Canadian Alpine Journal

2010


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The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 93, 2010

Features

The Cultural Ranges

Jeremy Blumel on pitch three during the first free ascent of Space Buttress on the west face of Mount Gimli in the Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains, B.C. (see page 114). Photo: Evan Stevens

Cover: Louis-Philippe Ménard on pitch six of La Cavale on Cap Trinité, Sanguenay National Park, Quebec (see page 12). Photo: Mike Landkroon

Previous page: Eamonn Walsh cruising up snow slopes on the Southwest Face of Mount Fryatt during its first winter ascent (see page 130). Photo: Rob Smith

Back cover: Craig McGee on the upper pitches of the Toothless Tower during the first ascent of Defiance on Mount Combatant in the Waddington Range, Coast Mountains, B.C. (see page 91). Photo: Joshua Lavigne

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Editorial

Balancing Act

We all strive for balance—in life, in work, in play. Even within our own climbing we often jump around the checkerboard of different genres, delving into cracks, pockets, plastic, snow and ice. *The Canadian Alpine Journal* also seeks balance in its pursuit for equilibrium between the varied facets that make up Canadian mountain culture. I am convinced that the 2010 *CAJ* may very well be the most well-rounded volume to date. Our nine feature articles deliver an impressive cross-section of the multiplicity within: Jerry Auld explores fiction, Jaime Hood examines mountain science, Karl Ricker debunks history and Jeremy Frimer embodies the "everyclimber".

To better acknowledge this cornucopia of variety, I welcome you, the reader, to the unveiling of a new section—The Cultural Ranges. I must admit, though, it is essentially The Inner Ranges of past Journals but with a tweaked title. The Inner Ranges was introduced by my esteemed predecessor, Geoff Powter. As a psychologist (his real job), he recognized the need for the *CAJ* to promote the fantastic narratives that were more introspective than the standard expedition report. This became an arena to explore the unmapped regions of the mind that often surface when faced with the mental challenge of mountaineering.

Enter my editorial dilemma. In addition to reflective essays, I receive poetry, fiction, humour and art, as well as historical and scientific pieces. They stretch beyond the scope that The Inner Ranges was originally intended (despite being slotted there in the past), but there are never enough submissions in each of these sub-categories to warrant their own separate section. So, they get grouped together as the typically well-written misfits. It was time for a title that reflected this mountain mélange. Lacking the creative juices to come up with a witty tag, I sought counsel from my sage advisors. Suggestions included Mountain Mix, Nuts and Bolts, Beyond the Climb and my personal favourite, Cirque de *CAJ*. Dr. Zac Robinson of the history department at the University of Alberta (his dissertation was on Canadian Rockies' mountaineering history) won with the new name.

Culture and diversity aside, the rad, hardcore and gnar-gnar is, of course, alive and kicking. Canadian alpinists were on a rampage this past year, most notably making first free (and almost free) ascents of big alpine walls like Mount Asgard's South Tower on Baffin Island, Central Howser Tower's west face in the Bugaboos, Mount Gimli's west buttress in the Valhallas and The Insicor on Mount Combatant in the Waddington Range. All of these routes had burly pitches of 5.12 that involved remote and committing climbing.

As for ice, the usual suspects, Eamonn Walsh and Raphael Slawinski, were trumped by J. Mills of Canmore. Once known as "Nordegg's best ice climber," J. gets the unofficial editor's choice award for climbing above-and-beyond the call of duty. His tick list for 2009-10 includes a new variation on the North Buttress of Mount Hunter in Alaska, a free (and second) ascent of Suntori on Mount Wilson, the first single-push (and almost free) ascent of the north face of Mount Alberta, and a handful of long, difficult ice and mixed routes, the best being The Undertow (climbed with Steve Holeczi and Mike Verwey) on the north face of Tangle Ridge located near the Columbia Icefield in Jasper National Park. This 600-metre-long alpine waterfall was toted by the grandmaster himself, Barry Blanchard, as "the ice route of the year, if not the decade." No small compliment.

As if that isn't enough to celebrate, our 2010 cover is a first ascent of a different kind. Quebec has never been featured on the front of the *CAJ*. In fact, there have only ever been two eastern covers before (Ontario in 2000 and Newfoundland in 2007). *La belle province* is well represented; there are also two bilingual feature articles, all of which is fitting as we welcome the newly inducted Laurentian Section to the Alpine Club of Canada.

This brings me to a part of the Journal that is always difficult. The Remembrance section hit very close to home this year. I lost two climbing mentors within six months of each other: Dave Thomson and Guy Lacelle, both age 55 and pushing their limits as hard as ever. Fourteen years ago, Dave took me under his wing and introduced me to the dark art of mixed climbing. I was to be his young padawan. I met Guy a few years later when I began competing in mixed climbing competitions. Guy was already a legend, so I was beside myself when he asked one day if I was free to climb with him. It was with wet eyes and a heavy heart that I had to edit the tributes to these climbing icons. Please raise your tumbler of single malt, or your Nalgene of glacial meltwater, and pay homage to Dave and Guy.

The 2010 *CAJ* is dedicated to mentors. Sadly, we say goodbye to two—but welcome many new ones. It is today's adventurers who fill the roles of inspirational mentors as they follow the humble, yet very large, bootsteps of our fallen heroes.

—Sean Isaac

Clouds as Tall as Mountains

Fiction by Jerry Auld
Illustrations by Jeremy Blumel

Everyone comes to the
mountains for a different reason.
Certainly I didn't come looking for
the highest peaks that **never** existed.

But what have I been searching for? These last years were so busy, yet now I'm not sure why I pursued a degree. That feeling of shocked dissociation kept me silent on the drive to the mountains. And even they look new and sharp, unlike what I remember. From Calgary, at night, in the depths of the university library, or when the mountains were obscured by clouds, I'd imagined the peaks that should stand there: towering crags, splintered and soaring. I thought this was normal, everyone must do it. Now I'm wondering. I seem to have forgotten the reason that made me study in the first place. When we drove through the Stoney Indian Reserve, I remembered a Navajo chant popular in the poster shops on campus:

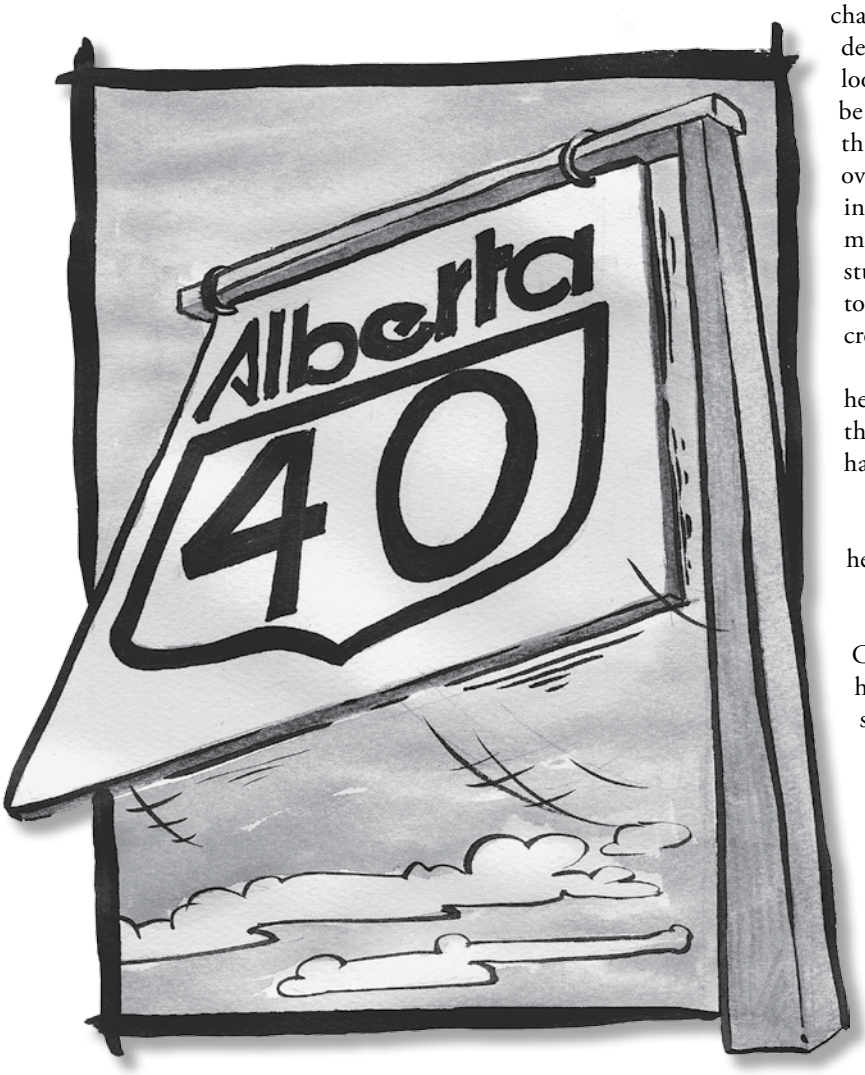
Everything forgotten returns to the circling winds.

The only thing I know for certain is that underneath everything is rock: solid, hard stone. Oceans and cities and forests can disguise this; even in the mountains we can lose sight of it. I grew up here, I've always seen the peaks, standing on the horizon, fading to a dark blue as the sky pales, blotted by the night. But I need to remember this.

Now I'm in the Front Ranges at the eastern edge of the Canadian Rockies, standing on the hot boulders at the base of a steep crag, paying out the rope as the Lion, above, reaches for a hold with heavy chalked fingers. I call him the Lion because it reminds me of who he is. It's better than his real name. I watch him and hope I'll be able to follow. The sun is warm on my bare legs. We climb together today on our way to work tomorrow. He's got me a summer job on the Kananaskis park trail crew.

We're above an emerald lake, ringed with a dusky pine carpet that, with the foreshortening of elevation, looks like a bed of nails some guru may lie down upon. A river issues here, filing back the limey fingers of stone. In the distance rests the flatness of the prairie, the end of the Great Plains. I can see the smudge of Calgary, the sliver of light reflecting from the tall library tower where only hours ago I slipped my final paper under a featureless door. I met the Lion on that campus, years ago. Closer spreads the town of Canmore, as if it has been washed up against the range and left to dry, like a fossilized jellyfish. The road winds into Kananaskis park, following the path of least resistance, and where the trees have been torn up, the earth reveals the same stone as the crags.

A clank like a broken bell. The Lion grunts and I look up to see him hammer a piton into a crack and clip the rope to it through a carabiner and sling. His hips shimmy with a hula of climbing gear, sparkling in the afternoon sun.



On the drive up I'd barely managed to explain my own changing circumstance, let alone ask him about his accident last year. When we reached the base of the route and looked out over the valley, the Lion said, "These trees must be like weeds to you geologists." The Lion is always saying things like that, trying to catch my goat. He was hunched over a disembowelled pack of bright rope loops and climbing gear, chewing some food he'd found. We haven't seen much of each other the past two years while I finished my studies. His truck sits below on the side of the road, next to a highway sign that swings in the wind like a raven croaking a warning.

Now he's above, pulling up past a shelf. His shoulders heave, and he moves with more skill than I remember. In the last two years he has climbed and improved while my hands have softened on the edges of library racks.

When he pauses I call up, "How do you feel?"

"Chicken," he says. He shakes his helmet. "No headspace."

The first climb of the season: always a blind date.

The Lion digs at a horizontal crack of loose chips. Can I trust him, or is our friendship like this limestone, hard and solid-looking but friable, having a tendency to shatter? Handholds here are notoriously portable.

The rope jigs and teases like a fishing line as he pulls out of sight. A pause, not short. Then he calls down that he's secure.

I pull the rope from my belay device and feel the butterflies inhabiting my guts. The rope rises as if charmed until it comes tight on my harness.

I step up and feel the rock. It's warm, rough, passive, and inviolable. Everything I want in a lover. I pull my fingertips down on an edge, step up on a nub, and feel my other leg swing heavy. I push up,

scraping my free foot onto purchase, already forgetting my map of the holds. Getting started is the key. I tell myself not to pull too hard, to trust my feet and stand on my legs, on my skeleton, but the motion seems foreign, translated.

After unclipping the first piton, I'm looking up from under the lip of my helmet for the next moves. I reach high and wide, finding small ledges but not committing my strength and weight to them. Backing off. The rope hangs patient. My fingertips feel so soft that the abrasive smear of a hold seems too painful to carry me. Winter fingers. My tips mash into pockets and as easily they roll out, like putty as if I can't scrape the rock. My shoes slip and skid, relearning balance. Trust, I say to them. I've done this before, but it was years ago. Now I see a hold and instinctively dart to it, then disdain it. I reach above the shelf but find nothing. Just smooth stone, washed with years of water over its sloping deck. What the Lion made easy is indecipherable. I wish I could create a hold. I feel like I'm flipping through an exam for a multiple-choice section that isn't there. My breath dusts the rock. With my wrists cocked back, my knees start to stutter.

I'm a riot of questions. *How did he lead this? How good is his anchor? Should I do a master's or get a job downtown?* I flutter over the rope, seeking any purchase. It didn't use to be like this. I don't want to fall and test the rope, not on the first hard part. I force myself to commit. Push on a toe, scrape fingernails, palm an edge. A body-memory shifts free from the mental sediment. I move up with baby steps, feeling better.

At the anchor I clip in; my hand shakes. It takes will to let go, to set my feet and lean back in my harness, staring at the thin rope that holds me there. I should have checked the harness again: the vision of the webbing blowing open in a plume of chalk is too immediate. I am aware of gravity, pulling behind me as it scrutinizes each act for negligence, for opportunity.

Pressed against the Lion, I feel the heat of his shoulder, the heavy muscle, the flex of his thigh. He shifts and hands me the gear: brass nuts on wires for slotting into cracks, metal camming devices for expanding into pockets, all attached by gated carabiners and slings of bright nylon loops. Through the smell of dust and his breath and my sweat and the spruce below, he smiles.

The extra gear weights my harness. The hammer especially seems like an unwilling slave; its iron was mined, smelted, forged, and then returned here to beat spikes into the stone fissures. The Lion plasters a creased route map against the rock. In pencil he has marked the ledges, cracks, and possible anchors. The climb goes straight up and then flares left under a bulge, forming a pinching crack. The paper flutters. I wish it had more detail, that it was a book of secrets that would take an eternity to read.

"That'll be fun," I say, looking up, trying for conviction.

I shake my head, rasp my helmet brim on the rock, and start up on my pitch. The crack is vertical, and my fingers dig because I don't believe that the friction of my feet will stick to the flat surface. I pull down on a jammed finger and feel pain. I weight it even more to move; the pain means it's too tight to slip. Two moves later I dig a chip from a hold and fling it, the flecks of mica sparkling. My knuckles are starting to bleed. The throb is reassuring. I have the negotiation underway now, we're bruising each other: neither the route nor I will leave unchanged.

I gaze down at the Lion. He looks back, unblinking. But the boulders below appear far and hard. I don't have any protection in yet. If I drop, the Lion's anchor may not hold and I could rip both of us off the cliff. It's called a factor-two fall—directly onto the anchor without anything to slow me. In my structural metals class, I once read that bridge workers were taught, if they fell, to throw their rivet hammers down, to break the water tension. But from here, nothing will break the cruelty of the earth below.

Each movement up strengthens the sense of gravity. Every time I look to place a piece of protection I drain strength from my arms, yet every move up increases my height and the exponential force of a fall. The Lion mutters. I start to panic, looking for a crack that could hold a piton or a wire-nut while my forearms burn. I snarl and try to will my hands to hold, but the numbness is creeping. The limestone is tan, not dulled grey by

rainfall, so I must be right under the overhang. There's quartz laced across the rock, little nubbins my fingers are too clumsy to use. A crack constricts. Fumbling with my rack I snag a brass nut and snug it in, clipping the rope in a lurching grab. It won't break a fall: the rope movement could lift and displace it, I still have to move, but the nut fills my hold. Fear is consuming the exposure of my mind, flaring to white, curling the edges.

A slow curtain of shame blunts my fear. I slam my fingers into a pocket and shimmy up by my feet. The long lip of the traverse crack is at eye level. It forms a shadow as I reach. I'm close enough to lick it, my mouth dry and chalky as the stone. The sharp edge cuts into my palm and I want to impale it there, into my bone, to shoulder up and drop in an elbow and rest.

