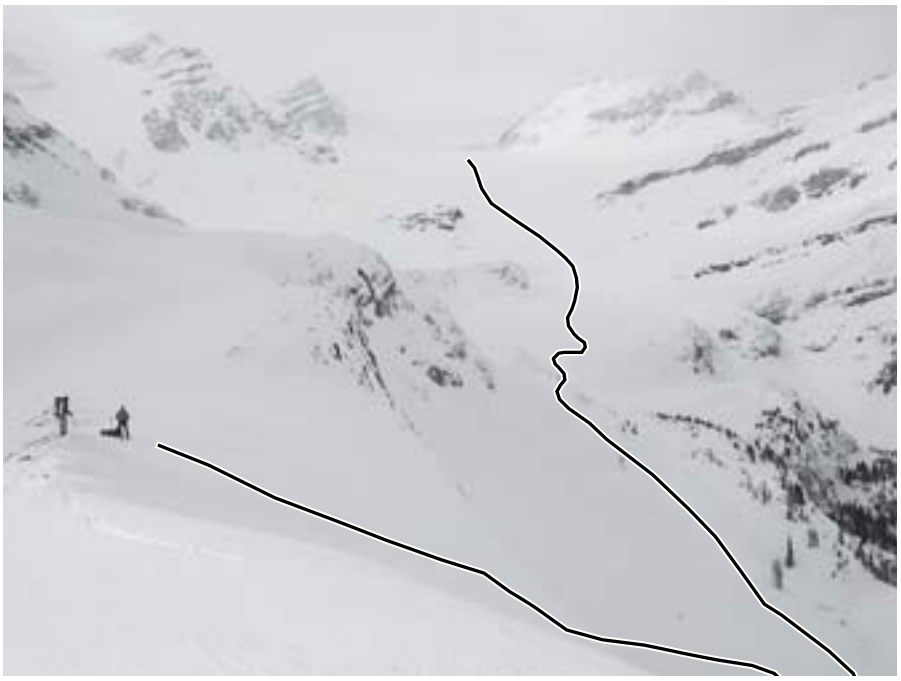
After several brainstorming sessions with the map, the terrain revealed her secrets. A wooded shoulder sneaked up to a lengthy bench. This would avoid the creek bottom where a patiently waiting terrain trap existed. On our first try, Liam Kavanagh and I set out in February 2005 under a high-pressure system and a bomber snowpack. We found the wooded shoulder (NTS 82N/9, GR 448053). The steepness of the terrain combined with the tightness of the trees made this uphill a memorable experience.

Skiing along the bench towards the Waputik Glacier was divine. However, decision time was soon upon us. Should we continue along the bench, which was indicated on the map, or drop down 70 metres to another lower, yet more appealing, bench? After deciding that the convex slope that led down wasn't in our ball game, we stopped and called it a day.

Something was disturbing me while I lay in my sleeping bag. I kept feeling a biting sensation in my crotch. Upon closer inspection, a variety of small twigs had invaded my long johns from the aforementioned wooded bench. I gathered I was too engrossed in the day's activities to notice the intrusion earlier.

The next morning found us skiing along the tight bench at GR 440083. Before long, we realized that this bench became narrower and narrower until large slopes loomed above us and a significant drop was below us. As I kept skiing across our elevated platform, I was quite thankful for the low avalanche hazard. Personally, I wouldn't recommend the narrow bench. I found it exciting, yet terrifying at the same time.

The route onto the Waputik Glacier on day two. Photo: Glenn Reisenhofer



A long deceptive slog delivered us onto the Waputik Glacier. This bit of ice led us to a col (GR 426122). The map indicated that we could ski through the col and contour around Mount Mary Sioui located to the southwest (GR 422115). If we had our ice gear we could have traversed two pitches of 60-degree glacial ice. Not having this, we were forced to return to the col and rethink things. In the end, we skied, slogged and carried our skis up the east ridge of Mount Mary Sioui for approximately 100 metres until we were able to traverse across to the Balfour Glacier.

With the Lilliputs sticking out like witches, fingers, the Balfour Glacier is an interesting place to be. The canyon that the glacier drains into contains a beautiful ski run lined on its west side with striking waterfall ice. A few hundred metres lower, an alpine world emerges with lengthy waterfalls, smears and a quiet feeling of isolation. I could only imagine Carlos Buhler struggling with the crux pitch high up on *Orion*. Since it was late in the day and steep terrain lay ahead, we decided to camp for the evening.

The fatigue of the past few days caused us to remain in our sleeping bags longer than we should have. As soon as we got going the crux of the day greeted us with a smile: steep and treed with a rock band to negotiate at the top. All of the fun started on this day. Liam started having difficulties with his skis. For some unknown reason, his skis kept coming out of his binding on this steep terrain. No form of genie worship, violent swearing or pleading with the

gods would help poor Liam with this problem. We also had another issue to contend with: the steep, treed south-facing slope started to disintegrate. Small balls of wet snow started rolling. I hid myself under a protective rock shelf and waited for Liam. The temperature continued to increase. I could refill with water by simply placing the bottle under the drips near the cliff edge.

Liam continued to have difficulties and his swearing steadily increased. Unbeknown to us, a lone skier was silently carving a track down below on the flats. The skier must have thought things pretty strange with all this swearing going on in the middle of an alpine paradise. As Liam settled down on the ledge we discussed the situation. Binding issues, soaking wet feet, a cliff band to deal with and a not-to-stable snowpack all led us to abort and ski out via Hector Lake.

In February 2006, Kevin Blades, Steve Morris and I were back at the game. However, this time the conditions were not as good. We followed the same wooded shoulder that Liam and I had taken the previous year. We all knew we would not follow the scary narrow bench. We needed to find a way down to the lower bench that would lead us to the toe of the glacier. At one point (GR 446078), before the narrowing of the bench, we decided to take a peek. We fished out the rope and Kevin belayed me down to a small rock outcrop. From my perch I watched Steve ski past and get carried down by a small slough. There was enough snow in the slough to scare us, but not enough to injure or bury anyone. At this point we decided to abandon our original plans. Considerable avalanche hazard rating made us feel like not tempting fate with the crux above Balfour Creek.

Two years had past since we first tried this trip. Kevin, Steve and I were back for more abuse in March 2007. Besides Kevin forgetting the rope (fixed by a quick pit stop in Canmore), the tour sailed by with the smoothness of light drifting snow. The wooded bench coasted by, as did the descent to the lower bench. Up the Waputik Glacier, curl around the northeast side of Mount Mary Sioui, cross over to the Balfour Glacier and head down through the amazing alpine environment of Balfour Creek. Here we were to meet our fourth party member, Ian Sherrington. A recent returnee from Cameroon, Ian was to ski across Hector Lake and join us for the last two days. The boys built an extra roomy sleeping space with towering walls and maximum headroom. This was created in the finest art deco tradition. A definite party atmosphere was in the air.

Hours later, Ian hadn't shown up, the party was dying down and all the boys were tired from playing. We found out later that Ian had a wicked reaction to the anti-malaria drugs he was taking and the doctor incorrectly told him to avoid the cold because it made him itch.

We managed to leave before the sun got out of bed. Not being an early riser, I wished I was still tucked in my warm sleeping bag. Skiing up the steep east side of the creek (GR 398156), we hit the rock band that traverses the entire slope. Kicking steps up the steep couloir that split the rock band put a grin on my face. For one, we were passing my previous "highpoint" and secondly, there was nothing technical to deal with. We just needed the right conditions. Whiteness greater than my chest hairs plagued the rest of the day. Skiing up the Ferris Glacier to the pass west of Crowfoot Mountain (GR 378198) became a test of patience, especially with the deceptive and funky snow moat that we encountered at the top.

As we set up camp at treeline we could hear people carrying on at Bow Hut. The structure with its warm woodstove and social atmosphere would be a great place to dry out, but it could become a strong lure drawing one away from the objective. A bench below Portal Peak and Mount Thompson beautifully traversed towards Mount Jimmy Simpson. We stared at the wonder all evening, waiting patiently to sink our teeth into it. We also saw the final slope that we had to attempt to finish the tour. This had us somewhat apprehensive.

Our final morning of the trip found us skiing across the lake that drains Bow Glacier. Unfortunately, we didn't see anyone climbing on *Bow Falls*. The last bit of fun for the day lay ahead at the col that joined Mount Jimmy Simpson and Mount Thompson (82N/10, GR 333248). Once we reached the bottom of the pass the true nature of the ascent revealed itself. I thought we'd have to draw straws to see who would go first, but Steve volunteered without resignation. After a few tight switchbacks he resorted to post-holing—a fun task when the terrain is steep and filled with powder. To make matters worse, a large plume of flying snow greeted Steve as he reached the pass.

The descent down to Peyto Glacier was solid, if not somewhat windblown. We soon reached the toe and beetled down towards the lake. During a short break we revelled in the experience. The lake was our last obstacle to negotiate and the crossing is usually independently dealt with using silent pleads similar to "Oh, please don't let me crack through the ice" or "Please don't let that surface water be on thin ice." With thanks, we crossed safely.

During our post-trip celebration, which consisted of pints of beer and 12-year-old single malt Glen-yumyum, we felt that this had been an exceptional outing. This trip had adventure, new terrain for us, a number of possible escape routes and worked us to the max. We also liked the fact that the trip was close to the pub. We felt that the traverse could be skied in the reverse direction, but this may lead to difficulty in determining where to descend the steep treed bits. One may consider skiing down the tight slot that is tucked up tight against the Balfour headwall (GR 388150). However, we were too chicken to go anywhere near this. Whichever way you go, don't forget to laugh at the hardships and enjoy the stunning alpine vistas on this remarkable avenue for adventure.

Summary

The Art Deco Tour: South-to-north ski traverse that parallels the traditional Wapta traverse to the east linking Bath Creek, Balfour Glacier, Ferris Glacier and the Jimmy Simpson-Thompson col to finish on the Peyto Glacier. Glenn Reisenhofer, Kevin Blades, Steve Morris, March 15–18, 2007.

West Face Story

Raphael Slawinski

I LOVE EVERYTHING about the Canadian Rockies, these mighty yet crumbling bastions. I would have a hard time choosing a favourite area, let alone a favourite mountain. Let me see: there are the grey, jagged ridges of Kananaskis Country; Lake Louise with Mount Temple's brooding north face; the Columbia Icefields with those ice-choked gashes. But if pressed, I would have to choose Mount Alberta above all others. There is just something about this peak that draws me back time and again. I have climbed it in summer and winter, I have day-tripped it from the road and I have slept on its summit ridge, but I just do not seem to be able to get my fill. Every time I crest Woolley Shoulder and see Alberta's black bulk looming in the west, I feel the same excitement I felt the first time I groveled up that notorious scree and looked across the "Black Hole".

I first saw a photo of the west face in a 1989 issue of *Climbing* magazine. A spectacular aerial shot, it showed a wall of black limestone topped by a dazzlingly white summit ridge, with a rare blue sky overhead. One line in particular jumped out at me: a gothic flying buttress, rising gracefully to the summit icefield. Underneath the photo the caption read, "The unclimbed west face of Mount Alberta." At the time, given my abilities, the photo may as well have been of Olympus Mons, but I did not forget it. Years passed and I got to know Alberta, or at least the sides of it within easy striking distance of the hut. But the only glimpses I had of the west face were by looking down it from the summit ridge. And from there I could not see much, other than that it was steep. This past summer I finally decided to remedy this state of affairs.

On a hot Friday afternoon in late July, Rich Akitt and I hiked over Woolley Shoulder intent on the west face. The next morning, with a full moon lighting our way, we crossed the rubble-strewn glacier toward the south end of Alberta. For some reason that escapes me now, I thought it would be best to traverse one of the large scree ledges that girdle Alberta. That this was not a good idea gradually became clear because the further we traversed, the narrower and more exposed the ledge became. After much unpleasant side-hilling, and with most of the length of the west face still to go, we turned around and stumbled back to the hut. We lacked the gumption for another attempt, so the following day we just ran up the *Northeast Ridge* (V 5.10), descended the *Japanese Route* (V 5.6), hiked out to the road and drove back to Calgary, arriving shortly before dawn on Monday.

Eamonn Walsh on the first ascent of the west face of Mount Alberta. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

I thought I was done with Alberta for the season. Gradually, I found myself thinking about it again, and longed to peek over Woolley Shoulder one more time before winter closed in. And so on a heartbreakingly beautiful Friday afternoon in mid-September, Eamonn Walsh and I waded across the Sunwapta River and headed up Woolley Creek. The sun was still warm but there was a chill in the air telling of the coming fall. The fresh snow plastering the peaks would not melt until spring. Ever the optimist, I figured the steepness and sunny aspect of the west face would mean it would still be in rock climbing shape.

Once again we skidded down rubble and jumped gritty crevasses toward Alberta, visible only as a hulking black shape against a star-filled sky. The moon was just past new and did not light our way like last time, but unlike last time, I knew where to go. Staying low, we rounded the south end of the mountain and easily walked beneath the west face across a rocky plateau. At a shallow col that plunged into a deep, shadowed valley to the north, we stopped for a quick rest. A cold wind whipped across the saddle and we were soon moving again, scrambling up scree and rock steps toward the vertical headwall capping the west face. We managed to fill up on water where it trickled down an ice gully, keeping a wary eye out for falling stones. Where the gully opened up into a snowfield, we donned crampons and traversed to the base of our chosen rib. A beautiful ribbon of ice cascaded down between the main wall and the lower part of the buttress. We were briefly tempted, but eventually the fact that we had only one tool apiece and no screws convinced us to stick to the rock. Besides, we were freezing and we could see the first rays of

sunlight warming the crest.

At the top of the first pitch, we found an old rappel station. And I do mean old: heavy, rusted pins stamped "Swiss made", connected with bleached Goldline. In 1963, four Vulgarians had attempted the west face and nearly made it up before being forced down by severe electrical storms. We would be following in their footsteps for most of the day. Changing into rock shoes, we continued upward. The guidebook describes the opening pitches on the headwall of the *Northeast Ridge* as offering "…largely unprotected climbing up to 5.10 on delicate, loose ground," with "…poor to non-existent" belays, "…a true test of nerve and ability." The first time I climbed that route a few years earlier, I was simultaneously disappointed and relieved to find that it did not live up to its "spooky" billing. But the west face amply made up for that disappointment. Crimping on crumbling edges, the last knifeblade a distant memory, I basked in my fear. At least once a year I seem to find myself whimpering to my partner, "I do not want to be scared anymore." And yet perched on that unclimbed buttress, high above empty, silent valleys, there was nowhere else in the world I would rather have been.

As the afternoon wore on and the sunlight turned from white to gold, we started thinking about topping out. But instead we were faced with a steep off-width crack, the only weakness in what looked to be the final steep step. Fortunately the rock also took a turn for the better, and after some grunting and me sending a few volleys of stones down on Eamonn's head ("Dude, are you OK?" "I'm… not… sure…."), we were up and looking at what we hoped really was the final steep step. We snuck up it via an easy gully, and then we really were up. The rock shoes and chalk bags went into the packs, out came boots and crampons. Under an intensely blue sky, more Karakorum than Canadian Rockies, we walked up the gentle snow slope to the summit and, without stopping, headed down the long south ridge.

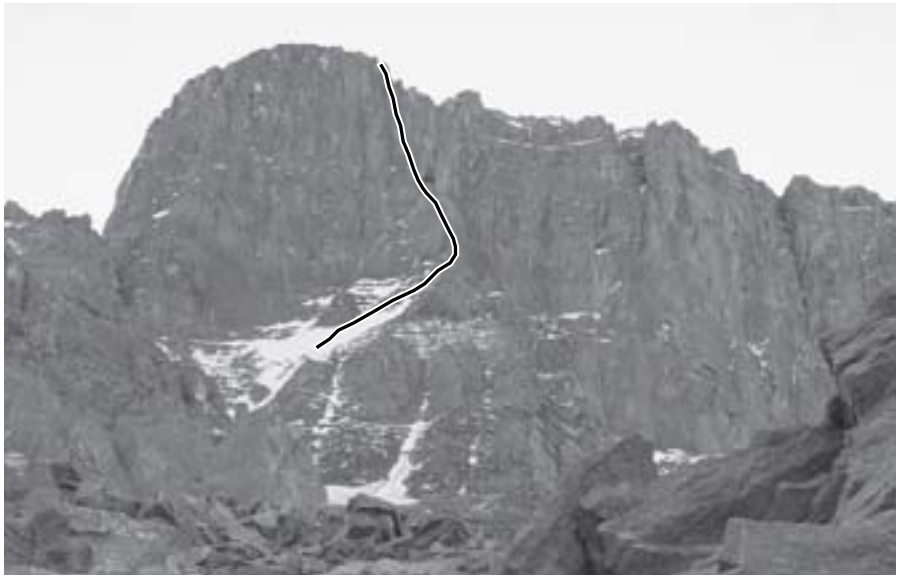
Night fell just as we completed the last rappel down the gully of the *Japanese Route*, below and upwind of the Elephants' Asses. But we knew where to go, and so were spared sitting out a cold night. Plunging into the darkness, we downclimbed rock steps and surfed scree towards the distant creature comforts of the hut. The following morning we slept in; a rare treat for weekend warrior alpinists. We lingered over breakfast, and eventually it was time to go. As we hiked out Woolley Creek, we looked up at the east face of Mount Woolley, the north face of Mount Cromwell, and talked of returning soon for more perfect Indian summer climbing. Instead I am sitting at home writing this while deep snow blankets the Columbia Icefields. As Alex Lowe once famously said, "Winter comes early to the high country."

Summary

First ascent of the west face (V 5.10+ R, 800m of vertical gain) of Mount Alberta (3619m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, September 15, 2007.

Gain the col below the north end of the west face by contouring below the lowest rock band on the east face, around the south end of the mountain, and across a plateau below the west face (four hours hut-to-col). The same point may also be reached by rappelling into the basin below the north face then walking across the glacier. From the col, scramble up and right into a snow couloir. Climb the couloir (some rockfall) or broken rock to its left to where it opens into a snowfield. The *Northwest Ridge* (V 5.9 A3, Blanchard-Elzinga, 1990) ascends a narrow gully up and left. For the West Face, cross the snowfield to the base of a prominent rock rib on the right. The first couple of pitches on the rib are easy and may be mixed. Above the climbing becomes sustained (up to 5.10+) on generally poor rock. In general, the route climbs the crest of the rib or its right side. Climb four pitches or so to below a prominent wide crack on the right. Climb the crack for a full rope-length. Step down and right into a hidden gully behind the top of the rib and scramble up and left to the summit plateau (10 hours from the col). Nineteen hours hut-to-hut. Take a full rock rack, two ice screws, and a pair of crampons and an ice tool each.

A foreshortened view of the west face of Mount Alberta showing the line of ascent.
Photo: Eamonn Walsh



The Meinen-Pullan Route

Will Meinen

Mount Louis was first pointed out to me while driving down the highway after returning from a day of skiing at Lake Louise. At a height of 2,682 metres, the mountain is not significantly tall, but it is truly a stunning and classic profile. All sides of the tower are flanked with steep smooth faces. The east face of Louis is particularly dramatic with the summit perched on top of the Diamond—a wall so steep and blank that it sends shivers down your spine. After seeing it, I immediately knew that I wanted to climb it.

When the alpine season began last summer in the Rockies, I partnered up with long-time friends Brandon Pullan and Danny O'Farrell for an attempt on a new route on Louis. Brandon had done his homework and excitement shone from his eyes as he traced his finger along a photo in the guidebook. It was up a brilliant looking line on the right side of the Diamond. Except for the last 200 metres of ridge climbing to the summit, it would offer unclimbed terrain. When Brandon asked if we wanted to give it a shot, Danny and I both immediately agreed.

As the three of us hiked up the trail, we all silently wondered how this adventure would unravel itself. We came to a clearing and Mount Louis' summit loomed above. It definitely looked bigger and steeper than the mental picture I had committed to memory. This was not going to be as easy as I thought.

"Did anyone bring food?" I asked realizing why my pack felt a tad light. "Or bivy gear?"

"Nope," Brandon replied in a confident and proud tone.

Danny piped up and said, "I think I'll just take some pictures from the valley floor and hang out with the other guys," referring to our friends who were camping in the same valley for the weekend.

With that, Brandon and I set off to find the base of our climb, while Danny set off to find the campsite. At the base, we roped up and started simul-climbing. The climbing was fun and we effortlessly cruised up the lower section and onto a series of aesthetic ridges. A piton here and finger jam there, the metres quickly melted away below us. Brandon set up a belay on a cam placement and I joined him. With nearly 800 metres of progress made, the final ridge to the summit was in sight, but the way to get there was not particularly obvious. A short downclimb and traverse to the left would put us inside a snow gully chock-full of teetering blocks. My eyes followed a hand crack up and right, but it disappeared from sight as it rounded a corner. This left us with a rather dubious choice to make. With time ticking away and momentum pushing us forward, I chose the hand crack. As soon as I was out of sight, I realized I chose wrong. A steady stream of water flowed over the path of least resistance rendering it unclimbable. I pounded my smallest piton into a seam and began assessing the situation. Further right was dry rock.

Unfortunately, it lacked protection and looked significantly harder, but it was my only option. I dried off my soaked rock shoes as best as possible then initiated myself into the bouldery sequence. The moves were coming together and I was almost through it—a few more moves and I would hit a jug followed by a ledge. I looked down to figure out my footwork and noticed the piton was further below than I had thought.

"Don't screw this up, Will," I muttered under my breath. With my feet stemming on two small edges and a Gaston for my left hand, I slowly pulled up to the jug. It was garbage—sloping and wet. My foot popped and I began to fall. When the rope caught me, I was upside-down and 10 metres lower on a ledge. I pulled myself up and onto my feet. I immediately fell to my knees. My left ankle was as limp as overcooked spaghetti. I turned my head to the sky and mustered a string of expletives. It didn't come out quietly either.

"What's going on up there?" Brandon screamed up.

"I think my ankle is busted. Can you lower me back to the belay?"

