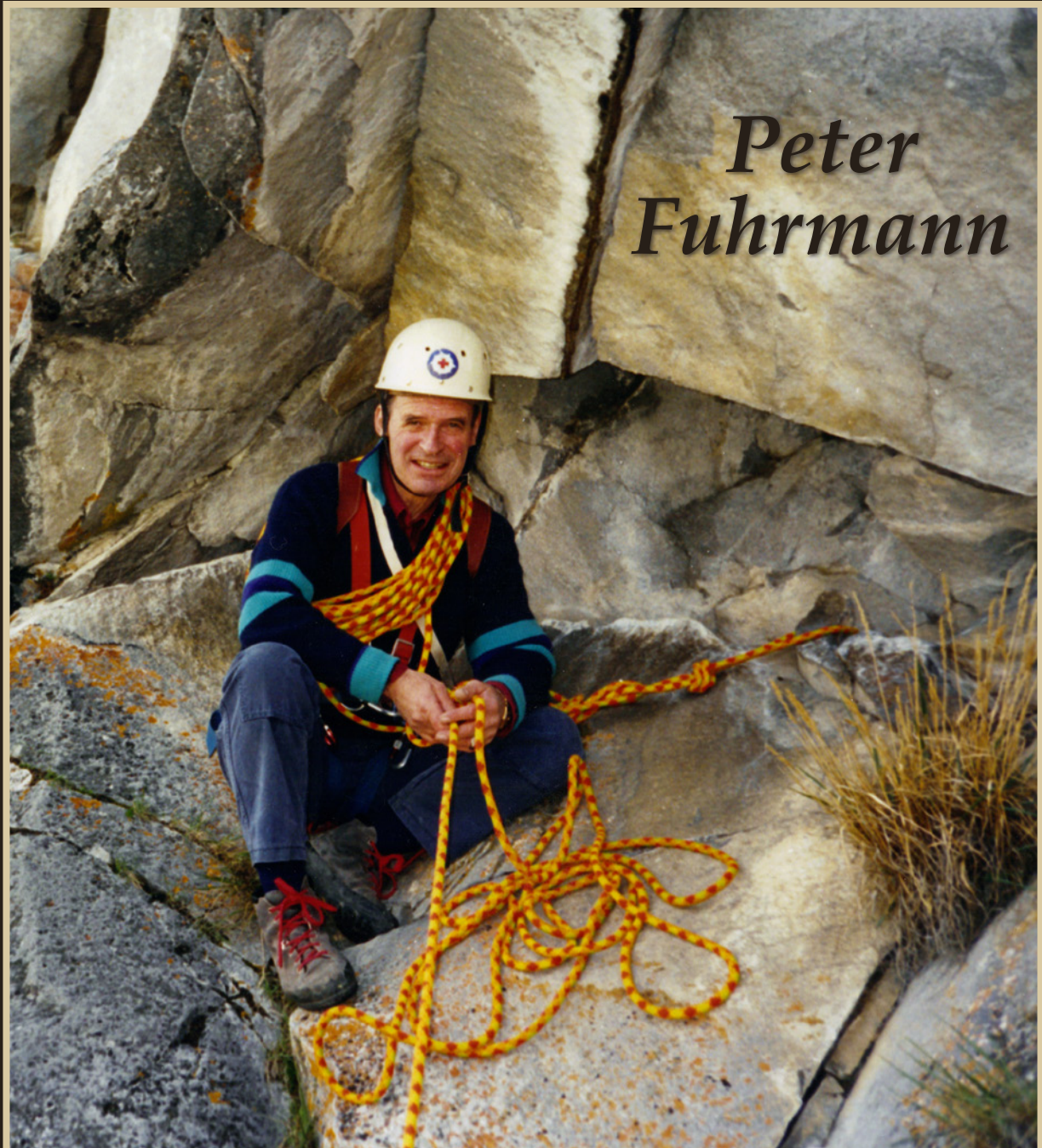


Con Bravura

The Remarkable Mountaineering Life of



*Peter
Fuhrmann*

by R.W. Sandford

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Cover photo: Peter Fuhrmann on Rundle Ridge.

Photo by Verá Fuhrmann.

Title page photo: Peter Fuhrmann on the ridge of Mount Little in the Valley of the Ten Peaks.

Introduction



Peter Fuhrmann was born into extraordinary privilege in Europe. But, when he was still a child, his family lost everything. You wouldn't know this if you talked to him, though, as it is not something he dwells upon. Peter was, however, very much a child of war and his experiences marked him for the rest of his life. But while many were destroyed or badly scarred by the experience of the Second World War, Peter came out of it less with malice than insight.

After he came to Canada, Peter developed a larger sense of the world and the potential that might exist within it. Steeped in classical music from birth, and an aficionado of great opera, Peter immediately recognized that the mountains in Canada marched to the timeless tempo of a great natural symphony. It did not take him long to realize that it was up to him to write his own lyrics and to undertake actions that harmonized with that grand score. If an aria is a solo piece written for a main character in an opera, then it could be said that, by his actions, Peter Fuhrmann wrote the words to his own song—an *Aria Alpina*—which he lived out through his life in what can only be described as great passion and skill.

Whether you know it or not, if you have explored and loved the Rocky Mountains, then you have likely been influenced by Peter Fuhrmann's vision and ability. If you have driven between Banff and Radium, hiked a trail in a western mountain national park or stayed in an Alpine Club of Canada hut then you have been touched directly by his hand. If you have climbed or hiked with a professional mountain guide then Peter Fuhrmann has spoken to you through them. If you, or someone you know, has ever needed to be rescued then, whether you saw him or not, he was with you or with them on the top of the rope or at the end of the sling beneath the helicopter that saved you. If you were injured and hospitalized in Banff, the policies he helped set may have helped you heal. But most importantly, if you have ever had a joyful moment in the Rockies and felt you heard parts of the great symphony that is mountain time rising and falling in the wind you will have shared that music with Peter.

In opera, exceptional skill is called *bravura*, and to perform consistently with such skill, especially in the face of adversity, is to perform *con bravura*. It is in tribute to his consummate skill as a mountaineer, his vision in helping create the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides; his masterful leadership as President of the Alpine Club of Canada; and his role as a driving force in the creation of Park Canada's highly regarded mountain rescue program that this historical record of the mountaineering life of Peter Fuhrmann has been written and so named.

—R.W. Sandford
Canmore, Alberta
August, 2013

Cavatina:

Dangerous Fast-Moving Beginnings

Though it would be easy to imagine otherwise, Peter Fuhrmann was not born with an ice-axe in his hands—but he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Peter Fuhrmann was born into this world on October 22, 1933 in Breslau, which at the time was not in Poland as it is now, but in Germany. This was a turbulent period in European history and particularly in Germany where, in the wake the harsh economic conditions imposed upon the country following the First World War, the Nazi Party led by Adolf Hitler was rising to power. At the time Peter was born, Hitler was beginning to take full advantage of his powers and had begun to infuse those powers with the ideology and militarism that would soon make the Second World War inevitable. Peter's family was caught in the middle of these extraordinary national and international economic and political tensions.



Peter as a child.

Peter Fuhrmann's birth certificate.

Erstes Kind:

Geburtsregister Nr. 1517 des Jahres 1933 G

Geburtschein

Vorname und Familienname: *Peter Fuhrmann*

geboren am 22. ten Oktober 1933
in Breslau

Standesamt Breslau I am 25. Oktober 1933

Der Standesbeamte
i. Winger

Verlaut am fünften (5.) December 1933 in der St. Petrus
Kirche zu Breslau
den 6. December 1933
J. M. Fuhrmann
St. Petrus, Canisius
Probstschule, Breslau

Für amtliche Vermerke:

6

Peter's father, Paul, and his mother, Charlotte, were at least for a time insulated from some of the harsher economic realities of the global depression that hit Germany particularly hard because of the conditions imposed upon it in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles. Peter's grandfather, Josef Kramer, was a wealthy architect and urban planner who had been responsible for many of the largest developments in Breslau. Peter describes the home his grandfather had in Breslau as "sort of elaborate, sort of large," but even that is an understatement. Peter didn't grow up in a house, or even a mansion; he grew up in a palace in which there was room for 36 visiting and residing family members with suites provided for each of them.

Peter's father who was also an architect, moved to Augsburg and then Nuremberg after Peter was born. In Nuremberg, he worked on the major reconstruction of the

city that had been ordered by the Hitler regime. Remarkably, Peter's father, who worked for Albert Spehr, somehow managed to continue to work on these major projects without becoming a member of the Nazi Party. However, staying out of domestic political conflicts didn't prevent history from taking its course. In 1939, Hitler declared war on much of the rest of Europe. When Allied bombing became heavy in 1941, eight-year old Peter was sent to live with his grandparents in Breslau. At that time, Breslau was considered too distant from Allied and Russian airfields to be a frequent bombing target. That, however, would change as the war progressed.

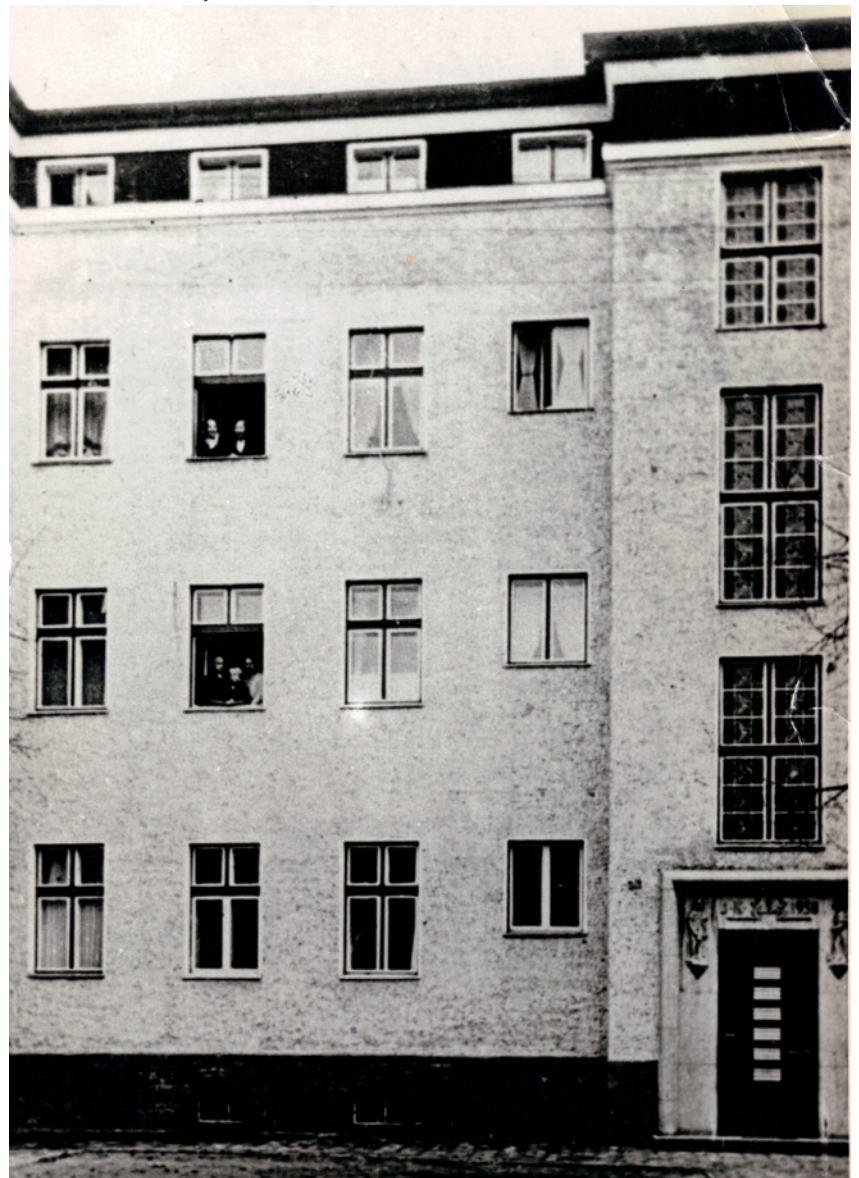
Peter remembers feeling very secure in Breslau. In 1944, when he was eleven, he remembers his whole family coming together

