Canadian Alpine Journal

2009

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The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 92, 2009

Features

The Inner Ranges

Stefan Glowacz (leading) and Robert Jasper on pitch 12 of Take the Long Way Home on The Bastion in Quernbiter Fiord, Baffin Island, Nunavut (see page 56). Photo: Klaus Fengler

Cover: Bruce Kay during the first attempt in February 2008 to climb Piss and Vinegar above Seton Lake near Lillooet, B.C. The successful ascent was made a year later in March 2009 with Jesse Mason (see page 95). Photo: Jim Martinello

Previous page: Climbers on top of the Gendarme on the Kain Route on Bugaboo Spire in the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains, B.C. Conrad Kain made the first ascent of this classic route in 1916 while guiding Albert and Beth MacCarthy and John Vincent (see page 6). Photo: Marc Piché

Back cover: Ines Papert on the 5.10 variation to pitch 12 of the Becky-Chouinard Route on South Howser Tower in the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains, B.C. (see page 101). Photo: Jon Walsh

Contents

The Canadian Alpine Journal, Volume 92, 2009

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EDITOR — Sean Isaac
COPY EDITORS — Lynn Martel, Helen Rolfe
FRENCH EDITOR — Anne Ryall
LAYOUT & PRODUCTION — Suzan Chamney
GRAPHIC ASSISTANTS — Hermien Schuttenbeld, Shaun Chamney
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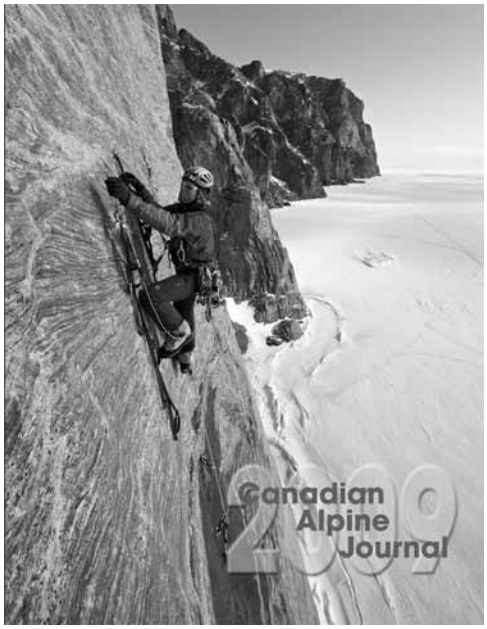
Editorial

Relevance, Elitism and Cover Shots

Almost a year ago, my first *CAJ* as editor was sent off to the printer. I sat back and revelled in the euphoric glow of survival. A few months later, messages began popping up in my inbox—positive feedback. I was elated. Then, the bomb hit. I received two letters of discontent, the authors of which unloaded an earful on how the *Journal* had become "elitist" and "an irrelevant publication". The more I considered their input, the more I disagreed.

The purpose of the *CAJ* is to record the history of Canadian climbing, year by year. Like it or not, much of what makes climbing history is cutting-edge ascents. In fact, that is the definition of history: a chronological timeline punctuated by important events. The past century of *CAJ*s reveals a similar truth. Case in point, the 1914–15 edition featured Conrad Kain's first ascent of Mount Robson; the 2008 volume reported on a new single-push route up the Emperor Face of the same mountain. Both of these ascents, almost 100 years apart, exemplify momentous accomplishments for their eras, not elitism.



The other cover choice. Photo: Klaus Fengler

Alpine journals are time capsules. They offer a snapshot of a period in history so that in 10, 50 or 100 years from now, a mountain woman or man of the future can open its pages (or download its PDF) and immerse themselves via words and pictures into an age gone by. The *Journal* is best framed as the Alpine Club of Canada's commitment to the climbing community. It is not intended to be a vehicle for the Club. At one point in time, it most definitely was the mouthpiece for club activities, but that was when pretty much all climbers were members. During the course of the past 100 years, climbing evolved (or devolved, depending on how you look at it) from a gentleman's game accomplished in clubs with guides, to an individualistic pursuit that embraced anarchy. The *CAJ* adapted to this shift in order to maintain its purpose of chronicling history. If it just focused on achievements by ACC members, then history would have been lost, ultimately making the *CAJ* indeed "irrelevant". The *Gazette* has filled the role of newsletter updating members about club news, events and activities, thrice annually.

A quick flip through last year's issue reveals, at least to me, an even balance of cutting-edge and every-man exploits, ranging from technical M-scary mixed routes on the Stanley Headwall to exploratory scrambling in the Pantheon Range—both equally important in the eyes of the *CAJ*. In addition to climbing accounts, other articles explore mountain science, historical debates, socio-psycho issues, introspection, fiction and poetry. Indeed, a diverse breadth of topics that hopefully resonate with our diverse readership.

This year's biggest quandary was the cover. The elusive cover shot is the 5.15 of publishing. A strong front image makes a statement. Last year, the choice was easy; this year, not so simple. I had it whittled down to two photos—both excellent. My first inclination was classic cover fodder: tack sharp, soft light, perfect composition, room for the title and stunning scenery. But, despite showcasing Baffin Island, it was a posed shot of a foreign climber. Option two was of a Canadian hard man by a talented yet relatively unknown Canadian photographer. I was torn. Aesthetically, I leaned towards the first choice, but in the end, nationalistic pride won out. An editorial decision was made: showcase Canadian climbers and photographers on the cover.

The *CAJ* must nurture local talent—un-posed, unpretentious, un-coifed. Our 2009 cover boy, err, I mean man, Bruce Kay, embodies this mantra. He has been pioneering high-end alpinism in his Coast Range backyard for more than 25 years. Not only is he a respected pioneer amongst his peers, but he is also an articulate storyteller whose words have inspired *CAJ* readers for decades. So this year's front piece is a tip of the hat to homegrown Canucks. We will continue to document and promote Canadian mountain adventures, both hard- and soft-core, inside and on the cover.

—Sean Isaac

Corrections

CAJ 2008, vol. 91, p. 77: The story titled "The Curse of the Alpinist" is by Will Meinen, not Brandon Pullan.

grüssen Sie Ihre lieben Eltern und Schwester.

Mit herzlichen Grüssen

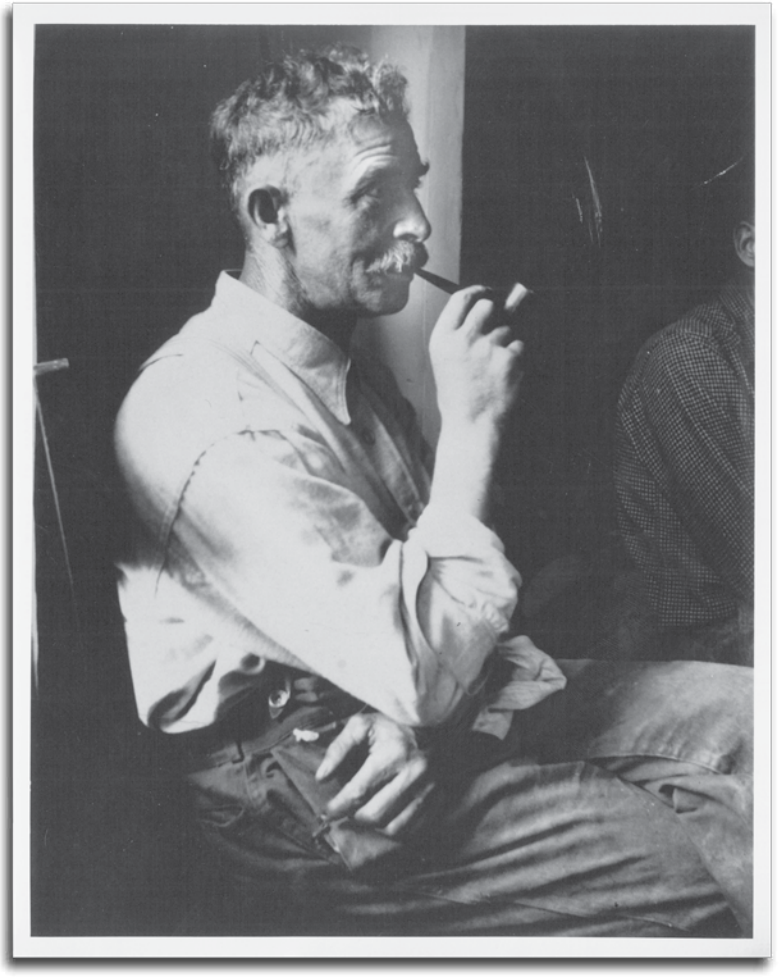
Ihr Konrad Kain.

31.

Dear Miss Amelie, Banff, 28.Juni 1909.

Your letter was the first,which I get in this country.My best thanks for it, Ich mache doch noch zu viele mistakes in writing English, it is better I write in German!Sie schreiben,dass Sie von mir nichts erhalten haben. Es ist möglich,dass Sie am 9.Juni noch nichts bekamen. Aber meinen Brief werden Sie doch erhalten haben? (mit Bleistift geschrieben,weil ich nicht Tinte hatte.Hoffentlich habe ich Sie damit nicht beleidigt?) So teile ich Ihnen noch weiter von meiner Reise mit. Am 8.und 9. war Sturm,und man konnte nicht an Deck liegen. Ich wurde aber deshalb nicht seekrank. Am 10. war es schön. Am 8. lernte ich einen Norweger kennen, der lange in Wien lebte,und nach langem Gespräch fragte,ob ich nicht Walzer tanzen kann.Da ich kein guter Tänzer bin,sagte ich die Wahrheit. Er liess mich nicht m mehr aus,und ich musste tanzen! Er tanzte vortrefflich,und so habe ich tanzen ge= lernt!! Am 11. um 5 Uhr abends landeten wir in Quebec, nicht in Boston. Dort nahm ich Abschied von Herrn Dr. Berl, der sehr freundlich mit mir war. Wenn er nicht gewesen wäre,hätte ich direkt Hunger leiden müssen. Ich will Ihnen die Sache nä= her mitteilen.Ich hatte in Wien vor meiner Abreise über 500Kronen. Davon kaufte ich einen Reisesack 10 K.,Fahrt nach Hannover 33 K., die Kiste 26 K., Fahrt von Hannover nach London 42 Mark, dazu Verpflegung (weiss nicht genau) Zahnarzt 45 K. das war sehr billig. In London zahlte ich für 3 Tage 33 s., Fahrt 11 Pfund 11 s. Da ich mir in London viel angesehen hatte, brauchte ich einige Schillinge.— — Dr.Berl hatte mir beim Abschied 120 K. gegeben, damit ich gut auskomme. Die Fahrt von Quebec nach Winnipeg ist einzig! Fast 2 Tage fährt man durch Wald und an tau= send Seen vorbei! Stundenlang sieht man kein Haus. Es ist nicht so wie bei uns alle 2 Kilometer ein Bahnwächterhäusl!! In Calgary stieg ich nach 5 tägiger Fahrt aus,und da Herr Präsident Wheeler nicht zu Hause war,musste ich warten. Ich wurde sehr freundlich aufgenommen und war 3 Tage in einem Hotel. Da kamen einige Touri= sten, die sich freundlich erkundigten ,wie es geht.Ich werde als Swiss Guide an=

Letters from the Archives



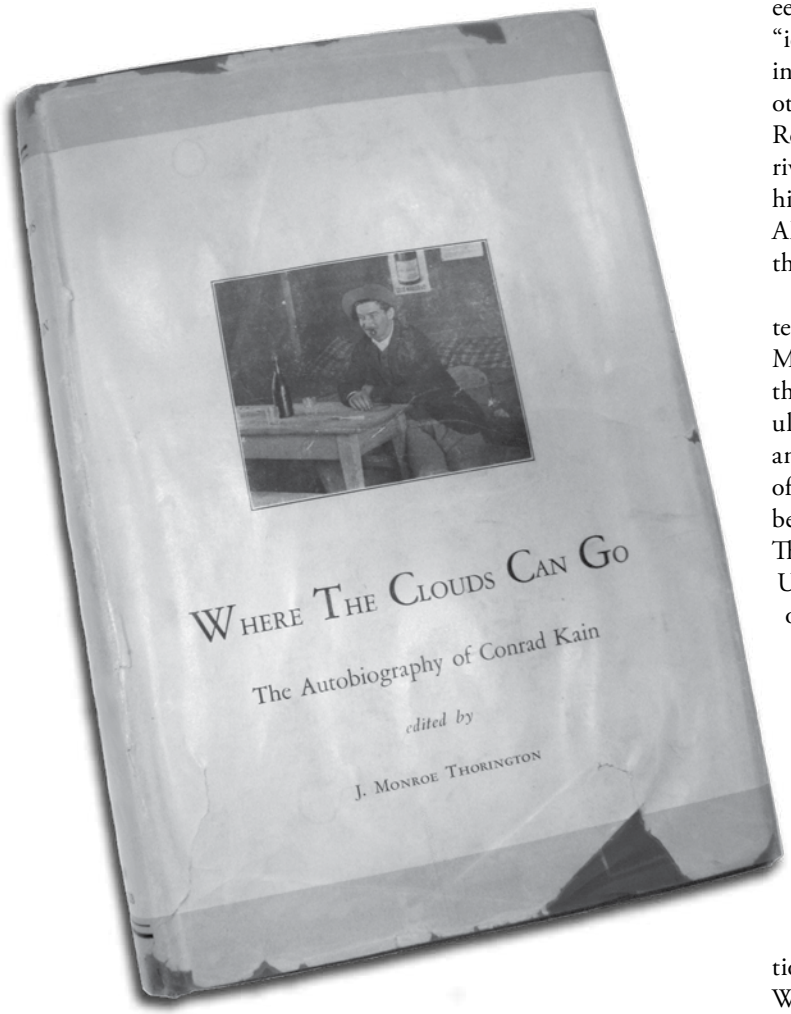
Zac Robinson

Above: A previously unpublished photograph of Conrad Kain from 1933. Photo: Courtesy of the Windermere District Historical Society (WDHS 2089)

Opposite page: The Kain-Malek correspondence. Amelie Malek transcribed Kain's original letters at Thorington's request in 1935. Her typewritten transcription of the letters is all that remains. Photo: Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Erich Pistor fonds (M160/accn7759)

According to writer Ted Bishop, "what governs all archival events is serendipity." Bishop should know. The English professor/motorcycle vagabond has spent enough time in archives the world over to accept that, while we often speak of sound research methods and good detective work, "the real discoveries seem to come from nowhere, to be handed to you, after days or weeks in which (it appears in retrospect) the insight has been perversely denied, as if there were not just curators but some other power controlling the archive." Bishop was referring, of course, to Sheshat (Sesheta, Sefkhet-aabut, and half a dozen other spellings), the ancient Egyptian goddess of writing, libraries, mathematics and architecture, as well as archives.

In the spring of 2005, Chic Scott and I had both the Goddess and Don Bourdon on our side. Don was the head archivist at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff. He's the type of person who, if he calls to say he has acquired something you'll want to see, the chances are what he has is good, really good. We got the call. And we descended upon the archive like junkies to the source—Chic in his old rusty truck, me in my equally decrepit hatchback. Iron oxide couldn't sway our course. Don had a set of letters written by Conrad Kain (1883–1934).



Kain, the almost singular superlative figure of climbing's earliest age in Canada—Esther Fraser's "prince of Canadian alpine guides"; Hans Gmoser's "master of the art of mountaineering"; and Earle Birney's poetic conqueror of Yu-hai-has-kun, "icerobed and stormcrowned". His number of first ascents in the Rockies and Purcells exceeds 60; his new routes and other climbs are countless. Most know the roll call by heart: Robson, Louis, Bugaboo Spire.... That the Austrian first arrived in Banff 100 years ago at the age of 25, with nothing to his name save the promise of employment with the fledgling Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) makes his accomplishments all the more remarkable.

Chic had noted the significance of these particular letters almost 10 years ago. In a manifesto titled "Mountain Mysteries," printed in the 2001 *CAJ*, the author, still basking in the warm glow of *Pushing the Limits* (2000), had set down the ultimate Canadian tick list—the *grand cours*, so to speak—for any alpine historian in this neck of the woods. It was the kind of "to do" list that, were it written in the early '90s, might have been reverently stuck to the inside of my high-school locker. The article is instead tacked to the wall of my office at the University of Alberta. It awaits unsuspecting students in need of a good challenge.

High on Chic's list was what he called "perhaps the greatest single treasure in Canadian mountaineering"—Kain's missing letters, journals and diaries. The Holy Grail. We knew J. Monroe Thorington had them in 1935, when, after the Austrian's death, he edited and published Kain's autobiography, *Where the Clouds Can Go*. But the trace ended with him. Thorington died in 1989, at the age of 94, and his notes were sent to Princeton University, his *alma mater*. What next became of the Kain material was unclear. No record of it existed at Princeton: its collection, however rich, was incomplete. Now in duplicate at the Whyte, it consisted primarily of works, other correspondence and diaries, photographs, maps and scrapbooks, as well as the

manuscripts for three books: *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada* (1921), the region's first mountaineering guidebook; *The Glittering Mountains of Canada* (1925), in which Thorington laid to rest in masterly fashion what little remained of the century-old Hooker-Brown controversy; and *Mont Blanc Sideshow* (1934), a biography of Albert Smith, a renowned mountaineer, showman and founding member of The Alpine Club.

The Whyte Museum's archives is a special place. Custodian of the renowned ACC library, it was established in 1966 to serve the mountain region bounded by the 49th parallel to the south, the Peace River to the north, the Front Ranges in the east and the Columbias in the west. The Eleanor Luxton Reference Room itself is nothing grand: long and narrow, it doesn't cover 1,000 square feet. Catalogues of Byron Harmon photographs near the front entrance are enough to keep the wandering museum visitors occupied. But it's in the back of the room, windowless but for the giant 1:200,000-scale maps of Banff and Jasper national parks on the walls, where the real work is done. Here, white-gloved researchers quietly chatter to one another about their respective projects. Others sit alone, often bent over old parchment or lanternslides, lost in a silent contemplation broken only by busy archivists returning from storage with loaded trolleys of requested material.

We sat and yakked about skiing. The archives was nearly empty. "Here they are," Don said strolling into the room. "Nearly 300 pages." He set the thick folder on the table before us. I nervously wiped my hands, which turned out to be cold and dry with anticipation, and flipped open the cover:

Nasswald, 8. November 1906.

Sehr geehrtes Fräulein,

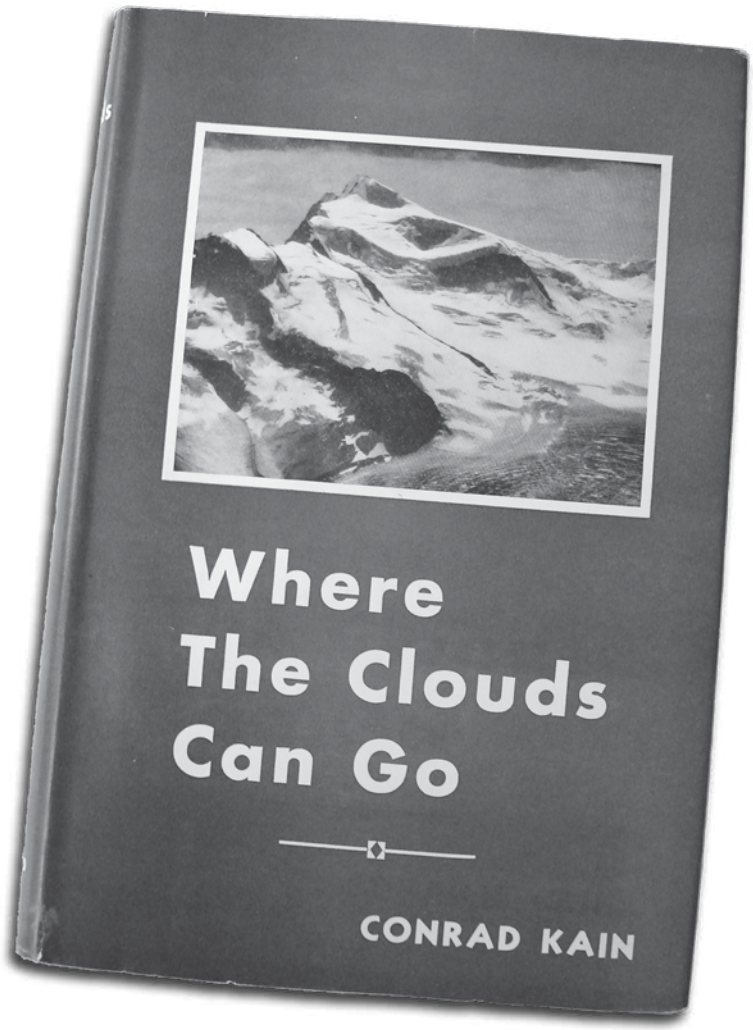
Erst nach längerer Zeit kemme ich dazu, Ihnen mitzuteilen, dass ich Ihre Sendung erhalten habe, wefür ich Ihnen meinen besten Dank ausspreche....

"Er, can either of you read German?" I whispered.

The Goddess had left the building.

The correspondence before us consisted of 142 letters written between 1906 and 1933, the span of Kain's adult life, more or less. They were ordered chronologically and addressed to a single correspondent, Amelie Malek (d. 1945), a young botanist whom Kain guided in 1906 near Gstätterboden but who lived out her later life in Reichenau, Austria. The very differences in social class that brought them together—Kain a guide, Malek a tourist—likely precluded much of a relationship beyond friendship in the morally rigid climate of pre-war Europe.

They nevertheless became dear friends. Kain mailed her flower petals from the different ranges he visited during his career. He signed off in English as "the wanderer," "your friend in the western woods," "your Conrad." Her replies remain lost. We had a one-sided conversation that spanned 27 years.



What would the letters uncover? Surely Thorington would have carefully finessed any revelations into Kain's autobiography. We chuckled at the futility of our situation while slowly flipping through pages of correspondence we couldn't read. And then, little by little, passages in English appeared.

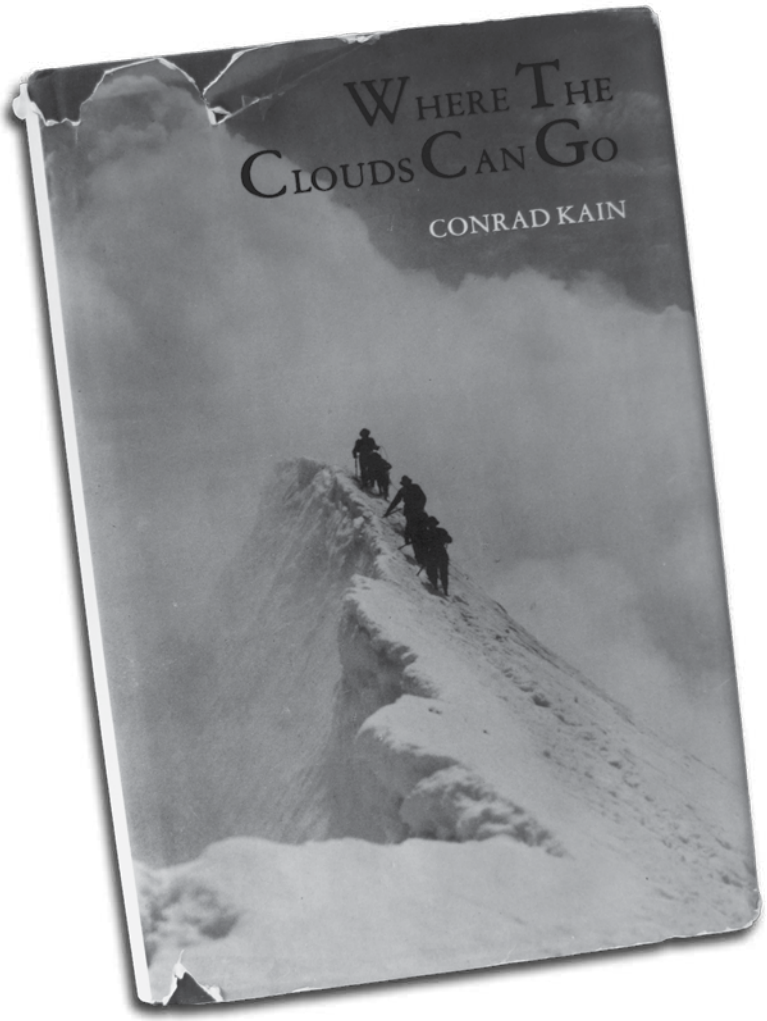
"Ah, look," Chic said. "She's teaching him how to write."

Writing in broken English from his birthplace of Nasswald in 1909, just months before making his initial voyage to Canada aboard the *Empress of Britain*, Kain expressed his "great anguish for the slip of the pen in English" and begged Malek to point out and "korrekt" the pratfalls in his prose. Kain's command of the English language was no doubt poor. It was likely limited to what he had picked up as a young man leading venturesome tourists on outings in the mountains southwest of Vienna. His father's death in a mining accident in 1892 left his mother, Franziska, alone with four young children. Kain, the eldest at 14, was forced to leave school, having learned little with only one teacher for more than 100 students. He took employment as a goatherd in the local hills. Later, while becoming a gilded mountain guide, he worked as a quarryman, a livelihood he supplemented by poaching game.

What began as a desire to better his writing became a lifelong tutorial through correspondence. Malek carefully commented upon, corrected and edited Kain's words—those English passages scattered throughout his letters to her, but also his diary, still lost, and the articles he later wrote for magazines and alpine journals, many of which Thorington used as chapters in *Where the Clouds Can Go*. "It is very hard for me that I have nobody who helps me like you with your letters," Kain wrote to Malek in 1909. Later, in 1933, now writing to her solely in English, he told her to "[r]emember that, whatever I do, it will be little in comparison to what you have done for me."

We sat in silence reading what fragments we could. Kain's adventures in the Southern Hemisphere. Mount Robson. The Great War. Malek lost her father just before the conflict broke out in 1914; by 1920, her family lived in poverty. Winters were cold. "Amelie," Kain wrote, "you can't imagine how I felt when I read in your dear letter of how little coal you have to do your cooking and keep a room warm. I wish I could hand you over the amount of wood I burnt unnecessarily in this country, then you need not freeze anymore for the rest of you life."

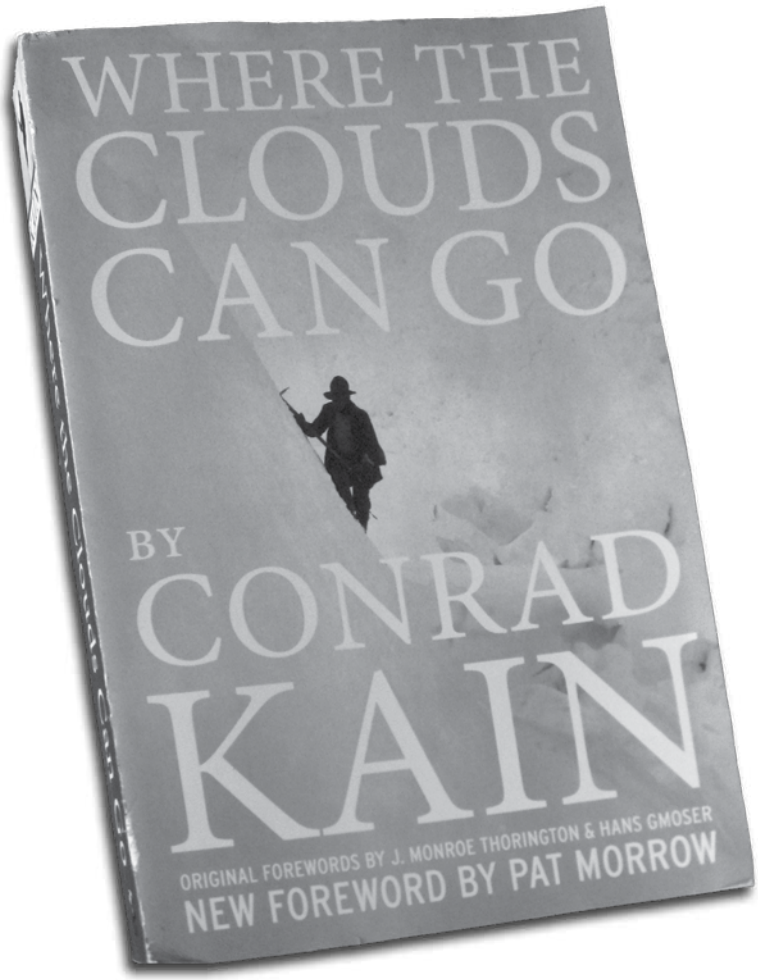
The text reverted to German. We flipped the page.



You know I am no longer the little boy from Nasswald. I am a full-grown man, and life has not been a picnic along the way. You know more of the happy and unhappy times that I've had in my life than anyone else from my old home. But there were many things I never told you, because they would have worried you. But let me cut the story short and come to the point. As I told you, my life so far was not a happy, lovely, joyful way all along. There were some trails I had to travel that were really hard, full of disappointments and cruelty. And these hard trails have hardened my heart for many sorrowful events. I tell you, dear friend, sometimes I was even ashamed of myself for being so hardened up! For it had never been my wish to be hard-hearted to anybody or anything in this world. Many a time I wish I could weep, but I could not. Fortune has not always been kind towards me, and you know that I have seen more of the world, and of life with its different sides, than the average man. And so it came, that I have not lost a tear for so many years, yes, Amelie, for many years. But your last dear letter was too much for me. Amelie, my dear friend of all friends I have, I know that I have to thank you forever so many kind deeds and millions of kind words that I have received from you! And now after all that I have to thank you for having softening my heart, and having shed those tears when I read your lines: "Ich habe im Laufe meined Lebens meinen Eltern so manches Opfer gebrcht. Ich werde meiner Mutter die Treue halten, so lange Sie am Leben ist und sie nie verlassen." These lines are the most beautiful lines and the best and kindest words I have ever read in a letter. These words made me cry like a little child.

"Are you sure," I slowly whispered, not taking my eyes off the passage that lay before us, "that neither of you can read German?"

Archives are a means to access history in a direct way, as much as that is possible. They bring history closer because they are not an interpretation or an intellectualizing of past events, but the *actual stuff* of past events. We had walked in on something unbearably personal. This passage. And it was not meant for us. We were face to face with someone few now fully know.



We called it a day and walked out into the brilliant sunshine.

Since 2005, the Kain letters have been carefully translated by Maria and John Koch of Edmonton and will soon be published in their entirety. They will surely hold the attention of generations of historians, climbers and armchair enthusiasts keen on the life of this extraordinary individual but also on the early years of mountaineering in the Rockies and Purcells. No doubt, they will shed new light on a few long-standing questions and prompt many others.

In this centennial year, however, Kain aficionados have little space on the social calendar. Projects and events commemorating the 100th anniversary of Kain's arrival to Canada abound through the various efforts of the ACC and the Conrad Kain Centennial Society (www.conradkain.com), a dedicated group of mountain guides, historians and admirers mostly from the Columbia Valley, where Kain lived out the last two decades of his life and whose nearby mountains were the scene of many of his greatest adventures. Commemorative cairns are being built, historic routes are being repeated and a whole new generation is being introduced to Kain's legacy through revised curriculum in elementary schools throughout the region. Even Laurie Schwartz and her award-winning Parks Canada theatre troupe, Mountain WIT, applauded for the one-person play *Elizabeth Parker and the Alpine Club of Canada*, will don Kain's hobnails and pipe, once again delving into the drama of the high alpine.

To survey these and other efforts, Thorington, himself—who once wrote of his friend "in Conrad Kain there was a splendid fire"—would be most contented, I think. In the prologue to the latest edition of *Where the Clouds Can Go* (1979), now long out of print and difficult to find, the historian mused that:

> When I edited Conrad Kain's autobiography in 1934, the thought never occurred to me that there might be a subsequent edition of *Where the Clouds Can Go*. Thus it was a great surprise to me when I learned that a *third* edition of the book would be published. After all, so much has been done in mountaineering during the past forty-five years that an entirely new book could be written about those mountains Conrad Kain pioneered; but, of course, it would not be Conrad's book.
>
> The fact that so much has changed during the past two generations does not alter the history that Conrad Kain made. The splendid fire will always live.

This year, Rocky Mountain Books will issue a fourth edition of Kain's autobiography with a new foreword by climber/filmmaker Pat Morrow. Scores of new climbers, like Morrow and Gmoser before them, will be introduced to this individual; many others will renew an old acquaintance. That the autobiography should again be reprinted is testament to the guide, the self-proclaimed "unlettered fellow, a former breaker of stones," who dreamed of being a writer. It's testament, as well, to his dear Miss Amelie, who, through letters from home, taught him to write.

Their fire still burns.

About the Author

Zac Robinson is a historian at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where he earned his doctorate in 2007. He writes widely about mountaineering history in the Rockies and Columbias and is currently working on an edition of the Kain-Malek correspondence. An avid climber and skier, he serves regularly as a camp manager with the ACC's Mountain Adventure Program and is a member of the Club's Mountain Culture Committee.

Page 8: *Where the Clouds Can Go,* first edition (1935).
Photo: Courtesy of the Bruce Peel Special Collections Library, University of Alberta

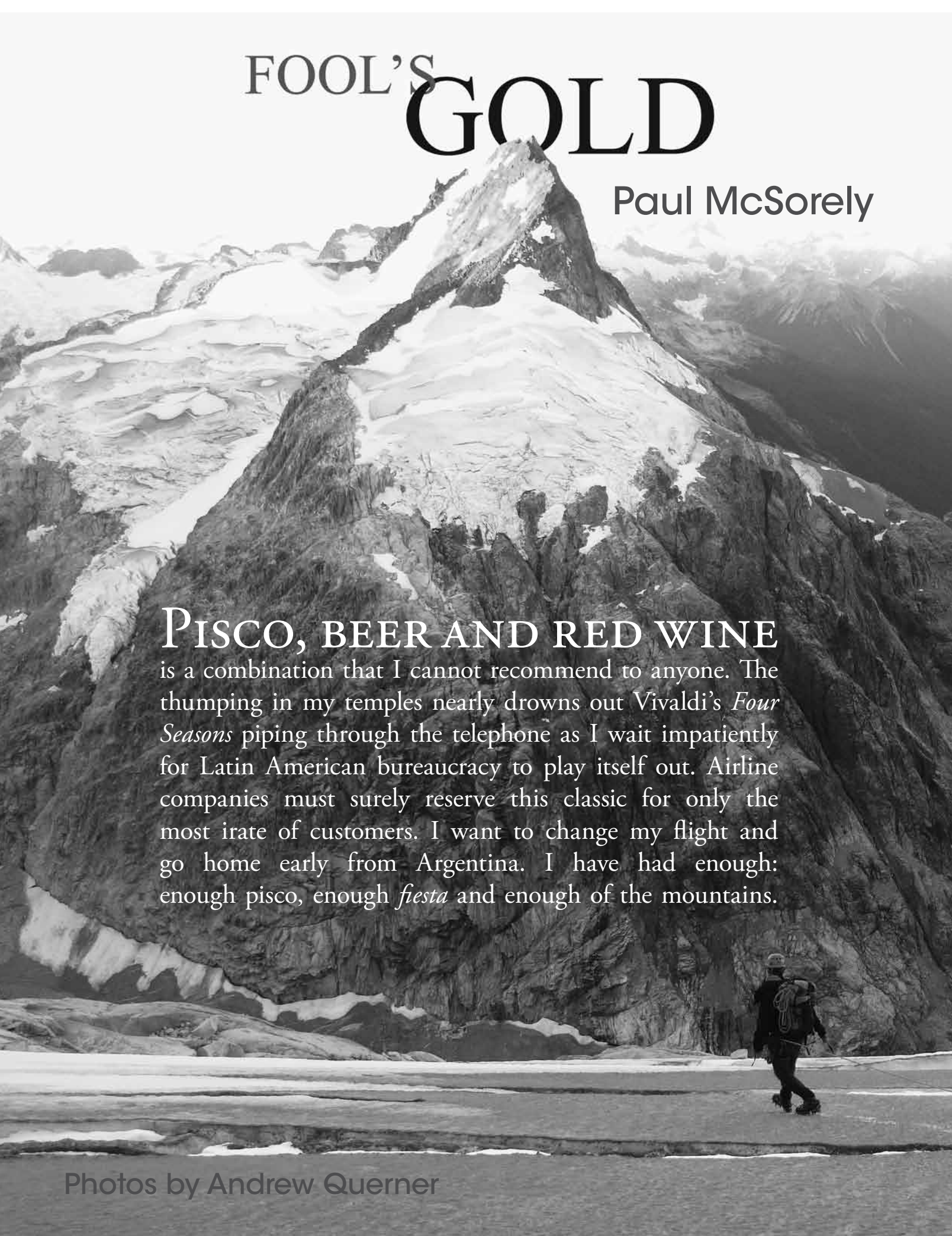
Page 9: *Where the Clouds Can Go,* second edition (1954).
Photo: Courtesy of Henry S. Hall, Jr. American Alpine Club Library

Page 10: *Where the Clouds Can Go,* third edition (1979).
Photo: Zac Robinson

Page 11: *Where the Clouds Can Go,* fourth edition (2009).
Photo: Courtesy of Rocky Mountain Books

FOOL'S GOLD

Paul McSorely



Pisco, beer and red wine

is a combination that I cannot recommend to anyone. The thumping in my temples nearly drowns out Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* piping through the telephone as I wait impatiently for Latin American bureaucracy to play itself out. Airline companies must surely reserve this classic for only the most irate of customers. I want to change my flight and go home early from Argentina. I have had enough: enough pisco, enough *fiesta* and enough of the mountains.

Photos by Andrew Querner

Our journey to the Turbio region was conceived in 2001 when I saw an untitled series of photographs on the wall of the Frey hut near Bariloche, Argentina. The images taped together old-school style created a 360-degree panorama. Big walls lined the valleys and a white, serac-crowned granite wall sat proudly in the centre. I asked around but no one knew anything—or at least no one would say anything. It didn't matter. I knew I had to go.

It wasn't until 2005 that I found out where the picture was taken.

"This is Turbio *Quatro*," a local guide told me.

"There are four of them!" I spat out, hardly believing that such places still existed.

"*Si*," he replied, "plus more unexplored valleys above."

That was all the temptation I required. I plotted to check out the Turbio with fellow Patagonian chronic Will Stanhope. We recruited our buddy, Andrew Querner, also a Patagonian vet, and began the preparations. The best part about researching the area was the patent lack of beta out there. A single online trip report detailing an unsuccessful foray was all I found. I praised Jah that this place had thus far eluded the trappings of the Internet. This is what we wanted—unspoiled adventure.

The trip got underway in classic form when the three of us met in Bariloche in early January. A bout of intestinal upset plagued our crew and delayed progress in a way that can only be described as Latino. Heat, fatigue and slovenly behaviour all combined to challenge our departure deadline. We did, however, have an ace in the hole—our Barilochean friend Bicho. He had been to the Turbio two years before and graciously offered us a slideshow, provided we bring the cocktails. During the show, Bicho flashed a photo of a triple-summitted massif. After some prodding, he leaked the information we desired about the western-most peak: "*Si, esta virgen*."

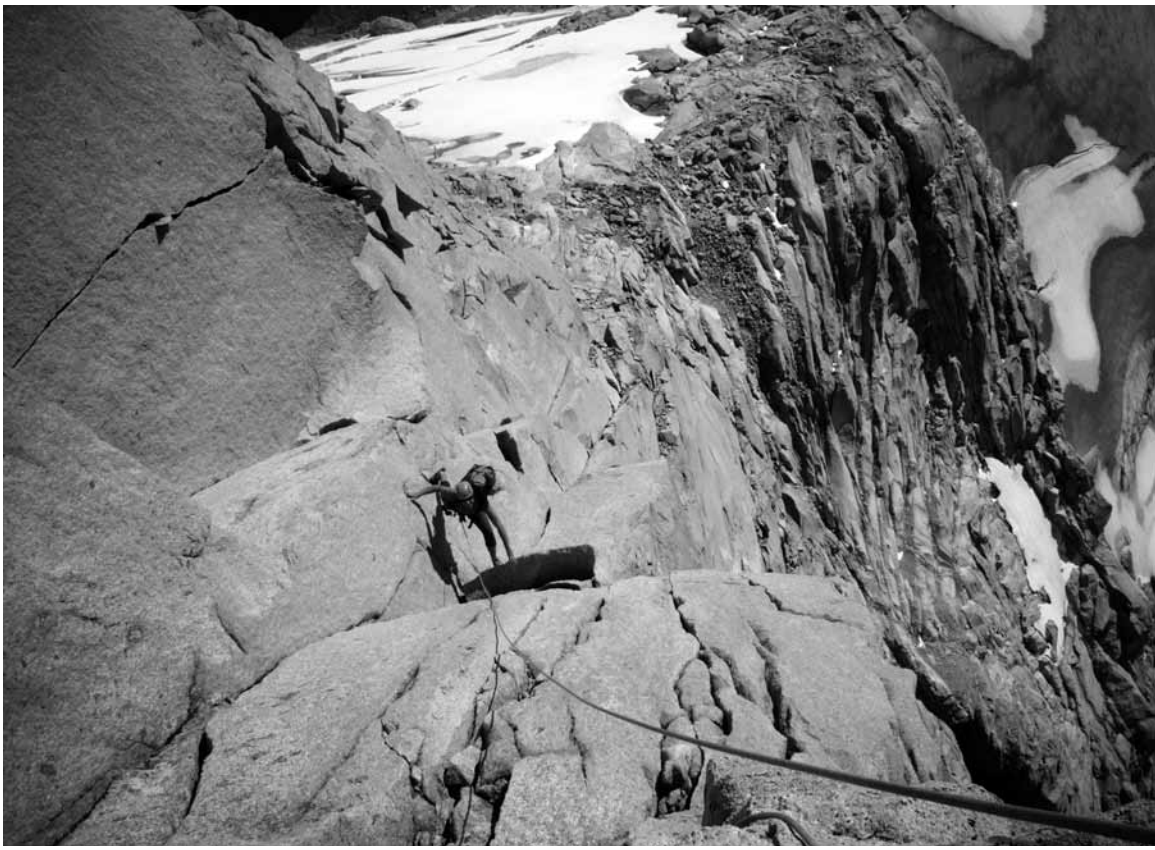
Two hours south of Bariloche, Lago Puelo was the kick-off for three weeks in the wilderness. A simple 15-kilometre jaunt in a Zodiac would deposit us on a beach at the opposite end of the lake where we would meet our gauchos and ride to basecamp. Easy enough, or so we thought.…

Thirty seconds from shore the vile tickle of vomit rose up my throat and I didn't know whether to break into tears or puke. Metre-and-a-half waves pummelled the rigid-bottomed vessel and nuking winds splashed our faces with bitter glacial water. Our bags, lashed to the bow, began slipping and we clutched them like crimpers on a 5.11 run-out. Andrew screamed out what we all were thinking: "I never thought I'd be so gripped this early into the trip!" Will and I nodded, tried to smile and continued our molestation of the duffels. Our boatman, Garibaldi, who was no doubt a descendant of his explorer namesake, sat stoic and focused as he punched the tiny vessel into the shelter of the south arm of the lake. Forty-five epic minutes later, we reached land and did what any seasoned seamen would do—chain-smoked drummies until we were raunched.

A scant five hours later than promised, the gauchos sauntered up Latino style, and we saddled the horses to start the 50-kilometre clop up valley. At sundown, gaucho Don Polo Bajamonde dropped us off at a tidy cottage, which punctuated

Previous page: Paul McSorely and Will Stanhope descending after completing the first traverse of Torres Piritas.
Photo: Andrew Querner

Left: Paul McSorely discovering the joys of the Valdivian bamboo forest during their gruelling approach.
Photo: Andrew Querner



Paul McSorely seconding pitch two (5.8) during the first traverse of Torres Piritas.
Photo: Andrew Querner

a perfectly kept lawn and flower garden.

"Is this your house?" I asked in Castellano, the local dialect.

"No," he replied, "but you will stay here tonight."

We hoped this would be cool with the owners who we were yet to meet. Moments later a youthful couple appeared and invited us into their home to spend the night and eat at their table. Gabi and Mariano are an anomaly in the Turbio; born in Bariloche they escaped the hustle of the ski resort scene to raise a family al fresco. It took several years before the guarded local community took them and their three daughters seriously and accepted them as Turbioans.

Just around the way, some 500 metres downriver, in a squalid shack lived the gentleman we would come to know as Coco. Imagine growing up all alone in a remote rural valley: once a month your uncle comes and checks up on you to ensure that you are alive and fed. You were shunned since birth because you are the offspring of an incestuous liaison, and to top it off, you are an albino and a dwarf. This was the case for our friend Coco, an 80-plus-year-old resident (Coco doesn't even know his exact age) of Argentina's Turbio Valley.

Coco made an appearance while we were chopping firewood to earn our keep during a rain day. He had an infected lesion on his chest and while Gabi tended caringly to it, Mariano ran translation for us as we tried to make conversation over a round of maté. The dialect that Coco speaks is incomprehensible to non-native Argentineans. Formal education was not an option for this man. He has endured a rugged and lonely life, but Gabi told us he has a special gift for speaking with horses and training them non-violently. This gift apparently didn't impress some of the local *campesinos*, when some years back they arsoned his home and left him with nothing. If it were not for Gabi and Mariano's compassion, I doubt this unique and extraordinary character would still be with us today.

Clearing skies allowed us to get the show rolling the next day, and happily our hosts decided to join us on the horse pack up to Turbio IV. Saddle-manship is not my forte. As a child in the Camargue, France, I was thrown from a horse into a river at a fast gallop, and since then, as you might have guessed, I haven't done much riding. So after two minutes, when our trusty steeds began the first (of a dozen) sketchy river crossings, it was easy to understand why I quickly rekindled my relationship with a higher power. Andrew and Will were much more at ease behind the reins and could enjoy the ride a little more than I.

Ten hours in the saddle is like being kicked in the ass numerous times by a really large boot. When we finally dismounted at an abandoned hut a kilometre up the Turbio IV Valley, the hurt diminished beside the blur of unpacking and organizing. Our friends stayed the night and we shared maté and some fresh lamb courtesy of Polo. In the morning, we bid *adios* to our *amigos* and began the first of several laps to the end of Turbio IV and beyond to our objective—the virgin tower in the Piritas Valley.

Under sunny skies we crossed a fixed Tyrolean just 15 minutes from the hut. Born from Argentine ingenuity, this miscarriage of a rigging effort consisted of two mysteriously

lopped-off trees and some none-too-burly three-millimetre fence wire tightened with garden-variety turnbuckles. There was no jostling for pole position on this beauty, but, being the most rotund of our trio, shotgun was mine. After re-rigging some seven-mil cord to serve as a backup, I dropped in.

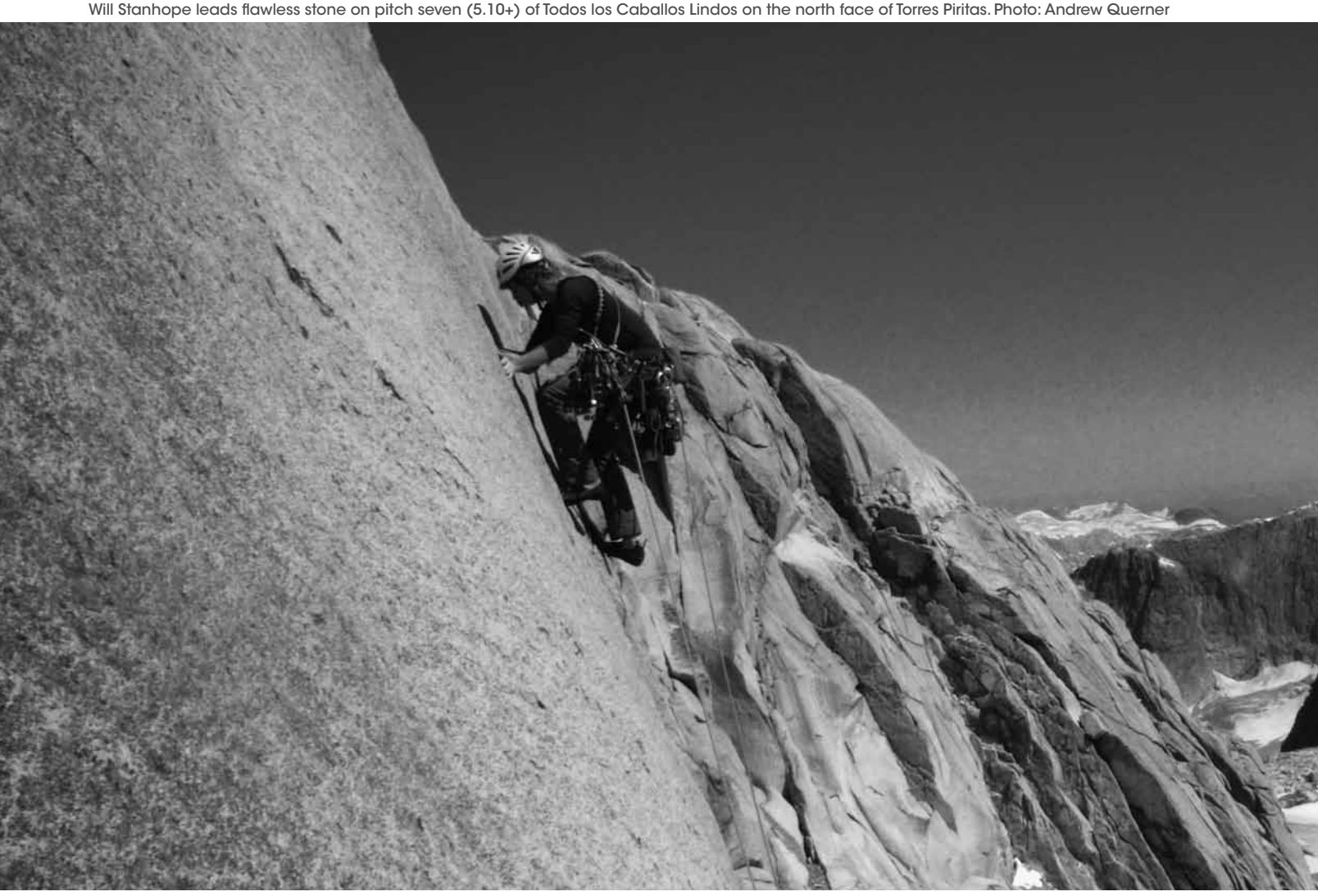
Beyond the river crossing, we were treated to the reality of the Valdivian forest. Though previous parties had chopped a vague trail, we quickly became lost, slogging and machete-ing up the valley at a pace that would rightly be called glacial. The temperate rainforest is more jungle than forest, and every year biblical rains fall on this land giving life to 3,000-year-old alerce trees and the ubiquitous colihue, a relative of bamboo. By midday, the rains began to soak us thoroughly, and we made the first of many pathetic bivis under a boulder. Despite the lickings, we were all in awe of this wild place that was home to amazing species of flora and fauna including a family of wild boars, which we startled one day during a retreat down valley.

Monsoon-style rains continued for the next 10 days. Sucker holes coaxed us out from the hut long enough to get committed—then drenched. At his rate, it took us three tries and seven days to establish ourselves at an advanced camp only 15 kilometres from the *refugio*. We all agreed that good weather might never arrive so we would just go up, siege and suffer. Amazingly though, the day after we made it to high-camp, the weather split. We definitely were not expecting this turn of fortune, so, as if to add balance to the karmic ledger, we slept in. Assuming this to be our only chance, we packed and started charging towards the tower despite the late start.

The stoke was palpable as we marched across boulder-strewn glacial flats and up to the approach pitches. We were so amped that we were actually going to get a chance to climb something. Will freed the first of the approach pitches at 5.11 bravo—a killer start to our day. Easier roped climbing and a few hours of 4th-classing up golden granite took us to a small glacier and the west shoulder of the Piritas formation. Here on the Chile–Argentine divide, we yipped and hollered at the unbelievable landscape that rolled out before us and down to the Pacific. Big walls stacked up all around us and helped us feel puny amidst the vastness.

"This is just like climbing in the Coast Mountains!" I exclaimed, feeling nostalgic for my home range. Andrew mulled this over for a minute, and, as he is known to do, chewed on

Will Stanhope leads flawless stone on pitch seven (5.10+) of Todos los Caballos Lindos on the north face of Torres Piritas. Photo: Andrew Querner



his words carefully before sharing them: "That's because this *is* the coast mountains." His logic was unflappable.

The climbing that followed was a genuine case of alpine justice. Cruise-y cracks and corners—without even the suggestion of looseness—flowed beneath us, and after a few pitches we un-roped and 4th-classed the serrated summit ridge. "We're really getting our John Clarke on," mused Will, giving a nod to the legendary B.C. coastal explorer who sought not difficulty but rather remoteness, wild beauty and soulful adventure. Our grins were too big to describe as we made it to the top of our first cairnless summit. What a gift to find such a magical mountain in its natural state. Though it felt a little gauche, we built a cairn that balanced precariously on the pointy summit. A downclimb to the east and more scrambling led us to the main summit of the Piritas formation. We tagged the cairn that Bicho and renowned Swiss-Argentine pioneer Pedro Luthi had built, then made a few raps gunning for the last and smallest tower. From a notch, two pitches took us to the final airy summit of the day. We high-fived, flashed our gang signs and bailed.

A glacial descent and multiple raps through the night saw us stagger like drunken sailors into camp 20 hours after leaving. Since we hadn't had a real rest in weeks, the next day was dedicated to sloth. To celebrate our laziness, we made a classic Canadian dish—doughnuts cooked in beef lard and dipped in refined sugar.

While taking inventory of the gear, we found two core shots in one of our ropes. This coupled with the aforementioned sloth allowed me to bow out of the next day's activity.

Andrew and Will really rallied for this one. Totally worked from all the effort just to be there, they stepped up and sent a righteous new 10-pitch route on the untouched north face of the west tower. Hats off to the boys for a proud send up a brilliant face. They described the ascent as "clutch-dropping, run-squad and pretty real". It was a proud way to end the trip, although the real finish was just getting started.

The escape from the valley was the long-anticipated crux of the mission. We needed to not only reverse the 15 rough kilometres to camp, but also the 50 stout kilometres to Lago Puelo that we had approached on horseback. To avoid this regrettable quantity of walking, we had the foresight to bring little inflatable dinghy boats. At the time, floating down the

river seemed better than trudging beside it. The cover of the box that the boats came in depicted a mother and child rowing gaily in what looked to be a swimming pool. As we contemplated the rushing water at the put-in, where Turbio I, II, III and IV converge, something about this image didn't jive. Overloaded with our monster rucksacks, the rafts looked out of place so we crossed our fingers.

Several intense rapids, a near swamping and numerous patch jobs later, the river mellowed and we enjoyed the float for what it was, a beautiful flight from the mountains down a stunning valley. The edge never really went away though; with Andrew packing a fat sac full of spendy camera gear, the prospect of capsizing was worrisome. By evening, the rain had started in earnest and we searched for Garibaldi's cabin aided by some beta from Mariano. We met a sawyer on the riverbank who gruffly informed us that it was inland a few hundred metres. That night, we crashed in the stables behind Garibaldi's rustic *refugio*, our bellies stuffed with some fresh trout courtesy of the gracious captain and his son Nico.

The next day, despite some rain, we headed out the last six kilometres to the mouth of the Turbio and a much tamer Zodiac lap across the lake. Once ashore, we toasted our adventure with several *cervezas* and the promise of many more.

In the end, this trip was hardly about climbing, but going to a far-flung place that had known few visitors and likely never will. I still haven't reconciled with myself why anyone would labour so much to gain so little, but we all felt it a privilege to travel through these valleys and for a brief while be a part of them. It was a rich experience that changed us for the better. We will never forget it.

Acknowledgments

A huge embrace to everyone who helped us on our journey: Senja and MEC; Max and Christie; Bicho and Anna; Lucas, Gabi and Mariano; Jorge; Jorgito and all the other Argentines who extended bro-manship along the way.

Summary

First traverse of Torres Piritas and first ascent of the west summit (IV 5.11-), Lago Puelo National Park, Northern Patagonia, Argentina. FA: Paul McSorley, Andrew Querner, Will Stanhope, February 22, 2009.

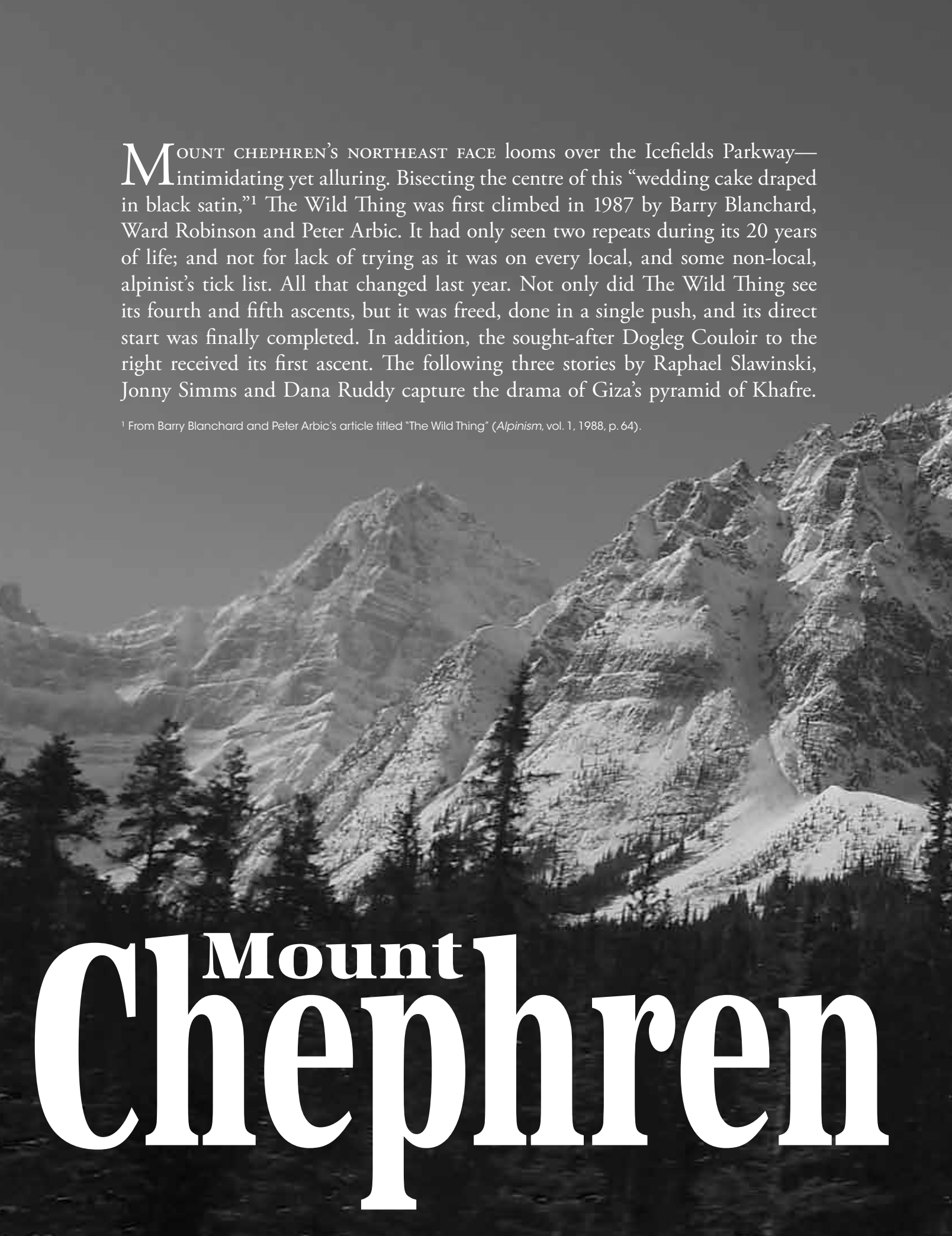
Todo los Caballos Lindos (V 5.11-, 450m, 15 pitches), north face of the west summit of Torres Piritas, Lago Puelo National Park, Northern Patagonia, Argentina. FA: Andrew Querner, Will Stanhope, February 24, 2009.

About the Author

Paul McSorley is an ACMG Assistant Alpine Guide based in Squamish, B.C. He is currently focusing his energies on needlepoint sewing (repairing his threadbare garb), horseracing (just the gambling part), and keeping his feet together while skiing. This was his fourth expedition to Patagonia.

Left: Todos los Caballos Lindos on the north face of Torres Piritas in the Turbio IV Valley, Lago Puelo National Park, Northern Patagonia, Argentina.
Photo: Andrew Querner

Right: Paul McSorely prepares his inflatable toy dinghy boat to raft down the Turbio River back to civilization.
Photo: Andrew Querner



Mount Chephren

Mount chephren's northeast face looms over the Icefields Parkway—intimidating yet alluring. Bisecting the centre of this "wedding cake draped in black satin,"[1] The Wild Thing was first climbed in 1987 by Barry Blanchard, Ward Robinson and Peter Arbic. It had only seen two repeats during its 20 years of life; and not for lack of trying as it was on every local, and some non-local, alpinist's tick list. All that changed last year. Not only did The Wild Thing see its fourth and fifth ascents, but it was freed, done in a single push, and its direct start was finally completed. In addition, the sought-after Dogleg Couloir to the right received its first ascent. The following three stories by Raphael Slawinski, Jonny Simms and Dana Ruddy capture the drama of Giza's pyramid of Khafre.

[1] From Barry Blanchard and Peter Arbic's article titled "The Wild Thing" (*Alpinism*, vol. 1, 1988, p. 64).

The northeast face of Mount Chephren: (1) The Wild Thing. (2) The Wild Thing Direct. (3) The Dogleg Couloir. Photo: Kevin Mahoney

The Dogleg

Raphael Slawinski

It was our second night on Mount Chephren that sticks in my mind. A night spent surfing the line between control and chaos. The final rock band on the face festooned with obscene snow mushrooms, like a scene from a demented dream. But I am getting ahead of myself. I cannot recall when I first heard about the line right of The Wild Thing on Chephren's northeast face referred to as The Dogleg, but the name was appropriate and it stuck. The line starts out as a snow gully, then at two-thirds height bends abruptly left, culminating in a series of chimneys cutting through the rock bands guarding the summit. I would look up at it every time I drove the Icefields Parkway, however it was not until the spring of 2007 that I got around to attempting it.

On a crisp morning in early April, with the first hint of dawn already lighting up the eastern sky, Dana Ruddy, Eamonn Walsh and I skied away from the road towards The Dogleg. Even more so than Mount Temple or Mount Andromeda, Mount Chephren is truly a roadside mountain, and we were already a few hundred metres up the initial gully when the sun hit the face. I never cease to be amazed at how quickly pleasure can turn to terror in the mountains. Dana and I were already out of the gully, but Eamonn was still in it when a heavy slide came thundering down. I kept waiting for the tug of the rope at my waist that would drag me off of my feet, but mercifully it never came. We spent the next few hours hunkered under a rock outcrop. Once things quieted down, we got out of there as quickly as possible.

Less than 12 months later I was back, enticed by a full moon and a good forecast. Dana and Eamonn had already made plans for The Wild Thing next door, though graciously consented to me trying The Dogleg without them. Originally there were supposed to be three of us, but in the end it was only Pierre Darbellay and me who booted up the giant snow cone at the base of the line. An avalanche tried to toss me back down the cone as I soloed the initial ice step. Fortunately, it proved to be the only one all day. We simul-climbed past our high point from the year before and continued up through some more ice steps, a broad snowfield and into a narrowing couloir. By mid-afternoon the couloir had steepened into a vertical corner. We pulled out the rest of the rack and the other rope, and got down to business.

The next two pitches, thinly iced affairs with decent rock gear, would have been fun had it not been for the overnight pack pulling at my shoulders. After some whining I managed to grunt my way onto the largest of the ledges that girdle Chephren's summit block. A crater in the slope blasted out by a snow mushroom that had fallen from somewhere above helpfully exposed some choss into which iron was driven, lashed together and called an anchor. The next rock band went quickly, and then it was time to look for a home for the night. After a few false starts, where we hit rock after digging through less than a metre of snow, we finally struck snow deep enough for a cave. With the entrance closed off and the stove roaring, it was easy to forget where we were. Sleep came easily.

In fact, we slept so well that we missed the alarm the next morning. When I looked outside, the clouds were barely above our bivy site despite a forecast for clear skies. The clouds did not look threatening so I did not worry. By mid-morning it started snowing. Strangely enough I only realized this after the fact, when I looked at photos from the climb. At the time I was too intent on the moment, holding the ropes when Pierre came hammering down the chimney. Suddenly the sky was full of rocks, and I tried to make myself as small as possible at the belay. Fortunately we found the tool he had lost during the fall, but his hip was bruised so I went up to finish the pitch.

As Pierre climbed past my stance to begin the next pitch, I remarked cheerfully that it looked like the angle above eased—the chimney turning into a snow gully. For the first, but not the last time that day, I was right about the snow but wrong about the angle. Snow choked the overhanging chimney above, tricking my brain into thinking the terrain was less than vertical. Two hard pitches later we emerged onto the snow ledge below the final rock band. By then the light snowfall of the morning had turned into a swirling mass of heavy flakes. With strange detachment I watched small slides start on the slope and gather volume as they disappeared down the chimney, following the parallel lines of the ropes.

Tools sliding off of marginal edges, crampons sparking on the smooth limestone, I managed to get up the next pitch without falling. Actually, that is not quite true: I was standing on a snow mushroom fiddling in a nut when I felt myself fall—and then stop. The umbilical on my tool had caught my plummet. While Pierre seconded the pitch, I tried to memorize the terrain above the belay in the fading light. The continuation of the chimney system rose straight up, while off to the right, weird snow blobs promised lower-angled terrain. I headed that way first, only to retreat from a pinnacle below a blank wall. I was balancing between snow mushrooms, traversing back left above Pierre's stance, when for the second time that evening

I felt myself free-falling. Overhanging rock and snow rushed upward. I bounced to a stop 10 metres lower without touching a thing.

I yarded my way back up to the cam that had held me, which now became my anchor. Pierre came up and continued across the traverse I had helped clear of snow. When he passed me we had an unspoken exchange about bivying at my stance atop a giant mushroom—the flattest spot we had come across all day. In the end, the cold, wind and falling snow kept us from voicing the thought of stopping for the night. Instead, at 3 a.m., I started up what I sincerely hoped would be the last pitch. The keychain thermometer on my pack showed -15 C, but between the fatigue and the spindrift blowing from the summit ridge, it felt colder. My first charge, up the right-hand branch of the chimney, failed when faced with an unprotected, overhanging off-width. I traversed into the left-hand branch, but after unsuccessfully trying first squeezing and then drytooling my way up, I began to have doubts about it, too. In the end, however, a few knifeblade placements, which I shamelessly hung from, delivered me to more reasonable ground above.

The wind gusted across the summit ridge as I struggled into my belay jacket and overmitts. I was too cold and tired to feel exultation, only relief. Pierre came up the pitch, somehow manhandling both our packs. As we traversed across Chephren's wind-scoured southern slopes, they slowly turned from black to grey. Day was breaking. Six hours later, after wading down avalanche slopes that thankfully stayed put, and post-holing to the ground with every single step in the valley-bottom woods, we were back at the car. We had a bottle of single malt waiting for us but we were too dehydrated to celebrate. We brushed a thick layer of fresh snow from the roof of the car and drove off to find water.

Summary

The Dogleg Couloir (V+ M7 A1) on the northeast face of Mt. Chephren (3266m), Banff National Park, Canadian Rockies. FA: Pierre Darbellay, Raphael Slawinski, March 22–24, 2008.

About the Author

Dr. Slawinski has a PhD in geophysics with a major in Canadian Rockies' choss. He has climbed the northeast face of Mount Chephren four times—twice in summer and twice in winter—resulting in two new routes. Besides alpinism, hobbies include drytooling, bouldering, sport climbing, ice climbing and Yam-ineering.

Raphael Slawinski on the first belayed pitch of climbing during the first ascent of The Dogleg Couloir. Photo: Pierre Darbellay

Big Game

Jonny Simms

This story brings the reader to the rainy West Coast. My armpits continued to mould with the elevated arm positions of exterior siding and the relentless coastal rinse. Whistler's top-notch parties and staggering number of social events can cause one's inner alpine rat to tediously gnaw through the bars and break out of the cage. I had had enough of the eight-to-four show and made a move to the alpine heartland where dreams are reality, where men are made. The sacred circle of alpine specialists in Golden, B.C., will always draw me back from wherever I travel and choose to temporarily to live. They are my momentum for alpine assaults.

"Actually, I've been losing sleep over that route," Jon Walsh admitted to me when I inquired about The Wild Thing. "Big game," he quipped.

With that, off we went up the Icefields Parkway for a reconnaissance, but our arrival proved a little late for any sort of quality observations. A night in my VW Westphalia parked below Mount Chephren was spent wondering what the future entailed. Jon and I had no set plans; we just wanted to have a look at what was in shape.

Dawn dusted us with five centimetres of overnight snow. The majestic Rockies radiated the morning's alpenglow. Upon inspection of Mount Chephren's northeast-facing The Wild Thing, we concluded there was no need to drive and look any further. Conditions looked good.

By 9 a.m., we had finished packing all the necessary accoutrements for a two-day mission. We departed the highway, crossed the river and were at the base in a few hours. Continuous sloughing from the previous night's snow had us waiting for the guts to drain, but as I've learned from Jon when sessioning in the alpine, the rope always goes up. I wasn't really interested in getting snow-jobbed from the spindrift, so I declined first lead.

"Aw, I never mind getting slapped around a little in the mountains," Jon said to me. Hood up, he took the lead. Rope wasn't going up very fast at first. Jon was pinned in the pouring spindrift five metres off the deck for a good 15 minutes. There was no point belaying on my part because he hadn't put the first screw in yet. My time was spent shooting video with running commentary. Persistence and Jon have a lot in common. Again, the rope went up.

We simul-climbed a good chunk of the first half of the route, which consisted of WI3 and WI4 steps along with a lot of snow couloir. Our bivy was reached at about 4:30 p.m. This temporary home was a whaleback rib splitting the two main couloirs on the face, that we flattened enough to set up our tiny tent.

At 5 a.m., we departed the camp and continued up the couloir for more ice climbing until the "5.9 horror step" was encountered just as the sun made its appearance. At this point I was on the sharp end. I equalized two uninspiring knifeblades, climbed three metres up, but declined to commit. While down-climbing, I yelled to Jon, "I don't think this is going to happen."

"Well, what's your plan B?" he impatiently asked.

Pissed, I screamed back, "I don't fuckin' know! What's your plan B?"

No response from the spooked horse. I grumbled, then untied from one of our two ropes, coiled it and threw it in my pack, which I left wedged behind the base of the rotting frozen waterfall. Continuing up the pitch, I imagined myself at Haffner Creek where one could hobble out if a tool popped and a fall occurred. Five metres up, I glanced down at the steep snow slope below and wondered if my ski-guiding season was about to be spent on the couch.

Slowly I progressed upwards another five metres and was pleased to find a solid horizontal crack, which I proceeded to lace up with three cams. Thank God, I thought to myself as my mouth watered with endorphins. At this point in the game the pitch traversed horizontally left on solid drytool placements. Damn! I'm run-out again, I pondered. Well, I suppose it *is* alpine climbing. After the sharp 90-degree horizontal turn and five metres of sideways climbing, I reached the base of the next couloir section. With a decent belay constructed, I brought up the spooked horse.

Thinking to myself that I'd lost my ice touch and I'd have to stop over-analyzing situations, Jon gave a few hints of being scared too. I realized that the pitch was as intense as I had originally thought.

The route continued up for more snow climbing and a quality M6 pitch, which Jon sent, then I found myself racking up for the A3 crux pitch of the route. Daunting as it looked, I progressed slowly up the initial run-out tube finding RPs on the left-hand wall of the corner leading to a cave-like alcove. This is where past parties had belayed from, and digging through the overhanging snow mushrooms, I found a solid green Camalot, inspiring me enough to continue the upward assault. More overhanging snow mushrooms guarded access to the ice. The Camalot at my waist gave me the confidence to attack the suspended white dollops. With a thud, the whole mass of snow went tumbling down the corner, grazing my left thigh.

The force of it jerked me enough downwards that I thought I was off and the send was botched, but my precarious drytool placements held.

"Sweet," I thought, "that's that."