"I don't know if there is enough rope, but I'll try…."

Brandon lowered me down and I bit my lip as the surges of pain pulsed through my leg. When I arrived at the belay, we devised a new game plan. Brandon went up to my high point, backed up my piton (that was nearly pulled out) and lowered off pulling out the rest of the gear on his way down. We pulled the rope and he set off for the snow-filled gully to our left. When the rope came taught, I dragged myself up behind him and several pitches later we both stood tall on top of the summit. Well, Brandon stood; I sort of hunched.

Luckily, the descent was rather straight forward with bolted rappel stations every 60 metres. Descending the talus field back to treeline was not straightforward. In fact, it was hell. I tried hobbling behind Brandon who was quickly bounding ahead into the darkness. After three steps I lost balance and re-twisted my ankle. Falling to my knees I screamed in agony. The pain was more than I could handle and I nearly blacked out. Brandon turned around and helped me to my feet. I was tired and it was now dark. I didn't see the point of trying to negotiate this treacherous landscape any longer.

"I think I'm just going to try and get some sleep here. You can go ahead and I'll meet you on the valley floor in the morning at our friends' campsite," I mumbled to Brandon in despair.

"I'm not leaving you behind, H," he wittingly quoted from the movie *K2*. I agreed to try my best to make it to the campsite. I proceeded to crawl backwards on my hands and knees down the talus. We lost the trail and had to bushwhack for several hours to get to the valley floor. I found a flat spot and immediately fell asleep while Brandon searched for our friends' campsite. I woke up to Brandon's

voice wondering how long I had been sleeping.

"I can't find them anywhere. I think they left."

We took a look at my ankle. It was the size of a grapefruit and was beginning to turn deep shades of purple. It was cold and I couldn't go back to sleep, so we decided it best to slowly work our way to the car. Brandon made an impromptu crutch for me and we began the long hike out. We arrived at the parking lot just before sunrise only to discover that there were no cars to be found. We continued our hike out to the highway and stuck out our thumbs in sheer desperation. Soon enough we got a lift from a middle-aged gentleman who dropped us off in front of a breakfast joint in Canmore. It was 6 a.m. and the doors were just opened.

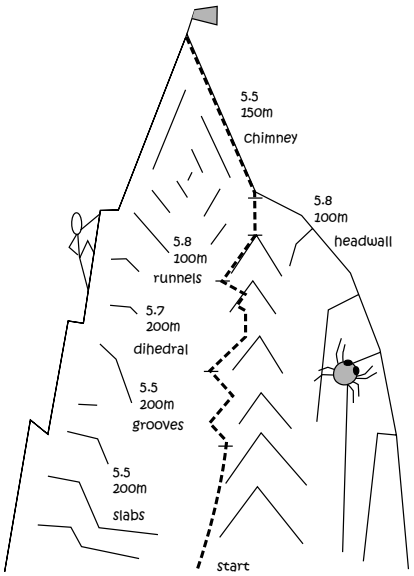
"I'll have the biggest breakfast you make, with an extra serving of eggs and coffee. Lots of coffee."

A crazy looking smile spread across our faces when our orders arrived and we hammered back the food. Between mouthfuls of food, I asked Brandon what we should call our route.

"The *Meinen-Pullan*, of course."

Summary

Meinen-Pullan (III 5.8+, 950m), Mt. Louis, Banff National Park. FA: Will Meinen, Brandon Pullan, July 1, 2007.



One Man's Journey

Janez Ales

The winter of ⊠⊠⊠⊠–⊠⊠⊠⊠ was a remarkable one for the Rockies snowpack. With weekday commitments to a master's dance program in Calgary and weekends devoted to ice climbing, by late April I hadn't managed even a single day of skiing. Sitting on top of Castleguard Mountain on May 5, I realized that conditions were perfect for a trip I had been thinking about for 14 years: the traverse of the Great Divide, through the Canadian Rockies from Jasper to Lake Louise.

Don Gardner, Neil Liske, Charlie Locke and Chic Scott first accomplished the traverse in 1967. It typically takes 20 to 30 days stretched over 300 kilometres of remote glaciated terrain with over 10,000 metres of total elevation gain. If I was going to launch into such an ambitious venture, conditions would have to be just perfect. I obsessed about the weather. With the last of the forecasted storms out of the way, May 8 looked like a good starting day. The snow coverage was most likely as thick as it would ever get in my lifetime.

Following bear tracks while descending the west side of Mount Lambe in the Blaeberry River valley. Photo: Janez Ales

To do a trip like this you need a plan, and up to that point the first and only item on the plan was to call the desperado of all desperados.

Chic goes: "Oh, you want to do the trip?"

Me: "Yes, I have been thinking about it since 1994."

Chic, in a low voice: "It's a nice trip... when are you thinking of doing it?"

Me: "Well, there is a storm forecasted for Tuesday, then it's gold for two weeks."

Chic, astonished: "Oh, you want to do it this year?"

The next day Chic came over for a chat. Walking up the stairs to my apartment he exclaimed, "So you want to do it on your own!"

"Well, I did not tell you that."

Chic knowingly said, "I presumed!"

Silence followed. His presumption was a result of me having given him a ride the day I linked *Professor Falls* with *Sacre Blue* on my own. It was, however, a false one, since I had been trying to come up with a partner overnight. The chance of getting one on such short notice was very slim. A potential partner had to be willing, able, ready to drop everything on a two-day notice and, pardon me for being so picky, would be one who doesn't snore.

We plowed through piles of gear in my living room and set down on two lazy chairs.

Chic continued his probing: "In this day and age everybody has the right to choose where and how they want to die!" Now, how do you respond to that? I am not sure who broke the silence. Half an hour later, Chic suggested I put a food cache on the Athabasca Glacier. He was surprised when I refused to plan to travel under the icefall dropping down on the south side of Snowdome. It was only then that he must have realized I was not willing to take things to the next level, as some may call it. Nevertheless, one could sense giving up in his low voice when we were parting, "Well, if you were going to do it, this is the year to do it… and give me a call when you come out!"

The next day, I was working at home and reading maps—lots of maps. The only piece of gear that I really needed and did not have was a lightweight tent. A friend agreed to give me a brand new tent in exchange for the same new tent when I got a chance to get one after the trip. When we were parting he asked, "What happens if you don't come back?"

A meeting with my employer was necessary to get some time off. Having been given a new project with a hard deadline on August 1 and a 30 per cent raise just over a month before, I had nothing else going for me other than the fact I had not taken a holiday since I started working for the company one-and-a-half years earlier.

Claude: "How long is the trip?"

Me: "The book says 21 to 30 days."

Claude: "And when are you planning to do this?"

Me: "I would be leaving tomorrow."

The reality of the situation was only then apparent to him. After a long pause he said, with a smile on his face, something like: "Welcome back!" I thought it was a sarcastic no—bad news indeed. However, I quickly realized that what he really said was: "*Well*, come back!"

My first stop was the toe of the Saskatchewan Glacier. Dropping off my food cache, I met a local guide with a client. Grant's parting words were, "Enjoy the trip, this is the year to do it."

My next stop was the Jasper Park warden station. All plans seemed to come to a halt when Grant—a different Grant—asked me, "What is the number of people in the party?"

The improvised "energy gel" at Balfour High Col. Photo: Janez Ales

*Summits and Ice*f *elds* says: "Four is a good number—any less and the trail breaking could be dif cult."

"One," was my reply. And that resulted in talking to a number of people at length. In the end, Rupert, head of Parks safety in Jasper said, "Well, this is the year to do it."

All days felt alike: wakeup early, eat, walk gravel flats, fear bears, skin up glaciers, avoid crevases, glide across icefields, ski down glaciers and have lunch wherever I wanted because there was nobody to argue about such important things.

My third-to-last day was different though. I was up at 1 a.m. booting up Mount Lambe. I skied down into Blaeberry River by 11 a.m. and I ate my last food there. No problem, I could get some good value for my $40 at Mistaya Lodge. Some salty pasta without sauce would do it. That became my true driving force all afternoon. However, walking down the Blaeberry River I was becoming unusually tired. I soon realized I was carrying the entire weight of my pack on my shoulders, thus constricting my lungs. The waist belt had simply gotten too big for my hips to take the weight. Or was it that my bum had gotten too small for the waist belt? I padded my hips with mitt liners and used a fleece sweater to gain some extra padding.

Dinner at the lodge was not to be—Mistaya Lodge was closed for the season. All I had left for "food" was two teaspoons of greens, two spoons of protein powder and nine Tums. As far as dessert, you would be surprised how much sugar was left in energy gel packages discarded in my garbage bag. That night I slept in the unlocked sauna.

The following day, my second-to-last, was indeed a tough one. Although I was well hydrated, my body had no fat left to burn. A single Tums only fuels a body for so long. When there were only two left, I started rationing. I refused to go to Peyto or Bow Huts, as it would mean extra elevation gain, but Balfour Hut was on the way. Arriving there in the late afternoon, I found a bottle of Miracle Whip and a cup of granola in the kitchen. I ate most of the granola and half of the fake mayo right away. The weather closed in and I had to spend the night there. In the morning I ate the rest of the granola. I could not even look at the Miracle Whip, but I took it with me anyway; after all, it was the only food I had. With energy levels waning at the Balfour High Col, I dug the squeeze bottle out of my pack and sucked on it until it was empty—then I cut it open and licked the rest out. When I arrived at West Louise Lodge, I phoned Chic.

"Oh, you are out already. So, how far did you get?"

Summary

Solo of the Canadian Rockies' Great Divide ski traverse from Jasper to Lake Louise (17 days, 300 kilometres in distance and 10,000 metres of elevation gain) by Janez Ales, May 11–27, 2007.

2007 Mount Alexandra GMC

Brad Harrison

It's ☒☒:☒☒ p.m. in Ottawa and I am putting my computer and all its related gadgets into my travel bag. Thanks to the Ottawa Section executive's generosity, I have been afforded an opportunity to present my version of the 102-year history of the General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) at the Section's annual dinner. The trip was definitely worth it. These folks are very enthusiastic. They want to know how the Alpine Club of Canada's largest and longest running mountaineering camp operates. Questions are abundant. How long does the camp run? Do we have to share a tent? What kind of food is served? Are the climbs technical? Can a beginner go? Buoyed by their interest, I do my best to answer the questions. Then the stickler, can we sign up for this summer's camp? You can, but it is sold out. Shelley Secord, at the ACC National Office, will put you on a waiting list. The inevitable query—why don't you make the camp larger or longer to accommodate everybody? The easy answer is that the 2008 GMC is in Bugaboo Provincial Park and we are governed by strict regulations limiting the size and duration of the camp. The more complex rationale is that I feel we have a responsibility to the environment that we are using. Limiting the number of participants allows us to offer a quality experience while keeping our environmental impact at a minimum.

As I reported to the ACC Board of Directors in November: no news is good news. Logistics for the camp went as smoothly as could be expected. We didn't have any serious incidents, be it health, climbing mishaps or transportation issues. Sorry for a dull report but a summer like the last makes my life a whole lot easier.

The climbing was well-suited for a GMC providing a variety of directions and uncharted areas to explore. The White Rose traverse was easily the crowd favourite. Mount Alexandra, being one of the more remote members of the Rockies' 11,000 club, was also a preferred route. Fresnoy, Spring Rice and Queant were good moderate climbs. Rose Petal, Whirlwind, Osprey and Coral were excellent short-day options.

The campsite location was ideal, possessing good water, comfortable tent sites and incredible views. We were able to place the tents on gravel bars thus eliminating damage to the local flora and reducing our ecological footprint. Ongoing measures to contain viruses from spreading continued to work well. The numerous and well-positioned hand washing stations have proved to be very effective. We had only a few minor ailments throughout the camp.

The weather was exceptional. We only lost three climbing days during the first five weeks of camp. Week six ran into some rainy and snowy weather with almost 30 centimetres of new snow.

In my opinion, the 2007 Mount Alexandra GMC was a success in all facets. The guides, amateur leaders and my staff worked extremely hard to please the participants and were successful in doing so. I received excellent support from the ACC office, John Dawes at the Golden (B.C.) Sobeys, Don McTighe at Alpine Helicopters and Ellen Jensen at the Bad Habit Bistro. We also need to thank Tahl Lunoch at Louisiana Pacific for having his road maintenance crew repair the Bush River Forest Service Road a week before my set-up crew was to fly in.

Ascending the north ridge of Mount Fresnoy during the 2007 GMC. Photo: Brad Harrison

Thanks to all of the GMC participants this summer. Your enthusiasm and continued support are really the catalyst that keeps your humble servants pushing to make the GMC as enjoyable and rewarding as possible for all involved. Hope to see you at the Vowell/Bugaboo GMC this summer!

2007 GMC Ascents

Mountain	Routes	Parties	Participants
Mt. Alexandra (3381m)	south face	17	153
Queen's Peak (3350m)	west face/north ridge	1	2
Mt. Spring Rice (3275m)	south face/east ridge	9	81
Mt. Fresnoy (3240m)	south slopes/east ridge	12	108
Mt. Fresnoy (3240m)	north ridge	1	5
Queant Peak (3113m)	southeast couloir/south ridge	9	58
Queant Peak (3113m)	north ridge	4	41
Rice Brook Peak (3029m)	east face/north ridge	0	0
White Rose Peak (3047m)	north traverse	21	171
Mt. Coral (2930m)	north ridge	5	55
Rose Petal Peak (2791m)	various routes	11	107
Fool's Gold Peak (2712m)	northeast ridge	8	78
Whirlwind Peak (2710m)	various routes	13	107
Osprey Peaks (2640m)	east slopes/north ridge	9	63

The Northeast Face of Mount Assiniboine —

Steve Holeczi

August is definitely not the best month for mixed alpine climbing in the Rockies. Dana Ruddy and I got suckered into a "cold for the end of August" forecast to try and have a go at the *East Face* (V 5.9 A2) of Mount Assiniboine. We slogged up the Settlers Road access, which is quite scenic. There's a glacier crossing and the lack of any maintained trail for the most part makes it feel a lot more adventurous. We crammed into the hut and watched it snow and blow all through the night. Sweet.

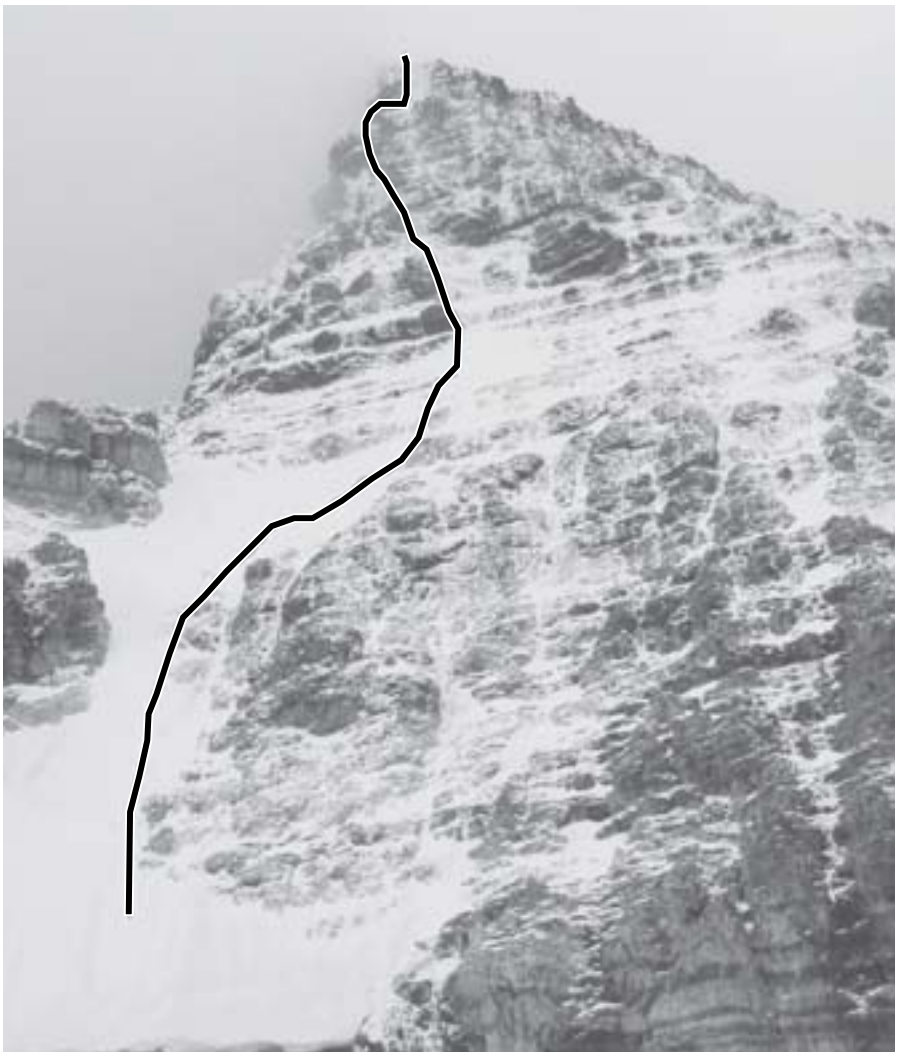
It was crap weather and snowing the next morning so we talked of bailing, maybe climbing on Yam or maybe just drinking. I definitely wasn't keen on doing the *North Ridge* route (II 5.5) again. It just kept getting windier and warmer as the day progressed until I was in a t-shirt outside chatting with Dana about who he had seen recently getting their ass kicked in one of the Jasper bars. We decided that a valiant effort to the illustrious col near the east face would at least save us from being totally lame. Maybe it would miraculously be cold enough. We couldn't see anything over there in the swirling vapour. Screw it!

On the way up I remembered James Blench had sent me a photo of the northeast face just around the corner from the *North Ridge*. We could kind of see the features through the clouds. Not massive by any means, but maybe a doable consolation prize given the warm weather. Besides, we both knew that going back to Canmore would mean wasting another day —especially after a few barley beverages. With the hut full, we slept outside with improving weather in our meager bivy gear. We were getting super antsy and agitated at our lack of activity and over-abundance of neurosis. The potty-talk turned south pretty quick. Dana is fairly soft-spoken but the inner redneck always rears its ugly head when challenged, or bored. His lower jaw juts out when he starts in on a rant. Given all of this, there wasn't much hesitation in the decision to give something a try. Early the next morning, we skirted left around the north ridge to the obvious ice face. Above the 'schrund, we simul-climbed a few hundred metres of easy mixed and 45- to 50-degree snow and ice aiming for an obvious chimney feature through the steep rock band high on the face. There are two options through this feature; we took the left. Two pitches of M4/M5 found us through this crux, which would have been dangerous if it were warmer due to its looseness. Luckily, we had cool enough temperatures but I still nearly had my head taken off by a stray missile. A bit of 5.5 climbing busted through the Red Band to join the *North Ridge*. It took us a round trip of 12 hours hut-to-hut. Being at a moderate grade this route should see more traf c and is a much more aesthetic and longer day when linked with the standard *North Ridge* route. It would be a great day done as a push from the vehicle, so give'er.

Summary

The northeast face (III M5, ca.550m) of Mt. Assiniboine (3618m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Steve Holeczi, Dana Ruddy, August 21, 2007.

The northeast face of Mount Assiniboine showing the Holeczi-Ruddy line. Photo: Steve Holeczi



Old Goats 2007

Rick Collier

Lost Guide Peaks: Remote ascents in the Bighorn Wildland; Alistair Des Moulins, Gail Des Moulins, July 17–21, 2007.

Over the course of one-and-a-half days, we backpacked 20 kilometres from the Hummingbird Creek staging area up the Ram River, Ranger Creek and Lost Guide Creek to Lost Guide Lake. Two remote and rarely ascended peaks were climbed: peak 3,015 metres (GR 722509) and peak 2,978 metres (GR 734493). Despite some detours forced by high walls, the scrambling was pleasant and straightforward.

Scott-Hooker Expedition: Sim Galloway, David Henry, Manfred Czechak, David Mulligan, Lisa Lee Johnson, Alistair Des Moulins, August 11–18, 2007.

Half the group helicoptered in while the others approached the 60 kilometres on foot via Whirlpool River valley. Ascents were made of Mount Brown (2799m), Mount Evans (3210m), Mount Hooker (3286m) and Mount Serenity (3223m). Mount Kane's (3090m) west ridge was also attempted but did not summit due to a technical notch before the third false summit.

Fulmen Mountain (2415m): Rarely ascended remote peak; Rick Collier, Mardy Roberts, August 18, 2007.

We decided to include Fulmen (Latin for lightening) in this report both because it is the only summit on the Lake Louise topo not included in the guidebook and because of the magnificent views of the north faces of the Goodsirs. We cycled up the Ottertail River to MacArthur Creek campground (three hours). We then hiked the Goodsir Falls trail (the imperial map mis-positions the trail), bushwhacked down to Goodsir Creek, which was forded at braids, and then 'whacked steeply up 600 metres (moderate whimpering) to the pass west of Fulmen. Easy larch slopes led to the spacious summit.

The Steeples (2760m): Rarely climbed glaciated peak; Rick Collier, Bill Hurst, August 25, 2007.

Bill (who has just turned a venerable 80 years of age) had climbed this imposing peak in 1957, 50 years ago when he was 29. The only other record of an ascent of the Steeples that I have seen is a 1997 west-to-east traverse of its many summits by the late Guy Edwards. Bill felt it was time now for a re-match. We hiked up Mause Creek (east of Fort Steele) and camped next to some unnamed finger lakes. The next day, we climbed and side-hilled some five kilometres to the Dibble Glacier, which we crossed to the loose and complex walls of the southeast tower. Tricky route-finding and difficult, exposed scrambling for 450 metres led to the major summit.

Tombstone (2820m) and **Boot Hill** (2515m): Pleasant scrambling in a remote setting; Carmie Callanan, Rick Collier, Christine Grotefeld, September 1, 2007.