Paul and Charlotte Fuhmann, Peter's mother and father.



to celebrate Christmas. That brief moment, however, was the end of any security Peter would have during his childhood in Europe. Less than a month later, in January of 1945, the Russian Army had closed in on Breslau. Led by his grandfather, Josef Kramer, the Fuhmann family fled first to Leipzig and then to Dresden where, remarkably, they

The Fuhmann Family Home in Breslau.



survived the most intense fire-bombing ever visited upon a European city. Refugees in their own country, the Fuhrmanns moved as they could to avoid danger until they found sanctuary in a little village called Wiesa just outside the town of Kamenz. It was in Wiesa that they were overtaken by the Russian Army. The Fuhrmanns hid for as long as they could in a root cellar, but when hunger forced them to emerge the Russians were there and the long journey from Breslau was over. The family was stuck. They couldn't move anymore because the country in which they were trapped was now under Russian occupation. In the days that followed, all of Peter's uncles were shot by the Russians and his aunt committed suicide. Peter fell emotionally and physically ill. Separated from

his parents in Nuremberg, he was stuck with his grandparents behind the Iron Curtain from which, despite many efforts, it appeared impossible to escape. Peter and his family continued to live in dismal circumstances for the next two years. It is a period about which Peter does not speak. In mid-1947, Peter was sent to a refugee camp that was set up to facilitate exchanges in both the west and the east of those who had been separated by the conflict from parents or children. Soon after Peter was able to leave the east sector and rejoin his parents in Nuremberg. When he arrived by train at the Nuremberg station, he was so sick with malnutrition that, fearing for their son's life, his parents took him immediately to hospital where he nearly lost a leg to infection.



Peter Fuhrmann's remarkable grandparents. Peter maintained throughout his life that every time he thought something was impossible he would think of his grandfather and suddenly circumstances did not seem beyond his means to manage.

Andante:

Walking Slowly Towards an Exciting Future

Gradually Europe began to rebuild itself. As part of reconstruction, Peter's father was contracted to help rebuild parts of the City of Nuremberg to what it had been before the war. Meanwhile, after slowly recovering from the traumatic encounter with the Russian Army and a year of starving in refugee camps, Peter was able to resume his education. After finishing grade school, Peter was looking for a career. His father advised him against going into engineering or architecture because many war veterans had been given special incentives to finish their education. So many had taken up architecture and engineering that it was hard to get a job in those fields. Instead, Peter spent two years studying business at a local institute of commerce after which he landed a job in the management group of Shell Oil.

Peter spent his first year in sales and advertising in Nuremberg before being transferred to an accounting position in one of Shell's major offices in Munich. He then transferred to Hamburg where he worked with Shell's production division and was later assigned his first operational district. While Peter very much enjoyed the work, he found the organizational culture at the time very restrictive in that many of the senior managers were former Nazi army officers who were embittered because Germany had lost the war. Over time, these executives were gradually replaced by younger staff, but during the time Peter worked with Shell only two younger staff members were hired on management tracks in all of Germany in any given year. There was also a gentleman's agreement within the Shell management group that, if hired in a management position, you would not move to another oil company. This gave young people little choice with respect to advancement. This made Peter restless.

In the meantime Peter had met and befriended a young mountain climber named Heinz Kahl at a jazz club in Nuremberg. Kahl worked for the post office and was of

the same disposition as Peter with respect to feeling confined by post-war circumstances in Germany. Through Peter's mother, who was at the time working as a librarian and in an art gallery, Peter and Heinz found their way to the Caritas organization, which arranged for visas for the two young men to go to Canada. Peter remembers that in the spring of 1955 the two intrepid young men said goodbye to their families, got on a train and then boarded a boat bound for Quebec City.

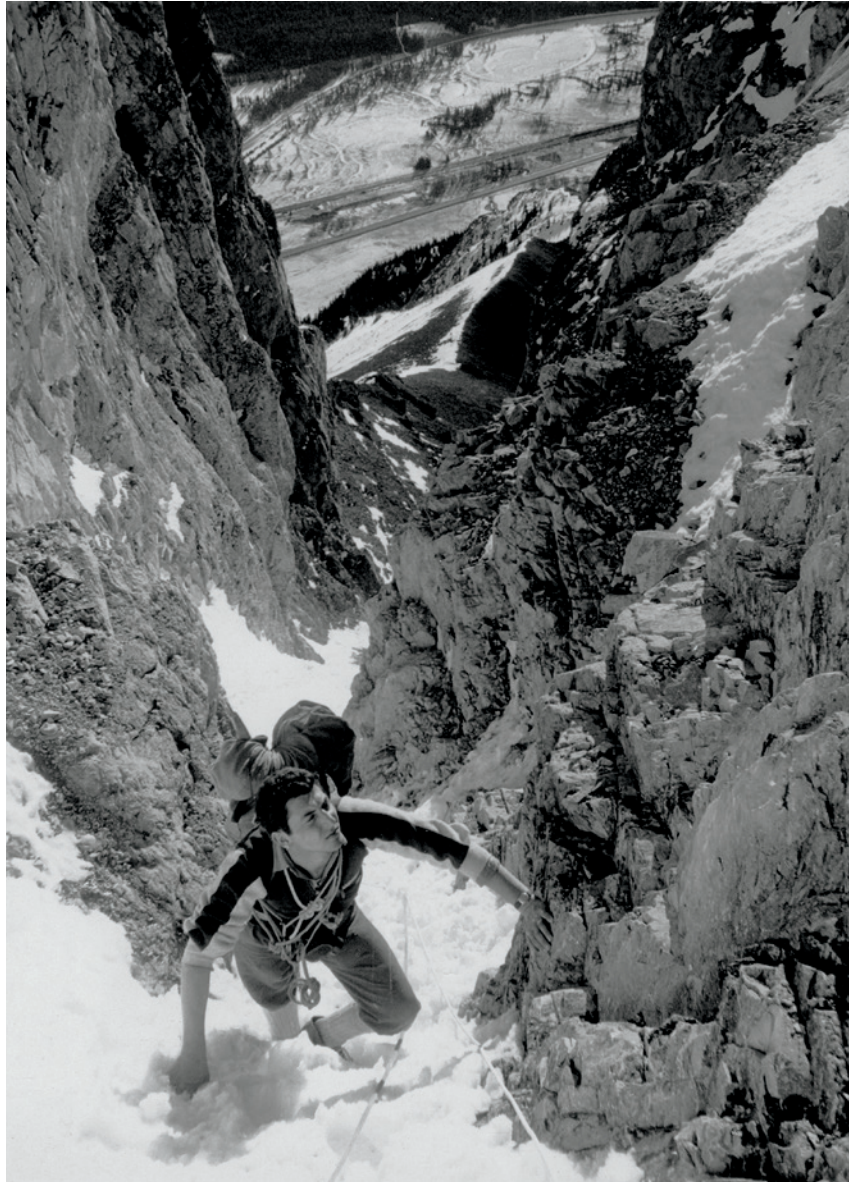
What they remembered most about the trip is that they were engulfed in a terrible storm, which Peter survived by spending most of his time in the bar where the bartender instructed that he should drink a cocktail called a shark. After worrying down several sharks the bartender instructed him to sit at the base of the boat's smokestack as that was the point of least motion during a storm. Peter weathered the storm, but Heinz Kahl didn't do nearly as well. Trapped in a cabin on the C-deck, Kahl was thrown against the ceiling and slammed into his bed for several days and emerged sicker than a dog.

After arriving in Quebec City, Fuhrmann and Kahl took a train to Edmonton, which Peter had chosen as it was the hub of the western Canadian oil industry at the time. The only jobs they could get after they arrived, however, were picking berries and doing chores at a farm outside of Edmonton. The longer they stayed in the Edmonton area, the more depressed Heinz Kahl became. What he missed was not so much Germany as the mountains. Despite his young age, Kahl had done some very famous routes in the Alps and he wanted to go to the Rockies. Unfortunately, the Hudson Super Commodore that Peter had purchased in Edmonton had blown up leaving the two with limited mobility. But when there is a will, there is usually a way. Relying on new friends in Canada they managed to get a ride to Banff, where the first night they slept on a park bench at Bow Falls.

The next morning they awoke thrilled to be in the Rockies. After a visit to Monod's sport shop on Banff Avenue to buy technical equipment, they set out immediately to attempt a direct route up the face of Cascade Mountain. Walking down Banff Avenue in the direction of Cascade, they were picked up by the per-

sonnel manager for the federal Department of Public Works who suggested that if they wanted to work in Banff, they should report to his office on Monday morning. Though they were unsuccessful in their direct assault on Cascade, Fuhrmann and Kahl suddenly had prospects that would change their lives.

Heinz Kahl on the first ascent of the upper southeast Buttress on Cascade Mountain.



