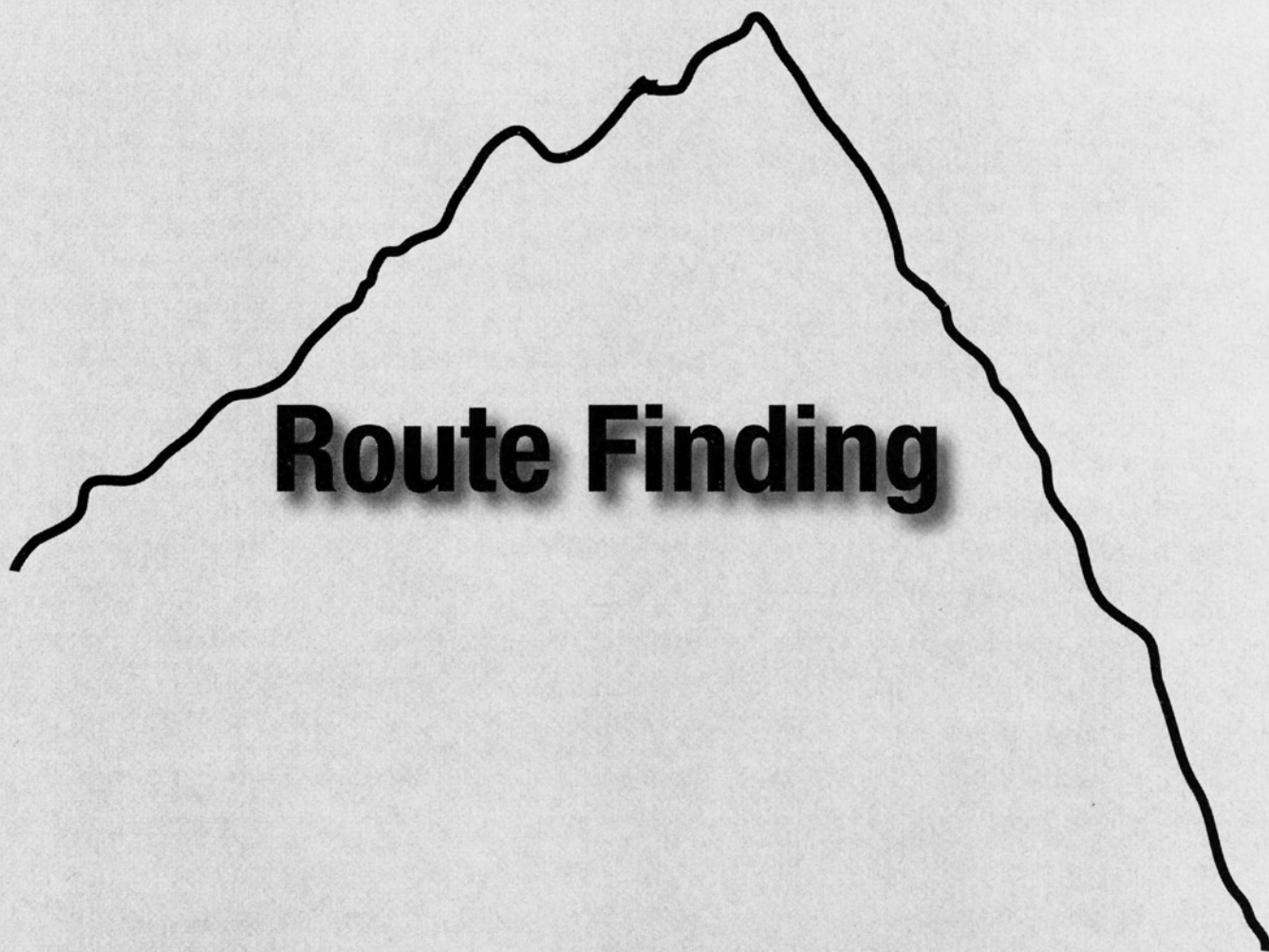


A black and white photograph of a massive, snow-covered mountain peak. The mountain's surface is rugged and covered in snow and ice, with a prominent vertical crack running down its center. At the base of the mountain, a group of about six climbers is visible, equipped with ice axes and climbing gear, standing on a snowfield. The sky is overcast and grey.

Route Finding

40 Years of Canada's Mountain Guiding Association
by Lynn Martel



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Cover photograph: "Candidates on an Assistant Ski Guide exam reach Bugaboo Crescent col in the Bugaboos, B.C., 1987. From left, Diny Harrison, Mary Clayton, Jim Unidentified), Claire Israelson and Peirre Desautels. Harrison became the first North American born female full Mountain Guide in 1992."

Photo by Pierre Lemire



Introduction

Sponsored by the Alpine Club of Canada and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, the annual Mountain Guides' Ball is the single event in the year at which everyone in the mountaineering community is sure to gather. It has become a custom at this ball to honour individual achievements and contributions that have strengthened the understanding and appreciation of Canada's unique mountain heritage. The 14th annual Ball, held in 2003, was particularly significant in that it celebrated the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. In celebrating this anniversary, the Mountain Guides' Ball can be regarded as an historical event in its own right. It was in celebration of this historical event that this summary history was

published.

As any writer will tell you, even a small publication can be an enormous amount of work. The effort invested in this project was particularly important in that no complete record of the history of the ACMG existed until Lynn Martel applied her considerable journalistic experience to capturing the stories and images that comprise this commemorative volume. A great debt is owed to Lynn and to all of the guides who generously contributed their time and photographs to this project. Thanks are also owed to Bernie Palmer of the Rockies Network who conceived the design of this book and cheerfully made all the changes necessary to see it through to publication. Huge thanks are once again owed to Laurie Venance and the staff of McAra Printing for printing this book and delivering it in time for the Guides' Ball.

As this book attests, the ACMG is comprised of people who have had an enormous influence of the creation and development of a unique alpine culture in Canada. The only other organization that could be said to have had a comparable influence is the one that ACMG founding member, Hans Gmoser, created to ensure that Canadian guides stayed busy after they became accredited. Canadian Mountain Holidays employs more mountain guides than any other enterprise in the world. The Alpine Club of Canada and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides owe a debt to CMH for their contribution to professional mountain guiding. That debt goes far, far beyond their generous support for this publication.

R.W. Sandford
Vice-President, Mountain Culture
The Alpine Club of Canada

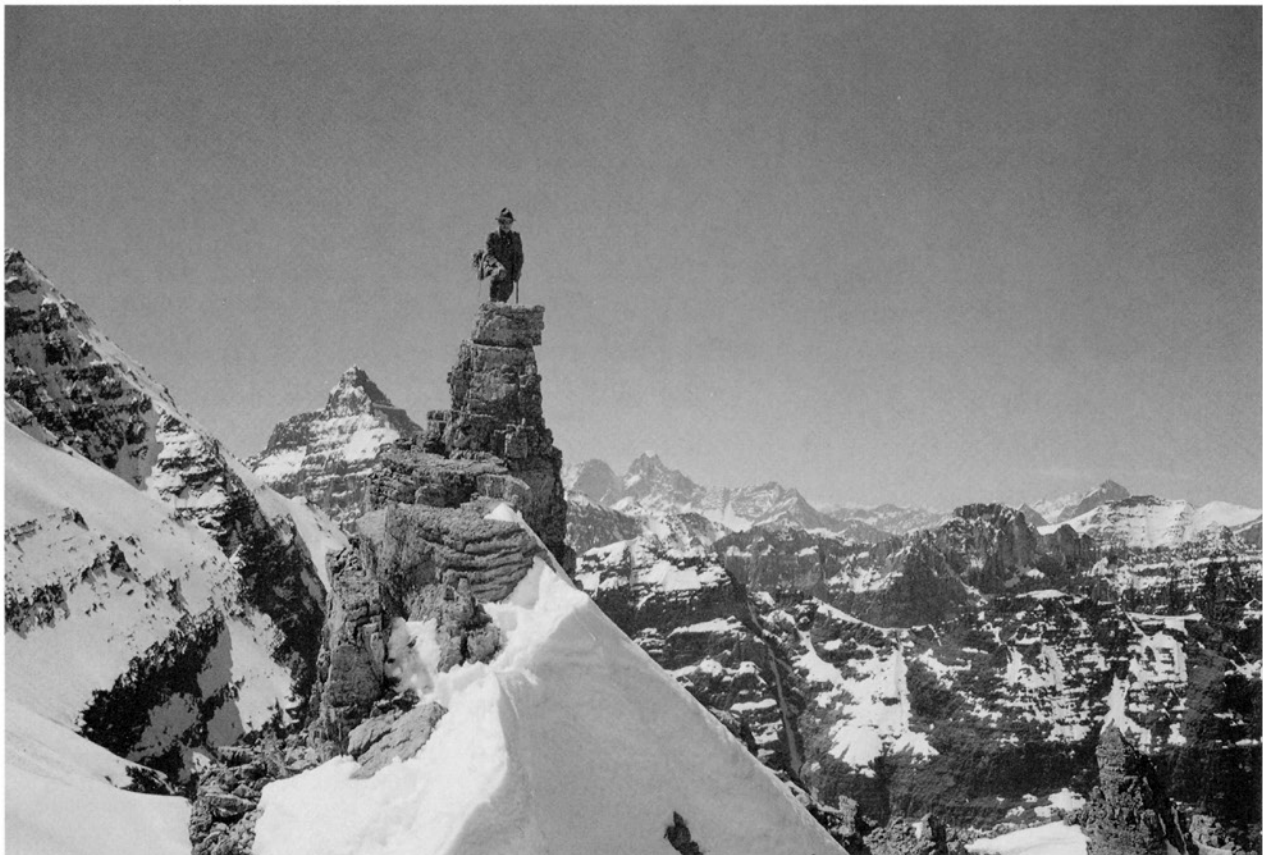
An Unfettered View 1897 to 1950

The first Europeans to encounter the Canadian Rocky Mountains were astounded by the high, jagged peaks and immense glaciers, but discouraged at the obstacle they created in the path of trade routes to the Pacific Coast.