The Flathead area of southeastern B.C. is rarely visited by alpinists, but it offers remarkable beauty and solitude. We drove the Corbin Road extension south to GR 801533, where we forded the Flathead River and continued up Haig Brook on a good trail. The next day we easily ascended the south and west slopes of Tombstone. Descending to 2,210 metres, we contoured east and north under the imposingly dark and precipitous 600-metre north face (likely unclimbed), the feature from which this peak derives its name. We continued 300 metres up slopes and buttresses to the east to an un-cairned companion peak, which sticking with the Arizona theme, we called Boot Hill.

Mount Amery (3329m): Possible candidate for inclusion on the list of 11,000ers; Rick Collier, David Henry, September 7, 2007.

First climbed in 1929 via Amery Creek (south of the Alexandra River), this route is likely no longer feasible, due to glacial meltback, although John Martin may have used this approach on his ascent in 1985. An alternative and much more practical route was, after several earlier attempts, put up in August 1994, by Thompson, Geppert, Sawatzky and MacDonald via the unnamed valley to the south of Amery (*CAJ*, vol. 78 (1995), p. 97). My climbing companion and I were blithely ignorant of this ascent, and so assumed we were bashing up uncharted territory when we grovelled through this valley on September 6. Although we likely took a different route up through the walls and towers of the south side of Amery than the Thompson party, such a distinction is largely irrelevant. More to the point is that several GPS measurements of the summit (reached amidst a nasty blizzard) suggested a height of 11,001 feet.

Spar Mountain (2576m): Rarely ascended peak and possible new route; Rick Collier, September 26, 2007.

Spar is infrequently climbed because it is protected by the confluence of two major rivers, the Vermillion and the Simpson. Six kilometres east of the Radium highway, I forded the Simpson River and bashed my way seven kilometres up little-travelled Lachine Creek and its west branch. After an unsuccessful attempt on the south ridge of Needle Peak (120 metres from the summit), I ascended the ridge west of my camp, contoured with some difficulty the bowl under the magnificent north face of Split Peak (climbed in 1974 by Roskelley and States), and then followed the easy south ridge of Spar for 2.5 kilometres to its summit.

The Pawn

Jason Thompson

I have a Confession to make: I've had a love affair for many years now. My wife knows about it and she's OK with it because it's a mountain affair. The source of my a iction is the Bush River area of the Canadian Rockies. There's something about the mix of deep valleys, soaring peaks, bumpy logging roads, non-existent trails and infrequent visitors that combines to draw me back year after year for yet another adventure.

This year it was the Pawn—one of the informally named peaks of the Chess Group on the western side of the Columbia Icefields. The seed for the trip was planted in July 2003 while climbing Mount King Edward. On the way back to camp, we admired a fine looking peak across the valley to the southwest, which turned out to be the unclimbed Pawn. On the drive out we explored some deactivated logging roads, but the access didn't look particularly inviting, so a return trip was temporarily put on the shelf.

Sure enough, a couple of intervening years dulled our vision of nasty bush and bred optimism anew. On the evening of September 28, 2007, Colin Wooldridge, Bob Pelkey and I made the drive from Calgary to the end of the road below our objective. There were hunters camping at various locations in the main Bush River valley but we fully expected to leave them behind when we turned left at the 86-kilometre mark (from the Trans-Canada Highway) to ascend a side valley and cut blocks on a shoulder some seven kilometres southeast of the Pawn. However, after grinding up hundreds of metres above the valley floor over numerous water bars and around rocks and deadfall, sometime after midnight we passed a parked vehicle complete with a pitched tent and dying embers of an abandoned campfire. I felt guilty for disturbing their peace but we pushed on until we couldn't drive any higher.

Early the next morning we packed up and started hiking toward the Pawn. Colin had the bright idea of getting high on the ridge as soon as possible even though it meant we would gain, lose and gain elevation a couple of times before reaching the Pawn. It definitely worked out better than my suggested beeline side-hilling thrash would have. In just over an hour we were above treeline and enjoying a pleasant ridge-walk on a cloudless day. Mount Bryce cut an impressive figure 10 kilometres to our east and the mountains ringing the Columbia Icefield spread out beyond.

We meandered up and down the ridge enjoying the views until it came time to drop down to a lovely emerald tarn that lay two kilometres east of the Pawn. Shortly thereafter we ran into a most unusual outcropping of tubular-shaped sedimentary rocks that kept us snapping pictures for the next half hour. Eventually we made our way onto a glacier and then ascended to a col (map 83C/3, GR 682636) via two pitches of muddy shale climbing.

Our intended route from this point was to ascend a snow/ice gully on the eastern edge of the Pawn's north face that we had viewed previously from Mount King Edward; however, the dryness of the gully and the constant rain of pebbles and small rocks quickly convinced us that an alternative route would be preferable. So we moved a hundred metres or so to climber's left and began an ascent of the buttress beside the chossy gully. By this time it was late afternoon. Colin led easily up through loose, low 5th-class rock with Bob and me simul-seconding behind. The buttress was higher than expected and required eight or more rope-lengths to top out, by which time it was dark and we gladly bivied at the first flat spot. My tent became a tarp for lack of space to set it up but the night was warm and the winds calm so the stop was restful. The stars were out and we searched for signs of our friends' headlamps on Mount Alberta to the north.

The next morning we descended into a notch and climbed back out before ascending a low-angled icefield to the summit. There we enjoyed some celebratory hugs, views and pictures in all directions before starting the long descent back to our vehicle, this time via the south-southeast ridge. The ridge proved easier than expected and we had no need for the rope. However, a short section of bush lower down very nearly stopped us in our tracks. Only an hour or so later did we escape with blue-

The north face of the Pawn with the northeast ridge following the left-hand buttress and skyline. Photo: Jason Thompson

stained fingers and huckleberry juice on our chins.

From that point, all that was left was a 600-metre descent to the valley below the emerald tarn, then an additional 600 metres of climbing—at first through a break in a moraine—to gain the ridge walk from the previous day, and finally, a 600-metre descent back to the truck. All went well until our final descent into the forest. Colin was convinced we should trend left and I was convinced we should be trending right. Bob didn't know which fool to follow. I was checking my altimeter watch as we descended and sure enough, when we reached the elevation of the vehicle, I quickly came to the realization that we should be way further left. So after a one-kilometre side-hill traverse, I ate crow and humble pie, wiped the egg off my face and cracked open a beer with my friends to celebrate another grand adventure.

Summary

The northeast ridge (III 5.4) of the Pawn (3100m), the Chess Group, Canadian Rockies. FA: Bob Pelkey, Jason Thompson, Colin Wooldridge, September 30, 2007.

The Path

Sonnie Trotter

I Can't say how my aCtions will affect the future of climbing, and quite frankly, it doesn't really matter and I don't really care. What does matter is how my actions affect climbing today—right now at this very moment. I suppose that debate is up for grabs.

But let me begin from the very start. In 1997, during a family vacation to the Bow Valley, I bumped into a friendly man by the name of Geoff Trump. It was mid-summer and we agreed to share a rope for the day as neither of us had a partner. As it turned out on that fateful afternoon, Geoff would show me the road towards traditional climbing. After a year in Ontario pulling on plastic and clipping bolts, I led my very first traditional rock climb, *Extra Dry* (5.9), with a mixed-up set of nuts and a few Camalots.

At the end of our great session, I noticed a streaked wall bigger and steeper than all of the rest. To this day it is still one of the most impressive rock faces I've ever seen. When I asked Geoff what it was, he looked up and grinned, "That my friend, is what I'd call the future."

Exactly 10 summers later, I found myself standing at the base of that great wall. It sat for approximately 20 years without a free ascent and I decided I was going to pour all my energy into it. A line like that was too irresistible to ignore.

After my second attempt on the bolted wall, it became obvious to me that the bolts were not necessary to make the climb safe—not for me, not for anyone. The moves would go. They were hard but definitely possible. However, now I had another challenge to deal with: the task of de-bolting the climb. At its heart, the line is obviously a traditional climb that was accidentally mistaken for a sport route, a simple misconception. To make a long story shorter, I took it upon myself to chop the bolts, a decision I stand by today even after feeling the wrath of the small yet present judgmental sector of our community. Most of this negativity took place via chat rooms and forums. Fortunately, I was also bombarded with positive e-mails and direct letters from supporters which were all warmly welcomed. I saved each and every one. The trash talk came mostly from citizens who didn't understand the truth; citizens of our vertical community that would rather spread darkness instead of light. In my opinion, there is not much room for darkness in our sport. Climbing is fun and it is a privilege so we should spend more of our time supporting each other ,even if visions overlap.

The climbing on *The Path* was as good as any I can remember: big moves to small crimps, technical feet and thought-provoking gear. The slightly overhanging wall created hard moves between good rests, and it quickly turned into a challenge of stamina over power. The crux comes two metres above the final piece of gear. The fall (which I took often) was a soft sideways swing onto a micro-cam that never pulled. I trusted the gear 100 per cent. If I didn't, I would never have done it.

The crux sequence begins after a good rest. With swollen arms and sweaty palms, I lunged left for a crimp the width of a pencil and the length of a paper clip. From this position, the hard part was switching my feet to shift the bulk of my weight onto my outstretched arm and come into a match. Three more tic-tac moves with spaced feet brought me to easy 5.12 terrain, deep breaths, and the final jug. With as little attention as possible to the 10 metres of slack I had in my hand, I hauled up 40 metres of rope drag to clip the anchor. This brought an instantaneous ear-to-ear grin that lasted for the entire exposed ride back down to the ground.

People often ask me why I named the route *The Path*. It was the only name I could give such a brilliant climb. It is an obvious path of holds leading to the very lofty top of the wall—three metres to the left or right, the wall is blank. This path of edges is a gift. But the real reason for the name is an appreciation for my friend Geoff Trump. This relationship was short but stable. A stranger who trusted his life to me within minutes of our first hello, Geoff showed me "The Lake" for the first time. A stranger who held my rope and lent me his rack. A stranger who showed me to trust my instincts, open my eyes and learn to follow a path less ordinary. A stranger with an honest smile.

Summary

The Path (5.14, 40m), Back of the Lake, Lake Louise. FA: Sonnie Trotter, August 21, 2007.

The East

Opportunistic Winter Cragging

Nick Buda

"Aaaahhh! Naayyaaaahhhh… unghhhh!" The crisp silence of a bitter January day in Ontario's northwest is broken by James Loveridge's moans and groans as he experiences the screaming barfies for the umpteenth time today. This time is a bit worse though; he's been hanging in his harness drilling and cleaning for too long in the bitter cold, and has lost feeling in both his feet and legs. His wailing draws my face out from deep within my cocoon of multiple down jackets, a sleeping bag and double boots, trying to stay warm belaying at the base of our newly discovered sport-mixed crag. My smug chuckles are promptly rewarded with a "your turn," which immediately wipes the smile from my face and has me muttering something about trail work. Sucking it up, I lower James and gear up for my turn on the agonizing sharp end. Really, there has to be a better way to spend our time than drilling when it's -30 C outside. Soon enough, the drill's batteries agree with me and after a couple more bolts I'm off the hook. The batteries have died despite the hotshots and insulated pack James cunningly employed to keep them warm.

Such were the dozen or so days James and I, along with a myriad of others, spent establishing some new sport mixed pitches at the crag we came to call The Fishery. The name seemed appropriate given its location on the Black Sturgeon Road north of Dorion, and in keeping with the name of its first route, *Jiggin' for Cod* (M5 WI6, 55m), a trad-mixed line plucked by temporary residents Steve and Kira Russell. The crag's steep roofs and chimneys, unusual for the region, also lend themselves well to "hooking" and most of the routes have been named on this theme.

Though word of our little secret seems to be getting out, climbers in Thunder Bay, Nipigon and the surrounding area still enjoy a comparatively unknown winter climbing paradise. With dozens of ultra-classic waterfall and traditional mixed routes, and potential for limitless first ascents across the region, I'm constantly surprised at just how few climbers actually visit—not that I'm complaining. A busy mid-winter weekend in Orient Bay might see half-dozen parties at most in the 20-kilometre corridor. Fewer still are active on the new route front, and it's not for lack of opportunity. The absence of crowds, save for during the Christmas break and annual Nipigon Icefest, is likely attributable to the lack of any reasonably close major urban centres. Most of the routes in the area are only one pitch, with some notable exceptions, but what they lack in stature they certainly make up for in excellent quality (of all difficulties), ease of access (many just a few minutes from the car) and a total absence of avalanche hazard. Add to all of this a very welcoming climbing community, and you have a great winter climbing area.

Another pleasure of climbing in the region is the small but close-knit band of locals that have been at the centre of much of the recent new route developments. Some of our most active "locals" likely have the largest commute to the crags of any community, with folks regularly making the weekend drive from places like Duluth and Minneapolis, Minnesota (four and seven hours respectively), Madison, Wisconsin (10 hours) or Winnipeg, Manitoba (seven hours).

Part of the joy (and frustration) of climbing in the area in recent years has been the rapid pace of new route development, particularly among the more challenging water ice and mixed routes. The sheer numbers of new routes and the rate at which they are going up means guidebooks are seriously dated as soon as they are published and much confusion over new routes and first ascent claims arises each season. Currently, much of the area knowledge on newer routes resides in the brains of a few, and they don't always have the picture straight either. What follows is a far from comprehensive overview of some of the more significant route developments in the region over the past few seasons, through my own myopic eyes. Apologies to those I leave out or otherwise miss—their contributions are no less worthy. My goal is to provide a synopsis of the more recently developed major venues and significant new routes. For every new route I've mentioned here, it's a safe assumption that at least five more went up, and in many cases, there is at least that many more still to do.

Matt Giambrone on the first ascent of an unnamed M8 trad route at Kama Bay during the 2007–08 season. Photo: Nick Buda

Orient Bay

Orient Bay (OB) has long been known as the centre of ice climbing in northern Ontario, and for good reason. As the best-known venue in the area, and with dozens of high-quality, roadside routes at every difficulty level, it has a lot to offer visiting climbers, particularly those with an aversion to long approaches. Though the majority

of long-established classic routes in the valley are pure ice undertakings, a number of ultra-classic traditional mixed pitches have been established over the years. Routes like *Off the Couch* (M6+, 70m, Fayle-Fayle-McKay, 1996) and *Claustrophobia* (M5, 60m, Loveridge, 1997) saw repeat ascents on a regular basis even before their appearance in guidebooks or the now-ubiquitous Internet forums. Though new routes like these were done sporadically over the years, the pace of new route development has increased exponentially in recent years. Sport mixed climbing came to the area (and northwest Ontario as a whole) in 2001 when Jeff Hammerich made a couple of trips into the Ice Palace area to establish *Genetic Defect* (M7, 40m) with Nick Buda and David Benton. Benton snagged the actual first ascent of the chossy line, with myself and others following over the next couple of weeks. The mandatory Internet slag-fest ensued, with many diehard traditionalists (most of whom had never laid eyes on the route) expressing strong opposition to the style (the route was bolted ground-up). Regardless, the route sees occasional ascents and there are now several such routes in the corridor.

Driving north into OB, most climbers' eyes are immediately drawn to the slender daggers and free-standing pillars of *Parallax* (WI5/6, 50m, Lindquist-Rone, 1987), one of the best ice routes in the valley. The vicinity is now home to an incredible collection of quality mixed routes. Leading the charge in development here has been James Loveridge, a local living in Duluth. In 1997, together with Andrew Albosta, he established *Secondary Binary* (M6+ R, 55m)—a very bold route that went long unreported but has become the classic mixed alternative to the unformed *Parallax* in recent years. Returning in 2004 with Jen Stewart-Grimes, Loveridge established *Parsec* (M7, 30m), a bolted direct start to the left of *Secondary Binary*. The immediate vicinity has also yielded several high-quality longer traditional routes (most at the hands of Loveridge): *Hubris at Sundown* (M5+, 120m, Brown-Buda, 2004), *Early Retirement* (WI5+, 70m, Buda-Loveridge, 2006) and *Relativity* (M6+, 65m, Buda-Loveridge, 2006). No doubt the prize of the area is *Mechanical Advantage* (M9 R, 60m, Giambrone-Loveridge, 2006), which links a thin ice smear to a massive, naturally protected roof to an anemic dagger, and stacks a bold M5 pitch on top. The route, like many of the others, has yet to see a repeat. The rarity of its formation means it could be a while yet.

Bryce Brown during the first ascent of *Hubris at Sundown* at Orient Bay. Photo: Nick Buda

In addition to hosting the controversial *Genetic Defect* and classic *Off the Couch* mentioned above, the Ice Palace has long been a top crag among visitors to OB for the sheer concentration of high-quality harder ice routes that form reliably every season. Routes like *10% Real* (WI5, Dahlberg-Saroka-Arneson-Quigley, 1985) are among the best and most sought-after in the area, and are perennial favourites among locals. In addition to about a dozen excellent pure ice routes, two notable new lines have gone up recently. The impressive *Professional Business Men* (M8, 55m, Backes-Giambrone-Hall-Isaac-Loveridge, 2005) was established while its protagonists were "working" during the Nipigon Icefest. Located beside the summer rock climbing area of The Schoolhouse, the route climbs a beautiful steep ice/mixed corner before following thin moves on

bolts out a steep, undercut dihedral with plenty of exposure. A long-eyed series of smears and pillars, most often sun-baked and unclimbable, tantalizes locals most years dripping straight down the middle of the five-star summer rock climbing venue of the Tajmahwall. The line finally came into condition during the banner 2006 season and allowed visiting climbers Shawn Tracy and Garth Willis to established *Arjumand's Shroud* (M6 WI5, 70m). The route was quickly repeated and its quality confirmed.

The so-called Wall of Doom is located mid-valley in OB across from the compressor station, and offers an intimidating collection of chossy rock chimneys and scary ice daggers. Many of the old guard had remarked that these climbs would be very serious and thus many of the youngsters had left the area untouched. Looking to cap off an excellent season in April 2004, "youngsters" Wes Bender and myself decided to go have a look anyway. Initially drawn to a serious-looking pure ice route, detached ice soon convinced us to look elsewhere. In the end, we opened the loose chimney of *Mythophobia* (M5 WI4, 85m) finding reasonable climbing and much more potential. The best conditions in the area's 25-year climbing history were experienced in 2006, and the remaining lines quickly succumbed to many talented climbers from as far away as Madison. With the addition of routes such as *Doomsday* (WI6, 55m, Bender-Rone, 2006), *Nickophobia* (M5 WI4+, 60m, Brown-Hyvarinen, 2006) and room for a few more still, the crag has much to offer mixed aficionados.

In addition to these concentrated crags, many excellent new routes litter the corridor pointing toward future potential and offering excellent outings themselves. Located just right of *Reflection Wall* (WI5, 80m, Dahlberg-Saroka, 1985), the sport pitch of *Refraction* (M7, 35m, Dahlberg-Tracy, 2006) has been described by Loveridge as the best pitch of its type in the area. Of interest, south-of-the-border activist, Mike Dahlberg, opened both routes over two decades apart. New pure ice outings of every difficulty, such as *Trickle Trunk* (WI4+, 60m, Bender-Hyvarinen, 2004) and *Psychotic Episode* (WI6, 55m, Landmann-Rone, 2005), are seeing regular ascents. Currently, Loveridge is projecting a new sport mixed line dubbed *Road to Nowhere* (M10) in the massive cave above *Going Nowhere Fast* (WI2, 25m, Dahlberg-Edlin, 1987) that will no doubt be the hardest in the region.

Kama Bay

KAMA BAY IS BY FAR the region's best-kept secret. While most of the visitors' attention in the region is focused squarely on Orient Bay, Kama has consistently offered up a dizzying number of very high-quality steep ice and traditional mixed routes, and is truly the gem of the region in terms of mixed climbing. The reasons for its apparent neglect relative to Orient Bay are somewhat perplexing. Perhaps the so called "heinous approach" keeps the OB regulars away—a good 30- to 40-minute uphill grunt for most routes, but occasionally two hours if post-holing.

Regardless, the lack of crowds and no highway noise makes the area that much better. It has been yielding a steady stream of excellent new routes in addition to long-established classics like *Getting Oriented* (WI4-5+, 55m, French-Hubrant-Page-Parent-Wilford, 1991), *Icebreakers* (WI5+, 60m, Crowe-

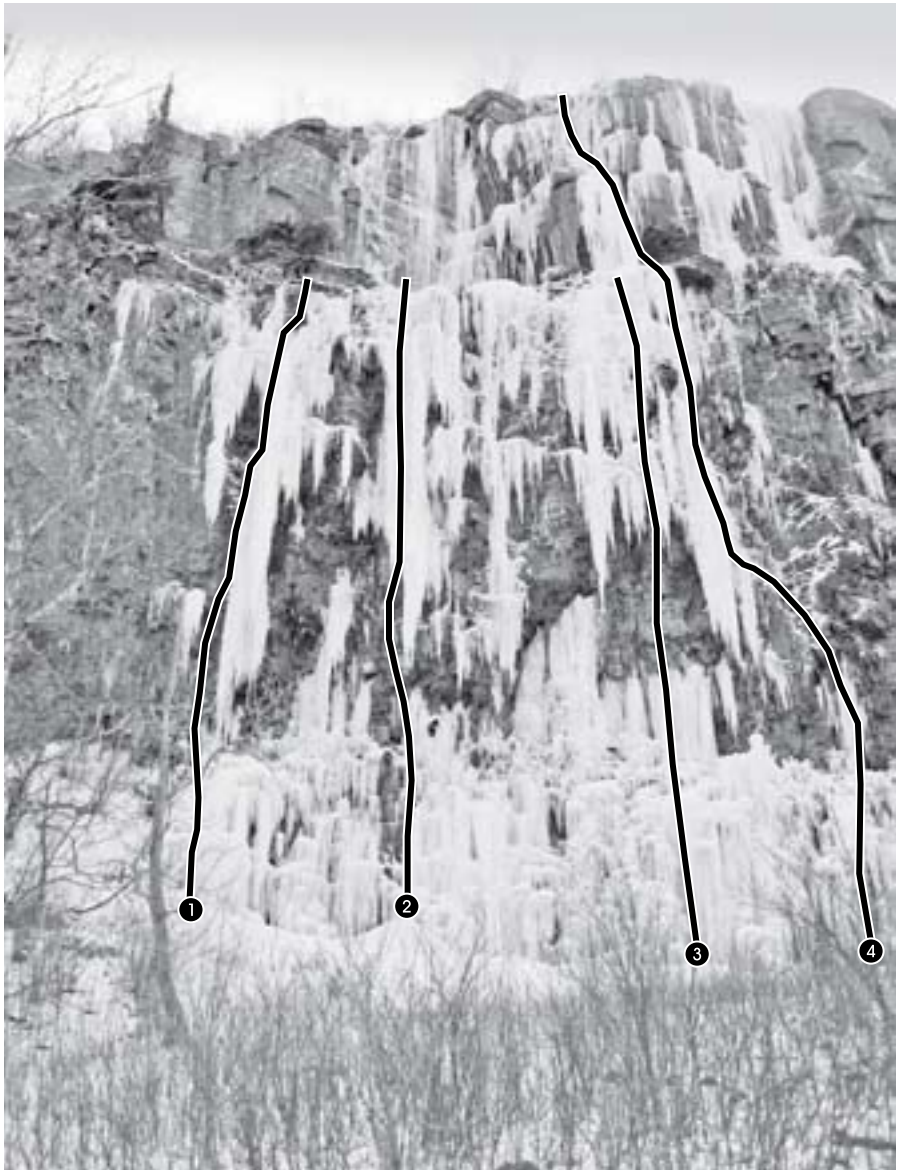
James Loveridge on the first ascent of *Galadrials Phial* at Kama Bay. Photo: Scott Backes

Mailhout-Pibarou, 1994) and *Hell's Chimney* (M5, WI4+, 50m, Groth-Walsh, 1998). Not all are difficult either. In 2003, Wes Bender established four new moderate routes up to WI4 in the drainage above *Powerline Falls* (WI3-5+, 30m, Kuenn, 1981) that have proved popular. Together with myself, Bender also established the pleasant *Kamakaze* (WI4, 35m).