I allowed my heart rate to slow. Gaining the ice was quite difficult. The cave below meant a lack of feet for the moves onto the ice. Powerful tool placements had me locked off, nose pressed against the ice pillar. Inching up, I then rotated sideways and found a chimney-style no-hands rest. A comical conversation with Jon ensued. He asked me how that felt and if I was finished having "a moment."

"I love moments when they're finished," I respond back from under a steady stream of spindrift. Jon was stoked seconding the pitch. I've seen this psyched persona before when he's new routing. His shit-eating grin said it all. "Big game," he offered.

Fired up from freeing the old aid pitch, we continued up more snow climbing to the upper third of the face. Looking up this section reminded both of us of alpine days in Chamonix, a rock solid and inspiring place—both places that is.

The time was about 2 p.m. and we had two hours left to climb six more pitches. At the base of the upper face we both silently agreed it was an appropriate time to start simul-climbing again. We covered ground in good time, but my mind had melted from the previous run-out leads. I built a pin anchor and brought Jon up to the belay. Almost dark, I exposed my spent mind on a platter and gave Jon the reins. From years of burly ascents in Patagonia, Europe and the Karakoram, I knew he would get us to the top.

"I'm just warming up," he told me.

Comforted by the eyes of the spooked horse, we continue. The rope went up.

In the dark and headlamp on, Jon happily drytooled his way up another two pitches of M6 climbing on scratchy rock and unsupportive snow. The exit ice chimney was capped by a bonus chockstone-roof exit—more quality climbing. His block led us to the summit ridge, and at 9 p.m. we topped out to a starry evening.

After a couple of quick photos we started the long process of rappelling the route. Jon led all the raps and I happily followed, wrapped up in my down parka. By 7 a.m., we were back at the van and could reflect on the awesome climbing, good exposure and a fine position.

Summary

The first free ascent of The Wild Thing (VI M7 WI5), northeast face, Mt. Chephren (3266m), Canadian Rockies. FFA: Jonny Simms, Jon Walsh, Nov. 26–27, 2008.

About the Author

Jonny Simms is currently residing on the West Coast of B.C., where he works an assortment of jobs including ski guiding, film-industry work and carpentry. When not hanging it out there in the alpine, he enjoys surfing and having cocktails with his buddies.

Jonny Simms on a delicate mixed section about halfway up The Wild Thing during the first free ascent. Photo: Jon Walsh

Weekend Thing

Dana Ruddy

Avalanches had pummelled my two previous attempts to climb the northeast face of Mount Chephren. My third undertaking, in March 2008, resulted in three very intense days on the famed The Wild Thing. Two of those days were spent in a storm avoiding the constant bombardment of spindrift avalanches. Eamonn Walsh, Jay Mills and I had battled our way through the crux rock band when the clouds began to swirl. Frantic to escape the perilous elements, we sought shelter. After at least a dozen botched attempts to dig a snow cave, the shallow, facetted snow finally granted us protection. We settled into the six-metre-long horizontal tunnel that gradually tapered to the width of a coffin. Eamonn, a prototypical MOG (man of girth), simply would not fit. Drawing the short straw, I climbed to the bottom of the hole. When the spindrift began filling the entrance, Eamonn was forced to spend the night climbing in and out of his sleeping bag to combat the constant threat of being buried. My claustrophobic quarters did not seem so bad after all. Morning saw no change so we resolved ourselves to the overwhelming task of descending the route. Twenty double-rope rappels brought us back to our skis and the security of valley bottom. While safely sipping roadside beers, we witnessed an all-consuming avalanche rip down the route. The mountain gods had been watching over us that day.

In late february 2009, amidst one of the most brilliant weather spells in recent memory, I was stuck at work, trying not to acknowledge the perfect conditions that were passing me by. Apparently, I wasn't the only one watching the skies. Eamonn phoned proposing a return trip to The Wild Thing, this time with our good friend Raphael Slawinski. However, the shrinking weather window of opportunity combined with work commitments restricted our ascent to a meagre two-day weekend. Still, ideal winter climbing conditions being such a rarity in the Rockies, we could not resist the temptation to try The Wild Thing in a continuous push.

At 3:00 a.m., my alarm sounded. I crawled out of bed at home to begin my morning ritual of boiling water and checking the weather. Two eggs and a cup of coffee later, I was speeding down Jasper's main street bound for the Icefields Parkway. Just after 6:00 a.m., I pulled up behind Raph's car on the highway below Chephren. A quick pack up—made easy since we weren't bringing bivy gear—and we were on our way. After an hour of skiing, we exited the trees to a full frontal view of the northeast face. It was not until then that Eamonn filled me in on the plan to climb the unfinished direct start as opposed to the indirect snow slog of the original line. This stream of uninterrupted ice flowing like a veil over the lower rock bands looked irresistible. In December 2003, Kevin Mahoney and Ben Gilmore—visiting climbers from New England—were the first to climb these ice pitches, but were turned back by a storm just above the crux. Thus, the direct start, had never been climbed to the summit; yet another challenge we would add to our already busy day. If successful, it would also be the first single-push ascent of a Canadian Rockies' grade VI in winter.

I took the first block leading pitch after pitch of deceptively steep ice and snow. Engaging climbing led through cliffs of brilliant orange quartzite that were interrupted only by the linear streak of ice that would deliver us to the intersection of the original route.

After a long section of simul-climbing we found ourselves at the foot of the crux rock band. The light faded, the headlamps came out and Raph started up the crux pitch. I could hear only a few groans as he forced his body through the squeeze chimney. Seconding, I had no choice but to hang my pack from a sling on my harness in order to get through; the MOG employed deep-breathing exercises accordingly. Raphael made short work of the next pitch, which brought us to the ledge where Eamonn, Jay and I had epic-ed the previous spring.

It was just before midnight when we decided to rest, rehydrate and eat. After chopping a ledge, Eamonn brewed warm drinks and prepared a freeze-dried meal while Raph and I dozed between bouts of shivering. Flashbacks from the last time I'd been on this ledge came flooding back. I was grateful for the calm night—though every whisper of wind made me flinch. It was a relief to see nothing except sparkling stars in the moonless sky.

After an hour-and-a-half break, we were slowly moving again. Cold and weary, I was glad that Raph agreed to lead another pitch. Under normal circumstances the climbing would have been rather simple; however, the efforts of the day

were beginning to take toll. Needing a breather, Mr. Slawinski handed over the sharp end to a seemingly spry Mr. Walsh. LED luminescence from Eamonn's headlamp ascended steadily up into the darkness. Staying conscious became an ongoing battle for Raph and I as our bodies craved sleep. Being tied to the anchor was the only thing that kept me from falling over.

As dawn began to spread across the sky, I could feel strength return to my body. Although I had not slept for more than a few seconds at a time, the light of day brought rejuvenation, allowing us to fully enjoy the glorious climbing of the upper headwall. The final drama would unfold as Eamonn fought with a steep, featureless corner. Raph and I braced ourselves in anticipation for what would have been a nasty fall. Thankfully, fancy footwork prevailed and Eamonn remained connected. Raph, keen to take over, led us up the final few pitches. A body-width runnel of ice tucked inside a steep chimney pointed the way to the top. The last pitch was particularly classy: a large chockstone capped the chimney, behind which we wormed.

Stepping onto the south side of the mountain was like getting beamed to another world. The Rockies were laid out before us, glowing in afternoon light. We could see northwards past Mount Forbes to the famous peaks of the Columbia Icefield, and even further to Mount Clemenceau. To the south, the north face of Howse Peak dominated the view while off in the distance the unmistakable twin towers of the Goodsirs could just be made out. It was a perfect alpine moment. We had worked hard struggling in the shadow of the northeast face; now we relaxed in the sun taking it all in.

After a brief visit to the summit there was no avoiding the post-hole marathon that was waiting for us on the descent. Four hours later, we were parading along the road. It was surreal walking the last hundred metres to the car, looking up to the rampart of rock and snow that we had just been amongst.

Monday morning was a cold one at -25 C, and I was stuck with the miserable task of insulating the unheated buildings I had been working on for the past few months. On any other day I would have cringed at the thought of stuffing battens of pink fibreglass. This day, however, I couldn't help but smile. Raph was teaching in Calgary and Eamonn was staking rocks in Banff, but I knew we were all revelling in the joy of having just climbed one of the great lines of the range.

Summary

First complete ascent of The Wild Thing Direct (VI M7 WI5), northeast face, Mt. Chephren (3266m). FA: Dana Ruddy, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, February 21–22, 2009.

About the Author

A mountain local since birth, Dana Ruddy was reared in Jasper, Alberta. He still calls Jasper home where he lives with his wife, Cristin, and their two dogs, Dex and Harper, and works as a carpenter. Turn-offs are climbing under seracs and at Haffner Creek, while turn-ons include south-facing limestone and clucking.

Dana Ruddy leading pitch three of the direct start to The Wild Thing.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

A violent flash cuts the distant night. "We need to get down fast!" I yell. It is almost midnight and for the second time today a big, black electric cloud is coming straight at us. There might be a reason after all why the Bugaboos are renowned for frequent lightening storms. We downclimb the summit ridge of South Howser Tower as fast as we can, trying to be careful not to make any mistakes. There are plenty of loose holds to pull on and going for a flight with one of them would only make matters worse.

We arrive at the top of the Minaret, throw the ropes and immediately start rapping. We move fast, but the electrical rage is moving faster. The roar is deafening. After a few raps, the ropes refuse to pull—stuck! We put all our gear on one side of the ledge and sit as far away as we can to maximize our distance from anything metal. We are sitting ducks waiting to be fried. "Well, I hope getting hit by lightening will give us mutant finger strength," I share with Nico.

We laugh nervously.

BUGABOO JAM SESSION

Seán Villanueva

A little annoyed, I started filling out the envelope. I really wanted to avoid having to pay the full fee for the campground. We had been in Squamish for about a week and had always managed to share a site, but our luck seemed to have run out. I searched the Chief Campground for people to split the fee with, but no cigar. This was going to put a hole in our budget. Squamish was the first centre of operation on our four-month climbing trip in North America. Next up, the Bugaboos; however, being without a car we were dependent on the rides we could find. We were told that hitching a lift was not going to be easy with all our baggage.

"Hey man, would you be interested in sharing a campsite?" a shadowy silhouette inquired.

"Ah, yeah," I stuttered, not believing my luck. Where did this guy come from? It was too dark to even see his face, but it turned out that Minnesota Lee was planning to stay in Squamish for a while, then progress to the Bugaboos.

"You wouldn't happen to have some space in your car for two guys and a lot of gear, by any chance?" I threw in. I didn't even know what he looked like, but we had found our drive.

From applebee campground we spotted an amazing splitter crack, which tears up the blank, steep wall on the right side of Snowpatch Spire. After some research, we found out the line was called the Tom Egan Memorial Route, and more importantly, it had not yet had a free ascent. All the more reason to check it out, we thought, and got straight down to business. After a couple of pitches we reached the base of the crack and just looking up at the thin seam slapped me right back into place. My heart sank down into my shoes as I felt small and ridiculous. Nico, however, was as psyched and optimistic as ever, so I tried to hide my doubts. Good thing it was his turn to lead. The gear being thin and delicate, he quickly resorted to aid climbing, preferring to check out the moves after checking out the pro. As he pulled up on gear I still couldn't believe how positive he stayed: "Yeah man! All the holds are here. It's going to go."

Well, I thought to myself, this guy just did the second ascent of Cobra Crack in Squamish, a route renowned to be one of the hardest cracks in the world. So if anybody can climb it, I guess there is a good chance he can. But as he tried to

Previous page: The view from an open bivy high on the Minaret on South Howser Tower. Photo: Seán Villanueva
Below: Nicolas Favresse on the flaring and difficult-to-protect second pitch of Doubting the Millenium on the Minaret of South Howser Tower. Photo: Seán Villanueva

pull on the holds, reality sunk in. We quickly decided to complete our day by finishing on The Power of Lard (5.12). As we were going up, two climbers were rapping down. They must have heard our climbing commands because I overheard their conversation.

"Hey, who are those French guys on the route?"

"Do you think it might be those two Belgian guys who were in Squamish?"

"The power of Internet," I chuckled. They must have heard of Nico's Cobra Crack send.

"*Bonjour*," one of them threw at me with a heinous accent while rappelling past us. Then he suddenly stopped and asked if my name was Seán. Turns out I had met Chris Brazeau and Will Stanhope two years ago in Patagonia while bouldering in Chalten between weather windows.

We met up again down in Applebee Campground where Jon Walsh came to join the party. Chris and Jon are locals and the Bugaboos are their backyard. They were up there any possible chance they could get, which was pretty much any time the weather was amicable. They were pretty crucial to our success amongst the spires by setting us up with key beta.

There was always something happening at their campsite. Big meals with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables to be shared, and lots of drinks to stay "hydrated". When I first saw all the empty beer cans and whisky bottles lying outside their tents, I was convinced it was a strategy to make people think that they weren't in a hurry to get on the routes early. I later witnessed with my own eyes—and hangover—that they were actually throwing that stuff down. Despite the partying, they were always the first up in the morning and off climbing, but they had a certain deadline, which I believe they called cocktail hour, when they had to be back. No matter how close they were to the summit, if cocktail hour was approaching, they were on their way down.

Applebee was full of people. Then bad weather came in, making the sun disappear along with the people. We had only carried one load up the three-hour hike, but luckily we had sacrificed food and rock climbing gear in order to carry up the important equipment—the mandolin and flute. Even though the cracks outside where full of snow, we had some intense jams and managed to keep ourselves well entertained. Food was next on the list of items to bring up.

We took advantage of the rain to move basecamp to East Creek, leaving behind the fast-paced, hectic Applebee. During our stay on the east side, we were mostly alone except for Bob Dylan and Jimmy Hendricks, the two local chipmunks trying to steal our food.

Just like the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer, the Minaret was calling for our prayers. The conical-shaped pillar with its cracks that cut from bottom to top was crushing our faces against the ground, and we needed to get up there to allow our nostrils to open and breathe properly. A crack system up the middle of the face leads to an obvious left-facing dihedral system. The route, Doubting the Millennium, was established in 2000 by Americans Bobby Schultz and Jay Sell at VI 5.10 A3. Now the muezzin was calling out for it to be freed.

The second pitch certainly offered its share of challenges. It was a less-than-vertical flaring crack with thin protection and delicate moves. After a couple of falls, we succeeded in redpointing the pitch. On the third pitch, the rope drag was pulling me down as I started to sketch out in a flaring chimney, and my foot gently touched a big, loose block. I could hear Nico shouting something but I couldn't decipher his message. Time to put in some protection, I thought, but as I looked at my harness I noticed I didn't have much gear left. I put in a terrible looking green Alien and tried to pull up slack to clip it.

"Just need 10 more centimetres!"

Nico's yelling became clear as blue sky: "End of the rope!" I was in trouble and needed to downclimb to a lower ledge.

Seán Villanueva on flute and Nicolas Favresse on mandolin, jamming at the East Creek Bivy with Lost Feather Pinnacle (left) and Wide Awake Tower behind. Photo: Jon Walsh

"Rock!" I screamed as the loose block launched itself into the void and I started sliding down the chimney. I barely managed to stop myself as I saw the chunk of granite ricochet off the wall straight towards Nico.

"Rock! Rock!"

Miraculously, it missed him by millimetres.

Four pitches up, we gained the start of the main corner system, but pretty quickly the stemming caused a brutal calf pump. I was lured into the overhanging wall to the right, followed by big hollow flakes and loose blocks. This led us to easier ground and the top of the Minaret. We were happy about our new addition to the wall, which we called Millennium Escape (5.12-, 600m), but while rappelling down Doubting the Millennium, and seeing the upper pitches, we couldn't help but feel the attraction. Upon touching firm ground, we swore to return for the original line.

The next morning I woke up feeling like somebody had stuck a knife in my back. It looked like all the climbing and carrying heavy loads had caught up with me. I spent the whole day lying down trying to persuade myself that the back pain would miraculously disappear so we could answer the call of the muezzin. The following day my back felt even worse, so I swallowed a couple of painkillers and retreated to Golden, crawling to the chiropractor. He did his magic and a few days later we were back in East Creek for more action. The weather had been bad during our little holiday to town so the big rock faces were still plastered. We opted to try something on the Pigeon Feathers.

A beautiful dihedral system leading into an intimidating black roof on Lost Feather Pinnacle quickly caught our attention. We were surprised to run into bolted belays on the first part of the climb, but after the crux pitch, we found no traces. We later found out the bolts were placed during a 2004 attempt by Sean Isaac, Grant Statham and Andrew Querner, and that the upper section was the upper part of Back at Bob's (5.11 A2), a route put up by Chris Weidner and Duncan Burke the same summer. The climbing was exceptional: splitter hands, fingers, fists and off-widths. We freed the crux pitch, which offered hard and pumpy moves between angling triple-cracks. The pitch finished with a scary move on a big flake that creaked every time we pulled on it. Yelling out "Please don't break, flake!" seemed to keep it in its place. We stemmed and chimneyed our way up the awesome black dihedral and finished in a wet, overhanging fist crack that required a lot of grunting and panting. The Black Panter has some amazing climbing, all free, starting up an unfinished line and finishing on an un-freed line.

We knew that Doubting the Millennium would be harder than the free variation we had done, but it was a more striking line and we felt obliged to try again.

An alpine start would give us more time to unlock the crux, so with the help of the full moon we were on the wall at 5 a.m. By noon, we were just below the previously avoided crux pitch—a thin crack cutting straight up to a good ledge. Suddenly the weather changed and in no time, snowflakes were falling and lightening was coming our way. For fear of being struck, Nico resorted to aid climbing and rushed to finish the pitch so we could start rappelling as soon as possible. Just as we were about to pull the rope, we noticed that the storm might just miss us, and even though it didn't look very stable, we decided to hang around a bit to see what would happen. There was tension in the air but we decided to go back up. We stressfully worked the pitch while being buffeted by strong winds. Black clouds and lightening lurked in the distance.

I clipped a rivet and then three copperheads before entering the sequence—free climbing above aid gear. Before I knew it, I was above the crux, my legs quivering as I smeared them in the flaring crack. My body was turning to jelly and my mind was fracturing, so I focused on my breathing and decided not to fall. I blubbered my way upwards and pulled onto the ledge, releasing a loud victory scream.

The sky looked less hostile, or so we thought, which kept us moving towards the summit. The light faded as we simulclimbed the ridge to the apex of South Howser Tower. The silence in the atmosphere was tangible; something wasn't right. As we pulled over the top, we saw flashes coming our way.

On the way down, we decided to stop and sit on a big ledge. Waiting to be electrocuted, all hopes of survival were lost. But then, fear slowly started to turn into admiration as we marvelled at the natural lightshow. A high-charged bolt hit the valley floor sparking a forest fire. It appeared that the Howsers were going to be spared a direct hit this time, so we enjoyed the spectacle.

Back on the ground after 20 hours on the go, we still had to walk back to basecamp—an *exhausting* 50 metres away. The next day was a well-deserved rest day composing new musical tunes.

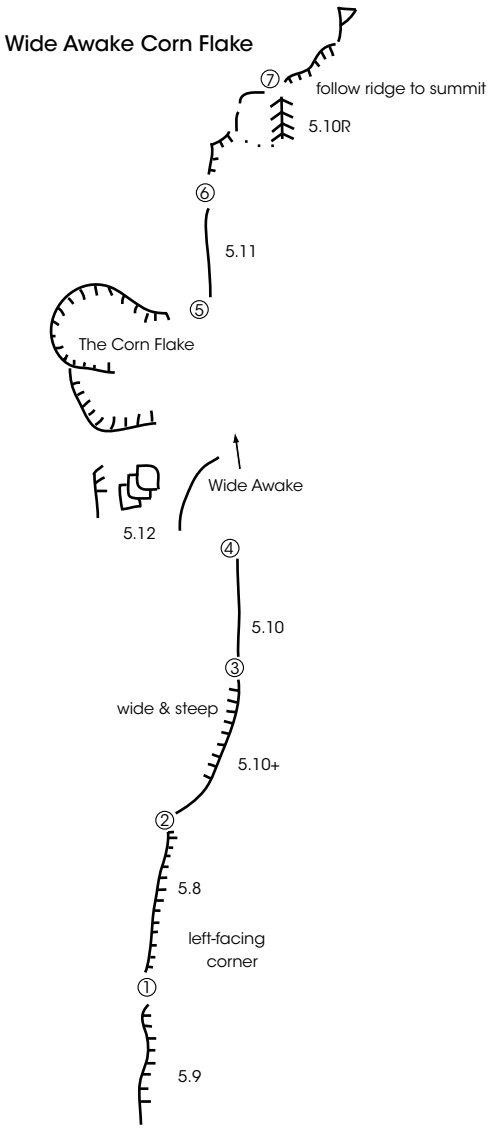
The weather came in, as did the snow, so we abandoned ship for refueling in Golden. After a couple of days of r 'n' r, we headed back up with our buddy Ben Ditto. The hope was to get on North Howser, but there was a lot of new snow on the peaks so we opted to try some smaller spires while the bigger ones cleaned up. We decided to try freeing Wide Awake (5.10 A2, 400m) on Wide Awake Tower of the Pigeon Feather group. With binoculars we spotted a huge flake in the shape of a gigantic ear just left of the crux pitch.

"Looks like an amazing feature," Nico offered, so up we went.

The crux turned out to be Nico's lead and for a second he hesitated: straight up, or off left to the ear.

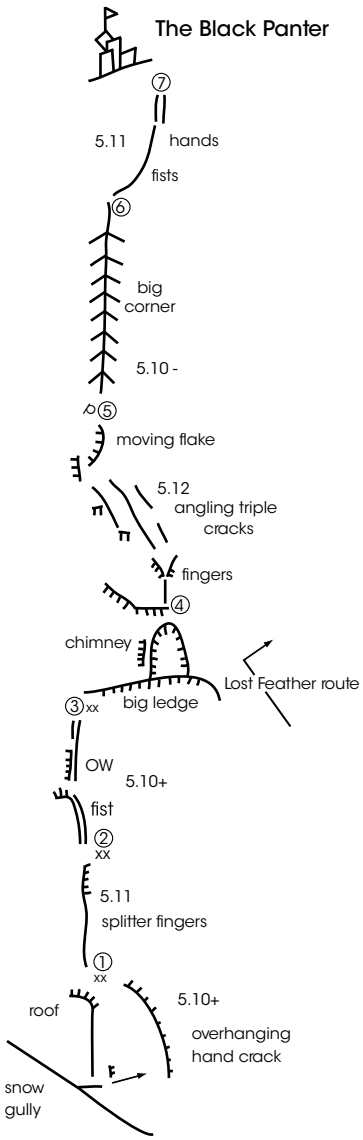
"It just looks like so much fun," he said and *à gauche* it was. He traversed out on a gritty slab and it seemed to take him a while to figure out the moves. As he reached out to the crack, he let out a big roar and I knew it was going to be hard. I followed, with Ben talking me through the beta. Delicate moves on razor-blade crimps barely got me across. Above, a short roof crack brought us to a scary 25-metre-tall flake as thick as a corn flake. You could see all the way behind it. Absolute madness. This ominous feature inspired us to name our variation Wide Awake Corn Flake (5.12).

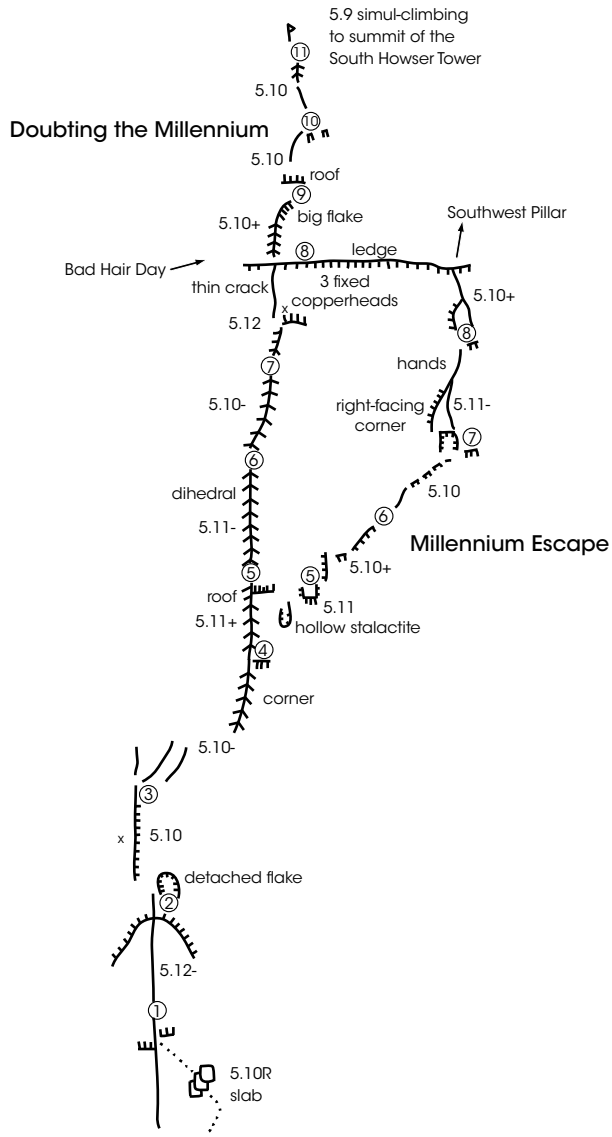
Seán Villanueva starting up pitch three of Doubting the Millenium on the Minaret of South Howser Tower. Photo: Nicolas Favresse



The bad weather came in yet again, so we locked ourselves up in our tent for a couple of days, buried alive by the white stuff. It was snowing hard. No ground, no sky, everything was white. I went out to empty my bladder and almost got lost trying to find my way back to the tent. It was like swimming in mashed potatoes. The Bugaboo rock-climbing season was over. We had 14 days of food left, so we stuffed ourselves, eating as much as we could before retreating to civilization. Breast-stroking through powder over the glaciers and cols with heavy packs, we struggled to navigate the whiteout. We managed a small glimpse of the rock faces—everything was plastered. Although there were still plenty of things we wanted to do, the weather decided it was time for us to move on.

Nicolas Favresse following pitch seven of The Black Panter on Lost Feather Pinnacle. Photo: Seán Villanueva





Summary

Millennium Escape (5.12-, 600m, 12 pitches), Minaret, South Howser Tower. FA: Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, August 5, 2008.

The Black Panter (5.12, 7 pitches), Lost Feather Pinnacle, Pigeon Feathers. FA: Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, August 15, 2008.

Doubting the Millennium (5.12, 11 pitches), Minaret, South Howser Tower. FFA: Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, August 17, 2008.

Wide Awake Corn Flake (5.12-, 8 pitches). Free variation to Wide Awake (5.10 A2, 400m) on Wide Awake Tower, Pigeon Feathers. FA: Ben Ditto, Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, August 23, 2008.

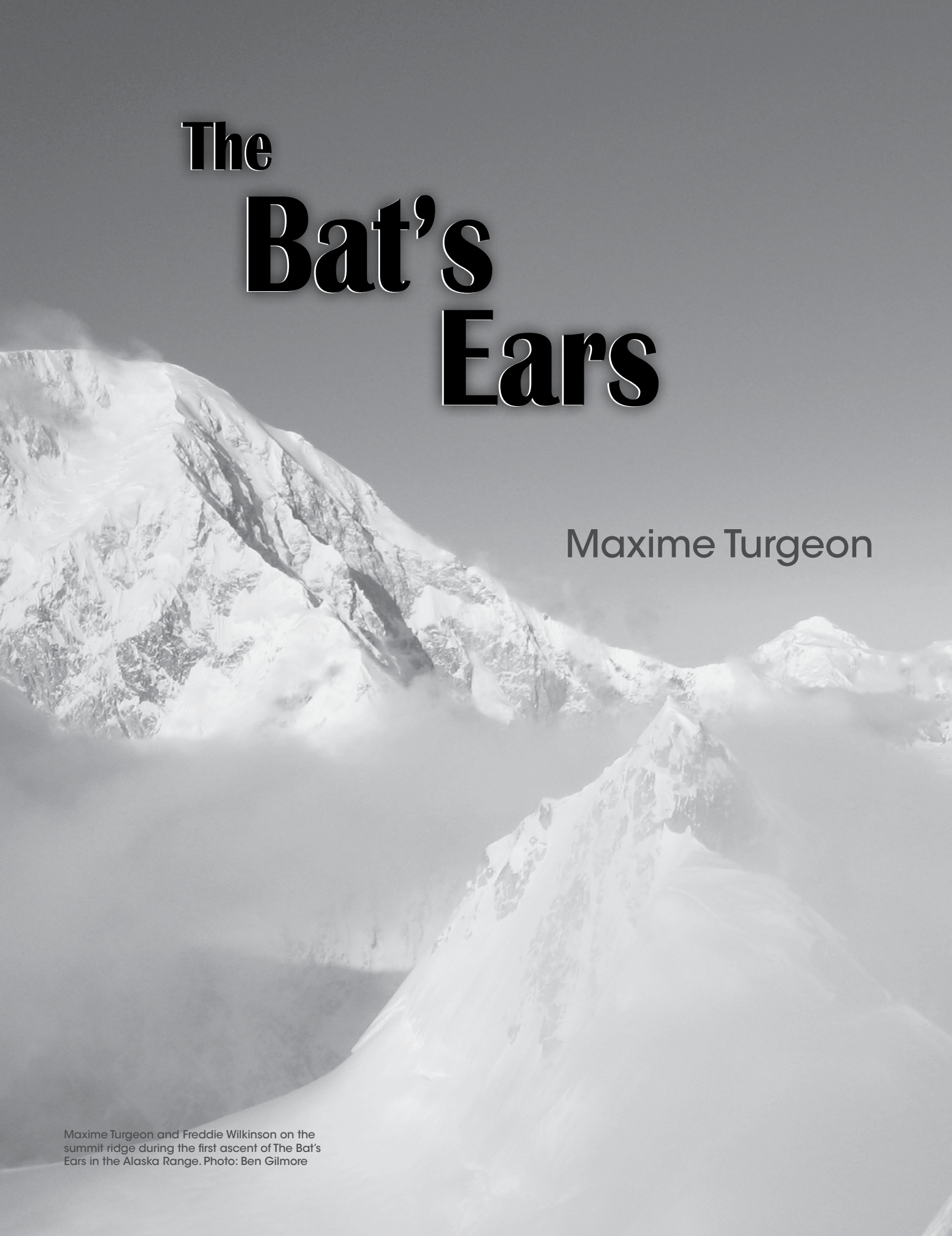
About the Author

Seán Villanueva is half-Belgian, half-Irish and half-Spanish. Yeah, that's right—he's 150 per cent man. When he's not guiding promising sport climbers (i.e. Nico Favresse) up towering spires, he teaches new climbers the tricks of the trade and chases pigeons off tall buildings in the city of Brussels.

Nicolas Favresse (left) and Seán Villanueva on top of the Minaret of South Howser Tower during their ascent of Millenium Escape. Photo: Seán Villanueva

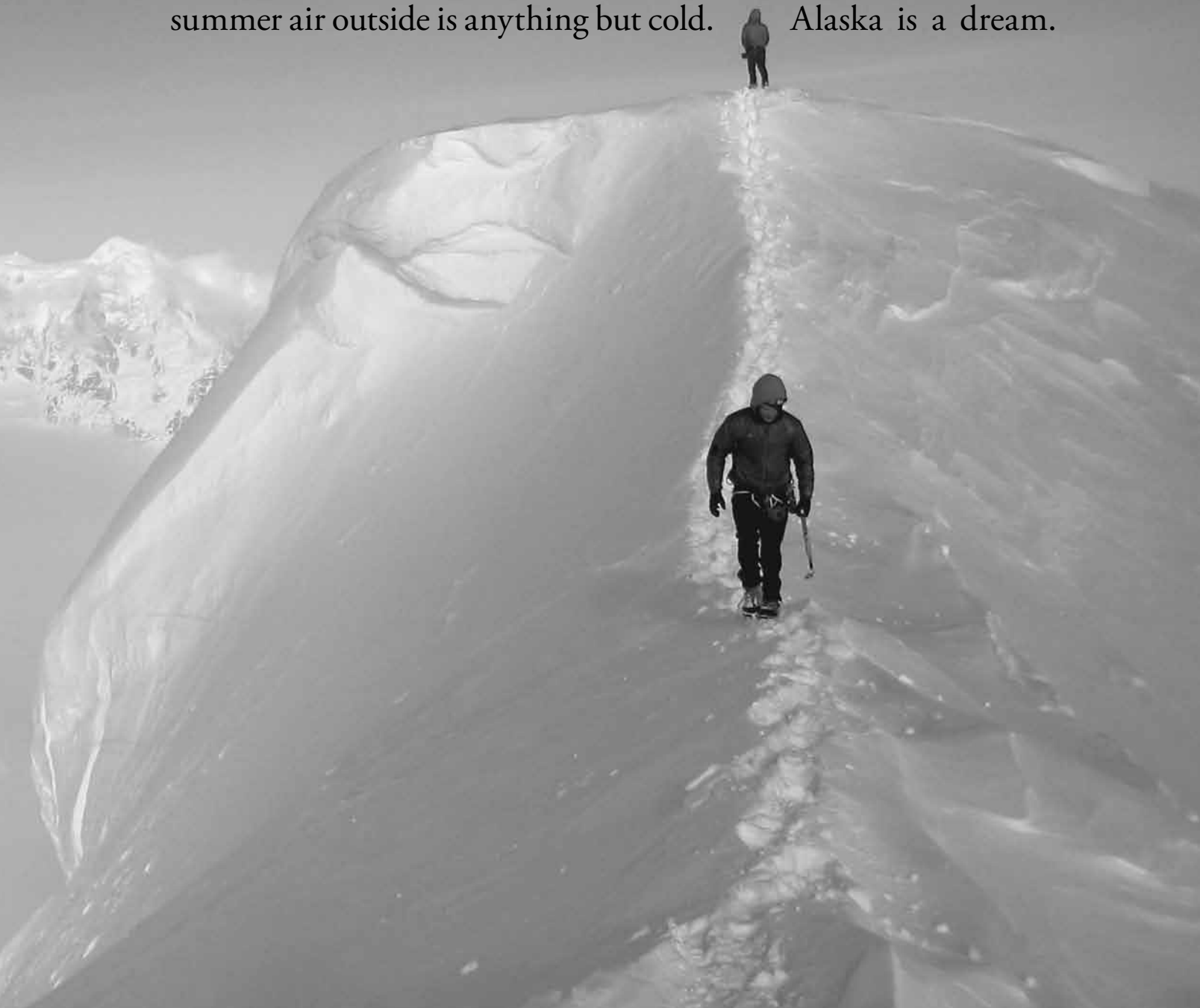
The Bat's Ears

Maxime Turgeon



Maxime Turgeon and Freddie Wilkinson on the summit ridge during the first ascent of The Bat's Ears in the Alaska Range. Photo: Ben Gilmore

Everything is calm. I cannot tell were I am. All sensations are numb except a warm feeling throughout—no pain, no sore muscles. Slowly, I can feel pressure building in my bladder, and suddenly I feel my limbs come back to life. My body is floating between two phases for what seems like an eternity until the pressure is too great and my fingers start to search for the zipper pull on my sleeping bag. It's nowhere to be found. As I move, cotton fabric tickles my skin. I take a big breath filling my lungs with a flowery fragrance. Eyes pop open. I'm home, in my bed. The summer air outside is anything but cold. Alaska is a dream.



I had left home exactly one month earlier. A depressed late-winter mood was securing its grip on me when I received an e-mail from Freddie Wilkinson of New Hampshire. He and Ben Gilmore were going on a trip to the remote Yentna Glacier in the Alaska Range. They were inviting me to join them for an attempt at what was likely the highest unclimbed peak in the range—a mountain dubbed The Bat's Ears. I met Freddie a few years ago after my climb with Louis-Philippe Ménard on the south face of Denali, and since then we had been trying to tie in together. Ben is one of those badass East Coast alpinists who inspired me to climb in Alaska in the first place. It didn't take much to convince me to accept their offer. They were going from April 19 to May 8, which was perfect. My girlfriend, Zoe Hart, was going to be in Alaska for her last ski guide exam and was going to be free after May 8 to climb with me. I couldn't have asked for better timing.

On April 21, under a perfect blue sky, Paul Roderick of Talkeetna Air Taxi landed Freddie, Ben and me at the edge of the boundary of Denali National Park near the Yentna Glacier. The high pressure lasted for the next three days, allowing us to set up camp and cache our gear 750 metres higher towards the base of the south face of The Bat's Ears. As soon as we got back to camp, the weather crapped out with a system that lasted almost a week.

On the fifth day of the storm, the sun made a brief appearance as it dipped behind the edges of the mountains. The hues of alpenglow painted the summits with a promise of a clearing trend. The barometer took a shy ascent, just enough to help us buckle our packs and flick on the alarm clock for the first time of the trip.

The buzz sounded at 2 a.m., and as I swept my arm across the tent to shut off the alarm my hand brushed the crispy nylon walls—a familiar touch giving me hope that the skies were clear and cold. We executed the middle-of-the-night drill that the three of us had dialed: start stove, melt snow, drink, eat, get dressed. As the light was growing towards the east, we broke trail across the basin to the 1,000-metre south face. The line was standing proud in front of us: a weakness of white runnels dripping directly from the summit. We had no idea of the kind of journey before us—a sea of unknown. As Freddie led across

Maxime Turgeon in the Gravel Gully during the first ascent of The Bat's Ears. Photo: Ben Gilmore

the 'shrund, the weight of our packs emphasized our cluelessness. We packed for all eventualities, but our rapid progress would deem the bivy gear unnecessary.

The smell and sound of the steel scraping granite, the vibration of picks anchoring into ice, these were familiar sensations. Every time we poked our heads around the corner, more ice runnels and splitter cracks appeared.

"Twenty-five feet!" I was confused. "Twenty-five more feet of rope left," filtered up from my south-of-the-border partners below.

What was that supposed to mean? Not used to that system, I tried to make a hasty mental conversion. It sounded like a lot but almost immediately the rope was stretched and I had to puzzle an anchor with the few bits of gear left on my harness.

Pitches transformed into blocks, and by afternoon most of the mountaintops were below our feet. Deep blue dominated the sky as far as we could see; the weather was holding strong. With the sun still high in the sky, the wall transformed into a snow rib and a few moments later we were on the summit ridge. The south face of Mount Foraker poked out of the horizon. It felt totally surreal. All around us we could see the mountains and faces of our past climbs. Memories of cramped bivies and epic descents came rushing back.

In the time it took to brew six litres of water on the flat ridgetop, the scenery started to change with bigger and bigger clouds building on the nearby peaks. There was no time to lose; we had to figure out a way down. The west ridge seemed to be our best option. As we cramponed our way down the snow rib, the clouds sank to the valley bottom making our descent feel like diving into a sea of steam. Short gullies and snowy steps kept popping up, forcing us inwards onto our front points, but soon afterwards a little clearing in the murk revealed the 'shrund just below our toes.

We made it back to the tents with the storm on our backs—a perfect sucker-hole. Twenty-three hours after leaving camp, we were back from a "day" of almost 1,800 metres of elevation gain. The bivy gear and two days' food was a miscalculated precaution that ended up being deadweight: payback for all the times things didn't go according to plan.

The south face of The Bat's Ears. Photo: Ben Gilmore

On may 3 at 9 p.m., in the most improbable weather, Paul buzzed over the ridges. Our books and iPods went flying in all directions; barely half an hour later, our stuff was piled on the side of the Kahiltna airstrip. Our new plan was to get one last good day of climbing in before Freddie and Ben had to leave.

The three of us were half asleep and in a daze from our instant switch of surroundings, but our jaws all simultaneously fell to the snow when we turned toward the North Buttress of Mount Hunter. It was covered with the most ice any of us had ever seen in our combined 15 trips to the Kahiltna. That was how the next chapter of my trip began, which I would call "the perfect alpine week."

Monday, May 5, 12:30 a.m., the alarm rang as the stoves went on. The blended aromas of coffee, fried bagels, eggs, cheese and bacon woke our senses. At 4 a.m., we regrouped at the base of the Moonflower Buttress. We had pushed ourselves breaking track, resulting in lots of sweat. At the base of the route, Ben pulled his socks off revealing a chunk of skin dangling from his heel. A half-dollar-sized blister was a hard way to start a 1,200-metre route.

The first block was mine—three rock bands, three climbers, easy to split. I followed Ben and Freddie's directions as they had already been on this section of the wall. Stellar ice runnels and a steep snow traverse placed us at the base of the Prow. Freddie and Ben screamed encouragement from below as my tools locked in the thin rock seam. Before realizing it, I clipped the anchor of the pendulum. I knew that Marko Prezelj had done it free, and I was already too far committed when I realized that the holds sucked. I kept matching front points on knobs, and just before I was really about to soil my pants, the icy side of the gully was within a tool's reach.

We made good progress but the weather was deteriorating fast. By Tamara's Traverse, the spindrift increased to a heavy flow. When I passed the rack to Freddie, I could see in his eyes that he knew what was waiting for him in the Shaft. We hid our cameras deep in our jackets and tightened our hoods over our helmets as Freddie disappeared under a white curtain of flowing snow—but the rope kept feeding out. Every time it came to the end we joined him as fast as we could, keeping our heads down. By 5 p.m., we made it to the top of the Shaft and onto the second ice band, but there was no way we could have made it through an open bivy in those conditions. Ben didn't seem too worried about it. He took the rack and pulled us two more rope lengths to the left onto a snow mushroom on a rocky ridge. An hour later we were all hanging in a 15-centimetre-thick snow shell, a metre wide, three-and-a-half metres long and a metre high. Aside from the fact that Ben was pissed that he broke part of one of the walls while digging, he had created the best shelter imaginable, considering the lack of options.

That night, Freddie had his first experience in the "two-man snuggle sack" and almost didn't want to leave it at 6:30 a.m. when the light started to come through the window. We crawled out into a bluebird day. The perseverance of the previous day had paid off. We knew that we were going to the summit. Ben cruised through the Vision, climbing it all free. I took over for the Bibler Come Again Exit, and finally reached the top of the buttress at 5 p.m. I could barely lift my arms but Freddie was psyched. Climbing as a party of three definitely has its advantages.

Maxime Turgeon starting up the Prow (crux) on the Moonflower Buttress. Photo: Ben Gilmore

Leaving everything except our puffy jackets, one rope and two screws, Freddie pulled us up the 500 metres of elevation gain to the summit in two hours. Except for Denali and Foraker, everything else was below us.

The sixth block was next—the descent. Ben was up for the task and led the 26 rappels down the face, putting in more than 20 V-threads.

When I woke up it was already Thursday. Trading day. Ben and Freddie were due to fly home and Zoe was waiting by the side of the runway in Talkeetna to fly in. "Not that I don't like you guys, but what a good trade!" I joked. When Zoe stepped out of the airplane, her eyes were shining as brightly as the pin on her chest. She had finished her last ski exam two days before and was now the fourth American woman to become a fully certified UIAGM Mountain Guide. I had just climbed two big routes, so we had a lot to celebrate. The pizza and beer she brought from town added to the festivities.

The next morning we came up with a plan. Zoe had been on Deprivation two years earlier and was psyched to give it another try. I was excited to get back on the North Buttress of Hunter for a second round.

Same time, same place, Sunday morning I was racking up at the 'schrund at 4 a.m., but this time with a nice, warm kiss before heading up the pumpy, dead-vertical ice wall. I must be getting soft, but there is something nice about kissing your partner before leading a hard pitch. Or maybe I just spend too much time spooning with guys at bivies. We simul-climbed through most of the lower section of the route until reaching the bottom of the Death Pitch. It didn't take me long to figure out the origin of the name. Twenty metres above the belay with no protection, I found myself on overhanging, sugary ice. I was desperately looking for a solid screw placement. Unsuccessful, I pushed one in on either side of me, both for Zoe's and my mental state. I stemmed my way up, trying to focus on my balance. The rope was completely stretched when I finally found a good crack for an anchor.

The day was superb. We were now swapping leads as often as we could to relieve the follower from the beastly second's pack. Barely nine hours after crossing the 'schrund, we were already at the base of the third ice band brewing up and feeling good about our progress. In the process of rehydrating for the labour ahead, my fingers slipped on the fabric of my DAS jacket's stuff sack. Before I could make the snatch, it was speeding to the glacier. My French roots caught up with me and a "*crisse de câlice de tabarnak*!" slipped through my lips while the bag disappeared in the abyss. "That's a big chunk of weight we don't have to carry anymore," I suggested. Zoe offered me her small magenta puffy as condolence.

At this point, the route does a big 300-metre traverse, zig-zagging left, then the same distance back right to the final crux pitches. At the end of the leftwards traverse, we fought the temptation to take the shortcut to the Bibler Come Again Exit on the Moonflower Buttress. We wanted to pay tribute to Marc Twight and Scott Backes by repeating their route in completeness, so we aimed right to the original finish. All that traversing was quite time-consuming, and it was 7:30 p.m. when we finally got to the base of the final steep ice pitches. The sun was hitting the face directly causing chunks of debris to rocket down around us. There was no way we were going to bivy anywhere around there. Up steep, hard ice it was. It took all the energy we had but at 11 p.m., in glowing twilight, we were standing on the top of the last rock band with the cruxes below us.

"Hey, Max. What's the name of this route again? I know it starts with a D but I just can't remember."

I thought she was kidding at first, but when I tried to tell her the name I had to think about it for a moment before it came to mind. Deprived was definitely the description of our state. A final 300 metres of calf-burning slopes took two hours to reach the cornice. We had been climbing for 21 hours straight and were both feeling sick to our stomachs.

Like an oasis in the desert, a vertical crack in the face appeared at the end of my headlamp beam. I poked my head in to find a perfect tunnel behind a snow mushroom. It felt so secure inside that we de-harnessed and jumped into the sleeping bag, instantly blacking-out for two-and-a-half hours. When we opened our eyes a bright ray of light was coming in through the crack. The weather was still clear and we were on our way to the summit again. At noon I was placing my feet on the top of the same snowy bump along the summit ridge where my tracks were still visible from a few days earlier. I had made two ascents of the North Buttress to the summit of Mount Hunter in a week.

The wind picked up as we headed down the raps of the Moonflower. Despite the cold of the spindrift, my heart was warm. I shared an amazing experience with my loved one; I was the happiest man on earth. The mountain could pour anything on me now.

Summary

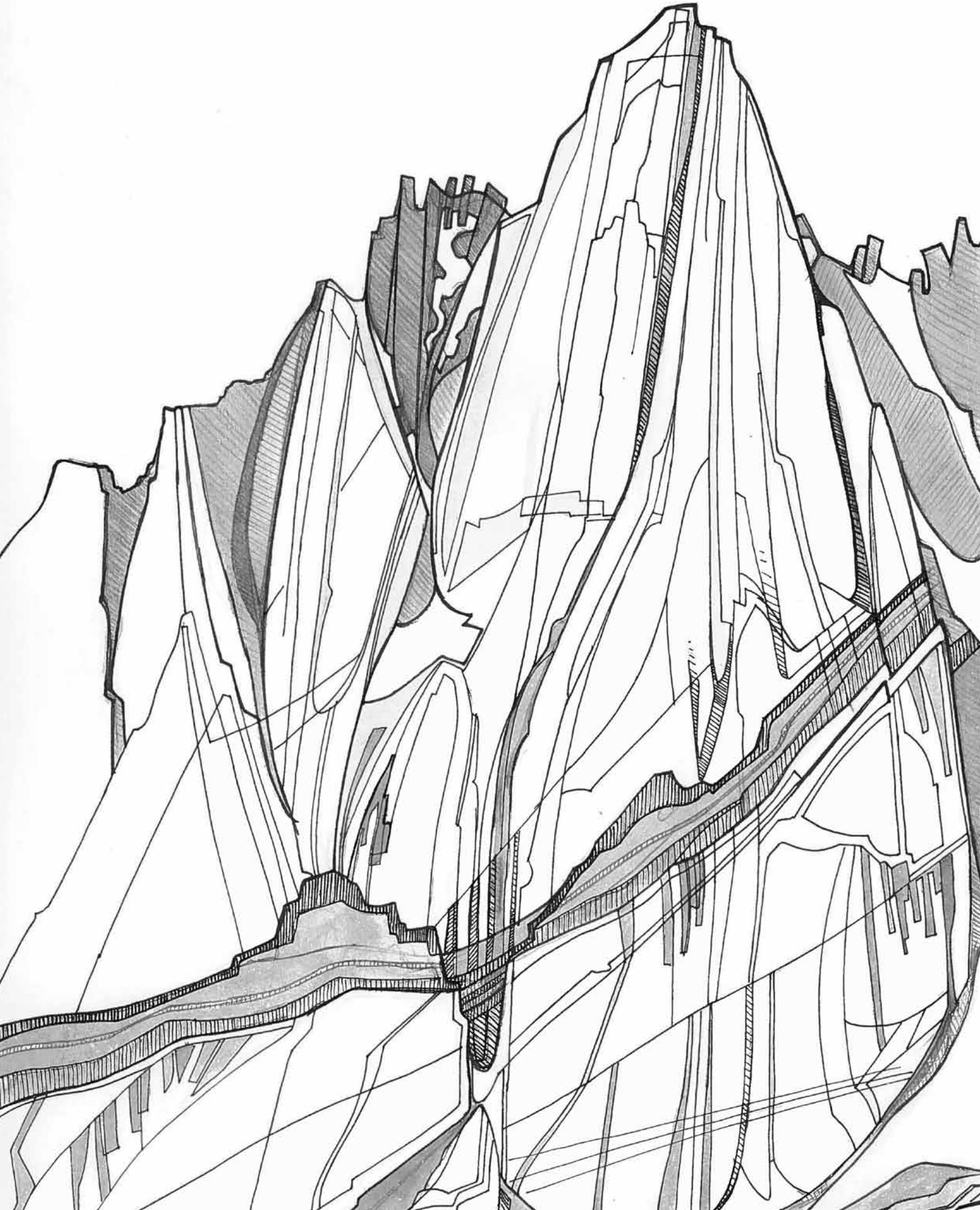
First ascent of The Bat's Ears (3245m/11,040ft) via the south face (AI4+ M5+, 900m), Yentna Glacier, Alaska Range. FA: Ben Gilmore, Maxime Turgeon, Freddie Wilkinson, April 30, 2008.

Free ascent of the Moonflower Buttress (AI6 M7, 1200m), North Buttress of Mt. Hunter, Alaska Range (40 hours to summit; 52 hours round-trip). Ben Gilmore, Maxime Turgeon, Freddie Wilkinson, May 5–6, 2008.

Deprivation (AI6, 1200m), North Buttress of Mt. Hunter, Alaska Range (32 hours to summit; 41 hours round-trip). Zoe Hart, Maxime Turgeon, May 10–11, 2008.

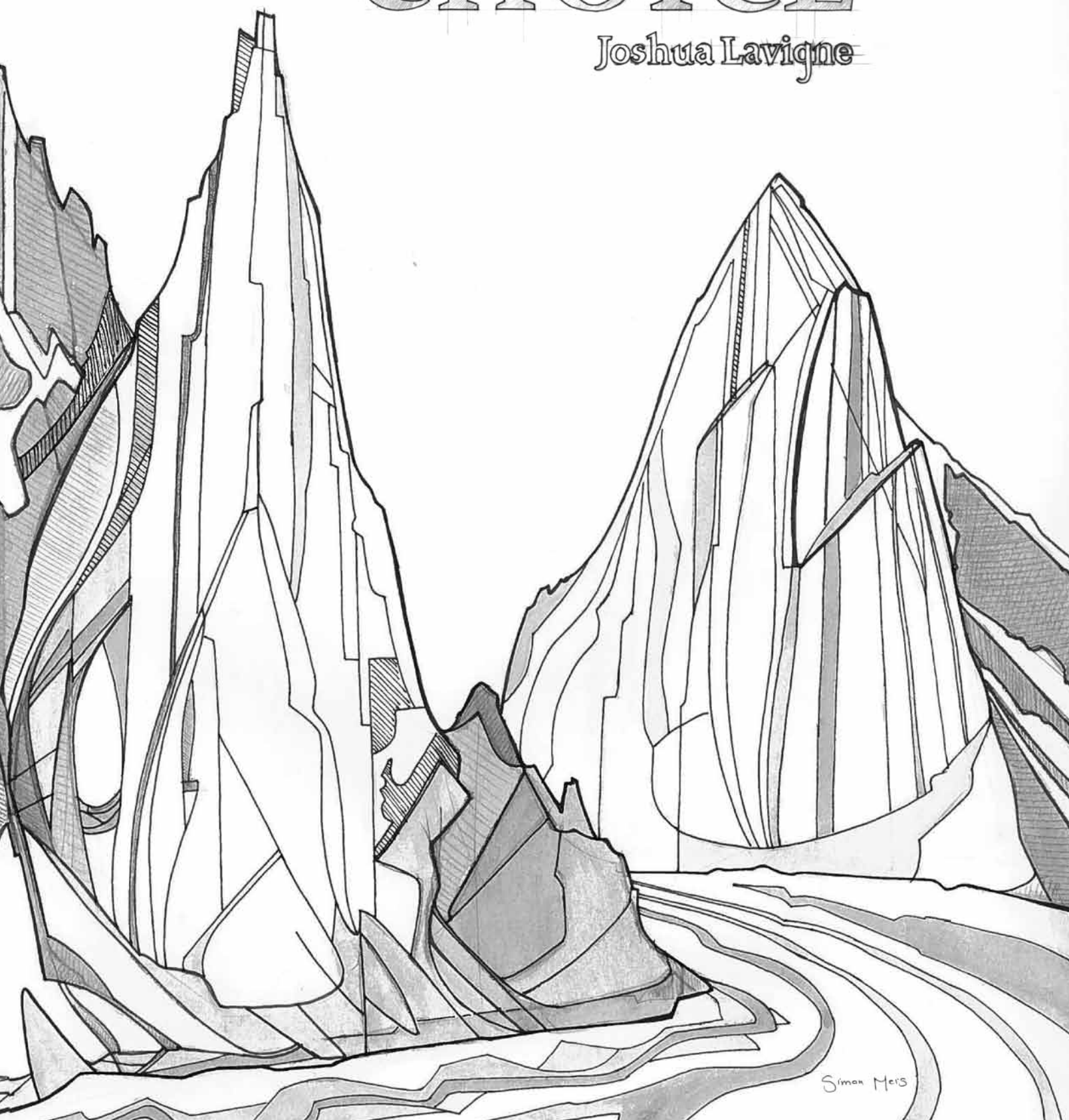
About the Author

Maxime Turgeon, 28, born in the suburbs of Montreal, Québec, now can be found hanging out in Chamonix, France. He has worked briefly in the aircraft industry with his engineering degree, but now makes a living as a mechanic, welder and carpenter between climbs. This was his third expedition to Alaska.



The CHOICE

Joshua Lavigne



We all have choices to make. Some are simple and some are not, but in my experience they all lead to a better understanding of who we are. Our choices create actions that consume us and engage us in the most committing moments. When I recognize these instances in my life and manage to use that mental space to move forward, everything in the periphery seems to fade away. The past is removed from my psyche and only the present remains. Travelling to Pakistan to climb a new route on a remote granite peak wasn't necessarily what I needed to scratch this itch. But it certainly was an opportunity that would provide many incredible challenges, and in the end, show me what is truly important in my life.

On our fifth day at basecamp, Simon and I tried to acclimatize by checking out the first few pitches of our proposed new route on the east face of Hainabrakk. If successful, our route would be the fourth ascent of this high-altitude spire. On the first pitch of the lower headwall, I aided and cleaned a dirty flared seam hoping it would go free. This pitch was the first difficult climbing of the route and was the key to accessing the upper face.

Back at the base of the headwall early the next morning, I traded étriers for rock shoes. We were packed and committed for an alpine-style free ascent. As I climbed into the crux sequence and moved above my gear, I focused on suppressing my apprehension. I had to throw myself at the corner layback with complete engagement. Because of the thin air and cold temperatures, my forearms tired quickly. The flakey crimps crumbled under my fingertips and my feet smeared the lichen-encrusted wall. I managed to find a stance where I could quickly brush off my hands and feet, but then resumed thrutching upwards. No possibilities for gear; I managed to climb myself into a potential 10-metre ledge-fall. My breath popped out of my lungs as I lunged again, forearms screaming for respite while feet slipped on lichen. Working into a marginal rest, I scouted for gear but I still couldn't relax; my leg automatically started to vibrate. Lungs wheezing from altitude, I focused on fiddling in a piece. At that moment there were no clouds of distraction drifting past. The only thing that existed was the present—the experience had captured me.

Simon was below looking up from the belay, watching me tentatively. He must have been calculating all the possible outcomes. Encouragement floated up even if he had doubts or felt I was being reckless. His support provided the focused energy I needed in that tenuous position. Simon is a solid partner, an incredible all-around athlete, who has devoted his life to the pursuit of adventure and climbing. He has more than 15 years of climbing experience, and from a quick glance at his résumé, there isn't much that he hasn't seen. At times, he is apprehensive about the hazards involved with alpine climbing, but he never shies away from the challenge, taking it on as an opportunity to discover his own personal limits. There are not that many people with whom I feel comfortable taking these sorts of risks.

Joshua Lavigne on pitch 27 during the first ascent of The Choice. Photo: Simon Meis

Composure regained, I topped out on the first headwall pitch gasping for air. If that pitch hadn't gone free, we would have abandoned our attempt to free climb the route. Alpine style doesn't allow time to work pitches. While Simon was jugging up the line, I looked across at the sun rising behind Nameless Tower. I slumped forward, savouring the rush of endorphins. In this moment of relaxation after so much hyperstimulation, butterflies floated across the horizon and my surroundings seemed to contract and expand with every breath. In reality, the hallucination only lasted a few seconds, but for me it will last a lifetime.

We had decided to divide the lower half of the face into blocks, and since I had cleaned and aided the first headwall pitches on our acclimatization run, I would start with those pitches, then Simon would take over for the next block of climbing. He took the lead and with little effort dispatched with 300 metres of moderate (5.8 to 5.10) climbing. Each pitch on this lower section was a minimum of 70 metres long, so as the rope came tight against my harness, I would start simul-climbing until Simon found a belay. By noon we had climbed more than 600 metres of the lower east face and were now completely committed to the upper headwall. If we rappelled from here, the majority of our rack would get left behind. Luckily, bailing wasn't considered as clean finger and hand cracks split the face above. The joys of onsighting new terrain continued.

Our goal for the day was a small ledge system conveniently placed below the upper headwall. We had collected water from a small spring at pitch 11 with the forethought that there would be no water on the ledge at pitch 16. With a final rope-length fixed above the bivy, we lowered back down for the night. We looked down 1,000 metres towards our basecamp. The Trango Glacier lay below, cracked and convoluted. Nameless and Great Trango Tower jutted into the night sky, like pillars holding up the heavens. We still had doubts about the line above, especially the overhanging headwall guarding the summit. But at the bivy, our combined high spirits and confidence allowed fear to disappear like the fading shadow of Nameless Tower. We looked forward to the challenges the following day would bring.

The night passed restlessly as hypoxia settled into our blood and the cold nipped at our extremities. Our ledge was east-facing, so as the sun rose, the temperature quickly

increased making climbing possible. We jugged our lines and Simon led the first block of the day. He was rewarded with some of the best climbing of our trip—several pitches up an immaculate corner of golden granite. There were a variety of crack systems to choose from, all of which led through multiple steep roofs. Features we had worried about from below proved easier then expected: a wide crack through a roof had blocks jammed inside that provided good holds; a gaping chimney contained a hidden hand crack. Simon aimed for a feature we had called the Golden Towers, which were situated below the final headwall. Up to this point we had freed more than 20 pitches of incredible climbing, a trend we hoped to continue to the summit, even if it was overhanging.

I took the sharp end and headed up towards two separate crack systems. On my left was a flaky layback leading into an off-width and on my right a thin splitter. I chose the splitter but it quickly ended my free attempt with a whipper and a loose block flying by Simon. The rock was less weathered because of its overhanging angle; therefore, it was loose and exfoliated. I realized that freeing this section would be highly improbable without a significant amount of cleaning. Pulling the rope and trying again was not really an option, and we had no water and very little energy reserves to spend on redpoint attempts. The headwall had gone into the shade and the temperature dropped quickly. I pushed upwards, aiding and penduluming between cracks, with the added weight of disappointment pulling at my heels. We topped out on the headwall exhausted. The dehydration, altitude and effort of the last 150 metres had taken its toll. Rest and re-hydration needed to be the priority if we were going to continue the push for the summit. We found salvation in a remnant of snow that we melted into water. Slowly we recovered our reserves.

The summit was close, so with full water bottles and newly found motivation, we organized our gear and headed up yet another flawless 5.11 finger crack. As the light faded and the terrain became more moderate, we simul-climbed and scrambled towards the top. On the summit, the sun had already slipped behind the peaks to the west; only a breath of air drifted by. Crouched together like brothers with our arms wrapped around each others' shoulders, we were exhausted and hungry but oddly satisfied in a masochistic sort of way. As with all summits, the excitement quickly became overshadowed by the fatigue that was now crawling through our veins. We grimaced for the camera and then turned to the task at hand: first, finding a place to sleep, then, preparing a meal.

Simon Meis leading pitch 22 during the first ascent of The Choice. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

Much effort and time had been invested to get to this point—a point that felt inconsequential in comparison to the journey to get there. We both knew that reaching the summit would always be dwarfed by the experience. The best part about East Hainabrakk was not actually topping out, but in having the opportunity to sleep on the summit and then in the morning, watch the sun rise directly behind Nameless Tower. The image of the tower growing wings of light will always be etched in my memory.

There are not very many experiences that I could say were the greatest of my life, but this was certainly one of them. We walked away from Hainabrakk with a skip in our stride and an eye to the horizon. We both had shit-eating grins on our face, as if the entire valley was now ours and we could do anything we

chose. Shipton Spire, Cat's Ear Spire and Nameless Tower were ripe fruit ready for the picking. Our goal was achieved less than a week after arriving in basecamp and the euphoria resulting from the success that had been infused into our blood would carry us for the next 30 days. How quickly the walls came tumbling down.

We rested for two days in basecamp eating Huissan's never-ending stream of meals. The skies were still clear and the temperatures at 4,100 metres reached over 30 C, so we started packing for our second objective—a one-day ascent of Eternal Flame on Nameless Tower. The first rain of our trip occurred on our way up to Nameless, so we turned around and went back to camp. Impatient with the weather, we decided to do a little cragging between showers. This would be the moment that changed my trip from one of infinite possibility to one of idling away. As I high-stepped on a marginal foothold with my arm completely outstretched overhead, my foot popped and my shoulder followed. It was wrecked. I couldn't even lift it above my head. To add salt to my wound, the weather cleared and stayed splitter for a week, clearing all the walls of snow and ice.

Joshua Lavigne on pitch 25 during the first ascent of The Choice. Photo: Simon Meis

Accepting our fate, Simon was gracious with no resentment or any inclination of negativity. I can't say the same for myself. I had little resistance to the brooding that filled my new daily schedule. A broken record of thoughts circled through my mind. Why was I here sacrificing so many things back home, especially time with my girlfriend? Prioritizing this trip may have poisoned my chance to make the relationship work. Why did the third member of our team bail just three weeks before leaving? He and Simon could have been climbing while I was injured. In my thoughts there seemed to be an endless slew of reasons floating around as to why the trip was not worth the sacrifices and why expeditions actually stunted my growth as a climber.

After two weeks of sulking and nursing my injury, Simon and I had reached a breaking point. The success of our climb on Hainabrakk had quietly faded away. A new objective was needed. We would either attempt to climb something—anything—or we would break camp and leave. Simon and I are the best of friends, but two weeks in camp had resulted in getting on each other's nerves. We needed to clean the air with some good old-fashioned teamwork—and hopefully a little climbing. We started packing and planning again, which stoked new fire to our motivation. An attempt on a new line up the east buttress of Cat's Ear Spire would be our focus. The weather was as fickle as my spirits, but I ignored these dark clouds and zeroed in on our new objective. Like an addict returning to his drug, the activity started to increase the dopamine levels in my blood, and I started to feel something like happiness again.

We climbed and fixed the first three pitches and then returned to our bivy at the base of the wall. As with our night on Hainabrakk, we were filled with optimism. Our line looked good. We were confident. The weather was holding. All that remained was to climb the route, which in our minds was already in the bag. But our efforts would be thwarted, not by weather, nor lack of motivation, but because of some random food poisoning that would completely wreak havoc on Simon's insides. I will never forget the moment when Simon looked over at me after breakfast, the strain of an indescribable pain on his face, expressing to me his discomfort and uncertainty about continuing. Then, not even a moment later, an eruption of gurgles sounded from his bowels. We looked at each other wide-eyed in amazement, then Simon dashed behind a small boulder desperately clawing at his harness. Ignoring the sounds of Simon retching on all fours, I turned and walked to our fixed lines. Like a lone soldier keenly aware of his fate, I attached my

ascenders to the line and slowly slinked up the three pitches to remove our gear.

This wasn't the end of our trip, but it was the end for me. I felt like I had been robbed of all my desire to suffer or even try. A day before the porters arrived for our departure, we decided on a quick ascent of Nameless Tower—but my heart wasn't in it. I agreed to go to honour my commitment to the team. Simon's drive remained strong, so I encouraged him to lead the 13 pitches to the large ledge system at the base of the upper wall. As we topped out on the lower buttress, a blizzard dumped five centimetres of snow on us in an hour. Huddled under the tarp and wearing only rock shoes, our decision was easy: no more suffering. It was time to retreat. We slid down the ropes with heavy thoughts of failure but thankfully with light hearts.

To this day I still wonder whether the trip was worth it. There were certainly experiences that I will never forget and I would like to think that by taking on these challenges I am a better person, but it seems hard to shake the feeling of selfishness. The moments that I now recognize as being the most insightful didn't really come while climbing. They came from the relationships that were nurtured before, during and after the trip. The insights that will change my actions developed through personal examination that occurred upon returning home while I was decompressing and reorganizing my life.

Having said that, I will certainly never forget the intense moments on the wall. They are experiences that separate my thoughts from my actions; they are moments when nothing else exists. If I close my eyes and imagine that first pitch of the lower headwall, my heart starts to beat faster and my palms begin to sweat. The memory is a reminder of complete awareness, when doubts do not limit actions. That is a choice I wish I could make every day.

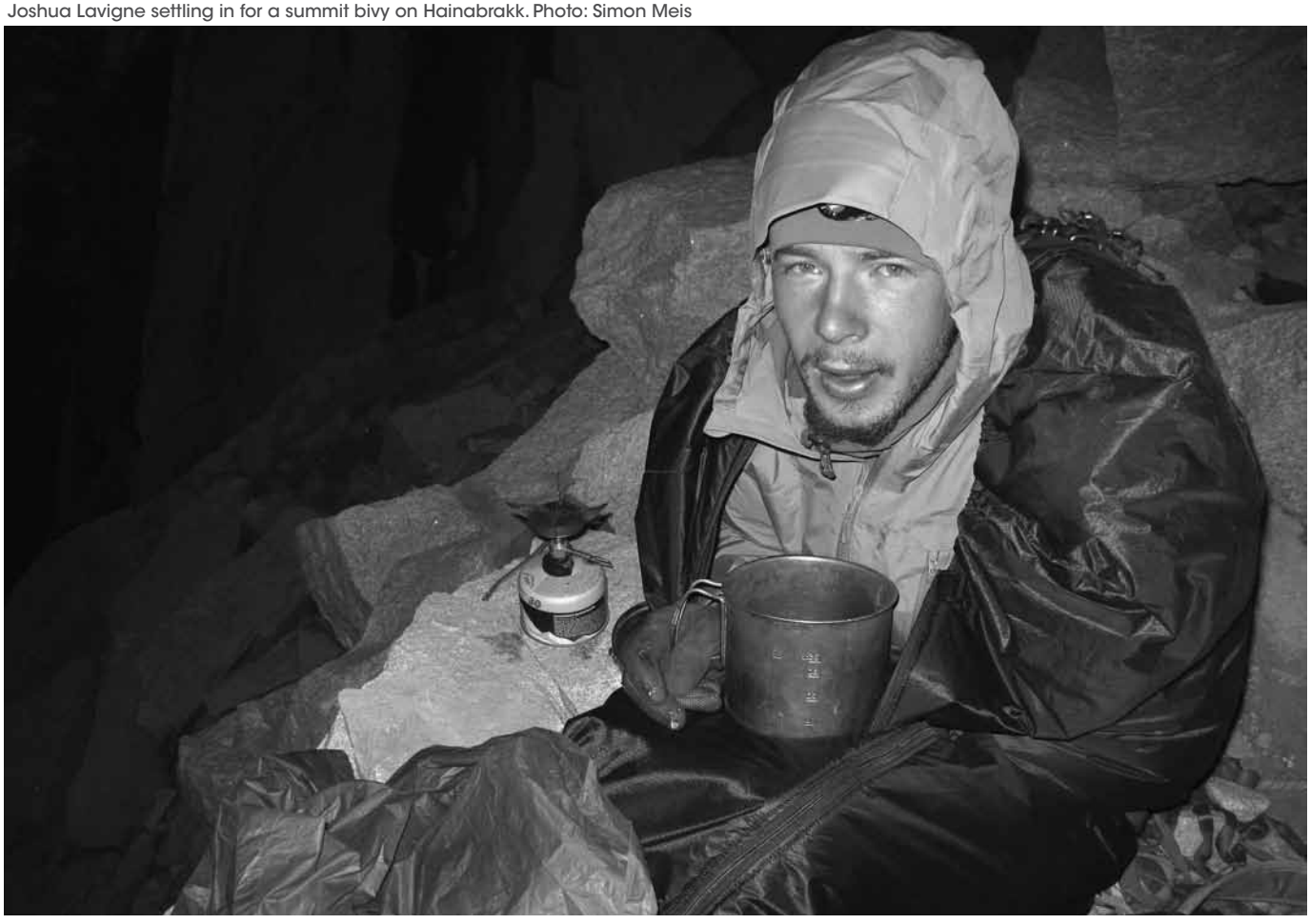
Summary

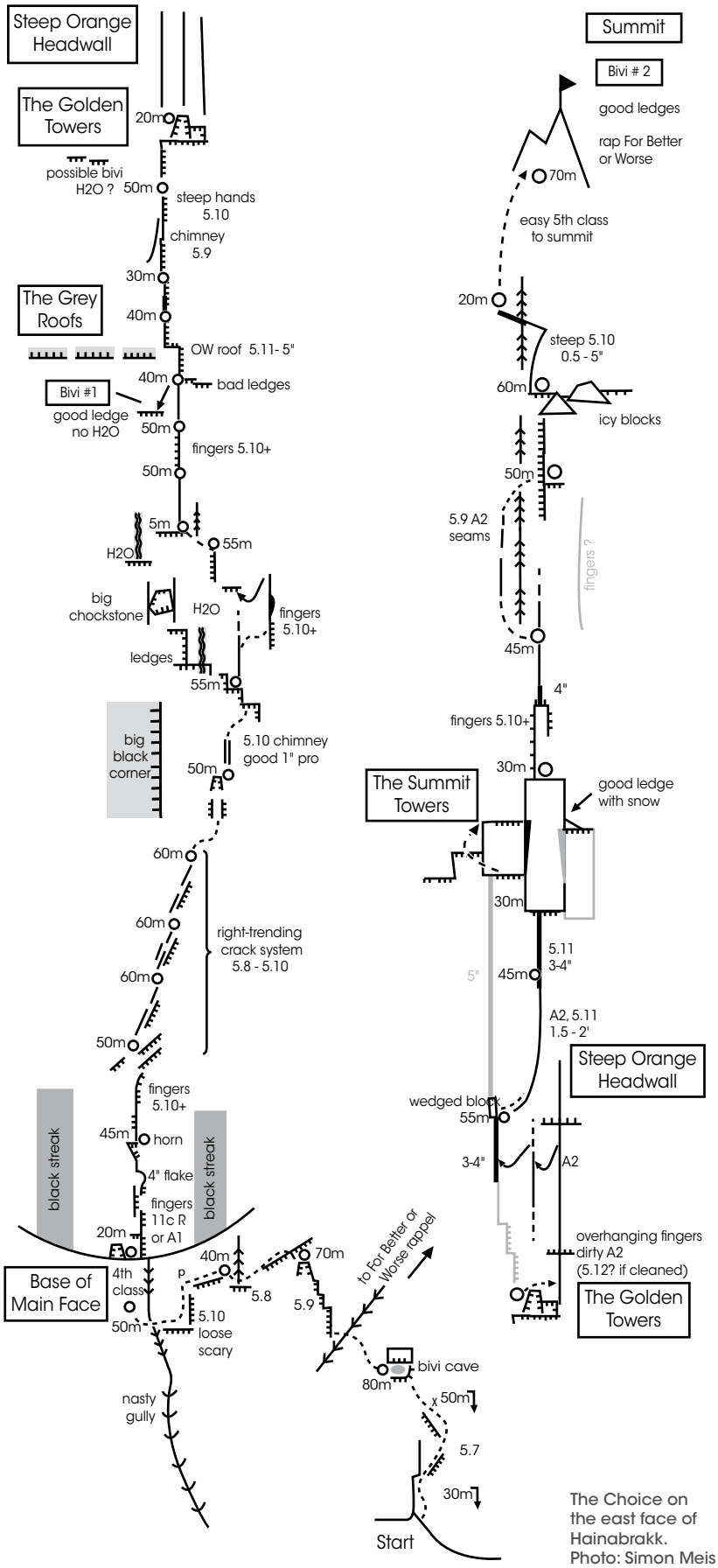
The Choice (VI 5.11cR A2, 1200m, 30 pitches), the east face of East Hainabrakk Tower, Trango Group, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Simon Meis, July 30–August 1, 2008.