When the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885, tourists began to look at the mountains as objects to paint, photograph and climb and American, British and European mountaineers arrived to claim Canada's virgin peaks, since none were left in Europe.

One of them was Charles Fay, a Harvard University professor who founded the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and the American Alpine Club. While traveling the scenic route home across Canada from California to Boston, Fay

spent one whole day at Glacier House Hotel in Rogers Pass and smitten, returned to Canada two dozen times. In 1895 he made an unsuccessful attempt on Mount Lefroy and returned to try again with Phillip S. Abbot in 1896. Unfortunately, Abbot fell to his death near the summit, triggering a public outcry against mountaineering. Fay argued passionately for climbing's rewards and hired Swiss guide Peter Sarbach to prove climbing safe. On August 3, 1897, Sarbach became the first professional mountain guide to lead a party to a Canadian



While Bruno Engler filmed CBC's *This Land*, about a mountain guide saying goodbye to the mountains, then 83-year-old Edward Feuz decided to climb to the top of the pinnacle at Abbot Pass, between mounts Victoria and Lefroy. Fearful for his safety, 20-something Rudi Gertsch started following him. "Get back you greenhorn!" growled Feuz, who waved goodbye to the peaks he knew so well, naming them one by one.

Photo - Rudi Gertsch collection.

summit and a new mountain tradition was born.

Starting with Christian Häsler and Edouard Feuz Sr. in 1899, C.P. stationed Swiss guides at Glacier House and later Chateau Lake Louise, since mountaineers were the ideal clientele to spend lavishly on its railway and hotels. Häsler and Feuz had served apprenticeships as porters under veteran guides before earning their own licenses and were respected as the most skilled mountain guides of the time.

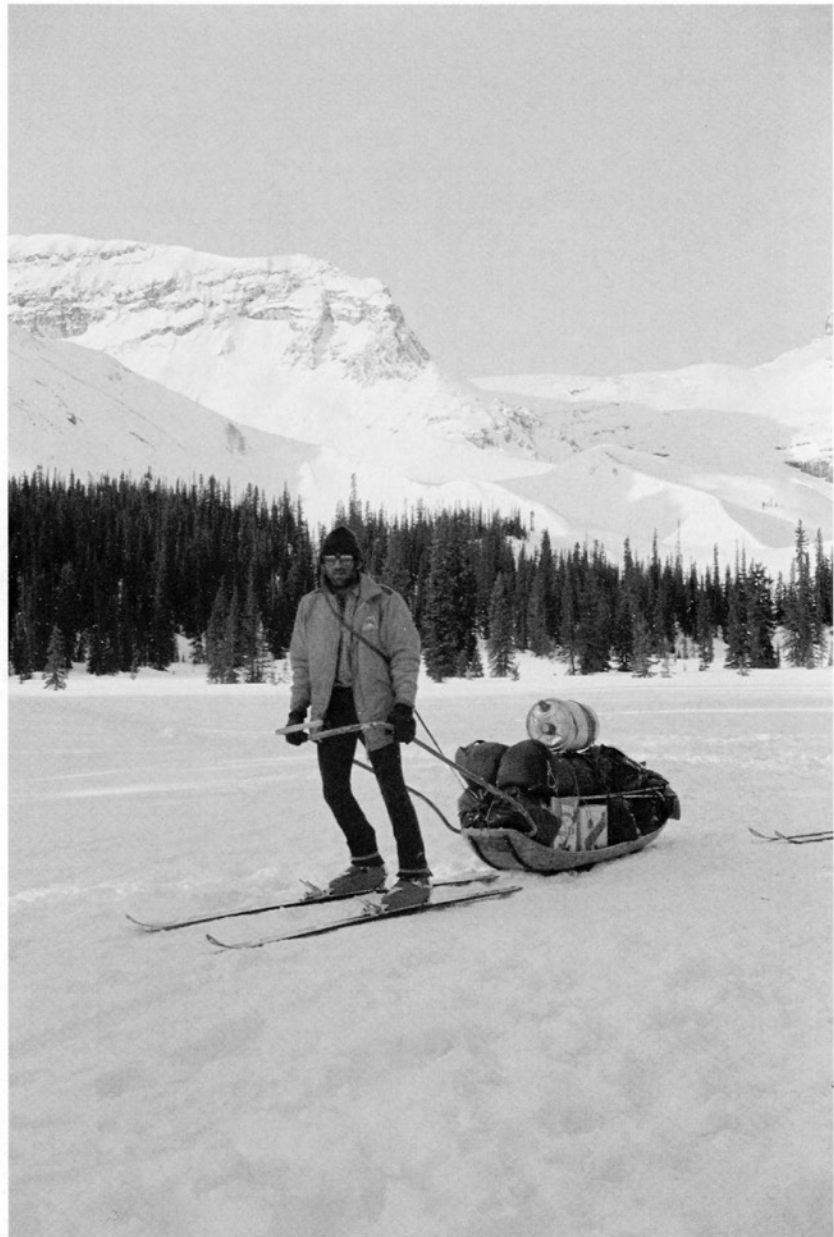
Route finding a century ago frequently began immediately beyond the railroad tracks, involving bushwhacking with well-equipped horse trains. While all the certified mountain guides until 1936 - when Ken Jones became the first Canadian to earn his mountain guide's license - were European, the invaluable packers and outfitters were Canadian.

Glacier House shut down in 1925, but climbing continued in Lake Louise. The 35 Swiss guides who made over 250 first ascents in the Selkirks, Rockies and Purcells influenced many, including Arthur Oliver Wheeler and Elizabeth Parker who created Canada's own alpine club. Canadian Pacific supplied equipment and guides to the Alpine Club of Canada's General Mountaineering Camp and Swiss guides - plus Austrian Conrad Kain - who

wintered in Banff also helped popularize skiing in the region.

For those early decades however, many climbers who were introduced to western Canada's magnificent peaks by Swiss guides, whose native

mountains bustled with sheep, goats and people, learned to appreciate the unfettered Canadian wilderness as an invaluable treasure.



Rudi Gertsch tows his dirty laundry and other gear out of the Little Yoho Valley after a month of guiding ski touring trips, circa 1970/72. Photo - Rudi Gertsch collection.

Founding Members

Peter Fuhrmann

Fuhrmann arrived in Canada from Germany in 1955 with his friend Heinz Kahl. Staring out in Edmonton, the two made their way to Banff where Fuhrmann, having worked in administration for Shell Oil in Germany, accepted the regional draughtsman position for Banff National Park's public works department. Fuhrmann started climbing with Kahl, earning his guide's license with Walter Perren in 1961 by assisting with a rescue on Eisenhower Tower. In July 1968, Fuhrmann was appointed regional Alpine Specialist for Banff, Yoho and Kootenay parks.

Fuhrmann served as president, secretary treasurer, as examiner into the late 1970s and was made an honorary member. He continues to guide the Alpine Club of Canada's classic Rockies Panorama Traverse each summer.

Hans Gmoser

Hans Gmoser came to Canada at his friend Leo Grillmair's suggestion, eager to climb. He earned his guide's license from Parks Canada in 1953, completing a questionnaire and paying a \$2 fee.

Gmoser guided summer climbing weeks and ski touring weeks in the winters. In 1952, he made the first ascent of Mount Yamnuska's south face, Grillmair's Chimneys, with Grillmair and



Hans Gmoser leads then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau up Bugaboo Spire in 1971.

The photo was taken by Bruno Engler who arrived at the Bugaboos lodge nearly an hour late, much to Gmoser's frustration.

Photo by Bruno Engler.

Isabel Spreat - the first of many ascents that would profoundly influence Canadian climbing.

When some clients expressed interest in using a helicopter to lengthen their ski day, Gmoser followed through. Starting with the Bugaboos Lodge in 1968, he built Canadian Mountain Holidays, the world first and largest heli-skiing company, now employing over 100 guides every winter.

Gmoser served as the ACMG's first technical director, as examiner and as president in the 1990s. He was made honorary president in 1997 and honorary member of the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations in 1992.

Brian Greenwood

Born in Yorkshire, England, Brian Greenwood came to Canada in 1955 at the age of 21. On Mount Yamnuska alone he put up 13 new routes, including Red Shirt. He was a leading climber in Canada throughout the 60s and early 70s, making numerous summer and winter first ascents in the Rockies and Bugaboos, many of which are considered classics.

Greenwood's talent and experience made him a natural to participate in the founding of the ACMG and to organize and run the first guide's course in 1966. He retired from climbing in the mid 1970s.

Leo Grillmair



Leo Grillmair grew up in Austria, where at 15 he was training for mountain warfare when WWII ended. After exploring the mountains of Austria and northern Italy for six years, he came to Canada with Hans Gmoser, taking his guide's exam with Walter Perren in 1957. A plumber by trade, he ran construction of Canadian Mountain Holidays' Bugaboo Lodge through the summer of 1967. He was lodge manager and head guide for 25 years, many of those with his wife Lynn as chef.