Most attention in recent years has focused on mixed routes, and activists Matt Giambrone and Loveridge have been leading the charge. Routes such as *Java* (M5, 60m, Loveridge-Slawinski, 2002), *NC-17* (M5+, 30m, Giambrone-Pierce, 2003), *Sticks In Stone* (M6+, 40m, Backes-Giambrone, 2003) and *Necronomicon* (M7, 40m, Backes-Giambrone-Hall- Slawinski, 2003) are as good as they come and should be at the top of all visiting mixed climbers' lists. Many of the routes at Kama presumably get missed due to their locations deep within chimneys and the fact that they are not readily visible from the road.

A few other routes at Kama deserve mention. The area testpieces are currently located in a massive, overhanging chimney just right of *Icebreakers*. In 2004, Loveridge and Giambrone established the dangerous *Shelob's Lair* (M8- R/X, 60m) climbing two very bold pitches to snag the tantalizing dagger. The committing nature of the climbing combined with poor protection have meant the climb remains unrepeated, despite apparently offering quality climbing. Fortunately, that same dagger formed much further down during the excellent 2005–06 season, and Loveridge and Giambrone returned to establish a much better-protected direct start called *Galadriel's Phial* (M8 WI6, 60m). The rock section is reported to offer excellent climbing, though Loveridge described the ice section as the hardest he's done to date in the region. To finish off the season, Loveridge and Giambrone did a very long and aesthetic two-pitch mixed line called *Evanesce* (M7 WI5+, 80m). Kama Bay continues to offer up new high-end pure ice outings as well. In 2005, Dave Rone made a bold lead to establish *Kama Sutra* (WI5+ R, 60m, Bender-Bottan-Rone, 2005), and even in the drought season of 2006–07, Bender found unclimbed ice nearer the highway, establishing *Divine Intervention* (WI5+, 40m, Bender-Hyvarinen). I quickly followed and established *Obstipation* (M6+ R, 50m). Even as this article goes to press in 2008, Giambrone and Dean Einerson paid a visit to Paradice, the back side of the Kama Hills, and found a beautiful new flow dubbed *Purgatory* (WI5+, 55m).

The east face of Mount McKay in Thunder Bay: (1) *Speaking With Crows.* (2) *House of Cards.* (3) *Domino Theory.* (4) *Les Bites.* Photo: Nick Buda



The Middle Lands

The numerous hills and valleys between Nipigon and Thunder Bay offer a multitude of new route opportunities for those whose interest lies more in adventure and exploration rather than technical difficulty. Paul Berger, a local university professor, has personified the nature of these types of routes, using all manner of transportation including snowshoes, skis, skates and kayaks to approach a variety of remote ice flows. Examples of this include a number of fun outings along the Nipigon River (*Ice Falling On Cedars* (WI 2, 40m) and *White Pine Sentinel* (WI3, 50m), both Berger-Moeller, 2004), and various ice routes on Pi Island approached by sea kayak.

The various backcountry roads near Dorion have also yielded some significant new crags in addition to isolated routes with a wilderness character. These include The Fishery, described earlier, which is currently the area's premier sport-mixed crag. Home to the testpiece *Tryptophan* (M9, 30m, Giambrone-Loveridge, 2004) and the classic *Sportf shing* (M7-, 30m, Einerson-Loveridge, 2004), access to the area has become an issue recently. Though the crag itself is on Crown land, a private-land parcel blocks direct access. Locals are currently in contact with property owners and it is likely a solution will be arrived at soon.

Thunder Bay

Though Conditions from season to season are incredibly variable, primarily due to the city's proximity to the weather influences of Lake Superior, Thunder Bay is home to some of the finest climbing venues in the region. Chief among these are the routes on the north side of Mount McRae. The crag is often referred to as the "Mount Rundle of the East" with its collection of hard multi-pitch outings that are by far the most watched pieces of ice in the region. Readily visible from town, locals constantly watch the wall hoping for the formation of classic test-pieces like *Pukasahib* (a.k.a. *Child's Play;* WI5+, 90m) and *Chucky's Revenge* (WI6, 90m). The hidden gem, *Nanabijou* (WI5, 80m), is widely regarded as the best ice climb in the province.

With the exception of a new left-hand mixed variation to an unformed second pitch of *Nanabijou* by Raphael Slawinski and Loveridge in 2002, which Slawinski described as one of the best mixed routes anywhere, new route activity had been quiet here since the mid '90s. The winter of 2005–06 was the best in the area's history and many new routes were established in the midst of regular repeats of all the rarely formed classics. The area loosely referred to as Robinson's Route in older local ice guides yielded three exceptional pure ice routes in a game of one-upmanship: *The Boys Are Back In Town* (WI5+, 75m, Meinen-Pullan, 2006), *The Men Didn't Leave* (WI5+, 75m, Buda-Robinson, 2006) and *Young at Heart* (WI5+ R, 75m, Backes-Loveridge, 2006), the latter only six days after Scott Backes had heart surgery. The prize of the crag, *Mishipeshu* (M8 WI6, 100m), was claimed by Loveridge and Dave Stemjhem. After bolting the first chossy shale pitch on lead, the attempt on the second pitch saw Loveridge take a horrendous whipper onto a slung chockstone just metres from the top. Loveridge went back and fired the route after adding a few more bolts, but suitors beware, even with the bolts this is not a sport-mixed route. It still remains unrepeated despite a worthy attempt by a strong party.

Recent years have also seen the maturation of another mixed venue—the East Face of Mount McKay. Despite the numerous hanging daggers and free-standing pillars, fickle conditions and a 25-metre band of loose shale meant many potential routes went undone. Until 2002, the only established routes were the spicy *Speaking With Crows* (M4 WI4+, 40m, Berger-Moeller, 1997) and the thin ice route *Good Job Hard Man* (WI4, 40m, Anfossi-Hamilton, 1995). In 2002, during a whirlwind tour of area testpieces, Loveridge and Slawinski snagged ascents of the two most obvious

Nick Buda on the first ascent of *Les Bites* on the east face of Mount McKay.
Photo: Bryce Brown

hanging daggers in very lean conditions, resulting in *Domino Theory* (M6+ R, 40m) and *House of Cards* (M6- R). Climbing late in the season, they both experienced the wall at its worst, climbing up stacked blocks of loose, overhanging shale and watching cracks widen as they torqued their picks. Conditions were much better when I visited in December 2006 with Bryce Brown and established *Les Bites* (M6+ R, 55m), which was also the first route to find conditions on the upper wall good enough to permit an ascent to the very top. With the exception of *Speaking With Crows*, none of the routes have been repeated as most folks have a limited appetite for rotten shale climbing.

Not all of the newest routes have been dif cult or bold either. Bender spearheaded the development of a myriad of moderate routes found on the Wailing Wall (initially discovered by Frank Pianka, Randy Hyvarinen and Dale Shymko in 2000) in South Gillies over two winters (2002 and 2006), adding 10 new routes to the wall, all at WI4 or easier except for one short testpiece. A friendly landowner has resulted in the crag becoming a popular destination for intermediate climbers looking to get off the beaten path.

True wilderness adventures await those who are willing to explore a little. Rumours of some moderate wilderness ice routes somewhere up the Armstrong Highway abound in the climbing community, though many have yet to figure out just where these routes are located. Area regulars are frequently surprised with new routes forming right under their noses in venues considered climbed out. The best recent example of this is *Sideshow* (WI5+, 55m, Hyvarinen-Kirpan, 2004). After trekking across the frozen Whitefish Lake with hopes of ascending the classic *Artesian Wells* (WI3+ to WI6, 60m, Wade-Van Shaik, 1992), the route's first ascentionists were shocked to see the new route formed in the most unlikely of places. Fast repeats confirmed the route's status as one of the area's finest.

Regardless of your climbing tastes or abilities, climbing in northwestern Ontario has much to offer local and visiting climbers alike, and I firmly expect to be establishing new routes even 10 years from now—as long as creativity and conditions permit.

La Zébrée

Jean-Pierre Ouellet

Have you ever felt a connection with a route? Just looking at it makes you want to climb it. Just thinking about it makes your hands start to sweat. When you go to sleep all you see are the striking features that make it unique. That is how I feel about one route: *La Zébrée*.

My love story with *La Zébrée* (means striped) started about 12 years ago. It was on my first day of traditional climbing ever. I had decided to climb *Le Sceptre* (5.8) on Mount King in Val-David, Québec, as my introductory gear-protected route. As I walked by *La Zébrée* to get to my project, I experienced *Coup-de-Foudre* (love at first sight). I was amazed at the beauty of the line. The black and white stripes, the double roofs, the steepness; everything seemed perfect. I thought it would be awesome if someone were able climb it free (at the time it was still an aid climb). I was far from thinking that, one day, I would clip its anchor.

Six years ago, my good friend Jeff Beaulieu started working *La Zébrée*. I was so psyched for him that I decided to help him as much as I could by offering to belay whenever possible. Jeff trained hard and worked the route for three years. He did the route in the autumn of 2004 on his very last try of the season. I belayed him witnessing the best climbing show I had ever seen.

In 2005, I returned from a successful trip to Yosemite to discover that I was single. My girlfriend had dumped me; therefore, I now had ample time on my hands. That in turn meant training every day. I even took Kung Fu classes. A new *moi* was born. With all that energy to spare, I needed a project. In mid-August I made a trip to Mount King and did the 10-metre roof crack of *Le Toit de Ben* (5.13a) placing the gear on lead and then downclimbing it. I was really surprised and realized that I was fitter than I had thought. That night I pondered what was next. The choice was easy. The following day I rope-soloed *La Zébrée* just to have a look at it. Self-belaying with a GriGri, I could make all the moves on my first weekend on the route. I had found my new project.

I knew it would not be an easy task. I had helped Jeff and had observed many of his frustrations. The worst was that the route was often wet. At the end of my first summer, I was really close to doing it but I still needed a bit more training, so I got back on my regime. I trained for 30 to 35 hours a week that winter and the following spring I felt fitter than ever. During the winter, I had too much time to think because I decided to try to do *La Zébrée* placing the gear on the lead (Jeff had the protection pre-placed). I would only call it a send if I did a proper redpoint of the route, putting in all the gear as I climbed. Due to the steepness of the wall, I knew it wouldn't be an easy task but I was ready to do whatever it would take. I just had to figure out a way to clean the route after each attempt. My plan was simple in theory, but time and energy consuming in reality. Since I couldn't just lower and clean, I would downclimb the route after every try, retrieving the gear for the next go.

The route was really wet in the spring of 2006, too wet to even try climbing it, so I headed out west to try to improve on my crack technique. In early June, I climbed *Sphinx Crack* (5.13b/c) in South Platte, Colorado and also got the second ascent of *Fiddler on the Roof* (5.13+) in

Fremont Canyon, Wyoming. I returned to Mount King in early August and was hoping to finish business. It had rained every other day that summer and the crack was not drying out, but I had an idea. All I needed to do was to dry the route myself. I started to dry it out with towels and sponges. I would rappel and down-aid the route while placing towels in the crack so it would absorb the water. This allowed me a couple of tries at the route before the towels became saturated. To me it sounded like a good plan, but it ended up being a lot of hard work. During the following months the weather did not improve. On some days it would take me five hours to dry the route, which only gave me time for one try before it started to seep again. I came close three or four times to doing it, but the rain wouldn't stop. At the end of October, I was disappointed and decided it would have to wait until the next season. I departed for a two-week trip to Indian Creek, Utah, making fast ascents of *Learning to Fly* (5.13+) and *From Switzerland with Love* (5.13+). This motivated me to start my winter training again.

This past April, I was in Kentucky's Red River Gorge finalizing my training when I received an e-mail from my friend Ghislain. He reported *La Zébrée* was almost dry because it had been 15 days without a single drop of rain. The forecast was looking good so I sprinted back to Val-David to have a shot at it. On my first day, I still had to manually dry it for five hours and the next morning for another two hours. After that the route started to stay dry, well, dry enough. I still had to dry out some jams, but it would only take me 30 to 40 minutes.

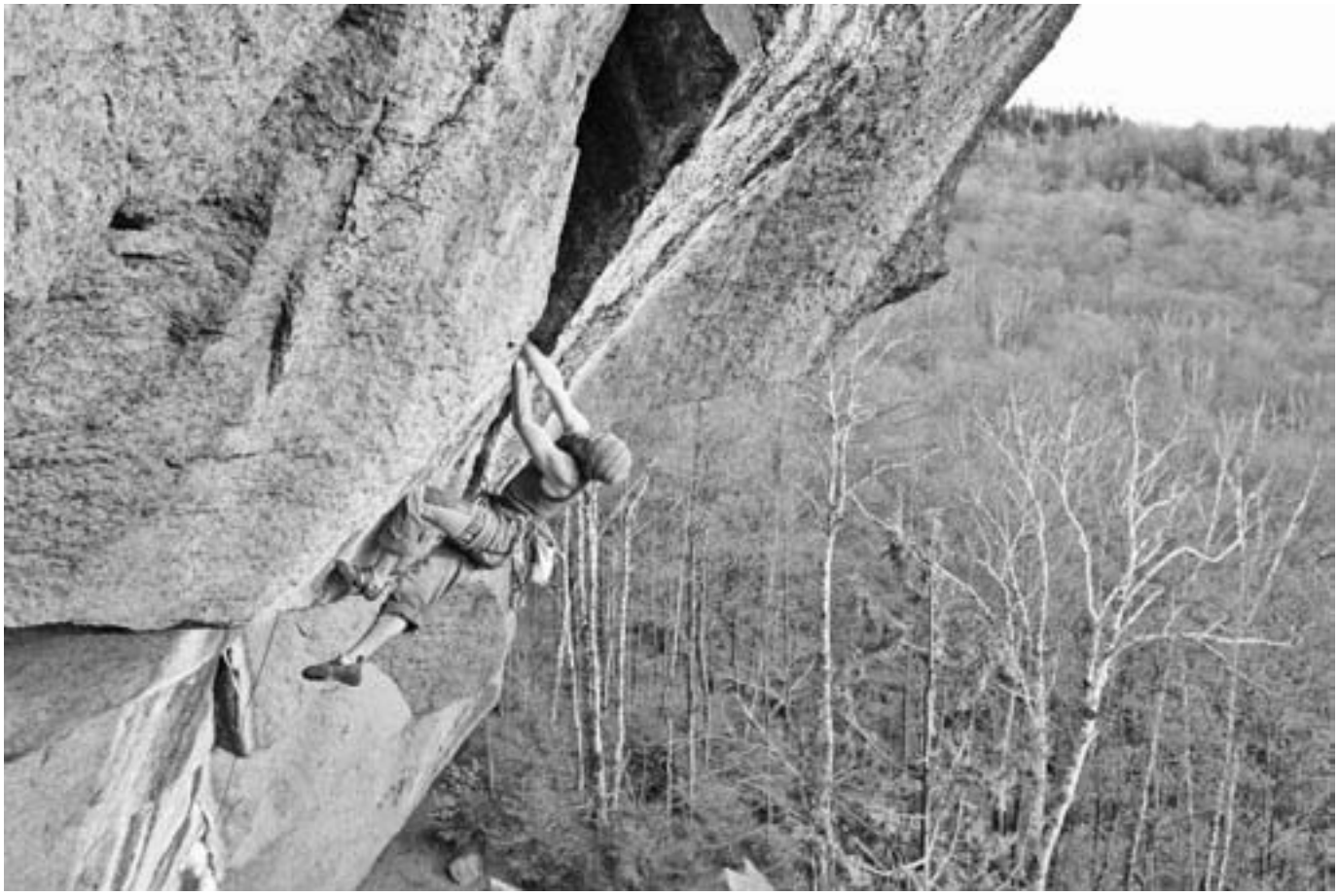
On my second try of my fourth day, I fell from the jug before the rest. The weather forecast was not looking promising for the next few days and I though I had wasted this perfect window of opportunity. The route was dry and I still couldn't climb it. I waited an hour and tried to relax. I told myself to have fun, just get back on it and enjoy the ride. If I fell, I'd just try it again, as long as it was fun. I dug deep to keep it together and finally clipped the anchors without falling or hanging. All was perfect.

I have mixed feelings about the route. I'm really happy to have the send in my pocket but I'm also sad because there will be something missing. I'm going to miss the learning process I was experiencing every day I spent working the route. *La Zébrée* was a big part of my life for the last three years. It taught me a lot about climbing, training and, most importantly, about myself. Does anybody know of a wet crack that needs to be free climbed?

Summary

La Zébrée (5.14a, 25m (overhangs by 14m)), Mt. King, Val-David, Québec.
FA: Jeff Beaulieu, September 2004.
First Redpoint (2nd ascent): Jean-Pierre Ouellet, May 2007.

Jean-Pierre Ouellet on *La Zébrée* at Val-David. Photo: Benoit Robitaille



Audrey Gariepy climbing at
Kaldakinn in northern Iceland.
Photo: Visual Impact/Rainer Eder

Foreign

Icelandic Ice

Audrey Gariepy

In February XXXX, I had the opportunity to go ice climbing in Iceland with Ines Papert, Marcus Bendler and Albert Leichtfried. Only 400,000 inhabitants populate this beautiful island—most of them living in the capital of Reykjavík. The people are very welcoming and proud of their country. They always wanted to educate us on their traditions and the natural resources of their country.

We were there to climb as much ice as possible and, of course, to have fun. The temperatures were cold and the conditions perfect for the two weeks we spent there. We were lucky because the Gulf Stream combined with the maritime climate usually makes for variable ice conditions.

We started our trip at an ice climbing festival in Kaldakinn, a little village in the north. The event was a good opportunity to meet all 40 of Iceland's ice climbers. I was speechless when I saw the incredible wall of ice adorning the sea cliffs behind the farmer's house where we were staying. All those beautiful ice lines right next to each other with the sea lapping at the base. When the local climbers told us that the hardest lines hadn't yet been climbed, Ines and I got a wave of energy that motivated us to climb everything in sight.

The following days we went from one steep ice line to another doing first ascents. *Thule* and *Coconut* were both 100 metres of WI5+. *Wish You Were Here* (WI6+, 100m) we named in memory of our friend, Hari Berger, who was killed in an ice climbing accident a couple months prior. It was the perfect line starting with a short warm-up pitch of WI4 followed by a system of ice daggers along a steep roof. At first we thought it would be a mixed route, but it turned out to be possible to go from icicle to icicle without touching rock.

The ocean environment made climbing on this wall a unique experience with the sun rising slowly above the distant horizon and sea birds playing with the wind's current. As I climbed, my body and mind were sensitive to every detail of the moment. The rhythm of my tools on the ice seemed to keep beat with the pulse of the waves hitting the wall below.

After a couple of days, Ines had an interesting idea: climb 1,000 metres of steep ice in a day. Our first attempt didn't go very well. The lines that we picked were too far from one another. Plus, the ropes got stuck a few times while rappelling, which slowed everything down. By the time the sun had set, we were exhausted and had only climbed 550 metres of ice. We drove home disappointed with our failure. We were surprised at how tired we were but kept chatting about what we could have done to be more ef cient.

The next day we departed Kaldakinn to explore another part of the country. We made our way to the eastern f ords to find mixed routes. We drove all day and were lucky enough to find our perfect project close to Breiddalsvik. The next morning, armed with the drill, Ines started to bolt our project ground-up. She was able to send it that same day but I had to come back the next day for my redpoint. *Chocolat Chaud* (M10, 40m) began with steep rock to an ice roof and finished on a very nice section of WI6.

Ines and I are pretty similar in many ways. One of them being that once we have an idea in our head, it becomes really important to accomplish it. The project to climb 1,000 metres of steep ice in a day was still haunting our dreams. After talking about it, we decided to go back to Kaldakinn to give it another try.

The safest way to speed up was to climb as fast as possible while seconding and to make our transitions between routes as quick as possible. At belays, there was no small talk other than to give positive encouragement. The day zipped by fast and we climbed even faster. By just after the sun set, we had climbed a few metres more than a vertical kilometre of technical ice. Completely wasted but incredibly happy, I never thought it would be that hard. The feeling of accomplishment was well worth the effort.