Cabaletta:

After a Disaster Things Get Moving

As per instructions, Fuhrmann and Kahl showed up at the Public Works office in Banff the following Monday morning. Both were made surveyors and assigned to Eisenhower Camp. Peter remembers that the camp was managed by a remarkable eccentric named Fish. Fish was a small hunchbacked man who became famous in Banff after he came out of the Cascade Bar drunk one day and dropped his briefcase. He stumbled twice and finally fell trying to pick it up. Annoyed at the unruliness of this mere article of personal property he pulled out a revolver and shot the briefcase three times whereupon the RCMP picked him up and deposited him in jail. Fuhrmann and Kahl got to know Fish well and had a lot of fun in camp. Working as picket-men, rod-men and chain-men, they also met others who, like them, were looking to start new lives. One of these was a man named Adolph Gaubinger, an architect who had originally come from Austria but had gone to Brazil, where he had built a brick factory, for which he had been given a bonus by his boss—a ticket to anywhere. As Gaubinger had always wanted to see the Rocky Mountains of Canada, he had found his way to Banff. Gaubinger and Fuhrmann became good friends. In conversation, Gaubinger recommended to Peter that he become a draughtsman. Peter asked why he thought he should do that. “Look at everybody else,” he said, “they are all half drunk and shaky from drinking too much Bushmill. You’ll make a good draughtsman.” So Peter took a rough plan and carefully redrew it. He then presented it to Sid Smith, the camp engineer. “It looks good to me,” Smith said, “you are now the draughtsman.” And that is how Peter Fuhrmann’s became a career draughtsman.

That winter Peter was provided with a tent, a piece of plywood and two sawhorses for a desk and his own instruments. He lived and worked in a camp located at mile 53 on the Banff-Windermere Highway. He began by doing drawings of all the sections of the new highway and soon became responsible for contract documentation and disbursements for the entire highway project.

It is at this time that Peter Fuhrmann began to take climbing seriously. He climbed every chance he could with Heinz Kahl and later with George Geber. He also met legends including Brian Greenwood and Dick Lofthouse who inspired him to ever greater heights and more difficult routes. It is not surprising that within the milieu exciting opportunities would present themselves. Peter remembers that one Sunday, George Geber came to ask if he could borrow Peter’s climbing rope as he needed two for the ascent he was intending to attempt. When Peter

discovered that the route Geber wanted to do was the Gonda Traverse, a famous wildly overhanging route on Tunnel Mountain near Banff, he was beside himself with excitement. The Gonda Traverse was named after Karl Heinz Gonda who perished on the Eiger North Face. Because they had all been part of the same climbing club in Europe, George Geber, Heinz Kahl and Robert Geber had all known Karl Gonda. After the ascent of the Eiger North Face there had been a long historic debate over whether Gonda and his partner had actually reached the summit or



Peter Fuhrmann as a young mountaineer.



It was climbing this tooth that Peter had his first serious brush with death while mountaineering. He fell out of a rappel and could have very easily have died. Suddenly safety became a serious matter, one he would pursue for the rest of his life.

if they had died on the descent. Many years later, their bodies were discovered on the other side of the Eiger proving they had made the ascent. Peter agreed to lend George Geber his rope, but on the condition that he be invited on the climb. And so it was that Peter Fuhrmann completed the Gonda Traverse; in his mind one of his greatest early achievements as a mountaineer.

Peter remembers that during this period he climbed hard, aiming to constantly push his own limits. It was only a matter of time before the inevitable happened. Peter had his first major climbing accident on a tooth of the shoulder of Mount Temple. The accident made him realize he didn't concentrate enough on safety. He wrote to his mother in Germany and asked her to send him all of the safety information on mountaineering she could find. His mother, being a librarian, delivered. Peter soon received a big box of information on advanced safety techniques being employed in Europe which, he explains, later saved his life.

Things were suddenly looking up for Peter Fuhrmann. Things were also looking up for Heinz Kahl. Two years after arriving in Banff in the summer of 1955, Kahl appeared at Fuhrmann's office door with exciting news. He had just received his national park guide's license from Walter Perren. Walter Perren would also soon change Peter Fuhrmann's life as well.



Classically trained guide and masterful climber, Walter Perren laid down the foundation for mountain guiding standards and rescue protocols that Peter Fuhrmann would later build on to advance mountaineering culture in Canada's mountain west.

Walter Perren was born in Zermatt, Switzerland on January 13, 1914, into a famous family of Swiss mountain guides. Under the watchful eye of his father, he made his first ascent of the Matterhorn as a young teenager, a climb he repeated by various routes 140 times during his guiding career. In 1950, at the age of 36, Perren came to Canada at the invitation of the CPR to work with Edmund Petrig as a guide at Chateau Lake Louise. When, at the end of the 1954 summer season, the CPR phased out the Swiss guides, Perren planned to return to Zermatt with his Canadian wife and three young sons. It is perhaps ironic that the departure of this valuable climbing resource from Canada was prevented by an accident that took place that summer on Mount Victoria.

Recognizing that the termination of the mountain guiding program at Chateau Lake Louise left it with limited resources to deal with mountain rescue, the National Parks Service invited Perren to stay in Canada to

organize mountain travel and rescue training for Park Wardens. Another major accident in the Lake Louise area just after Fuhrmann and Kahl arrived in Banff in 1955, underscored the importance of the decision to hire Perren and put into relief the work that had to be done if the National Parks Service was to be able to meet its evolving public safety responsibilities.

Perren had only been working for a few months when a group of 11 teenage boys from Philadelphia attempted an ascent of Mount Temple. As their adult supervisors had decided to spend the day shopping in Lake Louise, the party was on its own. It was a hot day in July and the boys were at 2,750 metres on the mountain when they became frightened by the amount of avalanche activity that was taking place around them. In the late afternoon, the most experienced of the teenagers, Tony Woodfield, urged the party to turn back, which they did. A few minutes later, however, they heard a roar and looked back to find a huge wet snow avalanche bearing directly down upon them. Ten of the boys, aged between 12 and 16, were swept away. By the end of the day, seven of them were dead.

When two of the survivors stumbled into Moraine Lake Lodge later in the evening, the Park Warden Service was summoned to affect a rescue. Wardens Jack Schulte and Wes Gilstorf accompanied a doctor to the accident site. Soon after, warden Bert Pittaway arrived at Moraine Lake with the newly hired Walter Perren. En route to the accident they came upon Gilstorf stumbling down the mountain with one of the injured boys on his back. The tragedy attracted international attention and started Perren down the long road toward the creation of two major Canadian institutions: Canada's elite National Park Mountain Rescue Program and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. Peter Fuhrmann would eventually have considerable influence on both of these institutions.



For most of their lives Peter Fuhrmann and Bruno Engler were both friends and neighbours in Harvie Heights, near Canmore. Bruno was a legendary skier, mountain guide, film-maker and bon vivant who became renowned for his love of the Rockies.


The first step in the development of the Parks Service mountain rescue capability involved the establishment of a new training program for Park Wardens that would give them the skills they needed to climb at a standard that would allow them to help other mountaineers if they got into trouble. Diversely trained to fulfill a huge range of responsibilities, the Park Wardens of the 1950s were effectively cowboys. Their duties most often centred around backcountry district management. District wardens undertook prolonged backcountry patrols on horseback and were responsible for trail maintenance, telephone line repair, fire fighting and wildlife management in their area of the park. Search and rescue at that time was largely confined to visitors lost on the valley floor. In 1955, there were only a few Park Wardens who had the time or the inclination to climb mountains. These, ultimately, would become the core of a new warden service public safety unit. It was Walter Perren's

responsibility to make wardens into mountaineers. While most of the wardens preferred horse travel to mountaineering, some of the cowboys proved to be fearless climbers. A few later become expert mountaineers. A whole new world was about to open up in the warden service.


As early as 1950, the Parks Service was beginning to track developing trends that suggested visitor use patterns had begun to change. When skiers began to travel in increasing numbers in the backcountry, the Parks Service invited a snow researcher from Rogers Pass named Noel Gardner to offer backcountry ski instruction to wardens in the mountain national parks. The first instruction was offered to five wardens in 1951. The ten-day course included basic training in alpine ski techniques and an introduction to recognizing changing snow conditions and avalanche hazard. A second course was offered to eight Park Wardens in the spring of 1952. In 1953, an advanced school was held for those who had distinguished themselves at the two previous courses and included an introduction to glacier travel and proper use of ropes, ice axes and crampons. At the conclusion of the course, Gardner offered that the training should have been expanded to include rock-climbing instruction. There was, however, no one available with the skills to teach such a course.

Peter concluded that if Heinz Kahl could get a national parks guiding license then perhaps he could, too. In the summer of 1960, Peter made an appointment with Walter Perren to take the test, but when he arrived at his office he discovered that Perren was not there. He then went to Perren's house where his wife told him that Walter had been called to two rescues—one on Mount Louis and one on Mount Eisenhower. Peter found no one at the Mount Louis trailhead and assumed the rescue there had been completed. He then drove to Eisenhower—everybody was there, horses and the gang. At first the District Warden, Huge Jennings, wouldn't let Peter go to the rescue site. Only by explaining that Walter Perren actually needed him was he permitted access. When Peter arrived at a feature called the Dragon's Back, he could see that Walter Perren was already two-thirds of the way up Eisenhower Tower en route to the party of climbers who had been stranded

**Banff
Climbing
School**



Banff Alberta Canada



**Director Peter Fuhrmann,
Alpine Guide of Canada,
Member of the Association of
Canadian Mountain Guides, A.C.C.**

Phone 678-5788 Box 932, Banff, Alberta

After receiving his guide's pin, Peter Fuhrmann established the Banff Climbing School. Hans Gmoser did most of the guiding around Lake Louise and Yoho, while Peter offered instruction and guiding in the Banff area. The images for the brochure were taken by Bruno Engler.

on the summit for three days. Perren yelled down to tell Fuhrmann to come up and bring his pack. Because he was looking straight at him, Perren may not have realized that Peter already had his own pack on his back, but, looking at it later, Peter realized that this may have only been part of the test. Peter put Walter's pack on top of his own and went up the right hand ridge of Eisenhower Tower, which is a much harder climb than the normal ascent route. When he reached the summit, he came upon three climbers who had been able to make the ascent two days earlier but had not the technical skills nor the equipment to affect the descent. When Warden Jennings had noted they were overdue he had examined the tower with field glasses, found the trio trapped on top and called Walter Perren to affect a rescue.

When Peter arrived at the location where the climbers were stranded, Walter Perren looked at him and said, "Well, you came for your guide's test, take this guy down the route you came up and I'll take the other two down the route I came up." The climber who had been assigned to Peter looked down—the route was absolutely vertical—and declared he would not climb down it. Peter remembers laying out the options available to him. He told the climber that since he was in the midst of his guide's test he could only offer him two choices. The first was that Peter would kill him and kick his body over the edge. The second option was that he descend the route with him immediately—which he did. Peter remembers leaving the three rescued climbers with the Park Wardens then running down the mountain.

The following day Perren took Fuhrmann up to the Victoria Glacier above Lake Louise to test his abilities with respect to crevasses and other kinds of rescue situations. Perren then asked one of his favourite questions in the guiding examination process. "What do you do," he asked, "when you have a lady on the rope at the summit and she has to go pee? Do you let her off the rope to go around



Peter married Bini Delcol in June of 1959. This photograph of Peter, Bini and sons Roland and Rolfe was taken by Bruno Engler circa 1965.

the corner or do you keep her on the rope?" "Naturally," Peter answered, "you keep her on the rope and turn the other way." Perren was satisfied and Fuhrmann got his guide's pin. Peter would never forget that day.