About the Author

Joshua Lavigne is a rock climber pretending to be an alpinist. Scraping together a living as an ACMG guide, he lives in Canmore, Alberta, where he has a propensity for wearing lipstick and talking down big objectives.

Joshua Lavigne settling in for a summit bivy on Hainabrakk. Photo: Simon Meis





The Choice on the east face of Hainabrakk. Photo: Simon Meis

WINTER SUN

"I move more slowly,
taking in the light
and the scenery—
bathing in it,
absorbing it."

Steve House

Steve House following pitch 11 (second pitch of the second day) on a new route on the north face of Mount Alberta.
Photo: Vince Anderson

I stand on a flat, 10-centimetre ledge—the biggest ledge I've seen in 90 metres. Leaning into the compact black rock, I take balance of my situation. To the right I have a small cam, but only three of the four cams touch rock. To my left I can see some old fixed pitons five metres away that mark the aid-climbing crux of the original 1972 route. I was still wearing diapers in '72. I have already tried climbing to those tempting pitons, but even aiding to them would not be possible here as the rock is smooth and blank. I test the tied-off pin that I placed. It flexes but the rock is solid so maybe it would hold. I have already tried to climb the thin seam that runs diagonally up and right, but it shut off after two metres and forced me back to this ledge. It feels like I've been at this stance for hours.

The Canadian Rockies are a very big place. In winter they are also very lonely. It took us one-and-a-half days of travel to reach Mount Alberta. We didn't see one ski track. No sign of any person, or any animal. All was white and quiet. Only the jumbo jets running between Europe and the USA reminded us of another world. The jets, too, were noiseless.

The north face of Mount Alberta is perhaps the most famous of the Rockies' grand walls: north face of North Twin, east face of Mount Chephren, east face of Mount Fay, north face of Mount Temple, east face of Mount Assiniboine and Mount Robson's incomparable Emperor Face. Each of these walls has 2,000 metres of relief. Only Mount Temple is less than a one-day walk from the road. As recently as 10 years ago, none of the big routes on these walls had been repeated in summer, except for the north faces of Temple and Alberta.

Alberta isn't any closer, or easier, than the others. But it does have good quality rock—solid black limestone. The Glidden-Lowe has had six ascents, far more than any other of the Rockies' greats proving again that climbers aren't afraid of hard climbing, they're afraid of uncertainty. Difficult climbing on good rock can be managed with pitons and biceps. Managing dangerous climbing requires a more subtle approach.

When we open the door to leave the Lloyd MacKay Hut at 4 a.m. on March 26, the air hits us like a wall of cold water. It is Arctic cold. Feels Alaskan.

At dawn, Vince spends a frustrating 30 minutes digging through powder to find a dropped ice tool. An hour later, he starts the first lead. The bottom of the face is guarded by a steep rock band. The Glidden-Lowe begins 80 metres to our right. We climb with fresh eyes and an open mind looking for pitches that will work best for our ice tools and crampons. Vince climbs a good thin crack and belays out of sight on a small icefield. I follow, carrying the single heavy pack with all of the bivouac equipment. We hope to spend only one night on this mountain and have packed accordingly.

A few more easy pitches and we reach the large icefield that guards the headwall—the real north face. The rope comes off. I follow Vince's sure steps for 800 metres trying not to look up too often. The cold rays of the March sun touch the glacier below us. Clouds start to build in the valley whose river flows to the Arctic Ocean. With each step we put more distance between us and the world we've come from. The quiet is deafening.

To reach the headwall you have to pass through the famous yellow band. Yellow is bad in the Canadian Rockies. Yellow is soft rock; rock without cracks and without strength. At least it is frozen together. After 60 metres I still have not found any cracks, so Vince takes apart the belay and we climb together for another 15 metres before I find a place to make a new belay.

The climbing gets easier and the ice becomes thicker. Two quick pitches bring us to the base of Alberta's headwall. It is now 2 p.m. and snowflakes are starting to drift down. I rack up and start a beautiful, steep M7 crack. Every few metres I clean a few rocks by throwing them out past Vince and down the ice slope. I watch the first one as it gains speed until I loose sight of it a few hundred metres above the glacier. I turn my face upwards and vow not to look down again.

Vince Anderson working up the lower icefield on the north face of Mount Alberta towards the yellow band and the headwall above. (1) Anderson-House, 2008. (2) Glidden-Lowe, 1972. Photo: Steve House


1
2
1
2

It is snowing hard now. Vince is yelling something about going back to the hut. I pretend not to hear him and climb until all 60 metres of rope is used. From the stance I yell down, "Next pitch looks good." Besides, I think, it's too late to get back to the hut tonight. We are spending the night on this mountain no matter what. This snow is no danger to us. Let's climb up and see. Maybe the weather will be better tomorrow.

No reply. I can see from Vince's movements that he is cold. I also see that he agrees. He takes apart the anchor and starts to climb towards me through the growing snowstorm.

Starting into the crux I don't see the snow. I don't feel the wind. I mark the tiny footholds with my mind, mapping them in space. I can still see them now. A thin seam barely allows purchase for my picks. I twist the tools out and step high with my left crampon on a small, match-sized edge in the middle of a smooth wall. I pull up and reach as high as I can stretch. The next placement is good—small, but good. Right frontpoint goes into the seam where I had my pick. I press hard on my foot to make the best of it. Two more long pulls and I reach a good crack, and ultimately, a good cam under a roof. This will keep me off that ledge, I think to myself, breathing a sigh of relief. More strenuous climbing follows but it is also more secure for my picks. I place a large cam and traverse to the left with nothing for the feet. I use power and use it quickly to make the delicate slab move to reach ice—beautiful ancient ice.

Vince turns off the stove at 1 a.m., and I snuggle down into my sleeping bag. Between me and the cold night is 300 grams of down. I sleep for a few hours, but by 5 a.m. the down is wet from the light snow so I start the stove for a hot tea. I want to get off this mountain today.

At 6 a.m., Vince climbs a short, vertical ice step to a large rock roof where he traverses right to a ledge. We're near the top of the headwall now and he tries to go further right to an icefield; however, the mountain won't let him out so easily. He turns his face upwards and starts a steep right-leaning crack—another brilliant pitch of M7 crack climbing. The rock is perfect. The seam transects a number of small roofs. Even with the pack I am compelled to try to free climb everything, mostly because it is fun, not because of any ethics. Of course I fall; it's difficult to climb this grade with 15 kilograms on your back, especially after a night of little sleep and much shivering.

Vince continues to unlock the secrets of the route and after just a few more pitches the ground becomes less steep. It has the makings of a classic line of ascent. There is only one logical line, and even then, it is only barely climbable.

I take the lead as the clouds rise from the valley. The rock climbing is over. We sprint for the top, placing an ice screw every 60 metres and climbing onto the northeast ridge. I belay Vince to the ridge. The clouds float around us so it feels like we're in a heaven, a heaven of mountains and ridges sculpted by wind and snow, a heaven empty of any souls but ours.

Working our way up, the ridge is narrow and steeply corniced all the way to the top. Pulling onto the summit I am worried that the cornice will break, but it is an illusion and the summit is flat. Giving a yell for this small victory, I sit on the other side to belay Vince to the top of the mountain.

Five minutes. That is all we take. Two photos, food, water, and then I start down. The descent is the Japanese route, which is notorious for tricky route-finding. I want off, and thoughts of 300 frozen grams of down in the bottom of my pack motivate me to hurry.

The beam of my headlamp cuts through the darkness, but I see only fog. Vince shovels a narrow place for us to sleep. I stand, not helping in hopes that it will clear and we can continue down.

"Well, you can sleep there, and I'll take this spot," Vince finally announces.

My space is narrow, but protected from the snowfall by a small roof. "You're giving me the best spot?" I pretend to protest.

"I've done more for people who meant less."

I smile and take off the pack, then the crampons. I pull the frozen sleeping bag apart carefully.

By morning I have started to sleep a little. My body heat has actually dried out the sleeping bag and now I am warmer than I was at the beginning of the night. The sun comes up and shines brightly. Bright, but cold; a winter sun. Vince starts to arrange the anchor for the first rappel. The glacier looks to be just 200 metres below. We'll be skiing back to the road this afternoon, I tell myself. Sleep in a warm, dry place tonight. The pink tone of morning light illuminates a small band of white quartz at the bivy. Winter rays cross the valley to wake the ice and stone of nearby North Twin. Vince rappels quickly away.

I move more slowly, taking in the light and the scenery—bathing in it, absorbing it. I am finding it difficult to leave the solitude and beauty of Alberta now. Reluctantly, I slide down the ropes after Vince, facing down, towards home. The winter sun starts to feel warm.

Summary

Anderson-House Route (VI WI5+ M8R/X, 1000m), new route on the north face of Mt. Alberta (3619m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Vince Anderson, Steve House, March 26–28, 2008.

About the Author

Steve House has climbed in the Canadian Rockies since 1991. The highlight of his first trip was climbing Oh Le Tabernac, a WI5+ route on the Icefields Parkway. Living in Bend, Oregon, he spends a lot of time clipping bolts at Smith Rock. Steve feeds his extended family by raising a couple of steers every year. This fact makes his common nickname, Farmboy, a bit of a misnomer. He's much more of a "ranch-boy".

Steve House starting up pitch two on the first day of a new route on the north face of Mount Alberta. Photo: Vince Anderson

The Arctic cold hits us as the turboprop's door swings open. At -20 C, the Inuits are celebrating the first warm days of spring. Kids are playing on the streets. We crawl deeper into our down jackets. Welcome to the end of the world. Welcome to reality.

TAKE *the* LONG *way* HOME

Stefan Glowacz

Photos by Klaus Fengler


RedBull

Monday, April 21

It takes some time to get used to the bitter cold in Pond Inlet. It should actually be much warmer, but according to the locals, it's a colder-than-usual year. With every breath drawn, the icy air bites our lungs causing mucus membranes to inflame. Two hunters return from Quernbiter Fiord—our destination—and tell us with good cheer about the many polar bears—at least 11. They shot two of them, so that only leaves nine to harass our nightmares. They inquire what calibre rifle we have.

Wednesday, April 23

The last few days have been spent packing. We constantly play each stage of our expedition in our heads in order not to forget anything. Once out there, we will be alone. According to our "by fair means" philosophy, we initially hoped to carry out the journey from Pond Inlet to the wall with dog sleds, then after the climb continue south along the ice to Clyde River via kite skiing. This romantic error of judgment was quickly retracted when we were informed that dog sledding is only used for hunting. We must carry out the first leg on snowmobiles. By early afternoon, we head south towards Quernbiter Fiord. Time plays no role since it is light 24 hours. It's a surreal environment. Vast, snow-covered hills pass us on the right. Blue-grey fog indicates open water on the left. With our Inuit drivers—all experienced hunters—we still feel safe, but these days are almost over.

Wednesday, April 30

Until today, we were only able to imagine the huge rock faces behind the curtain of clouds. When we stick our necks out of our tents this morning under streaming sunlight, we are absolutely speechless. Camp is pitched directly below the 1000-metre-high China Wall, which rises directly from the frozen fjord. Yesterday, when we turned off into the Buchan Gulf during a snowstorm, we saw the Bastion. It was love at first sight. The wall protrudes about 700 metres upwards from the surface of the ice. A rusty iron fort with a smooth headwall split by a series of cracks—the perfect line.

Friday, May 2

None of us have ever climbed in such an exposed setting before. In front of us lie icebergs and ocean. The rock face takes some getting used to. What appear to be solid holds unexpectedly break. The rock quality is difficult to gauge. We have to be extremely careful: any accident in this place would have serious consequences. After an easy free climbing pitch comes a difficult aid pitch. Only two pitches completed today—a modest start, but one nevertheless.

Saturday, May 3

Free climbing from 9 a.m. till 2 p.m., then aid climbing in the intense cold until 10 p.m. Robert, Mariusz and Klaus manage four pitches. Tomorrow it's Holger's and my turn. We are under a time pressure. By May 20, at the very latest, we must begin the trek to Clyde River, otherwise we're in danger of being caught in the annual ice break up. We're all under enormous strain. Contact with polar bears is very probable. But we knew this when we signed up. The huge polar bear tracks only a few metres from our camp instill fear. It's a wild, exciting land and we would not want it any different.

Sunday, May 4

A low-hanging blanket of clouds continually obscures the sky. In the morning, the air pressure had dropped slowly and steadily, a conclusive sign of a low-pressure system. Every hour becomes colder. We're getting close to mid-height on the wall. A few more pitches, then it will be time to leave the fixed lines and commit to the upper section with portaledges. A smooth dihedral runs up from the belay station. I can't deny my free-climbing soul and hook myself up to a perfect free pitch. It's not until after five metres that the fissure broadens enough to accept my fingertips. Unfortunately, every nook and cranny on the lower half of the wall is caked with dirt and sand, as if covered with concrete. Laboriously, I clean holds with the hammer.

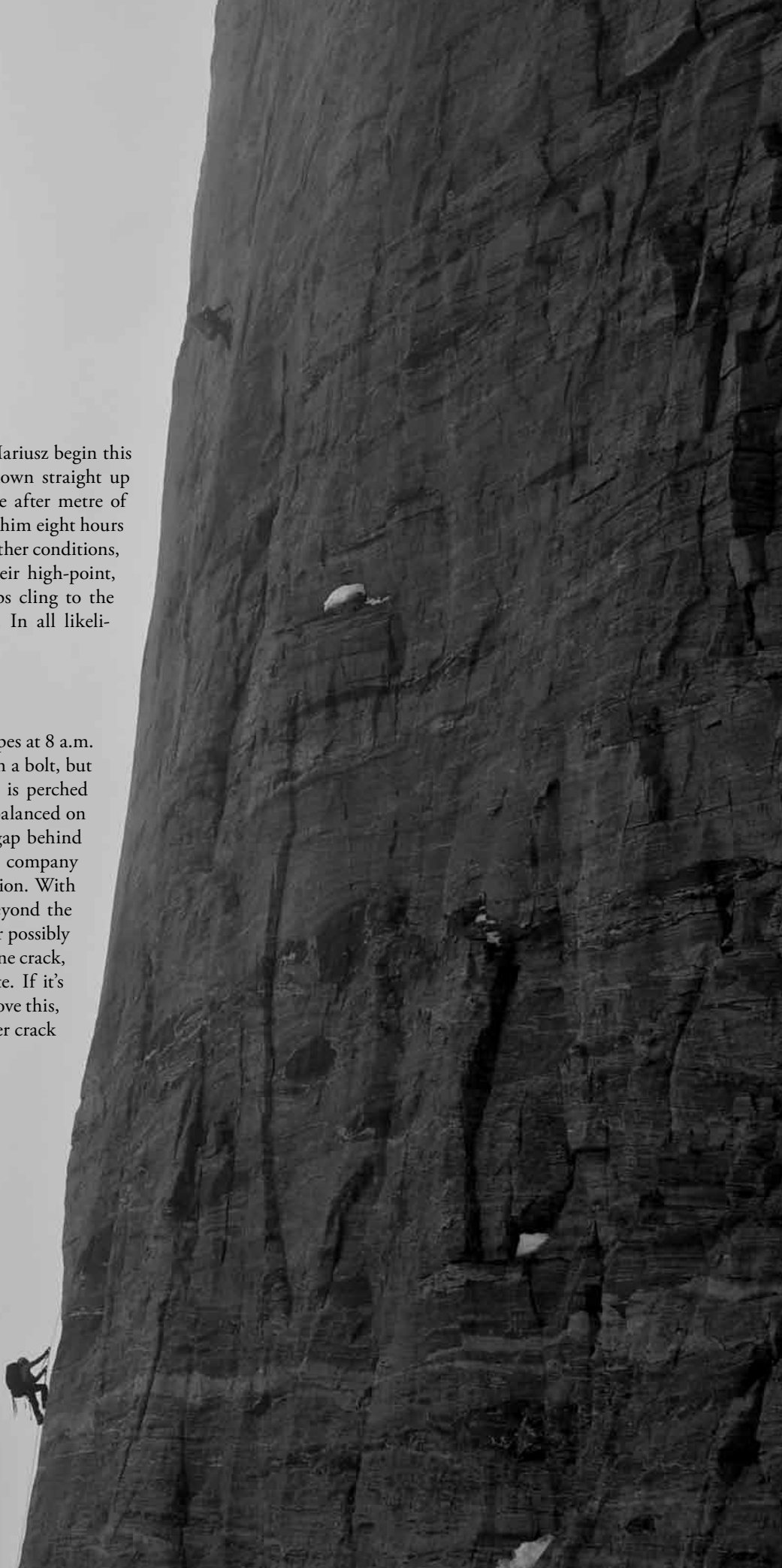
Photo: Klaus Fengler

Monday, May 5

It is snowing when Robert, Holger and Mariusz begin this morning. The snow is so dry that it's blown straight up the wall. Robert works his way up metre after metre of extremely technical aid climbing. It takes him eight hours to climb 60 metres. Given the adverse weather conditions, this is good progress. To the right of their high-point, they report that layers of exfoliating slabs cling to the wall like oversized swords of Damocles. In all likelihood, our path will continue over them.

Thursday, May 8

Robert, Holger and I head up the fixed ropes at 8 a.m. We are able to negotiate the "swords" with a bolt, but beyond these guillotines, a massive flake is perched on a tiny ledge with another huge block balanced on top. I actually consider chimneying the gap behind the flake, but the thought of it parting company from the wall quashes this ridiculous notion. With great care, I sneak my way around it. Beyond the death flake, Robert again resorts to aid for possibly the most beautiful pitch of the route—a fine crack, about 40 metres long, in the best granite. If it's possible, we want to try this pitch free. Above this, we can inspect what is awaiting us: a finger crack splitting a vein of quartz.



Friday, May 9

What we were afraid of becomes reality. For the next few pitches each of us struggles with our own weapons against this amazing feature: Robert with technical aid climbing, I with free climbing. We're not having much fun, but we're getting higher, and at the end of the day, that's all that counts. The higher we get, the more amazing the view. Far-off icebergs dot the open water like the tiny villages in the Bavarian foothills. Not a sound can be heard—only the cries of the seagulls and ravens disturb the silence of late evening.

Saturday, May 10

Tomorrow we will move onto the wall until we are finished the route. As we organize our equipment, we also take time to prepare food and gear for the next stage of our adventure—the march to Clyde River. The pools in the coves and under the rocks are growing as each day gets warmer. We calculate at least 20 days for the return trek on the breaking ice. That means 100 bags of muesli, 100 bags of main meals, 100 bags of soup and 300 power bars. Before we commit to the route, we have to pack up the camp and secure everything high enough to protect it from marauding bears.

Sunday, May 11

Two-thirds up the wall, a girdle of crystals forms a ledge wrapping the Bastion like a rusty belt. A half-metre wide, it is enough to stand on but too narrow to sleep on. We set up our portaledges at what will be home for the next few nights high on the side of this gigantic refrigerator. The cramped quarters of the portaledges means everything needs to be clipped in so as to not drop anything. With our hanging abodes set up, we begin the never-ending task of transforming solid into liquid. The plastic barrel filled with ice and snow that we hauled up the wall will hopefully be enough to sustain us for the duration of our vertical camping trip.

Monday, May 12

One at a time, we struggle out of our sleeping bags trying not to fall off the portaledge. Forcing down a quick hit of coffee and some granola, we set out for our day of climbing. Since severing our umbilical with the ground, the weather has become stable enough to try redpointing some of the aid pitches. The thin quartz crack that we initially aided directly above our hanging camp becomes my project. Sharp crystals offer superb locks that bite into my soft skin without mercy. Despite the cold, I manage to redpoint this tricky finger crack at 5.13b—the hardest free climbing yet to be completed on Baffin Island.

Tuesday, May 13

For days, our world has been tilted plumb. For days, we have laboured, suffered, feared and hoped. The wind lulls as we relax in the sun on the summit plateau. No human has been here before. I gaze out over the Quernbiter Fiord and the Buchan Gulf, then eastwards towards Greenland. The jumbled edge of the floe marks the boundary between the pack ice and the open sea of Baffin Bay. For more than an hour, we admire the view. I feel content—even happy.

Thursday, May 15

Climbing a new big wall was only one goal of our expedition. Now we begin the next stage of our adventure as we self-propel ourselves—hopefully with assistance from the wind—back to civilization. We have no more than 20 days to cover the 350 kilometres of distance to Clyde River. Spring has now sprung making the conditions on the ice more disadvantageous everyday we wait. Huge lakes are forming. They're treacherous because we can't judge the depth of water. We're going to have to travel mainly at night and hope for good kiting winds in the late afternoon. On the rock, we knew what we had to do to succeed, but as far as survival in the Arctic wilderness is concerned, we are novices.

Photo: Klaus Fengler

Friday, May 16

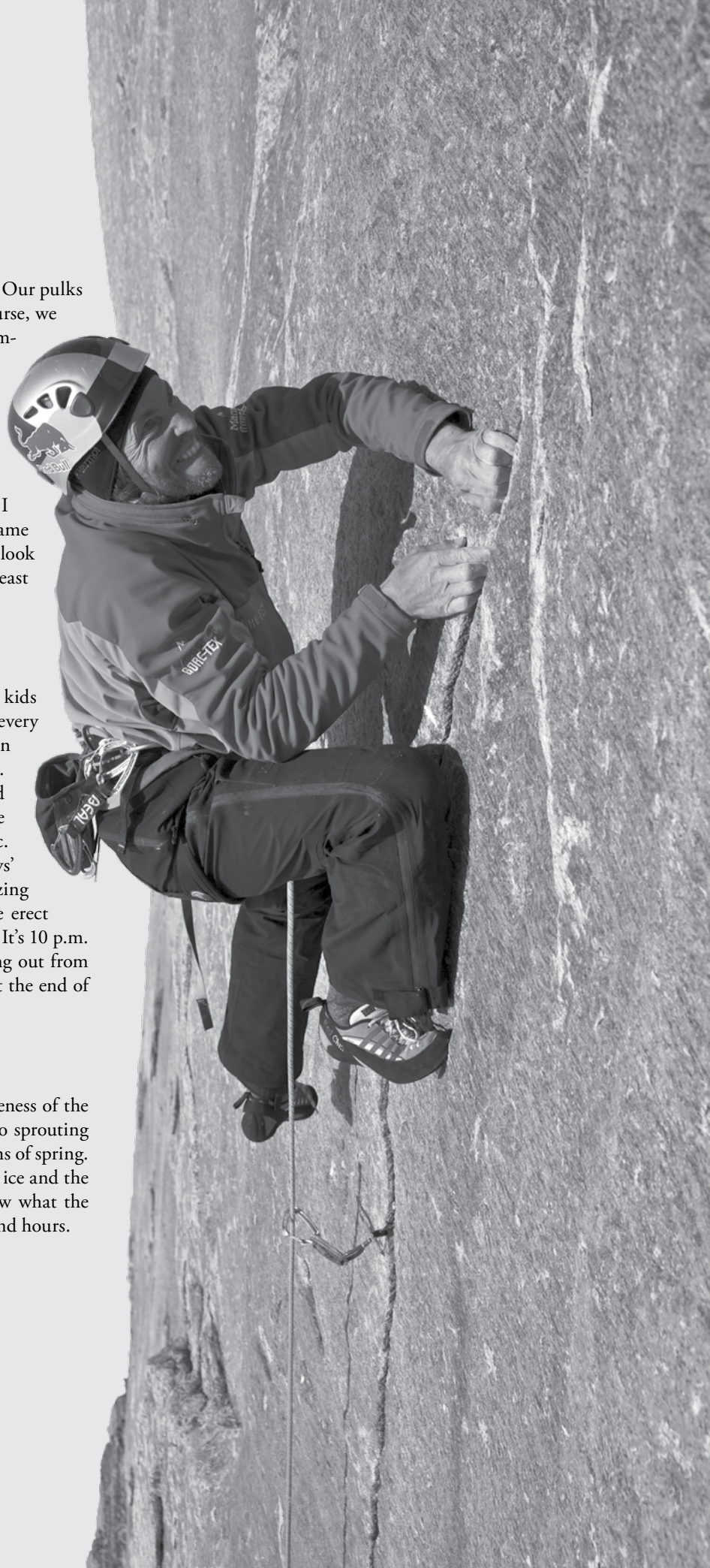
The motto of the day is "the discovery of slowness". Our pulks weigh between 75 and 100 kilograms each. Of course, we start off too fast. Of course, blisters are already forming after a few kilometres. And of course, we can't believe that we've covered such a short distance for all the effort. We divide the day into stages: two hours trekking, break, two hours trekking, break, repeat until at Clyde River. I choose an iceberg in the distance to aim towards. Then I try not to look at it for as long as I can. For hours I trek behind Holger's pulk and keep staring at the same rivet. When my curiosity becomes unbearable, I look up and realize to my horror that the iceberg, at least visually, is just as far away as it was before.

Monday, May 19

The wind wakes us at 7 a.m. We're as excited as little kids when we raise the kites an hour later. We enjoy every metre that we don't have to walk. The metres turn into kilometres as the invisible force strengthens. Effortlessly, we sail deeper and deeper into the fjord with the pulks towing behind us. In two hours we cover 20 kilometres. Polar bears flee in wild panic. As long as we move together, we feel safe. Three days' worth of distance covered in one, and an amazing campsite to boot. For the first time in weeks, we erect the tents on proper ground instead of frozen water. It's 10 p.m. and the sun is shining into the tents. Since starting out from basecamp, it is the first time we're not depressed at the end of the day.

Thursday, May 22

Two colours dominate the day: the glittering whiteness of the snow and the orange tent walls in the evening. No sprouting trees, no blossoming bushes to indicate the first signs of spring. The only hints are treacherous melting holes in the ice and the first rain. The worst thing is that we already know what the next day will bring: a monotonous trek for hours and hours.



Sunday, May 25

Early in the morning the vestibule flaps wildly. Snowflakes crackle on the tent's exterior. The clouds are hanging low, but a sharp wind is blowing the snow horizontally from the north. Normally I would crawl deeper into my sleeping bag, but wind means kiting, and kiting means no walking. The gusts get stronger so we opt to use the small chutes, which turns out to be a good decision. After a few hundred metres, we're stuck in jumbled pack ice and have to be extremely cautious manoeuvring through the uplifted floes. The clouds melt into the contours of the ice. The rough surface seems never-ending—a pile of splinters stretching to the horizon. And in between, small, colourful sails dart nervously back and forth like children's kites. Eight hours later, we exhaustedly set up camp. We've managed to make it to the middle of Sam Ford Fiord.

Sunday, June 1

We can hardly believe how quickly the temperature has risen in the past few days. It is excruciatingly hot. No cool shade to hide in and nary a breeze. We are surrounded by ice and snow. We talk little, each of us in our own thoughts. I'm not sad that our journey will be over tomorrow. For a limited period of time, I was able to experience a world that fascinates me but is just as strange and mysterious now as it was before. In the bright sunshine, we can see the antenna of the abandoned radar station on Cape Christian. This mark of man represents a finish line that we eagerly want to cross, but Clyde River is still a day's march away. We sit in front of our tents until midnight. For the first time, the sun is not only shining, it is also warming us.

Monday, June 2

The grand finale: no script, not even in our wildest dreams could we have imagined our arrival at Clyde River more terrifically. Yesterday was painfully slow, but now we race towards the end at 40 kilometres per hour. Adrenaline pumping and euphoric, it is indeed like a dream. Ships lie like fat seals on the icy bay, and innumerable sled dogs howl loudly to greet us. Words cannot describe the feeling of this moment. I don't even want to try. It is this precise moment that answers the "why" in why we always want new adventures. Each of us experiences it differently—somewhere deep inside.

Summary

Take the Long Way Home (VI 5.13b A4, 700m, 21 pitches), The Bastion (71°48'5187'' N, 74°18'21'' W), Quernbiter Fiord, Baffin Island. FA: Klaus Fengler, Stefan Glowacz, Holger Heuber, Mariusz Hoffman, Robert Jasper, May 2–14, 2008.

About the Author

Stefan began climbing at the age of 15 and quickly advanced to become one of the world's best sport climbers in the late '80s and early '90s, winning the Arco Rock master three times. For the past 15 years, he has focused on self-propelled expeditions to the most remote corners of the globe. This was his third pilgrimage to the Canadian North. Stefan lives in Bavaria, Germany, with his wife and triplet children.

Photo: Klaus Fengler

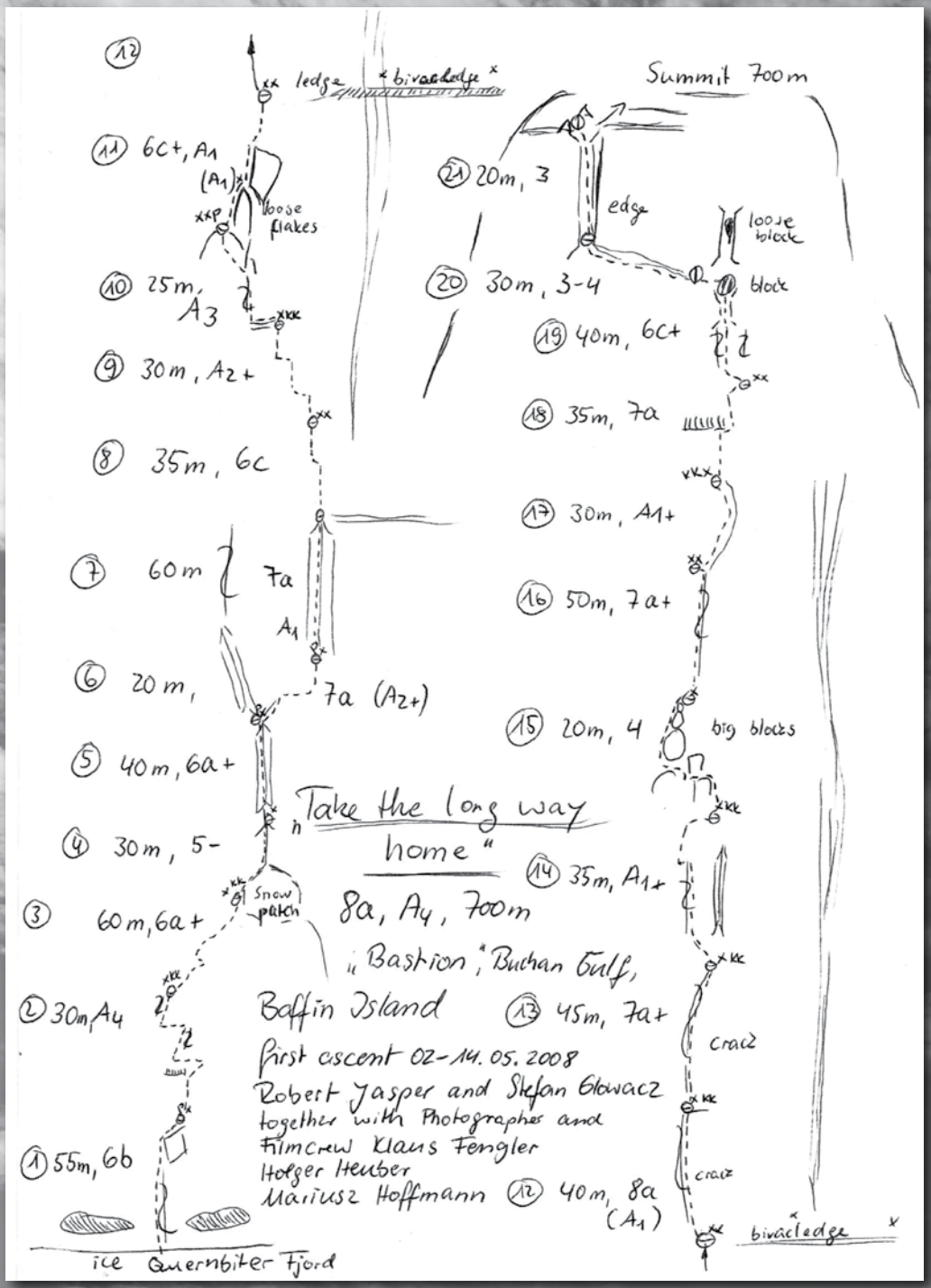


Photo: Klaus Fengler

The Inner Ranges

Stupid Az, Stoney Duz

Marx Karkis

Briefly believing in fate, I let Chance drive me around the bend. My life—a steady downhill slide—was going nowhere fast. I had to switch up—get out and see a bit more of the universe. The 'Stoke sounded good; more snow than G'dizzi and same-same close to the Pass. Didn't seem so good for ice climbing, but who needs ice when you have snow. Not this guy. Plus, Chance-y had hooked us up a sweet deal to rent Ian's attic suite—just the thing for a couple of dirtbags.

Ullr got in before I did, bringing Khione back down the mountains. Conor rolled the Merc into town early December towing a tank of veggie oil. He and Pat moved into Joel's flophouse, where Doc Travis was also holed up, and we started gettin' after it. Chance showed up around Christmas after quitting his job in G'dot. His arrival connected us newbies closer to his boyfriends—the established 'Stoke local crew, who happen to be a pack of animals, each well able to do their bit bustin' in some skin track and helping me, a snowboard tourist, to get out in the hills.

What a sweet piece of the goodness it is. It's a powder paradise. It's all here, from the alder-filled creeks up through the snow forests of cedar and hemlock, then the drier pockets of Douglas fir and white pine, spruce and balsam fir up high. Above that, the alpine, the rocks and lichen, barren and windswept and full of excitement, ridges and summits and bird's-eye views. What more can a ski bum dream to do? Jah bless us with snow, and we sacrifice all other excess to join the faithful in a higher calling of devotion to the Promised Land.

There's no two ways to say it—we got after the business like a real job, every day, with overtime. We were insatiable powder fiends. I'm gonna say it how it is now: I know the *Journal*'s role is to record the challenges and experiences in our alpine settings and I'm not sure why its content almost completely misses covering a national treasure—such stacks of sweet ski mountaineering. I guess there are a number of reasons skiers might not want to describe the cherry lines, and I'm not exactly sure why I'm bringing up the discussion. I have something to say though, and maybe its relevance is associated with the context of how we ride. I guess I'm talking about three things here: safety and risk and steep-mountain skiing. I'll start with the last since I'm typically back-asswards. Let me tell you about some goodness then, and I'll try not waste time with what you already know, the stuff in the guidebooks and the sweet lines off Griz, Cheops, Sifton, Swiss, Balu, Ursus Maj and Catamount. Wait! It's too much already. What'll I do? Go through each drainage, peak by peak, stating the obvious? I dunno…we all gots lives to live, so how about a high-five then! Five zones where we found love last winter, the highest quality steeps with little or no traffic—yet.

The Avalanche Peaks are in plain sight. The southwest summit with its short, sharp east face, and the northeast summit easily accessible from the top of the northwest chute... so good! Or, what about Bonney... oooh! The Tuzo Couloir... oh yeah!! The Hanging Glacier... oh hell yeah!!! And there's more good shots down the ridge towards Parsons Peak and into Smart Creek... sweet Bonney.

Have you seen the backside of McGill? Bring your guns 'cause it's a "chuting" range. It's all teed up, from the shorts and sweets near McGill Pass, through stacks of mo' spiceys, to a serious high-grade connection from the summit of Copper Peak—the upper face to a couloir thru pillars of stone... sweet love. The whole zone is wrapped with a factor of remoteness that adds value to honesty.

Speaking of takin' it out there; crossing Asulkan Pass and the Incomappleux River will get you into no-man's land, the crown of Glacier Park, the Dawson Range. Traversing Hasler Peak to ride the Comstock Couloir was definitely a highlight of the season and of my life in general. Good times with great friends, a rock solid crew who love mountains and snow. The fact that Greg, Conor and Chance sent the thing from the highway to Donkin camp, in a day, is a testament to their athletic fitness, and their intellectual deviance. We dropped Selwyn by its north glacier as well that trip, but it's a bit of a siren, attractive from afar but too exposed to the wind to hold the sweetness.

Alright that's plenty to get a point across. You wanted five so hit me up if you see me alive. I'm movin' on though since I don't have all day. Onto risk and safety then—big issues these days. They get a lot of attention and a ton of recommendations from folks way smarter than me, so I won't pretend to have something too significant to say about it. But, I've just heard too much negativity, peeps talkin' at my face as if I must not know what an avalanche is, and saying behind my back all about my imminent demise. The way we play, I admit, it might

Ian Jackson on the flats while Mark Hartley (a.k.a. Marx Karkis) stability tests a steep chute on the backside of Mount McGill in Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains, B.C. Photo: Conor Hurley

look a bit hectic, but we make safety our first rule, like most people do. I'm gonna say it, here and now, in order to keep me from stewing next time I hear some chump in pants too tight talking bout "kids these days" or where "snowboarders belong" or describing the ignorance of someone they don't even know. Such statements go a long way to make obvious the confines of the narrow mind of the speaker. If you see some tracks out there and you decide whoever left them must be an idiot to have gone there, well, maybe you're right; but maybe, it's just as likely that you have no clue what they were doing, where they were going or why. Jumping to conclusions probably says as much about you as whoever you're dissin'.

Keep your eye on the game; this game—recreation, powder skiing—it's about having fun. That's what we do. I'm not sure why people assume that means we neglect safety. It's not like choking on flowing snow is a good time, or being fractured and dislocated is fun. It really is not, and everyone knows that in one way or another. If it's me who you think is being stupid, do me the favour of calling me on it, but have some respect if you want much back. We might disagree, that's fine too, there's something for everyone out there. That's the sweetness and good fortune we have in the mountains around Major Rogers' pass, protected by Glacier National Park, reserved for us—the wildlife.

The Test of Time

Lynn Martel

Among canadian rockies climbers, the story is legend. In November 1952, Hans Gmoser and Leo Grillmair, two recent immigrants from Austria in their early 20s, approached the base of Mount Yamnuska, the vertical south-facing rock wall marking the Rockies' eastern gateway.

Wearing only crepe-soled street shoes, Grillmair led up a series of corners and chimneys with an English physiotherapist and enthusiastic climber, Isabel Spreat and Gmoser respectively, following him on the rope. After negotiating a tricky step with small holds and great exposure beneath him, Grillmair belayed his partners up to the base of a large chimney. Peering up into the dark, vertical cave, Grillmair wondered if he could find a route through until he noticed light streaming from the stone ceiling. Grillmair climbed upward, and after squeezing through a small hole, he belayed his partners up through the chasm, after which they hiked down the mountain's well-trod backside trail. The first route on Yam's face, which they would name Grillmair Chimneys and rate an easy 5.6, had been established.

More than simply the first ascent of Yam's cliff side however, Grillmair Chimneys was actually the first modern climb in Western Canada.

"It was huge," says Chic Scott, author of *Pushing the Limits*. "In my opinion, the ascent of Grillmair Chimneys was the start of modern climbing in Canada. Up to that point, climbing in Canada was to get to the top of a mountain, and ideally make a first ascent. That was the turning point—to climb the face whether they got to the summit or not. The point was to climb a difficult route for the joy of climbing."

In subsequent years, with various partners, Gmoser and Grillmair established more Yam routes, including Calgary Route and what would become another classic, Direttissima. For the remainder of that decade Yamnuska's cliffs were the solitary domain of only a handful of local climbers with prerequisite experience, skills and boldness.

"Is this really 5.6?" Last summer I set out with Robson Gmoser, the 39-year-old son of Hans Gmoser, and Robson's fiancée, Olivia Sofer. None of us had climbed Grillmair Chimneys before; it was my first climb on Yam.

More than once during our ascent, we commented on how the route seemed a lot more difficult than its grade indicated, and we wondered how Grillmair and his partners had felt climbing it without knowing what they'd find above them.

Starting up the final chimney with Robson belaying from above, I spanned my legs across the metre-wide gap, an intimidating open space below me. Shifting my weight to the left wall, then the right, I moved up one foot, one hand at a time. The climbing was physical and sustained. Deep inside the chimney, the air was cool and I took off my sunglasses to see in the dark. Following the rope, I spied the hole, just big enough to fit through after I removed my pack.

Laughing and covered in bumps, scrapes and bruises, I reached Robson.

"That was pretty staunch 5.6," he declared.

Now 78, Grillmair, who lives in Brisco, B.C., remembers his namesake climb well.

"We were in a snowstorm at the end," he described in his lyrical Austrian accent. "When we got to the base of the (final) chimney, it didn't look too encouraging. I knew I could handle the chimney, and I didn't want to go back down—it's not a good thing in a snowstorm when the rock gets all wet; my hands were cold and I was wearing only street shoes. I thought, I'll keep going up the chimney. All of a sudden I saw light, and I thought, Jesus, there's a hole up there! It was just big enough to fit my body through, I was only 130 pounds back then, I could go through it like a snake. By the time we got down to the bottom, the soles of my shoes were coming off!"

Over the years, Grillmair said, he repeated the route many times.

"I climbed it a lot of times without a rope, by myself," Grillmair recalled. "I got to know the route quite well. Now I'm 78, and I wouldn't want to do it now, not like that! At that time I had very strong arms. I was a plumber, and back then the pipes were galvanized steel and we screwed them together by hand before we used a pipe wrench. Do that 100 times a day—my hands, my grip was so strong. I just put my arms across and pulled myself up. I could spread my legs and pull myself up with my knees. That was my speciality.

"When we came to Canada, Hans and I, the rock climbing wasn't done yet. The Alpine Club, they climbed the easy route to the summit. We looked for the hardest route up; the peak wasn't important. It looked like a nice face for good climbing. After that Hans and I, we put some harder routes up, and then Brian Greenwood and those guys, they put up some really hard routes."

Today Yamnuska hosts more than 100 routes of widely ranging difficulty.

Gmoser, meanwhile, with Grillmair at his side, became known worldwide for launching the helicopter skiing industry with his company, Canadian Mountain Holidays, and for being a founding member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG). He received numerous awards and accolades, including the Order of Canada, before his untimely death in a 2006 cycling accident.

For robson, an ACMG certified ski guide working toward becoming a rock guide, climbing the route his father put up with Grillmair more than a half-century ago carried special meaning.

"I think it was quite neat to see what those guys had done. It makes you feel proud of your dad," Robson said. "It's quite an amazing climb, that they had the gumption to do it. I'm happy to have done it. I'm also trying to imagine them climbing through that little hole. It's a pretty neat thing, for the first route on Yam."

Robson said he doesn't remember his dad talking about his climbs very much, particularly since Hans quit rock climbing after he was seriously injured by falling rock.

"I heard a few stories here and there, especially about Direttissima and using wooden pegs for protection," Robson said. "The only thing I remembered from Grillmairs (Chimney) is that they only used one piton."

Grillmair however, doesn't recall using any pitons on a route that most climbers today protect with at least several pieces of gear on each of its eight pitches.

"We didn't use pitons or anything like that," Grillmair stated. "In those days, if we needed hardware, I wasn't interested. First of all, we didn't have it, but it wasn't my style. It's good Robson climbed it. It's easy for those young guys, the way they climb now. Besides, it's not that difficult a route."

"I read in an American magazine once that gave me credit for starting rock climbing in North America. I had no idea. On that easy route? It's almost embarrassing," Grillmair laughed.

Crevasse

The summer morning is clear cool
We rope up below the glacier
attach crevasse rescue gear
John leads
then Mark a child
the weakest member of our team
then me
The rope between us sways
inches above the snow
We walk slowly quietly
listen to the crunch of snow
soft swoosh of rope
clank of carabiners
kwawk of ravens
as they look for air currents to play in
The rhythm sweetens the still air
Sun warms us
The snow is firm protective
but we probe with ice axes
for hidden crevasses
take big steps over
where we think they are
At the top we want to lie in the sun eat
But no John says
we must get down
before the snow gets soft dangerous
Now John the strongest is at the back
I go first
Mark's still in the middle
My feet plunge into slushy snow
Sweat pours down my nose
Sunscreen stings my eyes
Glacier goggles fog
I'm blinded by the snow's brittle glare
I want to take my jacket off
but don't
Suddenly I'm in it
My feet feel air
My axe is thrust into the snow
I don't remember doing it
In a second I'm out again
I didn't even lose my hat
I breathe again look down
see that frigid chasm huge deep
see the blue of convoluted ice
turn into sinuous shadows far below
hear echoes of globs of snow
as they plop into the depths of the crevasse
The rope is taut I look back
see Mark still in self-arrest
He'd been the one who'd held me
had kept me at the rim

—Myrna Mattice

Always Go with a Guide

Margaret Imai-Compton

The guides' tent at the 2007 Mount Alexandra General Mountaineering Camp is the perfect backdrop for what I am about to do. A quick glance at Peter Amann; he nods "Go!" and the red record button on his digital camcorder flashes to life. I start to speak.

"This message is for all the ACMG guides and aspiring guides out there from a grateful client," I begin.

This is an impromptu recording so I am frantically making up the message as I go. "Think fast," I tell the voice in my head.

"What you need to know is that you all do a great service for people like me who depend on your talent and skill to get to beautiful places in the sky. I have been guided by so many of you, and without exception, you're all professional and well trained."

As I speak, so many exquisite memories of guides and climbs and stunning routes cascade into my mind. What guides to mention by name? There are so many! What routes to highlight? Start with Canada or talk about the guided expeditions abroad where we took our ACMG guides?

"Keep going with the message," I tell myself. "Keep talking." The camcorder's record button is still beaming red at me.

"I know the ACMG certification is really hard but it's worth it. Canadian guides are the best in the world and you need to know that clients like me value your training. You keep me safe and lead me to incredible places."

Whoah! Mental pause. Was that a lump in my throat? Did my voice waver? Holy Toledo, this little narrative about guiding is getting to me. Thank goodness I'm wearing sunglasses 'cause I'm actually getting weepy.

"So keep up the good work, and know that we value all of you. You're the best in the world and you need to know that."

Peter smiles appreciatively, shuts off the camcorder and says, "That's great, Margaret. It'll be good to show at an ACMG meeting."

I am totally taken aback with the emotion that surged forward as I expressed appreciation for Canadian guides. I like my guides. They are not only superbly trained machines, they are, without exception, really nice people. So it got me thinking, what is it about Canadian guides that make them exceptional?

My friend Kevin Viehoff from the UK, helped me to understand one part of the exceptional equation.

"I can't think of anywhere else in the world where the guides are so kind, they really look after you, and you never feel like it's a 'job' to them," he volunteered. "I feel like they've become my friends. I mean, we go out with Jim (Gudjonson) and Andrew (Langsford) year after year and they're always the same—easy going, always smiling, really good at what they do."

And it's true. Guides become friends. Guides' spouses and families become friends. Perhaps this is true elsewhere in the world, but I haven't come across it to the same extent as I've witnessed within the Canadian guiding community.

I once engaged in a spirited debate about the integrity of climbing with certified guides. It was put to me that because I only climb with guides, I am a "wannabe" more than an authentic alpinist; that I "lean" on guides to do the route navigation, to take the responsibility on leads, to construct the anchors and rappel stations, to shoulder the responsibility of a successful summit.

I totally agreed with my critics. I have happily paid out tens of thousands of dollars (mostly Canadian currency) for professional guides. However, I do not believe that being professionally guided makes me less of an authentic alpinist. Here's the reality of life in the 21st century. I live in a large urban centre without mountains. I run my own company and single parent a daughter. I need the mountains to feed my soul. But I don't have the resources to practice my mountaineering skills where I live, or to research routes and prepare the logistics for an expedition.

So yes, I happily pay my guides. They recommend a mountain, they tell me what to bring, they tell me where to show up and off we go. We have been to splendid places in Canada and abroad, and yes, I pay even more money to have them accompany me to foreign destinations.

Why bring Canadian guides to South America or Europe or New Zealand, when there are internationally certified guides available locally? Because, Barry or Steve, or Jim or Andrew or any other Canadian guide speaks our language, knows our abilities, anticipates our success and, yes, there's that word again, is our friend. It makes for a great trip on so many more levels than just climbing a beautiful route.

More than a hundred years ago, when the Swiss guides started the Canadian guiding tradition, there were clients like Dr. Hickson of Montreal. He came to the Rockies every year for more than 30 years, to climb with Edward Feuz Jr. and other guides. I have to believe that such a longstanding connection was the basis of a strong friendship between client and guide.

What is interesting is that 100 years ago, a mountain guide would not have been invited to dine with a client, or share the same quarters. In the rigid world of social class and protocol in the early 20th century, clients came from affluent, privileged situations and mountain guides were not regarded as social equals. According to the ever-outspoken Edward Whymper, in his first forays into the European Alps in the late 1800s, mountain guides were simply sausage-eating shepherds who just pointed the way.

What Whymper didn't appreciate is that professional guides enhance the mountain experience. I learn so much from observing them and from accepting their constructive and helpful feedback on my skills and technique. And I'm grateful that

many of Canada's leading alpinists such as Barry Blanchard, Rob Owens, Steve Holeczi and others, have chosen guiding as a profession. Although I have absolutely no expectation that I will be climbing at even a single-digit percentage of their skill level, as a client I benefit from their experience and daring.

When I was challenged on my use of professional guides, the one essential benefit that surfaced again and again was that my guides keep me safe. They keep me safe from my own stupid mistakes; they keep me safe from other hazards in the mountains; they keep me safe so I return intact to my family.

The last paragraph of the *The Guiding Spirit*—a book about the origins of guiding in Canada, features a wonderful quote from the legendary Edward Feuz Jr.—months before his passing. When he was asked for one thing he would say about his life in the mountains, he said, "Always go with a guide!"

I couldn't agree more. Thanks for the last word Mr. Feuz.

"Wine Time" by Stéfanie Gignac

Walking Stick on the Spiral Road

Jerry Auld

It's just a stick. just a foot-long shaft of wood. Bare too, the hand that holds it, gnarled and weathered. The stick doesn't belong here. The bare hand either. The man, only by effort of will, standing on Mount Robson, the highest in the Canadian Rockies. The guide's words hang in the granular air:

Gentlemen, I can take you no higher; God must do the rest.

One end is splintered to a point which was jammed into the rime. The hand that pulled it free is numb, fingertips wooden, outstretched above the enormous drop of the south face. The man is immobile, captured on camera in the instant the shutter flashes open and sears the film with ambiguous light. It's grainy, his neck indistinct in the fog of his exhale. The colours are of an old photograph: is it the sepia and grainy film. Or, is it the reality of 1913: grimy canvas jodhpurs, dull axe metal, woolly toque and beard, fierce windburn. There are no synthetics, there are no colours that haven't been rubbed with charcoal, grease and sweat. One wants the camera to pull back, to reveal his companions, the steepness of the face, the breadcrumb trail of divots in the snow leading them there, the fantastic drop to the still lake below. One wants to expand the frame to follow the twisted hemp rope, to start it all in motion.

But the stick is out of place, too big to be carried by a bird, and never this high. It's heavy, like an axe-shaft. His head is turned toward it, watching as the cold bites, slipping past the euphoria of arrival and realizing the struggle to return requires a goal the way a summit once drew him. Pull the camera back, follow the rope out: it's tight on his waist, stretching with the slight droop of waterlogged weight, splitting back to the stocky guide and forward to the other client. It's their last moment on the summit. Maybe that's the pause: even one step is one step down, never to be trod again. They know their accomplishment: all had searched the snows for anything unnatural.

I see no marker, no other sign, said a client.

It's ours! The first to set foot here since God placed the last stone, gasped the other.

Now the other client looks down at the long ladder of chopped footholds and the steepness and space around them. The clients are not young, already distinguished by careers. One is an ex-pat Brit, newly elected to the B.C. Legislature, the other an American naval commander that saw action in the Spanish-American war. They are ambitious men who have earned their reputations.

Beyond the stick are the surrounding peaks, no focal length deep enough to bring them into memory. They stand atop the highest, the hardest the Guide says he's ever climbed. They stand atop a series of rock bands, sloping layers that appear to curl up and around to this singular point. The Shuswap tribes call this the *Mountain of the Spiral Road*. At the top the three men are caught looking in different directions, bound by the rope. They all know the story of the previous attempts to stand there, especially that of their own Outfitter, retelling the stories in the glacier camp below. The wind snapped the canvas and they peered up at the broad shoulders of the mountain.

Four years ago, the Pastor and our Outfitter climbed up that side.

That looks bloody hard. Direct, but hard.

They could look up and see it against the dying day.

I'd heard our Outfitter had never before stepped on a mountain, even by accident.

And that he didn't even have an alpenstock. Used a pole he pulled from the forest.

I understand it was the Pastor's 13th attempt. On August 13th. A Friday.

They all laughed when one of them says it's bad luck to be superstitious. But they're all looking up silently. The summit's the only place the two routes meet, a singular point on a knife blade. There at the top, the rope holds them, the knots dripping water as they tighten. The camera can pull back and it won't change the calculus: The Guide is the first to be hired by the fledgling Mountain Club in a venture as precarious as his clients. They're all amazed at the ridge the Pastor and Outfitter climbed and from which they claimed to have reached the summit.

That's where they came up, the Guide said.

They would have missed all the glaciers, and with no train. Two weeks just to get here.

Even if they didn't make the highest point, they deserve credit, the Guide said.

But it's just flotsam, something cast aside. In the cold it's impossible to feel if the stick's flattened surface is from a knife or where ice has scored it. The man with the stick is inscrutable, looking from behind smoked-glass goggles that make everything look historic. The rope between them sags, it doesn't conduct, they can't tell what each is thinking. But they've all climbed many times before. Clients like that come with experience, but also expectations. They are not easily satisfied with an attempt, a high spectacle. They want the summit. And the Mountain Club wants word immediately upon their descent. Under the stick is the drop of the south face, to the tiny meadows and the station houses. They must see the platforms, the twin tracks flashing brighter than their size at this distance. Four years after the Pastor and Outfitter bushwhacked up over

Yellowhead Pass there are not one, but two railways, right to the doorstep, pulling away to warmth and water and comfort. The telegraph lines will flash their news out like a watershed from the mountains, spreading, faster than the train. Once that starts it cannot be stopped. It might seem ridiculous from that height; the stationhouses seem too small to shelter such power. The naval commander knows about signals. They've all told stories around the fires in the forest, and in the huddled cold camps higher up, jesting with each other, teasing the Politician on his recent election.

Politics seems a matter of timing. If you can deliver the knockout blow before your opponent can counter in another speech, then you win the public, he said.

Politics is not unlike War, said the Commander, tapping his teeth with his pipe. *In the battle of Santiago de Cuba, the Spaniards finally broke free to the open ocean and we engaged them. It lasted hours, the chase. Finally their Caribbean Squadron was sunk or scuttled. There was just the Vizcaya, which we pursued, trading broadsides. We had her cornered when we received the signal to desist. It was the work of an instant to question if the message was real, or a final desperate deception by the enemy. By then we had hit her magazine and she exploded. The others had caught their prey and I suppose we wanted our share of the glory. In our success the issue of ignoring a transmission was forgotten. That is war, after all.*

The rope is hemp, and doesn't stretch. But it doesn't matter which holds the stick—they are bound as one organism. After a summit it's always a dwindling slide to a sleepy satisfaction. The Guide knows he must get them down safely and that'll be easier if they're motivated by the desire to claim the summit, not from the mountain but from other humans. How many times had the Guide swung the adze to cut steps up? Fifteen hundred? Sixteen? The ascent has been hard won, the laurels deserved. His mantra is to never show exhaustion, hesitation, or fear. It's five o'clock, their descent will stretch well into dark, back down to their tiny tent where they had talked:

If our Outfitter was so green, and still ascended, how will the Mountain Club justify you, and themselves? the Politician had asked the Guide across the sputtering stove.

The Director says they didn't make it, that it's still ours to pluck, said the Commander.

But if they did, with the railway now, an amateur tide will flood these valleys.

I worry my office would be delegated to search and rescue, said the Guide.

Aye, if ascents are made with walking sticks. But the Director says there's no evidence.

If they made it they'd have left something, until then a man's word stands, said the Guide.

From the summit they could look down at the shores of Berg Lake and see their Outfitter's camp, possibly a thin rivulet of smoke, or a few horses running, jockeying for dominance. They all like him, it's not easy to forget his stories about the climb during three weeks of storms, the pole, him breaking the end but carrying on. They can all see the blonde curls under a drooping brim, his unassuming flash of smile. The Guide admires his enthusiasm, the way he appreciates the mountains. But that Outfitter needs the Mountain Club to keep his business running.

The stick's other end is mashed where dirt has pushed between the rings. Far beneath it the stationhouses sit quiet. It's two miles straight down, the biggest vertical in the Rockies.

You fall down that and nothing would remain.

On the other side and below his clients is the huge icefall of the north face. Berg Lake pools there, flecks of ice floating, white against the translucent green water. There are no sticks there. But all around, in mile after mile, until the horizon is hazy with fire smoke, there is the forest, broken by a bony ridge or mossy glade, but all one organism, flowing up against their stone heels. They are surrounded by sticks, all scattered, unnoticeable. The Guide has snapped many branches clearing the path for his clients in the forests below, the Outfitter many more. And surely uncountable more will be broken without regard. Up the rails, in the next year or so the Inter-provincial Boundary Survey will move through, establishing where Alberta and British Columbia should meet, probably the line will run directly through the Guide's legs as he straddles the top. Soon there will be surveyors hauling their theodolites up the peaks, swinging their scopes and peering at the summits and scratching their papers with rhumb lines. But for this moment the horizon is clear, there are no glasses flashing the late-afternoon sun, there is no one watching.

The stick is suspended, just in that moment. Can you see? Look closely at the hand, frozen in a loose claw, the film is grainy as if it sees the molecules of air, a thin layer of white between the flesh and the wood. It's a mere thing, an individual's flash decision, a flick of the wrist.

It's just a stick, after all. Falling.

[Editor's note: Despite some resemblance to history, the above story is fiction.]

Hiking in the Mundays' Footsteps

Peter Rothermel

This article was born and started to jell after I received a phone call from a man named Ron Dart, a scholar and historian, who has been researching the lives of Don and Phyllis Munday. He was trying to track down some information about the places where they had climbed in their early years around the Vancouver area. As well, he had searched for, and found, the remains of their cabin on Dam Mountain, and has repeated some of their Lower Mainland climbs.

Anyone familiar with the Mundays' history knows that it was from the slopes on Mount Arrowsmith that they first saw Mount Waddington in 1925, which launched them into years of exploration throughout the Waddington area, which gained them everlasting fame in the Canadian mountaineering community. In Don Munday's well-known book, *The Unknown Mountain*, he wrote, "Phyl's eyes shone as she handed me the binoculars and pointed to a tall mountain nearly due north through a new cloud-rift. The compass showed the alluring peak stood along a line passing a little east of the head of Bute Inlet and perhaps 150 miles away, where blank spaces on the map left ample room for many nameless mountains." They had spotted Mount Waddington, and Don and Phyllis would spend their next decades exploring that area. They would become forever famous for their exploits, which would earn Don the title of "The Dean of Mountaineering" and Phyllis the respected title of "Grand Dame of Mountaineering".

While I have been very much involved for several years with the initiative to gain protected park status for the Arrowsmith Massif, and also with assisting several research groups, it was only a matter of time until Ron would be steered towards me. As well, for years, I had been researching the history of Arrowsmith with a great deal of input from Lindsay Elms—Vancouver Island mountain historian. Ron would in turn introduce me to Kathryn Bridge—archivist at the Royal B.C. Museum in Victoria and author of *Phyllis Munday: Mountaineer* and *A Passion for Mountains*. Through her writing, I would glean bits of Arrowsmith history that would round out the story of that fateful day in 1925 when the clouds momentarily parted and the course of B.C. mountaineering was altered with a major turn. It was through Kathryn's writings that the mystery of just who Tom Ingram was had come to light. As the third party on the Mundays' Arrowsmith trip, I always wondered if he was an Island local. It turned out that Tom, a fellow Alpine Club of Canada member, wanted to climb Arrowsmith as a last peak before retiring from mountaineering, and so he invited Don and Phyllis. As well, they all shared the alternative motive of getting to a distant peak that would give them a different perspective and better view of the Coast Mountain Range.

I am content to leave the overall story of the Mundays to the scholars, historians and researchers dealing with the big picture. For my part, I am glad to be a small piece of the research and focus on that one day in the Mundays' lives that relates to my local mountain. Over the past years, I have been researching around museum archives and along the way I have found

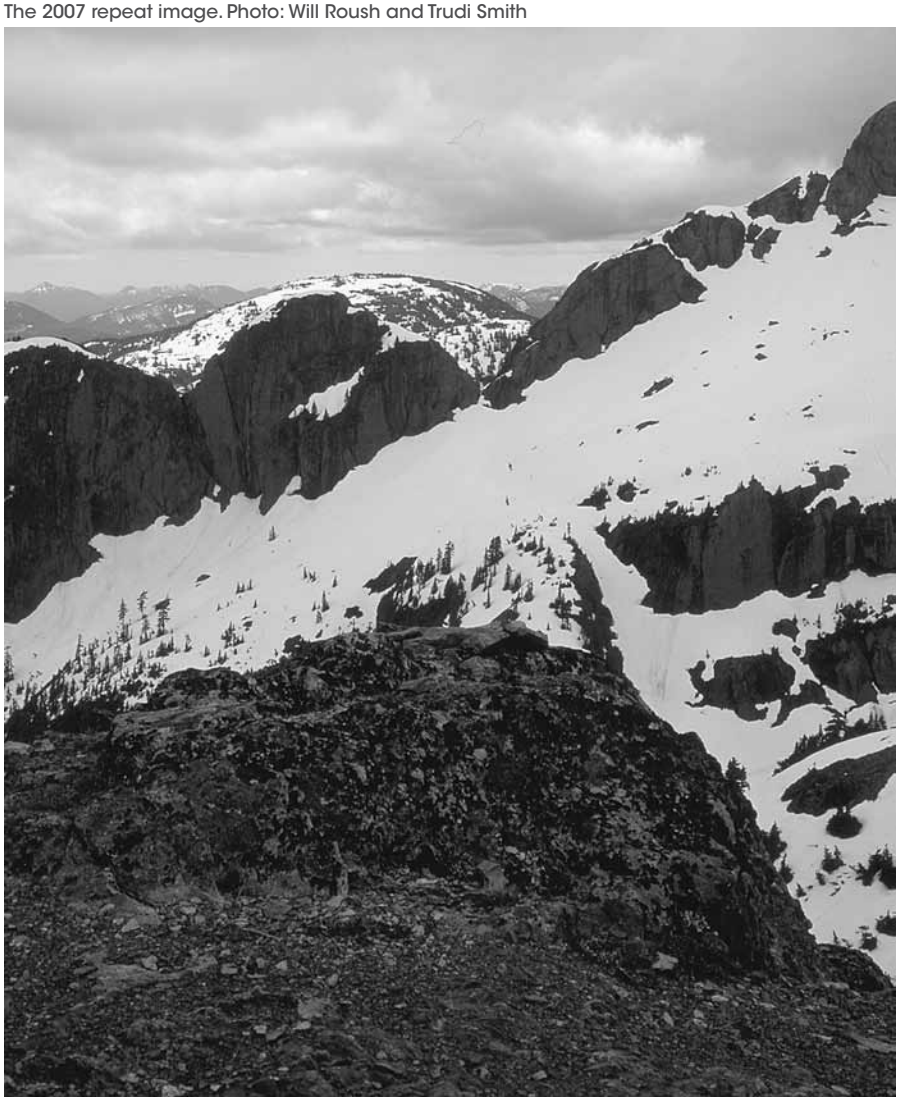
A 1925 photograph taken by Phyllis Munday of Don Munday (left) and Tom Ingram near the summit of Mount Cokely with Mount Arrowsmith's east ridge in the background.
Photo: Image I-61986 courtesy of Royal B.C. Museum, B.C. Archives

many photos and information on Arrowsmith's past, from such eras as that of John Macoun (1887) and James Fletcher (1901). Along with Lindsay Elms' document research, the history of Arrowsmith is coming into focus. From the Royal B.C. Museum, I have three photos taken during the Mundays' trip up Arrowsmith in June of 1925, and a fourth one of the McBey Creek bridge crossing taken in the 1930s, which is on the route that they would have been following.

When Ron Dart first contacted me, he wanted to find out if anyone might know anything about which route the Mundays took up Mount Arrowsmith in 1925, or if the route could possibly be sleuthed out. I replied back, almost laughingly, that of course I knew the route the Mundays took, as it would have been a well-established trail by 1925 that would have been built by the Canadian Pacific Railroad as a tourist draw in 1912. Indeed, it is likely the oldest intact trail on all of Vancouver Island, and it is still a very popular route to this day even though there are easier and shorter ways to gain the summits of Mount Cokely and Mount Arrowsmith. What is now known as the Old Arrowsmith Trail starts at Cameron Lake and switchbacks up the forested north-facing slopes and open alpine to Mount Cokely. To get to Mount Arrowsmith from Mount Cokely, you need to drop down to the Saddle—the col between the summits—cross a plateau area, traverse over three sub-peaks called the Bumps, and finally ascend a 45-metre 4th-class arête, known as the Nose, to the summit. Until the early 1970s, when a hiking route—the Judges Route—was found to reach the summit, the Nose was the only way to reach the highest point on Arrowsmith.

As well, I sent Ron the series of photos that the Mundays took and further stated that I was almost positive I could locate the exact spots where the photos were taken. In fact, when Don Munday wrote about Tom Ingram going waist deep in a crevasse, I was sure I knew exactly where it happened just from the tone of the text. There's a bluffy spot coming north off of Mount Cokely that melts away from the face in the spring, creating a bergschrund that if covered by new snow might prove to be a bit of a trap, as I found out once myself. In conversation with a fellow "Arrysmither" [*sic*] I described the scenario of Tom's drop, but before I could explain my theory he blurted out the description of the exact same place.

The 2007 repeat image. Photo: Will Roush and Trudi Smith



In a series of trips I went on with Ron Dart and several other people over the spring of 2006, I think we pretty much found all the exact locations of the old archival photographs. I had originally thought that the photo of "Don and Tom standing" was on Mount Cokely's summit. On hiking down the ridge, where the route to Mount Arrowsmith crosses, Viggo Holm's sharp eyes spotted the exact spot. It was great to have the input from many friends on these trips. Then that winter, on an ACC Section avalanche course I met Trudi Smith—a graduate student from the University of Victoria. She and her fellow grad student, Will Roush, specialize in repeat photography and spend their summers doing much of their work in the Rockies. Trudi was interested in the project, but we couldn't get it together to do a repeat photography study on Arrowsmith that spring due to conflicting schedules and bad weather. I was of the opinion that if we were going to do a repeat of the Mundays' photos that we should also do so in June, and in fairly clear weather as the Mundays experienced. That way the light coming from the sun would be at the same angle and the amount of snowpack could be somewhat compared.

Finally in the spring of 2007, we found the one single day in June that Trudi, Will

and I could make and that had clear weather. Will lugged his wide format camera and tripod up first to Mount Cokely and then to the Arrowsmith Bumps. Even though we took a much shorter route into the alpine than the original Old Arrowsmith Trail, it still required a full day. Much of the time was spent getting the camera into its exact location to take a repeat photo. Will and Trudi would spend a half an hour just pacing back and forth at the probable site and then another half an hour setting the camera and tripod in the exact place. Then one or the other might make an adjustment to the tripod location or look through the viewfinder and start the whole fine adjustment process all over again. Their technique was to grid off a copy of the original photo and to have a corresponding grid on their camera's viewfinder. Their patience with lining up the camera was only matched by my desire to nap as much as I could on a sunny day in the alpine. In the end, Trudi and Will created some perfect reproductions.

These before-and-after photographs will now be available to the Environmental Studies Department at the University of Victoria or any other groups doing historical comparison studies in the alpine environment. To my untrained eye, it appears that the shadier northern aspects show little change, while the sunnier southern aspects seem to have more tree growth than there was 82 years ago. It would be nice to see the photos and physical area scrutinized more closely by alpine environment specialists someday. Being in the United Nations Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve, other ongoing research on the Arrowsmith Massif includes: Ministry of Environment snow surveys (since the 1950s), the white tailed ptarmigan, Vancouver Island marmots and one of only two Canadian Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA) projects. Arrowsmith is indeed on the world's research map and I am honoured to have the chance to be a small part in helping these groups.

Don Munday pointing and Tom Ingram with binoculars on the Bumps (sub-peaks of Mount Arrowsmith) looking towards the B.C. mainland and the Coast Range. Mount Cokely is the rocky peak in the centre of the image.
Photo: Image I-61987 courtesy of Royal B.C. Museum, B.C. Archives

The 2007 repeat image. Photo: Will Roush and Trudi Smith

I find it fascinating and am awed when standing in the exact same spots that Don, Phyllis and Tom did. When I stare off to the north from these historic locations, I cannot help but wonder what might have happened if, on that fateful day in 1925, the clouds hadn't parted and Mount Waddington had remained obscured. Where might the Mundays have ended up putting their mountaineering energies towards? Having had a pivotal crossroad in my own lifetime, orchestrated by Mother Nature's whim of weather, I might well now be living in another country, never knowing a thing of the Mundays or of Mount Arrowsmith. A sudden rain squall in 1969 had me duck for shelter under a bridge along the Californian coast. The folks I met under that bridge were off to start a commune at Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island, which has been my home for 40 years. I can somewhat relate to the odds thrown on that pivotal day in 1925.

"Cookie Climber" by Stéfanie Gignac

Where Am I Now?

Straining, reaching, stretching,
Too far above my last piece,
Now I'm sketching.

Pumping, sweating, flailing,
Unable to make the move,
Now I'm sailing.

Twisting, tensing, pinching,
Bounce hard off the ledge,
Now I'm flinching.

Cursing, sniveling, whining,
Try it again one more time,
Now I'm climbing!

—Cheryle Battrum

Marc Piché on pitch two during the first free ascent (and second ascent) of Polar Thievery on the North Tower of Mount Asgard. Photo: Chris Atkinson

The North

The Baffin Factor

Marc Piché

After a relatively successful "first crack" at guidebook authoring, Chris Atkinson and I were looking forward to our next project together. A late night of scotch drinking with Kevin McLane, our publisher, sealed the deal. We would write a select guide to alpine climbing in Canada and throw in a coffee-table book highlighting the very best of them for good measure. The Alpine Canada Project was born.

When the fog finally cleared the next morning, we came to the sober realization that there was no way in hell we could afford to shoulder the significant costs involved in our obviously ridiculous plan. Especially because we had all agreed that the only way to do it would be to visit every area we wrote about. Off the hook, we went our separate ways secretly relieved that the whole thing was nothing more than a few climbers talking shit over drinks.

That was until some friends at Arc'teryx asked us what we had in mind for future book projects....

Chris and I decided that Baffin Island was the place to start and so began our planning. We wanted to visit the two most popular climbing areas on the island but quickly realized that they had distinctly different seasons. In the end, our plan was to travel to the eastern fjords by snowmobile from Clyde River to take photos just before the ice broke up, then head south to Pangnirtung and the Weasel Valley for a few weeks of climbing.

After five days of dodging snowmobile-eating leads (open cracks in the sea ice), icebergs and polar bear tracks, we had all the photos we needed of the impressive and intimidating walls of the Sam Ford Fiord, so it was off to Pangnirtung for the second half of our adventure.