The road back to Reykjavík gave us the last crux of our adventure. We had to drive in the biggest snowstorm I've ever experienced (and I'm from Québec!). With horizontal blowing snow obscuring everything, 10 kilometres per hour was all I could manage. Avoiding cars pulled over on both sides of the road, Ines and I sang John Denver's *Country Roads* which kept smiles on our faces in celebration of an excellent trip.

Summary

New routes: *Coconut* (WI5+, 100m), *Thule* (WI5+, 100m) and *Wish You Were Here* (WI6+, 100m) at Kaldakinn in northern Iceland and *Chocolat Chaud* (M10, 40m) at Breiddalsvik in eastern Iceland. FA: Audrey Gariepy, Ines Papert, February 2007.

Link-up: 1,000 metres of steep ice in-a-day (12 ice routes ranging in dif culty from WI5 to WI6 and in length from 80 metres to 140 metres), Kaldakinn. Audrey Gariepy, Ines Papert, February 2007.

Farol East

Maxime Turgeon

The alarm is ringing. I still feel pressure in my temples but less so than last night. The sky is clear and the moonlight unveils the profiles of the surrounding granite spires giving them a surreal look. At 10:30 a.m. we reach the snow slopes that mark the lower third of the south pillar of Farol Central. The weight on my shoulders feels greater and greater, my steps shorter and shorter. The sun is right in our face—it feels hot, real hot. My heartbeat echoes in my ears; I am sick to my stomach and could throw-up anytime. Progress is almost impossible. At 2 p.m. it's my turn to take the lead and the terrain above is far from reassuring.

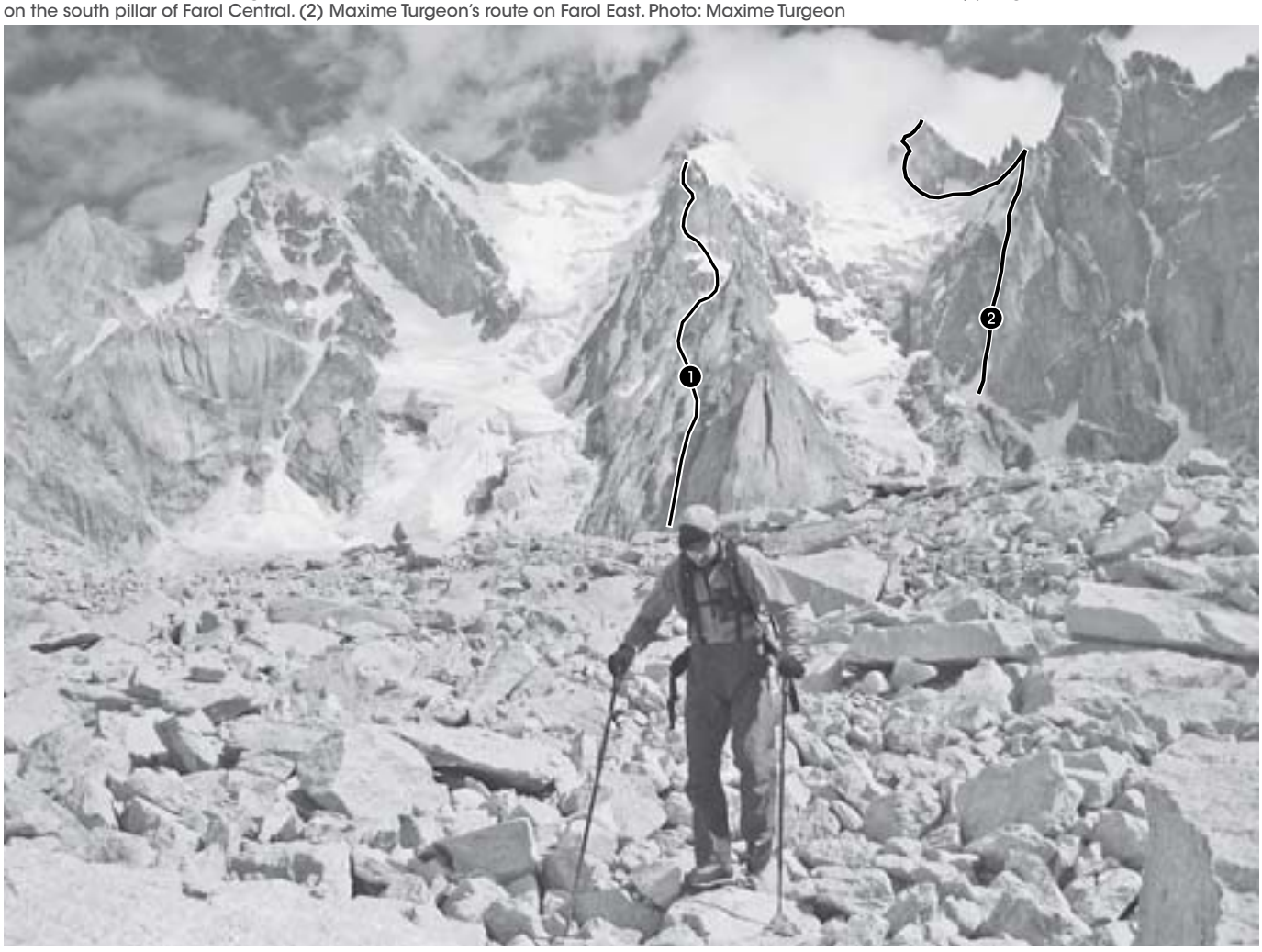
My left tool feels well anchored. I move tentatively onto it but suddenly the block that I am grabbing with my right hand shifts. I feel the force of acceleration then a huge impact. My vision is foggy and I can hardly breathe. When my mind clears, I find I am hanging fully from my umbilical [a stretchy sling that extends from a climber's harness to their ice axe so a leashless tool will not be lost if dropped—Ed.]. The only thing keeping me from falling is my left tool, which is still securely hooked in a crack. There is only one piece of gear between me and the belay 20 metres below, where Louis-Philippe (LP) is completely unaware of what just happened. The little string just saved my life, and probably his as well.

Composure regained, upward progress resumes until I find myself, as well as the rope, completely stretched. I feel like I am selling part of my soul to feed my ego—all this risk just for a tiny piece of a mountain. The feeling is soon replaced by the intrigue of what lies ahead.

All too soon I find out: an exposed section without any possibility of finding gear.

"Fuck that! It doesn't mean anything!" comes from below. LP has lost momentum. The risk for him is not worth it. The bid is higher than he is willing to pay. An emergency exit sign is blinking

Louis-Philippe Ménard working his way back to basecamp with a broken ankle in the Charakusa Valley, Pakistan: (1) Turgeon and Ménard's attempt on the south pillar of Farol Central. (2) Maxime Turgeon's route on Farol East. Photo: Maxime Turgeon



under his feet in the form of a narrow snow couloir opening to the side of the icefall. At first glance it appears to be an easy and direct escape, but in reality it is laden with the hazard of falling ice—a roll of the dice. An instant later we are pulling our first rap. The warmth and comfort of our tent becomes our sole focus.

Every creaking sound makes my muscles tense as I keep a wary eye on the seracs that threaten us. I am trying to control my breath but I feel like I am breathing through a paper bag. Kick, swing, kick, swing, I repeat the downward movements mechanically until the angle eventually lessens. A dreadful scream comes from above and a shadow falls quickly into my field of vision. I jump forward and cling to my tools waiting for the worst. Seconds are stretching but everything seems to stay the same; all I can hear is my breath raging. A scream emerges from below. I turn around to see LP clutching his only remaining tool—right at the lip of the serac.

"Are you OK?"

"No, my annnnkkle!"

Trying to get back up, he collapses, "I think it's broken!"

Our tent is a kilometre of crevassed glacier and unstable moraine away. Our basecamp, the closest sign of civilization, even further.

It's 9 p.m. by the time we reach the base. I look into LP's distant stare. He is laying on the ground, the Gore-Tex fabric on his knees and butt ripped from crawling. It is impossible to carry him. All I can do is relieve him from the weight of his pack and find the best way through the glacial maze.

The next morning, we vacate highcamp for the long talus slog to basecamp. LP loads up on painkillers and inch-by-inch limps towards the valley.

Maxime Turgeon attempting the unclimbed south pillar of Farol Central.
Photo: Louis-Philippe Ménard

All the muscles of my body are cramping with lactic acid. The heat is so intense under my shell that my eyes feel like they are going to pop. My universe is narrowing, limited by the opening of my hood. Suddenly the sound of my pick penetrating the ice changes—the ice becomes hollow. Nervously, I sweep my hood off with the back of my hand, trying to see more, trying to locate a line of weakness through the steep ground. I carefully place my front points on a small nub and systematically move on it ignoring the counter-weight of my pack.

It has been 10 days since we attempted Farol Central and failed. Now with LP returning home to mend his ankle, I am alone attempting the unclimbed Farol East—there is no one with me to catch me if I fall. I am here seeking perspective, but this time solo with no influence. Where are my limits? What is acceptable risk? Suddenly the edge of a snow patch appears in arm's length. All the muscles of my body relax as the shaft of my tool vibrates, transmitting the quality of the placement.

Slouching on my pack, every breath burns my dehydrated throat—I can't stop coughing. The heat is unbearable. The summit is still at least 300 metres away but my body refuses to take one

more step. After an hour of roaming my mind, I find the motivation to open my pack and pull out the stove. Rehydration feels good.

Once recovered, I put my puffy jacket and my six-millimetre rope in my pack and start up the broken mixed ridge, leaving the rest of my gear for my return. I climb not even 60 metres when I top-out on a tower only to discover a succession of monolithic towers separated by overhanging cornices and unstable snow mushrooms. I fall to my knees. There is no way I can climb it, especially in these slushy conditions. I rap back to my gear. Wet slides are going off everywhere making it too dangerous to bail, so I bivy waiting for colder conditions in the morning.

Pulling the radio from the bottom of my sleeping bag, I try to call Kelly Cordes, a friend at basecamp, a dozen times without any answer. The night is clear with a full moon, but the wind is blowing. The Gore-Tex fabric of the bivy bag is flapping against my face. The cold is turning hours into eternity. The night becomes terrifying. I have never bivied by myself before and loneliness is taking over. My mind is bouncing between two totally different states: the rational side is trying to weigh all of my options, while every sound and movement unnerves the irrational side.

When the sun starts giving a pink hue to the horizon, I already have two 25-metre raps done. This puts me at the base of a ramp, giving me access to a big, horizontal snowfield traversing all the way to the west ridge. It looks like it will go so I halt my retreat. By noon, I am self-belaying on an overhanging rock traverse. I corkscrew under the final mushroom to the top—the summit.

To the west, I now have a totally different perspective of Farol Central. The final ridge gives the impression of a white wave dragging the summit blocks. A strange emotion envelops me—the defeat haunting me from that failed attempt feels appeased. The view is breathtaking: K2, Masherbrum and even the Latoks, where I was exactly one year ago.

Over 1,300 metres above the glacier with only 50 metres of six-millimetre cordelette for rapping, there isn't time to waste; reflection can be saved for rest days.

At 9 p.m. I am back to the security of my tent at highcamp, soaking wet—due to an extended session of canyoning—and with barely half of the rope left, so frozen it can stand up by itself. I try the radio again and it doesn't work. Not too bothered, I doze off into an exhausted sleep.

The next morning I begin the hike to basecamp. Barely 20 minutes after leaving, I fall upon Scott [DeCapio] and Kelly who are relieved to see me alive. The previous night in basecamp, everyone had started to worry about me, and a search and rescue mission had been organized. It was a good thing I wasn't overdue yet, or I probably would have seen a helicopter circling over Farol....

After five days of rest and recovery, I am ready for more. Marko Prezelj is still feeling energetic despite the fact that tomorrow porters are scheduled to arrive for his return to Hushe. We team up to see what the pillars on the south face of K7 West have to offer. Without having previously scoped any particular line, our attention is caught by a shallow dihedral and crack system on the striking south face of the farthest east pillar on the south face of K7 West.

At 7:30 a.m. we are throwing rock shoes on. The pitches pass by quickly—perfect overhanging hand cracks, steep dihedrals, mostly 5.10 to 5.10+. At 5 p.m. the summit is still a few rope lengths ahead, but it's so close that there is no way either Marko or I are bailing on that. A finish with the headlamp it would be! At 8:30 p.m., after three pitches and a few metres of aid, we are on top of the buttress.

The feeling of accomplishment is always relative. We hadn't reached any real summit, and the formation that we had just climbed doesn't even have a name. But we left in the morning with a vision and the goal of reaching the top of that 900-metre pillar with only a single light pack between the two of us, and we had attained that goal. For us, it feels as satisfying as reaching any other summit of the Charakusa or any other valley.

The author during his solo first ascent of Farol East in the Charakusa Valley.
Photo: Maxime Turgeon

Thirteen raps and four hours later we are back at the base of the route. The evening festivities at basecamp mark the end of the last bottle of Scotch and the end of the trip for Marko and his partners, Steve House and Vince Anderson. I still have almost two weeks left and lots of projects in mind, but it is the end for me as well, climbing-wise at least.

Summary

Attempt on south pillar of Farol Central (ca.6350m), Charakusa Valley, Karakoram, Pakistan. Louis-Philippe Ménard, Maxime Turgeon, September 1, 2007.

First ascent of Farol East (ca.6350m) via the southwest face (WI 4+ M4, 1300m). FA: Maxime Turgeon, September 11–12, 2007.

The third pillar (5.11 A0, 900m) on south face of K7 West (5350m). FA: Marko Prezelj, Maxime Turgeon, September 18, 2007.

Gateway Ridge

Jeremy Frimer

Hanging to the east of the greater Miyar Valley, the Chhudong (a.k.a. Tawa) Valley is predominantly flat, save for a slabby cliff situated just below the Chhudong Glacier. On September 14, 2006, Michel van der Spek (Netherlands) and I made an alpine-style first ascent of the 1,100-metre (vertical gain) rock ridge that rises north from just below the glacier. The climbing was on what I believe to be metamorphosed granite, characterized by consistently solid rock, many face features, but few cracks.

We began from just below the glacier, gaining the ridge via a 4th-class, left-trending chimney/ramp. After crossing a snow gully, we climbed an easy 5th-class ridge crest before cutting left onto a second ramp. The sun rose as we roped up. After climbing one pitch to gain the upper ridge crest, we simul-climbed for several pitches before increasing difficulties slowed our progress. While inclined at moderate angles, the ridge's challenge lay in its narrow, and at times, hammer-head-like crest. We climbed five pitches (up to 5.9 R) before traversing off the ridge crest onto the face to the right side, where we found the terrain suitable for simul-climbing once again. We reached a notch in the summit ridge at 1 p.m. and proceeded to climb the final ridge to the summit. After 100 metres of climbing up to 5.10- R, we retreated some 50 metres from the summit so as to leave daylight to contend with the descent ridge that we could now see was far narrower than we had anticipated. After several raps and stuck ropes, we simul-climbed an 80-metre traverse on a hanging slab to reach a notch. At this point, the descent ridge became particularly difficult to travel so we made one rappel into a hanging scree field on the south side of the ridge, which luckily gave access to the upper sections of the ramp by which we had originally gained the ridge. We named our adventure *Gateway Ridge* (TD- 5.9 R, 1100m).

The year after our adventure, Slovenians Tanja and Andrej Grmovšek climbed the same line, but did continue the last 50 metres to the top. They suggested a new name for the peak ("Korklum Gou", which means Window Peak), a new name of the climb (Shangrila Ridge) and a new grade of 5.10c R. I endorse no such renaming or re-grading.

After recuperating in basecamp, Michel and I, along with Sarah Hart (Canada), visited the relatively unexplored Jangpar Glacier. Brits had visited this valley in early season 2004 (*American Alpine Journal*, 2005, p. 367), where they encountered much snow (expediting the approach while hindering climbing efforts). Our visit may be the first during the climbing season proper. While we can confirm that there is much in the way of untapped alpine and big-wall potential on granite or metamorphose granite, the challenges of approaching these climbs should not be understated. We found the camping situation in the rubble-filled valley and in its arid swales to be abysmal, and noticed that glacial icefalls barred reasonable approach to the majority of the peaks. The bulk of the challenge and expense in climbing these walls would undoubtedly be in the approach.

Gateway Ridge on peak 5,650 in the Chhudong Valley. Photo: Jeremy Frimer

Summary

Gateway Ridge (TD- 5.9 R, 1100m), peak 5,650, Miyar Nala, Himachal Pradesh, India. FA: Jeremy Frimer, Michel van der Spek, September 14, 2006.

Czech Start Canadian Pinish

Jennifer Olsen

I was coming to the end of my summer guiding season in the Alps, when I read Larry Stanier's e-mail requesting applications for the John Lauchlan Award (JLA). I knew I had to apply. Where to go and who with? Pakistan. That was simple. Ever since I read an article in *Climbing* about two women exploring new routes on impeccable granite in the Karakoram, it became my dream. I asked Lilla Molnar to go because we are good friends, she is an all-round solid climber and, unlike myself, easy to get along with.

We needed an objective. Via e-mail I asked a few of my friends to give up their secrets. Luckily, Sean Isaac, the father, recognized the unlikelihood of taking his young family on a first ascent in the Karakoram and sprayed his worldly knowledge upon me. Bublimotin (a.k.a. Ladyfinger Peak) seemed like the perfect objective for two Canadian women who like big granite walls. Luckily the JLA committee felt the same way and awarded us at the Banff Mountain Film Festival. The night I received the news, I was so excited about the prospect of visiting Pakistan, I didn't sleep a wink (the wine also might have had an influence).

In all its glory, Nanga Parbat dominated the landscape outside the window of the airplane for many minutes. That should have been the first clue as to really how big this range is. I didn't have a grasp on the grandiosity of these peaks until I was standing in the valley bottom staring up at Rakaposhi realizing that I was over 4,000 vertical metres below the summit of that "benign" looking mountain. I had to constantly remind myself that what I was admiring was way more work than the faces of the Canadian Rockies back home.

After a big day of trekking in the remarkable area of Ultar Meadows, we made a hasty decision to abandon Ladyfinger and Hunza Peak for safer and quicker approaches in the distant Hushe Valley. We had a fantastic acclimatization hike and toured the tourist-friendly Karimabad, but knowing the good weather would not last we needed to get to the next objective as quickly as possible.

Often I found myself tallying the total number of hours we would need to spend cramped in the back of the jostling jeep (a.k.a. the-puke-and-prayer-inducing-mentally-terrifying-why-pay-for-Disney-when-you-can-ride-the-Karakoram-Highway-for-pennies vehicle). We were lucky with our talented driver who honked often around blind corners in order to avoid a collision with large disco-coloured Bedford transport trucks called Jungas. Also, as a hospitable Muslim, he never sipped on his homemade alcohol without offering it to us first. I hoped the booze would put him in the state of flow that one would need to keep us safely out of the Indus River.

Lilla Molnar on the fifth pitch of *Czech Start Canadian Pinish*. Photo: Jennifer Olsen

The highlight of my trip to Pakistan, other than admiring the most striking granite peaks I have ever witnessed, was meeting the local people of Khane. The lovely village of our guide, Imran, hosted us with curiosity and generosity. Despite the language barrier, we engaged in learning about Islamic culture and the hardships faced by the local people of Baltistan. We were very inspired by Greg Mortenson's book *Three Cups of Tea* which aided our understanding of the local politics and traditions. We were also impressed by how the females from age two and up can function daily with those damn headscarves! I tried to be diligent with wearing my headscarf, but found it cut off my peripheral vision and I had difficulty keeping it on while working. Many hours were spent lounging on a rooftop observing the peaceful women and children gathering and sorting apples, walnuts, turnips, potatoes, onions and herbs for the upcoming winter months. The greatest gift this community offered cannot be bought or sold. The sense of a loving family brought tears to my eyes when I observed Imran welcomed home by several sisters, nieces, nephews and his own children after being away for many months guiding in the bigger mountains. I am very inspired to try to help this community fund their girls' school, which is also being aided by American climbers Lizzy Scully and Heidi Wirtz.

We were very fortunate to find a conveniently located and spectacular basecamp in the Nangma Valley. Many talented climbers have graced this location and left behind a legacy of hard aid and spicy free climbs. We stumbled upon the east face of Brakk Zang. Despite our limited knowledge of the area and being plagued with the desire of a first ascent, we scored by learning of an unfinished line previously attempted by Czech climbers. Luckily, it fit into our weather window, ability and motivation.

The first day of our ascent was blessed with sunshine and we were able to add two additional pitches to the Czechs' initial three. Lilla won the crux of this day—a tricky A2 butt-crack. After a couple of bad weather days that provided rest and a chance to scope the summit ridge and descent route, we charged back up to our previous high point in deteriorating weather conditions. Wearing everything we had, we climbed mostly 5.10 A1 for the remaining six pitches. Actually, we didn't climb so much as we gardened. Technically speaking, we extricated plants and harvested dirt. If extreme gardening were an Olympic sport, we would be medal contenders. The faces on either side of the cracks were brilliantly clean and slightly featured granite and the cracks have a lot of potential with rigorous cleaning to be just as remarkable.

As we neared the summit ridge, it began snowing and got dark. Despite being "incredibly talented ACMG superguides", we were not supplied with night vision or exceptional route-finding skills. We got a bit muddled at one point when I became confused and tried to outsmart myself. After some discussion and backtracking, we finally realized we were in the right spot all along and painstakingly continued our descent back to basecamp where we fell unconscious into our sleeping bags.

Relieved and rewarded by the send, we took a day off to consume, bathe and lounge. Lilla coined the name *Czech Start Canadian Pinish* for our route because our guide Imran—not used to the small appetites of picky white girls—would often ask us if we were "pinished" our dinner.

Rumours of an El Cap-sized ice climb tickled my curiosity. We went in search of such a Shangri-la, but never found the beast. We saw some potential, and perhaps later in the autumn when temperatures cooled Amin Brakk may sport such delicacies—although the bowl above this feature released its bowels many times during the snowstorms. Speaking of releasing bowels, back in Canada…. Just kidding, I will keep those descriptions to myself.