Grillmair served as the ACMG's first secretary treasurer and as examiner, but soon became too busy hosting guests at the Bugaboos. He retired from guiding in 1992 to hike and ski tour and travel the world. Grillmair is an honorary ACMG member.

Heinz Kahl

Heinz Kahl came to Canada in 1955 with Peter Fuhrmann, originally settling in Edmonton. They moved to Banff, where Kahl found highway construction work with the government.

An experienced climber, Kahl earned his guide's license with Walter Perren in 1957 and guided with Hans Gmoser, including the third ascent of Mount Alberta in 1958. Kahl was one of the most talented rock climbers of the day, putting

Leo Grillmair ski touring in the Mummery Glacier area, B.C. in 1970.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

up Diretissima on Mount Yamnuska in 1957, as well as Red Shirt and Chockstone.

A happy character, Kahl hosted the inaugural ACMG meeting at his one-room log cabin in Lac des Arcs, held in the afternoon because there was no electricity.

Tragically, Kahl succumbed to leukemia at the age of 33. Kahl Wall on Mount Yamnuska bears his name.

Dick Lofthouse

Arriving in Canada in 1954 from Britain's Lake District, Lofthouse was already an accomplished rock climber. He forged a solid climbing partnership with Brian Greenwood and together they made Mount Alberta's fourth ascent in 1958 – the first on Alberta without a bivouac. Lofthouse put up several routes on Mount Yamnuska, including Red Shirt with Brian Greenwood and Heinz Kahl.

After helping found the ACMG he



While working highway avalanche control in Stewart, B.C. Eric Lomas was the first Canadian civilian to use artillery. Here he stands beside an avalauncher in the late 1960s.

Photo – Eric Lomas collection.

guided only a little and like Greenwood, found membership in the organization didn't suit him.

Eric Lomas

Originally from the north of England, Eric Lomas took up rock climbing at 18, making four trips to the Alps before coming to Canada in 1955 in his mid 20s. He reached Banff in 1957, took his guide's exam with Walter Perren in 1960 and operated the Banff Climbing School (BCS) with Peter Fuhrmann in the early 60s.

Lomas worked avalanche control for the U.S Forest Service in Washington State, taught skiing and worked avalanche control at Lake Louise under Walter Perren. He was Whistler's ski hill manager before accepting an avalanche control job in Stewart, B.C. from 1967 to 1969, where he was the first civilian in Canada to use the avalauncher.

Returning to Banff in 1980, Lomas took over BCS and guided and taught avalanche safety courses with Bernie Schiesser. He served as ACMG secretary treasurer for four years in the mid 80s and was made an honorary member. He now operates Campbell Icefield Chalet with Schiesser.

Willie Pfisterer

Willi Pfisterer grew up in a family of mountain guides near Salzburg, Austria, climbing his first 3000-metre peak at 11

and competing on the national Nordic ski team. Pfisterer arrived in Quebec's Laurentian mountains in 1955 with Frank Stark and taught skiing there. His first Canadian climb was a solo ascent of Mount Sir Donald in Rogers Pass, his first guiding work with Bill Harrison on an Alpine Club of Canada camp. Earning his assistant guide's license in Austria, in 1955 he passed his guide's test in Jasper under Tony Messner.

Pfisterer helped develop downhill skiing in at Penticton's Big White and in Jasper and was instrumental in developing Rogers Pass' avalanche research program. With Walter Perren, he trained wardens through rescue school and in 1968 became Parks Canada Alpine Specialist responsible for Jasper, Revelstoke, Glacier, Kluane and Nahanni parks.

Pfisterer served as examiner on several ACMG guide's exams and is an ACMG honorary member.

Hans Schwarz

As a child in Bern, Switzerland in the 1930s, Hans Schwarz skied to school every day, climbing on limestone cliffs after classes. In the Swiss Army he advanced his skiing and climbing skills to join the elite corps. In 1956 he arrived in Toronto, learned to canoe then made his way to Hinton, AB. He helped cut the Banff-Jasper highway route and worked for Parks Canada at the Whistler's Mountain

ski hill. After taking mountaineering and rescue courses through the warden service, he passed Walter Perren's guide's exam in 1962.

Based in Jasper, Schwarz climbed Robson a dozen times. He served as ACMG vice president before becoming president in 1969 and served as assistant examiner to Brian Greenwood on the first exam in 1966. Schwarz retired from guiding in 2000 and was made an honorary member.

Frank Stark

From the same Austrian town, Frank Stark and Willi Pfisterer came to Canada together in 1955. Starting in Quebec's Laurentian mountains, they drove west in Stark's car, taking odd jobs in logging camps and accepting Salvation Army accommodations. When they finally caught their first sight of the Canadian Rockies, Stark kissed the pavement, having not seen mountains for a year.

Stark was a strong climber, guiding with Gmoser on Mount Robson in 1957. He took his guide's exam with Walter Perren that year, but retired soon after shattering his kneecap in a car accident. Hans Gmoser coaxed him out of retirement to work at the Bugaboos Lodge after it opened in 1968. Tragically, Stark was killed in a crash while flying his own plane in 1985.

Savouring Solitude 1950s

By 1950, Ernst and Edward Feuz were guiding privately, the only Swiss guides working in Canada. To stimulate interest in mountaineering and its guide services, C.P. brought Switzerland's Edmund Petrig and Walter Perren to the Chateau Lake Louise. When their contracts expired in 1955 mountaineering interest was so low that C.P. released them and Petrig returned to Switzerland. In the wake of two separate accidents that claimed four lives on Mount Victoria and seven teenage boys on Mount Temple, Perren accepted a National Parks Service offer to organize mountain travel and rescue training for park wardens and aspiring guides. In 1956, Perren suggested a young Austrian, Hans Gmoser, take his new guide's test.

While growing up in an industrial suburb of Lintz, a five-year-old Gmoser watched with fascination as some climbers disembarked the train they were riding and headed straight up nearby mountain slopes. In 1945, in his early teens, a local priest took Gmoser and several boys to the mountains for skiing and climbing adventures.

Soon Gmoser and childhood friend Franz Dopf joined the Austrian Alpine Club and

equipped with rented shoes and rope, plus pitons, carabiners, slings and hammers given them by the mother of a mountaineer killed in WWII, they cycled 80 km to the mountains every weekend. Leaving their bikes at the last farm they hiked to an alpine hut from where they climbed 600-metre limestone cliffs on 2500-m peaks. On their first climb, the South Ridge of the High Priel, their experience consisted of listening to other climbers' conversations.

By 19 Gmoser was a skilled climber interested in guiding, but knew he had to be 21 to earn his licence. When his old friend Leo Grillmair suggested Gmoser accompany him to Canada, Gmoser quickly joined him, intent on earning money and climbing for two years before returning to Austria. While living in Edmonton, one day

Gmoser joined some climbers for an outing on Jasper's Roche Miette. Confronted with endless valleys filled with nothing but trees and rocks, Gmoser grew so homesick for Austria's abundant villages and church steeples that he buried his head and cried.

In 1953 a chance meeting with Lizzie Rummel and Ken Jones who were hanging their skins to dry in a Banff backyard, led Rummel to hire the strong young man to help with her guests at Sunburst Lodge. The following winter Erling Strom hired him to do the same at his neighbouring Assinibione Lodge.

"One of the most fantastic things about the job was being able to – having to – ski from Assiniboine to Sunshine to pick up guests," Gmoser recalls.



Hans Gmoser demonstrates his excellent Austrian skiing technique in 1971.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

“Especially when I went alone and stood below Citadel Pass and it was absolutely quiet. They’re still I think, some of my best memories.”

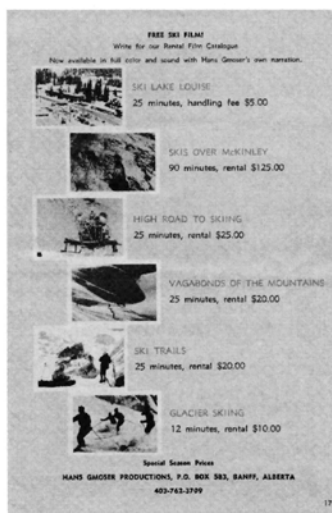
In 1953, Gmoser had paid \$2 and answered a one-page questionnaire mostly about Parks Canada regulations to receive the same badge the trail guides and packers carried. When Perren suggested he take another test in 1956 Gmoser readily agreed, eager to acquire more legitimacy than his Parks badge offered. Perren tested Gmoser and fellow candidate Bruno Engler on a one-day rock climb on Mount Cory, a two-day mixed climb of Mount Bonnet and another day of written and oral examination.

They both passed.

While Engler, a Swiss who reached Banff in 1939 and taught skiing at Sunshine and guided climbers at Lake Louise, was then busy with film and photography projects, Gmoser devoted himself to guiding and climbing. In November 1952, he and Grillmair made the first ascent of Mount Yamnuska’s Grillmair Chimneys and set a new local standard. Starting in 1956, Gmoser spent six weeks each winter in the Yoho Valley, overnighing at the Takakkaw Falls park warden’s cabin before continuing on to

To promote his guiding business, Hans Gmoser toured around North America showing his own ski movies. The approach was successful - he once attracted 1500 people in Salt Lake City.