The Lion cries sharply, something indistinct, probably a comment about my bad form. I walk my feet up on outstretched arms. There is nowhere to stick any gear. The groove is deep and runs in gaps under the curving bulge. I start to move, quickly now, desperate. As soon as the crack narrows, enabling me to place a cam, I do, yanking hard to test it, my feet slipping.

I reach into the crack. It's cold inside, and slippery. Something in the dark backs up as my pale fingers push in. I jam my fist, daring anything within.

I should know how the gap formed, but it's like blanking on a test. Other thoughts come instead: like how the Lion's partner died last year in a crevasse.

The rope drag becomes heavy as I pull sidewise. Each step to the left means that if I slip I'll drop and swing, grating along the surface, probably pulling my protection. My legs quiver. The gap leads slowly upwards.

I scrape the rock white with a brass nut as I fumble it into a constriction. Normally, that colour would mean something, tell me the composition of the rock, but now I have no memory.

Arms numb, I move without regard. Just up, along the crack, as long as it will take me. All I can see is the next metre; maybe that's all I've ever seen. Now I want it to keep going, angling up to the vertical, continuing this essential movement where to stop is to die—and where there is no room to reflect. Just keep going. past exhaustion, past decisions.

Finally, I reach the top. I grab the slings anchored there. The Lion grunts again and I ignore him. I secure myself and prepare to belay. My forearms are dense as clubs. My mind is humming. I pull in the rope, wondering if the wind just started.

Soon the Lion appears, edging and traversing, fast and involved. He tests everything, checking slings and the effectiveness of the placements. For a fleeting moment, his eyes are visible, deep brown like tunnels. When he pulls up beside me, it's not his physical body I sense but his intention coming close.

After I secure him, time becomes slow and expansive, so that anything is possible. We hang there with all the time in the world. His arms are lacerated. He points. My legs are the same, as though I've dragged them through barbed wire.

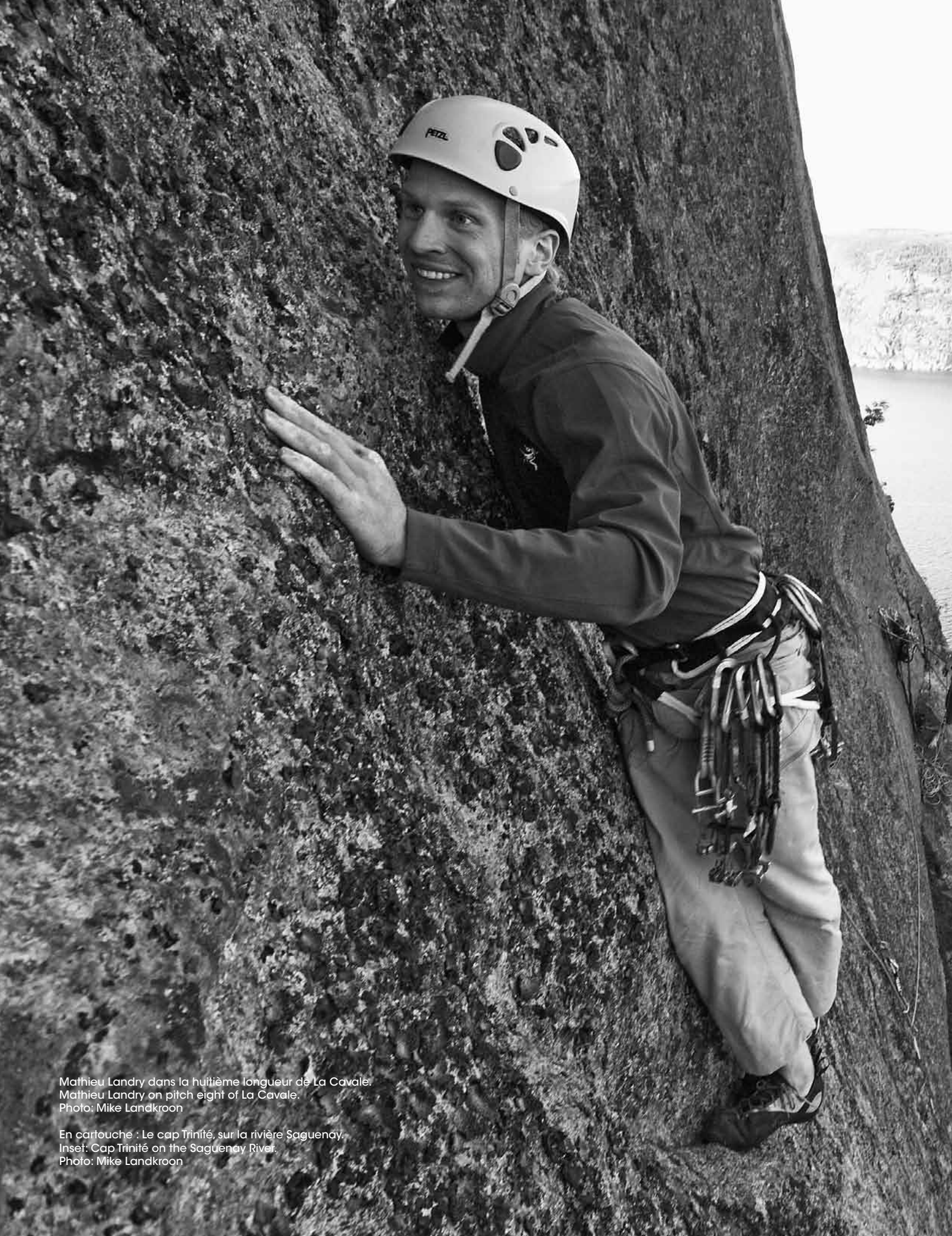
"Horseflies," he says, disgusted. I hadn't even noticed.

I turn to look out, across the valley. In the early summer's warmth, the snow collecting on the eastern crags bleeds black water stains like a claw has mauled their stony faces. The lake below reflects nothing in its milky haze. The sweep of the peaks is bigger than I'd imagined, so big it becomes a headache. I feel as though I've never seen any of it before.

Note: Excerpt from *Hooker & Brown* by Jerry Auld, published in 2009 by Brindle & Glass. Printed with permission.

About the Author

Jerry Auld lives in Canmore and explores the mountains via boots and books. He believes in creating and reimagining the stories of the Rockies through fiction to reawaken the forgotten, and divine the meaning and allure that the peaks hold for us. *Hooker & Brown* is his first novel.



Mathieu Landry dans la huitième longueur de La Cavale.
Mathieu Landry on pitch eight of La Cavale.
Photo: Mike Landkroon

En cartouche : Le cap Trinité, sur la rivière Saguenay.
Inset: Cap Trinité on the Saguenay River.
Photo: Mike Landkroon

Le cap Trinité

Stéphane Perron

Le cap trinité est la paroi la plus impressionnante du Nord-est. Du haut de ses 250 mètres, il domine un fjord majestueux dans une sublime ambiance sauvage. Il est parcouru par de nombreuses fissures de granit fantastiques dont la qualité n'a rien à envier aux plus belles voies du Yosemite. Le cap Trinité est un fabuleux terrain d'aventure pour les grimpeurs de l'Est. Ici, même l'approche, en canot ou en kayak sur le fjord, est mémorable. Il faut tenir compte des marées, des vagues et du vent. Je me rappelle particulièrement ce matin frisquet du mois d'octobre. Mon partenaire n'avait pas l'habitude du kayak, et il y avait d'assez fortes vagues. Soudain, un vlimeux coup de vent est venu conspirer avec les vagues pour renverser son embarcation et l'envoyer goûter l'eau salée (et très froide !) de la baie Éternité. Rebutés, nous avons terminé la journée sur les falaises d'escalade sportive de Chicoutimi.

Peut-être en raison de ce caractère sauvage et de l'approche aventureuse (et les infernales mouches noires l'été), le cap Trinité est peu développé pour l'escalade libre. Jusqu'à l'automne 2009, il n'y avait que quatre voies en libre sur le cap. D'abord, complètement à droite de la face principale, Les Joyeux Lurons, qui n'a pas été répétée très souvent, malgré sa difficulté modérée. Établie dans les années 80, La Vire du curé Dallaire a été grimpée un peu plus fréquemment, bien que sa réputation lui attribue un *off-width* à la longueur clé. La fissure n'est pourtant pas si large que ça, mais vue d'en bas elle est assez effrayante pour décourager les âmes sensibles ! Les Joyeux Lurons et La Vire du curé souffrent de leur manque de fréquentation et sont donc dans un état qui permet de déguster l'escalade « bio » du cap Trinité.

En 2001, deux jeunes Québécois, Jean-François Beaulieu et Jean-Pierre (Peewee) Ouellet, qui en étaient tous les deux à leurs premières armes en escalade de fissure, se sont donné pour mission de libérer la voie artificielle Les Grands Galets. Cette voie classique située en plein centre de la grande face principale, juste sous les grands toits du sommet, est longue, variée et absolument fantastique. Après des semaines d'efforts pour nettoyer et enchaîner, les deux amis avaient établi une voie en libre magnifique, sans ajouter de protections fixes. Le passage clé est un dièdre qui se grimpe en pontage délicat. Il y a un autre dièdre, fermé et très physique, plus haut, une traversée sur de mauvaises prises de pieds sous un toit, et un dulfer aussi court qu'intense à la dernière longueur. J'ai répété cette voie en solo encordé à l'automne 2008. C'est l'une des plus belles voies que j'ai parcourues. Elle est grimpée plusieurs fois par saison, surtout en artif, ce qui la garde propre.

La Cavale est une autre voie très propre, cette fois-ci grâce aux efforts de Louis-Philippe Ménard et ses copains. Louis-Philippe a découvert la ligne et il a effectué de multiples visites, accompagné de différents partenaires, pour nettoyer et grimper la voie. Elle comprend encore un mouvement ou deux de A0, qu'il espère éliminer cet été.

À l'automne 2009, je me suis donné une mission : augmenter le nombre de voies en libre sur le cap Trinité. J'ai passé les mois d'août et de septembre à travailler sur la face gauche du cap. Cette partie de la falaise a environ la moitié de la hauteur de la face droite, mais elle émerge directement de l'eau.

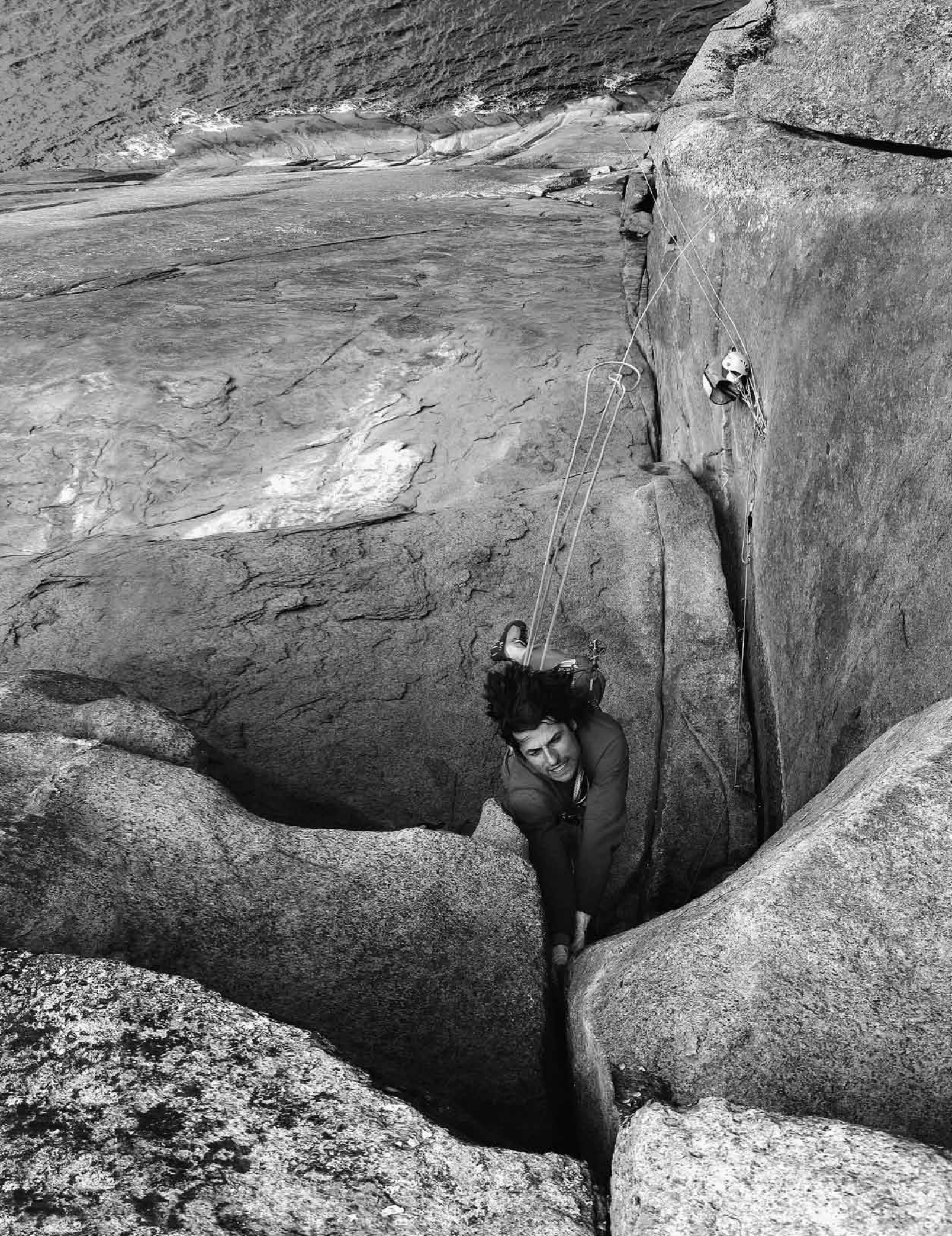
Cap trinité is the most impressive wall in the northeast. Its ramparts loom 250 metres above an ancient fjord creating a sublime environment. It is riddled with fantastic cracks that are in no way envious of their western counterparts in Yosemite. The Cap, as it is locally nicknamed, is an important stomping ground for the climbers of the East. Here, even the approach, by canoe or kayak on the Saguenay River, is memorable. You have to pay close attention to the tides, the waves and the wind. One particularly crisp autumn morning, my climbing partner was feeling rather unconfident in his kayak due to the pushier-than-normal swell. Suddenly, a strong gale in combination with the cresting waves sent him head first into the cold salt water. Not feeling the love, we bailed to the nearby Chicoutimi crags for some low-stress, sunny sport climbing.

Perhaps because of this wild aura and adventuresome approach (and the horrible summer black-fly season), Cap Trinité has not seen major development for free climbing. Up until autumn 2009, only four free routes breached its granite flanks. The first to have been climbed was Les Joyeux Lurons, completely on the right of the principal face. It has not been repeated very often, in spite of its moderate difficulty. Established in the '80s, La Vire du curé Dallaire has seen a little more attention, but still not much. Its reputation suffers due to a crux off-width, which seen from below can be discouraging for the faint of heart. Les Joyeux Lurons and La Vire du curé Dallaire both suffer from their lack of frequentation, thus are in a state of organic reclamation.

In 2001, two young Quebecois, Jean-François Beaulieu and Jean-Pierre (Peewee) Ouellet, both pretty new to crack climbing at the time, started on a mission to free climb the classic aid route Les Grands Galets. This route, which goes right in the middle of the main face, just under the large roofs at the top, is long, varied and absolutely fantastic. After weeks of efforts to clean and redpoint the pitches, the two *amis* had established a classic free climb without adding any fixed protection. The crux of the route is a dihedral, which demands delicate opposition on micro-holds to ascend. There is another very physical dihedral higher up, a traverse on bad footholds under a roof, and a short but intense layback on the last pitch. I climbed this route rope-solo in fall 2008. It is one of the most beautiful routes I have ever done. It is climbed several times per season, most often with aid, which keeps it clean.

La Cavale is another very clean route, this time thanks to the efforts of Louis-Philippe Ménard and his friends. Louis-Philippe discovered the line and paid multiple visits over multiple years with various partners to clean and establish the line. The route still has a move or two of A0 that he plans to eliminate this summer.