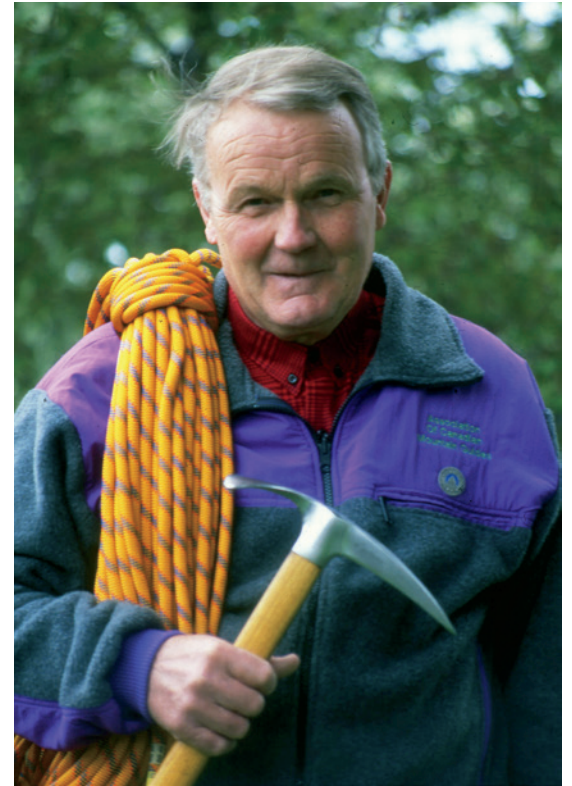
"I bought a bottle of Chianti," he remembers, "and went home and drank the whole damn thing. I celebrated."

There was good reason to celebrate. Having joined the Club that same year, Peter now qualified as a guide for the Alpine Club of Canada at its annual General Mountaineering Camps. He went on to guide regularly at these national camps which were held throughout the mountains of western Canada. In 1967 he guided at the Yukon Centennial Camp with Hans Gmoser and another guide with whom he shared a great number of adventures, the legendary Jasper mountain guide Hans Schwarz. The following year, Peter invited Hans to join him and client Hugh Considine on an attempt of 6,500-metre Huascarán in Peru.

Coloratura:

Fast Notes and Thrills

Hugh Considine was a well known Calgary lawyer and a very fine climber. In 1968, he and Peter Fuhrmann decided they would like to add a little adventure to their lives by going somewhere foreign to climb. They looked at a map of South America, and it was hard not to notice that the Andes, the longest range of mountains in the world, ran for 8,000 kilometres down the spine of the continent. The highest of these great mountains were in Peru; and the highest of these Peruvian mountains, at 6,768 metres was Huascarán. Once they looked at the mountain they decided it would be a good idea to take another guide with them.



Famous for his many ascents of Mount Robson, Hans Schwarz also became a prominent figure in the Association of Mountain Guides and at the end of his mountaineering career was honoured with the prestigious One Step Beyond Bill March Memorial Summit of Excellence Award.



MAY 16 1968
3 Canadians Lost on Peak
LIMA (CP) — Three Canadian climbers, two of them considered experts, were reported lost on a 22,200-foot Peruvian mountain Wednesday.
They are Hugh Considine, a Calgary lawyer, Peter Fuhrmann of Banff, Alta., and Hans Schwarz of Jasper, Alta.
Fuhrmann, president of the Association of Mountain Guides, and Schwarz are described in Alberta as expert climbers who have been working in the Rockies as guides.
The three men left Calgary for Peru May 2. Last Thursday they started up the Mount Huascarán to retrieve the body of Dominique Laprinca, a Frenchman buried in an icy grave for two years after he fell over a precipice.
They were due Monday at Raimondi Peak where guides were to meet them.

Newspaper stories emerged out of the incident on Huascarán declaring members of the party dead. Peter contacted the Canadian Ambassador in Lima just in time to prevent a costly attempt to rescue the bodies. Banff philanthropist Catharine Whyte had agreed to underwrite all costs related to the recovery of their bodies.

They knew no one more competent than Hans Schwarz and invited him. The trio decided to climb Huascarán despite the fact that it would essentially represent one of the earliest major Canadian mountaineering expeditions abroad. This was not an easy peak. This mountain had a reputation and many thought that Canadian climbers were not up to the challenge of making the ascent. The expedition made national news in Peru and in Canada when it was reported that Fuhrmann, Schwarz and Considine were lost on the mountain. Though they made the ascent of both summits of the peak, members of the team had problems on the descent and the climbers failed to return to base camp when scheduled. Bad weather followed and the climbers were reported as missing and then as dead. Hans Schwarz later published account of the incident in the *King of the Spiral Road*.

Expedicion Canadian a Los Andes Del Peru

by Hans Schwarz

One day a call came from Peter Fuhrmann asking if I would like to accompany him and a client of his, Hugh Considine from Calgary, on a trip to climb in Peru. After talking it over with Helen we decided that since my brother was in Peru working for Nestle's I could combine the climb with a visit to him and his family.

After eleven hours with the Princess of Buenos Aires of the Canadian Pacific Airlines, and a one-hour stop in Mexico City we arrived in Lima at 6 AM. We were cleared through customs without any trouble and spent the morning shopping. Hugh rented a car and shortly after 1 PM the long drive to Huaraz began. The first 100 km went by smoothly on the Pan American Highway, but the last 300 km we ended up on a rough, winding road reaching an elevation of 13,000 feet at the pass. Our descent down to Huaraz was slow, and at midnight we finally arrived at the Hotel Monteray, our accommodation for the night.

The next morning, for the first good look at the mountain, we drove to Yungay where we turned off the main road onto a narrow, winding, steep, modified donkey trail up through a deep, spectacular gorge with sheer walls on either side. What I remembered most was the enormous hanging glaciers on the North Face of Huascarán high above us. The road ended at a beautiful lake called Llanganuco where we left our car. We took our gear and went to explore the east side of the mountain where the first ascent had been made. We camped overnight at 15,000 feet in this area and inspected the glacier, which had melted back so much that it would have been dangerous to attempt this route. We then decided that we would have to climb it from the west side.

The next morning we returned to Yungay where we made arrangements to hire porters with donkeys to meet us at a village called Musho where we would start our climb... The next morning, the student porters finally arrived and we set off to establish our base camp on the moraine by Raimundi Glacier. After helping us set up camp, the porters left for Musho and we spent the evening getting ready for the climb.

The following day we started up the glacier toward the saddle where we had planned to set up our second camp. Unfortunately it was a long ascent and we ran out of daylight just below the Garganta. We were forced to camp in a very uncomfortable spot at 19,000 feet. The next day we reached the saddle, left our camping gear, and headed for the South Peak, at the summit the fog started to roll in and we were not able to get a good view. We had flagged our route and returned to the Garganta, where we put up our tent at our third camp at 19,500 feet and just below the North Peak.

The next day we woke up to a heavy snowfall so we spent

the day resting and waiting for it to clear. During the night because of the low pressure from the storm, we began to feel the altitude and had severe headaches, except Hugh Considine. The next morning we had good visibility and Hugh and Peter decided to climb the North Peak, which was just above us, while I chose to wait in camp.

When they returned to camp they were exhausted, but I had food prepared, which helped a bit. Now, since they had climbed the North Peak, the pressure was off and we decided that we had climbed the mountain enough, and that we had lost two days with the storm and would get short on food if we spent more days. The next morning we packed up our tent and headed down to our base camp, only to discover that the tents and equipment we had left there were gone.

At this time we didn't know what had happened, so although it was late afternoon, we decided to continue on down to the village where we had left our car and to see if we could locate our gear... Nobody seemed to be around, but as we went through the village we heard a lot of music coming from one of the larger buildings so we entered, and to our astonishment the villagers were having a fiesta, which we later learned was a wake for us. That was the first indication that all was not well, and that somehow the villagers, because of the snowfall, had decided we were lost on the mountain and presumed us dead. What could we do but have a drink with villagers who were so happy to see us alive?

Although we wanted to go on to the Hotel Monteray, we were told that we would have to spend the night in Yungay because the bridge was washed out from the storm. The next morning there was Klem, manager of the Hotel Monteray, who had come looking for us. He had with him a newspaper, which told us the whole story about the report to the papers that we were missing on the mountain because of the storm...

My brother also read something in a local paper and came looking for me... We had a great reunion. Relief for my brother and utter disbelief on our part as he elaborated on the stories in the paper. When we realized the seriousness of the false news, Peter immediately went on the one and only telephone line out of Lima, and spent a good part of the night trying to get the news out to Canada that we were all right. The Canadian Ambassador promised to have our families notified at once...

We really didn't realize the state of affairs in Canada until we arrived home and read all the newspaper clippings. The articles were really shocking as they were completely without foundation. For Canadian mountain climbers a little snowfall on a climb is not unusual, but for the Peruvian student porters it meant certain death.

Peter Fuhrmann's version of the ascent is different but it does confirm everything Schwarz reported about just how big an emergency this had become for the Government of Canada and for friends and family in the Banff area. Peter observed



In 1969, Peter Fuhrmann and Hugh Considine returned to South America where they made the seventh ascent of 5,947-metre Alpamayo in the Cordillera Blanca region of the Peruvian Andes.

that the trio climbed the mountain but were declared dead because they were slightly overdue. Peter explained that the people assisting the expedition were young students from Lima with limited mountaineering experience. The Canadian trio had, in fact, everything under control throughout the ascent and had even had a bet going—ten bottles of champagne—about when they would get off the glacier, which Hans Schwarz appears to have lost.