Photo – Kiwi Gallagher collection.



Stanley Mitchell Hut the next day. During the off-season, he hitchhiked with friends, making the first ascent of Alaska’s Mount Blackburn in 1958 and the first Canadian ascent of Mount Logan’s East Ridge a year later. In 1957 he guided the first successful party on Mount Robson since the 1930s, surmounting an unconsolidated snow mushroom that had repelled many others. In the process of marketing his winter guiding services, Gmoser also founded his own company that year, Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH).

In 1958, with Grillmair and Kahl, he led two of his Robson clients up then only twice-climbed Mount Alberta. While descending, the group was forced to bivouac on a big talus

ledge below the steep higher slopes, boulders crashing to the ground beside them as they dozed. During a 1969 climb on Robson, Gmoser’s wife Margaret gave birth to their son, Robson. With the profession keeping husbands and fathers away for days, weeks and sometimes months at a time, the patience, fortitude and commitment of many guides’ wives cannot be under appreciated.

Throughout the late 50s Gmoser energetically pursued guiding and climbing opportunities while Perren taught basic mountaineering skills to dozens of park wardens who were more comfortable on horseback than on glaciers and steep cliffs. A handful of climbers took Perren’s guide’s exam, with Dave Brewer, Ken Baker, Frank Stark, Leo Grillmair and Heinz Kahl earning licenses in 1957. Facing several applications in 1958, a busy Perren asked the applicants to supply a letter of recommendation from Gmoser. When subsequent candidates were issued licenses on Gmoser’s letters of recommendation alone, he question Perren on the procedure. Perren suggested the guides form their own association under the auspices of Parks Canada and the ACC and a few years later that’s what they did.

Birth of a Bonanza 1960s

They met one afternoon in Heinz Kahl's one-room log cabin in Lac Des Arcs. Assembled were nearly all the guide's licence holders - Eric Lomas, Peter Fuhrmann, Brian Greenwood, Willi Pfisterer, Dick Lofthouse, Leo Grillmair, Hans Schwarz, Kahl and Hans Gmoser, who brought Peggy Telfer to record notes. Fuhrmann was appointed president, Gmoser as standards committee chair and Grillmair as secretary/treasurer. On May 23, 1963, the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) was formally registered under Alberta's Societies Act. Anyone holding

a Canadian guide's license qualified for membership. But not everyone was comfortable with a formal organization and a suggestion they all take the same test to establish a standard for future guides wasn't fully supported.

In 1964, a few of Gmoser's ski clients expressed interest in using a helicopter for a few runs during their annual trip. Denied permission to access Rogers Pass' deep powder slopes, Gmoser brought them to the Bugaboos for a week of glacier camping and ski touring. Surveying the panorama from Anniversary Peak, he knew he'd

found the place to go helicopter skiing. He discussed the idea with Banff pilot, Jim Davies and decided an abandoned sawmill camp could be modified to provide adequate accommodation. April 1965, 18 heliskiers drove 45 kilometres for nine hours along a snowy logging road. The skiing was good enough to attract 70 skiers in 1966, 150 in 1967.

With the membership's full backing, Greenwood, an outstanding British climber, ran the inaugural guide's exam June 8 through 15, 1966. Schwartz, an experienced Jasper guide, served as co-examiner and Jim



The first heli-skiers in 1965 traveled in a Bell 47. It took 45 minutes to an hour to assemble a full group at the top of a run.

In 1966, a four passenger, jet powered French Artouste helicopter sped things up and by 1968, guests were riding in style in a six passenger Allouette.

Photo courtesy of CMH.

Tarrant represented the ACC as observer. One of the four candidates was Lloyd 'Kiwi' Gallagher.

Shortly after arriving in Canada from New Zealand, Gallagher accepted work at Gmoser's growing Bugaboos climbing and skiing operation, chopping wood and fixing skidoos. An experienced mountaineer, Gallagher experienced his first actual rock climb on the exam, leading up Mount Edith's north face. Rain and snow forced the group to bivouac and the following two weeks delivered more of the same.

The entire affair didn't conclude all that smoothly, so Gmoser decided he'd run the next course, which ran over seven

weekends in 1967. Bob Geber, Charlie Locke, Bernie Schiesser, Don Vockeroth, John Gow and Ottmar Setzer passed, but a few failed. From then on failure rates sparked heated debates about unrealistically high European standards, polarizing the fledgling organization.

The ACMG invited numerous Alberta and B.C. outdoorsmen guiding without licenses to take a small test and be grandfathered into the association. When most failed, Fuhmann, who in 1968 became Alpine Specialist for Banff, Yoho and Kootenay national parks, received docketts accusing the ACMG – comprised largely of European guides - of denying Canadians means to support their families by excluding them

from guiding within national park boundaries. Fuhmann responded that should those unskilled guides take clients onto technical terrain, any ensuing accidents would be Ottawa's liability. The docketts stopped arriving.

"Nothing went smoothly in those days," Fuhmann admits.

Following a two-week exam format similar to Europe's, candidates were marked daily on rock climbing and ice climbing skills as well as client management with emphasis on good judgement. Outside experts taught meteorology and first aid. Decision-making options were reviewed nightly.

Still, objectivity on the part of

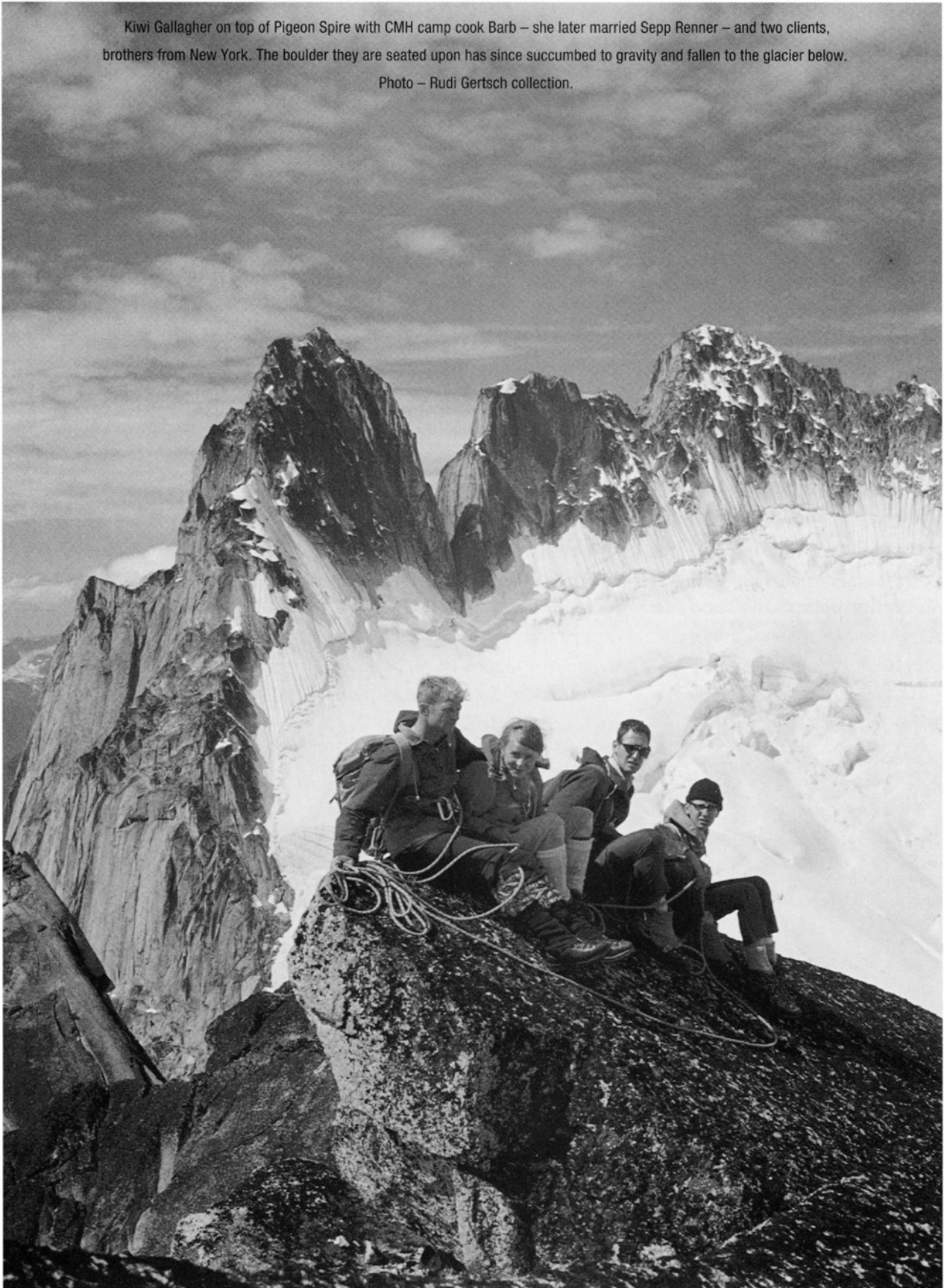


Kiwi Gallagher admires the view from Mount Robson's 3954-metre summit – the Canadian Rockies' highest, on the day Hans Gmoser's son, Robson, was born in 1969.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

Kiwi Gallagher on top of Pigeon Spire with CMH camp cook Barb – she later married Sepp Renner – and two clients, brothers from New York. The boulder they are seated upon has since succumbed to gravity and fallen to the glacier below.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.