Stéphane Perron en solo encordé dans la voie Haute Voltige.
Stéphane Perron rope-soloing Haute Voltige.
Photo: Mathilde Renaud



Ce qu'elle perd en hauteur, elle le gagne en ambiance ! La vire qui parcourt la base de la paroi est même submergée à marée haute. Il faut donc bien planifier son arrivée et son départ.

J'ai ouvert quatre nouvelles voies durant l'automne, dont trois en solitaire. Elles sont courtes, de trois à cinq longueurs, mais difficiles. Les deux variantes de Béluga — le Ventre et le Dos — sont à faire absolument pour les (rares) amateurs de fissures larges. J'ai trouvé des traces antérieures d'ascension artificielle sur les deux voies. La deuxième longueur du Ventre

In autumn 2009, I gave myself a goal: to increase the number of free routes on Cap Trinité. I spent September and August working on the left side of the face. This part of the cliff is approximately half the height of the right-hand side, but it emerges directly from the water. What it lacks in height, it makes up for with ambiance. Just add water to the base of any climb and exposure seems to increase exponentially. The ledge that traverses the base of the wall gets submerged at high tide, so it is necessary to plan your arrival and departure well.

Cap Trinité: (1) Le Dos (5.12+), (2) Le Ventre (5.11+), (3) Haute Voltige (5.13b), (4) Marée Haute (5.12b), (5) La Cavale (5.13b), (6) La Vire du curé Dallaire (5.11+), (7) Les Grands Galets (5.12d/13a), (8) Les Joyeux Lurons (5.11+). Photo: Mike Landkroon

est certainement l'un des plus durs *off-widths* dans l'Est. Quant au Dos, je ne l'ai grimpé qu'une fois et j'ai pris à sec sur la corde pour nettoyer, donc l'enchaînement attend toujours.

La voie Marée Haute est plus délicate et très soutenue. Elle est belle sur toute sa longueur. Quant à Haute Voltige, c'est la plus difficile des quatre. Son toit ahurissant à la quatrième longueur m'a obligé à tout donner pour arracher l'enchaînement, après plusieurs essais. J'y ai pris mes plus impressionnantes chutes en solo, juste à la sortie du toit ! La fissure qui fend le grand toit commence par de bons coincements de mains, mais elle se referme pour offrir un passage clé à coincements de doigts. Elle s'élargit à nouveau juste avant la sortie pour permettre un petit repos avant le difficile rétablissement sur le rebord du toit, directement au-dessus du Saguenay !

Comme dans les cas de Marée Haute et la variante du Dos de Béluga, j'ai ouvert cette voie en solitaire, en tête, en libre et à vue autant que possible. Mais étant donné que le rocher est généralement assez sale lors du premier passage, il m'arrive de prendre à sec pour nettoyer les fissures. J'essaie d'enchaîner à vue le plus possible et je nettoie en remontant aux poignées jumars. Ensuite j'y retourne plus tard pour l'enchaînement complet. Ouvrir en solitaire au cap Trinité est une option logique, puisqu'on évite ainsi d'exposer l'assureur aux chutes de pierre qui sont inévitables quand on explore du terrain nouveau. J'ai fait tomber beaucoup de roches lors de mes premières ascensions, donc j'était heureux que personne n'était en-dessous de moi. De plus, comme ce n'est pas toujours évident de dénicher des partenaires pour aller nettoyer des nouvelles voies, c'est souvent plus simple d'y aller seul.

Je compte poursuivre ma mission au printemps prochain. Dès qu'il fait beau, je vais charger mon kayak sur la voiture et rouler les trois heures de route qui séparent Québec du parc national du Saguenay. Après 20 minutes de kayak, je serai au pied de la plus belle escalade que le Québec peut offrir. Le potentiel est énorme, autant sur le cap Trinité que sur les autres parois des alentours. Le secteur pourrait bien devenir une destination majeure d'escalade traditionnelle. Les lignes sont là ; il suffit d'y mettre un peu d'énergie.

Résumé

Les Grands Galets (5.12d/13a, 8 longueurs), le cap Trinité, Québec. Stéphane Perron (solo encordé), septembre 2008.

Marée Haute (5.12b, 5 longueurs). PA : Stéphane Perron (solo encordé), août 2009.

Haute Voltige (5.13b, 4 longueurs). PAL : Stéphane Perron (solo encordé), août 2009.

Le Ventre (5.11+, 3 longueurs). PAL : Stéphane Perron, mai 2009.

À propos de l'auteur

Habitant de la ville de Québec, Stéphane enseigne la physique pendant la moitié de l'année. Il passe l'autre moitié sur la route, à grimper autant que possible — parfois même avec un compagnon de cordée.

I managed to open four new free routes in the autumn—three of them by myself using rope-solo techniques. They are short, between three and five pitches, but difficult. The two versions of Béluga—the Ventre and the Dos—are a must do for any fat-crack aficionados. On both, I found traces of past aid ascents. The second pitch of the Ventre is certainly one of hardest off-widths in the East. As for the Dos, I only climbed it once, resting on the rope to clean, so it still awaits a redpoint.

Marée Haute is more delicate and very sustained. It is beautiful for its entire length. As for Haute Voltige, it is the most difficult of the four. Its amazing roof on pitch four forced me to give it all I had to pull off the redpoint. I took my most impressive rope-solo falls yet, right at the lip of the roof! The crack, which splits the large roof, starts with good hand jams, but it closes to give a hard finger-jam crux. It widens again just before the exit to allow a small rest before the difficult turning of the lip, right above the Saguenay!

I opened these routes (Marée Haute and the Dos) rope-soloing on lead—free and onsight as much as possible. But since rock is generally dirty, I often have to hang in order to clean the cracks. I then often have to clean more while climbing back up on jumars. Once prepared, I return later for the redpoint. To open routes solo on the Cap Trinité makes sense, because one avoids exposing the belayer to the inevitable rock fall generated from exploring new ground. I have dislodged a lot of loose rock during the first ascents so I was quite happy nobody was down there. Moreover, as it is not always very easy to find partners to go clean new routes, it is often simpler to just go alone.

I plan to continue my mission next spring. As soon as the weather gets nice, I will lash my kayak to the top of my car and drive the three hours from Quebec City to Saguenay National Park. After 20 minutes of paddling, I will be at the foot of the most beautiful climbing Quebec has to offer. There is vast potential, not only on Cap Trinité itself but also on the other walls in the valley. The region could one day become a destination for traditional climbing. The lines are there ready to be picked.

Summary

Les Grands Galets (5.12d/13a, 8 pitches), Cap Trinité, Quebec. Stéphane Perron (rope solo), September 2008.

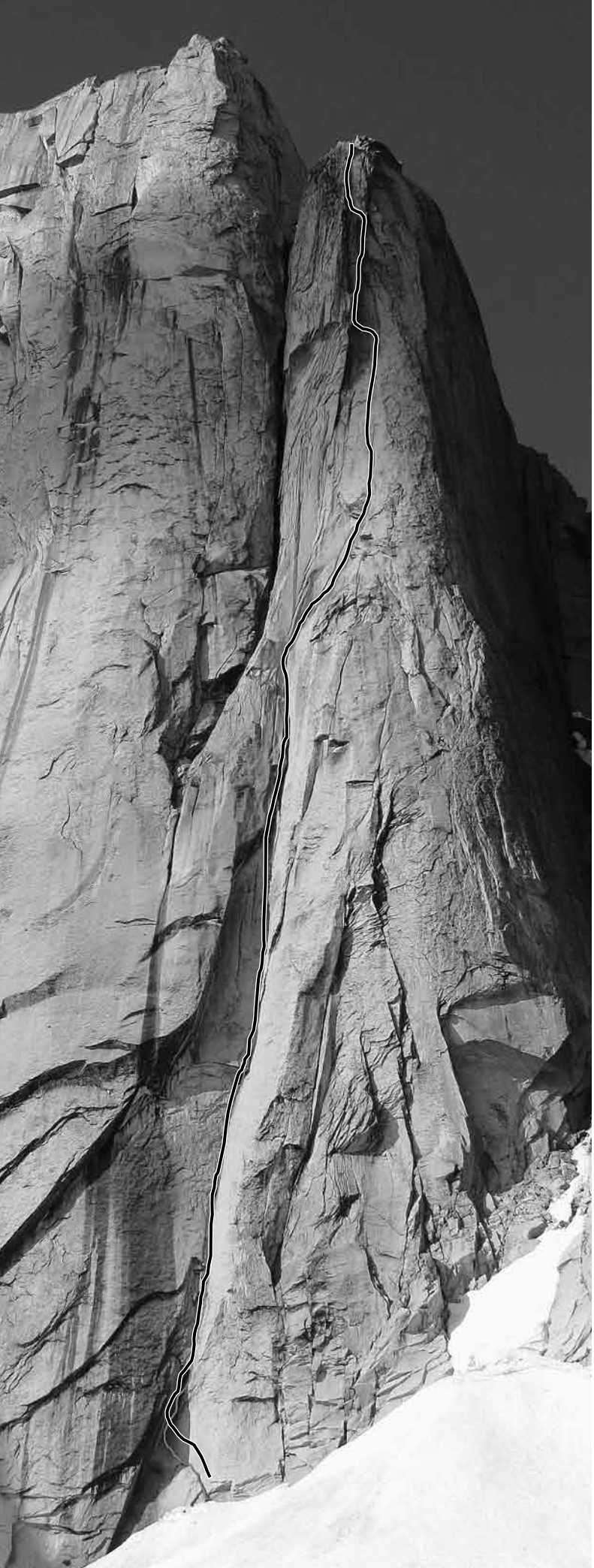
Marée Haute (5.12b, 5 pitches). FA: Stéphane Perron (rope solo), August 2009.

Haute Voltige (5.13b, 4 pitches). FFA: Stéphane Perron (rope solo), August 2009.

Le Ventre (5.11+, 3 pitches). FFA: Stéphane Perron, May 2009.

About the Author

Hailing from Quebec City, Stéphane is a college physics teacher for half of the year. The other half of the year is spent living on the road in his Dodge Ram camper van and climbing as much as possible, sometimes even with a partner.



Bugaboo Bluff

Jason Kruk

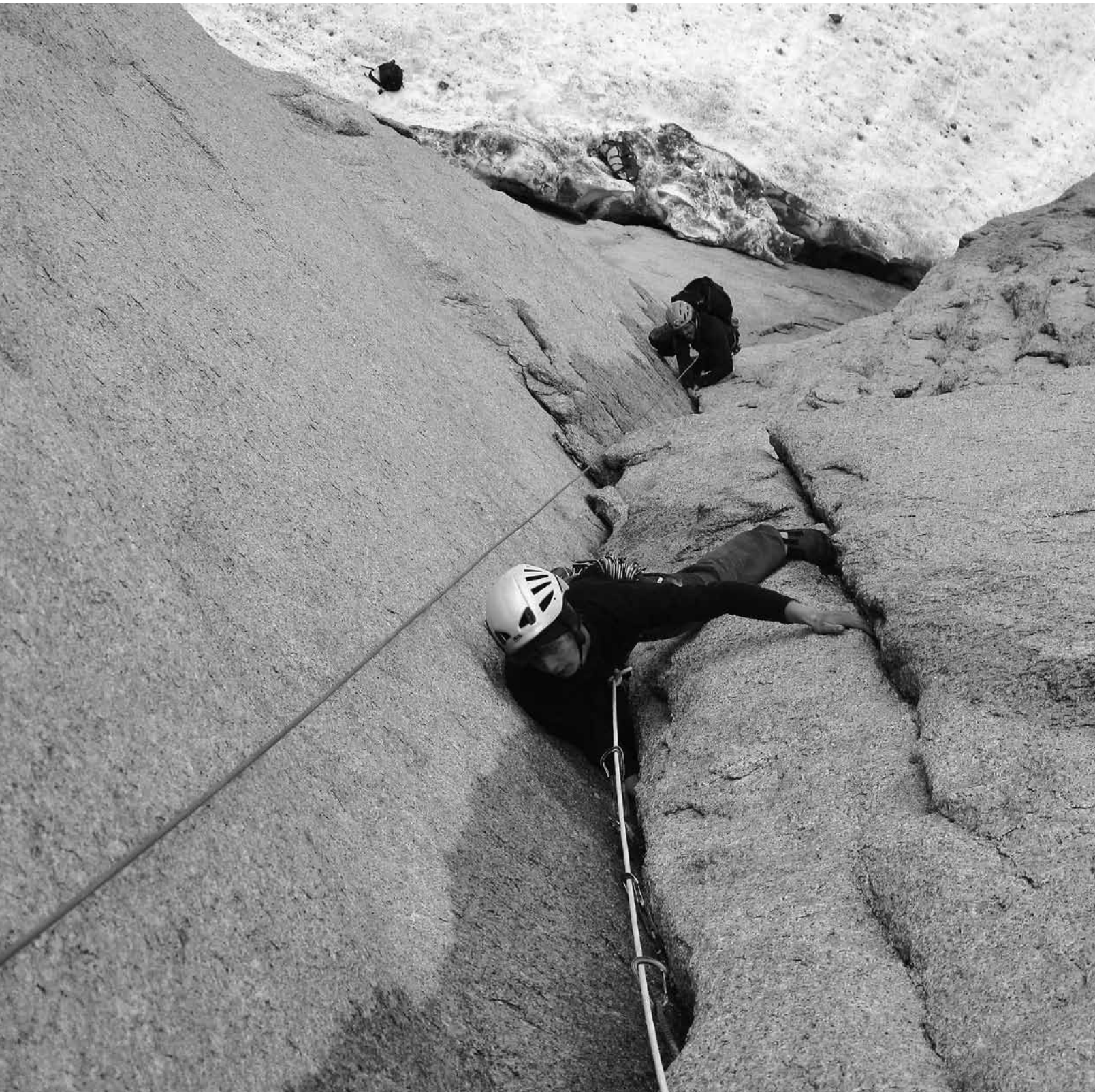
Chocolate Fudge Brownie (North Vancouver/Miami variation) on the west face of Central Howser Tower, Bugaboos. Photo: Jason Kruk
Top left: Matt Segal. Photo: Jason Kruk
Middle left: Will Stanhope. Photo: Jason Kruk
Bottom left: Jason Kruk. Photo: Jason Kruk collection

"Dude! slow the fuck down! Stay on the right side of the road!"

I was amped. My passengers were a little gripped. Chest against the steering wheel, I maxed my '92 Pathfinder around the switchback corners of the logging road, gunning for the trailhead and the perfect granite spires of the awaiting Bugaboos.

We had endless stone and a dreamy weather forecast just ahead. I had limited time. My driving betrayed my excitement. I had been sentenced to ACMG alpine exam hell for the summer. Slogging up snow slopes and learning the art of Rockies' choss navigation was my only *modus operandi*. My climbing fitness was at an all-time low. I put all of that out of my mind, though, because for the next 10 days I would be on vacation. I didn't care that my arms were weak and my legs were now oversized weights pulling me down. I was hungry.

Will Stanhope and Matt Segal following a wet first pitch during the first free ascent of the west face of Central Howser Tower. Photo: Jason Kruk



I often wish I was tall, dark and handsome. That would sure make things easier. I've never been intimidating, a force to be reckoned with—just a medium-sized, blonde-haired boy with glasses. I don't look like an athlete, and I rarely get the girl. It's hard to be ambitious in life faced with such adversity, without cheating. Lacking an advantage, I find myself grappling with something out of my weight class. Hopeless.

I was on the wrestling team all through high school. I would cheat and I would win. All my opponents thought they would crush me, the four-eyed dork. It was an attitude that always left them reeling as soon as the match started. I wanted them to think they would beat me, so I played the part with old boots and a hand-me-down singlet. I never wanted to begin a match against someone with their guard up.

My newly adopted tactic became a game-winning play in my climbing career, too. I reckoned if I snuck up on the mountain, I could get up and over it before it realized I was coming and had the chance to unleash its furious vengeance. I'm convinced it works. I was convinced it *would* work in the Bugs. Some non-believers would call me delusional. But hey, I was in a free-climbing hiatus; surely this mindset was far better than making excuses for poor preparation.