While they were working through the champagne at the Hotel Monterey in Huaraz, the manager showed them the articles in the Lima newspaper about their death, news of which had been picked up by Reuters in New York and then by the CBC in Canada. The manager of the hotel urged Peter and his friends to phone home as it was likely they had been presumed dead. Peter first phoned the Canadian Ambassador in Lima, got him out of bed and told him—after many bottles of champagne—that he was not dead, but clearly alive. The Ambassador replied that, even though it was the middle of the night, it was lucky he had called as he had two fully equipped helicopters being readied to affect a rescue the following morning. When Peter asked who was paying for the machines, the Ambassador answered that he had in his hands a blank cheque from a woman named Catharine Whyte in Banff who promised to pay whatever it took to find the missing Canadian climbers. Philanthropist Catharine Whyte was the founder of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

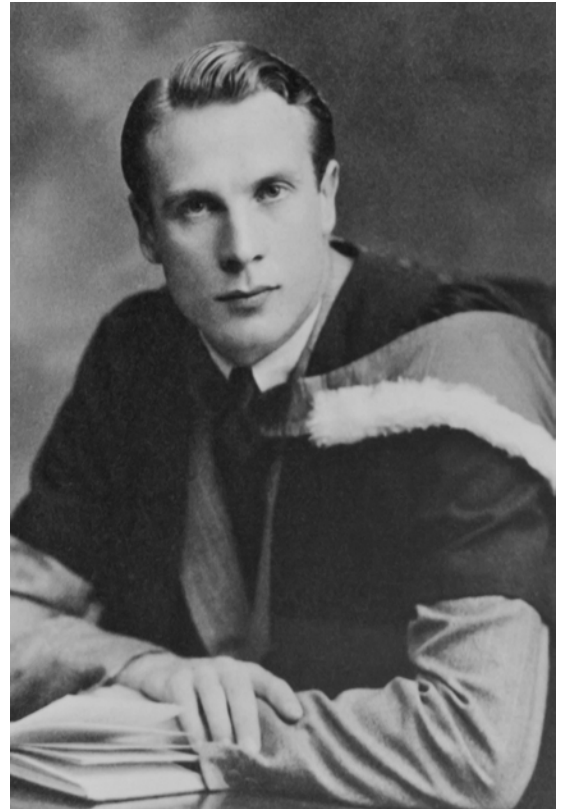
As he knew that the CBC had already phoned his mother in Germany to ask if she wanted his body returned to Europe—if it was found, Peter phoned his mother and then his wife in Canada to tell them he was alive. He later phoned Don Coombs, then Director General of Parks Canada, who had by that time, started a competition for Walter Perren's job. He told Coombs he was still very much alive, and would be coming back and would like to compete for this job.

Fortissimo:

Hugh Considine

Peter Fuhrmann remembers that Hugh Considine was an absolutely incredible client.

"We were 500 feet below the Garganta, which is at 19,000 feet. We were sitting on a little shelf, which Hans Schwarz has hacked out of ice and in the process broke my ice axe. I had finally managed in total darkness to cook a dehydrated hamburger, put it into a bun, put mayonnaise or something on it and gave it to Hugh. He bit in it and he said, 'This is disgusting!' He then flung it 3,000 feet down into the glacier. Instead we ate dehydrated strawberries and some soup for the rest of the night and the next day we went up to the Garganta. But we had pushed ourselves hard. The book says you shouldn't go more than two, two and a half thousand feet a day, but we had gone from seven to nineteen thousand feet in three days. Hans Schwarz and I both had bad headaches, but not Hugh. My headache was so bad that I crushed two Demerols and three 292s into a bit of sherry and drank it. But it didn't do anything. The headache was still there. Considine wasn't bothered in the least. Hugh walked around in front of the tent saying, 'when do we climb?' Not affected by headache, not affected by altitude, absolutely nothing. So that was the Considine situation. He was such an enormously good client. The only problem was after that hamburger he decided he would only eat crabmeat and drink Chablis on any further climbs we did. And that's how we climbed Alpamayo, the following year."



Presto:

The Pieces Fall Together

Peter arrived back in Canada from Peru just in time to apply for the alpine specialist position that came into existence in the vacuum created by Walter Perren's death. Peter remembers the interview clearly. He walked into the interview room and found Don Coombs waiting for him along with Chief Warden Bert Pittoway and the regional head of the National Parks Service personnel department. The first question they asked was whether he could tell the difference between a horizontal, a vertical and a ring piton. Peter remembers looking at Bert Pittoway and saying, "you know, if you want that sort of information you should hire somebody from a sport shop because I look at this job totally differently. What I'm envisioning is, being European and having come to Canada and knowing the European scene, and the Canadian scene, we will end up here with planeloads of European mountaineering tourists. And they'll be all over the Rockies. And it's so different, the rivers, the forest, the rock, the faces; everything. You will have nothing but problems and rescues galore, and what you really need is a rescue organization up to international standards, to look after these people, and I see my job as creating an organization of that quality for you." They then asked Peter how he would do that. Peter went on to tell them everything he had in his mind from avalanche control to rescue.

"We had a very, very interesting one-hour discussion, and out of the sixteen who applied for the job, I got it. So here I was, Alpine Specialist for the Western Region of Canada."

Fuhrmann was appointed Regional Alpine Specialist with responsibilities in Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks in July of 1968. Willi Pfisterer of Jasper assumed similar duties in Jasper, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier and Waterton Parks. Later Peter would also become responsible for rescue training in Cape Breton Highlands in Nova Scotia, Gros Morne in Newfoundland and Auyuittuq and Ellesmere Island in Nunavut and Pacific



Peter Fuhrmann shows signs of some of the stress associated with early mountaineering and rescue training schools offered to Park Wardens circa 1969.

Rim and Gwaii Haanas in British Columbia. Meanwhile, Willi Pfisterer became responsible for the development of similar programming in Kluane and Nahanni in the north.

Peter had been correct in predicting a rapid increase in the number of mountain rescues that would be taking place in the Rockies. While there were only three to date that year at the time he was hired in 1968, things quickly began to heat up. There were some 50 rescues in 1969 and more than 150 in 1970. By this time, Bill Vroom, John Wackerle, Jay Morton and other wardens already trained by Walter Perren were becoming very good at their jobs. The problem, however, that there weren't enough well-trained wardens and mountain rescues remained a demanding, dangerous and time-consuming proposition.

It was during this period of intense activity that Peter saw a picture in a magazine—which Bruno handed over the fence—published by the German mountain rescue organization of a man hanging underneath a helicopter. Peter was excited by the idea of this new rescue technique. While Parks Canada had lots of experience delivering rescue teams and equipment to accident sites by horse, it had never attempted to deliver rescuers directly to accident sites by a long line slung underneath a helicopter.

In 1971, Peter visited Germany where

he personally met the genius behind mountain rescue innovation in Europe, Ludwig Gramminger. Gramminger and Fuhrmann became fast friends. Later that year, Gramminger spent six weeks in Canada examining everything Canadians were doing in terms of mountain rescue. After Gramminger left, Fuhrmann called mountain rescue pilot Jim Davies, to share what he had learned. They met to examine the rescue seat, diagrams and photographs Fuhrmann had brought back from Europe. They talked about what Gramminger had observed in Canada. Slings a man underneath a helicopter was risky business but Davies was confident he could do it. Banff wardens, however, were justifiably sceptical. It didn't take them long to visualize the kinds of things that could go wrong while you were roaring down a mountain valley hanging from a hundred-foot line underneath a helicopter.

In order to convince them of the utility of this new concept, Fuhrmann had Davies lift him three metres off the ground and put him down again. He then flew Fuhrmann around the Warden compound and the Banff airport. Davies then put Fuhrmann down on a narrow ledge on Cascade Mountain. Fuhrmann unhooked and the helicopter flew away to return a few minutes later to pick Fuhrmann up and drop him back at the airport. The wardens were impressed. Suddenly everybody wanted to fly.

Jay Morton hooked up under the helicopter and they took off toward Banff. Morton asked Davies to fly him down Banff Avenue, which he did. The story goes that Park Superintendent Steve Kun was in his office with a group of senior officials when one looked up and exclaimed to the others, "Look, there's one of your wardens flying through the air, coming toward us." Kun was not amused.

Shortly after, Peter and Willi Pfisterer demonstrated the technique to the wardens in Jasper. The entire mountain parks rescue organization was suddenly supportive of

the potential of this new technology to shorten the time it took to reach and evacuate stranded or injured climbers.

On the way back from Jasper, Peter found himself at the site of a difficult rescue that was taking place above Pinto Lake. A hiker had fallen nearly 200 metres down a chute and was badly injured. A rescue team was trying to keep him alive while a helipad was being constructed so that the man could be pulled off the mountain. The warden in charge, Wally McPhee, was doubtful if there was enough daylight to affect a rescue and was fearful that the climber would die if forced to spend the night on the mountain. Peter had all the helicopter sling equipment he needed with him and was able to convince a reluctant helicopter pilot that a new kind of rescue might be in order if the life of the injured climber was to be saved. Though far from perfected, Peter affected the first ever survival rescue with the helicopter sling technique in Canada.



Dealing with tragedy on and off work. Peter married his second wife, Beverly Robinson in June of 1973. They had a daughter whom they named Diana, pictured here in Larch Valley in 1975. Diana died at the age of 19 of leukemia.

Three weeks later, Peter and Jim Davies used the sling technique to rescue a soldier badly injured during climbing training on Mount Edith near Banff. But it was not without risk. Here is how Peter Fuhrmann described the details of this thrilling rescue:

“So, Jim and I hook up and we fly in. He landed me, very nicely, at the spot where they’re all surrounding this guy who’s lying on the ground. So I said to Jim, bring in the rescue mine basket—we only had a rescue mine basket then. Okay, so he come back and gives me the mine basket, everything was fine. We put the guy into the mine basket, and I looked at Jim—they hadn’t even bandaged him, anything, he had a big hole in the head, skull fracture. And I thought, well, I’ll just put a triangular over it so the dust doesn’t get in the brain, you know, to avoid brain damage. So anyway, all of this works quite well.

And then Jim comes on the radio and he says, well, you know, the bad news is I can’t lift the two of you off together. And if he lifts only the stretcher, the stretcher will begin to rotate. So you have to have somebody on who sticks his feet out to act as a tail, you know, a fan. So I said, look, what we’ll do is, just cruise around awhile and I’ll talk to these guys here. So I told these guys, when Jim comes in, and he brings the line down, I will attach it to the main carabiner on the stretcher, and I’ll hook myself on, but you guys all have the stretcher above your heads, with the injured man in it. And then on the count of three, coordinated with Jim and the machine, you fire the stretcher out into space and I jump. That’s what we did. Down the valley we go. Did we ever go down! And finally he got enough forward speed and everything, and we started to go towards Banff. So, then Jim comes on the radio and says to me, “Where do you want me to land?” I said in the hospital yard—the old hospital—right across from the Park Administration building. We land there, the machine came in, and believe it or not, they have a stretcher with white sheets—I’ll never forget this—out in front. Bruno Engler took a picture of us coming in. We set our stretcher, the rescue mine basket, right on top of theirs. The nurses took it straight in to Emergency. Steve Kun was standing at the wrought iron gate across the street, watching. He never said a word.”

Pilot Jim Davies lands Peter Fuhrmann and rescued soldier in the parking lot of the old Mineral Springs Hospital. Photo by Bruno Engler.



With Jim Davies at the controls, the first lift-off in the history of helicopter mountain rescue is accomplished near Banff in 1974.

Doctors later reported in letters to the park that the injured climber would have died had he not been rescued quickly by that particular method. Helicopter sling rescue was suddenly in.