CMH's 1969 brochure proudly featured photos and biographies of its lead guides.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

OUR GUIDES

RUDI GERTSCH
22 years old, from Austria. In the winter, after completing his studies, he works as a ski instructor in the Alps. He is a member of the Alpine Club and has a reputation for his calm and sure in the world of mountains.

HANS GMOSE
38 years old, from Austria. In the winter, after completing his studies, he works as a ski instructor in the Alps. He is a member of the Alpine Club and has a reputation for his calm and sure in the world of mountains.

LEO GRILLMAIR
35 years old, from Austria. In the winter, after completing his studies, he works as a ski instructor in the Alps. He is a member of the Alpine Club and has a reputation for his calm and sure in the world of mountains.

LLOYD "KIWI" GALLAGHER
A native of New Zealand, 27 years old. A mountain adventurer, he has led a number of expeditions to the peaks of the New Zealand Alps. He has a reputation for his calm and sure in the world of mountains.

Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains, B.C.

The Bugaboos are one of the most spectacular alpine regions in North America. Steep, smooth granite peaks, made from a favourite with skiers and add a striking backdrop to the miles and miles of glaciers which offer some very challenging and exciting skiing. There is good skiing in the Bugaboos the year round and during March and April one usually encounters fine powder snow.

Helicopter Ski Weeks

No. 11	February 23 - March 4
No. 12	March 4 - 11
No. 13	March 11 - 18
No. 14	March 18 - 25
No. 15	March 25 - April 1
No. 16	April 1 - 8
No. 17	April 8 - 15
No. 18	April 15 - 22
No. 19	April 22 - 29
No. 20	April 29 - May 6

Full cost/week - \$270.00
Group of 7 - \$245.00 each
Group of 15 - \$233.00 each

This price includes air fare from Calgary to Brno, helicopter flight to camp, all charges for seven days at camp (including two hours and 20 minutes flying time) and your return fare to Calgary.

Helicopter skiing is undoubtedly the ultimate sport that is offered. We leave every morning directly from the lumber camp where we stay and fly to the top of one of the surrounding glaciers and mountains. From there we can ski the next valley where the helicopter meets us to fly onto another peak. In this way we have access to numerous mountains and skinned different runs. There is certainly nothing on this continent to compare with it and I doubt if there are many places in the world with skiing of such grandeur and variety.

The shortest runs in the area have vertical drops of over 3,000 feet and the long ones come of them seven and 10 miles drop over 3,000 feet. Of course, there are four weather days when skiing is limited, but there can literally be business days when the weather is good.

We are using an Alouette 4-passenger helicopter which climbs 500 feet a minute. For every party of eight to 10 skiers we have one guide and as soon as one group is on top of their run they can ski down while the helicopter lifts up the next group.

Since some of these glaciers are heavily crevassed, participants must, in the interest of their own safety and the safety of the party, obey the instructions of the guides meticulously.

In its third season, heli-skiing guests stayed in bunkhouses at a somewhat renovated sawmill and were asked to bring their own bed linen.

Photo – Kiwi Gallagher collection.

examiners proved a constant challenge. "On the first real course, we had a really complex formula of points, almost needed a computer to get the result," Gmoser explains. "As an examiner, you have to make the decision, and you don't want it to be a judgemental decision, you want it to be A plus B equals C. It was almost a mission impossible."

Within three winters word was out - helicopter skiing was the most exciting thing since t-bars. Bugaboos Lodge was built during the summer of 1967, with Franz Dopf as general contractor and Grillmair as project manager. Wary of too much comfort, Gmoser was reluctant to include indoor plumbing, but in the end good grooming won out.

"Hans and I felt, what we're selling is outside," Grillmair reasons.

Opening in February 1968, bedrooms slept five to eight guests. On opening day the carpet layer hammered frantically while the helicopter arrived with the first guests. But even with a helicopter, both guides and clients carried skins in their packs, in case weather grounded the machine. "Most people were there to ski mountaineer and it was a bonanza if you got one or two

runs extra a day, it just saved your four or five hours to skin up a big peak," Gallagher recalls.

At Assiniboine Lodge, Strom insisted Gmoser, the young labourer, share the dinner table with Wall Street bankers and Harvard professors. Gmoser appreciated the inclusion and instituted the same tradition at his lodges, one that is upheld to this day. After dinner, Bugaboos guests and guides would sing, Gmoser playing the zither, Frank Stark someone else a guitar or accordion. As heli-skiing's popularity blossomed, Gmoser realized the wilderness skiing experience would suffer should the lodge grow with it. In April 1969, heliskiers laid first tracks in the Cariboos, operating out of nearby Valemount. The next remote lodge was on the horizon and the need for qualified guides was growing.



Proud participants gather after the 1967 guides' course. Standing, from left: Don Vockeroth, Ottmar Setzer, Bob Geber, John Gow, Charlie Locke, Bernie Royal. Seated, from left: Leo Grillmair, Lloyd 'Kiwi' Gallagher, Hans Gmoser, Peter Fuhrmann, Hans Schwarz. Missing: Bernie Schiesser.

Earning the International Nod 1970s

When Rudi Gertsch was a child in Wengen, Switzerland he listened to his father debate working in Canada in 1949 – when C.P. hired Walter Perren and Edmund Petrig. At 17 Gertsch earned his porter's

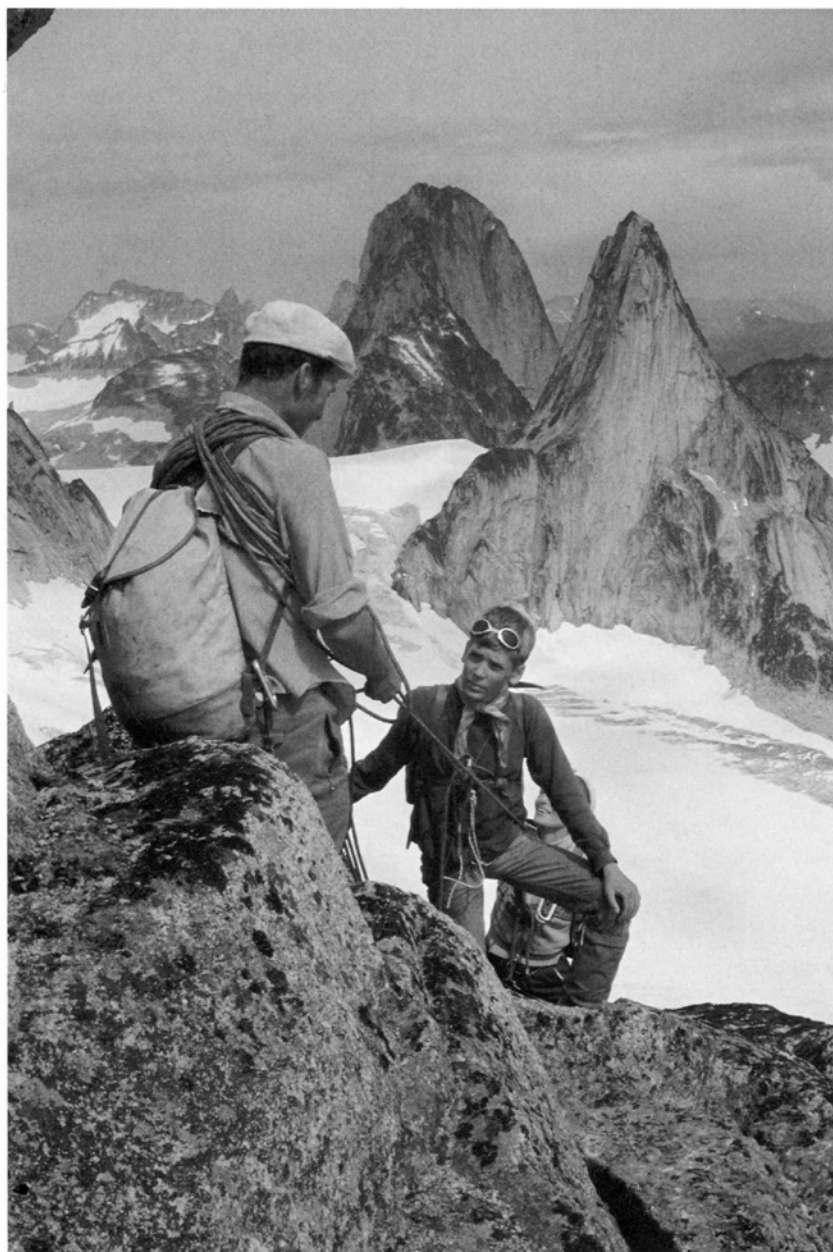
license and started working as an assistant guide.

Gertsch arrived in the Canadian Rockies in 1966 intent on traveling, but met Hans Gmoser and ended up guiding at the Bugaboos that summer. The

following summer, 22-year-old Gertsch returned to Switzerland to complete his Swiss Mountain Guide diploma. Back in Canada that fall, he coached the Banff Ski Runners before guiding at the new Bugaboo Lodge. The Canadian wilderness captivated Gertsch. "It was nice to be on a peak, just you with the clients," he recalls. "You couldn't do that in the Alps by that time. This was the last frontier."

While the helicopter-assisted skiing business generated an increasing demand for qualified mountain guides, Canadian guide training and certification focussed on climbing skills - not skiing. Although a skilled mountaineer, in 1968 Kiwi Gallagher couldn't ski more than 10 turns without crashing. He kept ahead of his guests by perfecting the forward roll in deep snow.