We had heard all about the famous nail-ups on the huge walls of Asgard and Thor, but people rarely spoke of free climbing in Auyuittuq National Park. With a bit of research and the help of Mark Synnott's new guidebook to the area, we hashed out a plan to find the best moderate free climbing the Weasel Valley had to offer. Our objectives had to meet two criteria: first, it had to be possible to climb the route in a day from camp, which, with 24 hours of daylight, can make for a pretty long day; and second, we had to be able to climb it with double ropes and an alpine granite rack similar to what we would carry in the Bugaboos.

We learned an important lesson on our first climb, which happened to be a new route on Overlord Peak directly above our first camp at the head of the fjord. We called it the "Baffin 1.5 Factor". Everything on Baffin is 1.5 times farther away than it looks, 1.5 times bigger than it looks and will take you 1.5 times longer to climb it than you think.

The line we had scoped was directly above our camp and we figured the approach would take us about half an hour. Two hours of steep grassy meadows later, we donned harnesses and helmets at the base of the slabs. The route started easy with endless pitches of 5.6/5.7 and the odd move of 5.8. Fifteen pitches later, we summitted the pyramid-shaped sub-peak somewhat shocked at how much climbing we had already put behind us. We were certain the remaining headwall would be over in about six pitches so we figured we had lots of time for a leisurely break on a big sandy ledge overlooking the fjord. Little did we know that we were only half way and that the business end of the climbing was yet to come. Another 15 pitches—a few of which were mid-5.10, the last being a wet, loose horror show—had us on the summit icefield at around 1 a.m. We descended to the northeast along the side of the glacier with one rappel over a short rock band and returned to camp just in time for an early breakfast.

After our 18-hour round-trip adventure on Overlord and a good rest day, it was time to move camp. This required one day to ferry the first load to our next camp, then a second day to carry the rest of our gear. Now we were getting into the heart of the Weasel Valley. Camped in the rock garden across river from Mount Odin and with a perfect view of Thor, it wasn't hard to decide on our next objective.

The South Ridge of Thor is in many ways similar to the Northeast Ridge of Bugaboo Spire. After a two-hour approach on moraines and rock slabs, the ridge steepens a bit and the rock becomes quite solid. The route goes at 5.8 but once on the ridge many options exist. We opted for the most exposed line and tried hard to stay as close to the edge above the impressive west face as possible. Thor's central location in the Weasel Valley makes for amazing views, and from the top we had our first sighting of the distinct twin peaks of Mount Asgard, 15 kilometres to the northeast. Again, it was clear where we had to go next.

We took advantage of a week of windy and drizzly weather to move everything we had up to Summit Lake. Now in position to climb Asgard, we

could relax until the weather came around. The first clear day, we scrambled up Mount Tyr to get a look at our objective and also to see what shape the glacier was in. The hardest part of the approach to Asgard is the huge loose moraine you must negotiate to gain the Caribou Glacier. A sunny day brought us up closer to Asgard to get photos and to scope out the Scott Route on its southeast flank. Running with water due to the unusually warm weather, it was evident that we would have to change our objective. It didn't take us long to settle on attempting the second ascent of Polar Thievery, first climbed by some friends in 1998. With our memory cards full, we were satisfied that we had some of the best photos of Mount Asgard we could have hoped for. We wandered back to camp at Summit Lake praying we hadn't just blown our weather window and our one opportunity to climb a peak we had both dreamed of climbing most of our lives. In an effort to keep our loads reasonable, our planning had us at Summit Lake with just under one week's worth of food and we were getting close to the bottom of the bag.

It was cloudy and even raining a little but we left camp anyway. We were pretty much out of food and would have to head down valley the next day. We didn't have much to say to each other as we worked our way toward Asgard for the second day in a row; both of us quite convinced that the whole thing was a write-off. I was working through scenarios in my head, trying to figure out if I would ever come all the way back up here to climb it if it didn't work out that day.

Our "Hollywood ending" was looking promising as patches of blue sky opened around us, and by the time we reached the glacier there was hardly a cloud to be seen. We worked our way up the seemingly endless approach slabs towards the base of the route: a series of cracks through the vertical headwall of perfect granite up Asgard's southwest face. Chris was the first to lead and was quick to find a creek running in the back of the crack. Lots of stemming, palming and drying-of-hands-on-pants later, he reached the first anchor. Following the pitch felt more desperate than he had made it look. The next couple of pitches were a lot drier and helped us get warmed up for the last two pitches, which we knew would be the crux. The first one was a 5.11a chicken-winging, ankle-scraping, off-width fiesta. I could just barely tickle tiny brass nuts into a seam way in the back. The second was a burly, steep wide crack that grew into an ice and dirt-filled exit chimney just to remind us that we were, in fact, alpine climbing.

Topping out in golden light as the sun dipped near the horizon, we couldn't believe where we were. There were thousands of granite peaks in every direction, each cluster like its own Bugaboos. Just before rapping off, we found the summit register from the 1953 first ascent party whose route we were about to descend. I was intimidated by the remoteness and couldn't imagine how those Swiss pioneers had felt to be the first ones to stand on top of this amazing summit.

Terrified of dropping the ropes, we meticulously worked our way back to the base of the route by making sure one end was tied to the anchor before pulling the other end through. Out of food and energy but full of satisfaction, we marched slowly and quietly back to camp.

The following day, under huge loads, we headed down valley with wobbly knees, crossing the numerous rivers one last time and taking pictures along the way. After two very full days, we were lying in the sun on the slabs at the edge of the fjord waiting for our ride back to civilization.

Despite its popularity as a big-wall destination, there is lots of free climbing and even general mountaineering to be had on Baffin Island. Some research in both the *CAJ* and *AAJ* archives will help you get a feel for what has already been done. Don't be surprised if you find evidence of previous parties on your "new route" as much has been done here without fanfare or reporting. You might have to settle for the second or third "first ascent" of your line. A party of two should be able to spend three weeks climbing in the Weasel Valley with two ropes, an alpine granite rack and the same list of camping gear you would carry to Applebee Campground in the Bugaboos.

Overlorded on Overlord Peak, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. Photo: Marc Piché

Summary

Overlorded (TD+ 5.10-, 1800m, 30 pitches), Overlord Peak, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. FA: Chris Atkinson, Marc Piché, July 1, 2008.

South Ridge (III 5.8, ~12 pitches), Mt. Thor, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. Chris Atkinson, Marc Piché, July 8, 2008.

Polar Thievery (IV 5.11a, 8 pitches), southwest face of Mt. Asgard, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. FFA: Chris Atkinson, Marc Piché, July 15, 2008.

Unclimbed Auyuittuq

The east faces of Mount Tyr (left) and Mount Walle. Only one route has been climbed on these two walls—the far right-hand buttress by Italians in 1992 (see page 76 of *Baffin Island: Climbing, Trekking and Skiing* by Mark Synnott (Rocky Mountain Books, 2008)). Photo: Marc Piché

The southwest face of Mount Svanhvit. The only climbed route on this face is up the centre by a Mexican-Spanish team in 1991 (see page 110 of *Baffin Island: Climbing, Trekking and Skiing* by Mark Synnott (Rocky Mountain Books, 2008)). Photo: Marc Piché

Unnamed, unclimbed northeast-facing walls on the Caribou Glacier (GR 965940). Photo: Marc Piché

The attempted, yet still unclimbed north face of Northumbria on the right. Photo: Marc Piché

Unnamed, unclimbed north-facing walls on the Fork Beard Glacier (GR 015785). Photo: Marc Piché

The north face of Mount Freya was unsuccessfully attempted in 2002, and remains unclimbed. Photo: Sean Isaac

Wilson Wall

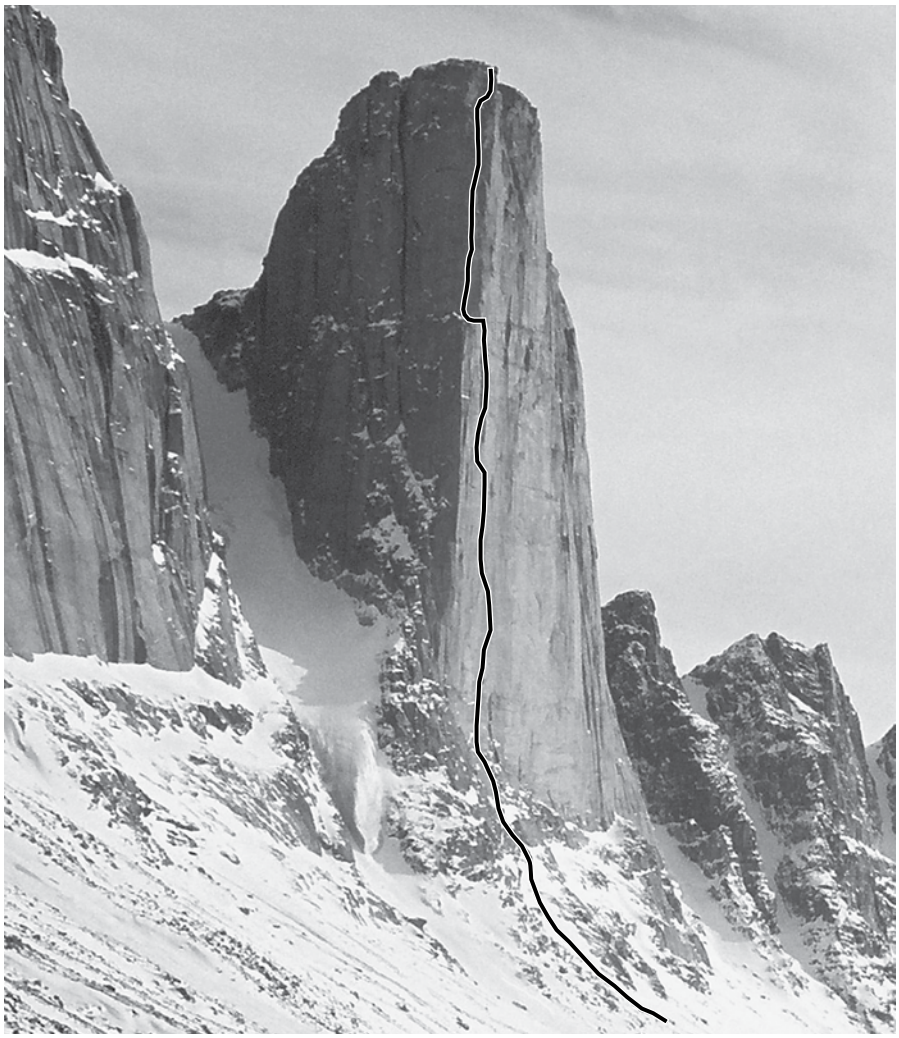
Peter Dronkers

On april 24, 2007, Drew Wilson (24), Kyle Dempster (22), Grover Shipman (32), Ross Cowan (41), and I (25) left Ottawa for the Stewart Valley, located in the eastern fjords of Baffin Island. I knew of only four routes there, two of which were climbed by professionally organized expeditions to Great Sail Peak. We left Clyde River in subzero temperatures and sledged across Sam Ford Fiord to Stewart Valley, establishing camp beneath Great Sail Peak. We knew of no other climbers in the area.

We chose a 650-metre unnamed and unclimbed overhanging spire four kilometers southwest of Great Sail Peak. Kyle and Drew began fixing up snow and rock slabs, while Ross, Grover and I brought loads up the 600-metre approach. Drew completed the free crux—a 5.11 traverse on loose flakes. Grover would remain in basecamp, while the rest of us climbed as teams of two in shifts around the clock. While sorting food at basecamp though, Ross opted out, so we climbed as a threesome.

After the final hauls, we drilled our camp below a dihedral. We had pulled up 300 metres of rope, and were suspended 120 metres up overhanging rock. Lacking spotting scopes, we had to route-find as we progressed. Over many days, we climbed 60- to 70-metre pitches of generally continuous and thin aid in extreme cold. Kyle and Drew—cousins and long-time partners—did most of the leading since Ross had been my intended partner. Drew accomplished the aid crux, an A4-hook traverse, and Kyle led an 80-metre pitch by tying ropes together. With 300 metres of rope fixed above, it appeared that our high-point was within a few pitches of the top. By our tenth day on the wall we could fix no more and packed for a summit push. We left camp in poor visibility and light snow. Kyle excavated snow and ice from wide cracks above the high-point. The angle finally eased, and Drew quickly drilled up a blank slab to gain a corner. I aided to a pendulum point, then Drew began free climbing in rock shoes, using bare fingertips in snow-filled 5.10 cracks. He continued up an overhanging bowl and arrived at a ledge three metres from the summit. The clouds sank and we saw the first blue skies in a week revealing the most impressive view imaginable. We had been on the go for 25 hours, so we rested and talked in the warm sun, gazing over distant summits protruding from the massive ice caps beyond the Stewart Valley.

Grin and Barret on Wilson Wall in the Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. Photo: Peter Dronkers



Kyle and Drew displayed their summit costumes: a hoola skirt and an inflatable monkey, respectively. We had succeeded on the most significant climb of our lives. We began rappelling back down to the portaledges, collecting hardware and ropes. Fourteen hours later, after a good sleep, we had a casual breakfast and packed our haulbags. I jumared to retrieve the two remaining fixed ropes, while Kyle and Drew arranged the lowering system. Drew had fixed a 90-metre static with a figure eight on a bight, leaving a five-metre tail to safeguard himself while manoeuvring around the anchor. Drew must have forgotten that he was still on the short end. He was speaking to Kyle as he began rappelling. It was the last time he was seen alive.

From above I heard Drew's scream.

I looked down to see him falling, impacting far below. There was enough rope to reach Drew, so Kyle rappelled down to be sure there was no pulse. He wanted to lower all the bags immediately, so he returned to the anchors to set up a lowering system. I descended to the snowfield to dock the bags, dodging the rocks they dislodged. Fifteen hours after waking, everything was near Drew's body. I drilled an anchor where Drew lay, retrieved my personal haulbag, and continued rappelling. Kyle found a way to walk down and met Ross and Grover, explaining what had happened. Temperatures on the lake had turned the Styrofoam snow to wet slush. We post-holed to our knees in ice water, and the five-kilometre walk took five hours. At camp, Grover notified the police using our satellite phone and we rested before retrieving Drew's body.

The Inuit gave us permission to name the mountain in Drew's memory, and we named the route Grin and Barret. Barret is the middle name Kyle and Drew shared. I will remember Drew for his simple approach to life, sense of humour, amazing climbing skills and sharp intellect. I remember, once while discussing plans before the climb, I referred to it as a "project". Drew said, "I don't see this as a project. I'm just here in this beautiful place, under a beautiful wall, having fun climbing every day." For Drew Wilson, life on the wall was the life he loved most.

Summary

Grin and Barret (VI 5.11 A4-), Wilson Wall, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. FA: Kyle Dempster, Peter Dronkers, Drew Wilson, April 2007.

Logan the Long Way

Marek Klonowski

The main goal of our expedition was to make a full traverse of Mount Logan without air support. We wanted to do the 450-kilometre distance from Yakutat Bay to Chitina, Alaska, under our own power. Two countries, two national parks and the largest non-polar icefield on Earth would pass under our feet. In addition, it would also be the first Polish ascent on Mount Logan's main summit.

On May 10, 2008, Tomasz Mackiewicz and I departed from Yakutat and crossed the bay with a local native fisherman. Encountering soft snow conditions and stormy weather with winds up to 100 kilometres per hour, we trudged over the Malaspina Glacier. On the Seward Glacier, we crossed between Mount Cook and Augusta, and entered into Canada and Kluane National Park and Reserve. Continuing up the Hubbard Glacier, we finally reached the East Ridge of Mount Logan after 10 days of effort and pulling our sleds for 130 kilometres.

In order to get all our supplies up the mountain, we had to climb the East Ridge twice. Luckily, the weather was perfect and we managed to get the route done in eight days. Our luck would change though, because it took another eight days to traverse to the main summit in bad weather—very windy and poor visibility. The weather forced us to spend four nights in two different snow caves. One day at 5 a.m., I fell 10 metres into a crevasse—un-roped. I was lucky and was able to get out by myself. We made the main summit on June 3, our twenty-fourth day since departing Yakutat. After coming down from the summit to our snow cave, we met two Canadian climbers, the first people we had seen the whole trip. It took another two days to get to Prospectors Col, the pass between Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) and Prospectors Peak, and then down the King Trench route. That day we saw six climbers going up, but didn't meet them. At Camp 4, the Canadians gave us some food from a four-year-old cache. There were no tracks below Camp 4 in the deep, soft snow. Finding our way through the whiteout with assistance from wands left by other expeditions, we bumped into a Swiss duo bringing our tally of people met to four.

The next day we walked down the Ogilvie Glacier where the snow had become icy and hard, thus not pleasant for walking and pulling a sled. We crossed tricky moraines to reach the Logan Glacier, which was in even worse shape. We left half of our gear there because dragging the sleds became impossible. Ice axes, crampons, snowshoes, rope and sleds were ditched; sorry, but we didn't have a choice.

Crossing the border back into Alaska, we left the snow behind—and ran out of food. The moraines at the toe of the Logan Glacier were absolute hell. Up and down on the rubble-covered ice, we barely managed one kilometre per hour. At that point, Paul Claus from Ultima Thule Outfitters dropped us some food. We continued down the moraines of the Walsh and Chitina Glaciers dealing with some serious stream crossing. Again, we ran out of food and did the final march to Huberts Landing very hungry. We reached Huberts Landing after 32 days after leaving Yakutat. It was there that our raft and a food cache waited for us—as well as hundreds of bear tracks scattered about.

After a rest day, we took to the raft and headed down the Chitina River. The strong current and waves flipped us over into the ice-cold water. Miraculously, another wave flipped us back up again. Wet and frozen, we gained the shore to make a fire and warm up. Once functional again, we continued—with only one paddle—the 45 kilometres to Ultima Thule Lodge, where Paul Claus welcomed us with a stoked sauna and good food. In 34 days, I had lost five kilograms, and Tomek, four.

The West Coast

Hunlen Falls

Will Gadd

I blame google for a lot of the problems in my life. If it never was invented, I'd be richer, spend more time with my family, drink less and climb more. I have a host of other personal issues that I blame squarely on Google. Hunlen Falls is a good recent example of why Google is worse for climbers than online gambling for gamblers. I would never even have heard of it if David Dornian hadn't sent me a link with a list of the world's highest waterfalls.

The Google list got a lot shorter when we took out all the waterfalls that were never going to freeze (Angel Falls in Venezuela, while looking incredible and about 1,000 metres high, just isn't going to get any ice without a new ice age), and also all the falls that did more sliding than falling. I like my waterfalls to actually fall; if I can even remotely contemplate someone kayaking the waterfall (there are a lot on the West Coast of Canada and in Norway that some nutcase might run some day) then it isn't a waterfall to me. With temperature and gradient filters applied, we were left with Hunlen Falls, located about 100 kilometres inland from Bella Coola.

Now, as anyone who has spent time in Vancouver knows, the West Coast is a swamp with occasional rocky hummocks poking through it. The only reason the snow sticks is because there's so damn much of it that it can't melt fast enough. But, just 200 kilometres inland, it's a radically different world—still wet, but it actually freezes regularly. I found the nearest weather stations, and for the last six years or so I've been checking the weather in Tatla Lake and Bella Coola. The temperature spread is often 20, or even 30 degrees, the difference between swamp and frozen ice. I probably wasted 40 hours looking at those two stations, and the weather history of each. In late 2008, the temperature in Tatla went to -30 C and stayed below -20 C for weeks on end. Time to drive.

New Year's Eve found David Dornian, Andrew Querner, EJ Plimley and me bivied under a falling-apart cabin after driving 16 hours and walking a few more. I had a printout of the route into Hunlen, and it was accurate enough to get us to the base of the climb after another day of spawning through the B.C. bush. There is actually a trail, but we didn't find that on Google Earth, unfortunately.

The canyon under the climb is intimidating, and the climb truly frightening, but what really scared us was an area about the size of a football field that fell and almost killed us before we even had a tool unstrapped from a pack. Hunlen is huge, and relatively high volume; ice forms in stadium-sized formations, and falls off in pieces as big as most ice routes I've climbed. We were blown away—almost literally, and walked back out quickly. Twenty-four hours later, we were home and back on the research program. It stayed cold. Surely it must form up better?

On friday, February 13, we loaded up a ski plane (walking is wildly overrated in B.C.) and flew into the falls. From the air we could see that little had changed; yes, there was more ice, but it was still obviously a completely unstable mix of falling ice and water. While standing on a lake more than a kilometre from the top of the falls we could hear the booms of crashing ice. At least it was cold, -25 C or colder.

After two days of scoping things out and climbing some smaller lines, we were ready to rumble with the rumbles. We rapped into the canyon under fire from two directions, and stopped about 20 metres from the glacier at the bottom. Of course, there is no glacier there on maps, but there had to be ice debris

Hunlen Falls located in Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. The line of ascent was via the ice smears fringing the right side of the unfrozen waterfall. Photo: David Dornian

Will Gadd (leading) and EJ Plimley on pitch six during the first ascent of Hunlen Falls. Photo: Christian Pondella

50 to 100 metres deep in the bottom of the canyon. I'd call that a glacier. Blocks the size of buses bounced along below our feet. EJ and I ran for our lives, up toward the sun. David was in Italy, sipping wine and swilling espresso. Sorry bud, you missed a good one!

We used no bolts on the route; placing a bolt would have been too slow. The ice alternated between awful and horrendous. I placed four good screws in the lower section, and maybe two more in the rest of the climb—partly because stopping to place gear was slow, and partly because the ice gear sucked. Protection was pins, nuts, slings around strange snow things and all sorts of alpine weirdness.

I rated the route "5.9 A2" as a nod to the classic Canadian grade for anything that doesn't slot neatly into a traditional rating system. British E grades may be more appropriate as that system reflects commitment, but its for rock climbing. Scottish grades might also be a possibility, but I haven't climbed enough Scottish routes to have a feel for that system. No, 5.9 A2 tells anyone who knows Canadian climbing what they're in for. Anyone who doesn't understand the history of this elusive grade can either remain puzzled or do their own research.

Hunlen was fun, we didn't get hit with anything big, and we climbed something that might never freeze up again enough to climb. The locals said it was the coldest winter in 20 years. We started to the right of the falls, as close as we dared to the destruction zone, and finished on ice that looked straight out of some of the Euro comps I used to do. All belays were placed in places where a lot could go wrong around us but we felt we would be OK. I wouldn't do it again, but I will go back to Tweedsmuir because it's a special place that upped my appreciation of B.C. a fair amount.

Oh, and if you're looking for more climbs, check out Google Earth a bit farther northeast. There's a lot left to do if global warming doesn't get much worse. And if it does, then I've been scoping this line in Antarctica. Damn Google!

Summary

Hunlen Falls (unrated, 280m), Tweedsmuir Provincial Park. FA: Will Gadd, EJ Plimley (with assistance from David Dornian, Christian Pondella, Andrew Querner and Scott Simper), February 15, 2009.

Coast Mountains 2008

Don Serl

New routing in the Coast Mountains in summer 2008 was lame—as in, where was everybody? Sure, the weather was unsettled, but that's par for the course. Sure, helicopters are getting expensive, but sitting at home is a bigger waste. And yeah, I know the boulders and crags are just too thrilling, but, really, if you wanted to enjoy every minute you wouldn't live in a land full of mosquitoes and Devil's Club by choice, would you? So how come the list of adventurousity is so short, eh?

The few who did do something out of the ordinary did well. In the remoter regions, that includes a list of only two parties. The first was Americans Micah Dash, Julia Niles, Kate Rutherford and Mikey Schaefer who had a productive trip to the Waddington Range. Micah suffered a broken heel during an attempt on a new route on Combatant, but the remaining threesome later did the first free ascent of the South Buttress of Tiedemann, with Kate leading the money pitch on the third tower at 5.11c.

Chris Barner, Paul Rydeen and a gaggle of Heathens hit the Reliance Glacier area again for a very successful group camp. The big route of the trip was the north ridge of Birthday Peak (a summit originally climbed by Mickey Schurr and Peter Renz in 1997). From the col with Furrowed Peak, about eight pitches of entertaining ridge climbing, with gendarmes, diagonalling cracks and other fun stuff, was overcome, with climbing on good rock up to 5.10. The south ridge of Oriana was scrambled in its entirety, perhaps for the first time, at about 5.6. The 9,000-footer northeast of Oriana proved to be a popular ascent, providing awesome views after an easy climb, and is coming to be known as Stonsayako Peak (although this may be the summit previously referred to as Madrigal).

While the distant backcountry remained pretty much deserted, there was at least one innovation closer to Vancouver. During a dry spell in November, Damien Kelly teamed up with Trevor Hunt to climb a fine-sounding alpine line on the far left side of the north face of Dalton Dome, left of the threatening serac bands in the centre of the face. A combination of snow and a rocky traverse rightwards led to a nice couloir, which went at AI2/3. With an easy approach via Brohm Ridge, this sounds like a route to keep in mind for early winter fun.

Also, unreported from last year, Kelly along with Derek Flett and Justin Cassels climbed a hard new route on the Central Pillar of Mount Joffre [see page 93 for a full report—Ed.], up the prow right of the Kay-Prohaska route. The lower right-facing dihedral followed by the earlier route was soloed, then a rightward ramp led to the base of the pillar. There were six pitches to about 5.11c, mostly face climbing, all hard, and protected mostly with thin pitons, small nuts and micro-cams.

As you can see, it is a very short list this year. Let's hope 2009 is more productive.

The Upper Black Dyke

Damien Kelly

Squamish winter climbing usually refers to sunny days spent at Penny Lane in the Smoke Bluffs or bouldering at any of the hundreds of great spots. This past December, Squamish took on a different feel. The wind blew from the north and temperatures dropped to -20 C for two weeks. Suddenly we were ice climbing at home.

Ice climbing is Squamish is great. You sleep in a nice warm bed and then meet at Starbucks at 7 a.m. for coffee. Because the ice rarely forms and we can go years with no local ice climbing, cold weather brings on a great excitement and anticipation. Phone lines are abuzz to see what's in, what has not been done and what's getting done. I had driven by the Chief and saw some ice on the upper pitches of the Black Dyke, so I called Jim Martinello to see if he wanted to have a go.

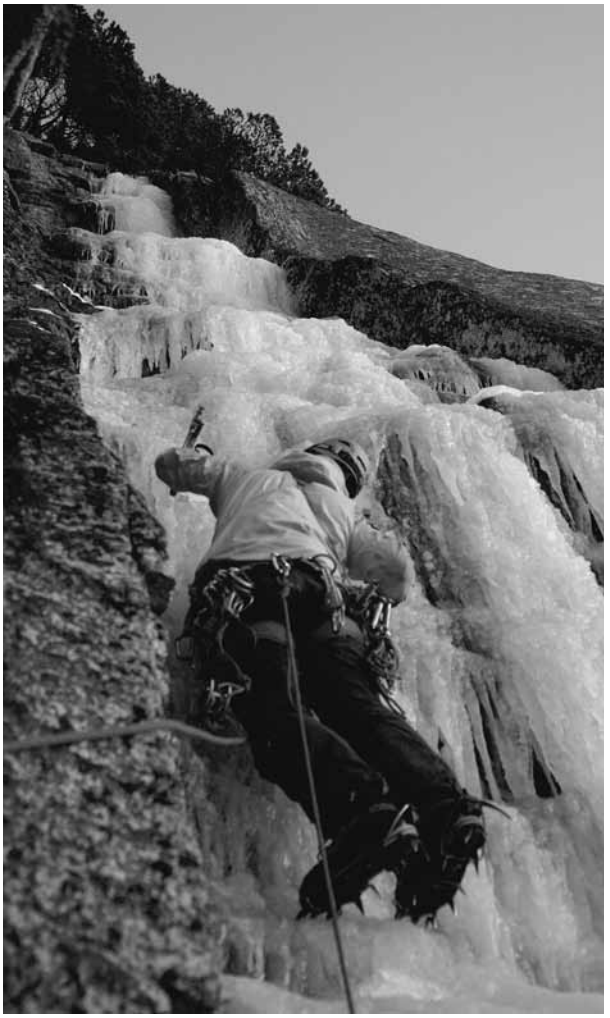
At 8 a.m., we left the car. Despite the wind blowing hard making it feel really cold, I figured that we should at least hike up to see what conditions were like. The Chief is not too committing, allowing us to bail at anytime if things got too uncomfortable. At Bellygood Ledge, we roped up. It was very snowy and iced up so I took a belay and made my way across to the base of the Black Dyke, gaining exposure quickly. The ledge had a whole different feel from summer—more alpine than crag.

I had climbed the lower Black Dyke with Sean Easton as an aid climb—before it was a free climb. I remember a loose block almost taking my head off and cutting the rope while Sean was leading the roof. At the base of the upper, Jim and I realized that neither of us had climbed this section before. We had no idea what the pitches were rated or what to expect.

I reasoned with Jim that I was not really a climber anymore and that he should lead the first pitch. This way I could warm up and get myself back on the program. Being a good sport and a willing partner, he agreed.

No ice on the first pitch meant we climbed with rock shoes and gloves but no tools. Jim fired it and I followed. Climbing with gloves on the rock worked pretty well.

I had it in my head the next pitch was 5.9 and not too hard. I kept my shoes on and started up. The first five metres went well enough: dirty basalt to a nice three-eighths-inch bolt. From there though, the route broke rightwards from the dyke onto the granite slabs, which were unfortunately covered by a super thin veneer of ice. I could see the line of bolts showing the route, but there was no way I could manoeuvre to them over the verglass. My only option was the original line, which continues up the dyke proper. I had no idea what was waiting for me up there, but it looked climbable.



Damien Kelly on the last pitch (pitch four) of the Upper Black Dyke in icy winter conditions. Photo: Jim Martinello

I worked up to a small roof, about four metres above the bolt, to what looked like a spot for some gear. The rock was covered with frozen dirt and verglass. I had to be really careful where I placed my rock shoes so as not to slip. I dithered at the roof, debating retreat or onward progress. I knew it would not be easy to reverse the roof moves and the only gear I could find was a poor Camalot jammed between loose blocks.

I had Jim send up my ice tools, and with my rock shoes still on I committed to the moves. I drytooled when possible but also had to resort to using the picks to carve out handholds in the dirt. After the bolt, I never found a solid piece of gear on the rest of the pitch. Needless to say, I was super happy to hit the belay cave and a good anchor.

The third pitch was a beauty: two-centimetre-thick ice with the occasional bolt and rock gear for protection. We stuffed our frozen toes into real boots with crampons. Jim did an excellent job on lead and left just enough ice to follow. It was amazing to be mixed climbing high on the Chief.

I got the last pitch—a WI4 pillar of perfect one-swing West Coast Styrofoam exiting into the forest. Then a quick hop, skip and jump to the pub to conclude a good day of elusive Squamish ice.

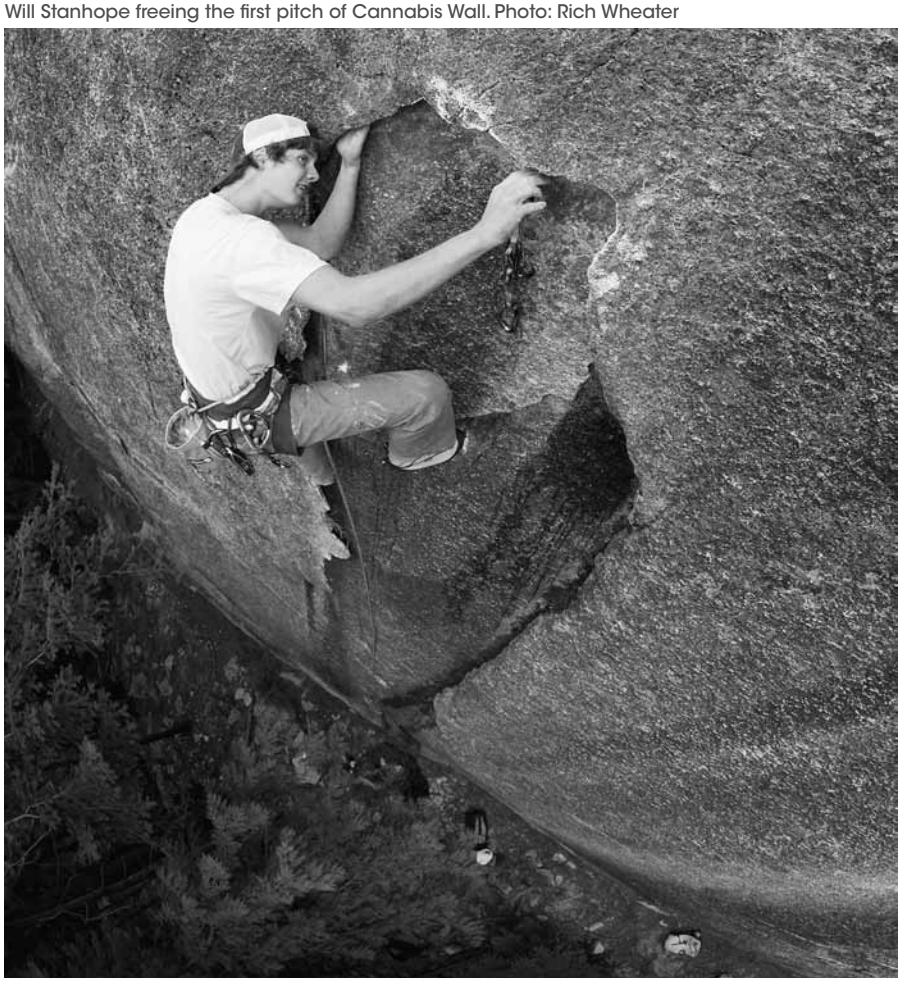
Cannabis Wall Free

Will Stanhope

I swung my rust-pocked Mazda 323 into site 52 at the Chief Campground. Matt Segal, Ethan Pringle and a host of others had been staying there for the majority of the summer. Tents were packed from end to end without a sliver of empty space. Coffee cups were scattered throughout the gravel, along with a pack of Bali Shag rolling tobacco and a scattering of empty beer cans. This was, without a doubt, the most unhygienic campsite in Squamish. Later, Segal was evicted for leaving so-called bear attractants out.

I was fishing for a partner to try Cannabis Wall (A3). The idea took hold over a cup of coffee that morning and wouldn't leave me alone. Cannabis is a popular aid route located directly right of Freeway on The Chief and was first climbed in 1969 by Eric Lance, Brian Norris and T. deGuistini. I just had to see if it would go free. Segal wouldn't go. Anything that slightly interfered with his bid to send Cobra Crack was scrapped. After half an hour of pleading, Ethan agreed to come and try it with me. Ethan and I first met about eight years ago at a competition in San Francisco. From what I can remember, Ethan won and I came dead last. I hadn't spoken to him since. In the intervening years, he has continued on his methodical quest to crush every hard route he comes across. Ethan has a driven, purposeful demeanour accentuated by his square jaw and military-style buzz cut. Weaving through the old-growth cedars and Douglas firs, I marvelled at the odd, spur-of-the-moment partnerships that spring up from nowhere.

Will Stanhope freeing the first pitch of Cannabis Wall. Photo: Rich Wheater



Eventually we arrived at the first pitch, where the forest ends and the granite begins. It is a bolt ladder bee-lining straight up past a hollow gong flake. Ethan took the lead, veering right into a sea of hollow flakes to avoid the bolt ladder, then heading back left at the end of the pitch. Despite having only placed gear a handful of times before, Ethan climbed quickly. What he lacks in gear trickery he makes up for in brute strength and an iron-strong will to succeed. I took the second pitch, a strenuous corner that eventually blanked out into a copperheading seam. I stared at this section for a while, hoping a finger lock would appear. No luck. Miraculously, a subtle foot rail appeared a body length down and left, leading to what I dubbed the Holdless Groove. From there, a series of side-pulls headed back to the next belay. We rappelled from there, but I remained hopeful. The next few days were spent dangling on a fixed line with a wire brush, mostly alone. Some people hate the task of scrubbing and preparing a route, seeing it only as brute manual labour. Personally, I love it. Each pitch is its own individual puzzle waiting to be solved. For hours I dangled in my harness, legs numb, scratching my head at the granite. Every so often, edges and crystals would compose into a sequence and I would be overjoyed. Other times, I would forget just as quickly, and the pitch would remain a mystery. From high on the Chief, I spent hours staring at Howe Sound watching the clouds stream in off the ocean. At the end of each session, I would zip down my fixed lines. Covered head-to-toe in moss and lichen, I stuffed my gear into my pack and walked down into the forest, my mind still buzzing with sequences.

During the week, I spent most of my days shovelling rocks at a West Vancouver construction site. As with

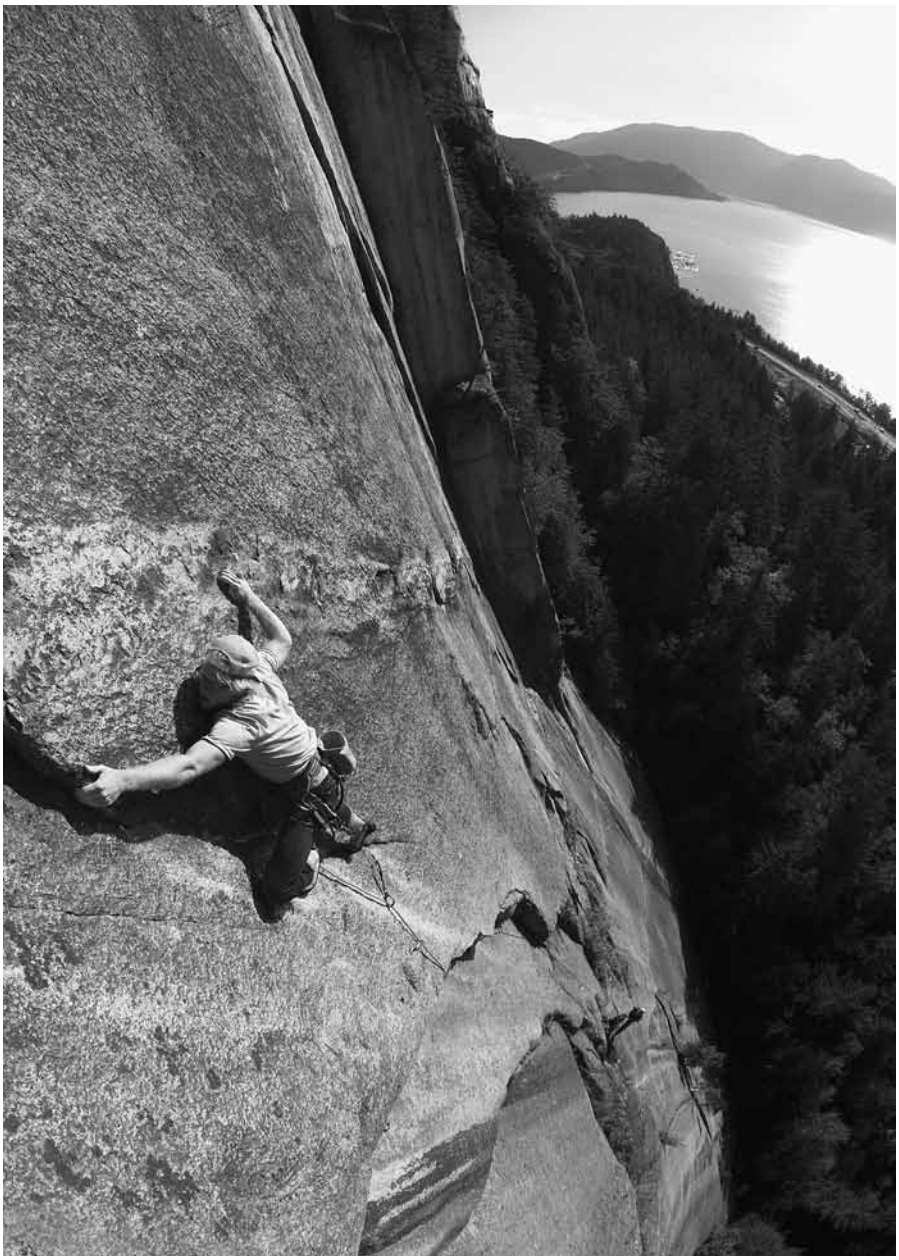
most construction sites, the conversation was centred on the newest Skil saws or how the Kansas City Chiefs were doing. Having no interest in power tools or football, I remained wrapped up in Cannabis Wall silently dwelling on each crystal and cam placement. Wobbling with wheelbarrow loads of gravel, I worried the autumn rains would begin at any moment.

My best buddy, Jason Kruk, joined me for some tries on the project as well. Jason and I have spent endless amounts of time together: in basecamps, at the climbing gym and on the rock. Climbing with him is as much about witty banter as it is about climbing. One particular day, still giggling from a joke, I tried to lead the second pitch. Cautiously, I left the corner and entered the Holdless Groove. Soon enough, I was leaning hard off some terrible sidepulls, desperately trying to claw my way to the belay. Tufts of moss clung to the footholds and I cursed myself for not scrubbing it better. Out of holds, out of gear and out of energy, I pitched off. The next thing I knew, I was lying on my back on the slab with sharp pain in my back. We rapped and I limped into the woods, tail well between my legs.

Back to the construction site, back to shovelling rocks. I had plenty of time to daydream about Cannabis Wall. Though gun-shy of the second pitch, I steeled myself mentally to give it everything I had. After all, the bidding was too high to fold now—too many days of effort were invested. The temperatures were perfect and my tweaked back was feeling better. I left the site fatigued from the hard work, but mentally renewed. I desperately hoped that pure motivation would propel me to the top.

The next day I began the climb from the bottom with Jason. Heavy maritime air clung to the rock spitting me from the tiny holds. By the afternoon, however, the wind had picked up and I held on, barely. I was finally playing out, in real life, the daydreams of the previous few weeks.

Pitch by pitch, the route came together and, by the top, it was done—the first free ascent. The five-pitch wall goes at 5.12 R, 5.13- R, 5.12, 5.13- and 5.12-.



Jason Kruk on pitch four of Cannabis Wall. Photo: Rich Wheater

It is fairly low angle, making the crux pitches exceedingly tenuous and quite low-percentage. You wouldn't fall off because of a throbbing pump. Instead, you'd fall because of a small foot error. For this reason, training meant memorization more than anything else.

I rigged the rappels and we zipped down past the pitches that had once seemed impossible. The evening light spread across the Chief and kite surfers swirled around the choppy waters of Howe Sound. Cannabis Wall and I were done with each other. As always, when these things come to an end, I felt a little glum.

On the ground, Jason and I sifted through the mound of wires and TCUs, talking excitedly about the perpetual "what's next?" We hiked away from the Chief pointing at new lines, scheming and laughing—waiting for the next idea to take hold.

Summary

First free ascent of Cannabis Wall (5.13- R, 5 pitches), Tantalus Wall, the Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FFA: Will Stanhope (with assistance from Jason Kruk), September 6, 2008.

Bicuspid Tower

Ian Nicholson

After an 11-hour drive north from our home in Seattle, followed by a 35-minute helicopter flight, we set up basecamp alongside the Tiedemann Glacier—our home for the next two and a half weeks. I was there with two of my best climbing buddies, Graham McDowell and Ryan O'Connell. On our first day in the range, we attempted to navigate the Stiletto Glacier. The ascent of the glacier started with a steep ice step, and was followed by a maze of crevasses that led up into the Stiletto Cirque. As we hiked, we looked up at our objective, the 600-metre unclimbed granite wall of the Blade. It towered over us looking even more majestic than I could have hoped. We spent several hours trying to find the best way up to the base but were stopped a mere hundred metres shy of it by a 10- to 20-metre-wide crevasse, which stretched cavernously across the width of the glacier. Fortunately, we located a collapsed section of ice and snow that looked as if it could provide access to the other side. We dubbed the slender bridge Crunch Time, but due to the lateness of the day and the precarious nature of the bridge, we decided to wait for a better opportunity to cross it.

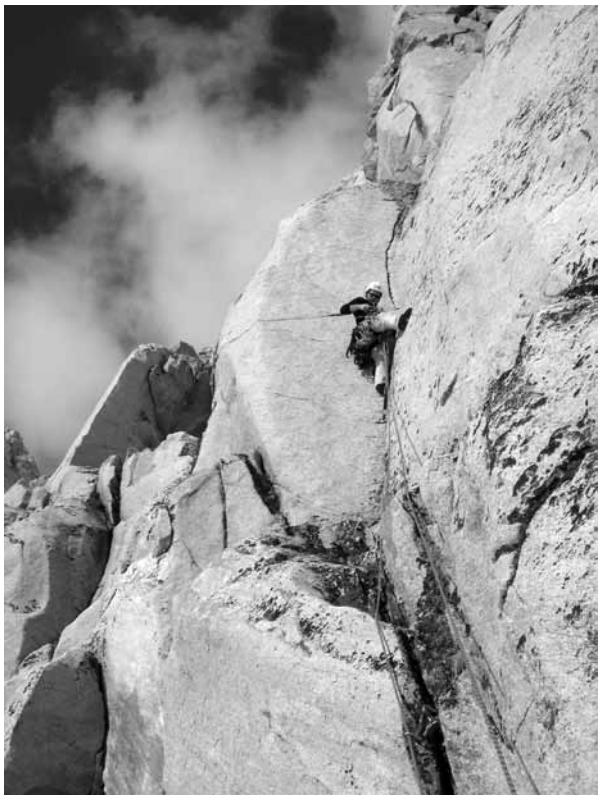
After two days of storms we awoke to clear skies and a rise in the barometer. Packing the minimum of equipment, we set off up the glacier and across the bridge, tiptoeing over chockstones of ice to get to a steep, sun-degenerated and hollow snow rib. After hours of hiking, we arrived at the base of the Blade and prepared our bivy for the night. When dawn finally came the next morning, it had snowed about eight centimetres and the mountains were shrouded in clouds. We decided it wasn't wise to attempt our climb in such conditions so we began rationing our food and hoping for better weather the next day. Time was whiled away lying in our bivy sacks. As the hours passed, we could feel the condensation steal the loft from our bags. The following morning provided hope.

Though it had snowed again and the temperature was well below freezing, the skies were as clear as they had been our entire trip. Unfortunately, we were not able to take advantage of the weather. The heavy snowfall had coated the wall in ice, which constantly rained down on us making a sound that resembled bacon frying in a pan. After climbing only a few hundred metres up the face, we decided it was not safe to continue. That—combined with our original idea of carrying all of our boots, crampons and ice axes up and over so as to rappel down the shorter north face—soon proved to be more difficult because of the added weight. For our next attempt, we decided that we would rappel the route in order to minimize our packs. I was very disappointed to turn around before we had even really started.

After an hour's rest, we decided to take advantage of the good weather and try something a little smaller with the remaining light. We opted for Bicuspid Tower, a nearly 300-metre, bone-white granite peak with a twin summit. It had been climbed a handful of times, but it had countless promising corner systems. We climbed four long pitches up the peak until we made a wrong turn and were dead-ended by loose blank rock. Due to the lateness of the day and darkening skies, we hurried earth-bound, slinging horns as we went. In order to reverse Crunch Time, soft snow conditions forced us to use a three-metre-diameter snow bollard. Disheartened that we had been unable to capitalize on the good weather, we finally arrived back at basecamp around midnight in the midst a snowstorm.

The following three days stormed viciously. High winds threatened to break tent poles and made even setting foot outside a horrible task. During the second, and fiercest, night of the storm, the wind blew with such force that it ripped out all of the tent's guy-lines and lifted our shelter into the air. The gusts tossed me onto my tent-mate, Ryan. Loose fabric slapped our faces as we watched the tent poles flex far beyond what I thought possible. The sound of the wind approaching was unnerving. There was a constant roar like a train trundling down the tracks—and we felt as if we were trapped on the tracks. In the other tent, Graham decided to bring some large rocks inside to help hold it down. While moving one he hurt a muscle in his stomach. When he woke up he could barely sit up, and walking was a challenge. We hoped

Ian Nicholson on pitch three during the first ascent of Life in the Fast Lane. Photo: Ryan O'Connell



that a few days of rest would have him back on his feet, but it was not to be. When the storm finally passed, Graham was still in a lot of pain and we almost flew out right away; however, we all wanted to get something done, so Graham urged Ryan and me to try something without him.

That morning, Ryan and I quickly ascended the glacier and racked up below Bicuspid. This time, we chose a slightly different and more direct start, but rejoined our previous attempt at the top of the first pitch. Stellar jamming and a stem box made up the second pitch (5.10a). The third pitch started with a contentious 12-metre splitter cupped-hand crack (5.10b), which led to a ramp and some difficult face climbing. The face gave way to a long dihedral with a continuous crack system of three- to seven-inch cracks for 200 metres. We grovelled up the off-width cracks, aiding and French freeing the steeper sections to reach the col between the two summits. My research indicated that the south summit, while slightly lower, had never been climbed before. This was reinforced by the fact that there were no rappel slings that would suggest previous passage. We summitted at 8 p.m., just 45 minutes before dark, and spent only a few minutes on top before slinging the summit horn and making a series of 65- to 68-metre rappels. We descended into the night, praying that the ropes wouldn't get stuck.

About two-thirds of the way down the face, the weather turned bad; heavy snow fell. The ropes got stuck on the last rappel, but after much tugging and whipping, Ryan saved the day with a single flick. As we descended the glacier, we struggled to see our tracks from the morning. Fatigue was showing as we tripped and stumbled on moderate terrain. I was watching my partner carefully, but as it turned out, I should have paid more attention to myself. At 2 a.m. we reached the top of the final steep ice step. I lowered Ryan the full 70 metres and he built a belay. I downclimbed the first 15 metres until a short 30-degree walking section. Just before turning around to face in again to downclimb the next section of 50-degree ice, I stuck my crampon into my pants and went tumbling down the ice head over heels. Even in his tired state, Ryan yanked in slack as fast as he could. I couldn't believe my luck: I had tumbled for 20 metres and was completely unscathed.

We arrived at camp around 3 a.m. Graham was waiting for us and when we arrived he quickly made us hot drinks. His abdomen was as bad as ever so we flew out the next day. We found out later that he had torn a muscle in his stomach. Surgery would be required to fix the damage.

Summary

Life in the Fast Lane (IV 5.10c C1, 8 pitches, 300m), southwest face of Bicuspid Tower, Waddington Range. FA: Ian Nicholson, Ryan O'Connell, August 31, 2007. Note: Probable first ascent of the south summit of Bicuspid Tower.

Life in the Fast Lane on the southwest face of Bicuspid Tower in the Waddington Range. Photo: Ian Nicholson

Mount Sloan

Drew Brayshaw

Mount sloan is a fine, upstanding young mountain. His parents praise him highly, and he pays attention in class and plays well with others. In business, Sloan deals fairly and never takes advantage of a sucker. At nighttime, in the clubs, Sloan is also a favourite of the ladies, with his quartz-flecked dihedrals and sultry buttresses falling from his summit.

Mount Sloan is quite visible from Gold Bridge and Bralorne, and apparently was quite the hit with the early miners back in the pioneer days of the Bridge River. Named after one or both of the early mining engineers (there were two Sloans), the mountain climbed was by Will Haylmore back when horses were still high-tech. The modern climbing history of the mountain begins in the '70s when Ed Zenger and Phil Kubik wandered their way up the Northeast Buttress: a fine outing possibly requiring a rope once or twice. In the '80s, Bruce Fairley soloed the north face (icky once the snow is gone; may one day be skied) and a B.C. Mountaineering Club party climbed the Southeast Buttress, which allegedly has a 5th-class pitch somewhere along its length although no one can agree as to where.

Around on the sunny south face proper, there are five gullies offering various permutations of 3rd- and 4th-class grovelling. A detailed history of these gullies, somehow differentiating between them into good and bad choices, was once presented in *The B.C. Mountaineer* by David Hughes. However, it is the spaces between that are most worthy of attention. The gullies are divided by ribs: steep at the bottom, gentle near the top, and featuring short walls in series separated by generous ledges. The rock is solid, the cracks parallel-sided and deep, and the climbing delightful. In the past few years I have climbed two of these ribs, and both offered superb adventures at the friendly end of the 5th-class scale. I highly recommend both and anticipate that in future they might even see a line-up or two. Day tripping from Squamish is reasonable with an early start; parties from further afield may enjoy the delectable camping at the Ault Lakes.

The south face of Mount Sloan: (1) Southwest Buttress. (2) South Central. Photo: Matt Gunn

Summary

Southwest Buttress (5.8, 225m), Mt. Sloan (2720m), Bridge River area. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Merran Fahlman, July 2005.
Begin at the left-most buttress on the south face. This buttress is distinguished by a small pinnacle at the start that aspires to one day grow up into Pigeon Spire's Pigeon Toe, but which has a long way to go.
P1: 5.4, 40m. From a ramp behind the pinnacle, climb up moderate cracks, trending right when opportunities present, to a small ledge belay.
P2: 5.7, 35m. Climb a steeper straight-in crack to its end. Move up and left on ledges to a very large ledge.
P3: 5.6, 50m. Move easily up slabby ramps and ledges to the base of a steep wall with a chimney.
P4: 5.8, 60m. Climb the chimney with excellent holds (short crux) to gain a very long ramp trending left with good cracks for pro. Belay on the arête where the ramp ends.
P5: 5.5, 40m. Climb the arête with good rock and many holds. From the top of this pitch there are several hundred metres of 3rd-class scrambling to the summit.

South Central (5.9, 340m), Mt. Sloan (2720m), Bridge River area. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Doug Wilm, September 2008.
The climb takes the central rib of the south face immediately right of the scrambler's gully described in *Scrambles in Southwest British Columbia*. Begin at the right end of this rib on a level terrace with large blocks.
P1: 5.7, 45m. Climb cracks and the arête for 30 metres to a large ledge. Move the belay 15 metres across the ledge to the next wall.
P2: 5.7, 55m. Climb a large corner avoiding greenery via face climbing up the featured right wall. Good horizontal cracks are available for gear. Belay on the ledge above.
P3: 5.8, 35m. Cut back left and pull a short bulge to gain a hanging slab left of corner. Climb the slab to an arête, then go right and up a short, overhanging stemming corner to belay above on the low-angled arête on a ledge with many large blocks.
P4: 3rd class, 30m. Move the belay up 30 metres along the low-angled arête to the base of a vertical white wall.
P5: 5.9, 40m. Move left and climb the arête on good holds but poor pro (small wires behind flakes) for 10 metres until it is possible to stem left to a corner system. Continue up to a large, flat ledge below a second white wall (possible intermediate belay, but rope drag is minimal). Climb the right-hand vertical corner (crux, awkward at first, then good stemming) to the belay above. Climbing direct up the white headwall looks to be mid-5.10 with splitter parallel hand cracks (bring multiple 1.5- to 2-inch pieces if attempting this) and would lead to the same belay.
P6: Low 5th class, 60m. Move right into a large corner/ramp and climb this to its end.
P7: 5.7, 45m. Climb the wall left of the arête up flakes and blocks, finishing right of the fresh rockfall scar; not-so-obvious route-finding but good pro. 250 metres of scrambling, either the lower-angled ridge crest or the gully immediately to the right, reaches the summit.

Joffre North Pillar

Damien Kelly

The north pillar of Mount Joffre stands proudly looking out over the Duffy Lake Road.

I had looked at it for years skiing and climbing the surrounding peaks. At the end of the summer, Justin Cassels, Derek Flett and I packed my truck and camper and headed up Cerise Creek. We trashed the camper driving up to the summer parking lot to Cerise but slept in luxury till 3 a.m.

The approach to the north face is classic and enjoyable. We walked the moraines and then cramponed up the steep snow apron to the base of the rock. Our plan was to aim for the right edge of the face. It's a sharp, clean line and looked good. The north face is square and looks like a wall from below. Its wall has a large triangular pillar that sits square on the face and ends a pitch below the top of the wall. The wall is approximately 300 metres high.

The left side of the pillar was climbed by Bruce Kay and Rich Prohaska in 1995. They stopped at the top of the pillar and rapped their route leaving the last pitch unclimbed.

We started by soloing about 100 metres up the right side of the pillar on loose 5.8. We had to stay close together to avoid knocking rocks on each other.

We then set up a belay where Derek led out from the inside corner of the pillar out to the right edge of the wall. Right away we could see it was good but demanding climbing. Derek led through a 5.11 finger crack to a ledge and then spent some time trying to go directly up the arête. From below it looked overhanging and hard to protect. I was willing Derek up, but was relieved when he backed off. He belayed us up to a fat ledge.

Justin took the next lead and wandered around the corner out of sight. About four hours later, after lunch, two smokes and a nap, I finally got a chance to start climbing again. I had been trapped on a ledge without a view of the climbing and had pondered what kind of cluster fuck could have resulted in the rope moving so slowly. The answer to that question was revealed when I started climbing.

Justin had led a steep face pitch with shitty gear to an alcove 40 metres

Damien Kelly and Derek Flett approaching the North Pillar of Mount Joffre. Photo: Justin Cassels

up. He brought Derek up first, and they had decided that the anchor was too manky so Derek led a short hard pitch to the next good anchor he could find. The climbing was technical 5.11—small holds on good rock with the occasional crack or flake for gear.

I climbed as fast as I could, trying to beat my pump. It was scary and I was cold from sitting for so long. By the time I got to the belay I was trying to think how I could bail on the next lead. I mumbled something about being cold and pumped. Man, you guys sure climbed a good pitch. Wanna keep going? No response, just the rack.

It looked a little dubious to say the least. Derek was trying to hide the poor anchor and Justin would not look at me. The crux was the first six metres from the belay and same as the previous pitch: face climbing, a bit overhanging, junk gear. All in all, it was great climbing. After a small roof and good gear, the climbing kicked back as I made my way back onto the face and to the top of the pillar.

I brought Derek up and we conspired to pump JC up for the final lead. It was easy. He was super positive and fired the pitch with a bit of screamin' and pullin'. Derek and I both had to pull on gear to get up the pitch. The top of the face is classic. One moment you are on a vertical wall and then the next moment on flat ground, sort of.

I thought about John Millar and Guy Edwards on top since we had talked about climbing the face together. It was good to go up there and pose out for a while, sharing an adventure with two friends.

Summary

North Pillar (TD 5.11, 400m), Mount Joffre (2710m), Joffre Lakes Provincial Park. FA: Justin Cassels, Derek Flett, Damien Kelly, September 2007.

Piss and Vinegar

Bruce Kay

Jesse mason and i climbed a new waterfall ice route above Seton Lake, located a few kilometres west of Lillooet. It is a variation of the existing route Winter Water Sports (WI4+, 420m, Austrom-Kay, 1985), but essentially amounts to an independent line, following the right side of the waterfall, whereas the original line follows the left. Either way you shake a stick at it, these routes and the others on Seton Lake represent some of the finest and most reliably formed ice routes in southwest B.C., and deserve far more attention than they apparently get.

We picked the last debatably sane day of the season as the weather transitioned from Arctic air to a more typical inflow of Pacific warmth and precipitation. As we climbed, temperatures rose to 15 C and the trickles of meltwater developed into torrents, triggering the odd bit of icefall. We contemplated bailing at the halfway point after soaking ourselves silly but fortunately persevered into drier terrain leading to the top. The ice quality was outrageously good if you could overlook a bit of dampness. The consistency more resembled serac than waterfall ice with good one-swing sticks and glorious hooking on solid cauliflowers and ledges. The grade started out at WI2–3 and gradually progressed up to WI4 and WI5 for the upper half. We chose a descent of rappelling the rock wall just right of the ice to avoid further wetness and icefall hazard. A series of tree anchors led to the lower ice and Abalakovs back to the canoe.

The problem (or more accurately, the appeal) of Seton Lake is the access. This no doubt accounts for the lack of action, for if these climbs were roadside, they would be crawling with climbers from stem to stern. Fortunately it takes a bit more gumption, cunning and perhaps a bit of luck in the case of canoeing, which a little bit of wind can turn deadly serious. This point was driven home to Jesse and me as we were blind-sided by a willywaw sneaking down from Cayoosh Canyon and nearly swamping us as we paddled the final hundred metres into the dock.

We decided shortly thereafter that, although the canoe has its quaintly Canadian charms (we half expected to run into the ghost of Pierre Trudeau out there), perhaps something with a bit more freeboard and stability is smarter, like a 14-foot oar-rig cartopper. Whatever the craft, the addition of an engine, though tempting, must be considered anathema. In fact, I would like to propose that the only legitimate ascent of a Seton Lake waterfall requires self-propelled watercraft, if, for no other reason, as a curious and barely coherent statement against our doomed and cursed addiction to petroleum and the perils of obesity. Also, that would mean there are still a number of first ascents down there. In other words, Dan Canton and Don Serl's 1985 ascent of Fishin' Musician, a local mega classic and a direct result of gross petrol consumption and Twinkies, is null and void and up for grabs (sorry boys!).

Whether you buy into this nonsense or not, get down the lake and check it out. You won't—hopefully—regret it!

Summary

Piss and Vinegar (WI5, 420m, 9 pitches), Seton Lake, Lillooet. FA: Bruce Kay, Jesse Mason, March 13, 2009. Note: Attempted earlier in February 2008 by Bruce Kay and Jim Martinello but foiled by poor ice at pitch seven.

Bruce Kay approaching Piss and Vinegar by canoe on Seton Lake near Lillooet.
Photo: Jim Martinello

No Ifs or Ands, Only Butts

Sandy Briggs

I have had my eye on the Centaur's Butt (north buttress of the Centaur) for quite a few years. In fact, in February 2005, two friends and I went to have a look. The thing was very out of condition. And it's a good thing it was—we might have done something stupid. The weather was perfect, but we wallowed up to our waists in deep, dry powder snow, working very hard just to get a glimpse of the proposed route from below Redwall's northwest ridge. Centaur looked formidable. We satisfied ourselves at the time with climbing Mackenzie Peak, but I remained intrigued. I had seen this buttress in wintry conditions from the ridge of Cat's Ears and it seemed to be an obvious line that somebody needed to climb.

It was therefore puzzling to me, but also satisfying, that of the several parties that had put up new rock-climbing routes on the north side of the Mackenzie Range in the past 10 years or so, nobody had claimed to have done this gem. I can only assume that they were very good climbers and considered the north buttress of the Centaur to be either too easy or too bushy. Since I have seldom been intimidated by either of these objections, the route continued to be near the top of my list of projects that must someday be checked out.

And so it was that in mid-September the weather forecast was fine, and I set off early one Saturday morning with Andy Arts, a new arrival from Canmore, to drive to the Mackenzie Range. In a fit of altruism, I had brought along a spray can of orange paint and we took turns improving the visibility of many of the metal tags that help mark the first third of the trail. We started hiking up the familiar and rugged climber's trail just before lunchtime. The weather was warm, and the major blow-down damage on the bottom third of the trail that had occurred in the preceding winter conspired with our loads and our trail-marking mission to slow us down so that it took us about seven hours to reach a good bivy site at the saddle between Mackenzie Peak and Perez Lookout. The view out over Kennedy Lake to the Pacific was spectacular.

We ate dinner while enjoying the sunset, except that I had forgotten to bring my spoon. So in order to have dinner, I had to carve a spork from a bit of random wood. The only tarnish on this idyllic scene was the presence of a healthy infestation of mosquitoes. Fortunately, I had had the good sense to bring head nets for both of us. We lay down in the open and fell asleep with the night sky, and the almost full moon, divided into many tiny squares.

We started about 7:30 a.m. the next morning—perhaps a little late—to descend around the base of the northwest ridge of Redwall to the "great Mackenzie ice sheet". After a surprise encounter with a couple of acquaintances working on the provincial government's ptarmigan survey, Andy and I set off to begin our climb, spotting a ptarmigan right at its base, where we left our boots and changed to climbing shoes.

I was happy when Andy offered to take the first pitch, partly because it looked challenging and partly because I needed to parasitize his enthusiasm in order to get into the correct frame of mind for this kind of climb which, frankly, I seldom undertake.

Our gear consisted of a standard rock rack, an ice hammer (mainly for dealing with snow on the descent) and a couple of pitons, a type of "courage" that I have found useful for Vancouver Island alpine rock. Gear placements were sufficiently sparse on the first pitch that Andy actually used a piton as the climbing drifted firmly into the 5.8 range. Since we had only one hammer, I carried a rock up the pitch to use in recovering said piton.

Once I reached the stance, Andy asked if he could take the second pitch too. He was feeling rusty and said he needed to get rid of the fear that kept knocking in his head. I was not entirely sure that the second runner, a hitch around a bush, actually accomplished this. He swung out left onto a steep face where the climbing stiffened a little, but where the pro improved significantly. When I arrived at the belay, Andy gave voice to the question we were both pondering, namely, "Shall we keep going?" Considering this for a moment longer, I replied that we should. I had a positive feeling about it. On the third pitch I found another occasion for a piton, a welcome knifeblade in a place where, even though the climbing wasn't all that hard, there were few features other than moss. I belayed from a sturdy tree.

The start of the fourth pitch was up a large chimney that turned out to be harder than it looked. Andy soon reached a bushy bulge and had to hunt for a good gear placement before stepping out left to a very exposed situation. When my turn came, I paused to be impressed by this move, then followed up to the base of a blank wall that required a bushy rightward traverse to a good ledge. Bushes attenuate the sense of exposure. Nice. I paused to consider the time of day and heard a clock ticking loudly.

We knew from earlier observation that there was an upper headwall that might turn out to be the crux. Andy's next short and tree-infested pitch reached that headwall, the bottom of a V-gully of bare and relatively featureless rock. My mind was grappling with doubts, but we were in a spectacular situation.

Andy tried the gully but there was no pro, so he backed carefully down and tried off to the left. At the end of this sixth pitch, he just silently handed me the rack. I am not so sure I wanted it, but I did want to be a gentleman, and Andy had done most of the leading thus far. It was time to see if I could balance the workload a little.

The pitch was definitely a kind of mixed climbing—not the type that you would find in the Canadian Rockies,

said Andy—but luckily, not wholly unfamiliar to me. The pro was just adequate, and included hitches around vegetation. About two-thirds of the way up this pitch there was an interesting Tarzan move using a protruding bush. I am not a botanist, but I did trust the root system of this shrubbery more than Andy did when he got there I finally felt as if I was contributing something to the effort. The next belay was a big tree. We supposed that we had reached the top of the upper headwall and that all the harder climbing was behind us. This turned out to be the case. I think Andy was being unkind when he said, "I'm from the Rockies where we don't run into moss, twigs, shrubs, roots and slime that often, especially not on a rock route." I have no recollection of any slime.

We ran the rope out three more times: a band of trees, a steep meadow with blueberries and a gravelly traverse to some very sharp-edged blocks. At least the climbing was very easy and soon we joined the standard route, one pitch from the very pointy summit. It was 5 p.m. so Andy graciously professed not to care about the summit, which I had been to several years before, and we immediately rappelled the short pitch to the big south-facing ramp, where I set off to check out the descent while Andy coiled the rope.

We couldn't reasonably descend by the normal route on the south face because we had to retrieve our boots from the base of our climb. Therefore, we rappelled to the notch east of the peak and three more times to get to the top of the snowfield. As often happens on the Island, we were separated from the snow by a problematic moat. Andy belayed me on a descending traverse to a place where I could hack a footstep into the side of the moat. I then stepped across the gap with my left foot, planted the pick firmly and heaved myself up onto the frozen snow. I had a brief "Yay!" moment, and then began contemplating the fact that I was on steep frozen snow in rock shoes. I belayed Andy to the crossing spot and slid the ice hammer down the rope to him. He planted the tool and made the same big step onto the snow. There was the same "Yay!" moment, and then reality struck: two guys in rock shoes with one ice tool on steep frozen snow.

Andy suggested snow bollards. I agreed but went for hand-lining it rather than actual rappelling. It worked, except that my arms were so tired I could hardly chop the bollard in that icy late-summer north-side snow. We did this about four times until, with tired arms, we could carefully trod down the sun-cups—me holding the nut-remover tool in case of a slip.

Finally, we were able to scramble down to our stash of boots where, with the tension released, "I believe we so far forgot ourselves as to shake hands on it," (borrowing Tilman's words). We changed footwear and slogged back up to our bivy site, arriving at 8 p.m. It had been an amazing day, but it was then that we had noticed that our weekend had run out of days and we were in the inconvenient predicament of needing another one to get home. A quick mental calculation showed that indeed a useful third day could be found if searched for, so we set out on this search.

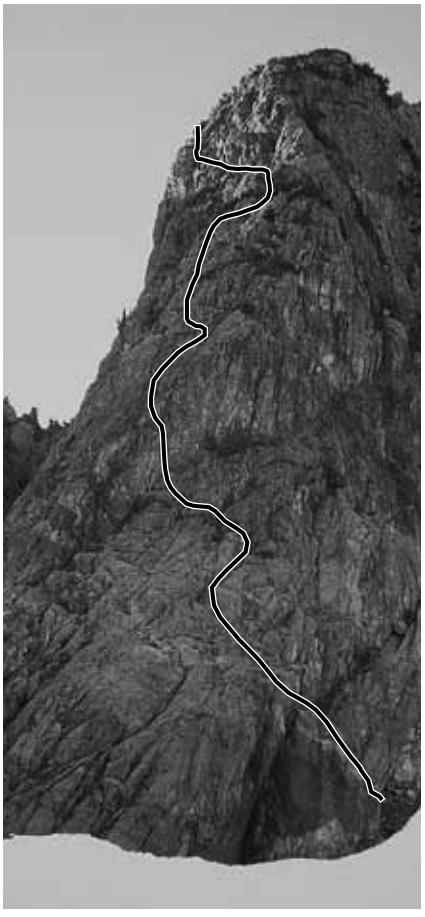
We started our descent at about 8:30 p.m. using headlamps from the start. At the first snowfield, we crossed fresh cougar tracks. The night was dark and we both began thinking about cougars lurking in the bushes. We stopped briefly at a small stream to fill up with water and then continued groping our way down the sometimes subtle trail. Several times we had to backtrack and cast around carefully in order to relocate the path. Once we were into the forest, the path became more well-defined, but the descent started to feel like some kind of masochistic triathlon. We were exhausted. A full moon rose over the ridge. Stars twinkled. An occasional pair of headlights snaked through the valley far below.

We arrived at the car at 3:30 a.m., gulped a can of coke each and began driving. I took the first shift, and we had to switch drivers four times on the way home. After dropping Andy off, I arrived home at 7:45 a.m. There was time for a shower and a bowl of cereal before I headed off to campus to give my 10 a.m. lecture. I am pretty sure it wasn't my best lecture ever, but it may not have been the worst. (One of Andy's friends, who happened to be in my class, later told him that she knew that our trip had been eventful and successful because of the smile on my face.) I was a zombie for the rest of the day. I finally got to bed at 6 p.m., and arose at 6 a.m. the next morning—feeling very, very happy.

Andy summed up his West Coast initiation with: "This is my apprenticeship to Vancouver Island climbing. If I had ever doubted it, I know now that there is life after the Canadian Rockies."

Summary

Centaur's Butt (III 5.8, 250m, 10 pitches), north buttress of the Centaur, Mackenzie Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Andy Arts, Sandy Briggs, September 13–14, 2008.



A foreshortened perspective of the north buttress of the Centaur and the new route Centaur's Butt. Photo: Sandy Briggs

Two Years in a Row

David Williams

On the morning of Sunday, July 29, 2008, I found myself for the second year in a row standing at the base of the remarkable Peak 8095 (2,450 metres, 57°34.7' N, 132°42.2' E) on the Stikine Icecap (see *CAJ*, 2008, vol. 91, p. 106). The helicopter that had brought us here from Juneau had vanished a moment earlier. I had stood in much the same spot in May 2007 during a ski traverse from the head of Thomas Bay, below the snout of the Baird Glacier, to the North Dawes Glacier, north of Endicott Arm. On that trip, dangerous wintry snow conditions forced us to abandon part of our planned traverse along the ridge system that runs east to west, south of Tracy Arm, to Mount Sumdum with a descent to Holkham Bay on Endicott Arm to finish.