Up until the perfection of the helicopter sling method, mountain rescue could be a hit-or-miss proposition depending upon where the accident happened. Emergency calls usually came late in the day. It was often hard to reach remote areas in time to

save victims. Wardens usually rode horses as far as they could and carried stretchers by hand. Often it was difficult to locate victims in the dark. Rescue parties would be forced to bivouac and frequently would not find the stranded or injured party until the following morning. Once located, the victim was put in the stretcher and hauled out. It often took a full day of pounding down hillsides to get to the trailhead and help. Wardens held the hands of many who died. Suddenly, with the helicopter, it was possible to save people quickly and fewer victims died in the arms of helpless wardens.

In 1974, Peter Fuhrmann and Willi Pfisterer went to a major world forum conducted by the International Commission of Alpine Rescue held in Czechoslovakia, which was attended by 16 nations. Ludwig Gramminger also invited them to witness a helicopter sling rescue demonstration on Eiger's North Face. Demonstrations were undertaken in numerous helicopter models and a mind-boggling range of new rescue equipment was displayed. Fuhrmann and Pfisterer discussed equipment and technique innovations with French, Italian and German helicopter pilots and rescue crews. They came back with dozens of new ideas, the first of which was to persuade Canada to join the International Commission of Alpine Rescue, which they accomplished later that year. By doing so, the Canadian National Parks System was able to keep up with continual advances in mountain rescue equipment, techniques and procedures.

It was also at this time that an ambitious new generation of Park Wardens began to excel in avalanche awareness and forecasting, mountaineering and mountain rescue. A few bright lights, including Trafford Taylor, Bruce McKinnon and Billy Moffat, didn't stay with the National Parks Service. Most, however, did. This elite group includes some of the best-known experts in mountain rescue in Canada today. Tim Auger, Claire Israelson, Gerry Israelson, Brad White, Gord Irwin and



In 1979, Peter Fuhrmann (left), Charlie Clarke (centre), Ratau Singh (right), Bruce McKinnon (photographer) and Dilsher Sing Virk made the very first ascent of any Canadian team ever in the Himalayas. They climbed 20,200 feet Swargarohini Peak in northern India. Peter later did another Himalayan first ascent, of Srikanta Peak with Claire Israelson and Skippio Merler.

Marc Ledwidge became part of the rescue program in the early 1970s. Compared to the earlier generation of rescue pioneers, they were bombarded with training. Besides basic mountaineering, ski mountaineering, glacier travel and basic and advanced rescue training, newly hired wardens were also expected to become fully qualified Emergency Medical Technicians. It then became a virtual requirement for rescue leaders to become fully accredited mountain guides.

Crack Parks Canada rescue teams were assembled; Peter Fuhrmann with Park Wardens Tim Auger, Trafford Taylor, Clair Israelson, Cliff White and Jim Murphy.





A cable rescue on Mount Yamnuska in 1975 during which a winch was anchored to the skid of Jim Davies' helicopter. Wiggerl Gramminger participated.

In 1982, Peter Fuhrmann hosted the first ever meeting of the International Commission of Alpine Rescue to be held in Canada. Peter offers that until the Banff conference, most European rescue experts thought that Canadians walked around

with an axe and saw, and lived in the bush. Suddenly they saw that Canadians had a huge advantage over most nations in that the warden service, being uniformed and possessing law enforcement powers, could do within their own organization what it often took many agencies working together to do in other countries. In France, for example, ground rescues were undertaken by the French Alpine Club but they had to hire the Gendarmerie to fly them. In Germany, the Bergwacht conducted rescues but they had to rely on the army if they needed helicopter support. As helicopter support was contracted directly by the rescue agency, all the rescue team in Banff had to do was call Lance Cooper in Canmore, detail the rescue location and he'd pick the wardens up on the way to the accident site. The Canadian system meant quicker response time and more lives saved.

When Peter Fuhrmann retired in 1991, he felt his greatest achievement was to have followed in Walter Perren's footsteps in advancing the best equipment, most appropriate technology and the highest possible level of rescue expertise in the national park warden service. Those who followed in his footsteps would stay on this same path. But while Peter may have viewed following in Walter Perren's footsteps as his greatest achievement, it was by no means his only one. He also went on to help found the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.



Because of the training required and skills demanded of Parks Canada rescue teams, training schools were often held in very difficult conditions. Wardens often joked about the difficulties and the challenges, but never failed to do their best on each course.

Aria Alpina:

Words Become Song

Until Walter Perren was hired by Parks Canada to develop a Canadian licensing system for guides, licenses to guide in the mountain national parks were issued on the basis of a one-page questionnaire. Perren immediately expanded the requirement to include a four-day comprehensive exam, consisting of one day of rock climbing, a two-day mixed climb, and a day of oral and written examinations. The first candidates to pass this examination were Bruno Engler and Hans Gmoser.

In 1957, Dave Brewer, Ken Baker, Frank Stark, Leo Grillmair and Heinz Kahl took the examination. Throughout 1958, Perren was too busy with other work to conduct the exams, and requested that applicants seek a letter of recommendation from Hans Gmoser as the basis upon which their application would be approved. In discussion with Hans Gmoser, Heinz Kahl, Willi Pfisterer and Peter Fuhrmann, Perren proposed the creation of a mountain guides' association which, under the combined auspices of the Alpine Club of Canada and Parks Canada, would formally undertake responsibilities for guide training and certification. The Association of Canadian Mountain Guides was formally created on May 23, 1963. The founding members were Hans Gmoser, Eric Lomas, Brian Greenwood, Willi Pfisterer, Dick Lofthouse, Leo Grillmair, Heinz Kahl, Hans Schwarz and Peter Fuhrmann. It wasn't long before the impetus for the high standards demanded of members of the association went far beyond the borders of Canada's western mountain national parks. Guiding as a full-time profession in Canada was made possible by Hans Gmoser who virtually invented heli-skiing by creating the now legendary Canadian Mountain Holidays based from Banff. The profession was also very significantly advanced by Rudi Gertsch who played a central role in the acceptance of the organization by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations.

In 1963, Peter Fuhrmann became the first President of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. That year Hans Schwarz was elected Vice-President. It was not an easy position in which to serve. Many candidates

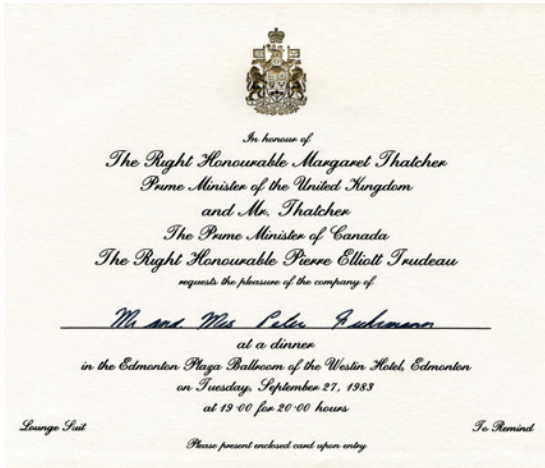
for guiding licenses seriously underestimated the standards for obtaining a ACMG guide certificate. High initial failure rates stimulated heated debate about the applicability of European standards to Canadian climbing. As a result of this debate, a more rigorous program that included apprenticeship and assistant guides' accreditation and a code of guiding ethics was introduced in 1968. Peter's persistence paid off. In 1972, the ACMG was welcomed into the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations. Canadian mountain guides were now among the worldwide elite.



Peter Fuhrmann in Mexico in March 1976; Peter learned to speak Spanish during his 32 visits.



ACMG guides' examinations remain very rigorous. Mark Kingbury is taking this exam; Peter Fuhrmann is next to him in the red gaiters, beside Rudi Gertsch in the white hat.



The Prime Minister remembered Peter and invited him to important state functions. Pierre Trudeau also helped Peter with direct support for advancements in mountain rescue techniques, training and programs.

Success rates in ACMG courses have since risen and more Canadian-born guides than ever are employed in Canadian mountains where they guide hikers, rock-climbers, ice-climbers, mountaineers, ski-tourers and heli-skiers from all over the globe. With ACMG accreditation, Canadian mountain guides are qualified to guide anywhere and are in high demand elsewhere in the world.

Today the ACMG currently boasts a membership of more than 850, of which more than a quarter are fully accredited combined summer and winter mountain guides. The association maintains its historical ties to Parks Canada and the Alpine Club of Canada, but mountain guiding is now an industry in its own right centred within the Mountain Parks and in surrounding snow cat and heli-skiing operations. After helping create and then guide the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides toward world-class standards, Peter went on to rescue the Alpine Club of Canada.



In 1982, the Prime Minister of Canada went climbing with some of the Park Wardens he employed in the western mountain National Parks. Left to right: Willi Pfisterer, Prime Minister Trudeau; an unidentified RCMP officer, Peter Fuhrmann, Marv Miller, John Steele, Darro Stinson and Gabi Fortin.

Crescendo:

A Terrifying Story of a Double Death Defying Experience

As any mountain guide will emphatically tell you, the conditions on high mountains can be highly unpredictable. In the early 1960s, Hans Gmoser and Peter Fuhrmann offered guided trips over the Wapta, Freshfield and Columbia icefields. Well known Calgary businessman Jim Gray was a member of a 1963 party that aspired to make a spring ascent of Mount Columbia, the tallest of the icefield giants.

The party set out from the toe of the Athabasca Glacier, climbed the headwall and proceeded to the big trench below Mount Columbia. At the foot of the mountain they built an igloo for ten people. The next morning they proceeded up Mount Columbia on skis. When the weather turned, the guides decided to return to camp for lunch. After lunch the skies cleared and the party skied two-thirds of the way up the left shoulder of the mountain, cached their skis and climbed to the summit. Peter remembers that Hans Gmoser did not rope his party. Hans was ahead and reached the summit first. He then crawled out on to the summit cornice and tapped the end of it with the shaft of his ice axe. There was a puff sound as the cornice collapsed. Hans leapt into the air and then went down with the cornice. Peter was sure Hans was gone. He went up to the summit with his party and unroped from the two climbers he was leading. He asked Jim Gray and others to give him a belay so that he could go to the brink of the cornice and look down to find out if Hans could be seen. Astoundingly, there was a ledge about ten metres below and Hans was lying on it in an arrest position with his ice axe. Amazingly the ledge followed back toward the summit ridge Peter and his party had just climbed and actually became wider as it did so.

Peter offered to hang a rope down but Hans did not want it. Instead he followed the ledge back to the ridge on his own. The rest of the party was in shock and soon began climbing back down the mountain. After reaching their skis they began to ski down very steep



Jim Gray and Peter Fuhrmann, both 80 years old.

terrain. A member of the party, Wilf Twecker, accidentally crossed his skis and started to bounce in 20-metre intervals down the slope. Peter yelled to Hans to try to stop him. Hans tried, but in the end had to move out of Twecker's way. Wilf flew by, and by some miracle ended up upside down with the tails of his skis stuck in the snow which prevented him from dying in the icefall below.