Gertsch, on the opposite side of the slope, skied to school as a child carrying his schoolbooks in a backpack. As a Swiss junior team member he competed in Nordic and alpine events. In 1968 he joined the ACMG and in 1969 began more than a decade as an examiner, and assumed the position of technical director. Gertsch dedicated himself to teaching aspiring Canadian guests to be as adept on skis as on the sharp end of a climbing rope – just



Ferdli Taxbock, equipped with the latest gear, guides clients safely to the summit of Marmolata in the Bugaboos, B.C., circa 1972.

Bugaboo and Snowpatch spires are in the background (l-r). Photo - Rudi Gertsch collection

like European guides. During his tenure, he was instrumental in developing the Ski Guide's training program and amended the two-week guide's course to become two two-week assistant guide courses, scheduled so that successful candidates could work the following season.

In September 1973, following some correspondence, Gertsch, who was the ACMG's first Union Internationale d'Associations de Guides de Montagnes (UIAGM) member, attended the UIAGM annual meeting in Liechtenstein intent on demonstrating that Canadian standards were as

high as Europe's. Founded in 1965, the UIAGM – or in English the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA) - sets worldwide standards for guide training and certification, technical proficiency and client care. This was Canada's first IFMGA meeting and the executive welcomed Canada as its first non-European member. That year Gertsch organized the first ACMG guides' refresher course, feeling that as an IFMGA member, and with equipment and technology changing rapidly, that Canadian guides should work to maintain international standards.

In 1974, Hans-Peter Stettler attended the IFMGA annual meeting in Briançon, France where he made a formal presentation to the delegates, including Walter Bonatti and Anderl Heckmair. A native of Grindelwald, Switzerland, Stettler served his guiding apprenticeship under Herman Steuri, father of a childhood friend and an IFMGA founding member. Stettler came to Canada in 1968, knowing Rudi Gertsch – they'd served in the Swiss Army together - was already there. In 1969 Stettler bartended at the Bugaboos, but when Gertsch broke his leg shooting a movie in the U.S.,



Hans-Peter Stettler leads the Mesaros family from Winnipeg on a ski touring trip in Rogers Pass, 1974. Mount Sir Donald in the background.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

Stettler got his guiding break. At 28 in 1974, Stettler took his guide's exam in Europe.

For the next decade, Stettler represented Canada on twice yearly trips to IFMGA meetings in Europe. In 1978, Canada hosted the IFMGA's first meeting outside of Europe. Ever since, IFMGA membership has provided ACMG guides recognition in member countries including Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Peru and Slovenia. In the winter of 1975/76, the new association helped lure 40 Europeans to work for CMH

in B.C. at Radium, Mica Creek and the newly built Cariboos Lodge near Valemount. By the mid 1970s other smaller heliski companies started up in the Canadian west, including Gertsch's own Purcell Helicopter Skiing.

With an increasing number of backcountry skiers, avalanche accidents were inevitable. Fortunately, most of those buried were quickly rescued, but in 1974 CMH suffered its first avalanche fatality in the Cariboos. The client - guide relationship is a symbiotic one however, and in the late 1960s

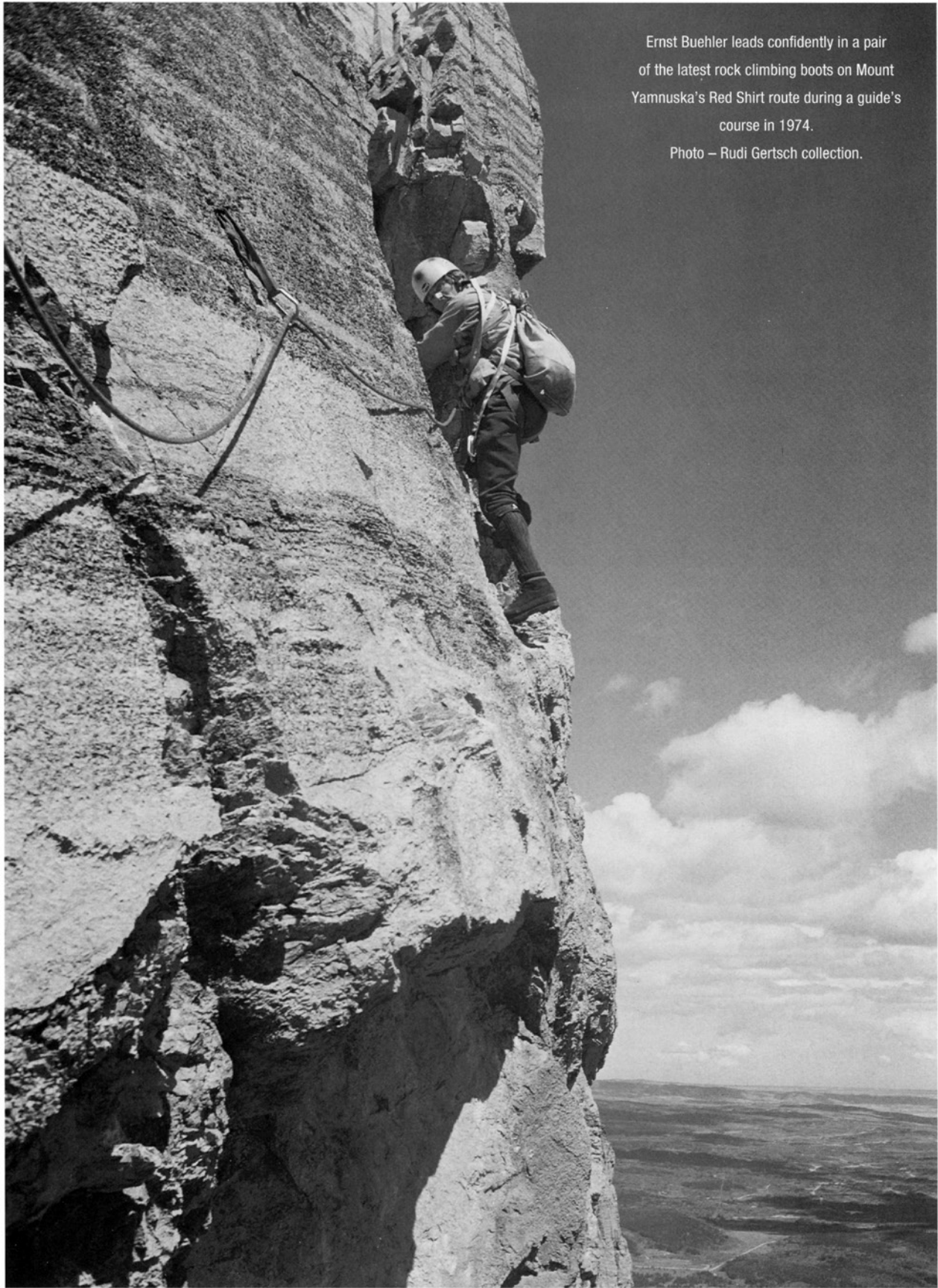
a CMH ski guest introduced his guides to a Skadi avalanche transceiver. Fortunately, the guides quickly realized its value.

"It was quite a change from the old avalanche cord," Gertsch admits. Until then, guides carried a coiled cord in their packs, to be trailed behind them in dangerous conditions. Later they wore a plastic box fastened by four bent nails to their jacket, with a cord attached to the lid that could be tossed away in case of an avalanche, theoretically floating to the surface. The cord was marked



Kiwi Gallagher, Herb Bleuer, Peter Schlunegger and Rudi Gertsch enjoy a day off from heli-ski guiding on top of Howser Peak in the B.C.'s Bugaboos, 1973.

Photo – Kiwi Gallagher collection.



Ernst Buehler leads confidently in a pair of the latest rock climbing boots on Mount Yamnuska's Red Shirt route during a guide's course in 1974.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

In 1978, Canada hosted the annual IFMGA/UIAMG meeting, the first time the international meeting ever took place outside Europe. From left, Rudi Gertsch, Herb Bleuer, Peter Schlunegger, Bruno Engler and Ernst Buehler yodel to celebrate the occasion.

Photo - Rudi Gertsch collection.



at intervals to indicate burial depth.

By the early 1970s all guides

and guests were wearing the Skadi. It proved its value in 1972 when a buried guest was dug out alive. When Stettler

attended an avalanche course in Switzerland where an old respected guide assured the crowd, "the only reliable thing to date is the dog," Stettler knew that wasn't true.

The burgeoning heli-ski industry allowed Canadians to break new ground in the area of snow craft science, putting them on the leading edge of ski guiding. By the end of the 70s, CMH had reluctantly – since it offered a valuable change of pace for both guides and guests - phased out most of its ski touring weeks and had seven heli-skiing bases running through the winters. Summer demand for guided climbing increased too and Canadian guides began making a living year round.

The B.C. Helicopter and Snowcat Skiing Operators' Association

In 1978 a group of heli-skiing operators gathered to form an association, electing as its first president Hans Gmoser, Peter Schlunegger as vice president and Rudi Gertsch as standards committee chair. Expanded to include snowcat operators in 1992, it was renamed the B.C. Helicopter and Snowcat Skiing Operator's Association (BCHSSOA).

With nearly 30 members, the association's mandate includes setting industry standards for safety, client care, environmental

stewardship and operating methods and to act as a collective voice for backcountry ski operators. As well, it works to promote helicopter and snowcat accessed skiing as a viable tourism industry with Alberta, B.C and the Yukon.