At the time, I was disappointed with this outcome, but here we were the following year attempting the traverse in the summer. The landscape was plastered with a foot of fresh snow and looked surprisingly wintry for July, but we had what appeared to be a stable snowpack. Stable enough this time around, that soon after a late breakfast of porridge, we set off to climb Peak 8095. We ascended the glacial slopes below the peak's west face. At the bottom of the face we roped up before crossing the bergshrund. Relatively steep snow climbing bought us to the narrow upper south ridge, 30 metres below the summit. Happy times for me on the summit as I absorbed the immensity of the Coast Range. With the help of a few well-placed snow flukes, we arrived down safely at our mountain of gear and descended roughly a hundred metres to make camp 2.4 kilometres north of Peak 8095 on the upper South Sawyer Glacier. Peter Celliers and Denise Hart from Berkeley, and Steve Sheffield and I from Vancouver spent a wondrous evening here against the backdrop of the big black north face of Peak 8095.

The initially chilly clear night gave way to cloud and heavy rain early the next morning, but by 11 a.m., we were underway with the clouds slowly dissipating throughout the remainder of the day. A 15-kilometre trudge north-northwest down the South Sawyer Glacier in rather painfully sloppy snow had us camped for the second night on rocks at the base of Boundary Peak 76 (2,268 metres/7,442 feet). Up early the next morning, we were soon on top of Boundary Peak 76 where we were treated to more terrific views. In the afternoon we traipsed another 9.7 kilometres down the South Sawyer Glacier, becoming a little damp through a snow swamp section, and made camp 3.2 kilometres east-southeast of Peak 7335 (2,236 metres) at the toe of the ridge system that would take us out from the icefields to the coast. The next day involved a big effort to carry our remaining 12 days of food and gear through deep snow as we climbed up and over the first bump, Peak 6580 (2,005 metres), on the ridge. From the col just to the north of the bump, we rappelled down to the glacier to the south of Peak 7335 and then continued through deep wintry snow, camping 800 metres to the west of Peak 7335. In the morning, I climbed Peak 7335 via the upper southwest ridge, a stiff 4th- to low 5th-class ridge, and was treated to tantalizing views of the icebergs in Tracy Arm.

Over the course of the next few days, the weather started to worsen as

Peter Celliers near the summit of Peak 8095 while making the first recorded ascent of the mountain. Photo: David Williams

we travelled west along the ridge crest or when the weather dictated and the terrain allowed, descended to the glacier highways to make progress. Travelling through this coastal wilderness still amazes and inspires me with its intense beauty. We made steady progress until the evening of day nine. We spent three snowy and blustery nights camped on top of Peak 5360 (1,634 metres, 57°47.7' N, 133°23.5' E). With supplies and time running low, we decided to place a satellite phone call to Coastal Helicopters in Juneau to get a weather forecast. What we heard was not comforting. We were experiencing the best weather that we could expect for the next few days; therefore, we needed to make a route decision. The crux of the traverse, getting to, up and over Mount Sumdum, lay ahead of us. We did not feel that the planned route was feasible under the current conditions. So, we turned to plan B and our escape route out to Tracy Arm from the valley running north three kilometres to the northwest of Peak 5360. With the need to move, we forced a route down off Peak 5360 by digging through the summit cornice and made it up and over Peak 5519 (1,682 metres) in limited visibility. At the col between Peak 5360 and Peak 5519, we noted a massive set of bear prints coming up from the glacial bowl from the west. The route that the bear had taken was to have been the start of our proposed route towards Mount Sumdum—so likely this section of the traverse would go.

We camped on the ridge a little north and just below Peak 5519 in deteriorating visibility with nasty-looking slots all around us. The following morning while cooking breakfast, we were treated to some breaks in the clouds, affording us stunning views of the coastal slab country surrounding us. Unfortunately, the clearing was only momentary. We traversed north towards Peak 5540 (1,688 metres). We needed to make another decision 800 metres south of this peak. We could stay high and continue traversing north for another few kilometres before descending, or descend directly west down the glacier to the valley bottom. The decision was easy. We knew from our brief glimpses of the terrain over the previous days that the high route with poor visibility would involve tricky route-finding to get around Peak 6130 (1,868 metres). Therefore, we opted for the latter route and began our descent directly to the valley floor. Initially, the travelling was straightforward as we descended below the clouds, but very soon the glacier became a complicated mass of broken ice and distorted slots. We left the glacier momentarily and hiked up onto the ridge above to get a view of what was ahead of us. Though not straightforward, we felt we would be able to piece together a route. Getting down the final 300 metres of glacier proved to be a lesson in patience. We found ourselves just as likely to be heading uphill as down, climbing in and out of slots, belaying and placing snow flukes. However, after what seemed to me to be an eternity, we found a way to the toe of the glacier and were left to deal with the slab country leading to the valley bottom.

After a well-deserved lunch, we set out in several directions to investigate possible routes down. We opted to take a direct gully route that Steve found, descending directly northwest just to the east of the bump at 870 metres (2,860 feet) on the east-southeast ridge off Peak 5540. We had to rap the top 15 metres to get into the gully and onto the snow in the gully bottom. The route was thankfully direct and straightforward, involving only a brief stretch of thrashing through the shrubbery before we emerged in a truly remote and gloriously wild valley bottom. After what was both a physically long and mentally tiring day, the relatively dry evening felt relaxed as we camped on an alluvial fan with colours and smells surrounding us and visibility up to 900 metres. This was a lovely place, the sort of place that rejuvenates my mental state and reaffirms why I continue to do these trips.

The last day was very full with light drizzle throughout. The valley is almost devoid of mature timber, but full of slide alder, salmonberry and devil's club. Higher up, old hard avalanche snow that had tumbled from the slabs above aided our progress, but the hike out of the wilderness soon became the usual gymnastic thrash. We had one small respite at lunch in a delightful grove of five ancient spruce trees. At one point our progress was down to 200 metres per hour. At times the creek opened up and we could walk along the edge in shallow, calm water. At other times the creek raged and roared below, invisible with the bush, hemmed in by canyon walls. This is the rawness that attracts me to these places.

Finally, we arrived at Tracy Arm. Fortunately, there was just enough space between high tide and the bush to pitch our tents on the gently sloping slab near the mouth of the creek. There was a lot of ice in the bay. We phoned Ward Air in Juneau to arrange for a boat pick up the next morning rather than a float plane as originally planned. After the arrangements were in place, we settled in for the night in our quiet, calm bay. We woke to the sound of exhaling as a pod of porpoises foraged in the bay. A while later, Adventures Alaska's 15-metre tour boat pulled in, bow first, as close to shore as possible. With some effort, we all climbed aboard and provided additional excitement for the 50 or so German tourists on board. We then set off up Tracy Arm for a day of playing tourists, snapping photos of calving ice at the snout of the Sawyer Glacier.

Summary

Summer alpine traverse from Peak 8095 (2,450 metres) on the Stikine Icecap to Tracy Arm (15 days, 72 kilometres of distance and 3,230 metres of elevation gain). Peter Celliers, Denise Hart, Steve Sheffield, David Williams, June 29–July 13, 2008.

West face (3rd class) of Peak 8095 (2,450 metres, 57°34.7' N, 132°42.2' E). FRA: Peter Celliers, Denise Hart, Steve Sheffield, David Williams, June 29, 2008.

West-southwest face (2nd class) of Boundary Peak 76 (2,268 metres, 57°41.8' N, 132°45.0' E). FRA: Peter Celliers, Denise Hart, Steve Sheffield, David Williams, July 1, 2008.

Southeast ridge (low 5th class) of Peak 7335 (2,236 metres, 57°44.3' N, 133°56.3' E). FRA: David Williams, July 3, 2008.

The Interior

Snowpatch in the Afternoon

Jason Kruk

I had tried, without success, for several seasons to make it to the Bugaboos. Every year, the weather forecast didn't correlate with time off from work, so I would find myself exploring ranges closer to home. It was an embarrassing trend only exasperated by the question: "You've climbed in the Bugs, right?" Well, no, but that was surely going to change this year. Nothing was going to stop me. Partner troubles and a bunk weather forecast again tried to hamper my efforts, but luckily Jen Olson from Canmore was free and psyched. I drove east from Squamish to meet her.

"How about a route on Yam while we wait for the weather… maybe East End Boys?" Jen was clearly trying to sandbag this nice boy from the Coast when she suggested such a steep Yamnuska "intro route" for me. I think she was disappointed when I applied a little TLC to the choss and weaseled my way through the low-percentage crux. We rappelled from just above when a small rain squall rolled through. It only lasted for five minutes or so, and I think Jen, the mountain guide, felt a little sheepish at our hasty retreat. I sure did; it was a good lesson learnt.

We had an opportunity to make up for the mistake when we finally got settled in the Bugaboos. Applebee camp was only a short walk from the base of the mighty 700-metre east face of Snowpatch Spire. With such a beautiful big wall laced with splitters so close to camp why would anyone climb anywhere else? On our first route, the Power of Lard, we would make up for our retreat off Yam. A violent weather cell abruptly rolled in, leaving us shivering on a small ledge with our backs to the steep wall. An hour later the storm had passed. Fighting a total gourd pump, I stuffed my fingers into the final soaking locks, pasted my feet to the overhanging wall, and somehow onsighted the last pitch, which was originally rated 5.13 but is more like 5.12.

Jen bailed out to pick up Ines Papert from the airport; I hung around camp and repeatedly got way in over my head soloing as many granite spires as I could. I guess you could chalk it up to youthful exuberance. I was just too excited and inspired by my surroundings to sit still. Thankfully, I only had to survive for a couple of days by myself before the girls hiked in to Applebee to meet me. Together we made the probable second ascent of the high-quality free route Divine Intervention (5.11b, Brazeau-Moorhead, 2006), on the east face of Bugaboo Spire. The crux pitch was a standout effort by Colin Moorhead, which left me whimpering on the sharp end in front of two strong females.

My timeline was now running slim and I still hadn't tasted quite enough adventure to frighten me out of the alpine. Luckily my friend Crosby Johnston showed up, training for an ACMG exam, with his girlfriend Rosie in tow. Crosby is a totally undercover brother and a glissading champion. I was psyched to rope up with him for one last mission. Our plan was to meet at 11 a.m. on the glacier below the east face of Snowpatch to try a new line on the left side of the face. Crosby had to shadow a mountain guide and his clients up Pigeon Spire in the morning, which meant I could sleep till 10 a.m.

I was on my eighth shot of espresso when I saw a lone figure straight-shot boot skiing down the Bugaboo-Snowpatch Col. I grabbed my pack and ran off to meet Crosby. We ninja-cowboy-grizzly-ed while balanced on the edge of the moat; Crosby's grizzly impersonation mauled my ninja so he won the first lead. Our first pitch would follow the Beckey-Mather Route (TD+ 5.10 A2, Becky-Mather, 1959), and proved to be the hardest of the climb, with Crosby eventually whipping off the last moves due to a broken handhold. I followed free at 5.12-. The rest of the first two-thirds of the face route linked wet 5.10 and 5.11 corners with run-out 5.10+ face climbing, sometimes in the vicinity of the Beckey-Mather Route or Vertical Party (TD+ 5.9 A2, Arbos-Clotet, 1993), sometimes on virgin ground. On the fourth pitch, I found myself confronted with a unique challenge: a pitch of 5.11 tips in the back of a soaking wet corner. Every fingerlock and every foot smear was a mental test of friction, and I would yelp, "Watch me!" every time I fiddled in a micronut or TCU.

About halfway up the pitch my attitude changed. I started to enjoy the totally wet climbing and laughed at a similar scenario from my first year enduring the Squamish rainy season. I remember my mental aerobics at the base of a very wet hand crack in the Smoke Bluffs, willing myself to believe wet jams were fine and fun so I could climb something in the middle of a month of rain.

The pitch ended at a roof and some bolts of unknown vintage. Crosby swung from big hand jams out the roof

Crosby Johnston leading pitch three (5.11-) on a new route on the east face of Snowpatch Spire in the Bugaboos. Photo: Jason Kruk

and I wondered where the hell we were. I tried to remember what the guidebook labelled each crack system as. It's my belief the most recent guidebook may have drawn in these routes incorrectly but I'll leave it to someone smarter and more interested than myself to figure out exactly who climbed what and when. Confusing lower-angled crack and corner systems characterized the upper half of the face. Crosby and I progressed in the remaining daylight by following the cleanest and driest option to the top of the wall, never really finding much of either.

We topped out the face and ran the ridge northwards. We hit the fixed rappel stations of Sendero Norte just as it was getting dark. Descending this enormous face was a test of onsight rappelling skill, but we made good time and were soon swinging across the moat and high-fiving at the base. Despite the very wet nature of the face, I was highly impressed with the quality of the climbing—seriously! It only takes a little faith to trust rubber smeared to soaked rock and finger locks in muddy jams.

The route concluded my trip, and I left with a strong appreciation for this resource. Where else can you find splitter walls a short stroll from your tent and enough good weather to facilitate mid-morning sleep-ins? The Bugaboos are a gift to climbers. A place we can go to feel the pump in our forearms while cruxing-out high above a glacier, with the knowledge that cocktails are never very far away.

Summary

Second ascent of Divine Intervention (TD 5.11b, 9 pitches), east face of Bugaboo Spire, the Bugaboos. Jason Kruk, Jen Olson, Ines Papert, August 7, 2008.

Johnston-Kruk (V 5.12- A0, 14 pitches, 700m), east face of Snowpatch Spire, the Bugaboos. FA: Crosby Johnston, Jason Kruk, August 13, 2008.

The Johnston-Kruk route on the east face of Snowpatch Spire combines sections of existing routes Becky-Mather and Vertical Party.
Photo: Marc Piché

Comstock Couloir

Greg Hill

Looking up, I can only see between 15 to 20 metres till the slope disappears into the white. We had a very brief view of this glacier from Twisted Rock but now the clouds have descended. Overly driven, I skin into the whiteout with determination and some naive optimism. It will clear, or we will get above this whiteout and be on our way to the summit…*hopefully*.

The summit we are heading for is Mount Dawson—the second highest point in the Selkirks—and on its north face sits a chute of epic proportions—the Comstock Couloir. This stunning line is highly visible from Rogers Pass and has been the fancy of many a daydreamer. It crashes to the valley floor at a constant angle of 55 degrees for 500 metres to where it spits out onto an equally steep fan. The route was first climbed in 1901 by Edouard Feuz, Friedrich Michel and Sayre Comstock, prominent explorers of the Selkirks, but it has somehow remained un-skied for 108 years.

We depart Revelstoke at 4:20 a.m. and are on our way up the Asulkan Valley by 5 a.m. Soon enough, we arrive at Asulkan Pass and ski down into the Incomappleux Valley. The descent ranges from dust-on-crust to completely frozen, which is required since the slope is aggressively steep and pillowed. We—Aaron, Conor and myself, the Revy crew—meet up with Tyler, Isaac and Mark, the Goldenites, and aim for Mount Dawson. We eventually break free of the whiteout and find ourselves heading towards the summit. Within minutes the ridge challenges us with an impasse. The only solution is to mantel onto the ridge and ride it *au cheval*. Straddling the knife-edge with one leg on either side, we hump our way forward.

Past the first hurdle, we tour across the hanging glacier, cross the bergshrund and boot pack up onto the ridge. Fourth-class ridge climbing, with a winter's worth of snow, makes for slow progress. The thick layer of clouds hides the thousands of feet we would fall if we were to slip. Finally, at 5 p.m. we summit. Psyched by our success, I am ready to backtrack and give up on the Comstock, but Mark is determined so he leads us down to the entrance of the couloir. We cut off a large section of cornice and watch as it tumbles down. The clouds obscure visibility but we begin to etch some turns anyways. The snow is perfect—softly tightened but very carve-able. Four skiers and two snowboarders slowly make their way down, the rocks bordering the sidewalls providing containment. After 500 metres of leapfrogging, we exit the bottom of the chute and rip up the steep fan down to the valley. We set camp on the Donkin moraines and recount the amazing day. It's rare that Goldenites and Revelstokians ski together, but the highest point between the two towns required the combined skills of both to surmount and overcome the challenges of Mount Dawson and its Comstock Couloir.

Early the next morning we, the Revy gang, head up Mount Fox, leaving the Golden gang to climb and ski off Mount Selwyn. With the sun shining, it starts as the perfect day but clouds and wind roll in to accompany us up the ridge. We shoulder our skis when we hit the scree and boot our way up to the top. After a brief wind-blasted visit to the summit, we head down the northwest face. I have never heard of anyone skiing this line, so we feel pretty honoured to enjoy 1,300 metres of great powder.

From the bottom, we tour up the Geiki Glacier and into another whiteout to gain the top of the Forever Young couloir. Pointing the skis down, we head home. Mission accomplished.

Summary

The first ski/snowboard descent of Comstock Couloir (D 55°, Comstock-Feuz-Michel, 1901) on Hasler Peak (3377m) on Mount Dawson, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FD: Greg Hill, Aaron Chance, Conor Hurley, Mark Hartley, Isaac Kamink, Tyler Mills, April 2, 2008.

First ski descent of the Northwest Face (entered climber's right via the Northwest Rib) on Mount Fox (3196m), Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FD: Greg Hill, Aaron Chance, Conor Hurley, April 3, 2008.

Conor Hurley *au cheval* (with Tyler Mills behind) on the way to the summit of Hasler Peak on Mount Dawson, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. Photo: Greg Hill

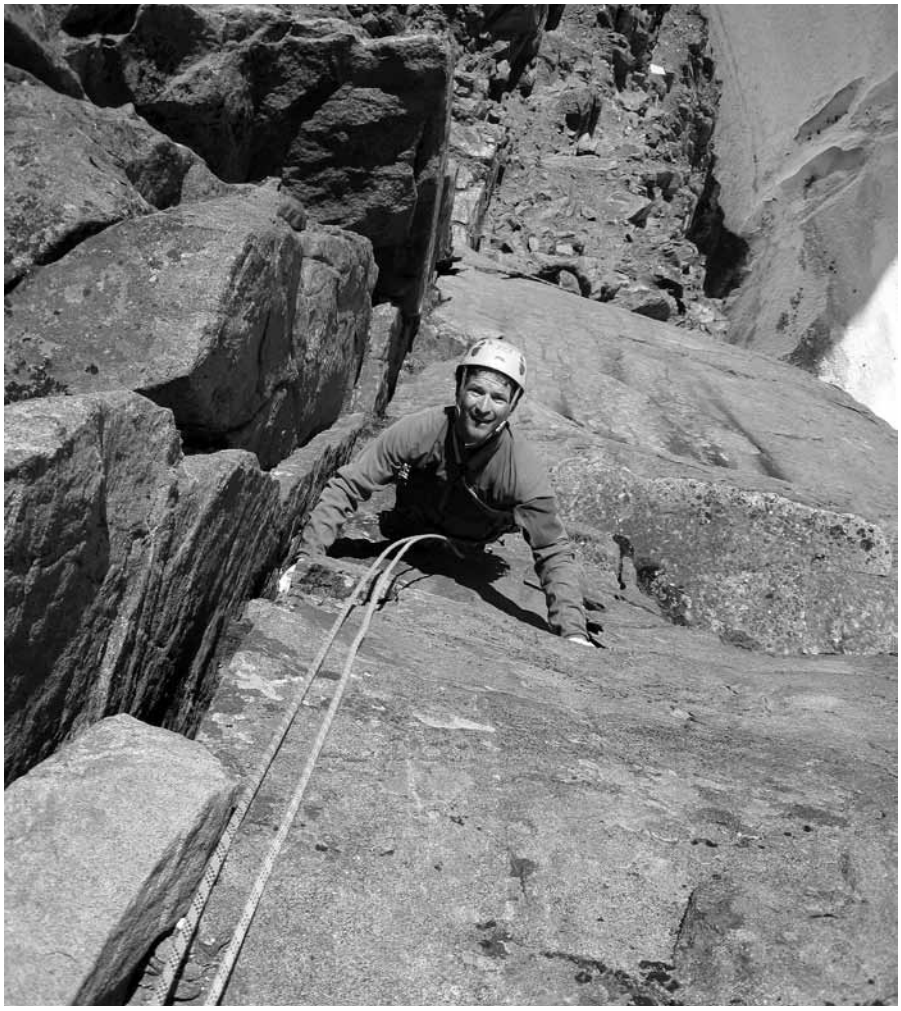
Prospective Pleasure

Jeremy Frimer

Another expedition to the Karakoram seemed like the next step in my relationship with climbing. After the usual greenhouse gas production, skirting clashes between the Taliban and Pakistani forces, getting sick and nauseous *ad nauseum*, and waiting out weeks of pouring rain, I came to a small revelation. The revelation was that I didn't feel like being in the Karakoram. I'm not sure that I ever did want to be there. The problem I have comes in the form of a psychological asymmetry: the kinds of activities that I look forward to are quite unlike the kinds of activities upon which I like to look back. Prospectively, I envision steep, clean, solid alpine granite. I see myself jamming up a perfect hand crack—bathed in the sun and clear of objective hazard. In other words, I envision a climb that goes well. But when I look back, such experiences make for short, bland stories…somewhat like looking at photos of swimming pools and lobster dinners from an aunt's vacation to Mexico. *Retrospectively*, I reminisce with pleasure at all the uncertainties, the insecurities and the problems that required unconventional solutions. In Pakistan, my forward-looking side eventually got the better of me—climbing the gigantic, icy flanks of Latok II just didn't appeal. Instead I took fancy in a south-facing rock peak. The "Aha!" (or, perhaps, Homer Simpsonian "Doh!") moment came shortly after my partner Ken Glover asked a question obvious enough to border on rhetorical: why travel the whole way around the world when peaks to my liking are to be found in our own back yard? Nils Davis, referring to the Sierras of his own back yard, captured the sentiment nicely on alpinist.com:

> Screw expeditions. No more suffering through weeks of logistical work, planning and headache. No more dysentery and living on fried goat's milk. No more waiting out weather of any kind. After all, what was I thinking? I live in the heart of the best weather and some of the best rock on earth.

Steve Swenson following pitch three (crux) during the first ascent of Ostrogoth.
Photo: Jeremy Frimer



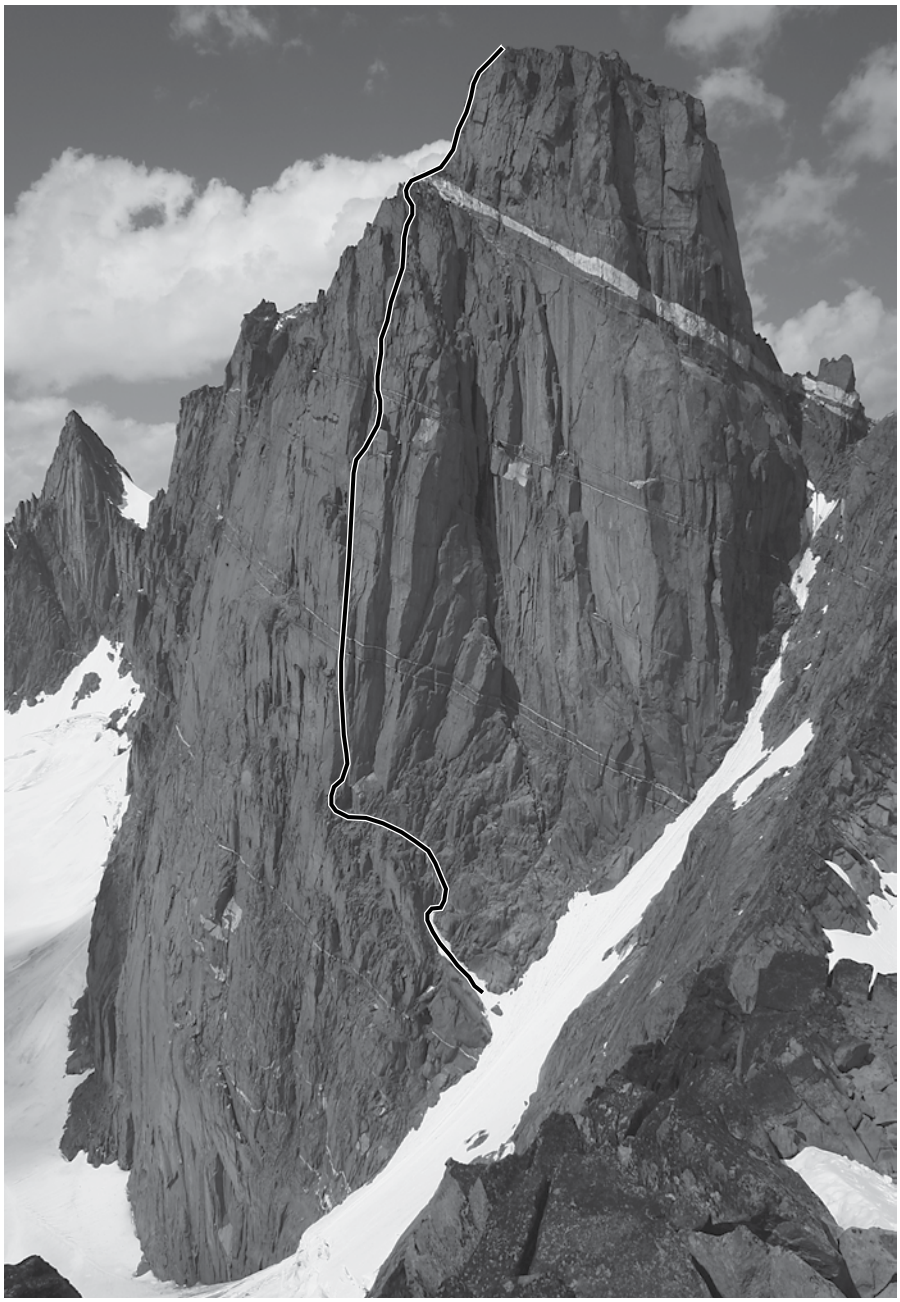
Some of the best rock in the backyard of a western Canadian would likely be found in the Waddington, Bugaboo or Adamant ranges. To get to the Waddington Range involves an expensive helicopter flight. A trip to the Bugaboos is logistically easier, but also the most crowded. With a little dough (say $500) and a willingness to create some extra CO_2, the Adamants may be the logistically easiest of all. What's more, Alpine Helicopters' pilot Don McTighe flies to the Adamants most summer weekends, so waiting for a solid forecast before committing to a trip is an option. A year after returning from Pakistan, Jacqui Hudson and my soon-to-be wife, Sarah Hart, joined me and my climbing partner, Seattleite Steve Swenson, for a week-long trip to the Adamants. We essentially had the mountain range to ourselves. I met Steve Swenson on my first trip to the Karakoram. For decades, he's been climbing hard in the big mountains of the world. But not that many people know his name because he doesn't "spray" in the magazines. Pretty much all you'll find in the literature on Steve Swenson is a series of understated trip

reports in the *American Alpine Journal*. His love for climbing is pure and untainted by prospects of what "sending" might mean in the social world.

In warm and sunny weather, we scouted out several peaks and eventually settled on trying the steep south face of the East Peak of the Gothics (3,231 metres). It had all the qualities of a climb that I look forward to trying, but relatively few of the qualities that make for nail-biting story-telling. Our attempt would be up a vertical-looking corner system to the left (west) of both the 2001 Ike-Walsh route and the 1983 Brillembourg-Cole route (see *Selkirks North* by David P. Jones, p. 343).

On August 6, 2008, Steve and I plugged steps up the snow, passing the bergschrund and snaking back to the left to join the rock at the top of a snow couloir. I led a long, wandering pitch of low 5th-class traversing to reach the base of the major corner. Steve then bumped the belay up five metres to a ledge just below "the business". A large flake loomed above, wedged ominously in a shallow chimney. Its right side presented as an overhanging crack. The degree to which the flake was wedged remained unclear, interfering temporarily with how much I was anticipatively enjoying the experience. Having led the only real pitch so far, and not liking the look of the flake, I looked at Steve and asked whose lead it was. In Canadian (the language), of course the question is meant as a polite way of stating "your lead, old man." But, being more fluent in American, Steve interpreted it as a genuine offer, and responded tersely, "yours."

Fortunately in prospect and unfortunately in retrospect, the flake turned out to be solid and gave way to enjoyable 5.10d hand jamming with great gear. Beyond, the climbing remained steep and clean on fine-grained, sun-bathed, splitter granite weighing in consistently around 5.9. Three more pitches of sustained and near-vertical crack climbing (5.9, 5.8, 5.10a) put us at the same height as (and to the right of) a major pinnacle on the south face. A chimney pitch followed, which involved an exciting finish (5.10b) to surmount a massive chockstone at its top. The angle then relented, giving way to a short 5.9 corner pitch and a 4th-class scramble past the very loose but easy white feldspar band. After traversing leftward for 60 metres onto the west face, we crossed a snow gully and climbed a short, steep chimney (5.10a) to gain easier ground and the summit ridge, drama-free.



Ostrogoth on the south face of the East Peak of the Gothics. Photo: Jeremy Frimer

Many of the Gothics' peaks have tall, sunny south faces but short, snowy north faces, making for disappointingly quick and easy descents. Steve and I descended the easy Northwest Ridge (Ferris-Kauffman-Putman, 1948) in two rappels and some easy downclimbing to reach the Gothics Glacier, Thor Pass and then basecamp by dark. We called the new 11-pitch route Ostrogoth (a Gothic tribe), in keeping with the Gothic tradition of the area. I think that I might just return.

Summary

Ostrogoth (5.10d, 11 pitches), south face of East Peak of the Gothics, the Adamants, Selkirk Mountains.
FA: Jeremy Frimer, Steve Swenson, August 6, 2008.

Reaching Valhalla

David Lussier

I'm reminiscing about a couple of enjoyable long weekends new routing with friends in the great Mulvey Group of the Valhalla Range last summer. The Valhallas in Valhalla Provincial Park are located just west of Slocan Lake in the southern Selkirk Mountains in southeastern British Columbia. The Mulvey Group is composed of aesthetic granitic spires, a gem for local alpine rock climbers offering the most attractive climbing in the range. Within this compact group, we put up new routes on the Wolf's Ears and Gladsheim Peak.

We made our first visit in mid-June, during the Father's Day weekend. My friend Ico and I were gifted with the "go ahead" from our respective families for three days of climbing. We had a very clear goal: climb a new route from the ground up on the dry south face of the West Wolf''s Ear.

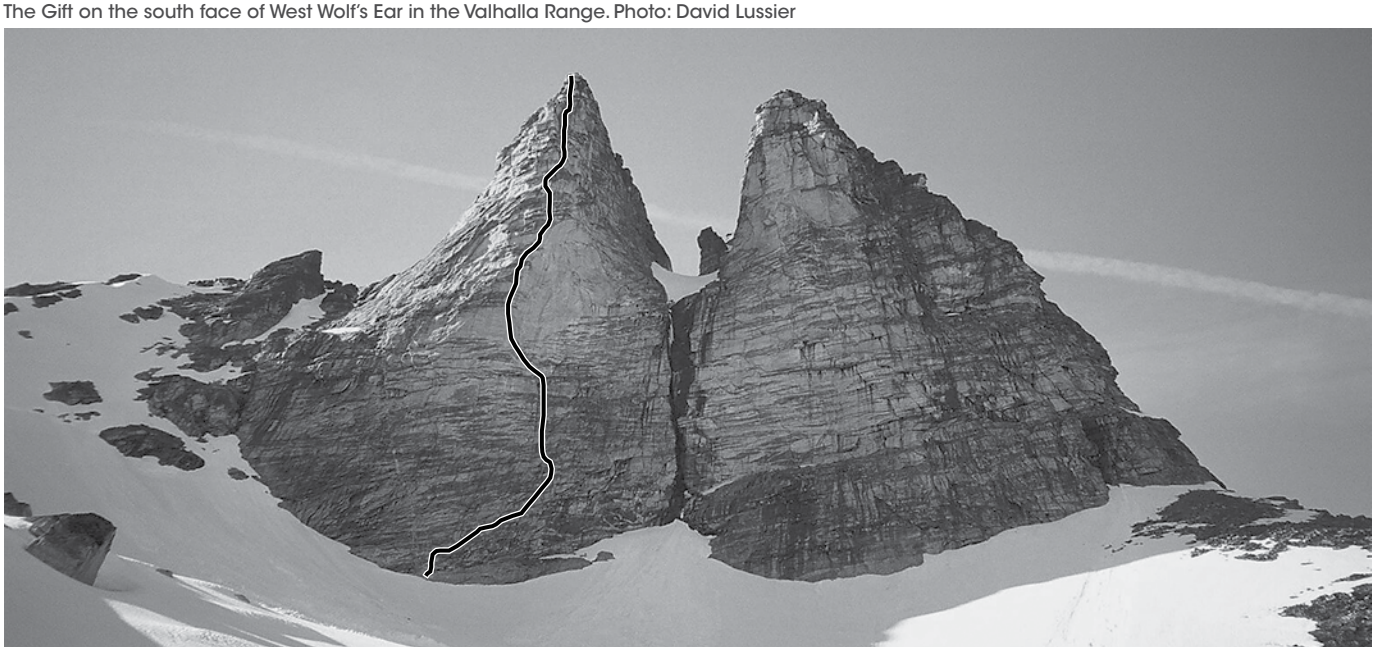
The result was more than satisfactory as we completed a very interesting and challenging new seven-pitch mixed bolt/gear route, which we called The Gift. The south face of the Wolf's Ears is located at the headwater of Robertson Creek. The best way to get there is from the regular Gimli approach trail, but where the trail goes above treeline (around 2,250 metres and not far below the base of Gimli), maintain your elevation while contouring around a grassy alpine basin in an easterly direction for about 1.5 kilometres. Aim for the base of a diagonal gully on the west face of a ridge system extending southward from the Wolf's Ears between the Gimli basin and Robertson Creek. Scramble this gully (100 metres) to ridgetop and then down the other side (40 metres) to reach the base of the south face. Overall, the approach takes almost three hours from the trailhead.

The climbing was aesthetic and exposed on solid, clean rock with difficulties up to 5.11c/d. The route featured wild chickenhead climbing connecting discontinuous crack systems. Bolts were generally placed where no traditional gear was available. We used a total of 20 stainless steel three-eighths-inch bolts with hangers, including two at each belay on the first four pitches.

Back in July of 2003, I had done the possible first ascent of the Full North Ridge (IV 5.10b, 610m) of Gladsheim Peak. I shared that aesthetic and challenging climb with Alan Jones and was fortunate to revisit it last August with Ramin Sherkat for a variation on the beautiful west face. This new route, the North Ridge Bypass, combined some fantastic clean crack climbing on the west face and the most interesting climbing of the north ridge. It was a great day out involving lots of travelling on snow and ice, challenging alpine rock climbing and a technical descent via the west ridge.

We approached from the uppermost Mulvey Lake by contouring upwards towards the north-northeast and then scrambling up to a col (GR 539148). A steep but short couloir down the other side reaches a pocket glacier. The couloir's condition can vary from good snow to ice or even dirt depending on the season. We continued in a northeasterly direction, dropping about 200 metres till it was possible to wrap around a rock buttress blocking access to the upper west face of Gladsheim. To gain access to the base of the north ridge proper, one has to drop another 350 metres in a northerly direction. The start

The Gift on the south face of West Wolf's Ear in the Valhalla Range. Photo: David Lussier



of the Full North Ridge route ascends a distinct, loose west-facing yellow wall to gain the ridge proper. To access the North Ridge Bypass, we walked up a steep and crevassed pocket glacier in a southeasterly direction just around the corner from the previously mentioned rock buttress. From the top left side of this pocket glacier, a gully and ledge system allowed access to the upper northwest bowl and ultimately the start of the route. Later in the season a large moat forms at the top of the pocket glacier, which could possibly block the access to the route.

The Valhallas continue to provide new route opportunities for the keen explorer looking for adventure. Climbers venturing into Mulvey Basin are few, and a trip there provides a great wilderness climbing experience. Enjoy!

The North Ridge Bypass on the upper west face of Gladsheim Peak in the Valhalla Range. The route continues to the summit via the upper section of the Full North Ridge (left-hand skyline). Photo: David Lussier

Summary

The Gift (III 5.11c/d, 245m), the Wolf's Ears, Valhalla Range. FA: Ico DeZwart, David Lussier, June 15, 2008.

P1: 5.8, 45m. Start on a broad ledge system four metres right of an obvious diagonal dike. A bolt should be visible above the first overlap. Climb past the first bolt to a smaller overlap with small gear. Traverse right and up past five more well-spaced bolts (some gear) to a two-bolt belay.

P2: 5.10-, 26m. From the belay, step left and go up a right-facing corner system past two bolts to a large grassy ledge with a two-bolt belay.

P3: 5.11c/d, 26m. Move left a few metres and climb a short, steep crack to blocky terrain. Continue up and left along the path of least resistance towards a skyline arête. A small crack system provides good protection. A bolt protects the reachy and technical crux through a slight bulge (the bolt is visible from the belay to the right of the arête). About five metres past the crux, step left around the arête then continue up and left for a few metres to a two-bolt belay.

P4: 5.11a, 35m. Step right to a thin crack system (bolt). Climb the crack to a small roof bypassing it on the left via a crack system that goes up and right back towards the arête. A fixed piton near the top of the crack protects awkward moves around the arête to a stance (and a bolt). Strenuous moves up a corner and past a small roof (trend left) lead to another bolt and easier ground with a two-bolt belay below a wide corner crack.

P5-7: Climb the wide crack for a few metres (5.9) then step left around the corner to avoid the roof. Climb up and right on enjoyable slabby cracks back towards the arête (5.7) where an obvious open-book corner begins. Follow this to its top (5.6), then continue along a broken ridge to the top. Belay wherever convenient.

Gear: Camalots to #3, set of nuts, small gear is very useful.

The North Ridge Bypass (III 5.10b, 250m), Gladsheim Peak, Valhalla Range. FA: David Lussier, Ramin Sherkat, August 23, 2008.

The route starts at a vertical crack system located at the left end of a large northwest-facing bowl between the upper west ridge and north ridge. It begins a few metres right of a faint arête at the far left end of the upper west face.

P1: 5.8, 30m. Climb a hand-to-fist crack in a flaring open book that provides good stemming with great gear on solid rock. Belay below a big roof with a wide crack on its left.

P2: 5.10a, 40m. Climb up and right around the roof, then back left on wild flakes to the main crack system above the roof (minimal gear but easier than it looks, 5.7). Continue up a left-facing corner to a small belay ledge where the crack system splits in two directions.

P3: 5.9, 30m. Climb the deceivingly steep left-hand crack to the north ridge.

P4-6: 5.10b. Continue along the upper North Ridge to the summit. The ridge is horizontal but narrow at first. The next significant vertical step encountered along the ridge is the crux for both the normal North Ridge and the Bypass route. It features exposed arête and face climbing on or just to the left of the steep ridge crest. A bolt protects the crux face move (5.10b) to reach a hand crack near the top of this 30-metre pitch. From here to the top, it is only just a few more mid-5th-class pitches.

Gear: Camalots to #4 with doubles from #.5 to #1, set of nuts.

A Fortnight in the Vowells

David P. Jones

The vowell group is the lesser brethren to the better-known and more frequently visited Bugaboo Group which lies to the south. The peaks of the Vowells are on average only 120 metres lower in elevation, but appear more diminutive than those in the Bugaboos since they lack the massive rock faces of the latter group. Although the rock in the Vowells is predominantly granitic, it is more fractured and thus perhaps less attractive to those who seek bold, aesthetic lines. An additional complication is the complex pattern of ridges and glaciers that inhibit easy movement within the range.

I first became aware of the Vowells in 1973, when my then climbing partner David Whitburn gave me a number of dramatic eight-by-ten black-and-white photos showing what appeared to be remarkable potential for new alpine rock routes. Interestingly, 35 years on, even though all of the peaks have been climbed, many lines remain unexplored.

News that the Alpine Club of Canada was planning to hold its 2008 annual General Mountaineering Camp at the toe of the Vowell Glacier suggested it might be a good time to piggy back on their helicopter logistics and pay a visit to the area. Hence, my wife, Joie Seagram, and I decided to spend two weeks in the area as part of our annual climbing holiday.

We discussed the matter of suitable camping spots with several individuals who had previously climbed in the Vowells. The obvious sites, such as the Malloy Igloo, Bill's Pass, East Glacier Camp and Wallace Lake Camp, were all disadvantageous in terms of convenient access to various climbing objectives. After hearing reports that it was possible to camp comfortably on rock in the Spear Spire–Centre Peak Col, we selected this as the best location for basecamp, since it provided easy access to routes as well as a convenient helicopter landing site just outside Bugaboo Provincial Park.

On Saturday, July 26, Don McTighe flew Joie and me, along with Aileen Smith and Brock Wilson, to the head of the West Glacier just below the col. Our impression of the col as a comfortable camp site was quickly dashed as the entire area was buried under a metre of fresh snow! After several hours of geo-engineering, Joie and I established a tent platform on wet gravel beside a frozen glacial pond, while Aileen and Brock elected to camp on nearby snow.

Unfortunately the cold, blustery and unsettled weather we had experienced in the preceding two weeks of alpine climbing in the Rockies and Purcells persisted, and we quickly realized our camp was situated in the throat of a wind tunnel that whipped hail and snow into the finer crevices of our tents and adjacent kitchen for most of the week. Despite storm cells and endless lenticular clouds, we managed to climb a few routes, the first being the easy snow and rock of the northeast face of Snafflehound. Later, on Monday, Brock and Aileen nipped up one of the established routes on the southwest face of Centre Peak, while Joie and I wandered up the southwest ridge of West Peak.

The weather on Tuesday improved somewhat so we decided to venture forth onto the southern flanks of West Peak in search of adventure. The base of the face was only a few minutes' stroll from camp across West Glacier. After scoping with binoculars, Aileen and Brock chose a fine-looking line on the face while Joie and I selected a right-facing dihedral system a short distance to the west. Both parties spent a delightful day establishing what we believe to be two new lines: Pressure Drop and Milli-bar Man. Throughout the day we had magnificent views of the Howser Towers as well as peaks more distant in the west. Both parties gained the ridge crest just below the summit within minutes of each other, and in the face of a decidedly cool wind and more threatening weather, we rappelled Milli-bar Man together and returned to camp by late afternoon.

For the balance of the week, we were largely confined to our tents as wind and snow buffeted camp. However, during one short break in the storm, Brock and Aileen managed to climb another of the established routes on Centre Peak, while Joie and I probed around the northern flanks of Spear Spire.

Weather on change-over Saturday was decidedly iffy when Aileen and Brock flew out, and we were joined by Nicolas Jimenez, Pete King, the "other" David Jones and his research associate from Germany, Jens Rauschenberger. Sunday brought cool, clear weather and three parties were able to climb established routes on the southwest face of Centre Peak.

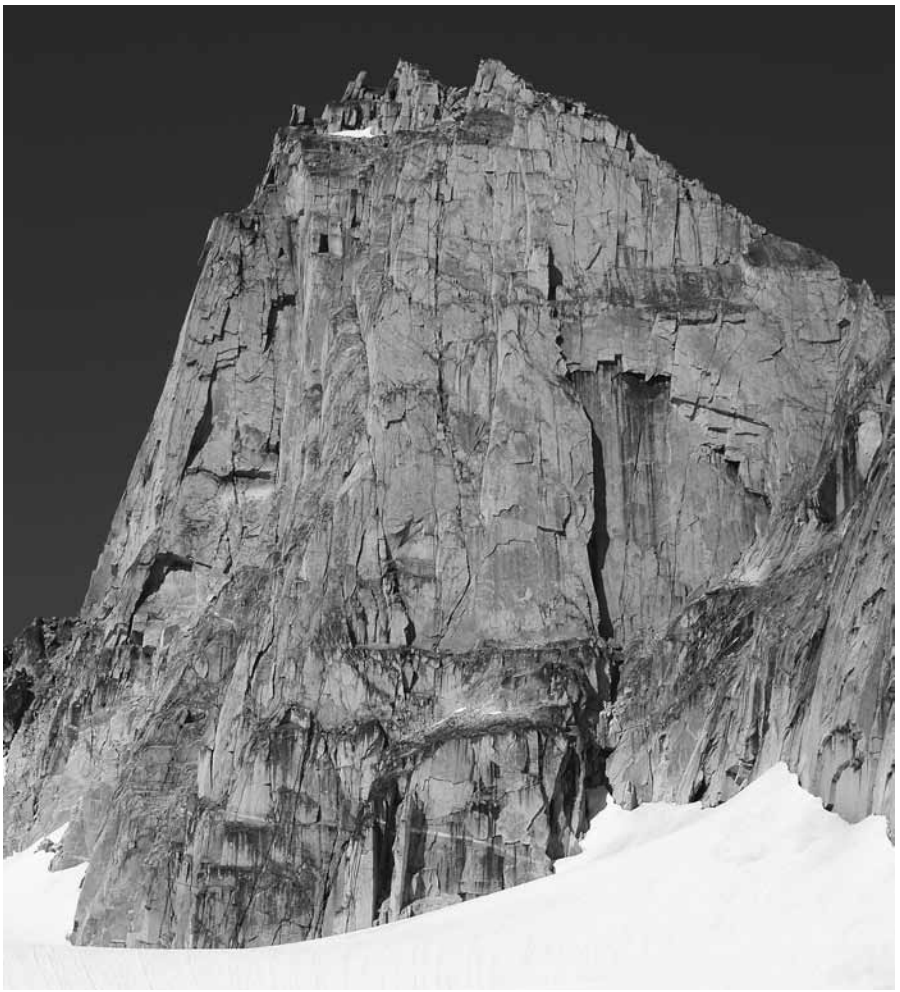
With the promise of decidedly better weather, Nicolas agreed to join Joie and me on a long glacier tramp to climb Mount Conrad while the remainder of the party opted for several previously established routes on the south face of West Peak. In barely light conditions on Monday morning, we wandered around the complex maze of crevasses on the lower West Glacier. After several false starts we finally found the key snow ramp that led down the glacier to the foot of an ascending ramp leading to Malloy Col. By this time we were bathed in early morning sun and could fully appreciate views of the Howser Towers as well as the west and northwest face of West Peak, which to this day has seen only one ascent on its beautiful clean granite (the 1981 Down-Flavelle-Flavelle route is actually on the northwest face, not the true west face as it has been incorrectly recorded in the past). The still air was broken only by our own breathing and the occasional distant thump of a helicopter over the Bobbie Burns Group to the east. From Malloy Col we wound our way up and across the Conrad Icefield, pausing once in a high col for a short snack and discussion

around estimated time needed to cross the next bowl and gain the north ridge of Mount Conrad. Fortunately, snow conditions in the heat of the day remained firm and we made short work of the three-kilometre march across the basin. After crossing a convenient snow bridge spanning the bergschrund, followed by a short stint kicking steps up a moderate snow slope, we reached the north ridge. A short tramp up the ridge and a final pitch of mixed rock and ice put us on the summit 9.5 hours after leaving camp.

For the first time in more than a week, we could sit on a summit with nary a soul in sight and soak in the memorable view. From Conrad we could see Sir Donald to the north, the Goodsirs and Assiniboine in the east, then Farnham and Eyebrow peaks in the southern Purcells, and finally the distant Monashees in the west. After a pleasant stay on the summit we started back to camp. Nicolas and Joie headed directly across the glacier while I scampered up a few minor peaks to look for summit records. We followed our uphill tracks until we regained the Malloy Col, then as the sun began to set we wound our way back up the lower tongue of West Glacier and were back in camp shortly after 8 p.m.

The following day was a rest day with the full party taking advantage of the now melted-out campsite, which provided dry rocks to sit on in the sun. Despite the lounge-and-rest atmosphere, everyone managed to wander over and climb one of the 5.9 or 5.10 routes on the southwest face of Centre Peak.

The next day Joie and "Professor Jones" elected to try another unclimbed line on the south face of West Peak, while Pete and Nicolas joined me for a tour of Little Wallace, Wallace Peak, Mount Kelvin, Snafflehound and Spear Spire following the classic route first traversed by William Buckingham and party in 1958. Most of the route is blocky 4th-class granite terrain with an occasional pitch of snow or ice and some interesting climbing to 5.8 negotiating a tower between Wallace Peak and Mount Kelvin. This traverse provided full value with grand views to the north and south



The unclimbed west face of West Peak. The 1981 Down-Flavelle-Flavelle route is left around the corner on the northwest face. Photo: David P. Jones

and exercised the party's route-finding skills. Back in camp we found that Joie and the Professor had discovered a very pleasant route with climbing to 5.8, but were unable to complete the route, in part because the larger cams had been left behind.

During our stay at the col, the northwest face of East Peak loomed above camp and beckoned continuously. As we scoped the face with binoculars, the remnants of snow from the last storm helped us to link features, which we figured could lead to an interesting line.

Thursday dawned excellent weather and while the rest of the party returned to complete the route on West Peak, Joie and I headed for the northwest face of East Peak. Over the next few hours we swung interesting leads, which linked a series of ledges and corners on generally firm granite. We gained the flat summit at 4 p.m. after completing what we believe to be a new route. We rappelled and downclimbed the north ridge and returned to camp shortly after the rest of the party, which had successfully completed Absent-Minded Professor on West Peak.

With our stay rapidly coming to an end, it seemed appropriate to climb the integral east ridge of West Peak, a route pioneered by Ron Factor and Helmet Microys in 1983 [unrecorded until now—Ed.]. Jens and I set off at a suitably modest hour in the morning thinking it would only take an hour or two to gain the summit. The remainder of the party headed for the west ridge of Centre Peak. A very short hike across the glacier followed by a scramble to the West–Centre Peak Col gave easy access to the east ridge. We spent a pleasant few

hours scrambling along the ridge, which was interspersed with short but interesting technical pitches. Nearing the summit block we avoided a short icy traverse on the north face by climbing a more inviting crack that led to the ridge crest. From there we followed the ridge a short distance until we found ourselves staring at a thin, overhanging corner crack that looked to be hard 5.10. Just then, we heard the sound of thunder clapping at our backs. Faced with an active storm cell looming in the southwest, we beat a hasty retreat and rappelled directly to the glacier, reaching camp just as the storm arrived.

Overall, despite the mixed weather, we had an excellent introductory visit to the Vowell Group. And since my new digital camera failed halfway through the trip, we shall have to return to sample more of the interesting opportunities that the Bugaboos' little brother has to offer.

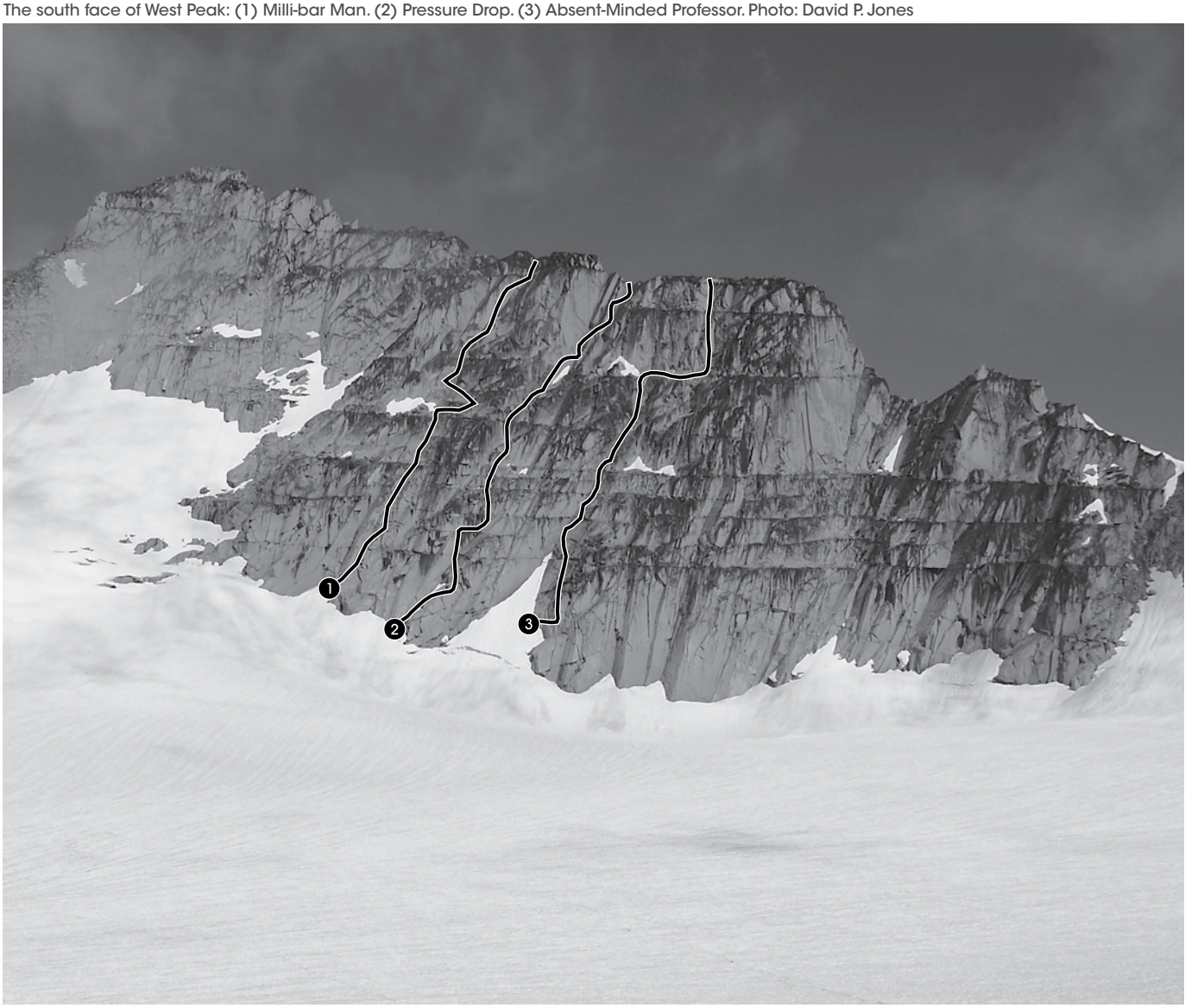
Summary

Milli-bar Man (D- 5.9), south face of West Peak. FA: David P. Jones, Joie Seagram, July 29, 2008.

To the right (east) of the summit block, there are two prominent right-slanting features a short distance apart that lead to the ridge crest about 200 metres east of the summit. This route generally follows the right-most feature on the south face. Cross the bergschrund and climb the right-most of two steep ramps, ascending face and corner cracks for 60 metres. Continue to trend up and right over blocks and up a steep right-facing corner to a ledge. Continue up blocks, ramps and vertical cracks to a corner and belay. Work up blocks to a large sandy ledge and belay in an alcove. Weave up some slots until able to work left up a crack to the base of two vertical shallow grooves. Stem and jam the grooves (crux), then continue up to a small alcove at the base of the final, right-facing corner. Climb the slabs and corner to the ridge crest.

Pressure Drop (D- 5.9), south face of West Peak. FA: Aileen Smith, Brock

The south face of West Peak: (1) Milli-bar Man. (2) Pressure Drop. (3) Absent-Minded Professor. Photo: David P. Jones



Wilson, July 29, 2008.

To the left of the distinct snow tongue that is the start of Absent-Minded Professor, climb twin cracks in a right-facing corner, moving right after 60 metres to belay on a ledge. Climb a wide crack off the belay, then move left to another short crack, then right to three face cracks, ending at the top of the pitch to the left on a nice ledge. From the belay, climb a small step then move left 10 metres and climb a small right-facing corner with hand cracks, just to the left of two larger, dirtier corners. Scramble to the base of the large open books and belay at a large boulder. Climb a featured face crack to a small platform and climb the corner to the left to gain the ridge crest.

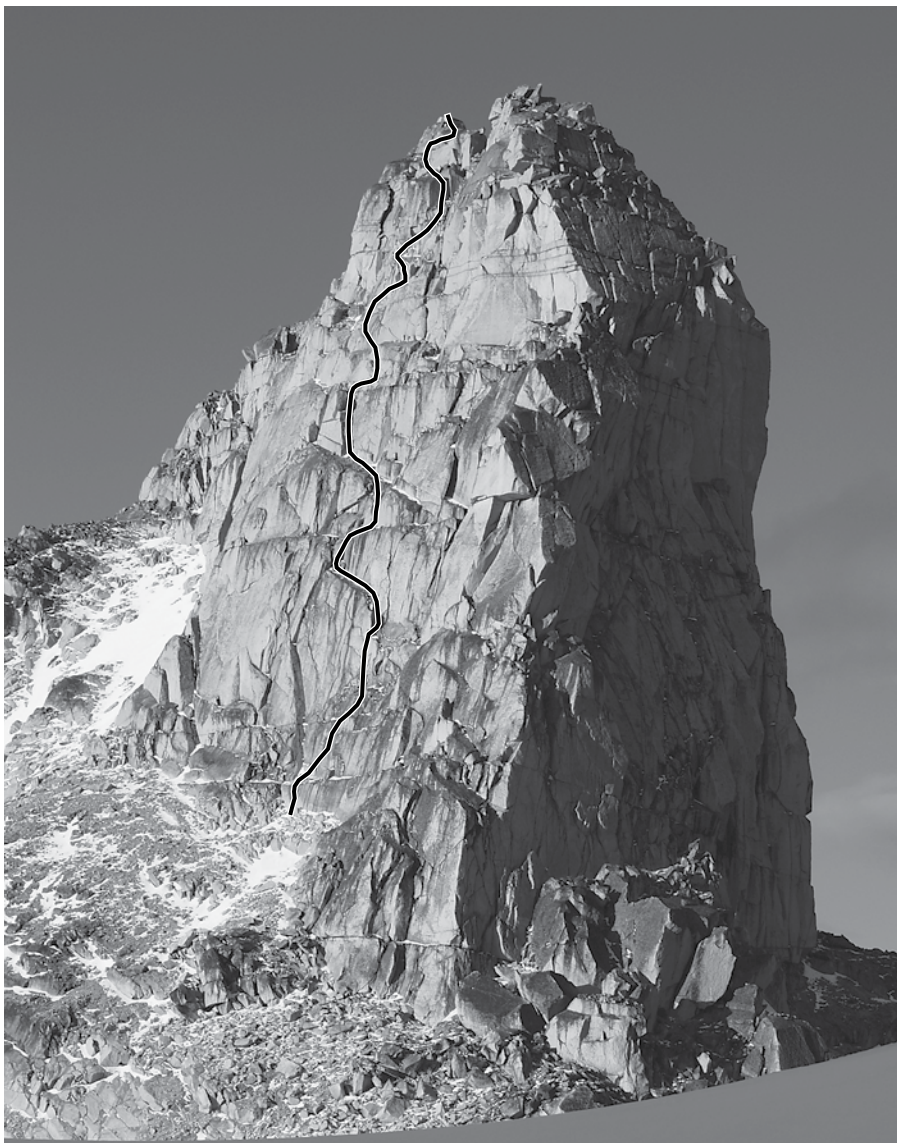
Absent-Minded Professor (D 5.10), south face of West Peak. FA: Nicolas Jimenez, David J. Jones, Peter King, Jens Rauschenberger, August 7, 2008. Note: attempted to within two pitches of the top by David J. Jones and Joie Seagram on August 6, 2008.

From West Glacier, cross the bergschrund at the base of a large triangular-shaped snow cone that occupies the lower portion of a large right-facing corner left of High Anxiety (see *The Bugaboos* guidebook, p. 345). Climb the snow to gain a large crack trending diagonally up the face to the right (east) of the corner. Climb pleasant face cracks for three pitches (to 5.7). Continue climbing somewhat broken terrain providing good cracks (to 5.8) and intermittent ledges for two pitches till reaching a very wide ledge beneath the steep upper wall (steep cracks require large gear and probably 5.10+). Traverse east about 20 metres to a short crack leading to a large east-trending ramp system. Follow the ramp system up some corners until able to climb up a crack (5.8) to a belay in some boulders at the base of the final obstacle. Climb the last step (5.7) and trend right to the ridge crest. To rappel the route, walk west on the summit ridge until above the start of the upper ramp that leads left (east). A 60-metre rappel reaches the wide ledge mentioned previously, then continue down the route.

Zig-Zag Route (AD+ 5.8+), northwest face of East Peak. FA: David P. Jones, Joie Seagram, August 7, 2008.

This route ascends a series of prominent ramps, starting at mid-base on the northwest face, near a large detached flake below a series of steps. Climb a shallow corner to the left, then work up and right following a series of cracks and small steps before trending left to a belay at the base of a steep hand crack. Climb large blocks on the left followed by a steep, slightly overhanging crack and belay in a small alcove. Work up right on a narrow ledge, climb a steep crack until able to traverse left up a ramp before working back right and belay at a large crack (this section could be avoided by climbing the hand crack directly; probably 5.10). Climb up right, then move left and climb a right-facing corner with multiple hand- to finger-sized cracks. Traverse right on a small, narrow ledge around a flake before traversing left to a belay in a small alcove. Step down and move left into a corner ascending flakes on the right side until able to work up and left on blocks and flakes. Traverse left on a ledge until below the summit notch. Climb up a series of small steps with considerable loose rock followed by a corner until just below the summit notch. Traverse left through a slot, stem up a series of flakes and mantel onto the flat summit.

Zig-Zag Route on the northwest face of East Peak. Photo: David P. Jones



Man of Steel

Craig McGee

In late July 2008, Evan Stevens and I headed into the Adamants with high hopes of freeing a few of the beautiful aid routes on towering big walls.

After a week of climbing, we still hadn't topped out on anything despite climbing almost 2,000 metres of alpine granite. On our first day, only a couple hundred metres from the top of the Turret, Evan had the pleasure of coming up to my seven-piece anchor. As soon as he arrived, I grabbed two more pieces from his harness, and for the first time in my climbing career, I had a nine-piece anchor—and I was barely happy with it. Needless to say, we went down after we both tried to convince each other that the next pitch really didn't look that bad.

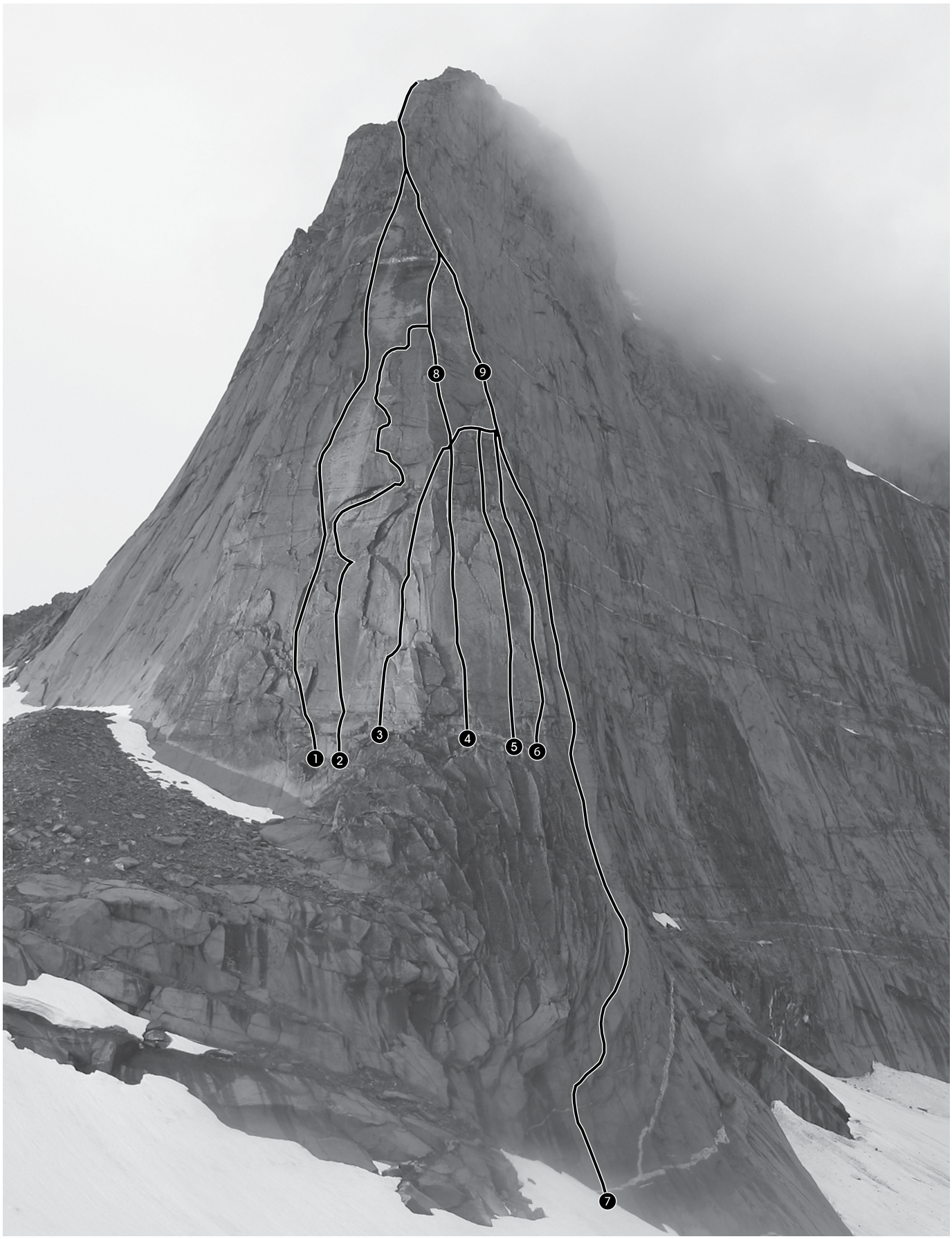
The rest of the week was spent trying to free the north face of Blackfriar. I had tried the first few pitches the previous summer, so armed with previous knowledge, we dispatched them free quite quickly; however, we were never able to totally put together the rest of the climb. Over the course of four days, we would get higher and higher, but each time we made new progress, rain and snow sent us running from our high-point. On our last attempt, we made it more than three-quarters of the way up, all free; but after a two-hour lead cleaning moss and freezing our asses off, we rappelled to the glacier in hopes of climbing something a bit warmer and cleaner. The next day we headed for the southwest buttress of Ironman, possibly one of the best alpine rock climbs in B.C. I had climbed the Gibson-Rohn a few times and knew that a beautiful-looking direct start was still waiting to be done. Right away the climbing was better than anticipated—south-facing, bulletproof granite. The rock reminded me of the Grand Capucin in Chamonix, minus the cappuccino approach. The climbing was excellent, and each pitch unique and engaging. We had brought the power drill, which made it possible to aim for the best rock and connect the best features. The first pitch was a test of balance and arête-pinching. The second had a wild full-body bridging crux that forced you into a position with both feet pressing on one wall while both hands pushed on the opposite wall—a highly unlikely combination. The rest of the climb continued to be as good as the first two pitches, and soon we had connected into the second pitch of the Gibson-Rohn. The climbing in the Adamants is a bit adventurous and difficult to get to, but personally, it's one of the hidden gems of Canada.

Evan Stevens on pitch two (5.12-) of Man of Steel, Ironman Buttress, the Adamants. Photo: Craig McGee

Summary

Man of Steel (5.12-, 4 pitches), direct start to Ironman on the southwest buttress of Ironman, the Adamants, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Craig McGee, Evan Stevens, July 25, 2008.
P1: 5.11-, 50m. Work rightwards up and over a series of right-facing corner features protected by a mixture of gear and six bolts (two-bolt anchor).
P2: 5.12-, 25m. Move left from belay into the main corner where full-body stemming is used to pass five bolts. Move slightly right to a finger crack on the face for small gear (and a fixed pin), but climb the juggy arête on the left (two-bolt anchor).
P3: 5.11-, 45m. Face climb out right on solution pockets to a steep finger crack that leads to a fixed nut anchor.
P4: 5.10, 45m. Climb the obvious straight-in, mostly hand crack on the face that gains the big ledge and the standard Ironman route.

Right: The southwest buttress (a.k.a. Ironman Buttress) of Ironman in the Adamants:
(1) Gibson-Rohn alternate start (5.10+)
(2) Variation (5.11a, A1, 4 pitches, McAllister-Parham, 2007)
(3) Southwest Buttress, pitch one (5.9)
(4) McGee-White (5.12-, 4 bolts)
(5) Unnamed (5.11-)
(6) Ironman, pitch one (5.9)
(7) Man of Steel (5.12-)
(8) Southwest Buttress (5.10 A1)
(9) Ironman (5.10+)
Photo: Craig McGee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The Northern Monashees

Roger Wallis

In July 2008, our team from the Toronto Section of the ACC set up camp in the Scrip Range of the northern Monashees. Our party consisted of Don Chiasson, Sue Cocks, Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym, Marilyn McDermott, Mark McDermott, Bill McKenzie and me.

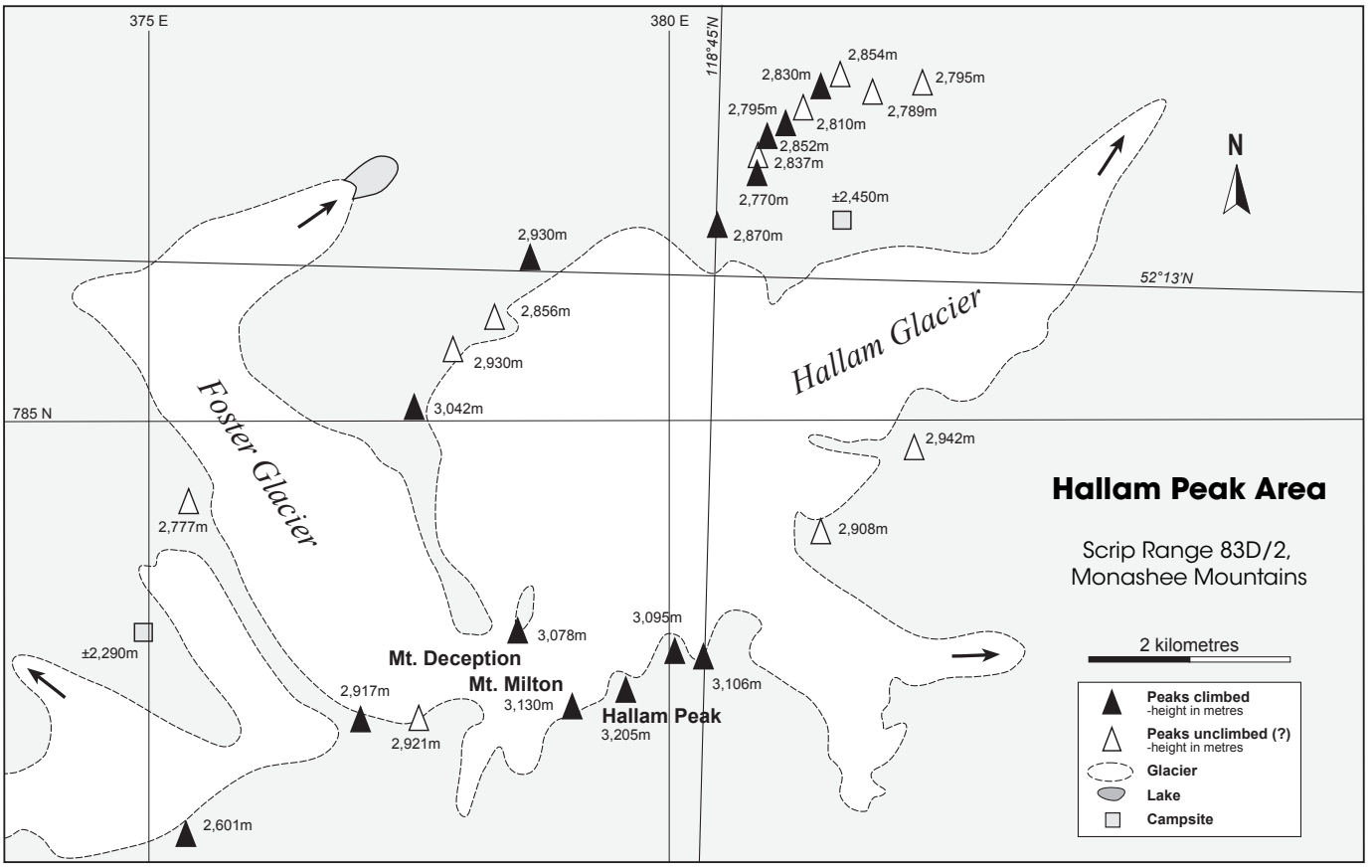
Climbs were made from an excellent campsite, on well-drained moraine, at the lower of two lakes situated on the north side of Hallam Glacier (GR 817870). During our two-week stay, we managed to make the first recorded ascent of four mountains (i.e. no previously published record and no cairn/record on summit). We also established three new routes on other previously climbed peaks, which were also likely second ascents of these summits.