We were sneaking up on the bugaboos, albeit slightly louder than usual, my breaks squealing with every fishtail around the corners of the logging road. My teammates were two unassuming badasses: Will Stanhope from Squamish and Matt Segal, Miami native, now from Boulder, Colorado. Both had clipped the chains at the top of the fearsome Cobra Crack in Squamish. I was surprised when Will invited me along since I was definitely the weak link in terms of free-climbing firepower. I guess I could carry a heavy pack, though, and knew how to tie in to cross the glaciers. One thing was for sure, collectively, we didn't look like much of a threat—exactly the way I liked it.

It was mid-afternoon when we finally parked the truck, my relieved passengers happy to have made it to the trailhead alive. As we distributed gear and packed bags it became quickly apparent that our backpacks were going to be enormous. We started drinking beer to numb the ensuing pain. The steep hike to camp was going to hurt.

We staggered into a bustling Applebee campground under the weight of our loads by late afternoon. Cocktail hour, a team meeting and we had a plan. We decided to set camp there in the 'Bee and hike enough food and fuel over to the west side of the range for a four-day mission in East Creek Basin.

The hallmarks of this area are the imposing west faces of the South, Central and North Howser Towers. The South is home to the ultra-classic Beckey-Chouinard, a 20-something-pitch 5.10-. The North Howser plum is the great All Along the Watchtower, a 900-metre all-free 5.12-, first freed by Americans Topher Donahue and Kennan Harvey. Steeper and mostly devoid of obvious crack systems, the west aspect of the Central Howser wasn't climbed until 1999 and has only one complete route up it—a multi-day, aid-job affair. The features on that route—Chocolate Fudge Brownie, established in 1999 by Brian Webster and Sean Isaac—looked the most promising for a free passage as we squinted through binoculars during a re-con to the base.

Our alarm woke us before dawn the next morning to marginal weather, though certainly good enough for an attempt. We choked down unappetizing oatmeal and strained coffee grounds through our teeth. I had forgotten filters. A city boy, I hadn't perfected crucial cowboy techniques. It didn't take

much caffeine to get me amped and excited to get moving. We double-checked our packs and were hiking by headlamp.

We crossed the small glacier below the Central Tower and kicked up the cone, stomping a platform in the snow below the moat. Looking up from the base, our line followed the only probable weakness through the lower granite bastion. As such, it was a natural watercourse, turning the first four pitches into insecure, dripping grooves. Meat-and-potatoes crack work with numb hands and feet that feel like blocks of wood would be a jarring start to the morning, to say the least.

"Can I have the first block of leads?"

None objected, so I tied in. On these missions, it's important to know your role. Like an enforcer on an ice hockey squad, I would take the hit for the star players, leaving them open to score the game-winning goal.

Matt looked nervous. Will methodically stacked ropes. The weather looked like it was moving in around us.

"Are those the good type of clouds or the bad type?"

"Those are the bad type, Matt."

Not yet an excuse to bail, though. Matt was out of his element. This kid from Miami had come a long way from the beach, establishing himself as one of the preeminent single-pitch traditional climbers in the world. He had exactly zero experience in the alpine environment, but he was psyched and willing to put the time in to learn. He knew he wasn't going to be bitchin' right away—a wholly refreshing attitude for a professional climber. By now, Will and I had been in this situation enough times, often together, to know how to deal with alpine intimidation. The tower above us seemed an improbable obstacle, but broken down pitch-by-pitch, move-by-move, the project would be easier to swallow.

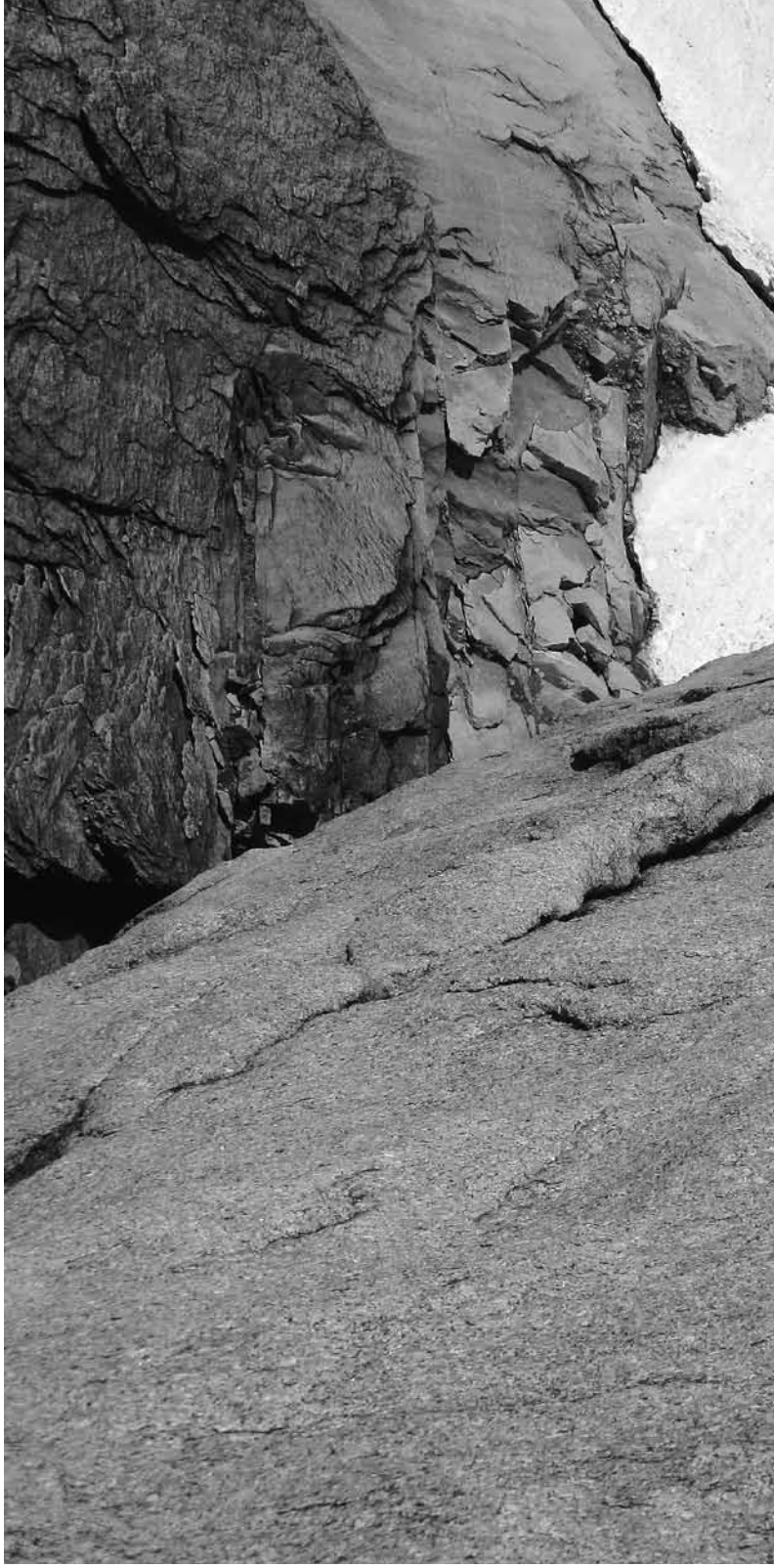
I hopped the moat, traded boots for rock shoes on a small ledge at the base of the wall and began the unpleasant job of dripping wet 5.10+/5.11- groove climbing. On pitch two, I laybacked into a tight chimney and became stuck. Only by removing my helmet and shifting gear from the back of my harness to my hips could I make progress up the slot. By the top, I had worn away the sheath of my rope at my tie-in knot, exposing tufts of white core. On the next pitch, I climbed past the obvious belay stance, wanting to stretch the rope to its end. Sixty metres out I hit a crux: the end of the ropes and a small waterfall pouring down on me. I guess shorter pitches occasionally have their merit. Reversing to the stance, I handed the sharp end over to Will. After a brief changeover, Will stemmed past my highpoint.

"Wow, it really is like a waterfall up here!"

"Yeah, Will, it's raining!"

Matt and I had been getting soaked for the past 15 minutes while the clouds began to drop their load. It really didn't matter, though, as the granite had been wet all day anyways. The weather looked as if it was only getting worse, so we now had a good enough reason to go down. After a brief team meeting, shouting from a rope-length away, it was decided. We bailed, boot-skied down the isothermic glacier and scampered across the talus back to camp.

The rain would continue on and off until the following afternoon. When the sun came out, we escaped the confined quarters of our tent to dry out gear and pack our bags for another try. Pre-dawn the next morning was clear. We were psyched, and the cowboy coffee was finally getting better.



The wall, however, was still wet. I led to our high-point efficiently, then handed the sharp end over to Will. He quickly disappeared from view. I patiently payed out slack. Matt rolled a cigarette. The rope kept going up, slowly, sporadically, until it didn't move for a couple of minutes.

"I don't know if this will go," Will shouted down to us. "I

Matt Segal following the headwall variation splitter during the first free ascent of Chocolate Fudge Brownie. Photo: Jason Kruk

could bring you guys up and see, but I am not sure."

"Well, either way, I trust your judgment, Will." Matt sounded wary.

"OK, build a belay. Bring us up." I wanted a look, too.

Will built a belay at a no-hands stance and brought us up. Above, a flaring corner led out an improbable-looking roof, the original aid line. To the right of our stance was a shallow corner arching rightwards but devoid of a crack—impossible to protect yet probably climbable. The corner petered out after 10 metres, and blank wall separated it from a crack system that out-flanked the roof and split through the headwall above.

Will pasted his body into the corner, and after a few tries, discovered a sequence to the top of the arch. Will stared down the blank slab, taunted by the splitters only a few body lengths away. Time and again, Will tried to traverse across the slab, only to body slam the belay after a jarring pendulum. Unsure of the feasibility of the moves, Will handed the sharp end over to Matt, who after a couple tries, was spit off unexpectedly, cutting his finger in the process. Returning to the belay and rolling a cigarette, he handed the rope over. The fate of the

mission now rested with me. I had a good feeling. I was uncharacteristically certain I would succeed, and on my second try, sent through the traverse.

"It's going to be a long night, boys," said Will. We were committed now. The amount of effort expended meant we weren't going down without a very good fight.

Excited to still be in the game, Will onsighted virgin 5.12-splitters for two pitches up the headwall. The rope went up steadily, and at each belay Will described the climbing in a weird, sort of rhythmic haze of movement. When the splitter tapered into knifeblade country, a series of slim crimpers led back into the original corner of the aid line.

Bonking, Will gave the lead back to me, and I grunted up the wet off-width above. Run-out and wavering, I gave my all and threw for a hand jam at max extension. Will and Matt cheered me on from below as I finished off the pitch, arms now

Will Stanhope leading pitch eight during the first free ascent of Chocolate Fudge Brownie. Photo: Jason Kruk

cramping wildly. Will and I traded lead duties for the remaining three pitches, now running on pure piss and vinegar. We kicked up the summit cone of snow in our rock shoes as the sun descended behind the peaks to the west. On top, we hung out for a brief moment to take in the brilliant sunset. Granite spires ignited orange all around us.

On our first rappel, the ropes got stuck. It was pitch black by the time we eventually freed them. We continued the descent in the dark with only every other pull running smoothly. Finally, after 25-plus hours on the go, we arrived back at camp, drained, elated and ready for bed. Our mission was complete. The last Howser was free.

We were back to the bustle of Applebee campground by late afternoon. Climbing tales went well with cocktails in the company of many friends at camp. The subject of what to do with the remainder of our trip was discussed. Sitting in the sun at Applebee it was easy to decide, as any climber's eye is instantly drawn to the awesome east face of Snowpatch Spire. The king line on the wall is Sendero Norte, Jon Walsh and Chris Brazeau's instant classic. Will had been up on the route last year with Chris, and I had rappelled the line after climbing another route on the wall. It had yet to see a completely free ascent though, so we were very keen to try.

Will and his girlfriend, Hazel Findlay, led the charge while Matt and I followed behind. We found great dry conditions and after a couple of attempts and rope pulls, Will managed to send through the fingertip crux. We were shirts off, cranking on steep granite above a glacier. It really doesn't get any better. Another great summit with great friends was in the bag.

We did even more great climbing that trip, and when the week was over I said goodbye to my friends and left for Canmore. Back to a reality of snow slogging and chossy scrambling to ensure I passed my exam. The vacation was over, no more granite fun.

My low-expectation sneak attack seemed to have worked. Perhaps being tall, dark and handsome isn't all it's cracked up to be. I had cheated the Bugaboos this time. But I'll be back, and I doubt next time that they'll anticipate my bluff and not let their guard down.

Summary

First free ascent of the west face of Central Howser Tower via Chocolate Fudge Brownie (North Vancouver/Miami variation, V 5.12+, 400m), Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains, B.C. FFA: Jason Kruk, Matt Segal, Will Stanhope, July 2009.

Sendero Norte (V 5.12+, 700m), east face of Snowpatch Spire. FA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, August 2007 (note: this was an ongoing three-year project). FFA: Hazel Findlay, Jason Kruk, Matt Segal, Will Stanhope, July 2009.

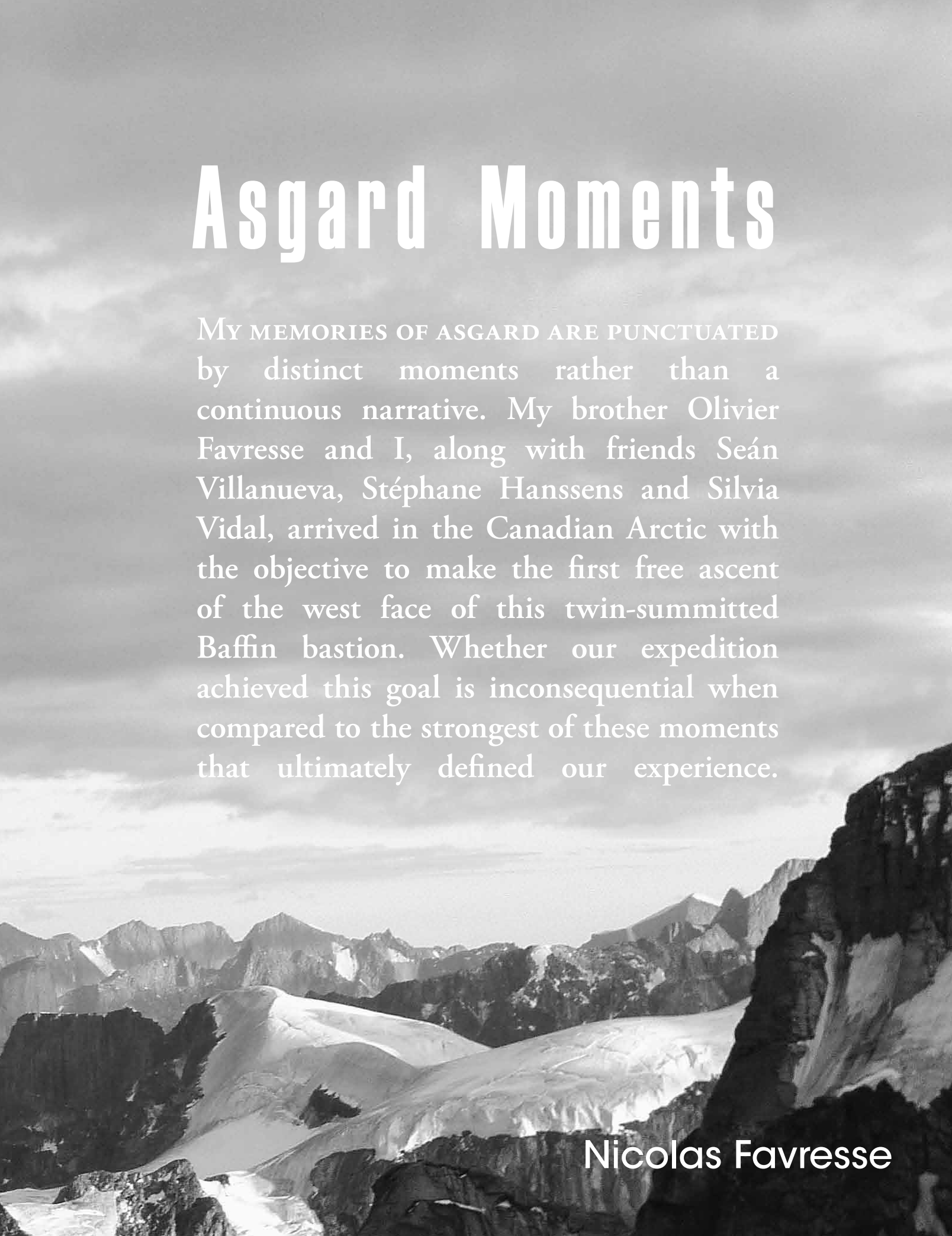
About the Author

Jason Kruk is 22 years old, an ACMG assistant alpine guide and a resident of Squamish, B.C. He likes alpine climbing and high-fashion menswear. He is pretty certain he is the only person to climb Cerro Fitz Roy *and* own a Dior Homme suit.