All BCHSSOA members are committed to providing funding and resources for research and development programs promoting safe backcountry travel in winter and have been the main financial providers for the University of Calgary's avalanche research program since 1989. The association also works closely with the Canadian Avalanche Association.

Redefining Standards 1980s

The Europeans set the guiding standards, but in the 1980s Canadians were redefining climbing standards, especially in the most Canadian of seasons – winter. Following in the crampon prints of the 60s and 70s boldest climbers, including Brian Greenwood and Charlie Locke, a younger generation of indomitable alpinists embarked on daring winter ascents throughout the Canadian west.

Barry Blanchard, who passed his Assistant Alpine Guide's exam in 1983, was among those leading the charge. Growing up under a slightly delinquent

influence in Calgary, Blanchard was inspired by classic climbing literature to become a great alpinist, succeeding as he accomplished extraordinary climbs in the world's great ranges. One of North America's most highly respected alpinists – but not really a skier - Blanchard persevered to earn his full guide's badge in 1996.

In 1982, Kiwi Gallagher, Dwayne Congdon, Tim Auger and James Blench contributed to the team that put the first Canadians – Laurie Skreslet and Pat Morrow - on the world's highest summit, Mount Everest. Four years later Congdon

reached the summit with Sharon Wood, the first North American woman to stand there. Wood, a B.C. native, climbed her first mountain at 12, committing herself to climbing by the age of 17. In 1982 she became the first woman to earn her ACMG Assistant Alpine Guide's badge – in the late 1970s Jara Popelkova was the first to earn her Assistant Ski Guide's license and guided for CMH. Wood subsequently became an Assistant Ski Guide and was the first woman to become an ACMG Alpine Guide.

Throughout the 1980s, ACMG examiners worked to maintain

The Canadian Avalanche Association

The Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) was created in 1981 as a non-profit society dedicated to developing avalanche research, facilitating an information exchange between snow science and safety professionals, promoting industry standards and to providing high quality avalanche education.

Its founders include Willi Pfisterer, its first vice president, Peter Schaerer as first president and Herb Bleuer. In the 1960s Pfisterer conducted research as a field technician and avalanche specialist in Rogers Pass for the National Research Council of Canada, a project that led to the formation of the CAA.

In 1991, funding from the National Search

and Rescue Secretariat allowed the Canadian Avalanche Centre (CAC) to open its doors. The CAC coordinates avalanche training schools, provides public safety services and manages Infoex™, through which snow, weather and avalanche related data collected daily by helicopter, snowcat and ski resort operators throughout western Canada is summarized and collated by CAC staff who share the information with service subscribers.

The CAA also provides a free avalanche information bulletin containing current information for the South Coast, North Columbia, South Columbia and Rocky mountain ranges. Based in Revelstoke, B.C., the CAA's managing director is ACMG guide Claire Israelson, a former national park public safety specialist.

Mountain guides have always had to be creative – as these guides demonstrate, rigging a rescue toboggan using skis and rope, circa 1976.

Photo Rudi Gertsch collection.



the highest of standards, often planning courses on their own time. Examiners were paid a daily rate but at times accepted less than their wages to make a course break even. President Guy Clarkson worked with technical director Rudi

Kranabitter to create a solid working structure for guides' courses and exams, leading to a formal set of guidelines documenting what was previously considered what "everybody knows". Previously, guide candidates were offered

little explanation when they failed courses. They created an interview and assessment process that would clarify a candidate's strengths and weaknesses, which decreased failure rates and accusations of favouritism. Together they also lengthened the Assistant Ski Guide and Assistant Summer (alpine) Guide's courses to three weeks each and implemented annual refresher courses.

Kranabitter grew up in a small village in the Stubai Valley near Innsbruck, Austria and while still attending school accompanied local guides to mountain huts, pulling dish duty before following them up mountains. Only 18, he earned his guide's licence in 1968. A friend who guided a summer in the Bugaboos applied for both of them to work with CMH and in early 1973, Kranabitter received a letter saying CMH was hiring. He quit his metal working job and headed to Canada, thinking he would work the season then go home. One season stretched into the next and he stayed.

After four winters with CMH, Kranabitter formed the Guide's Co Op, occupying basements of Banff retail shops. The business evolved into Banff Alpine Guides, taking over CMH's summer mountaineering and winter ski touring weeks as

Guides gather for a refresher course, circa early 1980s.

Photo by Bruno Engler



CMH dropped them. When Kranabitter opened Mount Engadine Lodge in Kananaskis Country in 1985, he passed BAG on to ACMG guide Greg Yavorsky.

Kranabitter influenced many young guides, including Vancouver native Scott Flavelle. Introduced to climbing through a Grade 10 outdoor class, Flavelle was soon hitchhiking every weekend to rock climb in Squamish and around B.C.'s southwest coast. During the 80s, Flavelle established difficult new routes in the Cirque of the Unclimbables, in the Adamants

and the Coast Range. After climbing throughout North America and in the Himalayas he took his first ACMG exam in 1979, becoming a full guide a year later.

But while ACMG examiners were intent on keeping standards current, at times they clung to old traditions. First introduced in the 1970s, the sit harness didn't replace the body/chest harness on exams until the late 1980s.

Flavelle guided on the Squamish Chief as rock climbing and mountaineering

schools multiplied, employing ACMG guides on the Coast where until then non-certified guides had worked. Since most of the early Swiss guides had focussed their efforts in the Rockies, Coast climbers tended to view the ACMG as a "Rockies thing." In the 1970s Herb Bleuer had become the Coast's first active Swiss guide, launching Whistler's B.C. Powder Guides.

Bleuer grew up with Peter Schlunegger and Rudi Gertsch – they took their ski instructors' course together. When Gertsch went to Canada, Bleuer and Schlunegger went climbing in

Mark Kingsbury, left and examiner Peter Fuhrmann slept in this snow cave during a Ski Guide's exam. A guide whose first job with CMH included shovelling dirt, Kingsbury took over the company's presidency when Gmoser retired in 1991.

Tragically, he died in a highway accident in 2001.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.



New Zealand and on their way home planned a quick Canadian visit. Schlunegger also established his own business, Selkirk Tangiers Helicopter Skiing in the late 1970s.

In the Rockies, Yamnuska Mountain School operated as a non-profit educational society as part of the Rocky Mountain YMCA, with its instructors including many of Canada's top climbers - Blanchard, Blench, Congdon and Wood, all rebelliously guiding without licenses before eventually

joining the European dominated ACMG. Meanwhile Dave Begg, who became a guide in 1983 with the New Zealand Mountain Guiding Association, ran a guiding business in Ottawa, sometimes importing Rockies' guides. He moved to Canmore and purchased Yamnuska from then owners Blench and Marnie Virtue.

While the examining process during the 1980s was a serious affair, a guide's workday often included wine with lunch while heli-skiing and dancing

until last call in Banff and Canmore nightclubs during weekend courses. On his first climb as a guide in the mid 80s, Dave Stark, now Yamnuska's chief guide, recalls passing around a celebratory bottle of champagne on the summit before descending. "Now that would be totally unheard of, that would be negligent," Stark states.

It was time for the guiding business to get serious.

Putting the Lodge in Order 1990s

The casual approach to guide's exams was no longer practical and with little infrastructure the organization struggled to maintain the viability of the training and certification program.

As well, in the era of liability issues and high-powered lawyers, professionalism was becoming increasingly important. While a few guides kept meticulous records, most would rather be in the mountains than shuffling papers.

As president in the late 1980s, Guy Clarkson re-built the association's finances and initiated a pro-active public awareness campaign. He grew up in Ontario but discovered climbing in the Yukon. He first encountered UIAGM guides in New Zealand and moved to Banff to join their ranks, earning his full guide's license in 1982.

With a business background, Clarkson set about making the ACMG run more like a business. He applied to a B.C. government program designed to assist professional organizations in upgrading their standards, securing a substantial grant that facilitated the creation of a course manual. Now aspiring guides would have access to comprehensive

information about the skills required throughout the training and exam process. Planning ahead, he encouraged a young guide, Karl Klassen to become involved in the ACMG executive.

Clarkson's successor, Hans-Peter Stettler and technical director Kobi Wyss nurtured the technical manual's development and Canadians once again initiated a step most IFMGA members hadn't yet approached. For the task, Klassen was hired because "he was the most organized." Inheriting a file box filled with outdated material representing decades of training techniques and procedures, Klassen found most of it useless and irrelevant so he created the first technical manual from scratch, finishing in 1991.

After moving from Manitoba to Fort Saskatchewan, AB as a teen, Klassen taught himself to ski. In 1977, at the age of 20, he took an introductory rock climbing course through the Hostelling Association – his instructor was Ferdl Taxbock and later took courses with Ernst Buehler, Wyss and Peter Fuhrmann. Embracing ski-mountaineering, Klassen took his Assistant Summer Guide's course in 1984, became a full Mountain Guide in 1988 and rose to serve as ACMG president from 1996

to 2000. In 2001 Klassen was hired as executive director, a paid position resulting from the president and board members' increasing workload due to the association's growing activities and services.

Like many of his peers, Klassen was profoundly influenced by senior guides, including Kranabitter and Pierre Lemire. Lemire climbed in his native Quebec and in New Hampshire before moving to Lake Louise in 1965. While working at the Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse he met several guides, including Ottmar Setzer who recommended he take his guide's exam, which he completed in 1974. Lemire and Kranabitter emphasized the importance of traditional guiding techniques, such as short roping, client care and the need to move quickly and efficiently on bigger objectives in high mountains.