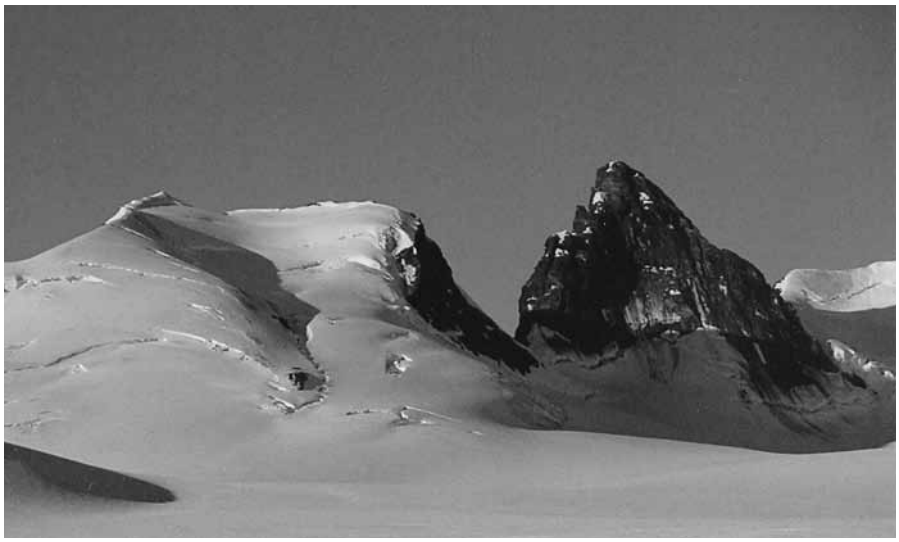
All grid references are taken from the 1:50,000 NTS topographic map 83D/2 Nagle Creek, 1986, 3rd edition; however, metric heights are taken from B.C. 1:20,000 TRIM maps because the 1:50,000 NTS map is in imperial units. It should be noted that there is considerable discrepancy between the GRs on the 1:50,000 Nagle Creek map and the 1:20,000 TRIM maps of Mud Creek (083D016), Hallam Peak (083D017) and Foster Creek (083D027). For example, our basecamp was at GR 817870 on the NTS map, but was GR 815872 on the TRIM map (i.e. a 200-metre difference in both easting and northing).

In addition, both the NTS and TRIM maps have Hallam Peak misplaced. "Locals" and well-informed individuals are aware of this, but first time visitors could be surprised. Hallam Peak is an imposing rock summit (GR 796824) and is the highest mountain (3,205 metres) in the area. To date, it has only one route of ascent, the original 1952 southwest ridge, which was done on August 4, 1952, by Sterling Hendricks, Don Hubbard and Arnold Wexler (see *CAJ*, 1953, vol. XXXVI, p. 103).

The peak wrongly shown as Hallam Peak, on the topographic maps, is the double-summitted glaciated mountain lying 700 metres to the east-northeast of the "true" Hallam Peak. "False Hallam" has a lower west summit (3,095 metres) at GR 801827 and a higher southeast summit (3,106 metres) at GR 803827. The first recorded ascent of it was made on April 11, 2004, via the north face, on skis by Ian Bissonnette, Aaron Chance, Greg Hill, David Sproule and Jeff Volp.

Our expedition would not have been possible without the most generous co-operation of Roger Laurilla, manager of CMH's Monashee Lodge, who very kindly made their "big bird" 212 helicopter available to us.





Hallam Peak is the triangular rock spire on the right. The original southwest ridge route takes the right-hand skyline. The northeast ridge (left skyline) and north face are unclimbed. The glaciated snow peak to the left is the inaccurately labelled Hallam Peak (a.k.a. "False Hallam") on NTS and TRIM maps. Photo: Roger Wallis

Summary

Southwest Ridge, Peak 2770 (GR 808874), FA: Sue Cocks, Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym, Marilyn McDermott, Mark McDermott, July 23, 2008.

Ascend the southeast slopes to southwest rock ridge (4th class), which was followed to the summit (first recorded ascent). Descent was made by same route.

South Ridge, Peak 2852 (GR 809877), FA: Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 23, 2008.

The southeast snow slope leads to a steep snow gully and ultimately the col between Peak 2837 and Peak 2852. Peak 2837 is the very prominent, massive grey summit and is unclimbed. Peak 2852 is the higher summit to the north, with a major ridge leading out to the west. From the col, climb directly up the south ridge (5th class) to the summit (first recorded ascent). Descend the northeast ridge on very friable rock.

Southwest Ridge, Peak 2795 (GR 811878), FA: Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 23, 2008.

Ascend via southwest ridge then descend via northeast ridge to reach southern snow slopes. The 400-metre traverse of Peak 2852 and Peak 2795 (first recorded ascent) took five hours. The rock along the ridge crest (5th class) has a vertical dip and is differentially weathered into innumerable towers and gullies, all of which are extremely friable.

Southwest Ridge, Peak 2830 (GR 814881), FA: Willa Harasym, Roger Wallis, July 25, 2008.

A long traverse across the southern snow slopes leads to the southwest rock ridge (4th class), then traverse two intervening towers to the summit (first recorded ascent). Return via same route.

West Ridge, Peak 2870 (GR 805869), FA: Don Chiasson, Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym, Bill McKenzie, July 22, 2008.

Ascend Hallam Glacier almost to the col at the end of the west ridge. Cut up the snow slope to reach the west ridge, then climb the ridge (5th class), over nine subsidiary towers, to the summit (second ascent). The descent was first attempted via the northeast ridge, but having set off a large rock fall just above the steep step, the party returned to the summit and then descended the south face by a snow gully/slope. The first ascent of the peak was done in April 2004, on skis by George Breko, Aaron Cooperman and Andrew Morrell via an unknown route.

Southwest Ridge, Peak 2930 (GR 787865), FA: Don Chiasson, Sue Cocks, Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym, Marilyn McDermott, Mark McDermott, Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 24, 2008.

Ascend Hallam Glacier to the col at 2,838 metres, and then scramble (3rd class) the southwest rock ridge to the summit (second ascent). Descend via the same route. The first ascent of the peak was done in April 2004, on skis by George Breko, Aaron Cooperman and Andrew Morrell via an unknown route.

Northwest Face, Peak 2601 (GR 753810), FA: Mark McDermott, Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 29, 2008.

Ascend the snow and ice face directly to the summit (second ascent) and descend same route. Based on a camp, by a small lake, on a rock ledge at GR 749831, from which descend snow/scree to reach the main glacier at an elevation of 2,100 metres. On the return from the ascent we met a wolverine sliding, running, jumping down the glacier. Both were equally startled by the encounter.

The first ascent was completed on August 1, 1993, by Leon Blumer, Ingrid Mertens and Earle Whipple from a camp on the Valley Glacier. From a col (2,526 metres) at the east end of Peak 3010, they followed the southwest ridge to the summit.

Hallam-Milton-Deception traverse, Don Chiasson, Paul Geddes, Bill McKenzie, July 25, 2008.

The 14-hour round-trip traverse began by climbing Hallam Peak from the Mount Milton Col by the southwest ridge. After returning to the col, Mount Milton was traversed up the east ridge and down the west ridge. In 2008, there was no rock on the east ridge, but the climb was quite steep with hard snow making crampons worthwhile. Finally, Mount Deception was traversed up south ridge and down north ridge. This descent was more difficult than it looked because the lower part of the ridge was steep, icy and crevassed. There is no recorded account of the traverse being done before in this direction, which is opposite to that of the first ascent.

2008 Bugaboo-Vowell GMC

Brad Harrison

In February 2009, I attended the B.C. Tourism Industry Conference held in Vancouver. The conference is a four-day event organized by the Council of Tourism Associations of B.C. The theme of the 2009 event was co-operation and how the tourism industry can ride out the current global economic malaise by working together toward common goals.

The 2008 Bugaboo-Vowell General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) embodied this mantra. The camp took place in Bugaboo Provincial Park, which presented some regulatory and environmental challenges. With the close co-operation of Tay Hanson and his staff at BC Parks we were able to pull off the GMC without a hitch, all the while meeting the requirements of park regulations and edicts.

We spent a lot of time in the tenured property of Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH). Rather than limit our ability to explore their backyard, the CMH staff at the Bugaboo Lodge were extremely helpful and offered much-needed support when we ran into logistical challenges. Dave Cochrane and his crew clearly embraced the mountaineering community and the GMC.

The GMC has tremendous co-operation from a large list of supporters, including Don McTighe of Alpine Helicopters, the frontline GMC staff and the Alpine Club of Canada office staff. Without all their assistance the camp would definitely not run as smoothly as it does.

As I reported to the ACC board of directors in November, the story on the 2008 Bugaboo-Vowell GMC is that no news is good news. Logistics for the camp went as smoothly as could be expected. For the first time in many years, the camp was a walk-in/walk-out affair due to BC Park regulations. This allowed us to lower camp fees, but the participant jury seemed split on the pros and cons of walking in versus flying in.

The campsite was ideal, possessing good water and comfortable tent sites with excellent drainage and incredible views. We were able to place the tents on sand or gravel bars, eliminating damage to the local flora and reducing our ecological footprint. Ongoing measures to contain viruses from spreading continued to work well. The numerous and well-positioned hand washing stations have proved to be very effective resulting in only a few minor ailments.

The 2008 Bugaboo-Vowell GMC basecamp at the toe of the Vowell Glacier. Photo: Brad Harrison

The climbing in the area was well-suited for a camp of this magnitude, providing a variety of technical and non-technical routes. The weather was generally good, but weeks two and five ran into some rainy and snowy weather. The prolonged spring was both a blessing and a curse. The more technical routes of Bugaboo and Pigeon Spires were plastered in snow and not in climbing shape until mid-July; however, the glaciers had excellent coverage making for easy travel. Participants enjoyed exploring the plums of the less-travelled Vowells—Mount Wallace, Robert the Bruce, Tamarack Peak and Juniper being very pleasant mountaineering objectives. As well, the Archduke Trio is a must-do for the serious mountaineer.

In my opinion, the 2008 Bugaboo-Vowell GMC was a success in all facets. The guides, leaders and staff worked extremely hard to please the participants and were successful in doing so. Thanks to all of the 2008 GMC participants. Your enthusiasm and continued support are really the catalyst that keeps your humble servants pushing to make the GMC as enjoyable and rewarding as possible for all involved.

2008 GMC Ascents

Mountain	Routes	Parties	Participants
Bugaboo Spire (3176m)	Kain Route	5	32
Pigeon Spire (3124m)	West Ridge	9	74
Little Howser (2960m)	North Glacier	2	18
Brenta Spire (2951m)	South Ridge	19	150
Brenta-Northpost Traverse	South-to-North Traverse	4	11
Wallace Spire (2947m)	South Ridge	18	109
Wallace Spire (2947m)	Living the Dream	1	2
Northpost Spire (2910m)	North Face	9	69
Juniper Peak (2860m)	North Ridge	15	98
Robert the Bruce (2860m)	South Ramp	9	68
Crescent Spire (2843m)	South Ridge	14	111
Archduke Trio (2668m)	North-to-South Traverse	3	8
Tamarack Peak (2460m)	North Ridge	12	88

South Terminal Peak

David P. Jones

Last august 2008, Marg Saul, Gabrielle Savard, Joie Seagram and I hiked to Perley Rock and enjoyed a late-evening bivouac under the full Sturgeon moon. Our objective for the following day was the west face of South Terminal Peak. Unfortunately, the *Selkirks South* guidebook provides little information about the location of prior routes or rock quality; hence, I discretely withheld from my companions any quiet reservations I harboured about our chosen objective.

Cornelius P. Kitchel briefly described his first ascent of the west face of South Terminal Peak in the Glacier House hotel log on August 23, 1906. Kitchel reported the principal difficulty as being a dangerous bergschrund that guide Edward Feuz Jr. skillfully negotiated. After crossing the bergschrund, the party ascended directly up the face and gained the south ridge, which was followed to the summit, three hours after leaving Perley Rock. Twenty-five years later on August 8, 1931, Georgia Engelhard made the second ascent of the west face with guide Ernest Feuz. Engelhard noted they used rubber sneakers, which provided good friction on the difficult pitches, and she and Feuz ascended the face in one hour. They then followed the north ridge to the summit and recorded their total time from Glacier House as five and a half hours. Although Engelhard's account of the second ascent is clear in terms of location on the face, Kitchel's is not.

On the morning of August 16, we left our comfortable bivouac early and after hiking over boulders, rock slabs and glaciers, we gained the foot of the west face in two hours. Fortunately there was no bergschrund so we simply had to step from the glacier onto rock ledges and select the best lines to tackle. The centre of the west face is fairly steep and bound on the right (south) side by a large right-facing corner with few features. To the south of the corner, the average angle of the face is considerably lower.

Joie and I selected a line about 70 metres left (north) of the corner. Although one cannot see the summit from the foot of the face, our selected line was slightly right (south) of the fall line from the summit. The route ascends a series of shallow corners connecting a series of ledges. Just over mid-height, the route ascends a corner to a roof that is negotiated by an awkward squeeze move out left onto a narrow ledge followed by a strenuous reach (5.8, the crux) to gain the next ledge. Above, nice quartzite edges and long sections of finger and hand cracks provide enjoyable mid-5th-class climbing directly to the summit.

Gabrielle and Marg chose a line about 100 metres to the left (north) of us. They began left of the aforementioned large right-facing corner and climbed the line of weakness with some 5.6 moves on the first pitch. Above the first pitch, they moved right and followed the line of least resistance with enjoyable easy to mid-5th-class climbing to the north ridge, which was followed to the summit. The route is probably in the vicinity of the Engelhard-Feuz route.

The rock is generally solid grey and green quartzite although there is considerable loose, broken stuff on the lower ledges of the routes. The entire party rappelled the west face just north of the summit with three 60-metre and three 30-metre rappels to reach the base of the face at the top of a shallow snow ramp, returning to the bivouac site after 11 hours.

On reflection, Kitchel's party probably ascended the face right (south) of centre, and south of the large right-facing corner, where the angle of the face is considerably lower.

Summary

West Face Direct (D- 5.8, 250m, 8 pitches), west face of South Terminal Peak, Selkirk Mountains. FA: David P. Jones, Joie Seagram, August 16, 2008.

Engelhard Variation (AD 5.6, 230m, 7 pitches), variation to the 1931 Engelhard Route, west face of South Terminal Peak, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Marg Saul, Gabrielle Savard, August 16, 2008.

A foreshortened perspective of the West Face Direct on Terminal Peak. Photo: Marg Saul

Audrey Gariépy on pitch two of Dirty Love during attempt number three. Photo: Jon Walsh

The Rockies

Dirty Love

Jon Walsh

Mount Wilson's mile-high southwest face is, in my opinion, one of the most overlooked alpine gems in the Canadian Rockies. Its lower flanks are stacked with several dozen classic ice and mixed routes of all sizes and grades. One of the most impressive of the roadside waterfalls is Shooting Star. Two 100-metre tiers of WI6 on a sunny aspect always get my neck cranked while driving the Icefields Parkway. Above it lays a mixed quartzite dihedral system on the right side of the biggest tower forming a natural *directissima* to the summit. I had been intrigued by it for years, but despite many glances through the binoculars, a lot of uncertainty remained with regards to the amount of ice that it might actually hold. Nevertheless, climbing it was a dream that I had a good feeling would one day become a reality.

And so the process of four attempts began in late March 2008. Attempt number one was with Audrey Gariépy. The first tier of Shooting Star wasn't formed, and a series of uninspiring old bolts in its place just wasn't going to do. We traversed right along the rock band between Shooting Star and Dancing With Chaos to a prow of about 100 metres in height. It looked do-able but our attempt to climb it ended 10 metres below the treed ledge. Excellent but run-out 5.10 face climbing in mountain boots had me high above Peckers and small knifeblades in terrain I couldn't reverse. Finally, I found a crack for an anchor to rappel from. One or two bolts would have made it reasonable to commit to the last few moves, but we weren't carrying any.

Attempt number two was a few days later with Andrew Querner, since Audrey had other commitments. Carrying a bolt kit this time, we set our sights on the same line, however, a trace of new snow and some light flurries rendered rock climbing out of the question. Instead, we traversed left towards Totem Pole, a three-pitch WI5 route. A wild settlement happened while I was leading the third pitch—a free-standing pillar. I quickly retreated before the whole thing came toppling down. The discovery of the day was a couloir that ascended up and right before its last pitch. This seemed the most logical way of passing the unformed Shooting Star. As we drove back down the highway, we noticed that the second tier of Shooting Star had fallen off sometime that day, making me happy to have failed twice to reach it.

The weather remained good and Audrey was psyched for another attempt. This time, we made the 45-minute direct approach, linked the first two pitches of Totem Pole into one, and followed the couloir up to the right. A 30-metre 5.7 rock pitch gained the big bench that runs for kilometres around the entire mountain; I think this was the route during the first ascent of Suntori. We headed up and right from there through trees and ascended the massive couloir above Shooting Star for nearly three hours to the base of the quartzite corner. Right away we were into pitch after pitch of naturally protected, iced-up mixed climbing, sustained at M6 to M7. We surmounted snow mushrooms, hanging daggers, icy squeeze chimneys and pumpy chockstones, always with good ice above. We were pleasantly surprised to find as much ice as we did. Engaging face and crack climbing kept us entertained all day and night. Finally, long after running out of food and water, we began rappelling as a spectacular sunrise painted the peaks and glaciers of the Great Divide with pink light. We had climbed three-quarters of the route in a 27-hour car-to-car effort. I knew then that it was good to go.

Audrey had to go plant trees, and I had plans with Raphael Slawinski the following weekend to try The Wild Thing on Mount Chephren. The chances of returning to finish the route that year were looking grim. When the weekend arrived, the forecast looked a little too unsettled for The Wild Thing since there would be nowhere to hide from spindrift and avalanches. Plan B was to go back to finish business on Mount Wilson. This was my fourth attempt in two weeks, so we made fast time with the trail broken, the mushrooms cleaned and some prior route knowledge. We even climbed half a pitch above our high point before it got dark. Two more time-consuming, energy-draining pitches, that I was happy not to have tried on the previous attempt, got us above the big quartzite corner. Four more moderate pitches landed us on the summit at 5 a.m.—23 hours after leaving the car.

The challenges were far from over. It was snowing and as dawn approached visibility worsened. Our intended descent was down Lady Wilson's Cleavage, a massive gully in the centre of the mountain, but we ended up on steep snow-loaded, crevassed slopes. A slab was triggered, so in order to avoid a catastrophe, we had to retrace our steps back up waist-deep 45-degree powder and reconsider our descent. Rather than going all the way back to the summit, we reached a col between the summit

tower and the group of three towers to its north. Three rappels delivered us to less-loaded terrain that we could down-climb to the top of Living in Paradise, which we rappelled along with Stairway to Heaven and Midnight Rambler. Including our detour on the glacier, it took us eight hours to complete the descent. Reaching the car 31 hours after leaving it, we were stoked about our incident-free mission. In hindsight, there are definitely safer and easier descent options available.

Dirty Love is a route I found deeply satisfying and I'd highly recommend it. Three different partners all put in solid efforts to piece the puzzle together and allow the route to go by fair means. It was a fun process. To sum it up, there were two approach pitches plus 1,200 metres of elevation gain up couloirs to get to the start of the route at around 2,700 metres. The next 500-plus metres were climbed in 12 pitches of steep climbing that protected well with a standard mixed rack. We climbed it without bolts in a single push, leaving the route clean except for a couple of stuck nuts. Climbing Shooting Star as an approach would be a very aesthetic way to get started.

Summary

Dirty Love (V M7, 1800m), southwest face of Mt. Wilson (3261m), Banff National Park. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Jon Walsh, April 5–6, 2008.

P1: M6+, 30m. Some rock and ice leads to a snow mushroom. Pass it on the right, then stem up rock and ice to an alcove below a chockstone. Pull the roof to a small dagger. Easier ground leads to a cave belay.

P2: M7, 45m. Stem out of the chossy cave to a small dagger. Climb up to a tunnel behind a chockstone (possible belay). Continue up snow and ice to a good stance at the end of the gully (possible bivy site).

P3: M6, 35m. Diagonal up and right on ledge systems and ice veins. Belay when it seems like an obvious time to head back left.

P4: M7, 40m. Angle up and left on steep rock and through an overhanging slot to a fixed wire belay below a big cave-like chimney.

P5: M6, 30m. Chimney up on the right, cleaning snow mushrooms as you go, to a good belay stance deep inside the mountain.

P6: M7, 40m. Continue for another 10 metres to below the roof of the cave, then chimney out to gain some ice. Squeeze upwards and belay on the right side of the snow slope above.

P7: M7, 40m. Ice climb into a cave. After cleaning some snow mushrooms and daggers out of the way, pull past the overhanging chockstone into the next cave and an ice-screw belay.

P8: M7, 30m. Clean more mushrooms and daggers and continue pulling past overhanging chockstones. Belay at the base of the snow slope above.

P9: M5, 60m. Head straight up the snow gully with short, steep mixed sections.

P10: M4, 60m. Continue up the snow gully with short steeper sections of mixed and ice climbing. Belay at the base of an overhanging rock wall.

P11: M5, 90m. Traverse 30 metres right on a broad snow ledge to a gully. Continue up the gully in simul-climbing mode. The gully goes from easy snow to nice mixed to steep difficult snow.

P12: 4th class, 100m. Traverse steep snow and easy mixed terrain rightwards, then back left to the summit.

Dirty Love on the southwest face of Mount Wilson. The ice pillar visible in the lower left corner is the upper tier of Shooting Star. Photo: Jon Walsh

The South Ridge of Mount Joffre

Steve Holeczi

I remember staring down onto the south side of Joffre Creek and looking in the distance to catch the itty-bitty silhouette of where we wanted to be. We'd just screwed up the approach to the west side of Mount Joffre…royally. We had been walking for nine hours up from Elk Lakes, over the Petain Glacier and had been forced south down some narrow valley away from the peak itself—bad beta, and even worse, bad judgment. Mike Verwey and Eamonn Walsh joined me on this little sojourn. These are two of the best and most experienced alpinists around and with the perfect weather it felt like a bit of a waste. The only salvageable part of that first attempt was the constant flurry of banter amongst friends, which was more than typical, both in frustration and in jest.

Armed with the McCroy Masonry truck, Eamonn (a.k.a. Busta) and I sped down Settlers Road with better beta but the same bad judgment. We started up the south side of Joffre Creek and ended up bushwhacking for some time until we spied the trail on the other side of the fast-flowing river. Eamonn ran across a log, waving his arms like he was grabbing at donuts, but made it across the torrent unscathed. I didn't like the odds so I took the other safer method of riding the log like a pony, getting my sphincter stuck on bits of broken branches and thrutching like an idiot to get across. Eamonn was not very sympathetic to say the least.

The newly found trail had us covering ground rapidly and we sweated the 10 kilometres to Sylvan Pass in 30 C temperatures in a few hours. At the pass we followed some goats up the lower parts of the south ridge, scrambling as they darted off down another slope. Once on the ridge proper the exposure was definitely augmented—the next half-kilometre was a rising traverse over "classeek" Rockies, non-protected choss. From there, a couple of 70-metre pitches of 5.6 gained the great ledge that transects the south walls. We excavated an amazing bivy with water and views, perfect for eating and drinking and farting and belching. We made fun of each other until we were bored and then settled in under clear skies.

The south ridge of Mount Joffre in Kananaskis Country. Photo: Glen Boles

Night rolled away and we worked our way up the main headwall, which was a maze of steep ribs that look like "elephants' arses". It made for interesting route-finding with climbing up to 5.9 for seven pitches, each 60 to 70 metres and generally following the edge of the west wall to the summit. The gear proved to be decent by Rockies' standards on most pitches and protected anchors could be found with some experienced piton craft. The descent was down the regular North Face route. Our aluminum crampons were adequate but conditions were primarily firm snow. A long high traverse contouring at 2,200 metres around Mount Mangin and Warrior Peak for three hours gained Northover Lakes. From there the real fun started: the west side from Northover Lakes to Joffre Creek is 700 metres of steep scree, hard-packed soil and mud. My friend Mike Koppang had spotted it during a heli flight and thought it might work although it is unlikely anyone had been down there before. Let's just say crampons and an ice axe might be recommended for portions of it. We grovelled skier's left but beta here is worthless. The descent spat us out to a pocket glacier, and after two-and-a-half kilometres, we hit the trail we walked in on at kilometre six.

We both thought that this route was a grand adventure to a peak neither of us had climbed and where not many humanoids venture. The rock is variable but manageable, like most big peaks in the Rockies.

Summary

South Ridge (V 5.9) of Mount Joffre (3449m), French Military Group, Kananaskis Country. FA: Steve Holeczi, Eamonn Walsh, August 18–19, 2008.

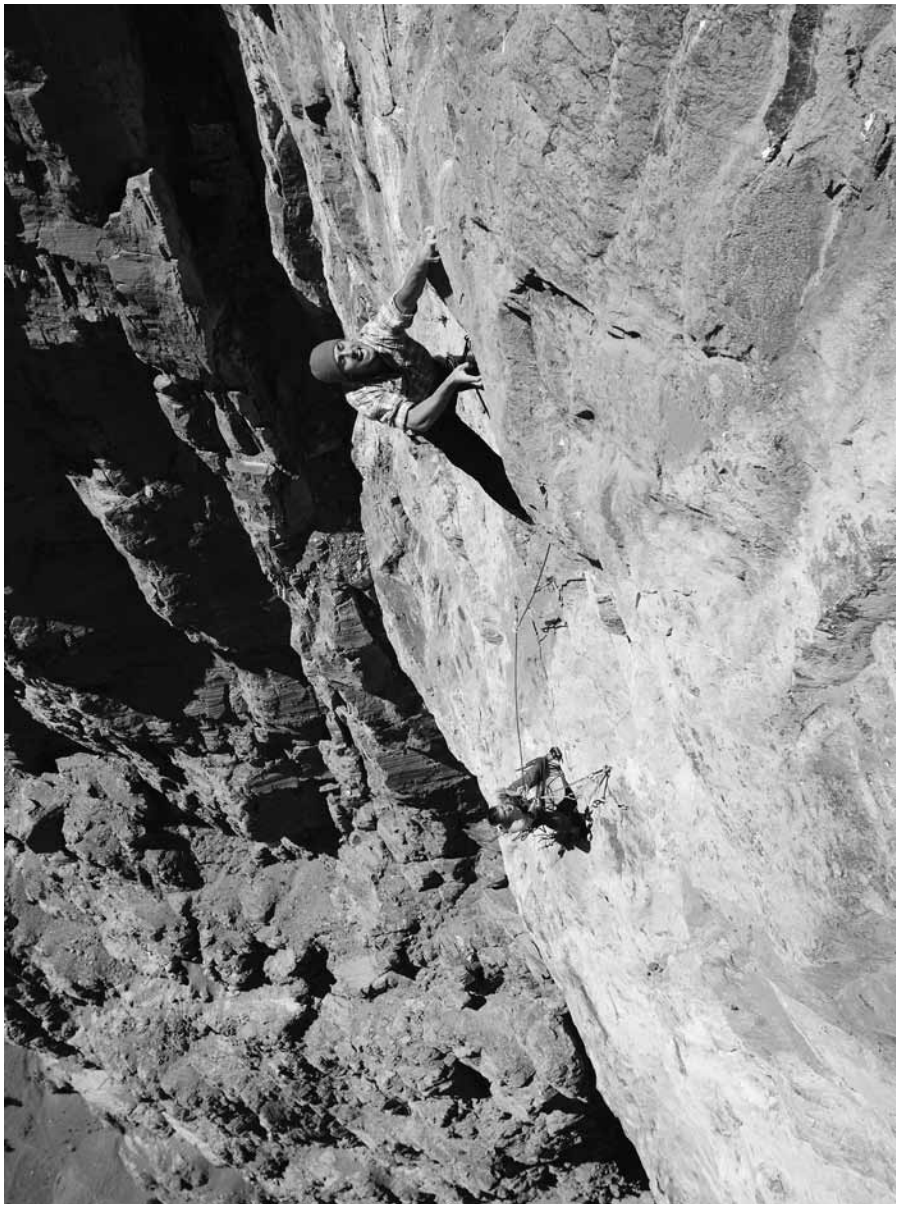
Group Effort

Sonnie Trotter

When I sat down to write something about this climb, my mind drew a blank. There just isn't one single story that sums up this wall; it's actually a culmination of many small stories, each one involving different people, different months and even different names for the climb (I'm not sure we ever settled on just one). Perhaps that's why it was so hard for me to try and capture this in one small report, instead of many, but I'll try.

It was by accident that we first noticed the orange wall, a glorious overhanging sheet of limestone. It loomed over us with such presence, an invitation to come play, one that we could not ignore. We originally went up to the base of Yamnuska to investigate a new free climb, Hot Doggin (5.12), with a good group of local boys. Nole Gingrich, Nick Rochacewich and I went back the very next day, armed with drills, batteries and bolts. Top-down was the method of practice here, as the headwall is only four pitches in length, and nestled on the upper two-thirds of the great mountain.

Sonnie Trotter (leading) and Derek Galloway on pitch three of The Mistress on Yamnuska.
Photo: Andrew Querner



Because there was no protection on top, it took two of us with half a length of rope stretched across the scree slope to protect Nick. Our hearts raced as he neared the edge of the sloping cliff and precariously placed that first bolt, the bolt that would allow us to gain the magnificent face below.

Upon first inspection, it was everything we were looking for—gold, orange, clean, hard. We rapped into space eyeing up the line, the path of best resistance, at least in our own minds.

It took four more days—spread out over two months—of drilling, bolting and cleaning to make the line truly come to life. Our excitement was rising. Nick unfortunately fell victim to the J-O-B, so I recruited Lev Pinter to join me for the first free attempt in mid-September. It was cold, but sticky. Feeling strong and fit, I climbed easily into the crux sequence, stoked that the big beast was about to fall, but suddenly I was airborne, dangling lifelessly over 200 metres of clear Alberta sky. A foothold had broken and ripped away my spirits along with it.

I didn't get another chance until July 2008. With Crosby Johnston, we went for the official ground-up mission. After speed soloing up the Calgary Route (5.6), we rested for a snack before embarking on the upper headwall. A 5.12b traversing pitch was a gentle slap in the face that worked the pump factor nice and dandy. The exposure was instant and the belay was slightly less than comfortable. But on the bright side, it led smoothly into the first crux pitch—a 25-metre pitch of crimps, smears, tiny pockets and pinches. It was pumpy, it was powerful, it was plentiful. But this time around, I just didn't have it in me.

Nothing broke, temps were perfect, but after the solo approach and the hauling of all our gear, I didn't have the guns to gain the chains. I got sloppy, forgot sequences, skipped clips and it cost me. I pulled myself together for the third pitch, a 5.13a with a bouldery roof encounter. I had most of these holds ticked and was able to execute. The final pitch is another 5.12b and I handed the lead over to Crosby. At first he was uncomfortable, shaking and breathing hard, but then he found his rhythm and climbed with confidence and stability—until the desperate final move lurking at the summit.

We didn't expect the last move to be so tricky, it just happened that way, sort of like its own little joke on us. If you know what you're looking for it's not that bad; if you don't, it could be the hardest move in the world. To make matters worse, you're two metres above the last bolt and mere centimetres away from the top of the wall. Crosby took repeated four- to six-metre falls until he had nothing left. He lowered off and I went up the wall, barely locating the crucial hold before succumbing to the sucking void. I talked him through the last moves on toprope and it all became clear to him. We shook hands for a good day in the crisp Rocky Mountains and packed our bags for the descent.

As much fun as that day was, the climb was left unfinished, incomplete. Three weeks passed and I managed to recruit local limestone expert Derek Galloway. Derek is a tremendous climber with more potential than perhaps even he realizes. Derek is best known in the area for his contributions to new routes at local crags such as Planet X and Bataan. He's bagged more 5.14s than he'll admit and recently made an early repeat of Existence Mundane, a 5.14b at Acephale.

The two of us came in from the top. I was at the point where I simply wanted this route finished and I didn't care so much about whether I did it from the ground in a push, or from the top. Things went far more smoothly this time, except I was just getting over a gnarly bug and felt weaker than I had all year. But I knew the route well enough at this point that all I had to do was connect the dots and hope nothing went wrong. However, it was Derek who stole the show. On a secure toprope, with my beta and ticked holds, Derek strolled the crux sequences, rested efficiently and managed to flash the last three pitches with relative ease. I was fully inspired.

In my eyes, the route is complete, every pitch freed. It's safe, it's fun and above all it's beautiful—but there is still room for a complete ascent. Shoes, rack and the shirt on your back, from car to summit and home again would be the ultimate day. I'm not sure who'll be the first as it takes a special kind of motivation to get up there, but the prize is waiting. Hopefully, it will continue to tell more than one story, more adventures, more memories, the way it did for me and the dedicated boys who tagged along.

Summary

The Mistress a.k.a. The Golden Dragon (5.13a/b, 10 pitches (4 pitches of new climbing)), Yamnuska. FA: Derek Galloway, Sonnie Trotter, August 15, 2008.

Icefall Brook

Jennifer Olson

The fast rumbling blades of the departing helicopter evaporated into the peaceful stillness of the surrounding wilderness as our palettes tingled with anticipation of the candy shop's worth of first ascents that lay before us. Creamy pocketed limestone walls were drizzled with icy blue pillars, and our hoots and hollers were lively and uncontained.

Audrey Gariépy, Caroline George, Ines Papert, Jon Walsh and I spent a week in March on a first-ascent binge deep in the Canadian Rockies in Icefall Brook. The canyon lies on the west side of the Continental Divide below the Lyell Icefield, just south of the Columbia Icefield. Beautiful walls rise hundreds of metres around this pear-shaped amphitheatre, and dozens of waterfalls seep through the highly featured stone.

Caroline George on pitch one of Happy Birthday in Icefall Brook. The smear on the far left is the last tier of Back from the Storm. Photo: Jon Walsh

Most of the climbing activity thus far had been done by Dave Thompson and a variety of partners, but according to Joe Josephson's *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, the area contains "virtually unlimited mixed terrain." A photo on page 264 of the guide reveals several impressive unclimbed pure ice lines. We lucked out with stable avalanche conditions, easy approaches and great ice formation. Many routes in the canyon wouldn't be safe to do with new snow or direct sun. After eight days of feasting on the delicacies, 10 major new routes had been done from WI5 to M12. Ines' three-pitch Call of the Wild is a candidate for the hardest multi-pitch mixed route in the Canadian Rockies at M12.

For many people in the group this was their first experience winter camping, flying in a helicopter and living in the backcountry for a week. We were really lucky with moderate temperatures mostly above -10 C. I was off the couch so climbing hundreds of metres of WI5 ice everyday was a rewarding challenge. We all felt exhausted and pumped early in the trip, but our voracious energy and gluttonous nature enabled us to keep sending.

The most notable memories from the week, aside from the climbing, happened in the kitchen, where broken eggs decorated our half-snow, half-tarp living quarters. They were broken in an inebriated state while enjoying our only rest day. Also, the humming sound of our propane heater welcomed us at every meal. We misplaced a key part to our cooking system so we had to rely on our propane heater for all our cooking. This seemed fairly dodgy, probably as most things on our trip did, but never caused us any trouble. In fact, we enjoyed many hot and nourishing meals from the noisy contraption.

Icefall Wall

(1) Supernatural B.C. (WI6 M7, 600m) FA: Jennifer Olson, Jon Walsh, March 2008.

Climb 250 metres of WI3 to an 80-metre WI6 pillar. After this, there are two chimneys; Olsen and George climbed a WI3 pitch up the right-hand fork to the end of the first attempt on the route. The left chimney consisted of a 40-metre WI4 pitch to a cave belay. An M7 traverse to thin delaminating ice was climbed to the next cave. One more pitch of very thin WI4+R gained a rock anchor on the right side of the snow gully above. The final 100 metres of ice gradually steepened from WI3 to WI6 to finish.

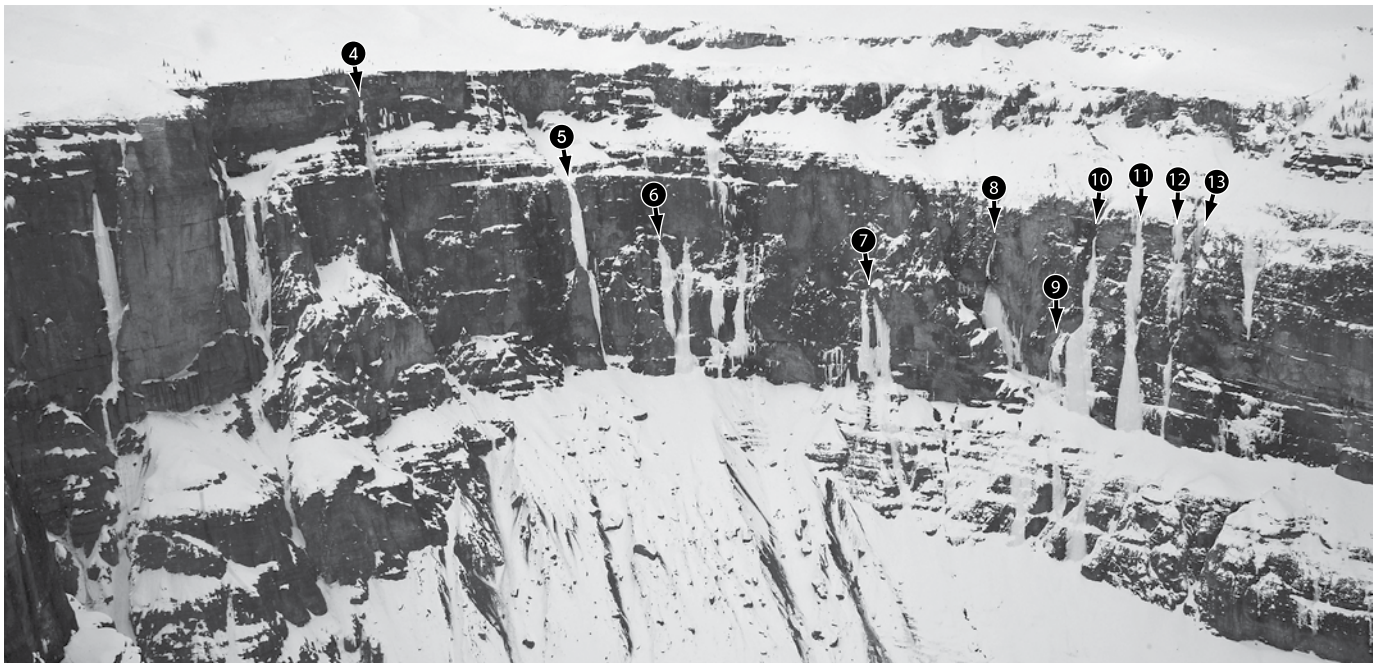
(2) Northwest Passage (WI5+, 600m) FA: Audrey Gariépy, Ines Papert, March 2008.

This is the obvious line in the middle of the wall consisting of five tiers of beautiful pillars separated by snow ledges. The second-to-last tier (the crux) is two pitches long.

(3) Back from the Storm (WI5 M5, 420m) FA: Jon Walsh, Ian Welsted, February 2009.

The first tier was three full 60-metre pitches of WI3-4. The second tier consisted of two rope lengths of thin, technical WI4+ with a few rock moves over bulges (cams, nuts and stubbies were the main protection option for this tier). The third and final tier was two full 60-metre pitches of excellent quality WI4 and WI5, respectively. Descent was made by making four rappels towards a snow gully on climber's right, then downclimbing and hiking the

Icefall Wall in Icefall Brook. Photo: Jon Walsh



Lyell Wall in Icefall Brook. Photo Jon Walsh

lower section of the gully. [This route was completed on a subsequent trip the following year—Ed.]

Lyell Wall

(4) Happy Hours (WI6, 240m)
FA: Audrey Gariépy, Ines Papert, Jon Walsh, March 2008.

Climb a narrow, winding gully with the crux being a pitch of WI6 in the middle (pitch two). The third pitch climbs behind a large wedged chockstone. A small rock rack is useful since the ice can be thin. The first rappel is from a two-nut anchor 10 metres above the top of the ice.

(5) Fossen Falls (WI6, 170m)
FA: Audrey Gariépy, Ines Papert, Jon Walsh, March 2008.

Located to the right of Happy Hours, this sustained three-pitch route is one of the most beautiful in the cirque.

(6) Happy Birthday (WI5, 120m)
FA: Caroline George, Jennifer Olson, March 2008.

This is the left-hand pillar in the cluster of four lines to the right of Fossen Falls. The next pillar right is Ginja Stick (WI5, 80m, Geisler-Thomson, 1995), while the right-most two are unclimbed.

(7) Easy Street (WI5+, 75m, Geisler-Thomson, 1995) and Tower of Terror (WI4, 75m Geisler-Thomson, 1995)

For a full route description, refer to page 268 of *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2002) by Joe Josephson.

(8) Into the Wild (M12 WI5, 100m)
FA: Ines Papert, March 2008.

This wild climb is accessed by climbing Ice Palace (WI4+, 60m, Lloyd-Thomson, 1991). From a belay in the back of the cave, climb a short pillar before launching out a 40-metre roof traverse. A bolted station is on the left side of the dagger just above the lip of the roof. Another 60 metres of WI5 leads to a hole from which the ice flows.

(9) Keep On Smiling (WI6, 60m)
FA: Audrey Gariépy, Jennifer Olson, Jon Walsh, March 2008.

The free-standing pillar that is 30 metres left of Mexican Overdrive is climbed in a single pitch.

(10) Mexican Overdrive (WI5, 200m, Chase-Thomson, 1991)

For a full route description, refer to page 267 of *Waterfall Ice Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2002) by Joe Josephson.

(11) Blue Lagoon (WI5, 200m)
FA: Caroline George, Ines Papert, Jennifer Olson, March 2008.

This is the fat pillar to the right of Mexican Overdrive. It was climbed in 2.5 pitches with a 70-metre rope with the crux being a 10-metre technical chandeliered section of the second pitch.

(12) Jusqu'au Bout (M5 WI6, 200m)
FA: Audrey Gariépy, Caroline George, March 2008.

From halfway up the second pitch of High Five, make unprotectable mixed moves left (crux) for about five metres to reach a thin WI4 smear that gradually fattens. The final pitch is a WI6 free-standing pillar.

(13) High Five (WI5, 200m)
FA: Audrey Gariépy, Jennifer Olson, Jon Walsh, March 2008.

Located in the gully to the right of Blue Lagoon. The first of three pitches is the crux presenting steep, technical WI5 climbing.

Note: 80 metres of WI3 must be climbed as part of the approach to gain the snow ledge that accesses all climbs from the Ice Palace to High Five.

Twice on Temple

Eamonn Walsh

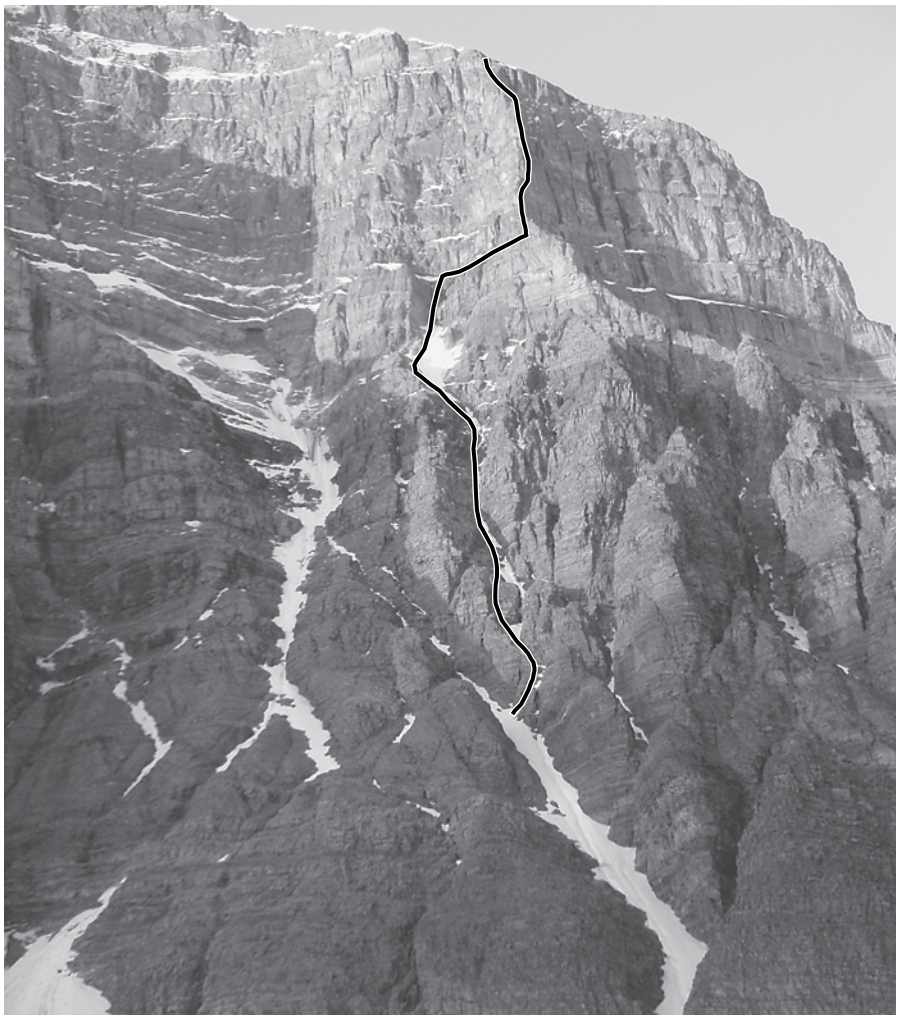
"I cannot believe you guys ever get up anything!" exclaimed Ian as Raphael and I lounged on our packs drinking tea and munching on various types of grub. I was eating some over-sugared, over-chemically-stuffed coffee bar, while Raph nibbled away at more healthy fare such as bagel and cheese. We had just ditched our skis not far from the base of the Greenwood-Jones on Mount Temple and would go on foot from there. Ian's comment made me reflect on the past, and I realized that it was not always so for me—and still is not. With certain partners, we eat as we gear up and barely stop all day for a break, but when I climb with Raph, we take it easy yet still move quickly. It helps that Raph hardly ever stalls while leading and I can follow fast, though sometimes not gracefully.

So, after our leisurely late-morning snack, we slogged to the base and roped up for the first short pitch. Off went the old bloke and that is how it went the entire climb; Raphael led with gusto, while Ian and I followed with the heavier gear. We would occasionally ask, "Are you sure you do not want a break from leading?"

"No," he would reply, "I would much rather lead than carry those pigs."

And so we went. For Ian and me, it was quite an enjoyable climb, though I worried about the low clouds to the west from time to time. However, as my partners seemed unfazed, I tried not to bring it up too much.

Icarus Buttress on the north face of Mount Temple. Photo: Raphael Slawinski



The first night we came across the largest ledge on the buttress just as it got dark—perfect timing. I went to work right away constructing a ledge for the tent. After not too long, we were crammed into the single-wall two-man tent with Ian cooking up a storm and feeding us super spicy Ichiban. Three dudes in a small tent make for a very warm night.

Day two was a leisurely start, but we made good progress to the base of the upper headwall just before dark. At my urging, we toyed with the idea of checking out the easy way off, but in the end it looked unappealing, so we went with the more aesthetic and familiar way. Raphael started out from the last belay as darkness became complete and did a clean and super impressive lead. He is one of a handful I know who has taken the drytooling techniques of the crag and applied them with great efficiency in the mountains. For some reason we thought jumaring the ropes with a Tibloc each would be a good idea. It ended up being a scary and slow process, but once we finally got up the ropes, Raphael had already carved a ledge out of the scree below a sheltered cliff. Ian once again whipped up a storm of tea, soup and spicy Ichiban.

Day three was a late start, the wind was blowing and the upper east ridge was socked in. We donned goggles and Ian led us to the summit. A quick romp down the southwest ridge to Sentinel Pass and then out Paradise Valley had us back to our skis, and soon thereafter, the car.

About a week after our ascent, some visiting American friends, Steve House and Roger Strong, did the Greenwood-Jones in a single 25.5-hour push, base to base. This was a committing way of doing it, but in terms of time, it actually was not much faster than ours. Even

though they probably got back to the car a few hours before we would have, the reality is that they spent two nights out and we spent two nights out. While I have indulged in single-push adventures on occasion, there is something to be said for the laid back, have-fun-in-the-mountains approach to climbs.

I THOUGHT THAT WOULD be my annual climb of Temple, but as it turned out, I would follow Raph up this accessible alpine playground one more time—this time via a possible new route in summer.

We started up the Dolphin as the sun streaked orange colours on the upper reaches of the face. It felt great to be back on the north face in the same year with Raph. After cramponing up firm snow, we broke out right into the Arrow Couloir. Already we were pleased because both of us had been up the Dolphin before, but not the Arrow. We discovered that it is a safer way to go because you scramble up the rock rib between the two couloirs, which gets one's precious self out of potential rockfall and away from the looming seracs high above the Dolphin. I led us up the first pitch of the Greenwood-Locke, which was to be my shining moment of the day. Once on the large ledge where the Greenwood-Locke heads left, we went right to look for the mysterious Slovenian Route—the reason we were up here on that fine summer day. There were many possibilities, which unfortunately were all looking wet. The original topo we had with us only seemed to indicate that it went up the wall between the Greenwood-Locke and the prominent rib out right. With all possible lines looking somewhat unappealing, our gaze turned to the aforementioned rib, a striking feature that juts out on the far right side of the north face of the mountain. Right away I could tell that I would be taking a back seat on this one. I gave Raph the sharp end, and he took it as though it was candy and he was a big kid. He ran off just as quickly as a kid would with that candy, gracefully and confidently, while I followed grunting and swearing.

The first couple of pitches were reasonable, but then it started to look doubtful that it would go. Each time, though, Raph would figure it out, fudging in tricky gear, moving upwards at a steady and methodical pace. He is a bold climber, but not rash; the puzzle kept getting solved. Finally, at a hanging stance with a shallow angle piton and a knifeblade pounded into somewhat chossy rock, I voiced my concern over the upcoming event. The next pitch looked to be the hardest yet.

Said I, "If you think you may fall, don't do it."

To which Raph replied, "OK," and then set off as though I had just given him some more candy.

After a couple of moves of very dicey-looking climbing (read: balancey footwork and crimping on crumbly edges), his feet cut out. I shrieked at the same time that Raph, who has a higher-pitched voice than the average dude, bellowed. I hoped his warrior cry had drowned out my whimpering.

Soon it was time to follow, so I yarded on a few pieces, my body thrashing, feet and knees smearing for all they're worth. At an overhanging bulge, Raph had done a devious traverse right to escape to easier ground. I guess I was going to have to climb after all…gulp! The traverse ended on the right edge of the rib around which there was a gully and low-angle terrain. I desperately tried to remember how to use my feet while looking at a long sweeping pendulum around the corner and into the gully, the outcome of which probably would hurt. I cursed and roared. It was not my finest moment. After a prolonged period of time, I pulled it off, feeling a small sense of achievement at not falling.

Another much easier pitch brought us to the top of the feature. We followed the ridge-like top of the rib up for a pitch and then horizontally around a towering gendarme, on the other side of which was the main body of the mountain. This is where it seems the Slovenians came up from the left, as there was a pin on the last pitch, which was the only one we found on the entire route. A longer-than-we-both-remembered traverse across scree slopes brought us to the normal southwest ridge route with sightings of the last hikers in Larch Valley far below heading home. We were down in the Moraine Lake parking lot after dark, yet once again we were able to find someone who gave us a ride back to our car at the Paradise trailhead, 18 hours after we started out.

I look forward to my next pilgrimage to the Temple.

Summary

First winter ascent of the Greenwood-Jones (IV+ M6, 1300m), north face of Mt. Temple, Banff National Park. FWA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted, March 8–10, 2008.

Icarus Buttress (IV+ 5.11-, 1100m), north face of Mt. Temple. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, July 20, 2008.

Raphael Slawinski off route during the first ascent of Icarus Buttress. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

The Jimmy Skid Rig

Brandon Pullan

It has been about a month since Will Gadd sent The Jimmy Skid Rig in January 2009. The media release generated a bit of controversy about two things: Will Meinen and me. I reported the route on Gadd's popular ice conditions website www.gravsports-ice.com, but I reported not how it went down, but how I thought it could have gone down. That was wrong. People reacted as they should have—confused. My write-up did not make sense, but with the stoke level high, I just typed and hit send.

When Meinen and I set out to climb the route three years ago, we were (and still are) just a couple of bumblies from Ontario who wanted to climb the upper ice curtain by any means necessary. Free was a possibility but not a must. As the years went by, we realized we had no idea what we were doing, aiding up a loosey-goosey wall to get to some ice. The wall is big, steep and mentally challenging. Every metre there was another loose block we had to tumble off. The route name honours our drill, nicknamed Jimmy, which was a busted-up Hilti with a 30-metre cord attached to a car battery in a backpack.

Over the years, Meinen and I have made it a point to climb new routes in the Rockies and to make note of them. The routes have not been cutting-edge and are in no way progressing the sport in the area. Our routes simply show that regular ol' punters from out East can get out and establish first ascents in the Rockies. At first, I simply mentioned the information to local guidebook authors, but as time went on, I sent the route information to magazine editors who would print it. However, the local community was torn on these reports as we were not reporting anything significant, just a few 5.9s. I have always climbed new routes because they are challenging for me personally. At any rate, people's opinions grew over the years as I continued to report these routes. The Jimmy Skid Rig was the last straw, which caused people to voice their opinions online. In the end, I have learned a couple of things:

1. Editors are not the be-all and end-all. It is up to climbers to decide if things are "worthy". Just because an editor is giving you page space, it doesn't mean anything.

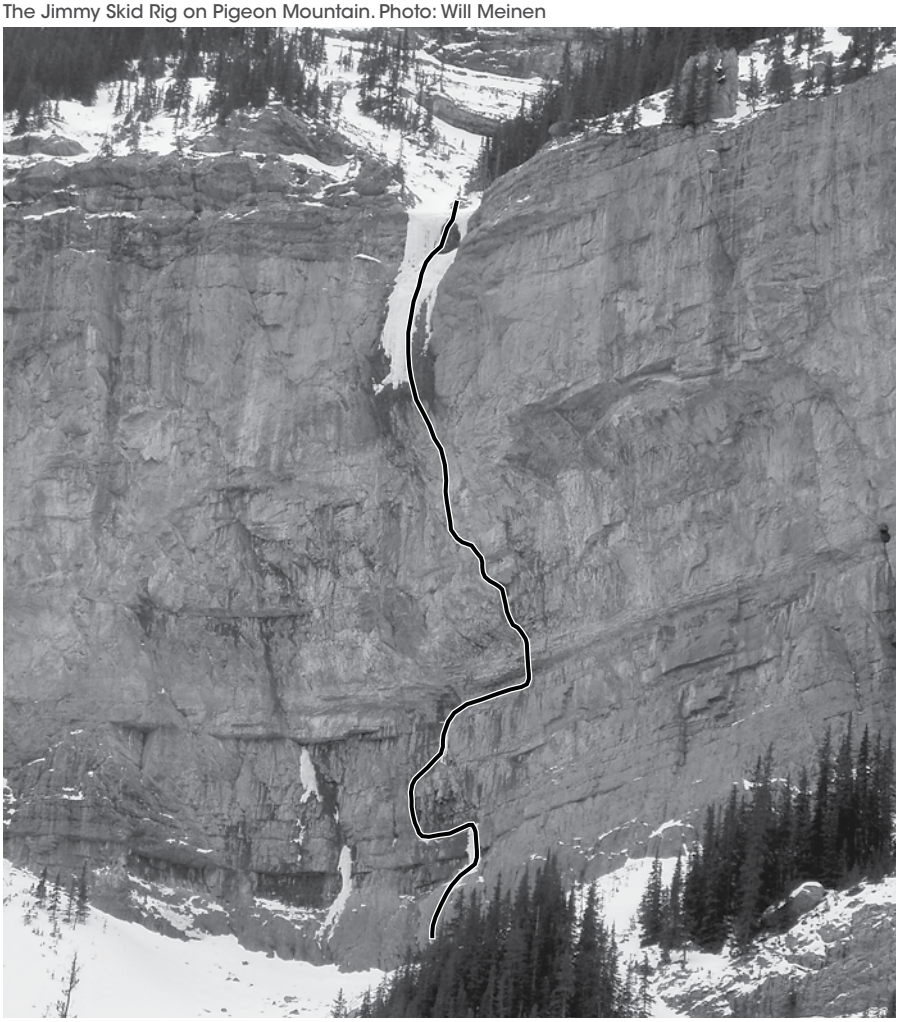
2. Avoid exaggerating. I grew up around fisherman, and fishermen make up tall tales to tell a story, even if the truth gets stretched a bit. I have learned that we can tell stories, but when it comes to what we are reporting, the truth is paramount.

The Jimmy Skid Rig continued to throw curve balls—the weather and conditions never seemed to be in our favour. As the three-year mark rolled around, I let Will Gadd in on our efforts and invited him to check it out. He did, and after three days of working it, cleaning it and adding the remaining seven bolts to get to the ice, he sent it. Meinen had to work that day but I jugged ropes and desperately tried to second. Gadd topped out and freed the whole rig—end of story.

Summary

Jimmy Skid Rig (M11 WI5, 200m), northeast face of Pigeon Mountain. FFA: Will Gadd, January 30, 2009 (equipped by Will Gadd, Will Meinen and Brandon Pullan).

The Jimmy Skid Rig on Pigeon Mountain. Photo: Will Meinen

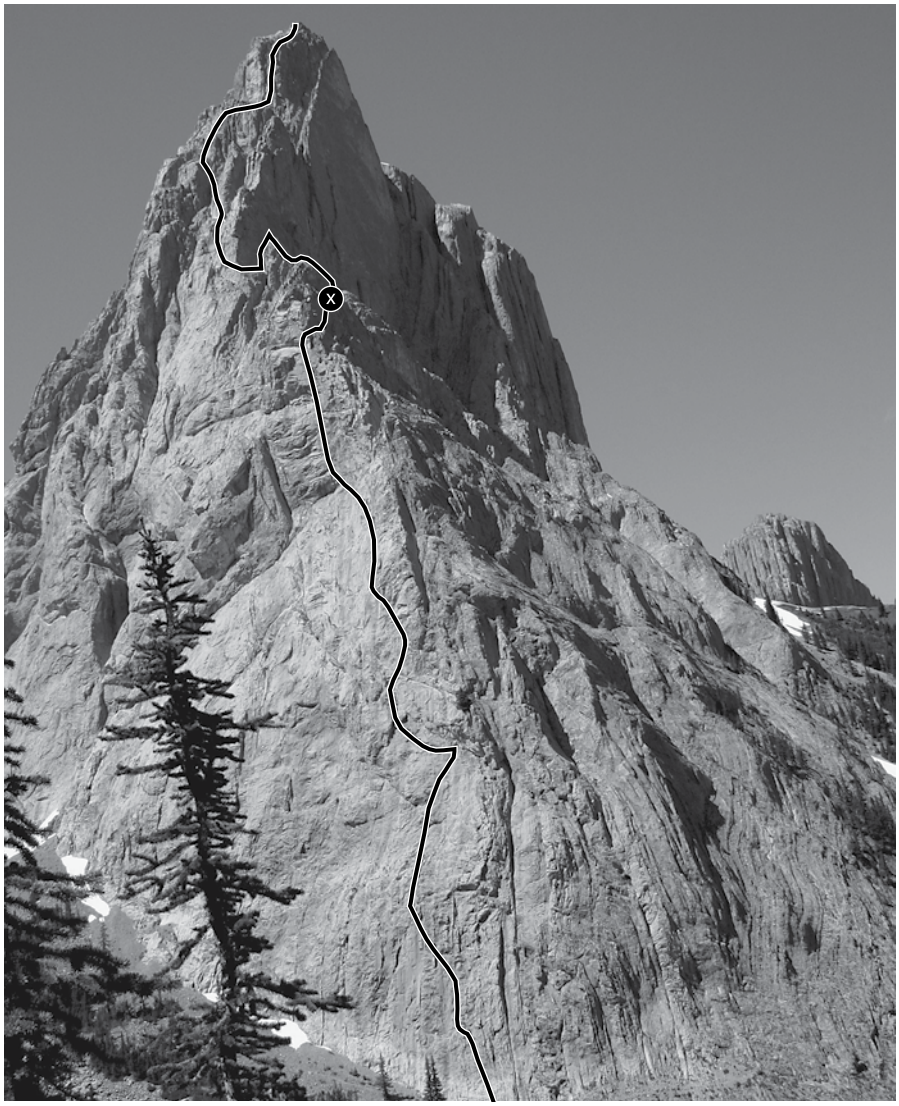


Louis and Kidd

Brandon Pullan

Mount Louis, the spire of limestone near Banff, needs no introduction. It is home to many a classic, and in 2007, Will Meinen and I managed a new route—barely. Tails tucked from a broken ankle, we vowed to return in better style. A year to the day and we were back at the base. Better prepared than the previous year, we hiked in early to scope the line and bivied at the base. A striking line up the bulletproof slab of grey prickly limestone rose proud from the scree. The buttress between the Gmoser Route (5.8) and Kain Route (5.6) dominated the left skyline when viewed from the east. Waking early and donning a light rack, a hand drill and some warm clothes, we were moving before sun-up.

I took the first four pitches and Will the next three until we could connect with the Kain Route. The 250 metres of new ground we covered was superb, some of the best on the mountain, and creates an excellent alternative start to the Kain Route. The third pitch is the crux—a 5.10a move protected with great gear. However, both the third and fourth pitches have 30-metre run-outs, though the climbing is quite easy. We placed only one bolt, which was for the second pitch's belay. We named the line The Gargoyle, since it is perched on the edge of Gargoyle Valley.



The Gargoyle on Mount Louis. The "x" marks where it joins the original Kain Route.
Photo: Brandon Pullan

For the next two months the sky closed in early every afternoon, bringing heavy rains, cold weather and poor climbing conditions. Many climbers in the Rockies felt the burden of less than ideal conditions, changing alpine plans to sport climbing plans, seeking sheltered crags as opposed to open ridges. It was during this time that I was out driving through Kananaskis Country, hoping for a break in the clouds to watch the mid-summer spindrift off the peaks. I wanted to be inspired by some wall of yet-to-be-climbed rock. It was then that I noticed a line of weakness on Mount Kidd's southern aspect. Kidd has two summits with the south being the higher of the two; however, it was the north summit that had this nice ridge crawling down to the valley floor.

The ridge looked typical of ridges in the Rockies—sections of climbing interspersed with sections of scrambling. The upper part was separated from the lower by a huge screefield. I phoned Will, who was more than eager to try it. The lower buttress was fantastic climbing up water-worn runnels and small roofs. The screefield was not fun, as it was composed of ankle-slicing, shin-bruising, jagged rocks. The upper portion comprised of steep tiers of loose rock held together by cold dirt that required us to tip-toe the 5.6 sections. A bit more scrambling and we came to a section of rock that resembled an overhanging serac. I climbed out onto the east face and found a slightly less steep piece of cliff. Ankles buried in snow, I committed to the protection-less verglass-covered rock. Will's anchor was two knifeblades hammered straight up, so needless to say he watched me closely as I eased up. My foothold broke and I desperately lunged

for a piece of scree at the lip. It held and I mantelled up. We climbed the last 60 metres up a fabulous snow-filled chimney to the summit ridge. The top was better than we had hoped for with the sun setting on an orange horizon. We named our climb Tah-Osa Ridge after Stuart Kidd's honorary Stoney title: Chief Tah-Osa, which means moose killer.

Summary

The Gargoyle (III 5.10a, 7 pitches), southeast face of Mt. Louis. FA: Will Meinen, Brandon Pullan, July 7, 2008.

Tah-Osa Ridge (III 5.7), southeast face of Mt. Kidd. FA: Will Meinen, Brandon Pullan, September 13, 2008.

Tah-Osa Ridge follows the left-hand skyline. Photo: Will Meinen

Wildcat Wall

Brian Merry

Early in January 2009, I was taking a backcountry ski leadership course with the Rocky Mountain Section of the Alpine Club of Canada at Mistaya Lodge. We flew in via the Blaeberry and Wildcat valleys from Golden, B.C. I spent the flight looking at mountaineering routes and ice climbs for possible first ascents. As we turned up Wildcat Creek a few kilometres before the lodge, a beautiful wall packed with ice came into view. I knew I hadn't seen a record of it being climbed before and started to think this could be the dream wall I'd been hoping to find.

During the ski trip, my thoughts kept returning to the wall of ice. I quizzed Dave Birnie, the lodge owner, and he didn't think anyone had done any climbing in the area. He contacted Phil Hein who had spent time at the lodge when it was being built in the '80s. Phil said he was always working while at the lodge and never had time to check out the ice. He was pretty certain it was unclimbed.

After the ski trip I began doing research on the wall. I remembered hearing about a mystery wall at Mistaya years ago. While working at a local climbing shop in Banff in 1996, a customer had walked in and mentioned it to me. As a young climber, I was definitely interested. He clammed up after I started asking more questions, and eventually I forgot about it.

I knew that I had stumbled upon the mystery wall of Mistaya. This was clearly a plum that was waiting to be picked. I was sure the Golden boys and girls knew about it but just hadn't gotten around to climbing it yet. I decided to focus on this project before someone else snagged it. I've noticed new lines in other areas in the past, but they got climbed before I had a chance simply because I didn't get off my ass. This wall had to get done this winter—sooner rather than later.

In the past, I've had problems finding partners that want to climb first ascents, especially if the route was more than a few hours from the road. The added commitment of logistics often doesn't fit into the tight scheduling that many people live by. I started thinking about possible partners. I needed someone who was committed to hard work and relished in adversity, someone who could deal with hardship while maintaining a good attitude, someone who lived for the unknown. Basically, I needed a technically strong mountaineer who didn't mind suffering. My first choice was Brandon Pullan. I told him I had found an area with numerous virgin ice climbs in the WI2 to WI5 range that was lodge-based with helicopter access. Without hesitation, he was in.

As we flew past the climbs, we both had shit-eating grins. We could see that the climbs didn't have any avalanche hazard above them, but we could also see they were very steep. Brandon was excited at first sight. He was looking forward to climbing steep one-pitch routes comfortably within his ability.

After arriving and settling into the lodge, Brandon and I shouldered our packs, clipped into our skis and headed down the hill to get a quick first ascent in before supper. As we approached the wall, our excitement grew. We were looking at three spectacular unclimbed routes in the WI4+ to WI5+ range. We decided to start on the right and work left.

Brandon offered up the first lead to me and I jumped all over it like a fat kid on a Smartie. The line that offered the best climbing was a few metres straight up from the belay, followed by a rising traverse out left across a curtain

of good ice to get into a vertical groove. Once established in the groove, it was straightforward to the top. The climbing was sustained, but the ice was in good shape needing only two or three swings of the axe to get a good placement. After rapping off, we talked about a name. Brandon suggested The Cat Came Back. I looked at him puzzled. He said I was the cat, and I came back.

As we started skiing downhill through the trees, I left my heel in tour mode because the creekbed was less than 50 metres below us. On my second jump turn, I tumbled head first down the slope. Upon righting myself, I discovered my toe piece ripped right off the ski.

Getting down to the creek bed balancing on one ski was fairly easy, but when I had to travel uphill it became a different story. I post-holed to my knee as I tried to hop forward on one ski. Brandon went ahead to the lodge to get a ski for me while I continued struggling uphill to keep warm.

Brandon was a trooper in helping me out. The first time he returned to me after a few hours, the ski he brought had a binding that was too small. He had to head back up the hill to get a snowshoe. By the time he returned again I had made it almost all the way back. We arrived at the warm lodge at 7:30 p.m. to a roast-lamb supper. It was nice to go inside to a hot meal after a small epic. Dave dug out an old pair of skis for me that saved the rest of the trip.

The following day we got an early start and headed back down to the wall. The next climb to the left was a WI4+ that we called Ginny's Corner, named after Dave's dog. It was to be our warm-up for the 55-metre free-standing pillar to the left of that again. Brandon took the lead and did a fine job cleaning the route of the chandelier ice and finding good screws. Usually when I follow a climb I enjoy it, but not to the extent that I am smiling ear to ear. This one was an exception—definitely a three-star route.

The next day we decided to do the easy climbs below the lodge and then ski up to the base of the Wildcat Glacier to check out snow conditions in the alpine for our planned ski out to Bow Lake the next day. I broke another ski binding about 200 metres from the lodge. I turned around and walked back to the lodge after trying unsuccessfully to fix it. I was pretty bummed out, so decided to take a rest day while Brandon continued on to solo Wildcat Falls and an easy mixed route to its left, which he called House Cat.

After his climbs, he skied up to the toe of the Wildcat Glacier to take a look. Conditions on the glacier were good. The next day we skied the 25 kilometres to the highway over the Wapta Icefields. The mystery of the Wildcat Wall had been solved.

Summary

Three new routes on Wildcat Wall (GR 244287):
The Cat Came Back (WI4+, 55m)
FA: Brian Merry, Brandon Pullan, February 1, 2009.
Ginny's Corner (WI4+, 55m)
FA: Brian Merry, Brandon Pullan, February 2, 2009.
Mistaya Pillar (WI5+, 55m)
FA: Brian Merry, Brandon Pullan, February 2, 2009.

Two new routes at Wildcat Falls (GR 252277):
Wildcat Falls (WI2, 60m)
FA: Brandon Pullan, February 3, 2009.
House Cat (WI3 5.5, 60m)
FA: Brandon Pullan, February 3, 2009.

Wildcat Wall: (1) Mistaya Pillar. (2) Ginny's Corner. (3) The Cat Came Back. Photo: Brian Merry

Pierre Raymond leading the mixed traverse (crux) on La Promenade du Bedeau, Vallée du Lac Cardinal. Photo: Dany Lévesque

The East

Saguenay Mixed

Pierre Raymond

In the late 1990s, modern mixed climbing at Pont-Rouge near Québec City changed the way we viewed our playground for good. Now well trained for this type of terrain, Quebecois climbers are seeking different objectives; imagining lines that were left untouched by previous generations of climbers. As a result, new routes are being done all across the province from the seaside cliff shores of Gaspésie to the more remote and serious locations in Côte-Nord and the Charlevoix area. We are forced to admit that Québec has infinite mixed climbing potential. We have lots of dirty, wet cliffs loaded with mossy cracks and cold winters—all the ingredients to produce awesome climbs.

The Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region, well known for its rock climbing and its famous Cap Trinité, has been neglected due to its remoteness and lack of active climbers. In 1999, Yves Larouche put up the first bolted sport-mixed climb of the area—Cicatrice (M8), a technical line with barely any ice thus requiring extensive drytooling—at Cap St-François in Chicoutimi. In January 2001, locals Charles Munger and Dany Lévesque added two more pitches to L'Empire Contre-Attaque (WI4+, Raymond-Gélinas, 1997) to create La Trilogie (III WI5 M6+, 180m), a beautiful climb facing the sun near the village of Petit-Saguenay.

In February 2004, while on a trip with partner Yves Larouche and Mathieu Bollulo, we found a wicked line formed left of Les Piliers du Temple (III WI5, 80m, Lacelle, 1994) in Parc du Saguenay near Rivière-Éternité and opened Honey! Make It Shine! (III WI6, 80m), perhaps one of the steeper pure-ice pitches in the area.

In the winter of 2007, I re-visited an area we used to frequent with other Saguenay ice climbers back in the mid 1990s along Highway 172. Many new ice routes have been done since then in the Vallée de la Rivière-Sainte-Marguerite between Sainte-Rose-du-Nord and Sacré-Coeur. The place was even becoming a favourite among locals and visitors due to its short approaches and moderate climbing. Most of the established routes were pure ice climbs between 45 and 200 metres high. The mixed lines were still untouched.

That day, on our way to an ice climb further east, we drove by a shit-in-your-pants looking line just east of a classic ice route on an impressive 300-metre north-facing wall high above the valley floor. We stopped, pulled over and stepped out of the car to look at it. Speechless, it looked dramatic and improbable. I could not stop dreaming about it so we made plans for an attempt.

From our belay station, the next pitch looks tough—and dangerous. Brittle, thin and dead vertical, it is. I watch my longtime partner Yves hand drilling the first of three bolts. I'm nervous yet excited because I know that once he is finished then one of us is going to have to try to send. With the bolt clipped, he traverses back down the slanting ledge to my anchor for a deserved rest. "Go check it out from the bolt, Pete," he offers.