We completed this marvellous journey with a few more days of Khane hospitality and a quick and painless journey back through Skardu to Islamabad. Fortunately, we had room on our credit cards for a couple of days of ruthless carpet shopping, a mosque tour and bizarre bazaar sightseeing.

Aside from being motivated to return to the magnificent spires of the Karakoram, I want to speak loudly of the peaceful and generous nature of the local people we met on our journey. Pakistan, like many other countries of the world, has a lot more going for it than what the North American media and politicians would have us believe.

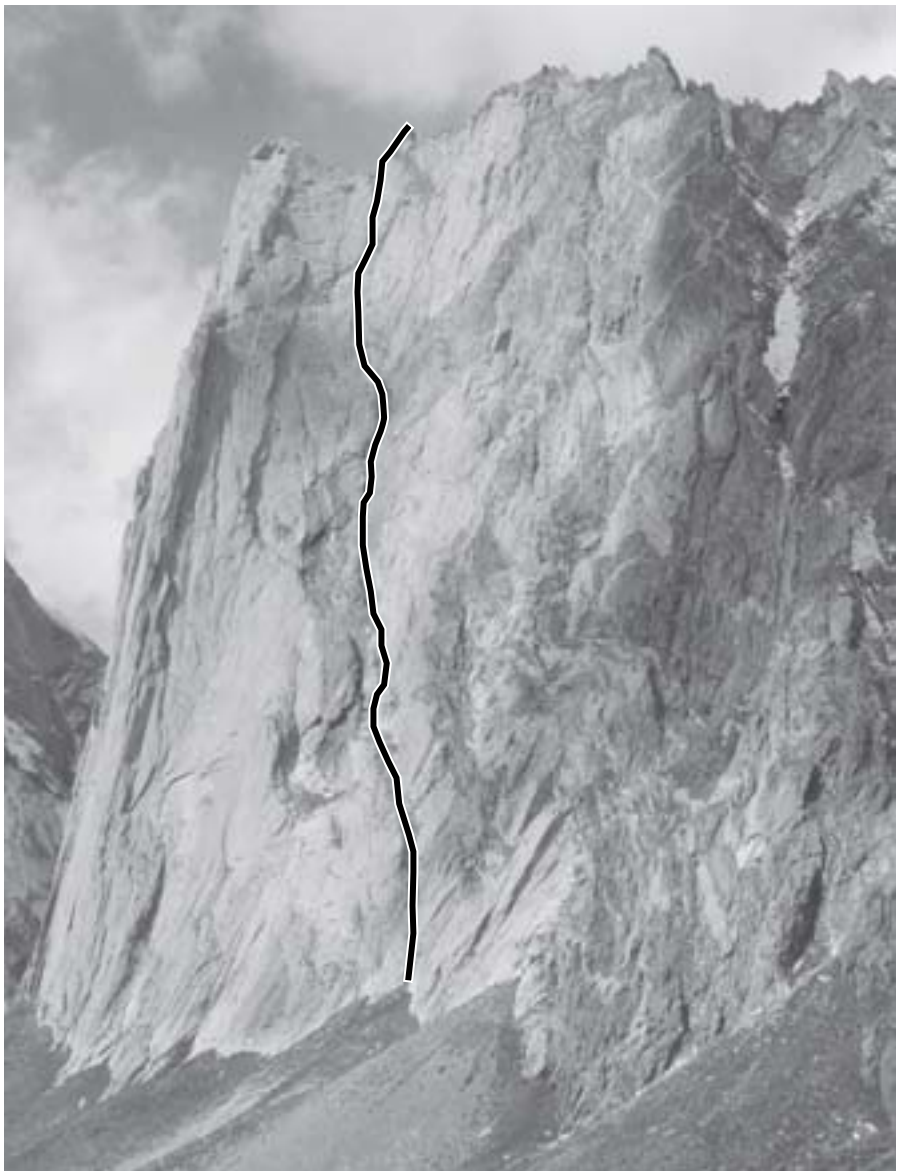
Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank the supporters of this expedition: the John Lauchlan Award, Arc'teryx, Petzl, Mountain Hardwear, Integral Designs and Mountain Equipment Co-op. As well, many thanks to Lane Faison, Bob Thrasher and Gabrielle Savard for their generous financial assistance.

Summary

Czech Start Canadian Pinish (TD- 5.10 A2, 450m, 11 pitches), Brakk Zang, Nangma Valley, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Lilla Molnar, Jennifer Olsen, September 2007.

Czech Start Canadian Pinish on the east face of Brakk Zang in the Nangma Valley.
Photo: Lilla Molnar



2007 BMC Scottish Winter Meet

Sean Isaac

In February [illegible], I travelled to the land of *Braveheart* and the Loch Ness Monster to attend the British Mountaineering Council's (BMC) Scottish Winter Meet based out of Avimore in the Cairngorm Mountains. Since first delving into the dark arts of ice climbing, I have longed to acquaint myself with the highlands of lore. Not only did technical winter climbing begin in these weather-blasted moors but Scottish climbing is also responsible for many technological advancements: Terrordactyls, Wart Hogs, front-point crampons, all creations of the hardy Scots. Photos in Yvon Chouinard's 1979 book *Climbing Ice* of narrow ice-choked gullies and rime-plastered faces had me fidgeting for over a decade in anticipation of Scotland's finest. The BMC winter meet was my in.

Of course, I had ulterior motives. Climbing isn't just about climbing. Scotland is known for kilts, bagpipes, haggis, deep-fried Mars bars and of course, Scotch. My covert reason for attending the meet was to gain a tutorial in whisky drinking and what better place to learn than the source. I was to embrace all that was sacred: the Glens, the Speysides, the Lowlands and most dear to my palate, the Islays.

The idea of the meet is to invite climbers from alpine clubs around the world to come to Scotland and to be sandbagged by local hosts. I did not need anyone sandbagging me as I was quite capable of doing it to myself. The first day was supposed to be an easy warm-up at the local "roadside" crag of Coire an Lochain, roadside meaning a two-hour approach. In my dazed state of circadian flux, the result of severe jet-lag, I chose to wear soft-shell clothing—my standard Canadian Rockies winter garb. Soft-shell is ideal for dry continental Alberta but the fabric's deficiencies were quickly realized once horizontal freezing rain was met head on. I was completely saturated to my gitch by the time we reached the base of our proposed route. My host for the day, Olly Metherell, offered insight: "Aye, this is what we call a double Gore-Tex day." With conditions "out of nick" due to the "lack of whiteness" on the rock, and me whimpering about being soggy and tired, we bailed back to Avimore.

The second day, Olly and I blitzed west to the icon of UK mountaineering, Ben Nevis. He surmised that its higher elevation would provide the wintry façade required for this game called "Scottish winter climbing". Over the course of the three-hour approach, elevation was indeed gained leaving the drizzle behind for light snow. Our route, the classic *Indicator Wall*, provided three pitches of thin plastic ice and steep squeaky snow directly to the summit. Pulling the cornice, I walked back 20 metres, threw a sling over the summit trig and belayed Olly up.

That evening, Simon Richardson, guidebook author and prolific first ascensionist, pulled me aside to ask if I would be keen to do a new route with him. I was honoured to be asked by none-other than Mr. Scotland himself so I accepted without hesitation.

"Braeriach! He has you going to Braeriach!"

I nodded innocently, "What's wrong with that?"

Ian Parnell, one of UK's finest alpinists, explained that it doesn't get much more remote than Braeriach.

"Give me a break, I'm from Canada—*I* know about remote."

The next morning at 5 a.m. I met Simon, who had arranged a bike for me. After a quick drive, we were pedalling in the dark. The day dawned and we were still pedalling. In fact, we pedalled for two hours into the hinterlands of Scottish backcountry. The bikes were stashed and it was on foot, up onto desolate Cairngorm plateaus wandering through pea-soup fog staring at a compass. As we approached the top of Braeriach, Simon suggested we rope up glacier-style so as to not accidentally step off the cornice.

After five hours of approaching, we finally arrived at the base of our new route to-be. Simon took pitch one up a grass-carpeted groove. Back home, we get all horny over the occasional turf-shot. There, I was living the dream with four points-of-contact spayed out on glorious frozen vegetation. Pitch two, the crux, fell to me: a rime-caked rock corner capped by a roof. I had questioned the double set of Hexcentrics while racking up the evening before. Cowbells are big, heavy and cumbersome but their merit became all too apparent as I was trying to get a cam to stick in the slippery verglassed crack. In frustration, I embraced the technique of choice, and hammered a #11 Hex deep into the frosted fissure.

A final easy pitch and we were back on top. When I did the math, five hours of slogging for three pitches of climbing didn't quite add up. New routes take effort, so I gave into the warm fuzzy feeling of having sent an unclimbed rig on my third day in Scotland.

Upon returning back to Glenmore Lodge that evening, we were informed that warm weather and rain was forecasted for the next day, bumping the avalanche hazard to extreme. With climbing out of the question, the next best option was embraced—get inebriated. Fortunately, as with all proper outdoor education centres in Scotland, the lodge was equipped with an in-house bar to quench our thirst. First a pint, then a dram of Oban, next an Islay I never heard of and wouldn't be able to pronounce anyways. When the bar closed at 11 p.m., Rok Zalokar of Slovenia saved the party by pulling out a two-litre pop bottle containing a clear liquid.

"My grandmother's homemade schnapps," he quipped emotionlessly in his thick eastern European accent.

I knew we were in trouble when he methodically rationed out portions—only a centimetre per glass. It might have tasted horrible but at least it burned going down. A few of these and things lurched out of control. One of our Scottish hosts

who shall remain unnamed, got it in his drunken head that it was bordering on a crime to close the bar so early, especially with the wretched forecast.

"You can't give extreme hazard and close the pub at 11," he slurred as he pried the bar gate open. Next thing we knew he was behind the counter, passing out beers.

At some point during the festivities, we decided on a name for our new Braeriach route. We christened it *Slovenia Death Water* in honour of Rok's granny's potent brew. The next morning was a sad state of affairs. Embracing the old adage "hair of the dog that bit you", we headed for the Tomatin distillery for a whisky tour.

With that out of my system, I could focus on climbing once again. The next day the weather was still iffy but the snow supposedly more stable so I headed back to Coire an Lochain with Viv Scott. He sent me up the classic *Savage Slit*, which checks in at benchmark Scottish grade VI 6 roughly equalling M5. What it lacked in difficulty it more than made up for in aesthetics—a steep hoar-plastered off-width slot with a narrow crack on the side for bomber nuts and secure torques. Pure bliss!

Ian Parnell during the first ascent of *Curly's Arête* on Ben Nevis. Photo: Sean Isaac

For my final climbing day in Scotland, Ian Parnell convinced me to try a new route on Ben Nevis with him. It was the last day of the meet and the Ben was swarming with climbers. Ian haul-bagged my ass up some sketchy insecure M7 pitches while I led the more forgiving moderate pitches. The climbing was intricate and finding protection was time-consuming. The Scottish ethic maintains a strict no-bolt policy. This is their way of preserving their "wee hills."

The five pitches of climbing took forever causing us to top out at dark, *sans* headlamps. We named our creation *Curly's Arête* in memory of Karen McNeill who went missing on Mount Foraker with American climber Sue Nott in spring 2006. Two other grade VIII first ascents were completed that day, as well as a repeats of rarely climbed testpieces, making it one of the most productive days ever on Ben Nevis (as we were told).

In the end, I satisfied my longing to sample Scottish winter climbing (and whisky) and I am already looking forward to returning soon for more abuse. Scottish mixed climbing differs greatly from our modern brand of sport M-climbing. Theirs is more akin to low-elevation alpine climbing than crag-style mixed climbing and confirms my suspicion why some of the world's best alpinists hail from the UK. Small mountains, big adventure!

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Alpine Club of Canada for generously supporting this trip.

Summary

Slovenian Death Water (V 6, 3 pitches), Corrie of the Chockstone Gully, Braeriach, Cairngorm Mountains. FA: Sean Isaac, Simon Richardson, February 27, 2007.

Curly's Arête (VIII 8, 5 pitches), Sioux Wall, Number Three Gully Buttress, Ben Nevis. FA: Sean Isaac, Ian Parnell, March 2, 2007.

Manaslu

Neil Bosch

Waves of wind-driven snow pounded our backs and burned our exposed faces. We had been in a state of urgent retreat from 7,400 metres back to our basecamp for the past 24 hours. The long rappels through the icefall on seven-millimetre polypro ropes that had been so frightening for us on previous trips to and from our higher altitude camps were welcome signs that we were at least on the correct path down. As we wove through incalculably deep crevasses our world resembled the inside of a ping-pong ball—the whiteout conditions had been with us since leaving Camp 2 at 6,800 metres. Now back at Camp 1, we hurried to eat, hydrate and drop gear in order to lighten our loads for the rest of the journey. Snow continued to accumulate by the minute and, although exhausted, we felt a certain sense of relief knowing that the route from 5,600 metres down to basecamp was straightforward and the worst of our escape was now behind us.

A day earlier our world could not have been more different. We were eagerly ascending the upper slopes of Manaslu en route to Camp 3, panting as we made steady but slow progress in the thigh-deep snow. The sky was blue, the sun was intense, and despite the altitude, we were still climbing in our long-sleeve T's. It was a great day to be climbing and our spirits were higher than the peak itself, which we were finally close to summitting. This was the culmination of two years of planning and 23 days of hard work, including several trips already up and down the mountain from basecamp to our higher camps. We were having a great day and our goal was within reach—this is why the mountaineer suffers.

We had the entire mountain to ourselves for the first two weeks of our climb. We had established a route with fixed lines through the icefall up to Camp 2. While we had not yet reached the summit, we still felt that our expedition had already been successful in many ways. Finally though, our plan was coming to fruition. Soon we would settle in, try to eat something, sleep for an hour or two and then get up at midnight to push the final 800 metres to the summit. With the technical climbing behind us and moderate snow slopes above, we all knew we were only 12 hours from the summit and sweet success.

At 7,400 metres we pulled out the tent and started to work on the platform. Toby made the regular 4 p.m. radio call to inform our basecamp, and the other groups that had arrived on the mountain, of our progress and plans for the next 24 hours.

It was then that we discovered a push to the summit the next day was not to be. Misha, the lead guide for the Swiss team came on the radio and warned of a sudden change in the weather from our current blue-sky conditions. Since the Swiss and Dynafit (German) teams had arrived, the three teams on the mountain had been co-operating whenever possible by sharing fixed lines, food, and schnapps, and most critical in our present situation—weather forecasts.

"Everything has changed," Misha said. "A massive front is moving in super fast and threatens to dump a metre of snow up high in the next 24 to 48 hours."

Our hesitation in considering options was brief. We were on a 35-degree slope high in the Himalaya. All four of us understood clearly that not only was this particular summit bid over, but that we also had to get down the mountain, fast. We made a hasty retreat before dark to spend another night at Camp 2, only to descend in stormy blizzard conditions the next day.

Back at Camp 1 we worked quickly on our transition and were ready to leave for basecamp, hoping to travel fast in the fading daylight. This first summit bid was attempted by all three Canadians on our team: Keith Sanford (expedition leader), Toby Brodkorb (nicknamed the Machine for his trail breaking abilities at altitude) and myself. Of the international members of our team, only Gonzalo Valez, our Portuguese member and a Himalayan veteran, was with us. Our other two members, Dave Morrison of New Zealand and Mike Parker of Australia, had become ill and could not join us. The four of us decided it would be quickest to descend a known slope just below Camp 1 and then rope up before getting onto the glacier below. As I prepared to stuff the rope into my pack Toby grabbed my arm. "My turn," he said, and took the rope. Gonzalo was first out of camp. I was not far behind, followed shortly by Keith and Toby.

Following Gonzalo's tracks in the rapidly accumulating snow, I grabbed my axe by the shaft in order to adjust the harness below my hip-belt. As I was adjusting my harness, my stomach leapt into my throat and I began to free-fall when a snow bridge collapsed. In the fall, my ice axe had miraculously wedged across the opening of the crevasse. Somehow, I had managed to hang onto the shaft, but with my feet dangling and no leash to support my hand, I would not be able to hold on for long. Keith immediately jumped across the hole and grabbed me by the shoulder straps of my pack. Keith wanted to pull immediately on my shoulders, but an upward tug might have dislodged the axe—the only thing holding me from plummeting into an endless black abyss.

Toby pulled the rope from the top of his pack and quickly made a loop big enough to hand to Keith. Keith clipped the rope to the haul loop of my pack and Toby secured the other end of the rope to hold a fall if need be. With the weight of the pack supported, I was able to relax slightly and stretch my legs apart to span the sides of the crevasse. All three pulled while I pushed and soon I was lying on my back in the snow above.

We all knew that I had dodged the big one and we were still far from safety. There was no time to think about what just had happened. Packs were put back

on and we were off down the mountain, this time with the rope tied between us.

At basecamp, snow had been falling most of the day, but had accumulated far less than higher up on the mountain. Over the next week, this all changed. The Himalayan weather that scares the life out of so many experienced climbers unleashed four metres of snowfall on us. Life was set by the hour. Our alarms would go off and we would, in our half-asleep state, get out and bang off the tents and dig out around the sides. Failure to wake-up and shovel meant a collapsed tent with broken poles and a torn fly. Unfortunately, we did not always wake up on cue and by the end of the week our tents were in sad shape.

Shortly after breakfast on the fifth day of continuous snow, our world was literally rocked. One minute we were lamenting our luck at missing the summit by one day, the next we were doing everything we could do to keep the dining tent from flying away in a sudden wind storm. At the time we had no idea what was happening. When it passed 45 seconds later, we quickly realized that we had been hit by a pressure wave travelling ahead of a massive avalanche further up the glacier. When we looked out of the dining tent, we found that the blast had totally flattened our cook tent, store tent, outhouse and two personal tents. This is when we learned that the camp staff affectionately referred to Manaslu as "Killer Mountain".

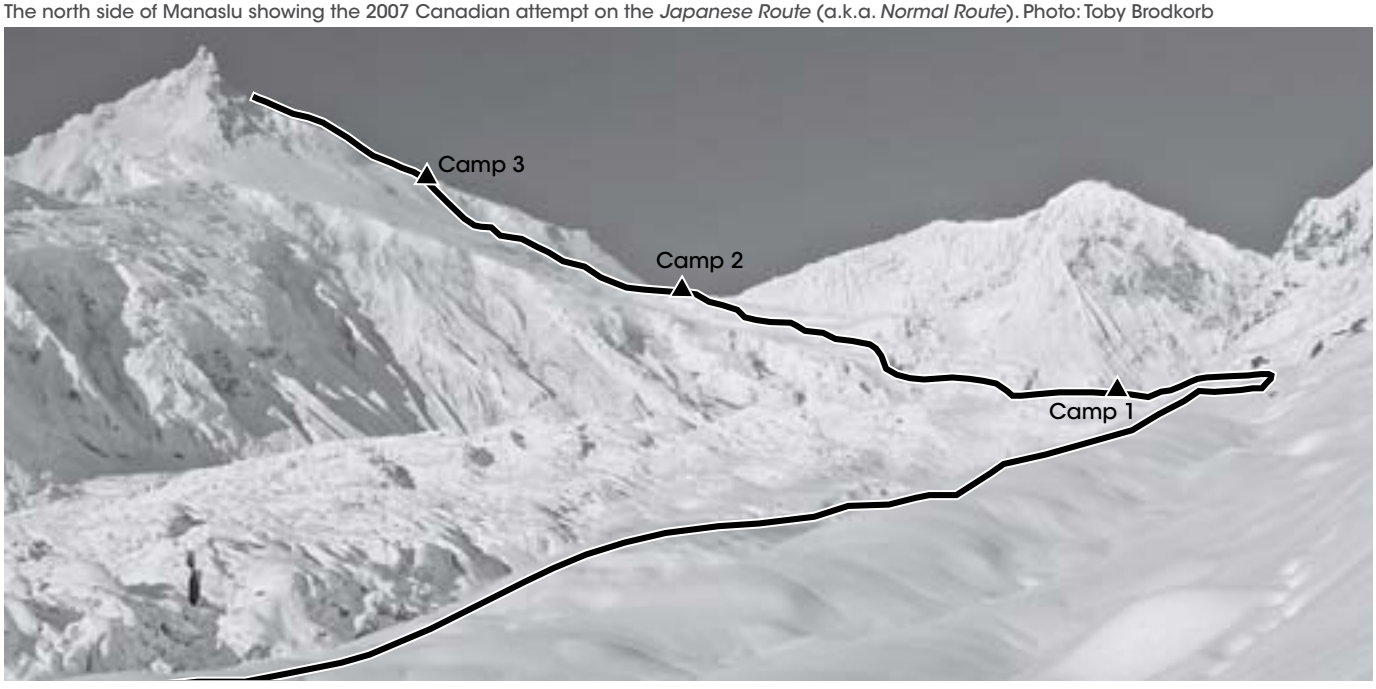
Compared to the other two expeditions on Manaslu, we were relatively lucky. Up a little higher on the lateral moraine, Team Dynafit was completely flattened. Their only option was to retreat back down to Samagon (the closest village) to regroup and repair. The Swiss team was a little better off. Most of their camp was well below ours and somewhat less exposed. Unfortunately their toilet tent was placed some distance from the main camp and was far more exposed to the sudden wind. The tent was thrown about seven metres and its unfortunate occupant, with his pants around his ankles, was tossed into the snow.

Eight days of constant blizzard will take a mental toll on any group and ours was no different. Stress levels rose with every day of inactivity. Aside from repairing tents and shoveling tonnes of snow, the only other pastimes were reading books, playing cards and wondering how much longer the battery in your iPod will last. We did find some relief in the age-old Canadian tradition of "drinkin' and fightin'" early one morning after we had finished a bottle of whisky over a friendly game of cards. We were more than happy to share this tradition with at least one other member of our team, Dave the Kiwi, who we soon found out had a black belt in Aikido. Meanwhile, Keith had to explain to the camp staff that Toby and I were not really trying to kill each other. "It's just a form of bonding," he said. Unfortunately, we did break a thermos and a chair in the mayhem.