In 1991 Hans Gmoser retired as CMH president and with a wealth of experience gained from overseeing nine lodges, 5000 skiers and 3000 hikers annually, plus 300 staff – 75 of them guides - he served as ACMG president from then until 1996.

In the early 90s, the constitution was altered so guides could pursue Ski Guide and Alpine

A mountain guide never tires of visiting new mountains. Here, Eric Lomas celebrates his 67th birthday by trekking near Cerro Torre, Patagonia.
Photo - Eric Lomas collection.



Clients practice self arrest techniques during a snow and ice school, with Ferdi Taxbock up front, demonstrating how it's done, circa 1972.

Photo- Rudi Gertsch collection.



Guide programs independently, allowing those interested in ski guiding but not interested in climbing to do so, fulfilling the demand created by the helicopter and cat skiing industry. Although the IFMGA only recognizes full Mountain Guide certificates, popular Ski Guide certifications allow holders to work in Canada. Subsequently, the independent Rock Guide program was formed to meet market demands, as was the enormously popular Hiking and Backpacking program, developed by Daniel Bonzi and Wyss. A Swiss guide who arrived in Canada in 1971, Wyss worked as CMH's operations manager for 15 years and was instrumental in developing

CMH's in-house training for its summer hiking guides. Also in the 1990s, Chris Miller, who began his guiding career with Yamnuska Mountain School,

developed a comprehensive Climbing Gym Instructor program to accommodate skyrocketing interest in indoor climbing.

Throughout the 1990s the ACMG matured, hiring James Blench as its first paid technical director. Standards were carefully defined and published in the technical manual and an instructors' field book, which provided a format for instructors to keep notes about a candidate's performance. A professional and terrain guidelines document was created and the code of ethics revised.

Having successfully built its own solid foundation, the ACMG was assigned to assist the American Mountain Guides



A guide candidate has to be willing to put himself in some uncomfortable situations – as this man does during a crevasse rescue demonstration.

Photo – Rudi Kranabitter collection.

Association (AMGA) in its bid for IFMGA inclusion. The two countries worked closely from 1993 to 1997, when the IFMGA welcomed the AMGA. The ACMG and AMGA produced a joint technical manual in 1999 after the AMGA purchased rights to the Canadian manual, offsetting costs for both and speeding up production of an American manual.

By the time the second edition of the ACMG manual was produced in 1996, it was made available to 242 members, including 100 full guides - five of whom were women. One of those was Diny Harrison.

Harrison grew up in Toronto and when at 13 the family cottage was sold, an aunt suggested she join a ski camp in the Canadian Rockies. Harrison didn't know what a glacier was, but liked the sound of

skiing in June. High Horizons Mountaineering Camps - run by Bernie Schiesser, who served as ACMG president through the 1970s - included Charlie Locke among its instructors. Harrison returned the following summer to pursue hiking and mountaineering courses along with another future guide, Rob Orvig.

At 17 Harrison studied with the Banff Centre's junior arts program. Soon afterward she

enrolled at Calgary's Alberta College of Art but was lured to the mountains to ski patrol at Lake Louise. She took up ski touring and Clarkson suggested she try for her guide's license. In 1992, Harrison became the first North American born female full Mountain Guide. In April 2003, she became ACMG acting president.

The organization had indeed matured.

Hans-Peter Stettler shows off his extreme skiing skills in Rogers Pass in 1974.
Photo - Rudi Gertsch collection.



Hans-Peter Stettler and the Party

In the late 1980s, Hans-Peter Stettler showed his receipts from his trips to Europe representing Canada at IFMGA meetings, which he had paid for out of pocket. Assuring Clarkson he didn't want the money, he suggested something be done for the benefit of the association. The membership planned a lavish party, to take place at the Banff Springs Hotel in celebration of the ACMG's 25th

anniversary in 1988, with Hans Gmoser as its special guest.

The party was such a success many felt it should become an annual event. Gmoser suggested in order to ensure good organization and longevity, the Alpine Club of Canada should be involved. The first annual Mountain Guides' Ball was a great success in 1990 and a tradition was born.

Looking Beyond the Peaks

Considering that mountain guides tend to be independent, strong-willed leaders, it's remarkable how much collaboration and teamwork contributed to the development of the ACMG into a successful and internationally respected organization.

While most of the mountain guides who gathered at Heinz Kahl's cabin 40 years ago became too involved in other

projects to devote themselves extensively to the ACMG's evolution, their contributions were nonetheless invaluable. In addition to the many guides profiled in the previous chapters are many more who made significant contributions and deserve a lot more credit than the few pages of this booklet could accommodate.

While Hans Gmoser can arguably be credited with

putting hundreds of Canadian guides to work, his greatest talent lay in possessing the foresight to seize opportunities, to dream of great possibilities and to surround himself with exceptional people willing to see the project to fruition, always with the attitude that if a hole needed to be dug he'd be the first one to shovel dirt.

Canada's 21st century mountain guides have come a long



From left, Rudi Gertsch, Edward Feuz and Bruno Engler at Opabin Pass, Lake O'Hara during the shooting of CBC's *This Land*, circa 1972, represent three generations of Mountain Guides.

Photo – Rudi Gertsch collection.

Guides gather proudly with their new packs for a group photo at the start of the CMH Bugaboos season, circa 1969. From left, Herb Bleuer, Leo Grillmair, Kiwi Gallagher, Hans Gmoser, Rudi Gertsch, Peter Schlunegger, Sepp Renner, Frank Stark and Ernst Beuhler.

Photo by Bruno Engler.



way from the Boy Scout-style badge Gmoser earned in 1953. They work around the globe, in the fields of snow science and avalanche research, as mountain rescue and public safety specialists, as safety and rigging advisors for televised adventure races and Hollywood motion pictures, as climbing gym and recreational skills instructors, as consultants to the coroners' office, as training instructors for the military and as skiing, rock climbing, hiking and mountaineering

guides. Throughout its history, the ACMG has successfully maintained constructive relationships with Parks Canada, the Alpine Club of Canada, Canadian Pacific (now Fairmont) Hotels and various land management agencies.

In the world of professional guiding, winter continues to be Canada's defining season. Canadian ski guides are second to none, benefiting from a long winter season and thousands upon thousands

of square kilometres of the best backcountry ski terrain and conditions on the planet, proven season after season as the world's most avid skiers pour exorbitant sums of money into B.C.'s helicopter and cat skiing industry. Consequently, Canadian guides possess superior skills on snow and carry out some of the most advanced avalanche awareness and research programs anywhere. In the future, winter promises to continue to play a significant

Kiwi Gallagher demonstrates state of the art rescue techniques, circa early 1970s.

Photo by Bruno Engler.



role, as ice climbing grows in popularity and western Canada – particularly the Rockies – becomes an increasingly desirable destination, and as the ACMG responds by developing ice climbing as a potential Canadian guiding speciality.

Guiding is a job, a profession that's market driven. While C.P.'s Swiss guides made numerous first ascents with their clients, most modern

climbing clients hire guides to facilitate tagging famous and well-trod summits during their allotted vacation weeks rather than explore remote and rarely visited ranges. In the day of lucrative gear sponsorships and televised adventures, exploring new peaks and routes is a full time pursuit few professional guides have time to indulge. Guiding is a profession driven by a passion for sharing the wonder and exhilaration of the

alpine, not fame, glory or great riches. It is also a profession that nurtures its own, as veteran guides and examiners continuously inspire and challenge future generations of aspiring guides.

One thing that hasn't changed much since the first Swiss guides were blown away by Canada's unfettered landscape is that Canada still has oodles of untouched terrain. Europeans

Hans Gmoser, right, guided a special guest at the Bugaboos, then Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971.

Photo by Bruno Engler.



who travel to B.C. to escape the Alps, where evidence of human development is ubiquitous, continue to be astounded by their ability to stand on a ridge-top in western Canada and not see any evidence of human habitation. In the 21st century, Canada's vast expanses of untouched wilderness are more valuable than ever, and not for their potential yield in terms of resource extraction and exploitation.

But that vast space is not always on our side; a Canadian from PEI or Saskatchewan or the greater Toronto area might not

recognize Canada as an alpine nation. Canada is a mosaic of landscapes, as well as a mosaic of people and cultures. The geography of a place is determined by Mother Nature, but the character of a place is created by the people who become part of its landscape. The need to preserve the landscape that makes those transformational experiences possible is greater than ever.

Just as the C.P. guides inspired their clients to appreciate Canada's vast unspoiled wilderness, today's guides have the same potential to educate

people to the importance of preserving that wilderness. As climate change shrinks the world's glaciers at an alarming rate, mountain guides have the unique opportunity to share with their clients those glaciers' immeasurable value simply by acquainting them with their very existence. Mountain guides are not only entrusted with their clients' lives and physical safety, but as they introduce them to the natural mountain environment they possess the capability to open the public's eyes to see beyond the peaks on the horizon and into the future.

Route Finding

40 Years of Canada's Mountain Guiding Association

by Lynn Martel



“Route Finding” chronicals the remarkable origins and evolution of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides, Canada’s world class cadre of professional mountaineers and heli-skiing guides.

This publication was made possible by the generous support of Canadian Mountain Holidays.

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