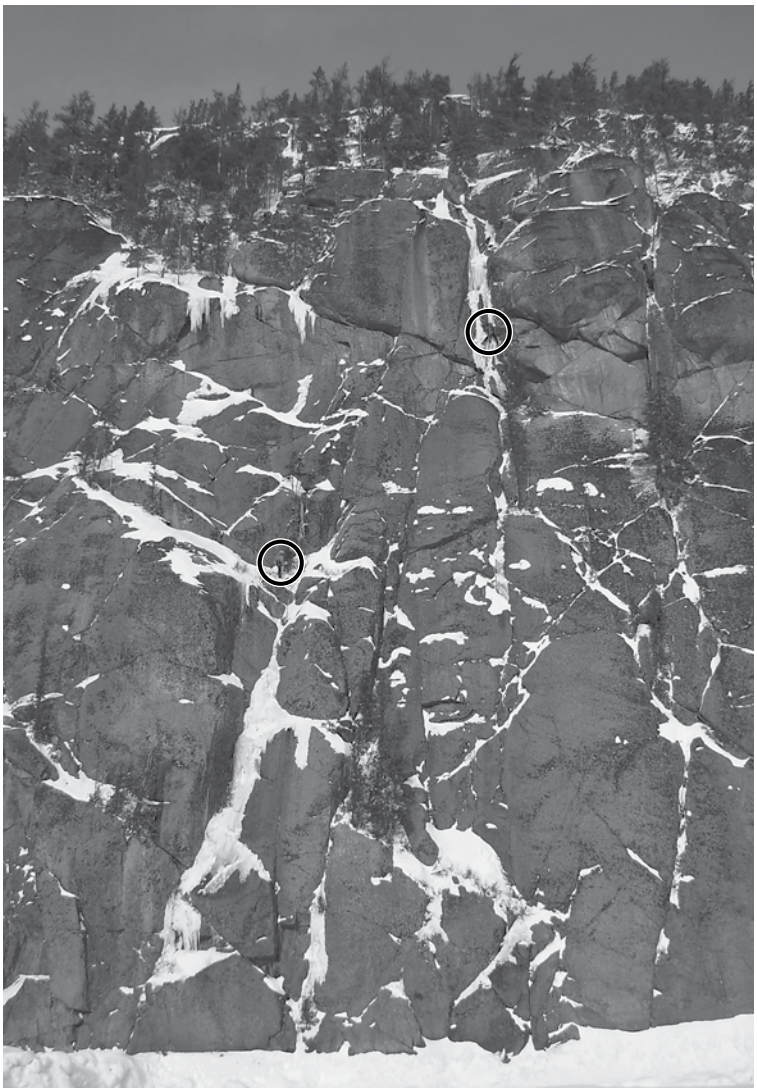
I learned a long time ago that various perspectives often only trick one into misjudging difficulty. Scoping a pitch from different angles helps most of the time, but it rarely tells how hard it is going to be. If I can clear my mind and imagine myself finding my way up then I should at least give it a try. I clip my leashes on, which serves as an intimidation indicator.

Like a boxer's ritual before the bell is sounded, I try to look fiercely into my opponent's eyes. Most of the time you can tell right then and there who the champ will be by who dominates the stare-down. It is no doubt going to be a Battle Royale, pushing to near my limit and maybe beyond. The first round begins and I am left with two options: surrender now or commit to unprotectable, cruxy climbing. I commit and search for gear, but the route makes smart use of my inattention by serving me an upper cut—the seams are shallow and will not even accept a #1 TCU. Willing to endure, I counter with my best jab by precisely planting my right tool in four centimetres of frozen moss. I slam a Spectre into the moss and clip it with a Screamer.

A bit higher I continue chipping away the thin ice to examine the rock beneath for cracks. This proves to be a smart combat tactic as I uncover a spot for a decent yellow Alien. I can't tell whether it will hold a fall because half the cams are against verglass. I also sling a 15-centimetre icicle out left under my coach's advice; his encouragement drifts up from the belay. Even though I am risking a 15-metre fall—ripping all the protection on the pitch down to the bolt that is level with the belay—I relish the situation and feel confident in my abilities to pull it off.

I enter a narrow V-shaped rock groove. The left wall is coated with two-centimetre-thick ice that allows some trustworthy pick placements. Better yet, I place my first reliable cam of the pitch. And perfect timing too, since a

one-metre roof blocks progress. The roof is split with a perfect crack for an equally perfect #.75 Camalot. With bomber gear, I serve up a powerful combination of punches. Tools securely torqued, I pull hard to get re-established above the roof to face my opponent's final blow: a thin traverse to a very thin ice curtain. Stunned and slightly punch drunk, I execute an out-of-balance-hold-my-breath-out-of-control-barn-door-hurry-up-cross-right-leg-over-to-re-stabilize-centre-of-gravity-while-swinging-my-right-tool-into-the-curtain series of moves. I manage, to my disbelief, a TKO. The bell rings, ending the match, and I belay my coach up. Homoland (III WI 6+R A0 M7, 220m) is defeated and we are crowned the victors.



Yves Larouche (leading) and Pierre Raymond on pitch two of Think Big Osti!, François-Xavier-Garneau Cliff, Baie des Ha! Ha! Photo: Yves Gauthier

Over the past two winters, I felt the urge to keep searching for more new lines in different locations. It was an easy task. In fact, I had in mind a few beautiful cliffs with interesting features that looked like they would be worth having a closer look at. In February 2008, partner Yves Larouche and I turned our attention toward the ice fishing village of L'Anse-à-Benjamin and its nearby impressive, sunny walls in the Baie des Ha! Ha! On the François-Xavier-Garneau Cliff, we climbed a steep mixed line on good granite left of the rock route Dièdre en Cèdre to produce Think Big Osti! (III M6, 75m).

This past winter, still eager to cover new ground, my first project was to link the ice routes L'Évêque (III WI4+, 90m, Raymond-Tremblay, 2000) into L'Archévêque (III WI5, 90m, Martin-Tremblay, 1999) by a right-to-left mixed traverse at mid-height in order to bypass the first pitch of L'Archévêque, which is often thin, delaminated and unprotectable. This would give access to its classic second pitch. The traverse, La Promenade du Bedeau (III WI4+ M5), which I climbed with Dany Lévesque, was mostly dry and necessitated both gloved hands and ice tools for progression. Located near the village of Petit-Saguenay in a beautiful setting, this unique valley has tremendous prospects for new rock and mixed lines, and is basically untouched.

I am also impressed by the beauty of Lac Ha! Ha! near Ville de La Baie. Perched high on the cliff shore with a southern exposure, the ambiance is unique and reminds me of Lake Willoughby in Vermont. While climbing Exil (III WI4, 100m, Girard-Élément-Plamondon, 1999) in 2007, I became familiar with the unrealized new route possibilities. After our climb, I saw a steep right-facing corner hiding a smear of ice. I was convinced that I had discovered a classic natural line, but it remained on my project list, and unclimbed, until February 2009. I finally returned to it this winter with Dany. We found sustained thin ice climbing on a disconnected and narrow vein with drytooling cruxes. Terre Natale (III M6+, 60m)—the name we gave our creation—would become a three-star route if it were closer to a populated area like Montreal. It beats my all-time favourites—such as Gringalet (III WI4, 120m, Denis-Roy, 1977) on Mont Pinacle in the Estrie region and Fantasma (II WI4+, 60m, Mailhot-Pibarot-Ross, 1993) on Mont Grand Morne in the Chaudière-Appalaches region—for the overall quality of climbing and points to the unlimited traditional mixed potential of Quebec's craggy hills.

Summary

Homoland (III WI 6+R A0 M7, 220m), Vallée de la Rivière Ste-Marguerite, Québec. FA: Yves Larouche, Pierre Raymond, January 2007.

Think Big Osti! (III M6, 75m), François-Xavier-Garneau Cliff, Baie des Ha! Ha!, Québec. FA: Yves Larouche, Pierre Raymond, February 2008.

La Promenade du Bedeau (III WI4+ M5, 150m), Vallée du Lac Cardinal, Québec. FA: Dany Lévesque, Pierre Raymond, February 2009.

Terre Natale (III M6+, 60m), Lac Ha! Ha!, Québec. FA: Dany Lévesque, Pierre Raymond, February 2009.

Going Coastal

Chuck Sutton

The phone rings. It's Friday night. On the other end, a voice: "Hey man. It's Seb. High tide is 2:00 a.m. tomorrow. You wanna leave here around 5:30?" I thought living in the Maritime provinces would at least eliminate the need for alpine starts. Not so. Alpine starts are common in Nova Scotia—not, however, for avalanche hazard nor the need to cover long approaches to long routes. Coastal ice climbing in Nova Scotia demands climbing to accommodate the enormous tides of the Bay of Fundy.

Like Grand Manan and St. Martin's in New Brunswick, the north-facing coast of Nova Scotia is home to some of the best coastal ice climbing in the east. Routes on the coast range from five-metre dribbles of WI2 to 60-metre WI5 monoliths. In some areas, there are as many as six WI5s in a one-kilometre stretch of coast. The northern aspect coupled with high winds off the bay make for fat routes with interesting, wind-sculpted features. Gothic-looking daggers and gullwing-like fans overhang many of the lines much like Meduse on the Gaspe Peninsula.

At 5:30 a.m., I'm at Seb's. At 6:00 a.m., we're at Roger's. Roger was out the night before and enters the car smelling of whisky and perfume. His unpacked gear is distributed between a cardboard box and a plastic shopping bag. But we're used to Roger. This morning is not unlike others where we've retrieved him almost directly from the night before. At the very least, his stories will entertain us for the hour-long drive.

Little is known about early ice climbing in the province. Like many East Coast climbing areas, development was mostly by transient students and few details have been documented regarding first ascents. Names that local climbers do associate with early ice climbing include Clark and Chris Goble, who are believed to have done first ascents at Cape D'Or, Moose River and Halls Harbour. Others including Chris Eager, Scott Kerr, TJ Fogarty and Dave Reid supported further efforts to promote ice climbing in Nova Scotia. Today, there's a new breed of young climbers psyched to keep the scene alive. Mentored by seasoned climbers including Sean Cassidy, Sean Drohan and Peter McVey, these kids are trading crash pads for tools, V8s for WI5s.

The sun is just coming up as we pull onto the wharf in Hall's Harbour. To the west, we can see the ice is in—and it's fat. We pack our gear and to Roger's delight, he finds his pack at the bottom of the cardboard box. Although the rising sun has no true warming effect in these cold temperatures, hints of gold reflecting from the gunmetal-blue water create an atmosphere of warmth as we approach our first route.

Soon after, I'm 10 metres above the beach. The waves pulse with my heartbeat as I move steadily higher up the route. Despite being early February, the route continues to drip. I look for those merciful plastic placements as I swing my tools. Too much time and too many screws later, I top out and clip in. The wind and waves now have me giving my belayer a thumbs up as there's no way he can hear me a mere 50 metres below.

Climbing in the East is a distinctly different experience than in the West. Both approaches and routes are shorter. Beyond the tides, there's never a need to rush out early to ensure getting the route you're after. The only others you'll find are the gulls and the occasional seal. If by chance, you do come across other climbers, you'll know them (and maybe recover some of that gear they "borrowed" from you the last time you climbed together).

Ice climbing in the East has it own unique flavour. The relentless wind and the crashing waves add an element of exposure that only can be experienced on the coast. In addition, squeezing in as many routes as possible without leaving your belayer to the mercy of the rising tides adds to the adventure. It's hard to imagine any other climbing arena that offers these unique elements. If only we could enjoy this unique climbing without those torturous, pre-dawn alpine starts.

Summary

Winter Warfare (WI5, 45m), Hall's Harbour, Nova Scotia. FA: Dave Peabody, January 31, 2009.

Amphibious Operation (WI5, 35m), Hall's Harbour, Nova Scotia. FA: Dave Peabody, Chuck Sutton, February 1, 2009.

Some Assembly Required. Ice Sold Separately (WI4+, 35m), Hall's Harbour, Nova Scotia. FA: Dave Peabody, Chuck Sutton, February 1, 2009.

Idiosyncrasy (WI4, 25m), Canada Creek, Nova Scotia. FA: Sean Drohan, Sebastian Launcelott, February 20, 2009.

Scotch on the Rocks (WI4, 30m), Canada Creek, Nova Scotia. FA: Sean Drohan, Sebastian Launcelott, February 20, 2009.

Hall's Harbour. Photo: Chuck Sutton

The Harvest

Eli Simon

On september 5, I woke at 5 a.m. shivering in the V-berth of the small fishing vessel *Royal Oak*. Through the companionway I could see the outline of two men methodically loading bait onto the deck. George and Ron Fudge (uncle and nephew), the boat's Captain and First Mate respectively, would act as liaison officers throughout our time in Newfoundland. These kind men had agreed to taxi me and my climbing partner Peter Fasoldt to Cape La Hune Bay with the understanding that we wouldn't be dropped off until they set all 350 metres of line they had on deck. We were grateful for all their help and told them we would be awake when they boarded in the morning to at least witness, if not participate, in some North Atlantic commercial fishing.

Once I saw their outline and heard the 250-horsepower marine diesel turn over, I shut my eyes and returned to sleeping in my safe haven below deck. I didn't wake up or do any fishing until we turned north toward the gut of Cape La Hune Bay, about 40 kilometres west of Francois, Newfoundland. Francois, the village in which both George and Ron were born and raised, is a small fishing outpost of no more than 130 inhabitants. No road of any kind comes anywhere near it. To get there, one must first drive to Burgeo—the end of the road—and board a passenger ferry called *Marine Voyager,* then sail almost due east for four to six hours, depending on sea conditions. The people of Francois are, as one would imagine, about as real as it gets. Fishing cod was, is, and should be their way of life. However, in 1994, the government decreed a moratorium on fishing cod, slowing the fisheries to a halt. Now, 14 years later, it's one of the very few places on Canada's coast that allows cod fishing. Unfortunately, the cod population is so depleted by large-scale fishing ventures from overseas that they simply "ain't catching what they used to."

Despite the hardships they've endured, the people here remain the friendliest and most pleasant people I've come in contact with. George and Ron offer two classic examples of Newfie hard work and hospitality. George stands almost one full head taller than my five-feet ten-inches. Even at 61, with hip problems causing a pronounced limp in his left leg, he moves as efficiently as any other fisherman on Francois' wharf, except for Ron. Picture a wicked gritty Energizer Bunny with a thick accent and an even thicker mustache and you have some idea of Ron Fudge. This happy-go-lucky workhorse seemed to be fuelled by his curiosity toward us and our outrageous plans to climb these unexplored walls. Our opposing worlds came together on our voyages from bay to bay and it was there we saw glimpses into the Newfoundland way of life and some of the history of this rugged island.

Our plan was to climb in three different bays, moving from west to east. We would begin in Cape La Hune Bay, then head to Ron Contre West Bay (both of which were unexplored by climbers) and conclude our trip in Devil Bay where lies Blow-Me-Down, a 400-metre sea cliff which now hosts more than 20 routes.

The relentless swells of the Atlantic eased as we turned north into the protection of Cape La Hune Bay. This barren fjord runs for miles with granite walls on all sides. The sun had just risen as we stood on deck, jumping up and down, eyeing line after line of what looked to be immaculate granite running into the sea. We were like kids in a candy shop, staring up at the bay's steep sides, dying to get a taste of what lay ahead. George and Ron didn't quite understand our excitement and thought we were absolutely nuts as we examined every wall and hummed with excitement. We eyed a potential basecamp at the mouth of a stream in an area known by locals as Dead Man's Cove. *Royal Oak* steamed towards our new home as we readied our gear and *Delmar*, our 14-foot aluminum canoe that would be our only mode of travel after *Royal Oak* steamed away. We shuttled our gear to shore, arranged a pick-up time, thanked our new friends for their help, and watched as they headed off to check their fishing gear and return to their families in Francois.

We set up a basecamp a hundred metres from the beach and about a metre from a beautiful stream. It was now just *Delmar* and us. The landscape surrounding us was unparallel to anything I had ever seen. No sign of human life in all directions for as far as the eye could see. We were now hundreds of kilometres from the nearest road. We shared this land with caribou, moose and the elusive bunny.

As soon as our camp was established, we slid on our harnesses and headed to the closest feature: an unclimbed, unnamed, sweeping 250-metre-high wall just a stone's throw from our camp. The first 100 metres of the wall was a clean slab split in the middle by a single finger-to-hand crack. As we swapped leads on our first route, the rock quality began to deteriorate just as quickly as the weather. By the sixth pitch we were completely socked in by a thick wet fog, and the climb had changed from perfect granite to what Pete described as "kitty litter-y, run-out death gardening." At around 200 metres up, we stood behind a crumbling chimney, cold, wet and scared. This was day one and we were already in over our heads. We descended using sketchy terrain rappels with scary downclimbing. We arrived back on the ground amazed at how fast both our beautiful day and our climb had changed. Our first almost-route, Touch My Caribou, ended 50 metres from the top. It was our rough-and-tumble introduction to climbing virgin Newfoundland granite, but we kept a positive attitude and waited for our next weather window.

Unbeknownst to us, this inclement weather was the beginning of Hurricane

Hanna. After weathering out the storm for 28 hours in our little four-season tent, the skies began to clear. We peered our heads out of the vestibule, and for the first time we could see across the bay. Splitting the clouds was the Tote, a beautiful granite dome with a 100-metre southeast face. This was our next objective and we were ready to climb. We readied *Delmar* for her maiden voyage across the icy waters of Cape La Hune Bay. Two ropes, a double rack, foul weather gear and two crazy Mainers began yet another journey, with nervous anticipation in their wake. At first, the 1.5-kilometre-long crossing seemed feasible with good visibility and calm seas. But soon, Mother Nature decided to play a cruel joke on us. As we reached the middle of the bay, the wind picked up from the south, bringing with it a steady swell, a heavy fog and a light rain. Disoriented in the fog and without any navigational tools, the pucker factor increased, as did the speed of our paddle strokes in the direction that we hoped was west. After what felt like an eternity, we spotted the faint coastline ahead. With our heart rates returning to normal, we followed this desolate coastline until we found an ideal spot to set up our advanced camp. Once ashore we sat in the fog, wondering what this wall in the clouds would reveal.

A long night of high winds and heavy rain made the sunrise all the more welcome as it dried the miles of shimmering granite. In full foul-weather gear, we racked up and headed to the base of the southeast face. With our spotting scope we had eyed a potential route: a thin-hand crack splitting the tallest portion of the cliff. As we arrived at its base, this splitter crack turned out to be just a closed-out seam. With rain clouds on the horizon, we headed to the cliff's most defining feature—a right-leaning crack system splitting the cliff in half. Some easy 5th-class terrain led to a few long pitches of fun 5.9 crack climbing. As we approached the top of the cliff, we were once again socked in by heavy fog and it began to rain. Pete burled through the final corner system to the summit in a downpour. We descended in the clouds back to our wet camp—hungry, happy and drenched. Our route, Boat 'n' Tote, was on great rock with enjoyable climbing on the bay's most impressive feature.

The bad weather continued, so we spent our time as hunter/gatherers. We set a dozen rabbit snares, which we checked frequently enough to scare away all the rabbits. We attempted to catch lobsters with a spear (Pete got a crab), and even attempted to use homemade traps. At low tide, we gathered urchins and mussels for a maritime feast,

Pete Fasoldt and dinner with Touch My Caribou behind, Cape La Hune Bay. Photo: Eli Simon

Boat 'n' Tote on the southeast face of the Tote, Cape La Hune Bay. Photo: Eli Simon

and in the fields we gathered berries for our pancakes. This closeness to the land was a refreshing change from our life as guides in the bustling tourist town of Bar Harbor, Maine.

A week after our arrival in Cape La Hune Bay, we heard the light hum of a diesel engine, and soon we could see *Royal Oak* in the distance. We broke down our camp in a frenzy and ran our gear to the beach. Ron and George seemed happy to see us and had a million questions about our adventures. Moose hunting season was about to open so they were getting ready for adventures of their own. Our time in Cape La Hune Bay was amazing and we were excited to explore yet another new bay. Our plan was to head east to Ron Contre West Bay, where lies St. Albans, a 400-metre unclimbed sea cliff and the reason we wanted to climb in Newfoundland in the first place.

George steered *Royal Oak* under St. Albans, and we quickly discovered the rock quality to be as poor as petrified dinosaur crap. George and Ron could sense our disappointment, but hurried us to make a decision, for they had fishing to do. Should we attempt a route in Dinocrapville or should we head east to Blow-Me-Down? Ron interrupted our pouting by pointing out St. Elias, a 200-metre wall further down the fjord. They agreed to take us to the base of that wall for some reconnaissance. As we approached the cliff, we could already see superior rock quality and countless cracks systems. Smiles returned to our faces and we once again readied *Delmar* and our gear for our new home. We chose to set up camp a couple of hundred metres from the cliff's base where a beautiful stream met the ocean. Ron waved farewell as *Royal Oak* headed back out to sea. We were once again left in the solitude of this rugged coastline.

With clear skies, we racked up and headed towards the base. With potential lines everywhere, we were back in the candy shop. We picked a very aesthetic line and battled through the tuckamore to its base. Our route required extensive gardening and a few pendulums, but overall it was a fabulous five-pitches that ended with the first technical ascent of St. Elias. Delmar's Nose Job (5.10 A0, 130m) was the beginning of a very successful stint in Ron Contre West Bay. The days were spent putting up new routes on great rock, and in the evenings we caught brook trout from the stream at our camp. Over the next two days we put up three more routes on this immaculate wall: What's a Bunny, a three-pitch off-width chimney route on the northern flank of the cliff; Royal Oak, a 120-metre-long wide hand crack in a dihedral; and finally, the jewel of the cliff, Rose's Cantina (III 5.10 A1, 200m). This last route follows wide crack systems through the middle of the southeast face, the tallest aspect of the cliff.

After returning from Rose's Cantina, we contacted George with our satellite phone and requested a pick-up the following day. By mid-morning, we heard the now familiar hum of *Royal Oak* as it entered the bay. The once stressful task of shuttling our gear to the boat was now a well-practiced ritual filled with laughter and excitement. We

told George that we named a route after his boat and his contagious smile seemed to grow with pride.

Two bays down, one to go, we motored east to Devil Bay, where lies Blow-Me-Down (known to locals as Jabo). Upon our arrival, we established our basecamp and began to set up fixed lines across 200 metres of slab that would gain access to the main part of the cliff. The next day we climbed Central Pillar of Aestheticism (IV 5.10 A2), the cliff's first route, established in 1994 by New Englanders Jeff Butterfield, Joe Terravecchia and Chris Cane. This climb went smoothly but ended in typical Newfoundland fashion in a thick fog and driving rain. Well-versed in coastal weather, these conditions affected us not and we topped out without incident.

As we descended back to camp, we discussed what was next. Our plan was to attempt the unrepeated route Heart of the Matter (V 5.10 A3+), put up by Jeff Butterfield and Chris Cane. As we sat and looked at the cliff, we realized that there were many possibilities for new lines and that we had the experience and gear necessary for an attempt. After a day of rest and scoping our options we decided upon an unclimbed line instead. The route we chose followed the prominent right-arching roof system that runs the length of the cliff. This feature essentially splits the cliff in half. At dawn the next day, armed with three ropes, 28 bolts, six drill bits, a triple rack, a light aid rack, 15 runners, a double ledge, food and water, and our trusty foul weather gear, we started climbing.

The first four pitches followed discontinuous crack systems and corners linked by short sections of run-out slab. The climbing was of great quality and went free at 5.10. The top of the fourth pitch shares the two-bolt anchor that is the top of the fifth pitch of Central Pillar of Aestheticism. This anchor and the 10 metres of climbing above is the only non-independent part of our new route. From this anchor we could see our potential line following the right-arching roof system for 100 metres to its apex. It was there, under the protection of the roof, that we spent our first night on the wall. After wrestling with our ledge for a while in the dark we discovered it was time to wrestle with our food. We had

The south face of St. Elias, Ron Contre West Bay: (1) Wha-da Bunny. (2) Royal Oak. (3). Delmar's Nose Job. (4) Rose's Cantina.
Photo: Peter Fasoldt

forgotten a can opener and the majority of our food was in tins. As seasoned aid climbers we soon found an A5 Birdbeak to be the almost-perfect piece for the job. I fell asleep on our first night with the sounds of waves crashing beneath me, and smelling terribly of tuna juice and beef stew due to our faulty and improvised can opener.

As the sun rose the following day, we went back to work. Pete led the first block, but on his first pitch he injured his ankle when he hit a ledge on a swinging fall. He had to turn the lead over to me. The following pitches followed the roof to its apex where I hammered my way through an improbable seam—a 12-hour lead with minimal progress. On this block of leads, I drilled four of the route's six bolts, making for scary aid climbing and slow going. I pulled over the roof to find a protected corner and we set up the 'ledge for our second night on the wall. As soon as I was horizontal, I was asleep. We woke surrounded by a thick, penetrating fog. Pete wrapped his ankle and began what would be the final block to the summit. The last hundred metres of the climb followed steep, beautiful, wide cracks to nice belay stances. Jugging the final pitch, I saw we had core shots in both our lead line and haul line—scary to jug past, but even scarier to lead on. Just after noon, we arrived at the summit. With smiles the size of boomerangs, we stood together 400 metres above the sea, tired and sore, happy and proud.

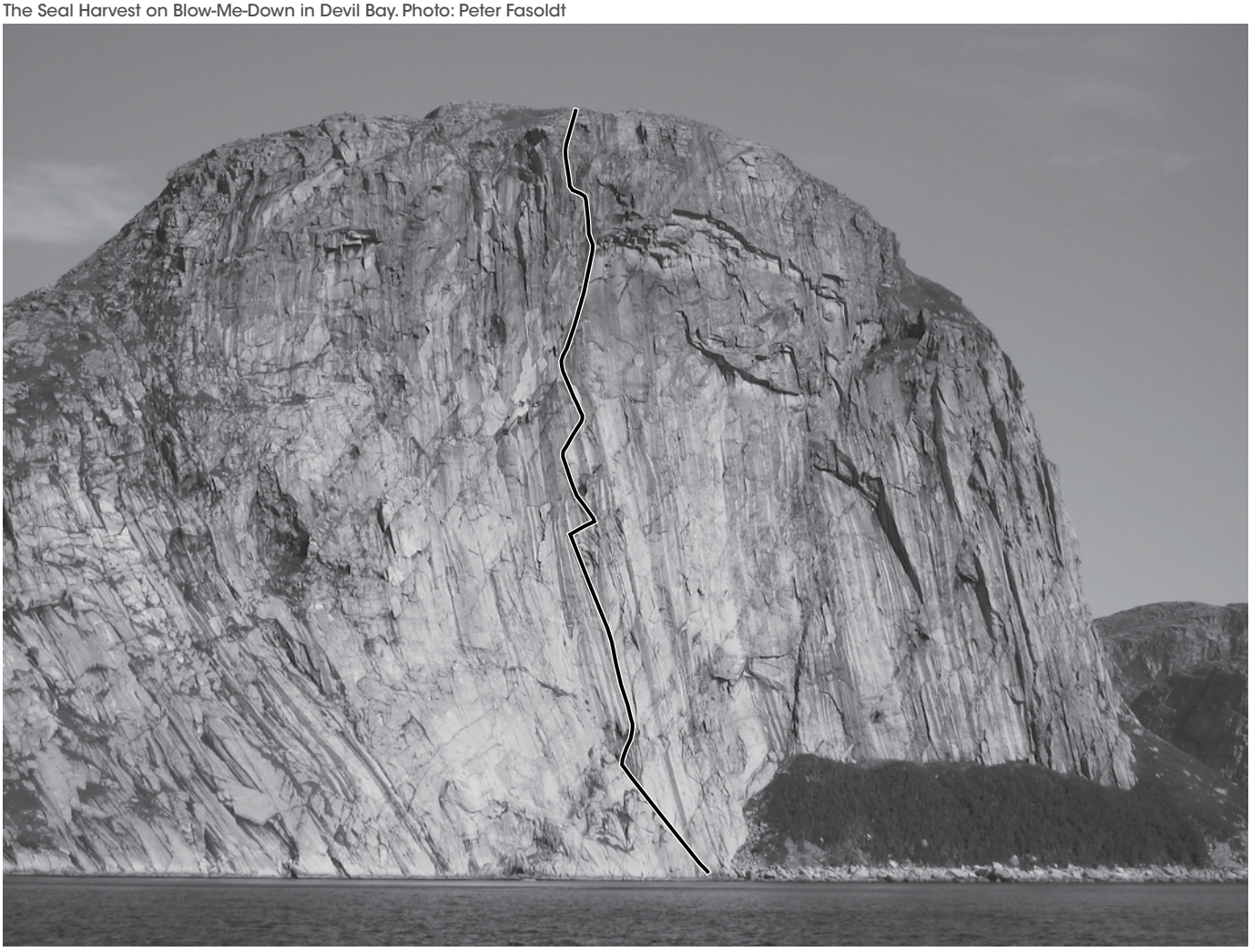
The Seal Harvest (V 5.10 A3) was an amazing route following the cliff's most defining feature. It hosts great free climbing as well as intricate aid. It not only put our technical skills to the test, but also our will and perseverance. After an easy descent and a full rest day at camp, *Royal Oak* steamed north into Devil Bay. It was time for us to go home.

The three and a half weeks we spent in Newfoundland was one of the most amazing trips of my life. The remote beauty of this forgotten coast was truly remarkable. The people we met were so hospitable, helpful and warm. They brought us into their homes and they taught us their history. Without their help we would have drowned with *Delmar* somewhere in the Atlantic.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank George and Ron Fudge, Kim Courtney and all the other wonderful people we met along the way. I would also like to thank the American Alpine Club and the Mountain Fellowship Fund for their support.

The Seal Harvest on Blow-Me-Down in Devil Bay. Photo: Peter Fasoldt



Summary

Touch My Caribou (5.9R, 270m), La Hune Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 5, 2008.
P1–3: 5.7, 150m. Climb the finger-to-hand crack that splits the sweeping slab.
P4: 5.8, 40m. Continue up the crack until it traverses hard right, then follow around the corner to a stance.
P5: 5.9R, 55m. Jam a vertical crack, then trend left via run-out face climbing to a ledge.
P6: 5.9, 25m. Move left along the ledge, then climb a ramp to a steep chimney on bad rock. Rappelled from a ledge at the top of the chimney due to rotten rock.

Boat 'n' Tote (5.9, 90m), the Tote, La Hune Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 8, 2008. Approached by traversing in from the left on 4th-class terrain.
P1: 5.9, 30m. Climb a wide crack to a stance.
P2: 5.9, 60m. Continue up the crack to a ledge just below the summit.
P3: 4th class. Easy scrambling to the top.

Delmar's Nose Job (5.10 A1, 140m), St. Elias, Ron Contre West Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 11, 2008.
P1: 5.8, 30m. Angle up and right into hand crack.
P2: 5.9 A1, 30m. Continue up the crack for 10 metres, then pendulum left into another crack system.
P3: 5.8, 20m. Follow a right-arching crack to a stance.
P4: 5.10 A1, 40m. Climb up a crack for five metres, then tension traverse right to a slabby stance. Ascend a vertical thin crack to a ledge.
P5: 5.6, 20m. Climb easy flakes to the summit.

Wha-da Bunny (5.8, 70m), St. Elias, Ron Contre West Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 12, 2008.
P1: 5.7, 20m. Climb the off-width to a ledge.
P2: 5.7, 35m. Climb chimneys with tricky gear to a large ledge.
P3: 5.8, 15m. Move right on the ledge to a steep hand crack that leads to the top.

Royal Oak (5.10, 100m), St. Elias, Ron Contre West Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 12, 2008.
Climb the obvious corner system splitting the cliff's south face.
P1: 5.10, 35m. Climb the wide corner system to a stance.
P2: 5.10, 45m. Continue up the corner to a grassy ledge.
P3: 5.9, 20m. Climb a steep hand crack on the right side of the face.

Rose's Cantina (III 5.10 A1, 170m), St. Elias, Ron Contre West Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 13, 2008.
P1: 5.9, 40m. Climb a dirty, vegetated corner.
P2: 5.9+, 30m. Squeeze up the chimney to where the crack thins and another begins to the left.
P3: 5.10 A1, 40m. Step left into a wide crack.
P4: 5.10 A1, 25m. Follow the crack up and right until gaining a horizontal crack. Traverse right until gaining a long left-leaning ramp that leads to a ledge.
P5: 5.9, 35m. Ascend a beautiful corner to a ledge and then up easy slab flakes to the summit.

The Seal Harvest (V 5.10 A3, 400m), Blow-Me-Down, Devil Bay. FA: Peter Fasoldt, Eli Simon, September 19–21, 2008.
Begins at sea level at the base of the rappels off the central ledge.
P1: 5.6, 50m. From the ocean, climb up an easy ramp to a stance.
P2: 5.6, 30m. Go up the slab trending rightwards to small cave.
P3: 5.10, 50m. Climb discontinuous slab cracks to the left-most left-facing corner.
P4: 5.10-, 50m. More discontinuous slab cracks gain the left-facing corner that leads to a ledge.
P5: 5.9, 55m. Follow the ledge up and right to left-leaning shallow cracks. The cracks lead left into a big cave. Exit the cave out left to a slab that is followed up and right to a two-bolt anchor. This is the top of Central Pillar of Aestheticism's fifth pitch.
P6: 5.10 A2, 30m. Join Central Pillar of Aestheticism past two bolts to a massive right-arching roof corner. Continue up the corner to an angled stance.
P7: A2, 30m. Move right under the roof to a bolt. Keep traversing right past another bolt to a small stance.
P8: A2, 20m. Step left into a corner; climb up and right of a small roof to a stance.
P9: A3, 30m. Climb up and right over a roof with thin gear to a bolt. Follow a seam to the apex of the huge roof. A thin, steep seam (micro nuts, Peckers and knifeblades) heads left over lip past a bolt to a stance.
P10: 5.10 A2, 50m. Climb up a wide corner on bad rock to a bolt. At the lip, work left into a widening crack that leads to a grassy piece of cliff. Move left to a large ledge.
P11: 5.10-, 30m. A few hard moves lead left to a shallow right-arching corner. Climb over a bulge to the summit.

Peter Fasoldt and Eli Simon (back) paddling *Delmar* across Cape La Hune Bay.
Photo: Peter Fasoldt

Pêche blanche au Cap Trinité

Louis-Philippe Ménard

« Pourquoi aimes-tu le camping d'hiver ? » Un journaliste du quotidien local interview Nicolae pour la rubrique de plein air du journal. Il répond maladroitement par des clichés : « Humm… contempler les paysages gelés magnifiques, coucher sur un matelas de neige… » *Certainement pas se lever à l'aube à -30*, pense-t-il. Il réalise qu'il n'est peut-être pas la bonne personne à qui poser la question. Nicolae Balan, roumain d'origine, est un partenaire d'escalade par excellence. Il a toujours le sourire aux lèvres, est un grimpeur hors pair, est motivé par les projets de grimpe improbables et, surtout, aime le Nutella ! J'étais donc complètement excité lorsqu'il a accepté mon invitation à faire une petite virée au Saguenay, cet hiver, pour tenter une première ascension hivernale du Cap Trinité, en libre. En vérité, Nic ne fait du camping d'hiver que par obligation !

Le « Cap », grâce à son site particulier, son granit orangé majoritairement surplombant et ses multiples toits, a joué un rôle important dans l'histoire de l'escalade au Québec. Je ne saurais dire si c'est du fait de l'ampleur de la paroi (au plus haut un peu plus de 300 mètres) ou de sa position privilégiée devant l'immensité du fjord, mais une chose est sûre, l'approche a certainement contribué à sa notoriété ! Puisque la falaise se jette abruptement dans les eaux profondes du Saguenay, on peut atteindre la base du Cap à pied par le sentier qui le contourne et passe par son sommet. Mais si on prévoit de rester plus d'une journée (et porter un sac lourd), cette option est déconseillée et il vaudrait mieux passer par le fjord. Personnellement, j'aime bien l'approche en canot. L'expérience d'être sur l'eau et de pagayer, plutôt que de marcher, le calme de l'endroit et le paysage vaste aux reliefs drastiques, me font rapidement décrocher de quelque préoccupation que ce soit.

Nicolae Balan on the last pitch of L'Allemand gelé on Cap Trinité. Photo: Louis-Philippe Ménard

Peu importe l'approche choisie, grimper au Cap, bien que faisable, est rarement l'histoire d'une journée. Et comme sur beaucoup d'autres falaises au Québec, les lignes de faiblesse qu'offre la roche ne sont pas toujours continues — et nécessairement propres ! En plus, la verticalité et les nombreux surplombs rendent l'escalade de la paroi assez difficile, mais combien intéressante pour le grimpeur ! On y retrouve donc majoritairement des voies d'escalade artificielle, mais ceci tend à changer depuis les dernières années. En hiver, le mur est malheureusement dépourvu de glace, ce qui explique en partie le peu de tentatives hivernales (l'autre facteur étant bien sûr les froids extrêmes des hivers au Saguenay).

Après une année léthargique remplie de blessures et de travail, ce qui m'a empêché de grimper, je planifie enfin avec Nic quelques jours de congé pour aller voir le manteau d'hiver du Cap et explorer allègrement le fjord gelé à ski. Avec la révolution (l'évolution !) de l'escalade mixte et mon engouement pour ce style, l'idée de grimper le Cap Trinité en hiver et tout en libre me reste accrochée dans la tête. Ma dernière visite à l'automne précédent m'a laissé un goût plutôt amer. Une énorme roche m'est tombée directement sur le mollet et m'a condamné aux béquilles pour la troisième fois cette année-là ! Il faut donc que je renoue avec cet endroit où j'apprécie tant être.

Nous faisons rapidement à ski les neuf kilomètres séparant le village de Baie-Éternité et le Cap, et bientôt apercevons sa silhouette définie, qui contraste avec le fjord gelé, complètement blanc. Je me croirais presque sur un vrai glacier. La comparaison à l'environnement d'une vraie montagne est plutôt facile à faire. Des reliefs hauts et raides emprisonnent un long chemin blanc et plat. La rencontre des eaux gelées à la base des parois clôturant le fjord de toute part, rappelle les paysages de montagne. En plus, le chaos de glace brisée que provoque la marée toujours bien active en hiver crée une barrière naturelle, telle une énorme rimaye, et son passage est tout aussi excitant. Et que dire du bruit sourd que provoque l'affaissement des glaces sous une marée descendante — comme un glacier en mouvement !

Malgré les cordes de mon traîneau se tendant derrière moi à chaque glisse, je presse un peu la cadence. Je suis impatient de vérifier s'il y a aussi peu de glace qu'on le dit sur le Cap en hiver. En été, on jurerait qu'il y a certainement des filets de glace qui devraient apparaître, le froid venu, dans plusieurs fissures évidentes souvent mouillées. Les skis glissent, la neige crisse, la silhouette du Cap apparaît enfin, mais nous nous rendons

vite à l'évidence que le mur n'offre pas autant de glace qu'on aimerait. Mis à part quelques plaques de glace formées bien bas, le mur est plutôt sec ! On fait le va-et-vient le long du mur et de ses voisins et, optimistes, on décide de grimper une succession de minces filets de glace encaissés à la gauche du Cap, dès le lendemain.

Ça passe, et aussitôt redescendus, on cherche inlassablement une ligne possible sur le mur principal qu'est le Cap proprement dit. « Ce dièdre-là, ça devrait passer », « Hmmm, ouais, mais ça ressemble à 30 mètres de glace en 3 et 300 mètres de dry-tooling », sont pas mal les mots que nous échangeons en évaluant chacune de nos possibilités. Un peu hésitants, après avoir débattu quelle ligne devrait subir notre insatiable tempo de dry-tooling, on remarque une lame de glace qui surplombe La voie de l'Allemand — la première voie ouverte sur le Cap Trinité, en 1965. (En 1964, une cordée québécoise fait une tentative qui se termine à 50 mètres du sommet. L'année suivante, une cordée allemande dirigée par Dieter Cowkroski vole la première en utilisant le matériel laissé en place.) Cette lame menant directement au sommet est évidente, mais les 200 premiers mètres pour s'y rendre le sont beaucoup moins. Avec la grande motivation qu'on peut avoir quand on va grimper avec un ami comme Nicolae, tout est pourtant possible !

Inspirés, on trace notre passage dans la verticalité du mur en suivant les faiblesses naturelles de la paroi — d'abord sur le rocher, difficile à lire, puis suivant quelques rampes de neige, plus évidentes. Avec chaque longueur, ma curiosité et mon excitation s'intensifient. Je me demande de plus en plus si la glace aperçue la veille sera assez solide pour être grimpée. Après avoir pris la relève en tête, Nicolae fait une avant-dernière longueur qui nous mène directement sous cette glace ; elle semble finalement plutôt mince. Aussitôt au relais, je jette un regard perplexe sur ce qui suit. À première vue, la glace ne se rend pas assez bas pour qu'on puisse la rejoindre et elle semble plutôt délaminée. J'échange tout de même rapidement le matériel avec Nic et prends la relève en tête, impatient de voir la glace de plus près. Mais une fois arrivé à sa base, je doute franchement de pouvoir aller plus loin.

Au loin, en plein milieu de la rivière Saguenay gelée, le brise-glace de la Garde côtière trace à vive allure le chenal permettant aux navires de transport de se rendre jusqu'à Chicoutimi. Un point noir tout près, sur la Baie Éternité, marque notre minuscule camp de base. Alors que le navire est obligé d'ouvrir le chemin à cause du gel et du surplus de glace, je me retrouve par contre face à un mince coulis d'eau glacée à moitié collé sur un mur lisse. Inspiré par cette énorme masse d'acier semblant surfer sur l'épais manteau de glace, je décide de tester mon poids suspendu sur mes lames de piolet en traversant le verglas d'à peine quelques millimètres d'épaisseur. Une fois lancé, cependant, je ne pense plus à rien et grimpe silencieusement une trentaine de mètres avant de trouver une place pour mettre ma première bonne vis (et même une deuxième !).

Je ne devrais pas continuer, mais si près du but, je ne peux plus redescendre, c'ést trop beau ! Et puisque dans la vie il n'y a que deux drogues — le danger et la beauté —, les deux étant réunis, je dois y aller. Durant ces moments, on peut se sentir tout à fait léger. Au sommet, nous ne sommes pas loin des Joyeux lurons (5.11+, 250m ; une voie tout en libre se situant juste à gauche de La voie de l'Allemand), et effectivement nous en sommes deux ! Nous avons réussi à passer en suivant la faiblesse naturelle, entrecoupée de deux longueurs de rocher et une longueur de glace magnifique. La voie de Cowkroski, l'hiver, devient L'Allemand gelé.

Summary

Mince à vie (M5 WI4, 270m, Côté-Lareau, 1999), Cap Trinité, Québec. Nicolae Balan, Louis-Philippe Ménard, March 14, 2009.

L'Allemand gelé (M6 WI6 5.8, 250m), Cap Trinité, Québec. FWA of La voie de l'Allemand: Nicolae Balan, Louis-Philippe Ménard, March 15, 2009.

L'Allemand gelé on Cap Trinité, Québec. Photo: Louis-Philippe Ménard

By Boat and By Boot

Stephen P. Loutrel

Exploring the summit of a remote 5,000-plus-foot Torngat peak in light snow on August 8, 2005, I led a short, exposed pitch above a steep snowfield and made my way to the top. I felt a sweet sense of elation, satisfaction and relief. It was late in the day, blowing hard, wet and cold. The footing was loose, icy talus. A small injury, a twisted ankle for example, could mean disaster. For the last hour or two, I had been considering whether the risks were too high to continue our ascent. Accompanying me were Keith Baker and Eric Whitney, two of my son's friends. We were hours from camp; now was the time to retreat.

This was the final summit, almost certainly a first ascent, on the list of 5,000-foot peaks in Labrador. A 63-year-old peak-bagger, I had been determined to push to the summit as long as it made sense, in spite of the previous stormy, sleepless night and the day's continuous precipitation. In my mind, it was the end of a 32-year journey.

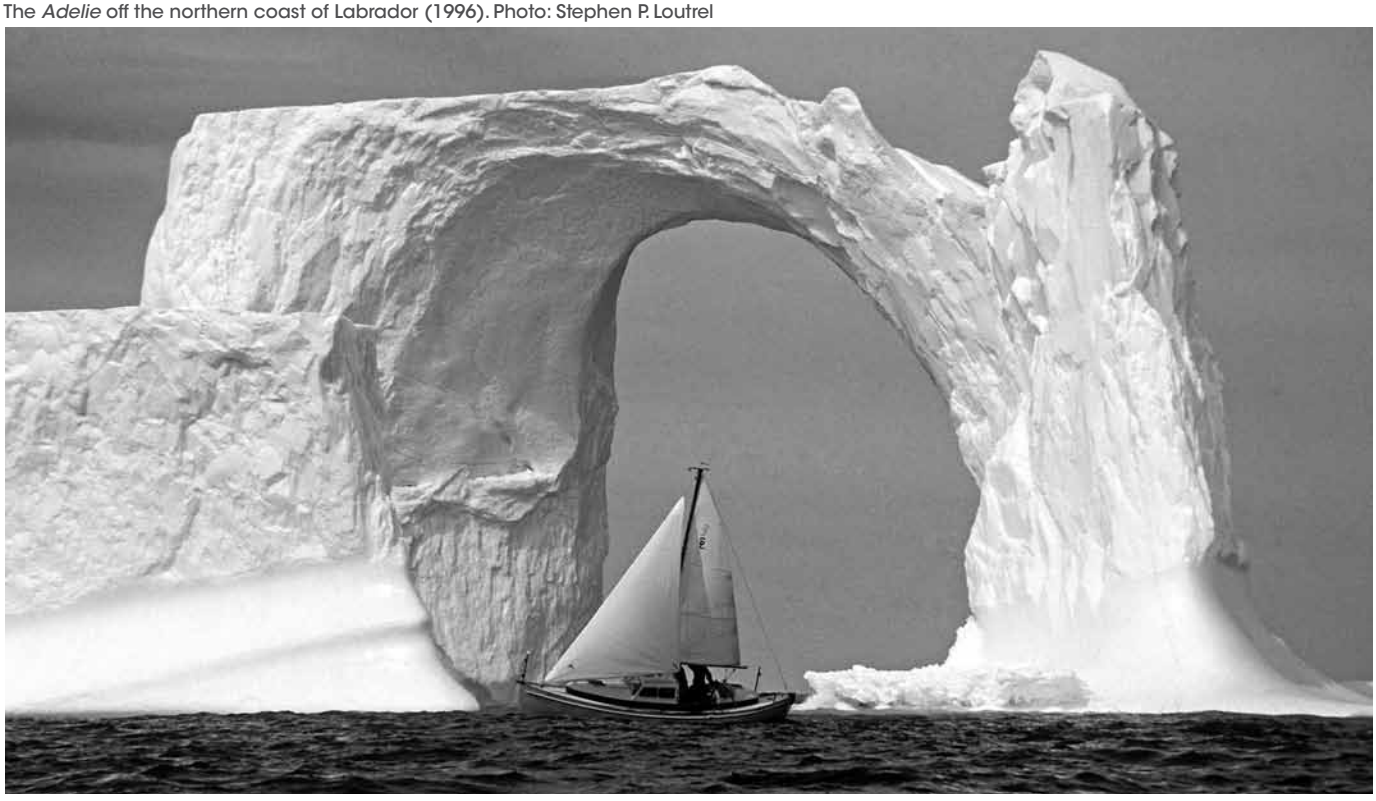
My pursuit of Labrador peaks began in August 1973. Stopped by a steep, deep, crumbly cleft (later named the "Korok Step") on the narrow crest on our way up the southwest ridge of Mount Caubvick (known as Mont d'Iberville in Quebec, with which it shares geography) on August 3, I had watched my friends Christopher Goetze and Michael Adler work their way across the snow-dappled, saw-toothed Minaret Ridge from the east in the late afternoon to stand on the summit, completing the first-known ascent of the highest peak in Labrador and Quebec. Disappointed not to be with them on the summit and smitten by the beauty of the land, I decided I would return to climb this peak and explore this majestic region.

Six of us, including my wife Lizzie, had arrived in Nain, Labrador, from the USA in July 1973, with three Klepper folding kayaks and supplies for four weeks. We had studied and trained for this trip all spring, inspired to a large degree by Alexander Forbes' book *Northernmost Labrador Mapped from the Air* (1938). Originally our plan was to cross Labrador, from Nachvak Fiord to Ungava Bay, using the Korok River. We had found strong winds while paddling north and were concerned about the long distances ahead without adequate shelter between Saglek and Nachvak.

Modifying our plan to depart for Ungava from Saglek instead of Nachvak, we dismantled and stashed the kayaks in a cache in North Arm of Saglek Fiord. We started the first trip of the two-trip portage with only the food and hiking portion of our gear in case the Korok River was unnavigable. We found the river to be a wide bed of boulders with a small flow between them for as far as we could see, so we changed our plans again—to climb in the Torngat Mountains.

We climbed a 1,459-metre mountain (4,786 feet, GR 449040, 14 L/12) to consider our route, and then we all

The *Adelie* off the northern coast of Labrador (1996). Photo: Stephen P. Loutrel



Mount Caubvick, the highest peak in the Torngats, from the southwest with the Minaret Ridge on the right (1973). Photo: Stephen P. Loutrel

headed northward to climb the enticing snowy peaks we had seen. (For an account of the first ascent of Mount Caubvick, see Goetze, Christopher, "Sketches of an Arctic Trip", *Appalachia*, June 1974.) Our group of six divided into two groups of three to attempt the ascent of Mount Caubvick by two routes simultaneously. My group approached the southwest ridge, which we thought would be easier. The other group, with the strongest climbers, approached Mount Caubvick from the southeast, putting them in position to climb Cirque and Cladonia as well.

In 1975, my wife Lizzie and I, with various crews, returned to Labrador, sailing our 12-metre-long Concordia yawl *Lacerta* from Manchester, Massachusetts, to Cape Chidley, encountering significant pack ice on the way. With our crew of Virginia and Mike Adler and Warren Hofstra, we anchored in Tallek Arm, planning to climb the unnamed peak shown as 5,232 feet (1,595 metres) on our topographic map, later named Mount Torngasoak. Setting out early under clearing skies on July 19, we followed the prominent gully on the east side of Tallek Arm. We passed a pond at about 600 metres and continued southeast up the ravine to a saddle, then northeast up the ridge to a false summit with views down to our boat at anchor. Following the ridge, we reached the summit, with sheer drops on two sides and startling, clear views in all directions, including icebergs out at sea. As far as we have been able to determine, this was the first ascent of Mount Torngasoak. We descended via the same route and enjoyed boot glissades down the extensive snowfields in the ravine (see Adler, Michael, "Mt. Goetze", *CAJ*, vol. 63, 1980).

Our next climbing effort was Mounts Innuit, South Innuit and Packard, which we climbed from an anchorage in Tasiuyak Arm on July 21, 1975. Again, we had mild weather. On our ascent we detoured to the north of Innuit for a view into narrow Chasm Lake. The views from the rounded summit of Innuit included Mount Torngasoak, Mount Caubvick and west to Ungava Bay, with pack ice in the blue water. Our climb south to Packard included two deep dips and an impressive section of not-difficult knife-edge ridge. We returned via Mount Innuit and then, tentatively at first, glissaded about 500 metres down a snowfield on our way back to the boat.

In 1973, we had felt our kayaks were too risky for travelling along the seacoast, and in 1975 we had spent three months sailing to and from Labrador, often leaving our sailboat in tenuous anchorages for extended periods of time while hiking. Using my mechanical engineering and naval architecture training, I started to design and build a special-purpose boat for extended expeditions on rugged coastlines. Finally in 1983, now with two children to help, I launched the new boat, *Adelie*, a nine-metre motor-sailer that we could trailer over highways to launch in Labrador and that we could secure on a beach for multi-day hikes ashore. I started to plan our return to Labrador.

In 1990, after a few years of testing *Adelie* on Newfoundland's southwest coast and south of Cape Harrison in Labrador, I returned to Nachvak Fiord on *Adelie* with a plan to climb Mount Caubvick. The crew included my wife, Lizzie; my 10-year-old son, Daniel; and my cousin Christopher Mumford. In Ivitak Cove, we cranked *Adelie* on her removable wheels up on the shore, where we left her, and started up the McCormick River valley for a seven-day hike. On the second night we reached a broad rocky height of land, with Mount Caubvick to our west.

In contrast to 1973, on August 4, 1990, the Minaret Ridge of Mount Caubvick was sunny and dry when Chris and I reached it carrying a superlight 60-metre climbing rope, slings and nuts. Lizzie and Dan accompanied us to the beginning of the Minaret Ridge, and then we climbed cautiously to the summit, finding a somewhat easy technical route with heart-gripping exposure, staying on the southwest side of the jagged ridgeline until the final pitch. From there we went to the north side of the ridge and had one thin move with a thousand metres of exposure to the glacier below. This was a proud moment for me, and we had calm, pleasant weather to enjoy the summit views. The following day, Chris and I climbed Mount Cirque from our high camp, and on the next day we moved our camp to the side of a lake for all of us to climb Mount Cladonia from the south on August 7.

The next chance I had to climb a 5,000-foot peak in Labrador was in 1996 when my son Dan and I, with his friend Adam Seamans, returned on *Adelie* to Nachvak Fiord after reaching Cape Chidley. We wanted to climb Peak 5100 (1,545 metres, GR 398324,

24 I/16). This time, on August 7, we landed *Adelie* on the river delta on the west shore of Tallek Arm. We started out hiking in T-shirts in hot weather, but the weather turned cold, cloudy and windy as we ascended. Rain started to fall, and eventually we reached a valley where we pitched the tent in 95-kilometre-per-hour gusts. The next day, in wind and cold rain, we climbed a steep, loose talus route between a snowfield to the northeast and a steep drop-off to the southwest to the summit. We had no views in the rain and clouds, and we built a summit cairn on Peak 5,100 before retracing our steps to the tent. We believe this was a first ascent.

In the following summer of 1997, Dan and I returned with another of Dan's friends, Jesse Poutasse, for more adventures in the Torngats. We landed *Adelie* in the exact spot in Tallek Arm where we had the previous summer, and this time, after a reconnaissance hike, we headed in to climb Peak 5074 (1,547 metres, GR 443295, 14L/13) on August 3. We set up a high camp and continued on August 4 over Peak 4900 (1,494 metres, GR 437315, 14 L/13). At times, we were in semi-white-out conditions on Peak 4900. From there, we continued south along the ridge, descended to a col and then finally climbed the summit of Peak 5074. The summit was marked by a cairn and snow covered. Under clearing skies, we had good views of Caubvick and the other peaks off the McCormick River valley to the east. We returned to *Adelie* that evening and gratefully enjoyed a rest day. The next day we climbed Mount Silene in stormy weather. During the week we were climbing from our base in Tallek Arm, about 30 centimetres of new snow accumulated on the summits. We were surprised and excited by this "summer" weather.

In 2000, we returned to Labrador. On the northern segment we were: Dan, his friend Sigrid Stanley and me. This year, one goal was to push as far north as possible. Along the way, we anchored in Seaplane Cove and climbed Mount Tetragona (1,356 metres/4,449 feet). We ran through McLelan Strait, a long-time temptation, explored Port Burwell and then proceeded north of Cape Chidley to explore the Button Islands and the Knight Islands, with barren, jagged, complex rock jumbles and six-metre tides in Davis Strait.

On our way north, we had stopped in Nachvak Fiord, hauling out in Ivitak Cove on July 26, and we started our hike up the McCormick River on July 28. On the second day, we set up a high camp at 1,065 metres in a hanging valley (GR 583301, 14 L/13) and then climbed Jens Haven (1,534 metres/5,032 feet) on the north side of the valley. Our route had a two-pitch technical section. On the third day, we climbed Mount Erhart (1,539 metres/5,049 feet) and Mount Erhart-East Peak (1,524+ metres/5,000+ feet) to the south. From these summits, we studied the ridge from Mount Erhart to North Caubvick as a possible route to climb North Caubvick. It looked very jagged, loose and extremely dangerous. On the fourth day, we hiked up to the saddle to the west and studied the possibility of crossing the glacier-filled valley to the west to reach the North Caubvick ridge, but we saw no reasonable route.

On the fifth day, we broke camp, hiked back down to the McCormick Valley and then north to the next hanging valley on the west, which we climbed, and then set up camp just below the first lake (518 metres, GR 589332, 14 L/13). On the sixth day, we continued west through the spectacular valley and then climbed onto the north ridge of North Caubvick. Ascending this ridge, we reached the summit of North Caubvick (1,554+ metres/5,100+ feet) at 12:30 p.m. On the seventh day, we broke camp and hiked back down to *Adelie* on the beach.

The last of my 5,000-foot peaks, finished in 2005, were as exciting as the others had been. The climbing crew was Keith Baker, Eric Whitney, Lizzie and I. Our first climb was from a beachhead west of the outlet of Nachvak Lake in Tasiuyak Arm of Nachvak Fiord. We crossed the outlet and headed eastward up the north side of the steep-walled valley. At the end of the day, we set up a camp on a long lake (N58.949, W64.069) and could see the route we would follow the next day up to an unnamed summit that we called Peak 5,000 (1,524 metres, N58.958, W64.095). Unfortunately, we had low clouds on the morning of August 3. We followed a ridge to the top, hoping the ceiling would lift to reveal the scenery around, and we lingered on the summit for two hours, exploring the area, hoping for views, to no avail. Since it was a first ascent, we built a cairn, left a message in a water bottle and took pictures in the fog.

For my final 5,000-foot peak, another unnamed summit (N59.103,

Unclimbed granite walls in the southwest arm of Saglek Fiord (2005). Photo: Stephen P. Loutrel

W64.173), we moved *Adelie* north to a location on the west side of Tasiuyak Arm. The approach to this peak involved some creativity; we decided to carry in our inflatable rubber dinghy to cross the outlet of Chasm Lake, and again we planned to spend two nights inland. Before leaving *Adelie*, we had an early-morning visit from a curious polar bear that left sandy paw prints on our railing. When we heard him and looked out the hatch, he was already walking away. We were extremely vigilant as we hiked along the shore and up the stream opposite Townley Head, following where the bear had gone.

The river crossing below Chasm Lake went well, and we secured the deflated dinghy under a pile of rocks for our return. Our route took us over snowfields in drizzle and fog on the north side of Peak 4900 (1,494 metres, N59.084, W64.160). We descended slightly to a lake (N59.117, W64.145) where we set up camp on wet gravel and hiked further in to see if the route we had planned afforded us access to the mountain. We could see through the clouds that our original plan to climb directly to the summit via a wide ravine and then the east ridge was too difficult. The ravine was steep and completely filled with possibly overhanging ice, with no obvious climbing routes on either side. The summit was invisible in the clouds, and the sky became dark and ominous.

The wind picked up after supper, and Eric wishfully secured the tent with a ring of rocks in gloomy, driving rain. We were weary from the long climb in to our camp, and we had a nearly sleepless night, with the tent frequently flattened on our faces by the gusts of wind. Lizzie commented that she guessed one advantage to having four in a three-man tent was that it was less likely to blow away. The morning was calmer. After studying the topographic map and what we could see above us in the low clouds, we decided to try a knife-edge ridge leading up from the north over a series of smaller peaks. I gave it a 50 per cent chance of success. Lizzie chose to rest at the tent in the drizzle, so three of us set off and had radio contact with her as we climbed.

The author on the summit of Mount Torngarsoak (1975). The ridge is unclimbed.
Photo: Elizabeth D. Loutrel

We started out to the northwest around the lake, turned south and climbed the ridge leading south, then southwest to a 4,700-foot (1,433-metre) summit, then southeast down and up to another 4,700-foot summit and then southwest down and up towards the final 5,000-foot (1,524-metre) summit. At times, visibility was 15 metres, and we had trouble finding the ridge continuation below some of the minor peaks. We stumbled on the slippery footing occasionally, but the route was straightforward until close to the summit where we had to cross the head of a snowfield on the knife-edge of the ridge and then climb a final six-metre pitch without belay. Cold and soggy, we reached the summit, and I had completed climbing the last of the known 5,000-footers in Labrador.

If we had carried in more food and had more time, we would have lingered at our campsite for ideal climbing conditions or climbing additional peaks in the area. But, this area has a reputation for stormy weather, so we decided it was time for us to start homeward. As we departed, we had fleeting views through the quickly changing clouds of the dramatic terrain around us.

Having completed the list of 5,000-footers, I continue exploring the wild beauty of the coast and fjords of Labrador. In 2008, we spent a week on a beach in Ryan's Bay and climbed a few of the peaks in the Four Peaks region. These peaks are very jagged and steep, but much of the rock is loose and dangerous for technical climbing. For possible new technical routes, Southwest Arm of Saglek Fiord, not far from the new Torngat Mountains National Park Reserve headquarters in St. John's Bay, presents interesting possibilities. I plan to continue exploring and climbing in Labrador—the beauty and excitement of this northern wilderness beckon.

Peak	Metres	Feet	UTM Grid Reference (NAD27)	Canadian NTS 1:50,000 Map	
Torngat Peaks					
Mount Caubvick	1,652	5,420	590274	14 L/13	
Mont D'Iberville	1,652	5,419	590274	14 L/13	
Torngarsoak Mountain	1,595	5,232	544339	14 L/13	
Cirque Mountain	1,402	5,144	676311	14 L/13	
Peak 5100	1,554+	5,100+	398324	24 I/16	
Mount Caubvik (North Peak)	1,554+	5,100+	584281	14 L/13	
Peak 5074	1,547	5,074	443295	14 L/13	
Mount Erhart	1,539	5,049	585292	14 L/13	
Jens Haven	1,531	5,023	575302	14 L/13	
Peak 5000	1,524+	5,000+	328519	24 P/1	
Peak 5000	1,524+	5,000+	370356	24 I/16	
Mount Erhart (East Peak)	1,524+	5,000+	593293	14 L/13	
Innuit Mountain	1,509	4,951	361468	24 P/1	
Peak 4900	1,494+	4,900+	437315	14 L/13	
South Innuit Mountain	1,494+	4,900+	357455	24 P/1	
Packard Mountain	1,478	4,849	354442	24 P/1	
Peak 4786	1,459	4,786	449040	14 L/12	
Mount Cladonia	1,453	4,766	664368	14 L/13	
Mount Silene	1,448	4,751	416381	24 I/16	
Peak 4600	1,402+	4,600+	425336	14 L/13	
Mount Tetragona (North Summit)	1,356	4,449	485750	14 M/5	
Mount Goetze	1,158+	3,800+	939086	14 L/11	
Peak 3790	1,155	3,790	471344	14 L/13	
Peak 3758	1,145	3,758	889864	14 L/11	
Peak 3600	1,097	3,600	402449	24 P/1	
Peak 3550 (Four Peaks group)	1,082	3,550	391983	24 P/9 & 14 M/12	
Peak 3000+ (Four Peaks group)	914+	3,000+	429036	24 P/9 & 14 M/12	
North Aulatsivik Island (South Peak)	884+	2,900+	388227	24 P/9 & 24 P/16	
Killiniq Island High Point	579	1,900	150980	25 A/7 E-E	
Mount Sir Donald	570	1,871	153851	25 A/7 E-E	
Kaumajet Peaks					
Brave Mountain	1,219+	4,000+	578156	14 E/16	
Finger Hill	1,006+	3,300+	524197	14 E/16	
Cod Island High Point	914+	3,000+	719104	14 F/13	
Kiglapait Peaks					
Man O'War Peak	1,050	3,445	809145	14 C/13	
Mount Thoresby	914+	3,000+	939094	14 C/14	

* denotes first recorded ascent of the peak was made by Stephen P. Loutrel
Note: Information is based on work by Greg Slayden and Richard Garland (www.peakbagger.com).

	First Recorded Ascent of Peak	Author's Ascent	Partners
	1973	August 4, 1990	Chris Mumford
	1973	August 4, 1990	Chris Mumford
	1975*	July 19, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Warren Hoffstra, Liz Loutrel
	1916	August 5, 1990	Chris Mumford
	1996*	August 8, 1996	Dan Loutrel, Adam Seamans
	1979	August 2, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	1979	August 4, 1997	Dan Loutrel, Jesse Poutasse
	1978	July 30, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	1978	July 29, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	2005*	August 8, 2005	Keith Baker, Eric Whitney
	2005*	August 3, 2005	Keith Baker, Liz Loutrel, Eric Whitney
	1978	July 30, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	1916	July 21, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Warren Hoffstra, Liz Loutrel
	1979	August 4, 1997	Dan Loutrel, Jesse Poutasse
	unknown	July 21, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Warren Hoffstra, Liz Loutrel
	1916	July 21, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Warren Hoffstra, Liz Loutrel
	1973*	July 30, 1973	Mike Adler, Chris Goetze, Brian Moore
	1915	August 7, 1990	Dan Loutrel, Liz Loutrel, Chris Mumford
	1916	August 6, 1997	Dan Loutrel, Jesse Poutasse
	1996*	August 9, 1996	Dan Loutrel, Adam Seamans
	1908	August 7, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	1975*	July 25, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Warren Hofstra
	1997*	August 2, 1997	Dan Loutrel, Jesse Poutasse
	1973*	July 25, 1973	Mike Adler, Chris Goetze, Liz Loutrel
	2005*	August 11, 2005	Keith Baker, Liz Loutrel, Eric Whitney
	2008*	July 21, 2008	Tudor Foote, Liz Loutrel
	2008*	July 25, 2008	Tudor Foote, Liz Loutrel
	1996*	August 4, 1996	Dan Loutrel, Adam Seamans
	unknown	August 2, 1966	Dan Loutrel, Adam Seamans
	unknown	July 16, 2008	Tudor Foote, Liz Loutrel
	1956	August 20, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Sigrid Stanley
	1958	August 16, 2005	Keith Baker, Eric Whitney
	unknown	August 15, 1990	Chris Mumford
	unknown	July 20, 2000	Dan Loutrel, Jesse Poutasse, Meggie Winchell
	unknown	July 31, 1975	Mike & Virginia Adler, Liz Loutrel

Foreign

The Isis Face

Eamonn Walsh

Mark westman and i arrived at Kahiltna International Airport (KIA) for our Alaskan sojourn on April 28, 2008. Our plan was the somewhat legendary Isis Face of Denali, which we had been talking about doing for the past three seasons. For a warm-up, we decided to acclimatize on the South Buttress of Denali. The South Buttress is a huge 19-kilometre-long high-level ridge. There is a lot of up and down but it's mostly walking along a broad snow ridge. Of interest, there are a couple of narrow sections with big drops on either side and several ice slopes, the biggest being the 300-metre Lotsa face. The first time Mark climbed Denali was via this beautiful ridge. In 1996, he and Joe Puryear, in a behemoth effort and in a style from which both have since evolved, spent 31 days climbing and descending. The first ascent of the South Buttress (done in 1954 by George Argus, Elton Thayer, Les Viereck and Morton Wood) gained the ridge much further along than where we would start.

On May 1, we gained a col at the base of Mount Francis' northeast ridge, which leads to the spine of the South Buttress. Snow walking, some rock scrambling and easy mixed terrain brought us to the base of a 150-metre, 30- to 40-degree snow and ice rib. Eventually the narrow lower ridge joined into the main body of Lisa's Peak where snow plodding and crevasse negotiations gained a camp a few hundred metres below Lisa's summit at 3,440 metres. It had taken us 6.5 hours to this point. During the day and into the night it snowed and our tent became a frozen, unpleasant place. We dug snow caves from that point on.

The next day we spent three hours slogging over Lisa's Peak, which had one section of scary wind slab with bad run-out consequences. Some broad ridge-walking ended when we had to downclimb 45-degree ice off the ridge to get around a yawning crack blocking our way. A traverse back into the ridge brought us to a small col at 1,100 metres where we dug a snow cave.

On May 3, we left the snow cave and its sagging roof—the result of it being built too thin, a rookie move on our part. The next section was some of the more interesting terrain on the entire route: 1.5 kilometres of ridge that stayed above 3,660 metres with fantastic views. There were two knife-edged sections—the first one was done by balancing on top, but the second one had to be negotiated by climbing the side on 50-degree ice—that deposited us at a vast col at 3,600 metres known as Margaret's Pass. One side leads down to the Ruth Gorge and was the original line of ascent. From this col, we traversed below Peak 13,050 in order to gain the pass that divides the East Kahiltna Glacier from the West Fork of the Ruth. It took us only 4.5 hours to reach the pass (3,800 metres), above which is one of the cruxes of the route, the Lotsa Face, appropriately named when Thayer and his team had to chop steps up this 300-metre sheet of ancient alpine ice…twice! We spent several hours digging a deluxe snow cave during which Mark frostbit his kneecap. It was definitely the first time I had seen that.

For two days we festered in our snow hole, passing the time as best we could, until we were fed up and decided to dash to near the top of the Isis Face. When we emerged from the cave we discovered it was a beautiful day. We quickly climbed the Lotsa Face and continued over more standard South Buttress terrain: broad snow plodding up, down and around until we found a flat spot at 4,590 metres. After depositing our cache for our Isis Face attempt, we returned to our snow cave having enjoyed an eight-hour outing. It felt good to cover lots of terrain without our large packs.

On May 7, we took seven hours to return to KIA. The South Buttress is a long, beautiful ridge that is technically easy but somewhat committing as there is no easy way off and hardly anyone climbs it anymore. For anyone looking for a moderate, but far more adventurous route to climb Denali compared to the over-run West Buttress, one need look no further.

The isis face has a reputation. It took Jack Tackle three tries before successfully making the first ascent in 1982. On his first attempt, Tackle's partner, Ken Curren, took a 70-metre whipper, breaking his femur. Tackle descended to his wounded partner who was slowly getting buried by spindrift avalanches. After digging him out, Tackle lowered Curren to their last snow cave then descended, skied out, flew out and organized a rescue team. He then led the team back to the snow cave where they lowered Curren down to the glacier and into a helicopter. On Tackle's third and successful ascent with Dave Stutzman, it took them eight days to climb the face during which Stutzman gashed himself whilst putting on his crampons earlier

Eamonn Walsh leaving the second bivy on the Isis Face of Denali. Mount Huntington is the pyramid-shaped peak in the upper right-hand corner. Photo: Mark Westman

Eamonn Walsh during the first ascent of Bacon and Eggs on the Mini-Mini Moonflower.
Photo: Mark Westman

on the climb. Soon after, the wound developed a staph infection. The second ascent was less epic, but still not a give-away; a team of four French climbers ascended the face over three days in May 2003, but had a crevasse incident on the descent mildly injuring one of the team members.

Our attempt came a week after three Japanese alpinists, dubbed the Giri-Giri Boys, made the third ascent of this Denali classic. However, this was only the start of their climb. After climbing the Isis they continued along the South Buttress, descended the Ramp Route to below the south face of Denali and then climbed the Slovak Route. We would be content with climbing the Isis and maybe continuing up the South Buttress to the summit.

May 17, Paul Roderick flew us in his radical Otter to below the north face of Huntington. Such is the position of this place that Paul never turns off his engine in case one of the many seracs looming high above was to release. Not soon enough, we trudged out of the danger zone and up towards the Isis. The start of the Isis is at 2,440 metres, but to begin, one must negotiate a convoluted tumbling glacier with huge crevasses, teetering towers of ice and deep snow. We started wallowing up this at 4:30 p.m., and after nearly 500 metres we surmounted the final bergshrund. Above, a couloir led to a wild hanging glacier that we climbed to, and then weaved out right then back left over ice ribs and deep snow. On top of this feature, we reached a large sloping area at 11:30 p.m. where we made our first camp at approximately 3,600 metres. It was a beautiful, clear evening with Huntington front and centre.

Around 10 a.m., the next day started. Above our camp there was a wild, contorted rib of huge mushrooms. We traversed out onto the left flank of the rib and followed seemingly endless 40- to 50-degree ice. This butted into the first rock band where the first and second ascents encountered 5.8 and some aid climbing. Mark had scoped this line many times from nearby peaks and had studied Washburn photos; he believed a more reasonable line existed to the right. Sure enough, we found an easy WI3 gully that was a sweet alternative to aid climbing. One of the best pitches was just below the top of the rock band—an ice-filled crack for the tools and slabby granite for the crampons to smear on.