Olivier Favresse on pitch 15 of The Belgarian on the west face of Mount Asgard's South Tower. Photo: Stéphane Hanssens

Asgard Moments

My memories of Asgard are punctuated by distinct moments rather than a continuous narrative. My brother Olivier Favresse and I, along with friends Seán Villanueva, Stéphane Hanssens and Silvia Vidal, arrived in the Canadian Arctic with the objective to make the first free ascent of the west face of this twin-summitted Baffin bastion. Whether our expedition achieved this goal is inconsequential when compared to the strongest of these moments that ultimately defined our experience.



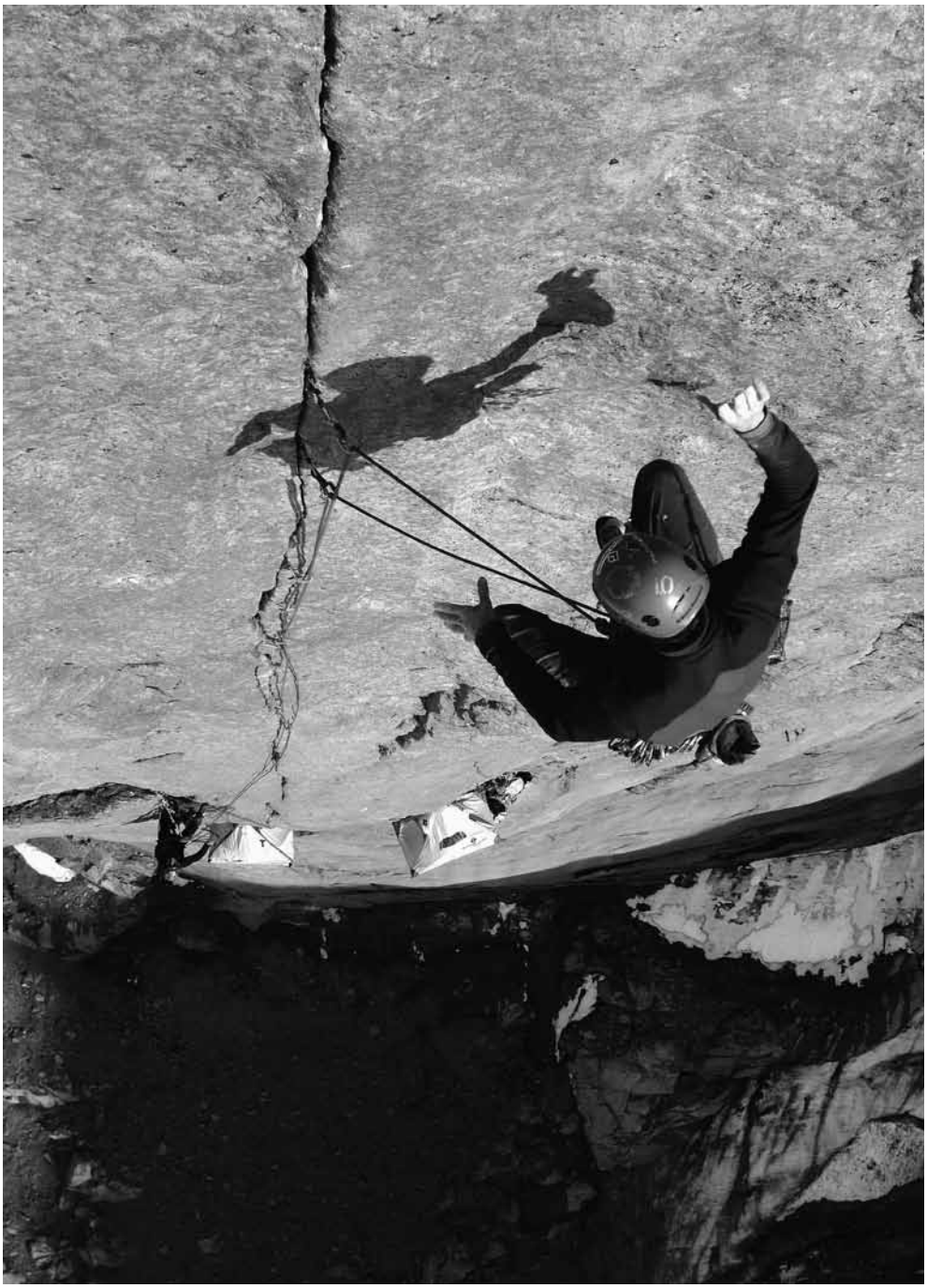
Nicolas Favresse

The Fall

I don't think I slept the whole night. Non-stop, just like a scratch on a CD, I repeat, repeat, repeat the crux section in my head. I am trapped by my waking dreams—sometimes I succeed, sometimes I fall. The more I dwell on the fall, the worse it becomes. Yesterday, I took the 20-metre flight, and I really don't want to take it again. It's definitely one of the biggest falls I have experienced. Fortunately, I was very lucky as it could have been much more severe. I just scraped my elbow on the rock. The main casualty is my headspace. Yesterday I was confident; now I am not.

Since we are climbing on a pre-established aid line, it would be wrong to add bolts this close to the original route. It would be disrespectful to the first ascentionist, in my opinion. I have to deal with what is there, or in the case of protection, what is not there. Placing a bolt would provide huge relief, but for me, accepting the drill would be accepting failure. Regardless, I know I am capable of redpointing this pitch—run-out and all.

After the restless night, I have no appetite. I don't say much. I feel as though I am acting strange. I need to start climbing before the sun hits the face in order to take advantage of the best possible friction. Despite the urgency, I hesitate for a long time before committing, and then the rest is a blur. It is as though my fear becomes an anesthetic clearing my memory. All I remember is the moment I grab the hold—the hold that marks the end of the crux sequence. Instantly I feel light and happy. It is incredible how a person's mood can flip from trepidation to ecstasy in a matter of seconds. Refueled with positive vibes, we can finally move on and explore higher up the wall.



Olivier Favresse falling off pitch six of The Belgarian. Photo: Seán Villanueva

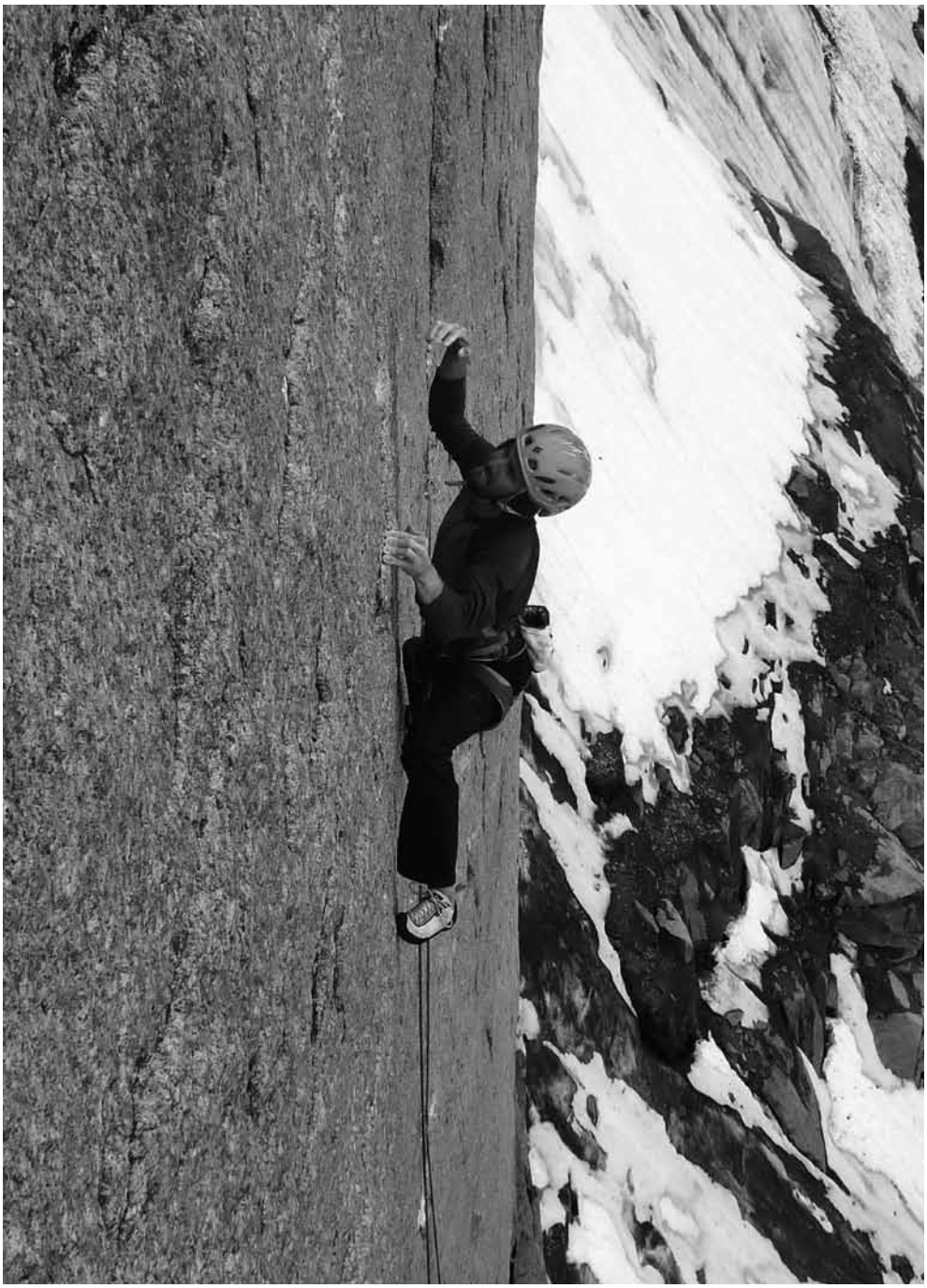
The Move

I HAVE BEEN BLOCKED HERE FOR AT LEAST ONE HOUR, hanging more than 600 metres above the glacier. My instinct tells me there is something—a possibility within the matrix of microscopic crimps. I analyze the sequence, calculate a solution and attempt to execute it. My fingers bear down as I explode upwards in a burst of dynamic levitation. I see the hold… it's getting closer; then… it moves away from me as I drop onto the rope. I feel that I am close to freeing this short, seemingly blank section. I am motivated; I love this research of the unknown—a problem to solve. It is a very powerful feeling to be this intimate with such a specific piece of rock, indeed, a huge privilege.

I could pull on my protection and continue just for the sake of reaching the summit instead of wasting all this time for just one move. But we choose to play by our own self-imposed rules. It is this exact moment that I absolutely need to resist the temptation to cheat. If I weaken now, our ascent will lose much of its value.

We worked so hard to be climbing on this wall. We busted our backs for three weeks ferrying loads over the 60 kilometres that separate Asgard from the head of the fjord. If I can summon just a little more strength, the mystery of this move can be overcome.

After three hours of effort, a solution appears—but it is at the very limit of my strength. It is the missing link to an all-free ascent. After a few attempts to redpoint the pitch, I realize I have to face reality: this move is too hard for me. I am obliged to kneel before Mother Nature and admire her strength. I now know the move is possible, but not for me at this moment.



Nicolas Favresse freeing the first pitch of The Belgarian. Photo: Olivier Favresse

The Summit

After days of slow progress, our time has come. We leave our portaledge camp at noon since there is no hurry—it never gets dark here. It feels amazing to unleash and leave the fixed ropes and haul bags behind and go for the summit. Seán and I aim for an appealing roof crack while Silvia, Olivier and Stéphane follow the main weakness. It is good to split into two teams, allowing us all to move faster and increase the chance that at least one of the lines will go free. Plus, the idea of a summit race motivates us to move faster.

After five beautiful, exposed pitches, we are quite surprised to find ourselves standing on top of a detached pillar. Sixty metres of downclimbing brings us back to the main wall but puts us behind the rest of the team for the last pitches. Then, all of a sudden, the soccer-field-sized summit comes to eye level. We immediately unrope and run like kids to the real summit. It is an amazing feeling to be standing on top of a mountain we had been looking at for so long. It feels like we were standing on the moon. All around us we can only see huge oceans of ice and endless walls. I can't imagine how many generations it will take for all these virgin walls to be climbed.

The sun dips below the horizon making the sky burst into red and orange. There is absolutely no wind, no sound; as if the world has stopped moving so we can better appreciate the visual spectacle before us.

We lay next to one another on a flat boulder, each of us lost in our own minds, waiting for the sun to reappear from its brief Arctic summer evening. The satisfaction intensifies as I consider the effort it took to enjoy this fleeting moment. Our success was made possible by Silvia's aid-climbing expertise, Seán's raw humour, Olivier's constant good mood and Stéphane's pragmatism. As the sun regains height, we make our way down, our way back to civilization.

Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, Stéphane Hanssens and Silvia Vidal on the summit of Mount Asgard.
Photo: Olivier Favresse

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank for their crucial support: The Belgian Alpine Club, Black Diamond, Patagonia, Sterling Rope, Five Ten, Seeonee, Julbo, belclimb.net, climb.be, UPMM.

Summary

Le bic rouge d'Odin (V 5.10, 20 pitches, 800m), east face of unnamed spire. FA: Nicolas Favresse, Olivier Favresse, July 7, 2009. Note: First recorded ascent of unclimbed peak; climbed onsight and in a single push.

Chocolate Boomerang (V 5.11, 18 pitches, 700m), northwest face of Mt. Tirokwa. FA: Stéphane Hanssens, Seán Villanueva, July 7, 2009. Note: Climbed onsight and in a single push; originally attempted by Australians in 2002 [see *CAJ*, 2003, vol. 86, p. 106].

The Belgarian (VI 5.13 A1, 20 pitches, 850m), west face of Mt. Asgard (South Tower). FFA: Nicolas Favresse, Olivier Favresse, Stéphane Hanssens, Silvia Vidal, Seán Villanueva, July 22-August 2, 2009. Note: Almost free ascent of the Bavarian Diretissima with variations (originally 5.10 A3).

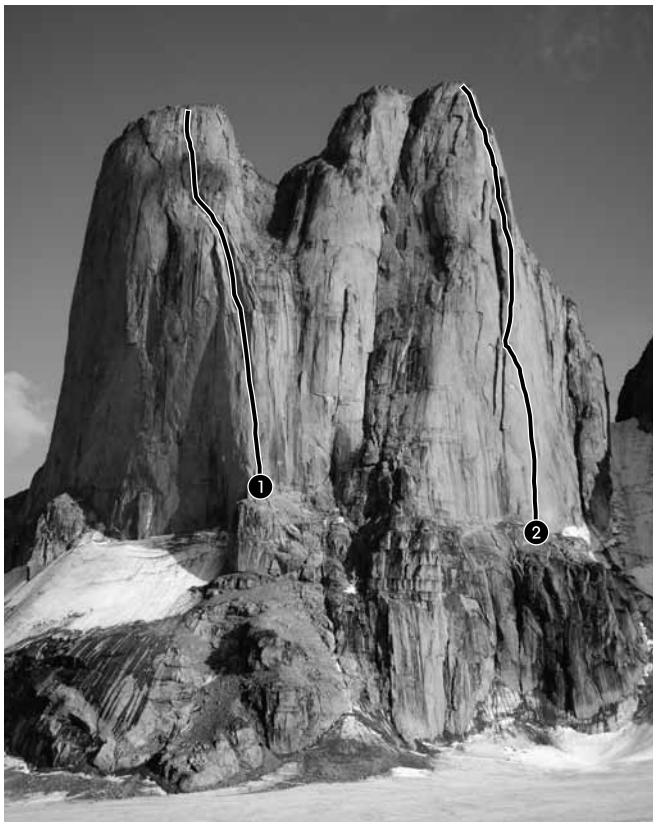
Whisky Gonzales (V 5.11, 24 pitches, 1200m), northeast buttress of Mt. Asgard (North Tower). FA: Nicolas Favresse, Olivier Favresse, August 7, 2009. Note: Climbed onsight and in a single push; shares some of the upper pitches with the Brazeau-Walsh route [see page 83].