Eventually the storm did subside and all three teams waited for two days to let the constant avalanches subside before we decided to give the summit another go. Travel was incredibly slow in the fresh snow, but eventually we did make it back up to Camp 1. Once we arrived, we had to probe through two metres of snow to find our tents, and then dig them out as evening fell. Red Green would have been proud of Toby who repaired 15 separate breaks in his tent poles with duct tape and bamboo wands. After a cold night, we gathered up and headed towards Camp 2.

Breaking trail was a painstaking task even for the Machine. The Swiss team, on "snow racquets", caught up to us by late afternoon but it was becoming clear that neither team was going to reach Camp 2 that day. Because of their late start and slow progress, the Swiss guide

The north side of Manaslu showing the 2007 Canadian attempt on the *Japanese Route* (a.k.a. *Normal Route*). Photo: Toby Brodkorb



had decided to head back down and get a more timely start the next day. For us this meant that we could borrow a couple of tents for the evening and stay put. Unfortunately, none of our group had brought along a cook pot for an intermediate camp. All we had to melt water was a small stainless steel mug that Mick (our Aussie member) had brought along. One cup of melted snow makes the equivalent of two ounces of water. We not only had to melt water to rehydrate from exertion of the day, we also had to make enough water to eat dinner and hydrate all climbers for the night ahead. Needless to say, no sleeping bags plus a heinous wind hammering our tents multiplied by the stove burning through the night, we got little sleep.

Morning broke with the shining sun and our spirits picked up. Before long we had broken camp and were headed back up the mountain. For the first time travel on the mountain was quite easy. Despite cold air temperatures (-25 C) and 60-kilometre-per-hour wind gusts that would occasionally throw us back in our tracks, we were making great progress on the hard-packed avalanche debris beneath our boots.

The second Swiss camp was 200 vertical metres below our own. We were shocked by what we saw. To find shelter from the prevailing wind that howled across the upper slopes of Manaslu, the Swiss had set up their Camp 2 beneath a large but supposedly benign serac. It turned out that the serac was not completely benign and part had broken off and completely pancaked their tents. We attempted to help some of their members dig them out, but when the rest of their team arrived they made the call that it was of little use and prepared to head back down. Their plan was to return in a few days when the weather was more favourable.

We continued on to our Camp 2 at 6,800 metres where we were not surprised that we could not see our tents. We had expected Camp 2 to be buried under the snow just as Camp 1 had been. What we had not expected was the amount of avalanche debris. When we established Camp 2, we had set our tents where we assumed they would be out of the fall line of the slopes above and out of the wind from the col. After probing and digging for a couple of hours, it became clear that our tents were not going to be found. Looking around at the avalanche debris, our guess was that Camp 2 had been pushed down the mountain by a massive avalanche. Perhaps even the one that had flattened our tents in basecamp.

Once again we found ourselves high up on Manaslu late in the day. This time we were without shelter, food, fuel or our warmest clothes. This hasty retreat would be even tougher than the last one. The big difference this time was that after 36 days on the mountain we knew that our time was up and our chance at the summit was gone. We were done and would not be coming back.

Focusing on the descent was made extremely difficult with the crush of disappointment and failure weighing on our minds. Almost two kilometres down the mountain, the Swiss team had found the remains of both Gonzalo and Keith's tents and luckily they still contained most of our gear. Even though Keith's tent itself was completely destroyed, we packed it up and brought it home. It would have been very easy to leave the remains behind as many do, but we chose instead to remove the wreckage. Our packs had quickly gained another 18 kilograms and travel became exponentially more difficult. We stumbled into Camp 1 very late after our third and final trip to Camp 2. We had been travelling above 6,000 metres yet again for over 14 hours and were totally exhausted.

The next morning Dave, who had been unable to join the rest of the group on the last summit bid, dug deep and made the five-kilometre hike alone to Camp 1 to help us clean and haul the accumulated gear down. Thanks to Dave's selflessness and perseverance, our own packs barely weighed more than 40 kilograms each.

A few days later, after logistics could be arranged, we again found ourselves where it all began in the beautiful cacophony that can only be Kathmandu. Here, while in the process of closing down the Rum Doodle, we had a chance to reminisce after what had happened. Our trip had spanned 49 days, 39 of which we spent on the mountain itself. We had climbed more than 11,000 vertical metres and had done it all self-guided, without Sherpa support or supplemental oxygen. We had come out with all our fingers and toes and, although we all were substantially thinner, we were all healthy.

More important than any of the above, we had come away with a climber's bond. It is hard to explain to anyone who has not tied into a rope and trusted their life to their rope-mates, but for those who have, and have been through the adventure, they undoubtedly understand. There was a period of eight days that we three Canadians spent together establishing and fixing the route through the icefall with the mountain all to ourselves. It was an exhausting and intimidating task. For us, it was also the highlight of the trip and defined for us the camaraderie and trust that will forever be tied to Manaslu.

Ultimately, we did not stand on that summit, and Manaslu remains unclimbed by any Canadian, Portuguese or Kiwi. That will no doubt change in the coming years. Though we did not leave our mark on the mountain, she certainly left her mark on us.

Acknowledgments

The 2007 Manaslu Canadian International Expedition would very much like to thank Ganesh Nepane from Monterrosa Trekking and Expeditions for arranging logistics and outfitting our basecamp. Our heartfelt thanks to the wonderful people of Samagon as well as our extended teammates: sirdar Sham, cook Dawa, and helpers Minh, Tek and Ahmed.

Summary

Attempt for first Canadian ascent of Manaslu (8163m), the eighth highest mountain in the world, via the *Japanese Route* (a.k.a. *Normal Route*), Mansiri Himal, Nepalese Himalaya, August 30–October 6, 2007.

Climbers: Keith Sanford, Neil Bosch, Toby Brodkorb, Mike Parker (Australia), Dave Morrison (New Zealand), Gonzalo Valez (Portugal).

Fox Jaw Cirque

Darcy Deutscher

"On belay, Darcy!" I awoke with a start and shook my head from side to side, desperately trying to shake some sense into my fuzzy brain. I knew that voice yelling my name, but who was it? A confused moment passed before I realized it was my partner, Josh. We had just passed the 24-hour mark of continuous moving on what would become our new route on Snaggletooth—a granite tower in southeast Greenland. The sun had already skipped on the horizon and started its sweeping ascent, providing us around-the-clock daylight and the impetus to just keep climbing. Soon we stood on top in brilliant sunshine with many beautiful peaks seemingly floating upon the valley fog below. We named the route *Natural Mystic* due to all of us repeatedly singing Bob's song throughout the very long ascent and descent.

Natural Mystic on Snaggletooth, Fox Jaw Cirque, Greenland. Photo: Josh Beckner

Americans Josh Beckner, Nate Furman, Kadin Panagoulis, Jed Porter, Annie Trujillo and myself—the lone Canadian from Squamish—landed on June 24 in the fishing village of Kulusuk, just below the Arctic Circle. The small aircraft originated from Iceland and the majority of our fellow passengers were on day visits to Greenland. Our proposed five-week expedition brought gawks of disbelief. As our plane approached, our smiles broadened and we began to move from window to window catching glimpses of granite erupting from the iceberg-filled sea. A couple of hours passed before our pre-arranged boat arrived and then navigated skillfully through the floating, creaking ice of the fjord. We stopped to visit various grocery stores of local fishing villages on our way to our final destination of Tasilaq Fjord. We were told that the stores were re-stocked just twice annually and that unfortunately we arrived too early for the next shipment. We were faced with consuming some interesting items, not the least of which was cheese so pungent it earned a nickname from our group not suitable for this journal. With food and fuel we returned to the boat and soon could see the granite spine of the Fox Jaw Cirque, and even from this distance our climbers' eyes started to trace lines to their summits.

As an expedition we established five new routes on already climbed formations, and one first ascent of a spire on the western side of the valley which has a long snaking north ridge, like an elephant's trunk, dividing two hanging glaciers.

We were spoiled by incredible weather—probably the best stretch I've experienced in the mountains anywhere. Continuous Arctic daylight and very high-quality granite just added to the experience. Besides some pesky Arctic foxes, juvenile Atlantic salmon and Canadian geese on July 1 (seriously), not much was seen in the way of wildlife in this pristine and beautiful place. The climbing was undoubtedly fantastic, the summits stunning and the scenery breathtaking. However, as so frequently occurs on expeditions, just the time spent with friends was equally memorable. There were many bouts of uncontrollable laughter in the "Jah" (our modified Megamid-cum-cook-tent) with real conversations that had nothing to do with climbing. This area is sure to see increased climber traffic in the future, and we hope all will make a great effort to preserve its beauty and magic that was so keenly felt by our party.

Summary

The Elephant's Trunk (III+ 5.8, 9 pitches), north ridge of Ganesh. FA: Darcy Deutscher, Josh Beckner, July 2007.

Tooth Fairy (III 5.7, 7 pitches), west ridge, Baby Molar. FA: Nate Furman, Jed Porter, Annie Trujillo, June 2007.

Southeast Buttress (III 5.9, 7 pitches), southeast arête, Baby Molar. FA: Josh Beckner, Kadin Panagoulis, Darcy Deutscher, July 2007.

Beers in Paradise (V 5.10+ A0, 13 pitches), south face, the Incisor. FA: Nate Furman, Jed Porter, Annie Trujillo, June 2007. Note: Shares four pitches with Mike Liebecki's 1999 route *Tears in Paradise* (V 5.11-, 13 pitches).

Left Rabbit Ear Indirect (IV 5.10, 13 pitches), south face, the Left Rabbit Ear. FA: Nate Furman, Kadin Panagoulis, Jed Porter, Annie Trujillo, July 2007.

Natural Mystic (V 5.10+, 17 pitches), south face, Snaggletooth. FA: Nate Furman, Josh Beckner, Darcy Deutscher, July 2007. Note: The route splits the enormous pillar on the largest formation at the head of the cirque.

Reviews

Peyto Glacier: One Century of Science

Edited by M. N. Demuth, D. S. Munro and G. J. Young, the National Water Research Institute (2007)

The ability to comprehend and model the hugely diverse universe of cosmic, atmospheric, terrestrial, marine and hydrological variables and interactions that drive our global climate is one of our most recent and greatest human intellectual achievements. It may come as a surprise to many Canadians that a good number of those few people in the world who are capable of occupying such complicated, inter-related intellectual and scientific domains and revealing them to others are Canadians. It will also be a revelation to some that, of this country's foremost climate scientists, many have undertaken elements of their most important work at the same glacier in the Canadian Rockies. Recently a group of these researchers published a book celebrating a century of scientific exploration in and around the beloved object of their research, the Peyto Glacier in Banff National Park.

Published in partnership with five of the major institutions presently interested in glacier studies in Canada and 10 years in the making, *Peyto Glacier: One Century of Science* is comprised of nine scientific papers that summarize research findings that have flowed from studies of the Peyto Glacier since it, and the remarkable icefield that creates it, entered the European imagination more than a century ago. These papers, written by the most respected experts in the field, represent landmarks in our understanding of dynamics of glacial ice as defined by climate in the Rockies over the past 10,000 years.

It is interesting to note that the first actual research on the flow and character of the glacier was not undertaken until 1933, when it became the object of the tireless scientific attention of Arthur Oliver Wheeler, the co-founder and driver of the Alpine Club of Canada. It was Wheeler's fiercely held belief that it was the responsibility of Canada's national mountaineering organization to not just introduce Canadians to their own mountains, but to ensure they fully understood the geological processes that created them. Wheeler's pioneering scientific efforts were continued after his death by two further generations of ACC members. The results of this work were faithfully published in the club's official record, the *Canadian Alpine Journal*. While able to undertake preliminary measurements and observations, ACC volunteers did not have the means to acquire and employ the highly specialized technology that would be later needed to achieve the next levels of desired understanding of glacial flow and discharge dynamics. By the early 1960s it became apparent only a well organized, multi-year research initiative would unlock the many climate secrets locked within the rapidly disappearing glacial ice of the Rocky Mountains. Such an extended, multi-jurisdictional effort could only be undertaken by a consortium of well-funded government agencies.

The book lays out what we needed to do 10 years ago and still need to do today. Data collection from single monitoring sources can no longer be relied upon to make water management planning decisions in adjacent basins, especially in a period when climate change may be altering the timing and nature of precipitation, snowpack dynamics and melt patterns. If we don't know fully what is happening to our water resources in our upper river basins, we can't fully and properly predict what will happen downstream especially as our climate warms. The monitoring of glaciers and hydro-meteorological data collection, especially in upland areas, should be a legislated activity. Governments should be mandated by law to effectively and consistently monitor the state of our glacial, surface and groundwater resources in the same way they are required to monitor seismic activity related to earthquake prediction. Our aim should not be just to capture more information but to go beyond data collection to the next levels of application. We need to make the full transition from modelling that serves only to tell us the current volumes of our river flows to modelling that allows us to predict how a given river basin will respond to changes of any of its constituent characteristics in the future.

Though watershed protection was a fundamental ideal in the pioneering era in western Canadian history, this function was eclipsed for many decades by resource development pressures and tourism and recreation priorities. Now, however, downstream population growth, increased agricultural and industrial water demands, and climate change are putting the importance of upland watershed protection back into bold relief. The immediate need for additional monitoring and interpretation of expanded hydro-meteorological information; enhanced understanding of present and future surface and groundwater flows; and support for aquatic ecosystem research have been identified as crucial to the development of modelling techniques that will allow us to predict and act upon human use and climate change impacts. Breakthroughs in our understanding of how to link the management of water resources to land use could revolutionize the way in which we manage our land base inside and outside of our upland parks and protected areas.

A hundred years of science at the Peyto Glacier suggests that our goal now should be to identify the influence of various kinds of disturbances on the timing and extent of precipitation, and to understand how glacial recession will impact biological processes on land and

in our mountain rivers. The overriding aim should be to develop a model of glacial, hydrological and river ecosystem dynamics that will enable us to better understand the potential influence of human impacts and climate change on our future. Only through advancements in monitoring and the integration of many fields of knowledge will we be able to predict and act upon the serious threat of diminished water resources in Alberta and deal with the spectre of prolonged drought in the Canadian West. In this, the Alpine Club of Canada—by way of the location of its high-altitude huts—could once again play an important role in scientific research in Canada's mountains.

—Bob Sandford

Coast Mountain Men

By Gil Parker, Aware Publishing (2007)

Coast mountain men by Gil Parker is a collection of chapter-size biographies of pioneers from the past century who helped define the identity of West Coast mountaineering. Many of these figures are common to mountaineering history further east as well, with their names attached to peaks of the Columbia Mountains and Canadian Rockies.

Each chapter is a short story in itself, making for an easy read one chapter at a time. The collection offers 13 chapters covering 15 men with each biography a concise and informative overview of the mountaineer's life. I've casually heard about these men for years so it was inspiring to discover more about their pioneering efforts and life stories in such a concise and comprehensive manner. Individuals such as Sid Watts, Rex Gibson, Lindsay Elms and Sandy Briggs are legends the reader discovers in depth.

Parker is obligated to mention himself numerous times throughout the book. After all, he was often with the protagonists when many of the described mountain feats were being accomplished. If a different writer penned the book, there would probably have been a chapter dedicated to Parker for his contribution to the Vancouver Island mountaineering scene.

The author naturally writes about the exploits of each mountaineer on the West Coast and Vancouver Island in particular. These stories relate the breadth of classic, as well as new and potentially difficult, mountaineering that exists on the Island. The result is that the reader learns about the local legends and the diverse opportunities the Island has to offer to alpine adventurers. The book left me with a desire to explore the wilds of Vancouver Island and Strathcona Park in particular.

—Brian Merry

Baffin Island: Climbing, Skiing & Trekking

By Mark Synnott, Rocky Mountain Books (2008)

For some, an exotic vacation destination may be found tucked among tiny uncharted islands in the South Pacific, or deep in the wild jungles of Irian Jaya. But for climbers, trekkers and ski tourers seeking solitude in a vast and virtually untouched landscape, Baffin Island is a highly coveted and revered destination, particularly for climbers intent on making first ascents.

Located north of Hudson Bay, and the world's fifth largest island covering 507,451 square kilometres, Baffin Island is a treasure chest bursting with natural wonders—glaciers, super-pipe shaped valleys, 2,000-metre high vertical granite walls, peninsulas, fiords, swamps, lake-studded plains and northern lights, not to mention seals, foxes, weasels, ravens and polar bears.

As described in the climbing history chapter of *Baffin Island: Climbing, Skiing & Trekking*, by Mark Synnott, the newly released guidebook from publisher Rocky Mountain Books, "Baffin Island is truly one of the last pristine wilderness areas left in this world."

While its isolated location renders a visit to the Arctic wonderland beyond most budget travelers' dreams, climbers, ski tourers, sea kayakers, sailors and even BASE jumpers have been exploring this Arctic wonderland for decades, with the first climbing expedition, led by Britain's J. M. Wordie—who served as chief scientist aboard the Endurance on Shackleton's legendary trans-Antarctic expedition—making two first ascents in 1934.

At 240 pages, with dozens of full colour photos, topographical maps and detailed original route sketches, this guidebook details over 100 climbing routes ranging from 1970s era aid climbs to modern-day technical free ascents to multi-week big-wall undertakings and most recently, Yosemit-style speed climbs.

With the region's frontier spirit memorably captured in route names such as *Polar Thievery* on Mount Asgard and *Rum, Sodomy and the Lash* on Great Sail Peak, its status as a truly world-class climbing destination is also well presented, with first ascents recorded by Swiss, Norwegian, Basque, German, Polish, American and Italian expeditions, not to mention the contributions of Canadians including Tom Fayle, Mark Klassen, Grant Statham, Jia Condon,

Rich Prohaska and Sean Easton.

Not just for climbers however, this guidebook also includes a section on ski traverses and descents, kiting and trekking, featuring the 97-kilometre Akshayuk Pass traverse which follows the Weasel Valley below the towering walls of Mount Asgard, Mount Thor, Mount Odin and Tirokwa Peak, where, Synnott writes, "It is fair to say this valley contains the highest concentration of giant cliffs to be found anywhere in the world."

Rounding out this first guidebook on the region with informative chapters on Baf n Island's natural and human history, Auyuittuq National Park, the Inuit people and their way of life in their home land, Synnott—a world-renowned adventurer, filmmaker and writer who has made five expeditions to Baf n Island—also includes the requisite advice on weather, equipment, travel and trip planning, polar bears and rescue, where he states, "Basically, there isn't any."

Unfortunately, this guidebook does not measure up to Rocky Mountain Books' usually high standards. A disappointing number of the photos are hopelessly blurry, but even more frustrating is what is missing—a complete lack of any index, making finding a particular route or even an area time consuming and annoying. And, as the first guidebook to a sparely visited expansive region, route details range from sparse to pretty much non-existent. By that token though, those seeking adventure of the first degree can open a page and let the dreams begin.

—Lynn Martel

High Infatuation

By Steph Davis, The Mountaineers (2007)

For the non-Climber, the time-worn question has always been, why climb the mountain?

But for the alpinist who dedicates her entire life to climbing, to the exclusion of nearly everything else, the real question is why do *I* climb the mountain?

In *High Infatuation* professional climber Steph Davis, who makes her home amidst the towering desert cliffs of Moab, Utah, with her similarly obsessed husband, climber Dean Potter, the question defines her life's journey. And what a journey.

Trained as a decidedly non-athletic pianist throughout her childhood and teenage years, while in her freshman year at the University of Maryland Davis skipped calculus class to try a "mysterious thing called rock climbing."

Never looking back, or down, Davis has spent her life since embracing the many and varied disciplines of what is a rather specialized sport to begin with, reaching the highest levels of competence and skill on short but intense bouldering problems a metre or two from the ground, climbing complex aid routes for days on end and sleeping on portaledges suspended hundreds of metres up Yosemite's vertical rock walls, carrying only the barest of essentials in high altitude snow and ice terrain and climbing solo without ropes on sheer rock faces—the culmination of which has placed Davis among an elite few worldwide—and among an even smaller group of female climbing peers.

With *High Infatuation*, Davis takes her place among yet another elite group, as an articulate, introspective, honest writer who at once reveals and discovers her place in life through intimate essays and prose poetry; and through her personal expression on the climbing stage.

Following her gut and an insatiable appetite for climbing and the adventures it offers her, Davis takes the reader on a wild ride, from an impromptu trip to previously unclimbed lofty remote walls in Baf n Island, to soloing 30 pitches rated a very respectable 5.8 to 5.10 in Kyrgyzstan because she "craved the uncertainty of knowing success or failure was entirely up to me," to becoming the first American woman to summit the sheer granite 3,375-metre Fitzroy in Patagonia. Admittedly obsessed and embarking on her fifth attempt, Davis leads her newly encountered partner, describing how "He has two arms, two legs, speaks English, and is kind to small animals. That's all I know. That's enough."

Moving boldly through her stories with an economy of language and precision of expression similar to the style in which she scales the most strenuously overhanging rock routes, coloured with just the right measure of details and feelings, Davis is adept at expressing challenges unique to a woman climbing at a level few men attain. Rarely mentioning grades however, she focuses on her relationships with the routes she climbs, each one an individual experience, puzzle, challenge and lesson—and her relationships with the people with whom she climbs those routes.

But whether coping with surprising negative attitudes as she scales her way up the professional climbing ladder, or, as when after reaching the most hard-fought summit of her career she falls into the depths of an existential conundrum, Davis pushes on to find balance in her relationship with her passion for climbing and her relationship with the husband she shares passion with.

Throughout her journey, Davis not only embodies the kind of happiness acquired through an accumulation of adventures and experiences rather than the accumulation of bank funds and equity, she writes about it with intelligence and eloquence.

"As with the other dif cult moments in my life, those experiences reinforced the fact that I climb for myself and no one else. In the end, climbing is what I love, my own expression of joy. Everything else is just noise."