When they arrived at the igloo everyone went inside except for Peter who remained outside cleaning his skis. Suddenly Peter heard unbelievable screaming. He rushed in to find Hans standing in the middle of the igloo on fire. A gas stove had blown up and covered him with burning gas. Peter instantly threw Hans to the floor of the igloo and rolled with him to put the fire out. Meanwhile Jim Gray and the others had started pouring tea and orange juice over them.

After dinner that evening, a council was held during which it was decided that the party would not go back down the Athabasca Glacier because with the luck they were having someone would likely fall into a crevasse. They decided to descend by way of

the gentler Saskatchewan Glacier and to do so nicely roped up. The next day they made their way carefully down the Saskatchewan Glacier to an old hut that had been built by the U.S. during the Second World War to test the performance of tracked vehicles on the Columbia Icefield. Peter had barely fallen asleep when he heard another horrendous

scream. It was Hans having a nightmare.

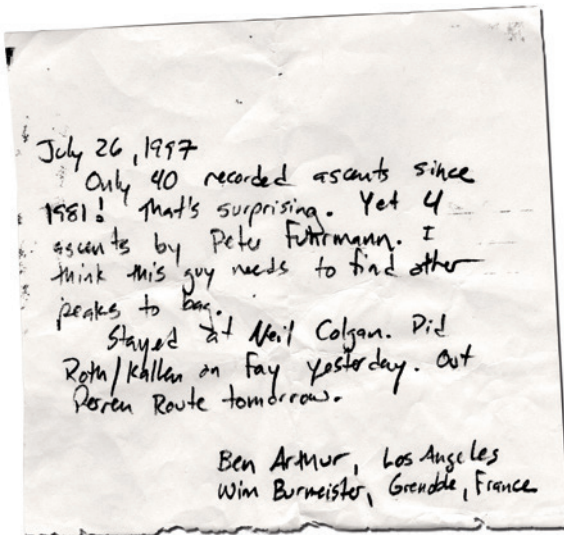
Peter believes that luck sometimes plays a big role in mountaineering. His friend Jim Gray agrees. You are lucky or you are not. Peter maintains that Will Twecker had trouble speaking without stuttering from that trip forward, but he was lucky. And so was Hans Gmoser.

The story of the Alpine Club of Canada has been well and widely told, but the ACC is such an important and historic Canadian institution, and Peter Fuhrmann played such a critical role in saving it, that parts of the story bear repeating. Once again, the story goes back to the Canadian Pacific Railway and its decision to bring Swiss mountain guides to its hotel properties at Rogers Pass, Field, Lake Louise and Banff following the death of Boston climber Philip Stanley Abbot in August of 1896. Peter Fuhrmann continues to be a living link between that period and the present.

One of the first Canadians to be exposed to the burgeoning Canadian alpine aesthetic inspired by the Swiss guides was a young surveyor named Arthur Oliver Wheeler, who established an early reputation for cartographic genius with a survey of the Rogers Pass area in British Columbia beginning in 1901. Wheeler became a tireless champion of a uniquely Canadian sense of the alpine. But despite the fact that Canada was a world centre for mountaineering by the turn of the twentieth century, Arthur Wheeler found it very difficult to create interest in an alpine association in this country. Though many clubs all over the world had been formed in the tradition of *The Alpine Club* created in England in 1857, Canadians didn't seem interested in forming an organization of their own.

After several attempts at creating a Canadian organization, Wheeler was ready to accept Charles Fay's offer to establish a wing of the American Alpine Club (AAC) in Canada, but only as a last resort. He refused to give up until he had explored every avenue of possible Canadian interest. For three years after the AAC offer, he wrote letters to major Canadian newspapers trying to garner support for a wholly Canadian organization. Ultimately it was a letter from Wheeler to the *Winnipeg Free Press* that hit the nationalistic nerve and brought the notion of a Canadian Alpine Club to life. That letter prompted an article in the paper by a staff writer, who claimed that it was downright un-Canadian to subject local mountaineers to the dictates of a foreign alpine institution. The article went on to give Wheeler a tongue-lashing for his lack of patriotism and imperialistic zeal. The author of that article was Elizabeth Parker.

Parker famously lambasted Wheeler's idea of affiliation with an American club, which prompted the astute Wheeler to ask for press



July 26, 1997
Only 40 recorded ascents since
1981! That's surprising. Yet 4
ascents by Peter Fuhrmann. I
think this guy needs to find other
peaks to bag.
Stayed at Neil Colgan. Did
Roth/Kallan on Fay yesterday. Out
Perren Route tomorrow.

Ben Armour, Los Angeles
Wim Burmeister, Grenoble, France

This note left in the summit register on Mount Allen near Lake Louise gives an indication of just how much climbing Peter Fuhrmann managed to do even while responsible for many important functions in his own work and in volunteer efforts to help others.

space and editorial support to promote a separate Canadian alpine organization. Supported by the newspaper, Parker then set out on a tireless campaign of articles about the club and its objectives. She organized the club's founding meeting in Winnipeg in March of 1906 at which Wheeler was elected president and she became the organization's first secretary. At last a Canadian mountaineering organization existed to incorporate an appreciation of mountains into the evolving culture of this huge new land.

While the North American mountaineering community remained obsessed with the first ascents of unnamed peaks throughout the west, Arthur Wheeler was already well into the planning stages of a much larger project. It was the ambition of the Dominion Land Survey to map the entire Alberta-British Columbia boundary from the 49th parallel northward to the 60th degree of latitude at the southern boundary of the Northwest Territories. The Boundary Survey, as it was called, was the most ambitious program of mountain exploration ever undertaken in this country.

Between 1916 and 1924, the survey mapped the spine of the Great Divide from Akamina Pass at the American border to where the Rockies came to their geological end more than a thousand kilometres to the north. During the survey, hundreds of mountains were climbed and thousands more described and placed on maps. These maps remain the foundation of what we know about our mountains today. The next step after the creation of accurate and reliable maps would be the consideration of refuges in popular places to ensure the safety of climbers and a growing number of hikers attracted to the glories of the western mountains.

The first such refuge had already been built by Swiss guides in the employ of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Abbot Hut is located on a narrow col above Lake Louise just beneath the brooding face of Mount Lefroy off which Philip Abbot fell to his



Peter Fuhrmann is widely regarded as one of the architects of a newly revived and highly successful Alpine Club of Canada. In this photograph he is working to help rebuild the trail from Lake Oesa in Yoho National Park to Abbot Hut.

death in 1896. Abbot Hut was the first of such high altitude refuges but soon there were many others. After Canadian Pacific Hotels terminated its mountain guiding program in 1954, it eventually became the responsibility of what was then the National Parks Service. For fifty years, until the Alpine Club of Canada built Neil Colgan Hut above Moraine Lake in 1983, Abbot Hut had the distinction of being the highest permanent building in Canada. All of the refuges in the western mountain national parks except Abbot Hut were built by the Alpine Club of Canada. In recognition of the Club's reputation for maintaining and operating alpine huts, Peter arranged with Parks Canada to have Abbot Hut turned over to the Alpine Club of Canada in 1985, the year of Canada's national parks centennial. The Club's maintenance experts and volunteers eventually restored the building to its original simple elegance. But even before the restoration of Abbot Hut, Peter noticed that the Alpine Club of Canada was entering a period of great organizational difficulty. He was afraid the Club would fail. Peter did not want that to happen.

In 1983, Peter agreed to run for election to the position of Central Vice President. At a meeting in Ottawa, ACC President Ted Whalley recommended that the national club be dissolved and that the region sections form a federation of Canadian mountain clubs. Whalley noted the ACC's annual

General Mountaineering Camp was operating at a loss, the clubhouse in Banff was in deficit and there was serious doubt as to whether the Club had enough money to publish its annual *Canadian Alpine Journal*, the longest running publication of its kind in Canada. At that meeting Kevin O'Connell was nominated as President but before the election could be held O'Connell and three companions went to Peru to climb Huascaran and were killed in an icefall. In 1984, Peter Fuhrmann found himself at the helm of a nearly insolvent Alpine Club of Canada. Peter's first act was to go to the bank to get

enough money to pay debts. He then hired Dick Latta as manager of the Club and put Vicky Lockwood in charge of finances. He made Dan and Val Verral responsible for the office at the clubhouse. Eric and Dorle Lomas, Jim and Patsy Murphy and others volunteered to give the clubhouse a badly needed facelift. John Sykes provided a bobcat to improve the state of the road leading to the clubhouse and Richard and Louise Guy wrote letters to the much diminished membership encouraging them to help revive the annual General Mountaineering Camp. Soon these camps began turning a profit.



Peter Fuhrmann was the chair of the board of the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital for 17 years. His greatest achievement in that role was to orchestrate the building of a new hospital in Banff—one that had a helicopter pad compatible with all current mountain rescue techniques.

Next Peter focused attention on the Club's constitution and by-laws. Lawyer Dave Vallance provided new by-laws. The board was expanded to include the chairs of all of the regional sections. While some members of the executive remained opposed to keeping the Club's huts, arguing that ACC was not in the accommodation business, Peter thought otherwise. His experience with the National Park System suggested to him that if the Club didn't keep the huts Parks Canada would get rid of them. To make sure that didn't happen, the ACC took Parks Canada up on its offer to take over the management of Abbot Hut. Then Peter signed a deed for land at Lake Louise and committed the Club to being the key partner in the development of the Lake Louise Alpine Centre. Peter went out and found the money to build it. He then connected the Alpine Club of Canada to the Banff Mountain Film Festival and built Canada's first climbing wall as a means of attracting young people to the sport. After two years of turmoil the Club—to Peter's amazement—re-elected him President. He served four years in that capacity which Peter claims were among the most exciting and satisfying of his life.

Out of the recovery of the Alpine Club of Canada has arisen a most remarkable backcountry hut and lodge tradition. In his recent guidebook to huts and lodges in the Rockies and Columbia Mountains, Jim Scott lists 124 different places where hikers, skiers and mountaineers can find often quite comfortable shelter in the mountainous backcountry of the Canadian west. Many of the choicest of these huts are operated by the Alpine Club of Canada both inside and outside Canada's national and provincial park system.

But Peter Fuhrmann did not just serve the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides and the Alpine Club of Canada. After being introduced to medical professionals at the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital as a result of the development of the national parks sling rescue program, Peter decided to join the board of the hospital.

Bravo:

Vita Con Bravura

Not surprisingly, Peter Fuhrmann was recognized with many awards during his life. He won the Royal Canadian Mounted Police training award in 1980; an award from the International Commission for Alpine Rescue which was presented to him in Switzerland in 1982. He was made an Honorary Member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides in 1986. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney recognized his 36 years of service to the National Parks System in 1991 and that year he was also honoured as the Patron of the annual Mountain Guides Ball. He was made an Honorary Member of the Alpine Club of Canada in 1998. The following year the ACC made him an Honorary President. The same year he was recognized widely for his contribution to the construction of the Lake Louise Alpine Centre.