Porter Route (VI 5.12 A4, 24 pitches, 800m), north face of Mt. Asgard (North Tower). Stéphane Hanssens, Seán Villanueva, August 8, 2009. Note: Climbed in a single push and onsighted/freed all but three pitches.

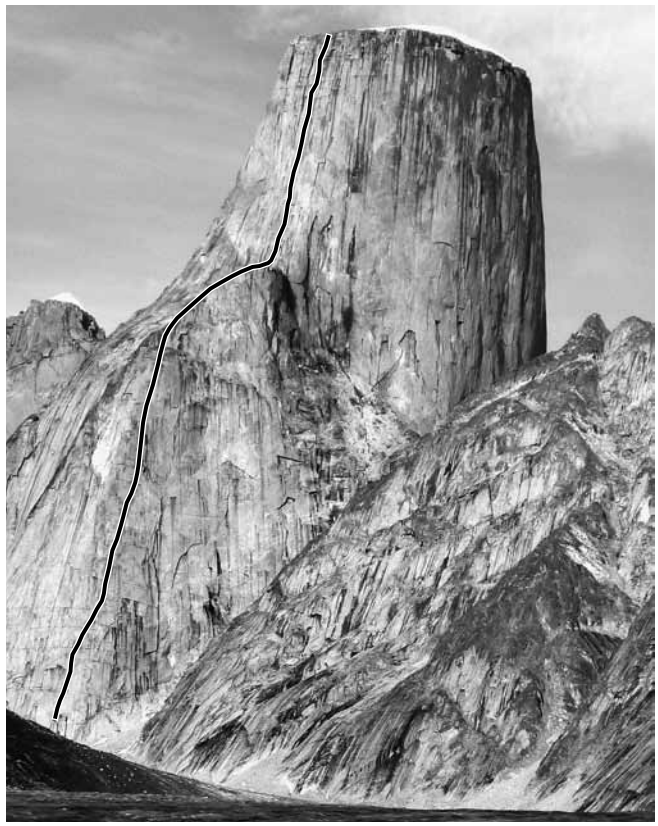
About the Author

Born and raised in the flats of Belgium, Nicolas Favresse is hardly ever home. Instead, he can be found travelling the world with his mandolin, repeating the hardest traditional climbs and freeing the biggest big walls. No stranger to Canada, he has made significant ascents in Squamish and the Bugaboos [see *CAJ*, 2009, vol. 92, pp. 28-35], and is already planning to return to visit the Cirque of the Unclimbables.

Stéphane Hanssens, Nicolas Favresse, Seán Villanueva, Olivier Favresse and Silvia Vidal (from left to right) on the summit of Mount Asgard. Photo: Olivier Favresse

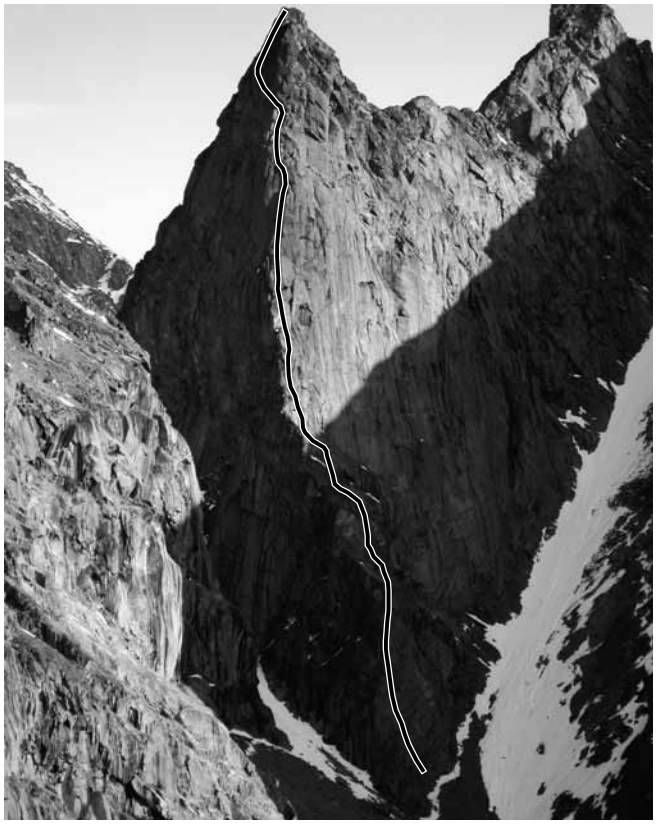


The west faces of the Mount Asgard's North (left) and South (right) Towers: (1) the Porter Route, (2) The Belgarian. Photo: Nicolas Favresse



Whisky Gonzales on the northeast buttress of Mt. Asgard's North Tower. Photo: Nicolas Favresse

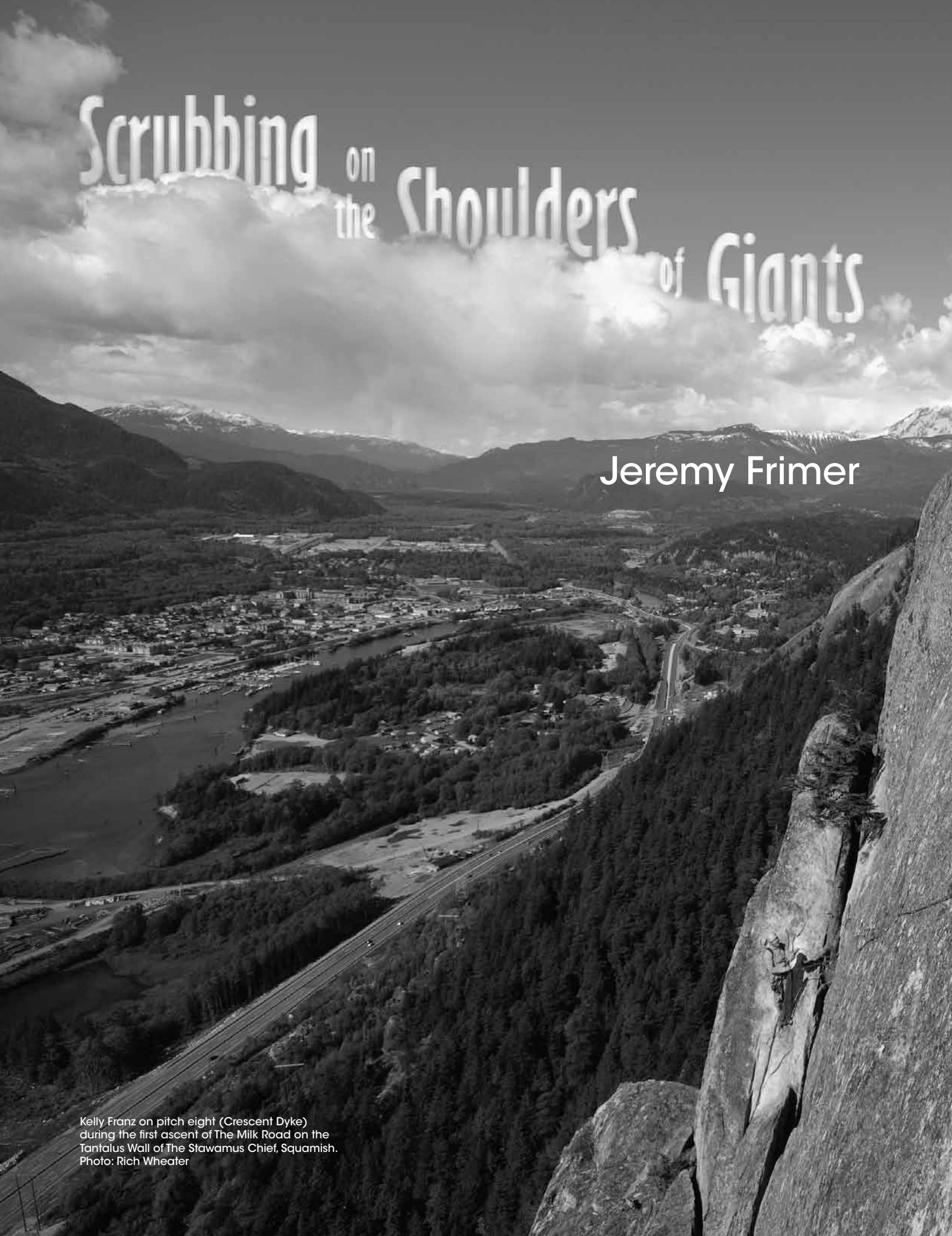
Le bic rouge d'Odin on the east face of an unnamed spire beside Mount Odin. Photo: Nicolas Favresse



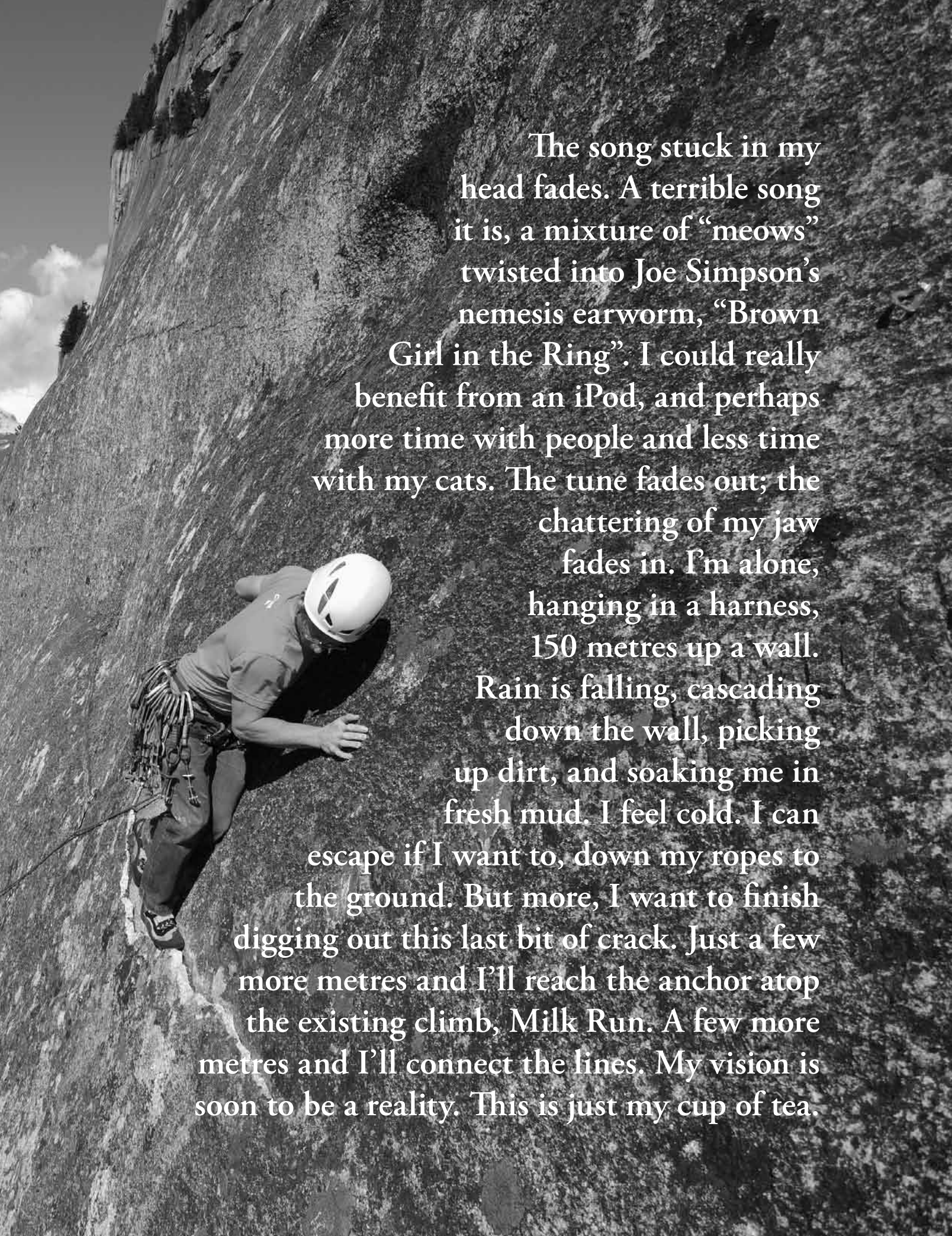
Chocolate Boomerang on the northwest face of Mount Tirokwa. Photo: Nicolas Favresse

Scrubbing on the Shoulders of Giants

Jeremy Frimer



Kelly Franz on pitch eight (Crescent Dyke) during the first ascent of The Milk Road on the Tantalus Wall of The Stawamus Chief, Squamish. Photo: Rich Wheater



The song stuck in my head fades. A terrible song it is, a mixture of "meows" twisted into Joe Simpson's nemesis earworm, "Brown Girl in the Ring". I could really benefit from an iPod, and perhaps more time with people and less time with my cats. The tune fades out; the chattering of my jaw fades in. I'm alone, hanging in a harness, 150 metres up a wall. Rain is falling, cascading down the wall, picking up dirt, and soaking me in fresh mud. I feel cold. I can escape if I want to, down my ropes to the ground. But more, I want to finish digging out this last bit of crack. Just a few more metres and I'll reach the anchor atop the existing climb, Milk Run. A few more metres and I'll connect the lines. My vision is soon to be a reality. This is just my cup of tea.

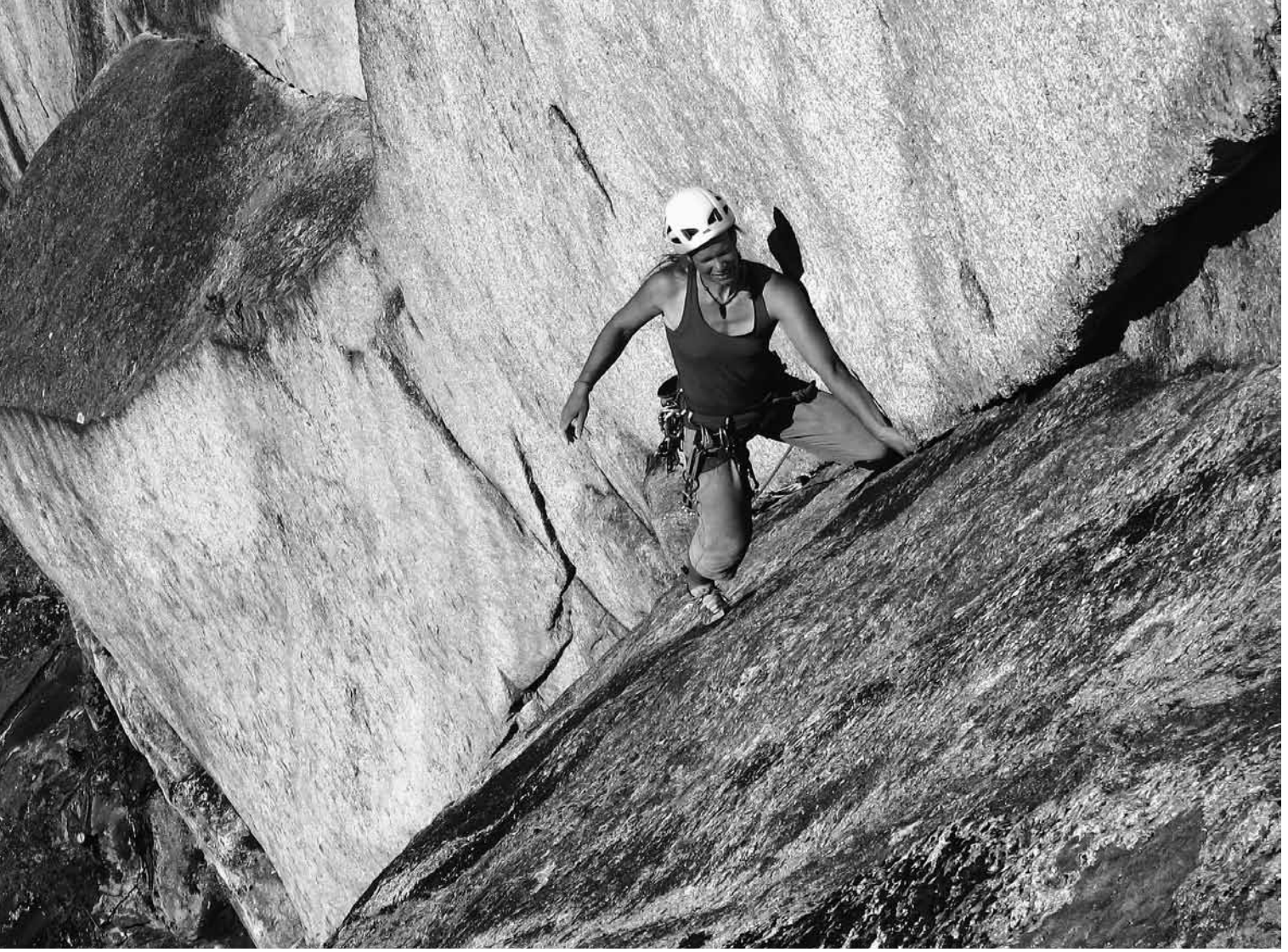
In terms of climbing routes, what do we count as being "valuable" or "significant"? To a large degree, climbs attain status as being significant because of their difficulty; hard climbs are the ones that find their way to the cover of *Alpinist*. At the same time, these difficult climbs offer little to the average climber beyond a good read and knowledge of their existence. Moderate routes may also be valuable and, ironically, they too may have a degree of difficulty beyond what the "difficult" routes have. Let me to explain.