—Lynn Martel

A Passion of Mountains: The Lives of Don and Phyllis Munday

By Kathryn Bridge, Rocky Mountain Books (2006)

Don munday has been called the elder and dean of British Columbia mountaineering, and Phyllis Munday has been called the grand lady of the ancient spires and white-capped diadems. It is rather uncanny that a biography had not yet been written on the lives of Don and Phyllis Munday, but now Kathryn Bridge has filled the gap in a most readable, meticulous and accessible manner.

Bridge carried out her sleuth work well in her 2002 *Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer*, an informative teaser and primer on the life of Phyllis Munday. There was much missing in this earlier telling of the tale of Munday's life, and the curious and keen reader could not help but yearn for more to slake the thirst of the mountaineering palette. *A Passion of Mountains: The Lives of Don and Phyllis Munday* offers a full course and much more on this pioneering couple of mountaineering lore and legend.

A Passion for Mountains has a most alluring and appealing cover, and the many photographs in the missive cannot but hold and delight the attentive reader. Many a page tells the tale well, in a visual way, of the climbing ethos and life of Don and Phyllis Munday. The written text fits hand and glove with the fine photographs. Bridge quotes amply from the varied writings of the Mundays, and she threads her interpretive text judiciously through the fabric of the photographs and primary material.

A Passion for Mountains tracks the life of Don and Phyllis Munday in a chronological way, from their early years apart, their meeting, their many climbs and their parting with Don's early death in 1950. Each chapter's title acts as a well built cairn for the reader, pointing the way further along the trail: (1) Early Years and the B.C. Mountaineering Club, (2) Wartime, (3) Recovery and Discovery, (4) Climbing on the Coast, (5) The Alpine Club of Canada, (6) Mystery Mountain Years, (7) Icefields and Mountains and (8) Later Years. The evocative prose poems by Phyllis, "I think What will Happen to Me", "The Legacy" and "List of Ascents" winds down the few final pages of this well crafted book.

There is no doubt that *A Passion for Mountains* is a much more mature and integrated book than *Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer*. Bridge deserves many an accolade for her hard archivist work and visually pleasing text. Don and Phyllis Munday would be more than honoured by the attention Bridge has lavished on them.

A Passion for Mountains is a keeper and must read for those interested in the early years of mountaineering in B.C. and Alberta, and the early years of the Alpine Club of Canada. Phyllis Munday was the first woman to climb Mount Robson, and it was the Mundays who scouted out the approaches to the highest mountain in B.C., Mount Waddington. Do delight in the text. History will come alive in your hands.

—Ron Dart

One Muddy Hand: Selected Poems: Earle Birney

Edited by Sam Solecki, Harbour Publishing (2006)

There is no poem in the history of Canadian mountaineering literature as graphic, poignant and dramatic as Earle Birney's "David". Birney's first collection of poetry, *David and Other Poems* (Ryerson, 1942) catapulted him to the forefront of Canadian literature, and the book won the Governor General's award.

Most Canadians were read, either in school or in family settings, "David". The sheer momentum, vivid descriptions of mountain scenery, challenging ascents and the final, fatal climb of the Finger on the Sawback are etched deeply into the souls and imaginations of many Canadians.

"David" is one of our few undoubted classics and both mountaineering literature and Canadian literature on a whole would be much leaner without such probing prose asking much of the reader. This much-celebrated poem holds a high place in *One Muddy Hand*, but so do other mountain-themed works by Birney. "Daybreak on Lake Opal: High Rockies" (1946/1970), "Takkakaw Falls" (1950) and "Climbers" (1950), reflect his fascination with the alpine environment.

In her biographical note in *One Muddy Hand*, Wailan Low (who lived with Birney from 1973 until his death in 1995), mentions "…as a boy in Banff, Earle came to know mountains and climbing…" and "He climbed regularly with his friends…." There is no doubt that Earle Birney, although not a technical climber, had a passion for high places and understood, in a sensitive and poetic way, the delicate and fragile relationship between humans and mountains. Birney was no naïve romantic, and a meditative read of "David" will dispel such an attitude to nature. It reminds us of the tragedies and hard decisions often posed to those who falter and fall.

Birney was a pioneer of Canadian mountain poetry and Canadian literature—he should be part of the canon of both. *One Muddy Hand* illustrates ably and amply why this is the case.

—Ron Dart

Remembrances

Viggo Holm

My memory suggests that I first met Viggo Holm in the summer of 1986. A couple of friends and I were descending from Flower Ridge when we met Viggo hiking up with a small group of youth, including his young son Kris. We introduced ourselves and chatted briefly, wishing each other a fun hike. Little did I know then what an important and inspirational part of my life Viggo and the entire Holm family would later become.

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

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

By vocation Viggo was an engineer, by avocation a skier, a mountaineer and a sailor. He was a member of the Royal Victoria Yacht Club and both sailed in and served as a race marshal for the Swiftsure yacht race. He was a loving husband and father. I know I speak for us all when I say that Viggo will be sorely missed, that he will remain an inspirational example for us, and that we extend our love and support to our friends Judith, Katy and Kris and their loved ones, not only in this sad and dif cult time, but also into the future.

Should anyone like to make a donation at this time, Judith has generously requested that it go to the Rise Above Barriers Society in Viggo's name (www.riseabovebarriers.com).

—Sandy Briggs

Paul Valiulis

Paul Valiulis went missing off the Dutch Antilles' island of Saba on October 30, 2007. We most likely will never know the exact circumstances of his disappearance. Deep-water blackout is one suspected cause. He had recently taken up free diving and was known to descend up to 45 metres on a single breath. I observed this talent in the Galapagos when a tourist leaned over the rail of the boat and her sunglasses slipped away into the big blue. The anchor showed 19 metres of water as the new resting home for those $200 shades. Over the side went Louisiana's finest mountain guide and I will be damned if he did not come up with those glasses.

Having started this memorial piece at least a dozen times, I came to the realization that there are massive gaps in the things that I know about Paul's life. I know that he was born in Shreveport, Louisiana 42 years ago. I know that he went to Stanford University and graduated with a science degree. That he travelled Asia and Europe to climb before showing up in Canmore in 1987 and enrolled in the ACMG guides' program in 1990. He has a 13-year-old daughter. I also know that for Paul the journey has always been more important than the destination. Taking on the challenge of medical school; planning a future and family with his fiancé Meghanne. These are symbolic of his quest to continue learning and improving the quality of his life.

There are volumes of things that I do not know about Paul's life. I never met his father or mother. I only recently learned the name of his sister through a couple of YouTube e-mails. I can't remember if he had one or two brothers [he had two brothers and two sisters—Ed.]. I guess I always figured that there would be plenty of time to catch up on those details later in life as we gummed our oatmeal. We have no way of knowing the last time we see somebody may really be the last time.

Paul has had a profound influence on my life. He was the first person I knew that had a video camera. He was the only guide I knew back in the early '90s who could turn on a computer, let alone print something off of Photoshop. We both went Mac before it was cool to do so. He was also the only person I knew who skied worse than me. It may be for that reason alone I bonded with Paul.

If there was anything that I could let Paul know, it would be thanks for all the adventures, all the council and all the good times. They have added value to not just my life, but any who were fortunate enough to know you. The final thing that you have taught me is that the world we live in is not static and that change is inevitable. Continue to set goals and appreciate what we have and those who are close to us, because we have no idea what the future holds.

—Joe McKay

Jim Tarrant

Jim tarrant, honorary ACC member and Calgary mountaineer, passed away quietly in a hospice after a long battle with prostate cancer complications. Jim was a native Calgarian, attending school at Colonel Walker and Crescent Heights. At the time of his death at 89, he was the longest standing member of the ACC, having joined the Club in 1939. Jim's climbing career was interrupted by World War II, but he still managed to do some climbing in England's Lake District and in Wales while on leave.

A very active member with the Calgary Section, Jim also attended over 25 ACC annual General Mountaineering Camps and did hundreds of climbs with his lifelong friends Bob Hind, Marjory Hind and Bruce Fraser. Jim had nine first ascents to his credit, and claimed his most memorable climb was the northeast ridge of Odaray Mountain with Don Morrison in 1955, now known as Tarrant Buttress.

He was awarded the Silver Rope Award for Leadership from the ACC in 1950. In 1963, an unfortunate accident with Peter Verrall and Geoff Davis, in which a cornice broke on the summit ridge of Mount Baker near Peyto Lake, resulted in their spectacular fall down the near vertical rock and ice face to the glacier below. Miraculously all were able to walk away with relatively minor injuries. Jim continued to climb for many years, but abstained from leading.

Jim climbed in Austria, Switzerland and Germany and trekked in the Himalaya, in addition to climbing extensively in the Canadian Rockies, Purcell and Selkirk ranges.

He was a fine pianist and often played the organ or piano at many ACC functions. His love of music took him to Austria many times to the opera houses and concert halls. He promoted Austrian wine and travel and was awarded the Silver Medal from the Austrian State Government for services to the country.

Jim's ashes will reside in the Bugaboos—one of his favourite climbing areas.

—Bruce Fraser

Colin Wooldridge

We're sipping on a 16-year-old Lagavulin in honour of our good friend Colin Wooldridge as we write. More than one high-quality single malt has been consumed in celebration of his life.

The following expression was found on a hand-written note in Colin's office: "One lick from the lollypop of mediocrity and you will suck for life." We're not sure who coined the phrase, but it captures the way Colin lived his life. Colin did not know how to approach anything in a half-hearted way. He applied this mantra from his early skateboard-lugeing experiences to extreme skiing in the Whistler area and, over the past five years, to hard and bold climbing routes in the Canadian Rockies. We know that many of us were inspired and guided, both physically and spiritually, by Colin during our mountain adventures.

Colin was an exceptional climber, but this was only one of his many talents. More important than his climbing abilities were the friendship and camaraderie he provided to many. He had the ability to smile constantly even when the bugs were biting like hell or it was freezing cold. You would be hard-pressed to find anyone who can remember him ever losing his cool. He was a constant and stable partner who brought an aura of *joie de vivre* to every activity he participated in.

One of Colin's goals was to still be climbing WI5 ice on this 50th birthday. His ambitions were often grand, but seldom unfulfilled or unrealistic. It is not surprising that he was able to style up hard routes such as *Grand Central Couloir* on Mount Kitchener, *Supercouloir* on Mount Deltaform and the *Weissner-House Route* on Mount Waddington, often dragging his less talented partners along for the ride and making it look like a walk in the park. His mental fortitude was such that he could solo climbs very close to the true limit of his climbing ability but would always know when not to push and was exceedingly safe. This approach was consistent with another of his favourite quotes:

"Where force is necessary, there it must be applied boldly, decisively and completely. But one must know the limitations of force; one must know when to blend force with a maneuver, a blow with an agreement." (Leon Trotsky)

Colin was never shy to express his opinion, greet with a hug, or to invite himself over for a drink or a meal. There are countless instances where friends remember him talking and drinking scotch well into the early hours of the morning, just happy to be in their company. Colin's boundless energy would have him up again in just a few short hours heading to his next 24-hour non-stop climbing adventure.

Many of Colin's climbing buddies were not aware of his scholarly talents. Colin completed his masters degree in geophysics at Simon Fraser University, authoring a national award-winning graduate thesis, and was encouraged to pursue a PhD, which he declined in favor of pursuing his love for outdoor adventures. Colin also possessed skills as a poet, a talent he rarely shared with the climbing crowd, and had many other artistic interests, perhaps the ultimate expression of which can be found in the wedding rings that he and his wife, Catherine, designed. It was these talents in addition to his climbing skills that truly made Colin an exceptional person.

Colin will be deeply missed by his family and friends but most of all by his loving wife, Catherine, and their unborn child. Colin, may your spirit climb on.

—Marcus Dell, Nicholas Ranicar, and Jason Thompson

Dr. Gerald A. Wright

Dr. Gerald A. Wright of Lethbridge, Alberta, passed away on March 31, 2007, at the age of 89 years. Gerald was born on May 7, 1917, and raised in Brecon, South Wales, U.K. In 1951, he immigrated to Canada, arriving in Lethbridge as the result of an advertisement by the Hunt Clinic in the *British Medical Journal*. He measured the distance from Lethbridge to the mountains and deemed it satisfactory. As a member of the Hunt Medical Clinic, he worked as an anesthetist and maintained a general practice in addition to serving as Chief of Medicine at St. Michael's Hospital and the Lethbridge Municipal Hospital. He retired in 1988.

Shortly after arriving in Canada, Gerald joined the Alpine Club of Canada and attended many of the summer camps, frequently as camp doctor. In celebration of Canada's centennial year, he was a member of the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition that took place in the St. Elias Range. He was camp doctor and member of the Alberta team which was successful in its ascent of Mount Alberta.

In 1968, he trekked in Nepal in the Annapurna region. In 1969, with the ACC, he successfully climbed Mount Waddington. On his third attempt, he reached the summit of Mount Robson. Internationally, Gerry climbed Nevado Huanstan in Peru, Mount Cook in New Zealand and the Eiger and Matterhorn in Switzerland. Gerry was an early member of the Lethbridge Chinook Outdoor Club, with which he enjoyed many years of climbing and hiking in the Rockies and the foothills. Waterton Lakes National Park was his favourite destination. Gerald was a member of, and attended summer camps with, the Skyline Hikers of the Canadian Rockies. He was a founding member of the Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition, sat on the board of directors and for many years planned their hike schedules, many of which he led.

Gerald was known for his good-natured humour, his spirit of adventure, his understatement and his unflappability in even the most dangerous situations. He was a conservationist who showed love and respect for the natural world. He enriched many lives and will be missed.

—Mary Harries, Eric Williams and Marion Wright

Vernon Cuthbert (Bert) Brink

I first met Bert in [illegible] when he came into Dr. Ian McTaggart Cowan's office at the University of British Columbia's (UBC) department of zoology for a quick visit. We were introduced and Bert asked whether I belonged to the Varsity Outdoor Club (VOC). I answered no, but I was hoping to join when I was taking my postgraduate studies with Dr. Cowan.

Dr. Brink was Honorary President of the VOC. He used to attend the club meetings on campus. Obviously, the members had great respect for Dr. Brink. He took a lively interest in VOC. During the summer, the club often collaborated on mountain trips with the B.C. Mountaineering Club (BCMC) and the Alpine Club of Canada's (ACC) Vancouver Section. Dr. Brink, or Bert as everyone knew him, was an excellent leader on climbs—safety conscious, especially for the new climbers, caring for all members of the group, and even caring for other climbing groups encountered on a mountain.

Bert was born in Calgary and moved to Vancouver as a young child. Living in Kitsilano, he joined St. Mark's Boy Scouts and at about age 13 hiked up Hollyburn Mountain with the scouts. He enjoyed that experience so much that he and some friends kept returning to the mountain. They built a little cabin near 6th Lake (on Hollyburn Plateau) and made their own skis. They bought some hardwood at J. Fyfe Smith Co. Ltd. and soaked it in the bathtub to develop a curve for the tip and some camber.

As the site of their cabin became Vancouver Water District territory they had to abandon their cabin, but it became a first-aid shack for skiers. Bert was also instrumental in assisting to get a skiers' first-aid patrol for skiing accidents, which was probably a forerunner to establishing the Canadian Ski Patrol in the 1940s.

Bert graduated from Kitsilano High School in 1928, at age 15, and went on to UBC to graduate in 1932 with a major in botany. He teamed up with Neal Carter, also a VOCer, and others to explore Garibaldi Provincial Park. They named a peak Veeocee, and east of Mount Wedge and Weart, they named another peak Mount Neal and its adjacent glacier the Carter Glacier. While doing his fieldwork on range management, Bert explored the Chilcotin and especially the south Chilcotin Mountains. In 1938, he started to quietly campaign to get that area dedicated as park reserve—it was finally set aside in 2001.

With a PhD in botany and biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin, Bert became professor in agronomy at UBC. He also returned to his association with VOC. Being a member of the ACC, Bert got the two groups together for summer mountain climbing trips, also with the BCMC. Membership for both of these senior organizations benefited from association with VOC.

Until the end of WWII in the mid-1940s, the UBC faculty was mainly middle-aged or senior professors. Bert was among the few younger unmarried ones. In the department of biology was Ruth Fields, also young and unmarried. I remember both used to come to meetings of the Biological Discussions Club. We students used to wonder, "Why don't they get together?" Well indeed they did, circa 1948.

Bert undeniably went on to many great things, most notably the co-founding of B.C. Nature Trust. He certainly followed their mantra: To know nature, and to keep it worth knowing.

—Iola Knight

Susanna Lantz

On February [redacted], [redacted], Susanna Lantz was killed in an avalanche while ski touring in the Chickadee Valley, along the British Columbia–Alberta border. She left behind her family, a global network of friends and her local community in the Bow Valley. She was 28.

I didn't know Susie that long. We met just over one year ago, while nursing drinks and catching a live show at a local pub. But I don't think the short time mattered that much. Some friendships take years to develop. With Susie, all it took was a good day at the crags or big night on the town—replete with her cutting-edge dance moves—to break down the barriers.

One of the last times I saw Susie was when she picked me up at midnight from the Calgary Airport. Not many friends get that excited about driving over an hour each way—at night, in winter—to pick someone up at the airport. But Susie came and was stoked. When I offered her money to cover the gas, she adamantly refused. The only way to hook her up was to sneak the money in her glove compartment when she wasn't looking.

Susie was funny and kind and lighthearted and a joy to be around. In a community filled with high-energy people, she was the source. Every time I'd ask her, "What are you up to?" the answer was astounding. Three jobs was always the minimum: from working at the Canmore Hospital to leading bike tours across North America; from tree-planting to working as an arborist. The workload often paled in comparison to the personal pursuits of competing in multi-day adventure races, climbing Yosemite walls and biking from Canada to South America.

Anyone who knew Susie can probably remember when she'd tell a story and her eyes would get huge. She'd get this "I know it sounds crazy" grin and then proceed to tell you how she spent two days on her hands and knees plowing a trail through barbed-wire alder, without food and without sleep, during a race. Or, how she hopped on her bike in Calgary one day, having barely ever fixed a flat, and started riding south, not stopping until she touched the tip of Tierra Del Fuego.

I remember climbing with her one day last fall when she kept throwing herself at these steep, pumpy routes. You could tell she was physically exhausted, but instead of quitting or getting frustrated she'd just laugh and say, "I know I can do this!"

"You gotta rest, Susie," I'd tell her, "take a few rest days." She just kept laughing and said, "I know, I know." It turns out she'd been going hard every day for weeks. That's when I started calling her the go-bot.

I'd often wonder how she maintained the frenetic pace. Why was it so hard for her to slow down? I never really got an answer. I'd joke with her that her pace was more than a little neurotic, and she'd usually just grin as if to say, "I know. It's not my fault. I was built this way."

But for all her tireless pursuits and perpetual motion, Susie was also present and calm. She was a good listener who understood the value in silence. I'll miss those times just sitting around, sharing our own brand of absurdity and laughing about her most recent epic. Susie seemed to know that even a long life was short, and that the measure of a person was more than a tally of their accomplishments. For all the energy she put into her activities, she put twice as much into the people in her life.

What else can I say? You left your mark. You were a good friend. We think about you often.

—Andrew Wexler

Susie

Passionate adventurer; determined and hard working, silly and sweet, generous and loving, kind and good, creative and crafty, capable and strong, beautiful.

We all loved you and now we've lost you and we're so sad.

Come back to us if you can. We'll look for you in the freshly fallen snow, when we get on our bicycles, when we plant a tree. When we're climbing, we'll feel your warmth on the sun-bathed rock and hear your encouraging voice. When we're competing, we'll think of your drive and determination. We'll wrap ourselves up in your scarves and reread the stories and kind words you've written us and we'll love you all over again.

Come back to us, Susie.

—Deb Lantz

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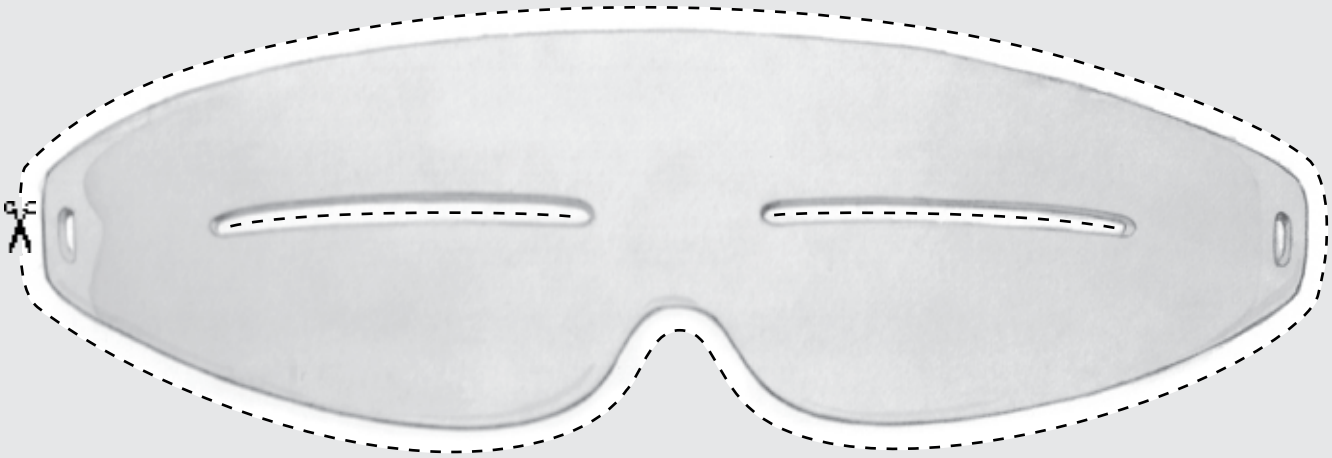

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Steve House traversing into the beginning of the eighth pitch (crux, M8 r/x) of the Anderson-House route on the headwall of Mount Alberta's north face. Canada.
Photo: Vince Anderson

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