While tackling the rock band, the weather had become windy, cold and snowy, but we could tell it was just daily convection and so enjoyed the adverse conditions as we climbed moderately technical terrain. The rock band gave way to an icefield, which we slogged up until 8 p.m. where, at 4,200 metres, we came upon a rib that offered a spot for us to hack out a tent platform. After a couple of hours of chopping, we were happily brewing up for the evening. The cold night air had cleared the skies and calmed the wind. We could see the final rock band a short distance above with an obvious splitter gully showing

the way through the Eyes, which from where we were did not look anything like their name.

May 19 was fantastic. The sun was gloriously warm. It was one of the finest days I have experienced in the Alaska Range. Starting at 10 a.m., we finished the last bit of the icefield, then continued up some mixed climbing and into the ice gully. Near the top of the enclosure, it was deep enough to lose the sun. We suddenly froze again. After this brief reminder of the cold that lingered not far off, we were back in the sun looking up the final slope, the top of which was guarded by some truly gigantic cornices. We wondered how there could be a way through those beasts. It became obvious where to go soon enough and for the first time we saw signs that the Japanese had indeed climbed the route ahead of us. A faint set of tracks led to the only feasible weakness through the white wave. We topped out on the flat South Buttress at 4 p.m. and descended a short ways to our cache. After a brief discussion, we took the conservative decision and opted out of going for the summit. It had been a good climb; so, as per the first and second ascents, we descended. By 10 p.m., we were at Margaret's Pass setting up our tent for one more night on the mountain.

The following morning dawned cold and windy, so we did not get going until almost noon. But once on the go, it took us only six hours to get down the rest of the South Buttress and back to basecamp where Lisa had beer and food waiting for us.

After a few days of lounging in camp, we skied up the glacier past the Mini Moonflower to an ice line we had spotted earlier in the trip. On a feature we were calling the Mini-Mini Moonflower, an obvious ice hose dropped from the right side of the summit. On May 26, we climbed this enjoyable line, a possible first ascent that we named Bacon and Eggs. The steepest climbing was found surmounting the 'schrund. Forty-five-degree ice gained the ice hose leading to a mixed bowl and then the cornice, which turned out to be easier than it had appeared. Once through the cornice, it was a half pitch to the top. It took only 11.5 hours for the return trip to camp.

Thus ended another fine trip to those inspiring mountains. It had been the latest that I had stayed in the range for quite some time and things were getting hot around KIA. Indeed, it was very much summer back in Talkeetna, where the usual post-expedition debauchery began, as well as some of the fondest memories.

Summary

Fourth ascent of the Isis Face (Alaska Grade 5, 2150m), east face of Denali, Alaska Range. Mark Westman, Eamonn Walsh, May 17–20, 2008 (note: not to the summit).

Bacon and Eggs (III WI4, 400m), north face of the Mini-Mini Moonflower, Alaska Range. FA: Mark Westman, Eamonn Walsh, May 26, 2008.

Bacon and Eggs on the Mini-Mini Moonflower, Kahiltna Glacier, Alaska. Photo: Mark Westman

Banana Wall

Sacha Friedlin

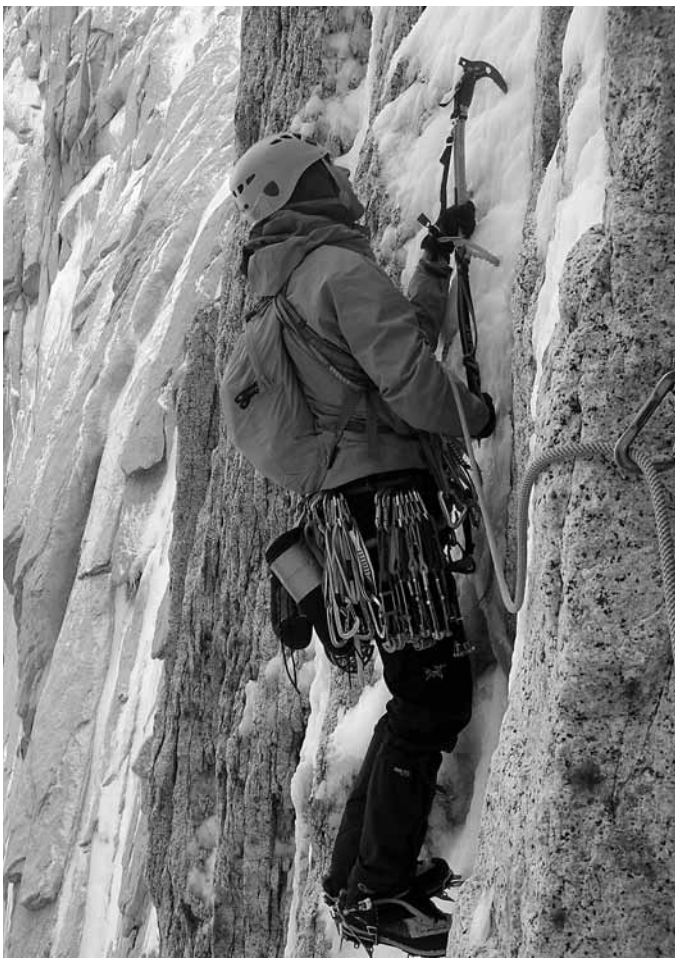
Beware of what you visualize. Do not underestimate this force. Climbing is an exciting sport that can make you dream. There is always a new objective, a new project, a little bigger, a little more challenging.

For me, it was Patagonia. My passion for climbing in Patagonia began in 2005 on the Torres del Paine in Chile and on El Mocho in Argentina. That is when I first saw the north face of Aguja Poincenot.

Upon returning home to Quebec, I found a photo of that magnificent face in an *American Alpine Journal*. The image revealed numerous unclimbed cracks in the centre of the face between the existing Crouch-Donini (5.10+ A2, 800m, 1996) and Potter-Davis (5.11 C1, 550m, 2001). I was inspired. It was with Frédéric Maltais that I decided to try this project. I knew that his skills were a good complement to mine. We would make a good team.

Climbing in Patagonia is a blend of rock climbing, ice climbing and big-wall climbing combined with less-than-perfect weather. At least there is oxygen due to its low elevation, but it moves very quickly. Extreme wind is part of Patagonia's reputation. It does everything to make you lose your courage and vision; however, there is a reward for perseverance and patience. When the wind stops and the clouds are pushed aside, the granite towers show their beauty. It is impossible for a climber to remain indifferent. Personally, in those special moments, I feel a mixture of strong attraction, anxiety and gratitude.

Waiting for a good weather break, we stayed several long weeks in the town of Chalten and at our little bivouac at the Polish Camp. On January 11, we finally went for our first fast, light and uncomfortable single-push style attempt. We were surprised at how long and difficult it was to get to the base of the north face. The so-called "approach" was a climb in itself, taking eight hours and involving climbing up to 5.7 and WI4. We learned that aluminum crampons are not comfortable on running shoes or very effective on real climbing. After a 17-hour attempt with only four pitches of mixed climbing done on the actual north face of Poincenot, we came back with a good comprehension of what the project was going to entail.



Frédéric Maltais on the "approach" to the north face of Poincenot.
Photo: Sacha Friedlin

With limited days available, we started again two days later for a second single-push effort in the best weather yet. Then a thumb injury occurred on the approach and kicked us back to Chalten. This part of the trip was the most difficult for me. I felt unsatisfied. With very little climbing done, this trip had become completely absurd, a complete waste of time. We had been waiting for a solid weather window for weeks and when it finally arrived, I hurt myself. It can be difficult for me to accept destiny sometimes. My mind was running wild. Why was I taking such a complicated path with my life? Why was I putting so many obstacles in front of myself? All of this, only to end up feeling defeated.

Fred's peace impressed me. To succeed, I knew that I had to change my attitude. I had to get back to my roots. I had to put aside the desire for achievement and just enjoy what I love the most—climbing big alpine walls. Climbing is a passion for me; a simple lifestyle based on a connection with the universe and a sense of well-being. It pushes away the superficial and it puts into focus what is important.

Finally, on January 16, another weather window was announced. Our little injury-induced wait had given the sun time to dry the wall and improve conditions. Instinctively, we felt there was no time to waste so we started in the evening from Chalten and slept under the stars at Agostini Camp. The next day we completed the rest of the approach and started up the north face proper. At 11 p.m., a hundred metres up the cliff, snow and wind forced us to find a bivy. It was not safe to sleep at the base of the face because of serac hazard, so we spent three hours chopping out an ice ledge

with an ultra-light ice axe on a 45-degree slope in the couloir between Aguja Kakito and Poincenot.

That is where my visualization paid off. Being way up there with monstrous Patagonian forces, totally exhausted and trying to survive in a plastic trash bag, you still have to keep sight of the goal. I dreamed that I was enjoying the misery. I felt that the terror would end soon, which helped to push away doubt.

The next day, after a very long night of spindrift, we climbed slowly up icy cracks and mixed ground to reach a wonderful bivy site at the end of pitch six. We decided to rest and stay for a second night on the cliff fixing our two 60-metre half-ropes on the upper section. Perfect weather the next morning allowed us to finish off the remainder of the wall. Cruising along those perfect cracks was thrilling. The view and void were unreal. Every beat of my heart was less indifferent and I felt life fully in the moment. I wanted to stop time. I think I felt a kind of reward for all my failures and other difficult experiences. I was convinced that I was at the right place. Everything was perfect.

We named the route Banana Wall because of the curving geometry of its high-quality granite cracks that grace the face. Almost every pitch was in the 5.10 range with a few cruxes of 5.11a. We French-freed in a few icy spots, but these sections easily would go free in warmer weather. Mixed climbing was encountered on the first 200 metres in the gully that separates Aguja Kakito and Poincenot. The M6+ mixed crux on pitch three, which involved unconsolidated vertical snow under a rock overhang, could easily be avoided by climbing a direct line between the second and fourth pitch. This possible variation would decrease the mixed difficulties to M4. We placed no bolts or pitons, so the route is free of gear, even on belays.

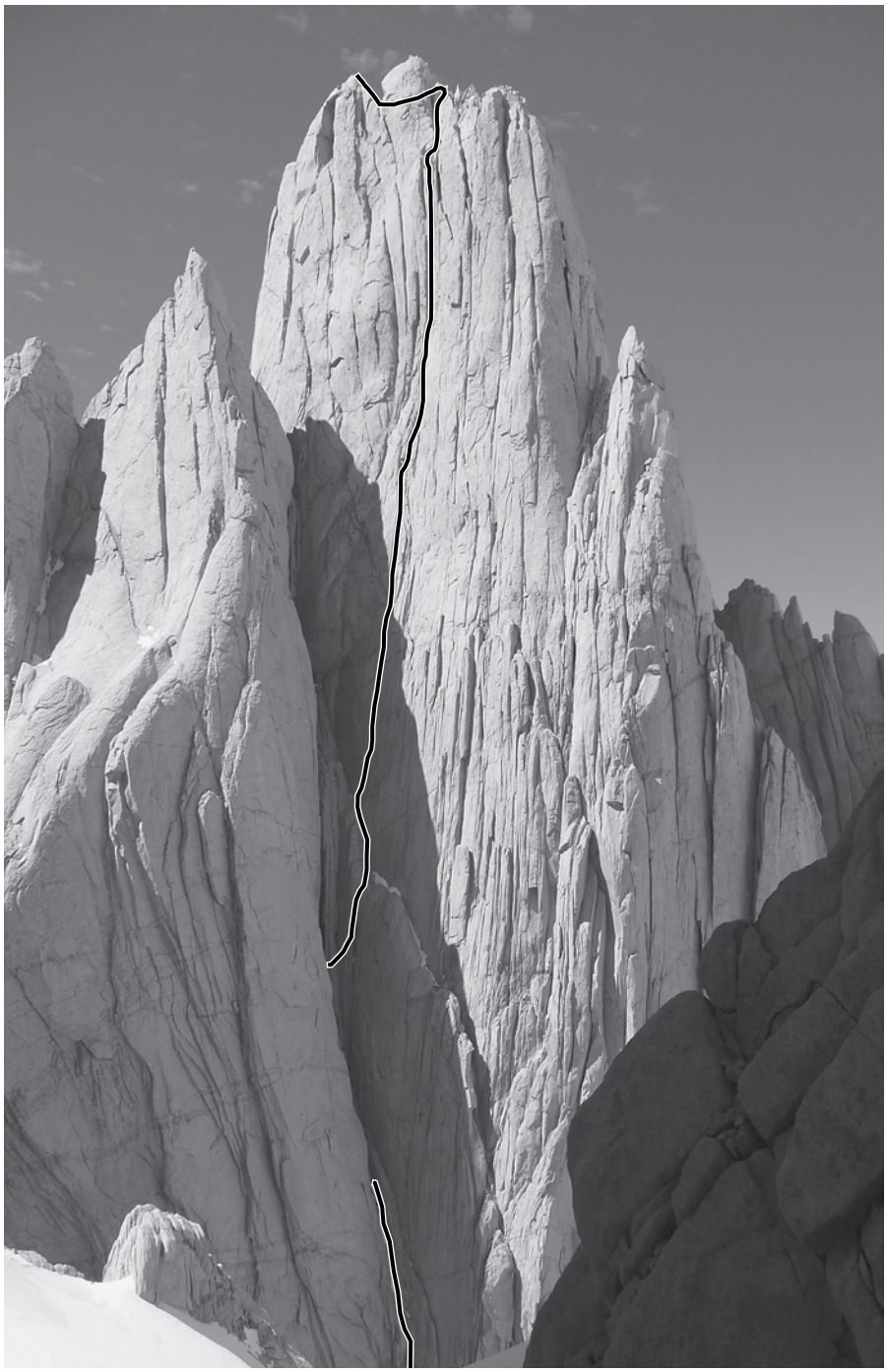
We descended via the Whillans-Cochrane route and all the way to Lago de los Tres in a 24-hour push. The next morning, we hiked back to Chalten very hungry. When we got to town, it was deserted of climbers—a sign of the unusually long weather window the spires were experiencing.

We went to Patagonia for the enjoyment of our pursuit, and despite success, I've had a hard time writing about our ascent. I do not want to portray mountaineering as an ego booster. For me, it is a path to personal change and perhaps even to spiritual enlightenment. Ultimately, it is not our achievement that is important; it's not the summit, but the road to it. Having enough courage to follow the call deep inside us allows us to enjoy each and every moment of life. That is my Patagonian experience.

Summary

Banana Wall (VI 5.11a M6+ C1, 800m), north face of Aguja Poincenot, Argentine Patagonia. FA: Sacha Friedlin, Frédéric Maltais, February 17–19, 2008.

Banana Wall on the north face of Poincenot. Photo: Mario Walder



Tordrillo Traverse Take Two

Andrew Wexler

On may 16, 2008, Joe Stock, Dylan Taylor and I flew into Alaska's Tordrillo Mountains. We'd spent a week loitering in Anchorage waiting for better weather and perfecting a circuit between some of the city's seedier establishments. What the hell, if we weren't going to be skiing, we could at least be enjoying ourselves. So we embraced our purgatory and withheld little. Well, Dylan and I did at least. As for Joe, he stayed true to form and pressured us to bolt every time a blue patch appeared in the sky. He was like one of those thoroughly overbred racehorses that must have a goat in his stall to calm his nerves. In this case, Dylan and I were his billy goats.

But the truth was that if we launched in haste, we were likely to repeat last year's fiasco. In 2007, Joe and I spent 10 days going nowhere on the same traverse. We needed to be patient and play our hand. If we bluffed and the weather called us, we'd be sitting in our tent, getting fat and failing for the second time in as many years. We needed to hold a good forecast if we were to complete our objective of skiing a 160-kilometre traverse (11,580 metres of elevation gain) across the Tordrillo Mountains. We wanted to accomplish this without caches and we wanted to climb and ski the range's four highest peaks along the way: Mount Spurr (3,373 metres), Mount Torbert (3,480 metres), Mount Talachulitna (3,474 metres) and Mount Gerdine (3,431 metres). We needed at least seven days of perfect weather to cover the distance, ski the avalanche-prone shots and navigate the complex icefalls. We got 10.

Day 1: Doug Brewer of Alaska West Air in Kenai shuttled us into the mountains one at a time in a Super Cub. He put us down on a bench at 732 metres on the side of Mount Spurr. We spent the next five hours climbing 1,585 metres to the summit of Crater Peak. On our backs, we carried 30-kilogram packs with enough staying power for 12 days. From Crater Peak, we dropped down to a saddle below Mount Spurr and set up camp at 2,165 metres.

Day 2: After spending way more time than expected, we summitted Mount Spurr and skied from the top. We wanted to push on and drop down to a lower elevation, but we needed to be fresh to navigate the 1,220-metre icefall separating us from the Capps Glacier. We set up camp at 2,987 metres and froze.

Day 3: "Well, I've been colder at night, but I'm not sure that I've ever been colder in a sleeping bag!" was the first thing out of Dylan's mouth in the morning. We packed up and started moving in all our layers. We got to the icefall and began our descent into the broken maze. I led down and eventually got stranded on an unsupported mushroom of snow, directly below some enormous seracs. I swallowed hard, unclipped from my skis and reversed the track to where Joe and Dylan were waiting. We roped up and headed for a prominent shark-fin ridge splitting the icefall. From the ridge crest, we were faced with a blind 50-plus-degree roll-over that led down to more broken terrain. Joe belayed Dylan into the void. When the rope came tight, Dylan unclipped and we followed him down. Once off the shark-fin ridge, we skirted a few massive holes before exiting onto the compression zone. We spent the next few hours sweltering in the heat on our way to a col between the Upper Capps Glacier and the Triumvirate Glacier, and spent the night camped at 1,371 metres, below some of the most beautiful orange granite spires I have ever seen.

Day 4: We spent the day working our way up through another icefall and set camp below the Torbert Plateau at 2,133 metres. The big days were causing us to tear through the food. Dylan pondered aloud the likelihood of killing and eating a bear when we got closer to the Skwentna River.

Day 5: The day dawned cold and clear and we headed for the Torbert Plateau. We summitted Mount Torbert and Mount Talachulitna, and covered 32 kilometres and 2,377 metres in the process. We could not have asked for better weather or conditions.

Day 6: We broke camp and skied up to the Great Wall. This 22-kilometre-long, 610-metre-high barrier runs east to west across the range. We skinned up to the base of a steep pass and boot-packed up to the ridge. Dylan was out front and warned us that the ridge was heavily corniced. We threaded the needle between a cornice fracture line and an avalanche crown, and worked our way over to a small bench. We tried sawing through a section of cornice with the rope, which resulted in us almost getting the rope irretrievably stuck. We tried throwing big rocks onto the cornice. We accomplished nothing. All we managed was to weaken the cornice and increase the odds that it would release naturally while we were below it. In the end, we found the least corniced section of ridge and set an anchor. Joe belayed and I downclimbed until the rope came tight. Fifteen centimetres of snow covered blue ice, so I made a V-thread and equalized it to a screw. I unclipped from the rope and Joe pulled it up. He belayed Dylan down next and then downclimbed with a belay from below. We repeated this process two more times before we clipped back into our skis. There was a bergschrund at the base of the slope and we were mindful of our turns while still above it. We skied a few more hours that evening, and set camp on the upper Triumvirate Glacier, in almost the exact same spot that our trip had ended in 2007.

Day 7: After a few hours of skinning over a glacier that sparkled like a disco ball, we summitted Mount Gerdine in high winds and began the 1,524-metre descent to the Trimble Glacier. That

evening at camp, I brought up the possibility of concluding the trip early. "I'm OK with having a perfect trip," I told Joe and Dylan, "I don't need to continue on to the Skwentna River for bushwhacking and grizzlies." To his credit, Joe stayed calm in the face of my treason. "You're welcome to call a flight in tomorrow and leave," he said, "I'll ski to the Skwentna alone if I have to." I should have known as much.

If there was one certainty on this trip from the start, it's that Joe Stock had a wild hair up his ass for the Skwentna River. "It's gotta be the full traverse of the range," he kept saying. "Lake Chakachamna to the Skwentna!" The man's mind was set like concrete and there was little hope of changing our trajectory.

Day 8: We woke at 4 a.m. to high winds slamming the tent. Visibility had dropped to 30 metres. Looking back up towards Mount Gerdine, you didn't need to be a meteorologist to know that the peak was getting hammered. We dropped down to the Hayes Pass and the Hayes Glacier. From there, we climbed a steep moraine and headed for Spring Creek Pass at 1,676 metres. With the lower elevation came massive grizzly bear tracks and we spent most of the day weaving in and out of them. After 14 hours on the move, we boot-packed up Old Man Pass and set up camp at 1,371 metres.

Day 9: When the alarm went off at 4 a.m. again, I did not want to move. I would have been content to lie in the same position all day. If everything went to plan, we would reach the Skwentna River that afternoon and call in the pilot. At least that was the idea. In reality, we didn't know if a pilot would be able to land on the Skwentna. I was running off vapours for energy and was too tired to give the question much thought. We broke camp and dropped 915 metres. We stopped to brew up, and then began a 915-metre skin and boot-pack up snow and shale. From the ridge crest, we were treated to a 1,220-metre descent to the Skwentna River. We should have been elated but we weren't. We were just tired. We called the pilot and arranged for a tentative pick-up the following day. Then we passed out.

Acknowledgements

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Summary

First ski traverse of Alaska's Tordrillo Mountains (10 days, 160 kilometres of distance and 11,580 metres of elevation gain). Joe Stock, Dylan Taylor, Andrew Wexler, May 16–25, 2008.

Andrew Wexler and Dylan Taylor on the Triumvirate Glacier on day three of nine on the full-length ski traverse of the Tordrillo Mountains, Alaska. Photo: Joe Stock

Himalayan School of Alpinism

Jennifer Olson

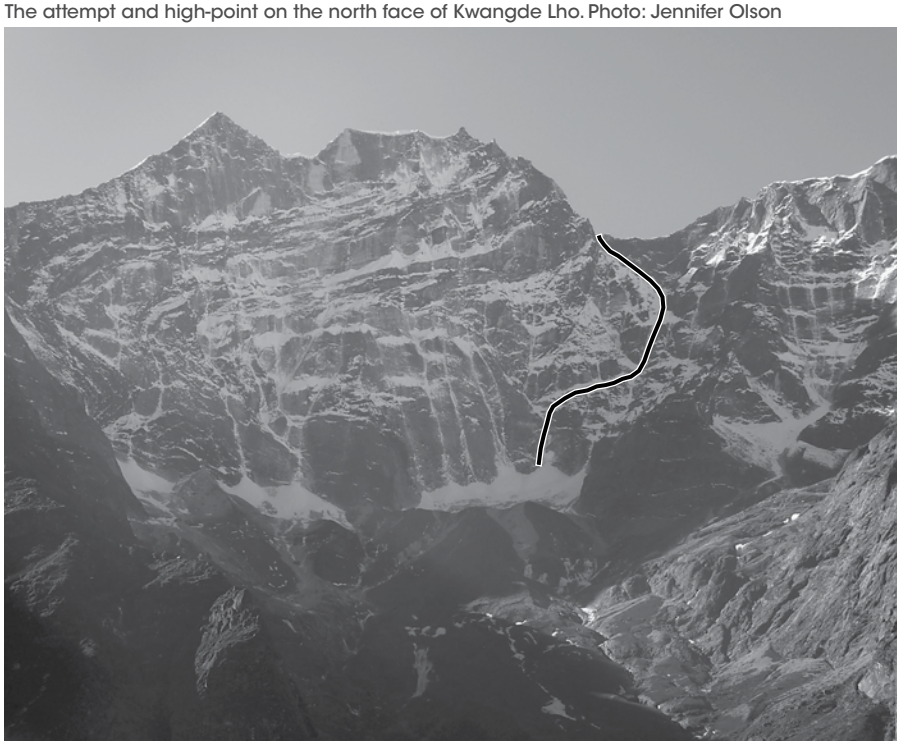
Audrey Gariépy, Ines Papert, and I returned from Nepal with cold toes and a C+ grade in alpinism. Our first trip to this part of the world will be remembered by yak cheese and 12-hour, -20 C bivies. We had fantastic weather with minimal wind and clear blue skies almost every day. Disappointed by the lack of ice in the region, and after surveying adjacent objectives, we persevered with our original plan of climbing Kwangde Lho (6,187 metres), but by various previously climbed routes. Photographer Cory Richards and videographer Chris Alstrin accompanied us to basecamp, but did not join us on our attempt.

Our initial foray above basecamp taught us that the Himalaya are bigger than they look. We established a bivy at 5,100 metres near the base of the face. During these first two nights, I realized that my lightweight set up of a +5 C sleeping bag and five-millimetre foam pad was inadequate for the long, cold nights. Misery is a great teacher. After a couple days of r 'n' r, including a Namche Internet session, we were back up at 5,100 metres ready to give it another go.

On our first day of climbing, we did get to climb several pitches of vertical sn'ice, generally run-out with occasional rock protection. We were lucky to find a bivy ledge, which I spotted about 100 metres above in the dwindling light. After chopping a ledge and securing the tent to the rock, the three of us squeezed inside our paper-thin First Light tent. I was psyched to be in the cozy middle position despite having my head downhill.

Our second day of climbing involved traversing snow and rock slopes until 100 metres below the col where we had to climb steep, fractured granite held together only by ice and gravity. Just before launching up this choss, Ines dropped her open pack, which contained her headlamp, water, food, puffy pants and a few gadgets such as the camera, video camera, radio and satellite phone.

The attempt and high-point on the north face of Kwangde Lho. Photo: Jennifer Olson



She was stoic in her response as she led up through the tenuous ground above. We took a bit of time at our high point of 5,880 metres on the ridge to come to terms with the decision of not summitting. It was the only time we would feel the heat from the southerly aspect.

The realization of our poor strategy was very disappointing. We had the energy and weather to summit, but not enough food, and we should not have left our tent, stove and bivy gear at 5,600 metres. We were 300 metres below the summit and had to retreat back down into the refrigerator that is the north face for a technical descent that took us two days before returning to basecamp.

After about 24 hours in basecamp, I was slowly starting to warm up enough to remove one of my eight layers. Audrey came to the realization that she had frozen two toes that would require medical attention.

We climbed 1,000 metres of roped terrain and rappelled the same. We never saw evidence of previous routes, but perhaps more snow and ice protection was used in the past. We feel a great respect for the Kwangde Lho and grateful for the time spent admiring her beauty.

Acknowledgments

The expedition would like to thank W.L. Gore, Outdoor Research, Arc'teryx, Petzl and Feathered Friends for their generous support.

Summary

Attempt on the north face of Kwangde Lho (6187m), Namche Bazaar region, Nepal. Audrey Gariépy, Jennifer Olson, Ines Papert, January 2–4, 2009.

[Editor's note: Ines Papert and Cory Richards stayed after everyone else departed and climbed a new route (Cobra Norte, TD M8 WI5, 1200m) up the left side of the north face of Kwangde Shar (6,093 metres) over 4.5 days.]

Baintha Kabata

Maxime Turgeon

Lined by some of the most impressive peaks on Earth, the Choktoi Glacier is tucked between the Biafo and Baltoro glaciers in the Karakoram Range, just south of the Pakistan-China border. All three are connected like a giant ice-covered granite spine. For more than 30 years, alpinists from around the world have been travelling to this region to attempt the faces that rise more than 2,000 metres above the glacier. Still today, none of those 7,000-metre peaks have been climbed from the Choktoi side.

During the last week of August, under heavy skies, my partner Colin Haley and I, joined by Josh Wharton and Whit Magro, set up basecamp just across from the north face of Latok I. Josh and I both had been to that basecamp in the past, at different times, to attempt the north flanks of Latok I, but both of us had gone home with ascents of minor peaks and fragile stomachs. Josh was back for a second run at Latok, but Colin and I had different plans. We had our eyes on the often-attempted Southeast Pillar of the Ogre. Located at the far west side of the valley and guarded by a big icefall, we quickly realized how much work would be involved in getting all of our stuff to the base of the climb. And, after a couple of carries in deep snow up the 10-kilometre approach, we deeply regretted not having brought our skis.

During the process of acclimatizing and getting the gear in place for an attempt, we spotted an aesthetic ship-prow ridge on a smaller peak on the glacier north of the Ogre. With no hope anywhere in the forecast for an extended high-pressure system that we needed to attempt the Ogre, we decided to try this intriguing formation. With gear for one bivy, we launched from basecamp not even knowing the peak's altitude or how long the approach would be. Aided by firm snow conditions, we started climbing at 9 a.m. after 12 kilometres of glacier walking.

As the day progressed, we gained elevation and forced the line onto the ridge where we encountered decent granite and good ice runnels. By the time the sun disappeared behind the Ogre, we felt like we were about two-thirds of the way up. The altitude and the lack of acclimatization began to catch up with us during the night and made the bivy quite painful. Despite the rough sleep, an amazing sunrise gave us the energy to get out of bed with the hope of making the summit that day. The upper section of the ridge became more complex and time-consuming, but after a full rope-length rappel on the right side of the ridge, the slopes to the summit opened up. Just as the sun was setting for the second day, we reached the highest point of the unknown, unnamed peak. We named the peak Baintha Kabata, which means "Ogre's son" in Urdu. Throughout the night, we blindly abseiled down the west face and made it back to camp 48 hours after leaving. We definitely underestimated the warm-up.

The south ridge of Baintha Kabata. The mountain behind and right is unnamed and unclimbed. Photo: Maxime Turgeon

The next morning we woke up to snowfall, and the next morning too, and the next one again—centimetres soon became metres and days became weeks. We made half-a-dozen attempts just to find our cache to maintain our chances for an Ogre attempt, but all hope, as well as all gear, was lost. On the last day of the trip, in a soul-destroying mission, we trudged for hours through thigh-deep snow only to discover that our cache was buried under metres of snow. We both swore never to return to Pakistan. Similar to my first trip to the Karakoram, I failed on the main objective, but garnered a small success on a minor peak. Most likely I will soon forget the suffering and be back at it for another round.

Summary

First ascent of Baintha Kabata (5900m) via the south ridge (V 5.9 AI4 M5, 1200m), Choktoi Glacier, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Colin Haley, Maxime Turgeon, September 3–4, 2008.

Cascades norvégiennes

Mathieu Audibert et Audrey Gariépy

En février 2008, Mathieu Audibert, Audrey Gariépy, Guy Lacelle, Chris Alstrin et Alex Lavigne se sont donnés rendez-vous en Norvège pour un séjour d'escalade de glace très bien rempli. Avec les bons conseils de Guy (c'était son septième voyage dans ce beau pays), nous avons pu grimper presque tous les jours, complétant plusieurs voies classiques avec quelques « premières » … peut-être !

La Norvège est un pays spectaculaire. Les routes s'acheminent dans les zones alpines et nous plongent le long des fjords, en passant par les tunnels interminables qui traversent les montagnes. Avec ses petits villages colorés au bord de l'eau, c'est un paysage à couper le souffle.

Les cascades abondent. Malgré la situation nordique de ce pays, il faut être relativement chanceux pour les voir gelées, fait surprenant pour des Canadiens endurcis qui sont habitués à des saisons de glace très longues et stables. Le courant d'air chaud du Gulf Stream assure aux Norvégiens des hivers cléments — moins qu'idéal pour les grimpeurs de glace.

Nous avons visité des endroits classiques, tels que Hemsedal et Rjukan. Ces destinations de choix sont bien connues des grimpeurs. Elles sont accessibles et renferment de belles voies de glace pure et de mixte.

La journée la plus froide de notre séjour, nous avons grimpé Hydnefossen (WI6, 160m), située sur une face nord particulièrement exposée aux tourbillons de neige. Audrey et Mathieu ont grimpé à côté de Guy, qui démontrait, en solo, une ténacité et une force dignes d'un maître. La glace dure et sèche ne se prêtait pas bien à l'escalade ce jour-là.

A Rjukan, les voies classiques Lipton (WI6, 120m) et Juvsoyla (WI6, 100m) étaient bien formées dans le petit canyon. L'accès facile et la proximité des deux voies nous ont permis de jouir d'une superbe journée.

Après quelques jours de grimpe de voies plus connues, nous avons eu envie d'aller explorer les recoins du pays pour peut-être avoir la chance d'y découvrir quelques cascades qui n'avaient jamais connu d'ascension. C'est toujours un peu délicat de savoir ce qui a déjà été grimpé et ce qui ne l'a pas été. En Norvège, il est impossible de trouver un guide d'escalade de glace avec toutes les voies répertoriées. Les Norvégiens veulent permettre à tous de découvrir les cascades avec les mêmes sensations que lors d'une première ascension.

Pendant qu'on conduisait vers les fjords de l'ouest, en direction d'Eidfjord, une paroi a attiré notre attention : Voringsfossen, un mur incroyable d'une hauteur variant entre 250 et 350 mètres et offrant des cascades de glace verticale — et mince par endroits. Nous pensions bien avoir gagné le gros lot. Nous nous sommes empressés d'aller grimper les cinq lignes qui nous tentaient le plus et espérions être les premiers à les faire ! Après quelques recherches, nous avons découvert que nous ne pouvions donner

Thermalphobia, located near Hjolmo, Eidfjord, Norway. Photo: Guy Lacelle

des noms qu'à deux de ces voies ! Guy et Chris ont ensuite ouvert une voie au milieu du mur, qu'ils ont appelée My Grandma Did It (WI6, 250m). Pendant ce temps, Mathieu et Audrey ont eu la chance de faire une voie juste à côté, qu'ils ont nommée La mante et l'ours (WI5+, 250m).

Nous aurions bien aimé profiter un peu plus de ce mur exceptionnel, mais la température a monté au-dessus du point de congélation, et presque toutes les premières longueurs sont tombées.

Alors que nous pensions que tout était fondu, nous avons trouvé une ligne magnifique bien encaissée au fond d'une vallée. Notre énergie est revenue, et le lendemain matin à 4h nous avions les deux pieds dans l'eau glaciale pour traverser le premier obstacle de l'approche. Nous avons passé les trois prochaines heures à remonter au milieu de chutes sur des roches instables et des lames de neiges, au-dessus du pierrier, tout ça dans un jour blanc total. Notre récompense a été immense ; une ligne extraordinaire de glace jaune verticale n'attendait que nous ! Nous nous sommes empressés de grimper ces cinq longueurs, qui nous ont fait sourire à chaque mouvement. Alors que tout s'éffondrait autour de nous à cause de la température trop chaude, notre voie ne semblait pas en être affectée. Nous pouvions entendre d'énormes blocs se détacher des autres voies tout autour. Nous appréhendions tous un peu la descente dans le fond de ce petit canyon étroit où tous ces monstres se concassaient. Heureusement, tout s'est bien déroulé ! Nous pensons que c'est une première, mais qui sait ? Nous l'avons nommée Themalphobia (WI6, 300m).

Nous étions très impressionnés par le potentiel de la Norvège. Les chutes d'eau sont partout. Le seul problème est que le froid doit être présent assez longtemps pour les geler. Nous étions contents de visiter les endroits populaires comme Hemsedal et Rjukan, et nous avons apprécié encore plus la découverte et l'exploration de nouveaux territoires.

Summary

La mante et l'ours (WI5+, 250m), Eidfjord, Norway. FA: Mathieu Audibert, Audrey Gariépy, February 2008.

My Granma Did It (WI6R, 250m), Eidfjord, Norway. FA: Chris Alstrin, Guy Lacelle, February 2008.

Thermalphobia (WI6, 300m), Eidfjord, Norway. FA: Chris Alstrin, Mathieu Audibert, Audrey Gariépy, Guy Lacelle, February 2008.

Voringfossen Wall in Eidfjord, Norway: (1) La mante et l'ours. (2) My Granma Did It. The other obvious ice lines were also climbed by the authors and partners, but they were not first ascents. Photo: Audrey Gariépy

Reviews

My Mountain Album

by Glen Boles, Rocky Mountain Books (2006)

Glen boles is well-known and widely respected in the mountaineering community. He deserves to be. Over the course of nearly 50 years of climbing, Boles made an astounding 37 first ascents and climbed 525 peaks in Canada's mountain West. As a member of an informal association of equally committed climbers loosely called The Grizzly Group, Boles also had fun climbing and encouraged others to do the same. But, there is a lot more to Glen Boles than mountaineering achievement. Glen Boles lives and breathes mountains. He climbs them, writes about them, photographs and draws them—all with great competence. This stunning coffee-table book suggests that posterity may well remember Glen Boles as much for his art as for his climbing.

History is lucky that Glen Boles had an interest in photography and art. Most mountaineers take up photography as a practical means of keeping a record of their ascents, but let mountain landscapes speak for themselves. Most photographers take up the art as a means of learning to see and understand what they are seeing. Glen Boles did both. He made images as a means of remembering but also took a great interest in photography as an art form. In *My Mountain Album*, you can almost see the point in his life when images suddenly began to really matter. As one turns the pages, you can feel Boles striving to apply growing photographic talent to the making and processing of his images. We also witness the next stage in his love affair with Canadian mountains, which began when Boles started to make drawings and paintings based on photographs so that he could give these images and the experiences he captured in them even more meaning and lasting value. By comparing his photographs and drawings, we see how different artistic mediums express different qualities of place and time.

My Mountain Album is more than a book of images; it is an album in the truest sense—a book of memories. In it are well-made photographs of the routes he took, the peaks he climbed and the people with whom Boles shared a long and remarkable life in the mountains. As Boles climbed with many of the finest mountaineers of his time, it is also a history book. Because of its respectful interpretation of landscape, it is in addition, a book of geography and geology. Because Boles possesses such a strong sense of place, it is also a book of poetry. Most strikingly, however, it is a book of stunning visual art. It is a record of a great climber's perceptual, as well as physical, ascent to the high places where people are transformed and made more complete and whole by physical effort and exposure to the glory of landscape. As such, this work is likely to become a classic within the growing literary and artistic genre associated with Canadian mountaineering.

—Bob Sandford

Morning Light: Triumph at Sea & Tragedy on Everest

by Margaret Griffiths, Rocky Mountain Books (2008)

If there were ever any natural environments that inspired great love stories, the ocean and the mountains would have to be at the top of the list. *Morning Light: Triumph at Sea & Tragedy on Everest* is at once an ode to exploration, a celebration of human capabilities and a touching love story between a husband and wife, and a father and his sons.

Its author, Margaret Griffiths, has compiled an exceptionally eloquent and personal tale based on tape recordings and letters recorded and written by her late husband George, his diaries and conversations she shared with him, as well as reports from the events of the 1982 Canadian Mount Everest Expedition.

While the expedition did succeed in placing the first two Canadian climbers on the summit in October 1982, it was marred by the tragic deaths of three Sherpas and CBC cameraman Blair Griffiths (George's son and Margaret's stepson). While being chosen as the cameraman to record history on Mount Everest had been the culmination of a filmmaker's dream for Blair—a dream that ended in tragedy—that expedition came right on the heels of George's wonderfully successful life-long dream of sailing solo across the Atlantic Ocean in a small wooden sailboat, navigating by the stars and without any modern technological aids.

From its opening lines, *Morning Light* expresses an aura of peace and gratitude for the blessings of long life, while at the same time it shimmers with the sentimental and painful reality of loved ones lost.

Even more amazing is the skill and care that Margaret writes of two worlds with which she had no personal intimacy—the great Atlantic from a sailor's perspective, and the giant mountain landscape of the Himalaya. While at times in the first couple of chapters, the sailing jargon is all but indecipherable to the average landlubber, before long it matters not a whit, as the reader is captivated by the wonders of the journey and the obviously impressive intricacies of solo navigation amidst such a great

expanse of sea.

Better still, the inclusion of the tiny details of life—whether they be the ingredients of a sailor's stew, the habits of familiar sea lions back at Margaret's home on Galiano Island, or the familiar names George attaches to such inanimate objects as his sailboat's stove—serve to create an intimate and endearingly colourful story.

Writing of events that transpired more than two decades earlier, Margaret Griffiths, who is now in her late 80s, has captured an era with terrific authenticity. Particularly accurate is her relating of the events and sensibilities of the 1982 Everest expedition, and of the scene at the time in which Canadian, Catalan and New Zealand climbing teams were the only climbers on the mountain, having taken three weeks to hike there through a foreign, mysterious and relatively undiscovered Nepal.

Remarkable also is her awareness of the nuances of climbing, as she carefully notes such details as the fact that the first summit team of Laurie Skreslet, Sungdare and Lhakpa Dorje did not follow fixed ropes to the summit, since they were the first climbers to reach the top that season. Impressive too, is the sensitivity with which she shares the personal feelings of the drained expedition members after they experience four deaths, and describes the heart-wrenching acts of retrieving Blair's body from the icefall, and the cremation of all four dead men.

Poignant, honest and meticulously crafted, *Morning Light* is a lovely romance, a story of a man's deep, life-long love for sailing and the sea, the love he shares with his two sons and the touching and constant communication between him and the woman he loves, made all the stronger by the great distance between them as he sails home toward her.

As she brings the journey to a close with George's own journey to say goodbye to his son in the barren high-alpine landscape where he was laid to rest, all the while recognizing that his own time is limited, one senses that Margaret, too, is closing a meaningful chapter in her own life, and this reader felt honoured to have been invited to share in its beauty.

In her own final act of love for her husband, Margaret Griffiths has crafted a carefully tended-to book as lovingly as George sailed his little boat.

—Lynn Martel

Tomaž Humar

by Bernadette McDonald, Hutchinson (2008)

Awhile back in our national newspaper, I read an impassioned debate on the relative strengths of biography versus autobiography as paths of insight into a person's life. The argument, ultimately, turned on the suggestion that most people simply aren't willing enough to fully account for all sides of their own lives, or aren't self-aware enough to see themselves in context to allow us to trust autobiography with as much assurance as biography.

I wasn't entirely convinced. Especially in the last few more self-observant decades, there are many autobiographies that seem honest to the point of self-condemnation, and throughout the history of literature there have been scores of biographies that are more dishonestly hagiographic than any autobiographer would ever dare.

The debate takes interesting turns in the world of climbing. Just as in other sports, climbing biographies too often seem to claim, either explicitly or implicitly, that it's only the sporting accomplishments that matter. The other stuff of life—marriages, children, careers—can consequently be treated as little more than detours on the path to a Stanley Cup or an ascent of Everest. This notion is both a bit silly and more than a bit unfortunate; to my mind all that other "chaff" is what makes a biography both more true and more compelling.

Thankfully, in her third climbing biography, this time focusing on the Slovenian alpine master Tomaž Humar, Bernadette McDonald chose the more accurate *and* interesting path. While other writers might have succumbed to Humar's larger-than-life bombast and portrayed him as somehow superhuman, McDonald dug a whole lot deeper and tells the story of a character who's all the more impressive because of his humanity. Her Humar isn't an invulnerable, steel-willed alpine monster; rather, he's a painfully raw man who finds perhaps his only salve through the mountains.

McDonald is a fantastic researcher who obviously warmed her way into Humar's heart, and she managed to get incredible access to his inner world. The result is a deeply insightful look into an extremely complicated product of an extremely complicated part of our world. We're reading about Humar because he climbs, but this is ultimately a book as much about the horrors and heroes of war as it is about the terrors and gods of alpinism.

If I have one quibble with the book—and it's a small one, more about style than substance—it's that McDonald's capacities for research can sometimes work against her. As was the case in her previous two bios, her writing can sometimes be overweighed by the details she's discovered, tending to dry statements of the facts ("And then this happened, and then this…") without enough of the literary colour that she shows in other moments she's completely adept at. When McDonald inserts observations and insights instead of relying on straight journalism, the book has a more engaging heartbeat.

That aside, this is a wonderful book for anyone who wants to understand the remarkable power that mountains can have in a climber's life.

—Geoff Powter

Expedition to the Edge: Stories of Worldwide Adventure

by Lynn Martel, Rocky Mountain Books (2008)

One inevitable aspect of adventure is its capacity to lead us into extreme situations, sometimes without our intention. And the adventures featured in *Expedition to the Edge*, by Lynn Martel, draw in the reader so intensely that after 60 journeys to various corners of the world, even the least adventurous of readers feels as though they have paddled over a raging waterfall, climbed icebergs bobbing in frigid ocean waters, and hiked for thousands of kilometres. Cleverly categorized by theme, each story also stands on its own, dividing the book into manageable segments.

Martel, a freelance writer and journalist based in Canmore, Alberta, compiled the stories into book format when she realized how many tales of adventure she had written over many years for various publications. Having grown up in Montreal, Martel eventually made her way to the Rockies and, through her own adventures, soon discovered that she would never leave. More than 20 years later, Martel's presence in the mountain communities has been well-established through her articles in local newspapers, many of which became suitable material for *Expedition to the Edge*.

Paddlers, hikers, rock climbers, alpinists and all-around adventure enthusiasts make up the characters of this book. As if their activities were not exciting enough, particularly gripping is the fact that these characters are not fictional. Some are well-known adventure-seekers, while others are as unassuming as the guy next door. As such, their experiences of life lived at the extreme is both inspiring and sobering. The choice to engage in this sort of lifestyle brings with it the unfortunate reality of facing dangers and losing friends along the way, a sacrifice for the fulfillment of walking, and hopefully surviving, that fine line between fear and exhilaration.

Having interviewed each of the featured adventurers herself, Martel not only captures these gripping stories but also the voices behind them. While the transition from chapter to chapter is abrupt at times, the effect this shared storytelling creates is an intriguing assortment of narrative voices and varied reactions to the thrill and fear in adventure. Martel's journalistic tone acts as a common thread, bonding the diverse storytelling styles and illustrating the bigger picture represented amongst them.

Apart from Martel's presence as the objective witness throughout the book, another prevalent thread is the shared experiences of the adventurers, the most obvious being their connection to the Canadian Rockies and, more specifically, the communities of Canmore and Banff. This shared connection places the Rockies on the world's stage both as a birthplace and hub for adventure seekers.

On a deeper level, Martel is able to communicate what motivates each of these trailblazers to explore and test the limits, and also what these people are unable to explain about their escapades. It is that question of "why am I doing this?" that comes up enough to help the reader to understand the enigmatic qualities of adventure-seeking. The unknowns and "what ifs" inherent to each of the adventures recorded in *Expedition to the Edge* tease the reader's curiosity in a frightening and fascinating way.

Martel's first book is the epitome of armchair travel, leaving you to explore the world from the comfort of your home. But it might also rouse that desire within you to feel your heart race once again. For real.

—Meghan J. Ward

Bugaboo Dreams: A Story of Skiers, Helicopters & Mountains

by Topher Donahue, Rocky Mountain Books (2008)

It is an exciting time for writers interested in mountain culture and history in Canada. The past decade or so has seen an explosion in the literature. And the archive is as immense as the culture is coloured. Climbers, perhaps, nod their heads. Their history is something that many take seriously. Maybe that's precisely why it took a climber, a second-generation guide no less, to write the first sustained treatment of Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) and the development of heli-sport, a year-round industry that's been setting the international standard in the Columbia Mountains for more than 40 years.

Topher Donahue, however, is not a heli-ski guide, nor is he even a Canadian. But, like so many before him, the Colorado-native—an award-winning mountaineer, journalist and all-round nice guy, regularly seen "going for it" in Sender Films productions—was introduced to the magic of heli-skiing by powder pioneer Hans Gmoser. The die was cast. What was to be an article for *Powder* magazine quickly spiralled, like spindrift in the rotor blades, beyond the confines of the assignment. Encouraged by the mountain doyens of CMH's famed Nostalgia Weeks, as well as a healthy sense of urgency that any good, yet-to-be-told saga impresses upon an author, Donahue set out to write what he called "the most intriguing, diverse mountain story I had ever encountered in my life."

Bugaboo Dreams is a history of CMH, despite the author's reluctance to label it as such in the book's preface. It's well written, and the overall

organization—thematic more than strictly chronological—permits readers the luxury of setting it aside and returning to it with ease. In 12 chapters that weave corporate history, geography, snow science and personalities with a treasure trove of first-hand accounts and archival photographs, Donahue tackles a diverse range of topics, which, all told, highlight the rich cultural dimensions of the industry. While the development of heli-skiing and its allure among those who can afford it are well handled, what distinguishes *Bugaboo Dreams* is its attention to the industry's labour force: the ski guides and their families, the pilots, administrators and lodge staff.

Some conclusions, however, are unconvincing. "Traditionally," Donahue writes, "the guiding profession was exclusively men, but in its modern form it is a profession ideally suited for equality between genders." Given the statistics, which Donahue himself cites, the rosy assessment is a hard sell. Only eight of the 100 ski guides working for CMH during the 2007–08 season were women. To be fair, the problem is endemic across guiding culture as a whole, and Donahue does pay homage to the great strides individual women have made over the past 20 years. But to say that "while sitting in on dozens of guide meetings during the research for this book, often with only one female in the room, I never observed anyone treating them differently because they were a woman" doesn't change the fact that there still is only one woman in the room. The badly needed conversation here is, perhaps, beyond the scope of the book. But full-spread colour photographs of female staffers at Bugaboo Lodge flashing their breasts at passing helicopters or waiting, tray-in-hand before a sublime alpine backdrop, for guests (also mostly men) to return from the heights does little to dispel the hyper-masculine fantasy—"Brothers of the Snow"—that most "wilderness"-based tourism industries continue to perpetuate in their promotions, implicitly or not.

Herein lies my only criticism of *Bugaboo Dreams*. In places, it reads a little too conspicuously like a promotional brochure for CMH, which is fine, if that's the intent, but it somewhat detracts from what is otherwise a great contribution to the literature on mountain culture and history. Donahue's enthusiasm, though, however motivated, is delightfully addictive. It's impossible to read any part of this book and not feel inspired for the magic of mountains in winter, of deep snow and endless powder turns—the same sort of dreams, we learn, that started the industry.

—Zac Robinson

The Mountain Knows No Expert: George Evanoff

by Mike Nash, Natural Heritage Books (2009)

George evanoff (1932–1998) has waited too long for someone to tell the tale of his well-lived life, especially since he was mentor and icon to many. There has been a need for a thoughtful, curious and probing biographer to unravel the richness of Evanoff's full and challenging mountain career. Author Mike Nash deserves ample praise for walking the reader into this varied and ever-unfolding mountaineering journey. Evanoff's passion to protect, conserve and preserve wilderness areas is legendary. He played a significant role in creating new parks in the region: Kakwa Provincial Park and Fang Protected Area are but two of Evanoff's offspring, the later posthumously renamed Evanoff Provincial Park in his honour.

The Mountain Knows No Expert opens with an evocative prologue titled "Path of a Hero", which begins the narrative of his life. The hero faces many challenges, and bit-by-bit, lessons are learned, giving the character greater depth and detail. Evanoff was a child of an immigrant Macedonian family that sunk deeper and deeper roots into mountain-laden regions of northwest Alberta and British Columbia. His early outdoor years were typical of the time—mountains were places to hunt for game, bring home killed trophy and reel in many a hapless fish.

It was, to Evanoff's credit, that he came to see that mountains need not be places for the slaughter of animals. A mountain man emerged who became committed to the roles of ski patrol, avalanche safety and backcountry guide in the Prince George area and beyond. Evanoff offered leadership in the Alpine Club of Canada as the founding member of the Prince George section, and his vision brought much needed leadership to the growing industry of ecotourism in the area he called home.

The Mountain Knows No Expert is divided into 15 chapters with each chapter vividly and convincingly portraying a heroic life. The reader meets many of the men and women whose lives intersected with Evanoff's (including Nash's), and explores the impact that Evanoff had on them personally. Most of the chapters are replete with photographs of Evanoff, friends and the mountains that all help to recount a life lived in a visual manner. The book reaches its inevitable conclusion—Evanoff was killed by a grizzly bear in 1998. The mountains always have the final say and even experts are not immune from the unpredictable nature of the wild and untamed backcountry—truly a basic lesson one and all should heed.

— Ron Dart

Hollyburn: The Mountain and the City

by Francis Mansbridge, Ronsdale Press (2008)

This well-written and apparently well-researched book tells the story of the Hollyburn Mountain area and nearby Cypress Bowl, located high above West Vancouver, just across the Lions Gate Bridge from Metropolitan Vancouver. From the early loggers to the ski pioneers and on to the mountain bikers of today, it is all there. The book is an excellent addition to our growing library of Canadian ski history. The text is full of fun and drama, interesting characters, politics and intrigue. With more than 100 images, it is a reader's delight and with an eight-page index it is also a researcher's delight.

Hollyburn is particularly important to West Coast skiers and hikers as it provides more than two million folks in the Greater Vancouver area with easy access to a relatively pristine wilderness area. This area has, over the years, been the focus of the competing interests of commercial development (loggers and real estate developers), skiers, cabin owners, hikers, nature lovers, environmentalists and local politicians (who have very rightly been concerned about the water supply for West Vancouver). The book is moderate and well-balanced in its treatment of the different factions, which is very nice to see as the West Coast outdoor community has always been a polarized one.

Unfortunately, there is no information in the book as to who author Francis Mansbridge is, so it was unclear what his (or her) association with the Hollyburn area is or what his (or her) writing and research credentials are. However, a Google search revealed a very well-qualified individual with a PhD in English and 12 years' experience as archivist with the city of North Vancouver.

For a delightful read on a cold winter evening as you sit 'round the fire with your hot chocolate, I highly recommend this book. Hopefully some of the other ski hills in Western Canada will create a book of their history. They could use this one as a model.

—Chic Scott

The Coast Mountains Trilogy: Mountain Poems, 1957-1971

by Dick Culbert, Tricouni Press (2009)

There are gods leering behind the winter winds. In Dick Culbert's collection of poetry from the 1960s, he illuminates the Coast Mountains with the dark intents of Norse Gods. This is compelling. It makes the storms take on wings, and the driven snow have a will behind it that makes it easier to contest: for instead of pushing senselessly into cold blasts with freezing hands, he has us imagine the fierce countenance of Peril, looming above and baring her fangs, and that changes our endeavours into a hero's quest.

Each conquest was a task begun
Each failure was a nagging bond.

Dick Culbert is a mountaineering legend on the West Coast, who wrote an authoritative guide to the Coast Ranges in 1965. He also wrote poems, which are like his ascents, some which have never been repeated—a rambling approach through vivid scenery, some fast fun sections with solid edges, and then some loose parts. Many times they wander, but then there are verses that are so hard and direct that you nod at their precession. I don't think he looked back at many of the early poems once they were done, as if the process was what mattered, not the product.

It is easy to see the comparisons to Rudyard Kipling and Robert Service, but Culbert is less polished. Most ballads are a fun jaunt.

A threat made good, the mountain stood,
In peaks of grandeur yet untold
Where ramparts rose like virgin snows
And forests lay in dusk-like mould.

But it is when Culbert writes in his own style that he shines. Short pieces like "A Fragment" are gems—sharp and naked.

It is particularly fascinating to read between the poems. Written over 15 years, they are Polaroids in stanza of a man first disdainful of the city, hopeful of the restorative transformation of the wilderness, in awe of his own youth, and the power and impartiality of the peaks. As they progress, however, he becomes jaded, perhaps indifferent himself.

A bland why-botherness pervades
The savage drive of challenged youth,
A flavour has been lost, in truth
I lack the will.

His words can be hard to follow, but in truth he is not shy to tackle the ambiguous, harder concepts, like the weight of clouds on a soul, or the solidity of tent walls after a month of rain. His words strike a chord to the memory of long waits.

One wonders if, in all the railing against the gods of greed and neon, Culbert didn't find any Norse gods behind the wind and became disappointed due to his own built imagination.

Yet, at the end, his vision lingers. And it is a romantic one; of personified and powerful peaks clashing. Perhaps he lost his gods in order to succeed in the end by offering them up to us.

—Jerry Auld

The Weekender Effect: Hyperdevelopment in Mountain Towns

by Robert William Sandford, Rocky Mountain Books (2008)

There are a few titles one could have chosen for this book, such as *Too Much of a Good Thing Isn't,* or *Home is Where the Heart is Bigger than the Wallet,* or *People + Place + Soul = Culture*.

Either way, the powerful message contained in the compact-sized hardcover book *The Weekender Effect*, by Robert William Sanford (known comfortably around Canmore as Bob), would be the same. That is, when a community formed organically over time by residents motivated primarily by a deep and uncompromising love of place begins to be overwhelmed by part-time newcomers who proceed to change it into a fast-paced reflection of their full-time urban homes. Those whose heart and soul created what made the town attractive in the first place are often made to feel as if they are being chased from their own homes, which are no longer desirable—or affordable.

Sandford states this phenomenon, often referred to as "amenity migration", has descended like a plague of acquisition by those with the means to do so in one mountain community after another across the western U.S. for several decades. What makes it all the more disheartening is to watch as it rapaciously overcomes one's own hometown.

"Terms like 'amenity migration' do not describe what happened in my town," writes Sandford. "In my estimation, it is an outrage to characterize what is happening to the West in such egregiously simple terms. We did not experience 'amenity migration' in the town I live in. What we experienced was downright dispossession."

And while Sandford never identifies Canmore, where he has lived in his primary and only residence since 1981, as his hometown, it matters not, since any Canmorite who has been here longer than five years will see their hometown's blemished reflection clearly page after page, chapter after chapter.

No doubt anyone who has lived in Canmore since before 2000—when the population stood at 10,500, or about 65 per cent of what it is today, and fully double what it was a decade earlier in 1990—will identify with much of which Sandford speaks. Quite likely they'll fondly reminisce of a time when their hometown didn't have or need traffic lights. A time when rather than honk impatiently at the sight of two locals conversing between rolled-down car windows in the middle of a downtown intersection, motorists might instead recognize a neighbour and join in the conversation.

But then, more than 30 per cent of Canmore's population does not live here full-time, to which Sandford replies, "when a mountain town approaches 40 per cent part-time residency, the sense of community begins to implode."

What long-time Canmore residents—those who haven't yet fled to other small-for-the-time-being towns in interior B.C.—are witnessing, Sandford suggests, "is nothing less than a complete transformation of landscape and culture."

As part of his motivation for writing this book, Sandford admits in his preface, "passionate and powerful sense of localness has only barely been articulated."

Throughout the pages of *The Weekender Effect*, Sandford proceeds to not only articulate that connection to place and community, but also to suggest some crucial steps for preserving it in communities that feel themselves under siege from powerful and persuasive outside interests.

Change he argues, does not have to mean a complete surrender of all that is meaningful to those who established a community, while at the same time long-time residents need realize that not all those who are recent arrivals seek to take more than they have to give.

Among several suggestions is that which pleads small towns should encourage "small locally owned businesses rather than big operations owned by outside interests that have targeted where you live as a profitable outpost of globalization." By harbouring businesses such as chains and big-box retailers, small-town governments hand over decisions that affect their own home to people in office towers in Toronto and Calgary, thus handing over their own uniqueness with it.

The key, Sandford states, is for small mountain communities to believe in the value of what they have, and to keep those outside interests pushing a money-based set of values from reshaping the community in their own image.

"No matter how you promote it, no matter how much spin the developers put on it, a city of wealthy weekenders will never feel or function like a mountain town," Sandford writes. "In many ways, it is far easier to build houses and streets than it is to build the kind of local associations and cultural traditions that make it worthwhile living in those houses and pleasurable to walk those streets."

In the end, in the face of the new West, Sandford writes, we must reverse the traditions of the old West, those of picking up and moving in search of greener pastures as soon as the place we're in ceases to be what we want it to be.

"We have to stay and stand up for where we live," he states. "We have to create the next best West."

—Lynn Martel

Remembrances

Charles "Chuck" Kane
1933–2008

Tragically, on December 24, 2008, Dad was killed in a vehicle accident en route to visit us in Alberta for Christmas.

Dad was born in Wilcox, Saskatchewan, in 1933. He spent his childhood and young-adult life in Vancouver and the West Coast. His management career soon took him back to the prairies, to Estevan, Saskatchewan, in 1963, where he managed the brick plant for seven years. In 1970, he moved his family to Kamloops, B.C., where he managed Balcrete Building Supplies. He was the plant manager of Thompson Rivers University for many years, from which he retired to enjoy time doing what he loved.

Climbing, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and travelling were just a few of Chuck's loves. Over the past 25 years, Dad told us about his many treks in the Rockies, and of the Stanley Mitchell and Elizabeth Parker huts, where he volunteered countless hours being a hut custodian. He was extremely honoured that he could fill those shoes. He had so many entertaining stories to tell of his times there, and about all the great people he had met from all corners of the world. He always took such a genuine and sincere interest in other people's lives and could remember their experiences in such great detail. It was quite impressive. His fellow climbers were a real inspiration to him and his zest for living.

Not only did Dad have a love of the outdoors and the people he met, he truly loved his family. He is survived by his three children: Robert Kane of Creston, B.C., Leslie Brown (David) of Blackie, Alberta, and Brad Kane (Lana Calder) of Barrie, Ontario. He was pre-deceased by his wife, Beverley, in 1993. He also has two grandchildren, Levi and Parker Kane, sons of Robert, and two surviving sisters, Beverly of Cowichan Bay, B.C., and Pearl (Wilf) Gray of Chilliwack. He is pre-deceased by brother Murray of Ashcroft, B.C., and sister Lorraine of Vancouver.

Dad left this world far too soon. We were not ready to say good-bye and miss

him terribly. He had many more plans to travel and climb. He had more friends to make and volunteer work to do. There is one more star in the heavens above, and one less footprint here on earth. Go Rest High Upon That Mountain, Dad. We love you.

—Leslie Brown

Bev Bendell Downing
1943–2008

I had the good fortune of knowing Bev Bendell for many years and find it hard to believe that she is no longer with us. Bev was an important part of the many different circles she travelled in. She was a key member of the Alpine Club of Canada, both at the section and national level.

My personal involvement with Bev was through the Club as she was one of the first people I got to know when I joined, and she was a key mentor. She was chair of the Rocky Mountain Section when I was vice chair; and when I moved into the chair position, she filled the vice chair. She encouraged me, listened to me and laughed with me. She was always there when I needed advice. Bev always stepped up when someone was needed, but she was never one to seek the spotlight. She was happy working in whatever capacity was required. In many ways, she was the foundation of the Rocky Mountain Section.

Bev was involved with the ACC for many years in many ways. She was staff, she sat on the Mountain Culture Committee, worked on the Rocky Mountain Section executive and several other national committees—and these are just the areas I personally know about. Because of her deep knowledge about everything to do with the ACC, she had the ear of the national executive. If someone had a question, Bev would have the answer. This level

of involvement resulted in Bev receiving the A.O. Wheeler Legacy Award in 1996.

Some of my best memories of Bev have nothing to do with the ACC. Bev lived a few blocks away from me and frequently popped by to drop something off or pick something up. I always invited her in for a coffee, tea or beer, but she was always on the run and never had time. One evening, she surprised me and accepted. It was a beautiful summer evening so we enjoyed a beer outside on the deck. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed someone walking up the sidewalk and right into my house. Much to my surprise, it was Bob and Vi Sandford. Bob said he was out for a stroll and happened to notice us sitting on the deck so decided to join us. This happened several more times in the next five minutes until I finally realized it was a surprise party for my 40th birthday.

Another fond memory was when a group of us were skiing at Highwood Pass one Halloween. Bev had brought along her puppy, Goblin, who was an extremely well-behaved dog. While we were getting our gear organized, Bev let Goblin run around and sure enough, the Kananaskis Country rangers descended and gave Bev an off-leash ticket. Not quite sure what to say to Bev afterward, I offered, "You should have asked the ranger if the ticket was good for the day or was it a per occurrence ticket?" She laughed so hard that before you knew it, we had climbed to the top of the run and she was still laughing.

Bev moved out of the Bow Valley in 2005 when she married Joe Downing. I was simultaneously sad to see her leave the area and elated that she had found someone to share her life with. Not long after, she learned that she had a terminal illness. Rather than succumbing, she lived the rest of her life to its fullest. During that time, she donated funds to the ACC's Mountain Culture Committee and Library Fund, toward the rebuilding of Fay Hut and to the Canmore SPCA.

Bev was one of the most cheerful, positive, helpful, energetic and genuine people I have ever met. I miss her. I consider myself fortunate for having been a part of her life. Thanks, Bev, you always will be in my heart.

—Rod Plasman

Peter Sydney Vallance
1926–2008

Peter vallance died in August 2008 after a challenging illness, giving his family the gift of grace in adversity.

There is a yellowed and ancient envelope in his grandson's room that Eric Brooks retrieved from the summit cairn of Mount Louis that says:

Mt. Louis
August 9, 1946
Guide – L. Grassi, Canmore
Peter Vallance, Calgary
By South Face

The family legend is that Peter climbed Louis largely at the behest of his father Sydney Vallance who had climbed Edith to take pictures of the ascent. His wife and soulmate of nearly 60 years, Jean, says that Peter reported to her that he was scared to death and that his mother, Doris, gave him serious heck for shredding his runners.

Peter had an auspicious beginning to his career in the mountains. He was allowed to attend the A.O. Wheeler camp in Rogers Pass (1941) when he was 15, contrary to the then rules, and climbed Tupper, traversed Castor and Pollux, and climbed Avalanche. He did the first traverse of the Mitre during the Paradise Valley camp with Eric Brooks in 1944, and attended the Eremite Camp in 1945.

It wouldn't necessarily be mountaineering "accomplishments" for which Peter might be remembered. When climbing Tupper on the 40th anniversary of his ascent, guide Dave Smith asked Peter as they rounded the Hermit if he remembered this part of the climb. Peter responded with some aggravation: "If I remembered this I wouldn't be here!" He wasn't enamoured by more serious mountaineering, but rose to the challenge if the occasion presented itself.

What is and was remarkable was the enduring and abiding love for outdoor adventuring that infected everything Peter did outside of his career as a family lawyer in Calgary. In 1966, he became fast friends with many of the pioneering Everest team on a trip into the Pumori basecamp. He took an active part in the 1967 Centennial Camp in the Yukon. He served as a Camps Committee chair for several years and wound up the

Middle White River on horseback. He was a heli-ski pioneer in the '70s in the days of the old two-passenger Bell B-1 bubble-fronted helicopter based out of abandoned logging camps long before the Bugaboo Lodge.

In the '70s, Peter and Jean discovered northern canoe voyaging and in the next two decades explored thousands of

kilometres of true northern wilderness; Indian Lake, the Mackenzie twice, Old Crow from Summit Lake, down the Porcupine to Ft. Yukon.

Peter was a member of the ACC from 1944 to 2008—64 years! The 1970 plaque on the Fryatt Hut reads: "The Sydney Vallance Hut presented in his honor by his son." Sydney was able to fly in to the hut. We were never sure of his reaction to the fact that Peter's dad seemed at least as impressed by the helicopter flight as he was by the hut.

There wasn't anything about the mountains that Peter did not love. In his room at the care facility in Invermere there were four pictures of the mountain meadows above Sunshine near Eohippus Lake with Assiniboine in the background, all resplendent in fall colour. Everyday he rediscovered the pleasure and peace of the alpine. If good souls wander, no doubt that is where Peter rests, in the high country of the Rockies.

—David Vallance

Gerta Smythe
1937–2008

When Gerta Heher suffered a broken arm as a child in Graz, Austria, she received such comfort from the nurses, she knew that this would be her vocation. From an early age her passion was exploring the mountains, but Austria in the shadow of WWII had limited opportunities for recreation. After finishing her nursing training, she heard that in Canada work could be found close to the mountains; she was on a plane within a month.

Arriving in Hinton, Alberta, Gerta met Ken Smythe, an itinerant Australian, and by 1961 they had started married life in Jasper. Gerta thrived on being in the heart of the mountains and seized every chance to climb and ski the Rockies' peaks. Despite the busy demands of raising four children—Edward, Anthony, Vincent and Maria—and her nursing career, she notched up some notable ascents.

In 1971, the family moved to Victoria and Gerta soon found new adventures on Vancouver Island. As an active member of the Alpine Club of Canada and when already over 50, she climbed all nine summits designated as "island qualifiers". She was proud to be one of the first women to achieve this IQ distinction. Never one to miss an opportunity, she joined expeditions to the Caucasus, Himalayas and Andes, as well as countless climbing and ski trips in B.C. She retained her climbing ethos from her early days in the Alps, excited to accompany a guide on routes that challenged her. As strong in body as in mind, Gerta would regularly outpace her companions and lead the summit celebration with a joyful polka dance, a song played on her recorder and a sharing of home baking.

Gerta's craftsmanship was legendary. For family and friends' birthdays she produced exquisite knitted or crocheted items. She loved to give and to share, always claiming she received more. She and Ken sponsored SOS children, hosted international students and welcomed a stream of extended family from abroad. Their lakeside home was a hub of activity for the family. Gerta was in her element as *Oma,* taking any of her nine grandchildren on hikes and ski trips, sharing her love of nature with them and delighting in their emerging personalities. She swam in her lake through most seasons, wearing a wet suit on days that kept lesser mortals firmly indoors. Despite her adventurous and independent spirit, Gerta kept the traditional "*Kinder, Kirche, Kuche*" values of her upbringing. She was a devout Catholic, and volunteer work was a big

part of her life, from playing the piano for seniors to acting as warden in a local park.

Gerta was always looking forward. In her 60th year, she climbed Huascaran, Peru's highest peak at 6,768 metres. For her 70th, she dreamed of climbing Mount Assiniboine—but it was not to be. In spring 2008, she was struck by advanced cancer, and was taken from us too suddenly and too soon.

—Catrin Brown

"Mount Sir Donald", acrylic painting by Chris Penn (2004)

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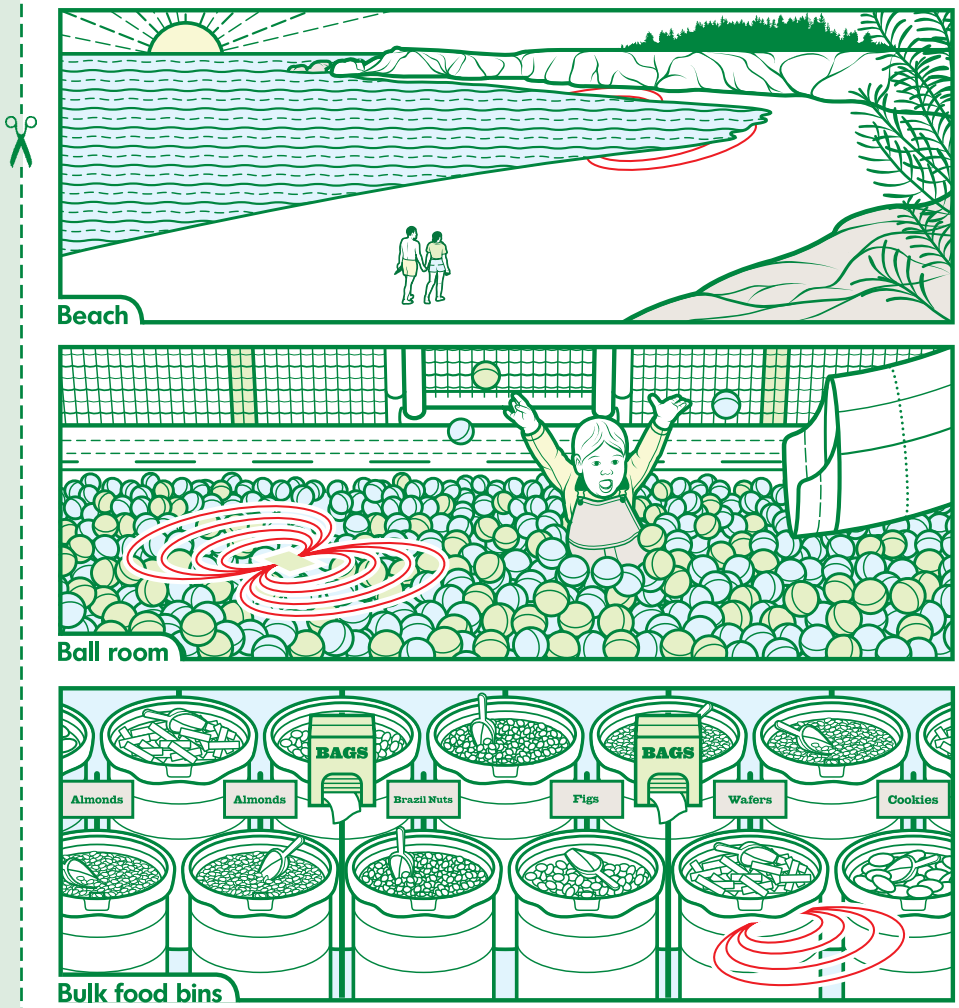
WINES OF CALIFORNIA

Photo: Dave Garrow, Mt. Logan, Yukon © Cory Richards



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