While Squamish is best known for clean granite splitter cracks, this cleanliness is the exception; the rule is dirt and vegetation. Trees and shrubs grow out of any sort of crack, even the vertical Split Pillar once upon a time. Vertical and overhung routes (which tend to be difficult) are usually naturally clean. Moderate routes often involve lower-angle crack systems, which act as catchments for falling leaves from trees. Leaves decompose into soil; out of soil grows vegetation. To become a climb, these cracks usually need to be cleaned out, which takes a lot of work. In fact, low-angled crack systems tend to be the most vegetated and hardest to clean. Some of these moderate crack climbs capture the essence of the Squamish experience—finger-locking up Exasperator, laybacking up Diedre or hand jamming up the Split Pillar. The significance of moderate crack routes is found in the difficulty they require to be cleaned, and the experience they offer to the average Squamish climber—the "everyclimber".

Unsurprisingly, these moderates are crowded. The everyclimber is looking to step out of line on the classics and find a comparable experience elsewhere. If such an experience sounds like pitch after pitch of 5.10 granite crack climbing with a wall of air beneath one's feet, then buckle the safety harness and set out on "my" new route, The Milk Road.

In recent years, I have shifted my focus away from international expedition climbing to local route development in Squamish. For me, the quality of a new route is determined by how it's received—if people don't like it and no one climbs it, then I messed up along the way. This philosophy has led me to invest considerable thought into which route to clean and how to clean it. My approach is to find the natural lines, and do what it takes to unlock their potential.

I see route cleaning like authoring a book; an author is constrained somewhat by grammar, logical flow and length, but otherwise has much liberty in where to take a passage. Similarly, a route developer has many choices that impact the climb—which exact line to clean, where to bolt, and so on. But like an author, a route developer also faces constraints. The rock itself is a major constraint on authorship. For example, blank sections lack holds and authoring doesn't change that (unless one resorts to chipping). A related constraint is the climbing community, with the constraint being peer pressure,



Enni Bertling on the Filibuster pitch of Right Wing on Slhanay (formerly known as the Squaw). Photo: Jeremy Frimer

euphemistically labeled "ethics". Ethics are particularly strict when it comes to fixing up an existing route. The remainder of this story is about fixing up existing climbs and the encountered constraints along the way.

For context, about 60 per cent of the 40 pitches that I have developed in Squamish are new ones. Perhaps the coolest of them is on Oleson Creek Wall. Damien McCombs invited me to join him on a project last summer. Twenty-two person-days and 229 hours of scrubbing later, the five-pitch, 5.10a route called Wire Tap, as well as five 5.8 to 5.11c single-pitch climbs, became a reality.

The remaining 40 per cent of the pitches that I have developed were clean-ups or retros of existing overgrown climbs. These retros seem to strike a powerful chord in the Squamish psyche, bringing the cleaning efforts to the public's eye. So why not avoid all this trouble and find a secluded piece of rock to scrub? The reason is to add as much value as possible. The Squamish traditional climber generally prefers a continuous crack system, and is more likely to climb something that is close and visible from a trail or road. Appreciating these simple tendencies has led me to highly visible, obvious lines, even if the lines were climbed sometime in the past.

A prime example of cleaning up an existing climb was Right Wing, a 150-metre route on the Slhanay (formerly known as the Squaw). If you stand in downtown Squamish and look at the cliff, the first feature that catches your eye is a large right-facing corner, smack dab in the middle of the cliff. The 2004 *Squamish Select* guidebook conspicuously shows no route up it. Further research revealed that it was the line of first ascent on the cliff by a party including the legendary Fred Beckey, who called the route "classic" in the 1968 *American Alpine Journal*. The route was then freed in the '80s. But other than the odd aborted attempt, this so-called classic was abandoned. In 2006, I rapped the route and witnessed tremendous potential. In the big corner system (the one visible from town), I saw a pitch of unique character in Squamish—a full 60-metre pitch of steep, 5.10 crack climbing with practically no rests anywhere.

I also noticed some off-width and chimney sections, which may have been bereft of protection. This raised a dilemma: if these sections turn out to be run-out and scary for the average 5.10 climber, and if I clean the route, then word might spread of scariness, and it might overgrow. The general rule in Squamish is to not bolt beside cracks. Might this instance be an exception to the rule? I addressed this question by e-mailing the first ascentionist, Mr. Beckey. Likely in a hurry, getting ready for another expedition, he responded (and I quote character for character), "NO PROBLEM WITH BOLT PERMISDSION I DONT OWN THE CRAG I RELLY DONT RECLL ANYTHING ABUT TE CLIMB EXC WE MUST HAVE

USED SOMEW AID ANDIT WAS NO5T EASY PROBABLY PITONS AND BONGS." Fred is legendary in multiple ways, natural selection bless his soul.

Fred's "PERMISDSION" in hand, I consulted the climbing community by posting the question on the Squamish climbing forum under the premise that if the general consensus determined it wasn't OK for me to bolt it then I wouldn't bother with the clean-up in the first place. The post seemed to strike a nerve of the Squamish community, eliciting 63 replies and more than 20,000 views, becoming the second most-viewed thread on the forum in its history (second to one on chipping). In the usual democratic way, responses reflected a spectrum of opinions. To my eye, more responses seemed to favour the "go for it, bolt if needed" perspective over the "no bolt, no way" view.

I decided to move forward with the project and cleaned up Right Wing with the help of some friends, delaying the decision about bolting. I dwelled on the issue for some time and debated it with others. The wide spot probably had enough protection to satisfy the 5.10 lead climber. Most compelling to me was the argument that, boltless, the pitch would be a uniquely long and sustained pure trad experience in the grade for Squamish. The pendulum in my mind tilted slightly to the conservative (less is more) decision. With ambivalence, I decided not to bolt. Some were disappointed with me, an inevitability given the public game I chose to play. I dubbed the gigantic corner the Filibuster: a 5.10d beauty, taking my last drip of effort, making me dry heave and returning a feeling of personal transformation through passage. Not for want of effort, I still haven't sent it after four tries.

When the legends of yesteryear arrived in Squamish, they picked off the most natural, aesthetic lines. But the style of the day was ground-up, get-the-rope-up-there climbing. The goal was not to prepare a classic, but to simply climb the line. After a day or two or three of thrashing through vertical jungle, the climb had seen an ascent but remained just as unattractive as before they climbed it, leaving Squamish with a story but not a climbing route of quality. This was the storyline on Right Wing, just as it was on an even bigger project that I recently finished.

Some routes are developed in a day by a single person. Other times, routes are developed not in a weekend or a month, but gradually over decades, with different characters playing different roles. The Milk Road is of this latter variety. Just completed, the route is a nine-pitch 5.10d (with A0) route up Tantalus Wall, towering over the parking lot and campground, and has been some 44 years in the making. Chapter 1 of the story began in 1966 when Fred Beckey (who else) and Eric Bjornstad made the first ascent of the wall by following the bushy Crescent Ramp. I e-mailed Fred again to ask what his adventure climb was like: "YES I RECALL THE ROUTE BUT CANNOT REMEMBER A THING BARELY RECALL WHO DID IT WITH MY DARK RECALL IS THAT IT WAS GRUBBY (EARWIGS, MOSS, MAYBE SPIDERS??)"

Kelly Franz on pitch four (Milk Run crux) during the first ascent of The Milk Road. Photo: Rich Wheater

Chapter 2 was in 1969, when Eric Lance and John Wurflinger aided the spectacular Milk Run corner system below Beckey's line on Crescent Ramp (Beckey had followed a different crack system to get to the ramp).

For Chapter 3 (1982), Peter Croft and Tami Knight spent a day cleaning the Milk Run corners and then freed them. About half of the parts of what has just become The Milk Road were in place by 1982, only with moss and lichen blanketing much of the faces, and dirt and roots filling in most of the cracks. Peter Croft later reflected that he didn't expect that Milk Run would ever get done again. The tremendous potential of the climb lay bound up in a shallow, earthen grave.

The emancipation of the route began in the '90s, when, in Chapter 4, Matt Maddaloni properly cleaned Milk Run. The final two pitches of the four-pitch route are "some of the best at the grade in Squamish," demanding a "magnificent enduro effort on good finger locks," according to the two current Squamish guidebooks. Matt's move to clean up these corner pitches was visionary.

But the route ended half way up the 300-metre wall, leaving the climber half-satisfied as they rap off. I wondered if it had to be that way. I wondered about a full-height extension to Milk Run, via cracks near Fred Beckey's bushy Crescent Ramp. My vision crystallized into what I hoped would become a 5.10 wall route in Squamish (possibly the first). What would make it stand out would be not the route's difficulty, but its lack thereof—a wall route for the everyclimber. Before long, I was consumed by the project, lying in bed every night, wondering, imagining, scripting. And then I set to it in 2009, beginning Chapter 5.

Climbing impeccable granite in a temperate rainforest near a major city may have led ascent styles in Squamish full circle. Many first ascents in the Golden Age of the '60s, '70s and '80s relied on bottom-up, slow-and-heavy siege tactics. Fast-and-light became (and still is) in vogue. But to improve or open a quality route that has significant amounts of vegetation, as is now commonly done, the only feasible way is to siege the route top-down, slower-and-heavier than ever. On the wall, I had some 600-metres of rope fixed.

Now and then, I've had friends join me for a day of scrubbing. But most of my 25-plus days on the wall cleaning The Milk Road were spent alone. Being alone on a wall puts me on edge, ruminating on what-if's. I keep my cell phone in a plastic bag in a chest pocket of my jacket, just in case. But afterward, I recall with fondness those days when I have the Chief all to myself, and experience the mystery and eeriness of the vertical world in a mid-winter rain.

I clean in the winter rains not just to keep my summer free to climb, but also out of concern for public safety. The Chief is a popular place in summer. Route cleaning inevitably involves dropping heavy tree limbs and loose rock. After falling for a few hundred metres, even a small rock can become a lethal projectile. With route cleaning on the rise and the amount of

Jermey Frimer jumaring through a mid-winter rain while cleaning The Milk Road. Photo: Jacqui Hudson

visitors to Squamish rock in all seasons increasing, Squamish is facing new issues. In the past year, on at least three occasions, people walking at the base of walls have narrowly missed being hit by falling rock from a route cleaner high above. To avoid these sorts of incidents, I spend 20 minutes at the beginning and end of each cleaning day laying out numerous signs and stringing caution tape across trails. Knock on falling wood, I have yet to have a public safety incident.

Most of The Milk Road follows long, continuous crack systems. Cleaning typically involves digging dirt, roots and loose rock out of the crack, scrubbing the surrounding faces with a wire brush and pruning back nearby trees—then lowering down a metre and repeating. In one particular spot on the route, however, this strategy wasn't nearly adequate. Pitch seven had an existing option: up Colin Moorhead and Kai Hirvonen's High Octane, a magnificent, overhanging, 5.11b hand crack. But the climb I meant to author was to be no harder than 5.10, so I set out to provide an alternative option by cleaning a more moderate chimney variation on the right.

Blocking the way was a massive stump from a cedar tree that had grown horizontally out of the chimney. A chainsaw or a can of gasoline may have made quick work of the stump. But neither is my style, nor are they kosher tools for cleaning on the Chief. I recruited my friend Nick Elson and we tag-teamed the stump, armed with only a handsaw. The stump was buried in dirt and grit, which worked its way in the cut dulling our saw blade. Two hard days and two saw blades later, the stump let go and made its way to the base where it now rests peacefully. To me, the battle with the stump symbolizes the authorship process and the determination necessary to see it through.

A social movement is in progress, an ad hoc fleet of route developers well supplied with scrub brushes and scraping tools. What makes this unit particularly unique is its lack of organization. Clubs and access societies are usually not responsible for the route developers. These are individuals who take it upon themselves to invest time, effort, money and good weather to provide a service to the community. Squamish is in an era where new routes are plenty, and old routes are being brought back to life. These efforts celebrate the climbs of the Fred Beckeys and Peter Crofts of the past. To borrow from an Isaac Newton quote, if I have scrubbed further it was only by standing on the shoulders of giants.

About the Author

Living in Squamish, Jeremy is completing a PhD in psychology at UBC. He has climbed big mountains in Alaska, the Yukon, Peru, Patagonia, Pakistan and India, but now only dreams of such places as he writes his dissertation. Jeremy has been a frequent contributor to the *CAJ* over the past decade.

Summary

The Milk Road (5.10d A0 or 5.11d, 9 pitches), Tantalus Wall, Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FCA: Jeremy Frimer, Kelly Franz, May 8, 2010.

The Milk Road is similar in difficulty to the Grand Wall route. Most pitches involve 5.10 crack climbing. This route has been some 44 years in the making, with contributions from Fred Beckey and Eric Bjornstad, Eric Lance and John Wurflinger, Peter Croft and Tami Knight, Matt Maddaloni, Kai Hirvonen and Colin Moorhead, and completed by Jeremy Frimer and friends.

Gear: Standard Squamish rack to four inches with triples or quadruples in the finger sizes for the Milk Run corners. All stations are fixed. Double ropes are needed to retreat.

P1: 5.9 A0 or 5.11b, 20m. Boulder up a short V-shaped double crack, then follow rambling terrain left (slow to dry). After 15 metres, step left and climb a slab with five bolts for aid. FA: Nick Elson, Jermey Frimer, 2010.

P2: 5.10c A0, 20m. A complex pitch. Climb an arching flake, then pull over the top of the flake, clip a bolt, then move left. Aid three bolts (free at 5.11d), then move left, downclimb a shallow corner, step left again and move up to the belay. FA: (P2, P3 and P4) Eric Lance, John Wurflinger, 1966. FFA: Peter Croft, Tami Knight, 1982. Recleaned by Matt Maddaloni, 1998.

P3: 5.10b, 20m. Fingers in a left-facing corner with good rests.

P4: 5.10d, 40m. The crux pitch. Fingers in a left-facing corner without many rests. Pumpy. Slow to dry.