Perhaps Peter's greatest honour, however, was receiving the One Step Beyond Bill March Memorial Summit of Excellence Award in 2010. This award is presented annually to a person past recipients hold to have done the most to honour mountain experience in the Canadian Rockies. Recipients are permitted only two minutes to speak, which is precious little time considering the accomplishments of people of this calibre. His speech was vintage Peter Fuhrmann in that he used it to acknowledge and thank his friends; to provide philosophical insight and guidance for future generations; to comment on the mountain world and the state of the planet as a whole; and his great love of opera, jazz and art. Because he did all of this with humour and grace in only two minutes, his speech is provided in full.

"Well, let me tell you, if it had not been for the perseverance and determination of Eric Lomas, my colleagues from the Warden Service and my dear friends at the Alpine Club of Canada, I would not be standing here today. I thank those who nominated me and the members of the board who selected me to receive this award. One friend I would like to mention specifically is Jim Davies. Jim and I developed the helicopter sling rescue system for Canada. More than a hundred lives were saved. A great accomplishment. But if you have to hang under a helicopter to do this, you better make sure whoever flies that bird is your friend not your enemy. Thank you Jim.

So now we have Bob Sandford. At dinner the other night he presented me with his book, Ecology and Wonder. It's not just a book with pages glued together. It is a philosophical statement of our existence. The west we had, the west we have now. Making the mountains our home. Imagine the east slopes flowing toward the Atlantic; the north slopes flowing toward the Arctic; the west slopes flowing towards the Pacific. But since 1955, many of the glaciers I climbed on are gone. The Plain of Six Glaciers may now be the Plain of Two. Whoever does not believe in global warming—that's your privilege. Bob's book aims to create a culture worthy of place.

Over tea, my dear friends Jim and Josie Gray stated that some of us live beyond their means. A neighbour recently renovated his house. Two people have 4 ½ bathrooms. Obviously a bladder problem. In 1958 in Harvie Heights where I live, you could buy a lot for \$175. Last year one sold for \$875,000. Is there still any perspective; and is there still a little room for philosophy, Homer, Voltaire, Descartes, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer? In music is there still room for Mozart, Penderiki Hindemith, Stavinsky, Charlie Mingus, John Coltrane or a bit of time for art: Salvadore Dali, Picasso, Gioacometti and

Henry Moore. Or it is all about 6.7 litre trucks?

But enough of this. How did I get into this passion of professional mountaineering? In 1961, I got a phone call from Lake O'Hara saying there was a lady there who wished to give her husband a birthday present of an ascent of Mount Hungabee. In I went, slept in the shed—a special privilege for guides—and met my client in the morning. Let's go—well your suit? "You don't like it? The Oxfords. They have Vibram soles. I have just returned from Switzerland having climbed the Matterhorn. A rope was not really necessary." He climbed right at my heels. At the summit a handshake for lunch, crab meat and Chablis and down for dinner. Over dinner; "Can I hire you for another climb?" "Certainly, but where" "I don't know, somewhere in South America, I think in Peru." I finally found out he was fishing in Yanganuco and the mountain behind the lake was

Nevado Huascarán. Beautiful climb. The South Peak; the North Peak; back a little late. Already declared dead, but the wake was great. Pisco beer and champagne. What followed was Robson, and 50 more peaks with Hugh Considine, my dear friend.

I made two first ascents in the Himalayas, climbed in Ecuador. Illiniza South and North, Chimberazo, Via verratas in Italy, the volcanoes of Mexico where I played on the beaches; and also made many climbs in my beloved Rockies.

Way back in my youth, my mother said to me that in mythology Goethes' Faust never forgot. THE GODS, THE ALMIGHTY ONES, GIVE THEIR FAVORITES EVERYTHING IN FULL. THE PLEASURES: THE INCREDIBLE ONES; AND THE PAINS THE HORRIBLE ONES. I close with an affirmation from Jack Lemmon. "If you don't do it with passion, it's not worth doing."



Peter married former Olympian and renowned Czech documentary film archivist Verá Matrasova on November 10, 2005. Verá passed away three years later.

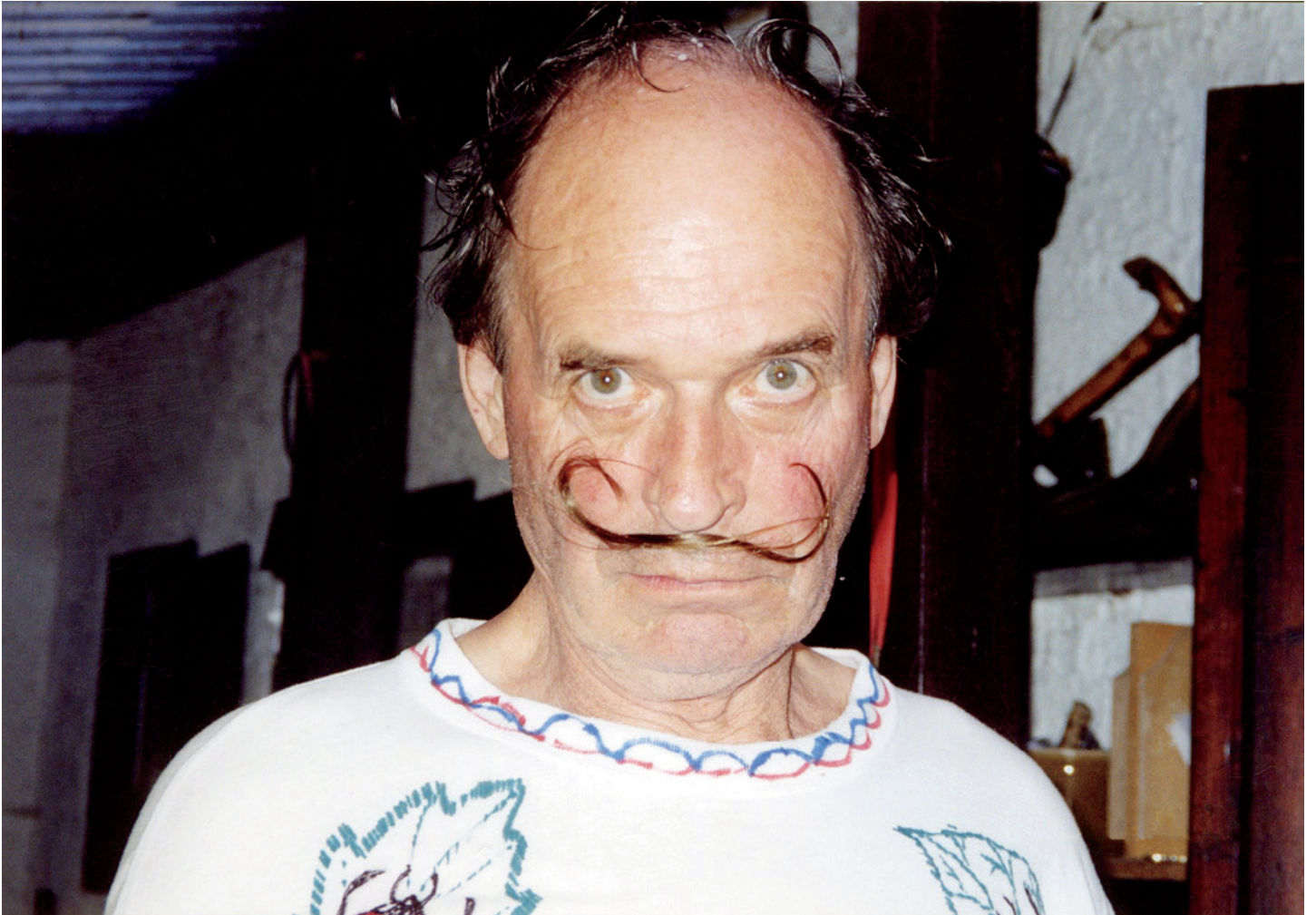
Curtain Call:

Peter Fuhrmann & Doris Forrest

The sharing of unforgettable mountaineering experiences often makes people lifelong friends. Peter first climbed with Doris Traulsen in 1964, while offering private introductory training on the Rundle Rocks just outside of Banff. Though both went on to live full and exciting lives in their own right, they kept in touch and climbed many peaks together, including the Eisenhower Tower. They rediscovered each other after their spouses were deceased. On April 27, 2013, forty-nine years after they first climbed together, Peter and Doris were married by Justice of the Peace and former National Park Warden and rescue leader Rick Kunelius. Most fittingly, the ceremony took place in the combined presence of their families, in exactly the place where their relationship had begun: at the Rundle Rocks outside Banff.



From left, marriage commissioner Rick Kunelius, Peter's sons Roland and Rolfe Fuhrmann, Peter, Doris, Doris' daughter Phoebe O'Leary, Tanya Frazer and Doris' son Paul Coyne.

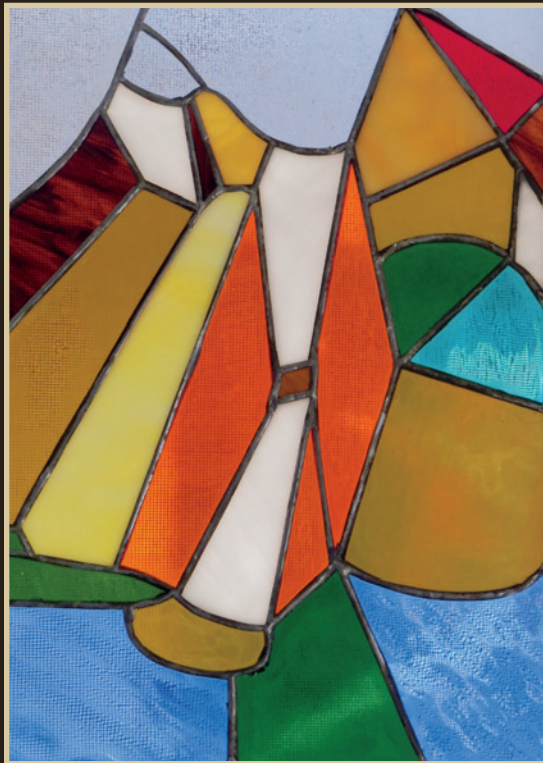


Inspired by the great mountaineers, musicians and artists of Europe, Peter Fuhrmann is not a man to be trifled with, on a mountain, in a board room or at a party.

Con Bravura

The Remarkable Mountaineering Life of

Peter Fuhrmann



Peter Fuhrmann's artistic talents are clearly demonstrated in his remarkable stained glass representations of high altitudes places in Canada's western mountains. Peter annually donated at least one of these works to the Mountain Guides Ball to raise money to support the work of two organizations he influenced greatly while serving as President; the Alpine Club of Canada and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.

For further information regarding the Summit Series of mountaineering biographies, please contact the National Office of the Alpine Club of Canada.

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