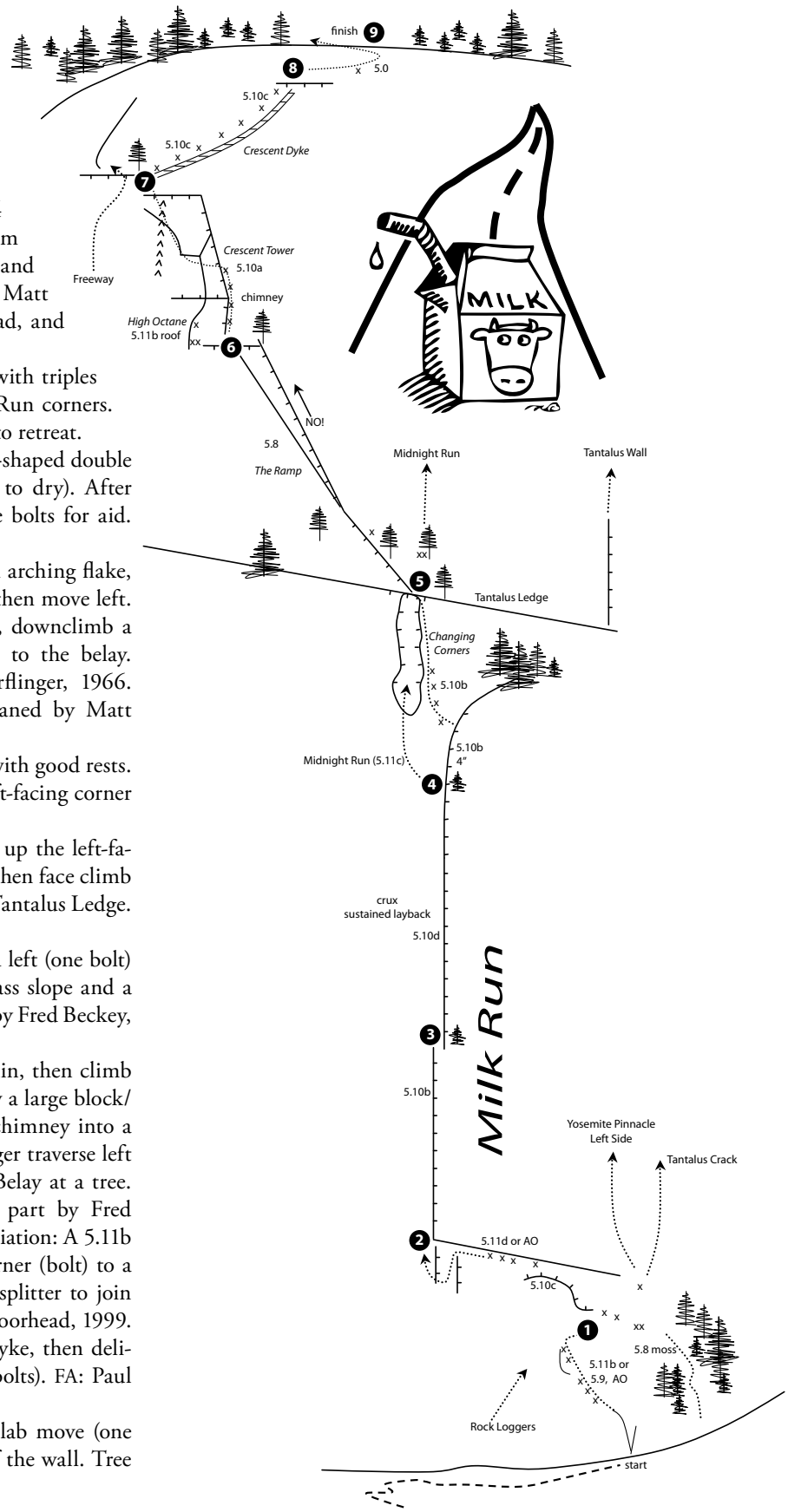
P5: 5.10b, 30m. Changing Corners. Continue up the left-facing corner (#4 Camalot needed off the belay), then face climb left (four bolts) to a right-facing corner to gain Tantalus Ledge. FA: Kelly Franz, Jeremy Frimer, 2010.

P6: 5.8, 55m. The Ramp. Follow cracks up and left (one bolt) in a fine position to gain the base of a dirt/grass slope and a chain. FA: Kelly Franz, Frimer, 2010. First part by Fred Beckey, Eric Bjornstad, 1966.

P7: 5.10a, 30m. Crescent Tower. Pull up a chain, then climb a chimney/corner for 10 metres until just below a large block/chockstone (four bolts). Step left, exiting the chimney into a splitter face crack. When the crack divides, finger traverse left (not right), then climb cracks near the arête. Belay at a tree. FA: Kelly Franz, Jeremy Frimer, 2010. First part by Fred Beckey, Eric Bjornstad, 1966. High Octane Variation: A 5.11b variation is found to the left. Climb a thin corner (bolt) to a hand crack through the roof, then follow the splitter to join the other variation. FA: Kai Hirvonen, Colin Moorhead, 1999.

P8: 5.10c, 20m. Crescent Dyke. Step onto a dyke, then delicately foot traverse the sustained dyke (seven bolts). FA: Paul Cordy, Jeremy Frimer, 2009.

P9: 5.0, 10m. Walk right and make an easy slab move (one bolt) at the end of the ledge to reach the top of the wall. Tree belay. FA: Kelly Franz, Jeremy Frimer, 2010.



Nanga Parbat

Louis Rousseau

August 2007: I am walking with my Austrian climbing partners, Günther and Gerfried, on the Baltoro Glacier in Northern Pakistan. We summitted Broad Peak and attempted K2, and we want more. But our bodies won't allow us another week of high-altitude climbing. It is time to go home. Crossing Concordia, we let our imaginations search for the next project. I can't remember who first mentioned Nanga Parbat for 2009, but as soon as we arrived home, we began planning for our new objective. Gerfried discovered an unclimbed hidden couloir on Nanga Parbat's northwest wall in Reinhold Messner's book *Solo: Nanga Parbat*. Messner's incredible photo shows the complete Diamir flank from the sky revealing the narrow passage. On paper, it was the perfect line.

À gauche : Sepp Bachmair (en haut) et Louis Rousseau près du bas du couloir Göschl. Left: Sepp Bachmair (top) and Louis Rousseau near the bottom of the Göschl Couloir. Photo: Gerfried Göschl

En haut : Louis Rousseau (à gauche) et Gerfried Göschl sur le sommet du Nanga Parbat. Above: Louis Rousseau (left) and Gerfried Göschl on the summit of Nanga Parbat. Photo: Louis Rousseau

Août 2007. Je marchais le long du glacier Baltoro, dans le nord du Pakistan, avec deux amis autrichiens, Günther et Gerfried. Nous venions de faire le sommet du Broad Peak, suivi d'une tentative sur le K2. On en demandait encore, mais nos corps ne pouvaient plus supporter une autre semaine d'effort en haute altitude. Pour nous, c'était le temps de rentrer. En traversant Concordia, nous laissions aller notre imagination afin de trouver notre prochain projet. Je ne sais plus qui a mentionné en premier le Nanga Parbat pour 2009, mais aussitôt de retour à la maison, nous avons commencé à planifier ce nouvel objectif. Au printemps 2009, dans un livre de Reinhold Messner intitulé *Solo : Nanga Parbat*, Gerfried s'arrêta sur une photo aérienne du versant Diamir. En scrutant attentivement l'image, il identifia un mince couloir dissimulé qui donnait accès à l'arrête nord-ouest, toujours vierge. Notre prochain projet était né ! Sur papier, cette nouvelle ligne était parfaite.

June 17, 2009: I arrive in basecamp with my Austrian partners, Sepp Bachmair, Hans Goger, Gerfried Göschl and Günther Unterberger. After a three-week acclimatization period on the Kinshofer route, it was time to prepare for our new route that we hoped to climb in pure alpine style. Our idea was to bring the strict necessities to survive four and a half days without pre-installing any camps, without the help of porters and, of course, without the use of oxygen bottles. Our backpacks would only contain two tents, three ice screws, two rock pitons, 50 metres of seven-millimetre static rope, four ultralight ice axes, two technical ice axes, two gas stoves and 10 gas cartridges.

We left basecamp on July 7 and walked around the Diama Glacier, at the base of the northwest wall. Other members of our international team were simultaneously climbing the Kinshofer Route—the so-called normal route on Nanga Parbat. After two hours of walking on the glacier, we set up our first bivouac at 5,300 metres. From there we could watch our friends, as well as the Iranian and Korean teams, make their way from Camp 1 to Camp 2. In front of us, the unclimbed 900-metre-long couloir sliced up through the unexplored northwest buttress. At first sight, the line looked steeper than we had imagined. Hidden between the Czech route (1975) and the incomplete Diama Glacier route on its left (2000), this gully was the missing piece of a puzzle that had taken us a whole year to solve. We even dubbed it the Göschl Couloir in honour of Gerfried, who had found the old photograph in Messner's book.

We left very early on the second day. Our goal was to reach the top of the funnel before the sun hit the Diamir face. The day before, we had noticed several avalanches coming down its confines, so we needed to be off of it by afternoon. After easily crossing the bergschrund, we climbed the left side of the couloir—a 150-metre-high section that averaged around 50 degrees. A second 80-degree section forced Gerfried, Hans and Gunther to climb loose rock on the left margin. Seeing this, Sepp and I opted to stay in the guts of the gully, which turned

Le 17 juin 2009, j'arrive au camp de base du versant Diamir du Nanga Parbat, avec mes co-équipiers autrichiens, Sepp Bachmair, Hans Goger, Gerfried Göschl et Günther Unterberger. Après une période d'acclimatation de trois semaines sur la voie Kinshofer, il est temps de nous préparer pour l'ascension de notre nouvelle voie, que nous espérons grimper en style alpin. L'idée est d'apporter le strict minimum pour survivre pendant quatre jours et demi, et ce, sans établir des camps d'altitude au préalable, sans recourir à l'aide de porteurs et, bien sûr, sans faire usage d'oxygène d'appoint. Quant à nos sacs à dos, ils contiennent deux tentes, trois broches à glace, deux pitons, 50 mètres de corde statique de sept millimètres, quatre piolets ultralégers, deux piolets techniques, deux réchauds et une dizaine de cartouches de carburant.

Après avoir quitté le camp de base le 7 juillet, nous marchons le long du glacier Diama jusqu'à la base de la face nord-ouest de la montagne. D'autres membres de notre expédition internationale sont partis faire la voie normale (Kinshofer) en même temps. Après deux heures de randonnée sur le glacier, nous installons notre premier bivouac à 5 300 mètres d'altitude. De cette position, il est possible de voir la progression de nos amis et des autres équipes (iranienne, coréenne) sur la voie Kinshofer, entre le camp 1 et le camp 2. Devant nous se trouve le couloir vierge de plus de 900 mètres que nous devons escalader pour rejoindre l'éperon nord-ouest, toujours inexploré. À première vue, le couloir nous semble plus abrupt que nous l'avons imaginé. Caché et encastré entre la voie tchèque (1978) et la voie incomplète du glacier Diama (2000), à droite, ce couloir est la pièce manquante d'un puzzle que nous avons mis un an à résoudre. Nous l'avons même baptisé « le couloir Göschl » en l'honneur de Gerfried, qui avait trouvé la vieille photo dans le livre de Messner.

Nous plions bagage très tôt le matin du deuxième jour. L'objectif est d'atteindre le haut du couloir avant que le soleil ne frappe la paroi. La veille, plusieurs avalanches ont dégringolé

The team ascends a 200-metre ice face near the top of the Göschl Couloir. Photo: Louis Rousseau

L'équipe gravit une paroi de glace de 200 mètres vers le haut du couloir Göschl. Photo : Louis Rousseau

Le deuxième bivouac ; la voie est cachée dans le couloir à droite de l'aiguille rocheuse proéminente.
The second bivouac with the route hidden in the gully to the right of the prominent rock tower.
Photo: Louis Rousseau

out to be 20 metres of WI4 blue ice. After 700 metres of steep, hard snow, we were confronted by a 200-metre ice section that averaged 60 to 65 degrees. We had no other choice but to face this obstacle and, for the first time, use the rope and three ice screws to ascend it in three pitches. We installed a second bivouac at 6,300 metres, about 100 metres above the end of the couloir.

On the third day, we finally reached the northwest buttress. A huge serac that we had to negotiate stood in our way. We continued our ascent on a long 50-degree slope that led us to a col at 6,600 metres between two giant pinnacles. We went right around the second huge rock structure where the rope came out once more to add security to this crevasse-ridden section. After that, a slow and hard climb up 250 metres of deep snow slowed us down. Our third camp was on a flat, wind-exposed plateau at 6,900 metres. We had earned our rest time.

The fourth day brought even more hardship. First, we came upon a very long 20- to 30-degree slope. Our teamwork paid off in the way of shared trail breaking through the knee-deep powder snow. At morning's end, we finally reached the top of the northwest wall of Nanga Parbat. We were now climbing in a section of rocky steps where we became lost many times. After hours of scrambling on unstable terrain, the wind began to blow harder and harder, weighing us down considerably. At 7,250 metres, we had to make a decision. It was evident that our only chance of reaching the summit was to traverse to the Kinshofer route.

We hadn't planned this traverse but we had no choice, so we accepted the risk and managed it best we could. We worked across 50-degree slopes in very deep snow. If we tripped, self-arrest would be impossible. After two hours of sideways struggle, we reached a tiny rocky ledge from which we could see Camp 4 on the Kinshofer route. After exploring more than 2,300 metres of new terrain on the northwest buttress, and without leaving any trace, we quickly dropped 300 metres to the waiting tents. Sadly, our celebration was cut short.

During the day, we welcomed our friends at Camp 4 as they returned from their summit attempt. At around 9 p.m., a distress call came from the Korean team. Apparently, a Korean female climber, Miss Go Mi-Sun, who was climbing with six members of her team and one of our friends, Wolfgang Kölblinger, was unable to climb down on her own. The group had reached the summit at 7 p.m. in very bad weather and was attempting to descend to us at Camp 4. Three Pakistani porters left quickly with hot drinks, oxygen and a rope to try to meet them. Sadly, they returned having found no one. Gerfried and I decided to search for them as we departed for our summit attempt. Right before sunrise, we found Miss Go and her team. We asked if they needed assistance, but they

le long de notre couloir. Rien donc de rassurant. Après avoir traversé facilement la rimaye, nous suivons la gauche du couloir en grimpant un premier passage de 150 mètres, d'environ 50 degrés. Un deuxième passage, de 80 degrés, force Gerfried, Hans et Gunther à grimper sur une roche friable sur la gauche. Devant une telle situation, Sepp et moi décidons de grimper les 20 mètres quasi verticaux au centre sur de la glace bleue (WI4). Après 700 mètres de neige dure et abrupte, nous nous retrouvons devant un passage de glace d'environ 200 mètres, incliné de 60 à 65 degrés. Obligés de négocier cet obstacle, nous faisons usage pour la première fois de la corde et des trois broches à glace (trois longueurs). Le second bivouac est installé, à 6 300 mètres, approximativement 100 mètres après la sortie du couloir.

Au troisième jour, nous atteignons enfin l'éperon nord-ouest. Un énorme sérac nous bloque cependant le chemin. Après l'avoir contourné, nous poursuivons l'ascension d'une longue pente de 50 degrés, ce qui nous permet de rejoindre un col à 6 600 mètres, situé entre deux gigantesques gendarmes de pierre. Arrivés au col, nous continuons l'ascension à droite du deuxième gendarme ; comme le terrain est crevassé, la corde est utilisée pour la deuxième fois. Puis une longue et pénible montée de 250 mètres nous attend dans une neige profonde qui ralentit notre progression. Notre troisième bivouac est installé sur un large plateau exposé au vent, à 6 900 mètres d'altitude. L'équipe s'accorde alors un « repos » bien mérité.

La quatrième journée est parsemée de nouvelles difficultés. D'abord, l'ascension d'une interminable pente de neige, inclinée de 20 à 30 degrés. Le travail d'équipe est impeccable. Lentement mais sûrement, nous faisons la trace dans cette neige poudreuse, qui nous arrive parfois jusqu'aux genoux. À la fin de la matinée, la partie supérieure de la face nord-ouest du Nanga Parbat est finalement atteinte. Nous grimpons maintenant une succession de ressauts rocheux ; plus d'une fois, nous perdons notre chemin. Après plusieurs heures d'escalade facile sur ce terrain instable, le vent se met à souffler de plus en plus fort, ce qui ralentit dangereusement notre progression. À 7 250 mètres, il faut prendre une décision. Il devient évident que notre seule chance d'atteindre le sommet est de traverser jusqu'à la voie Kinshofer.

declined and continued down. We inquired about our friend Wolfgang. They said that they hadn't seen him since the summit. We pushed towards the summit in hopes of meeting him.

The discovery of Wolfgang's backpack and ice axe at 8,064 metres gave us hope. We continued and eventually summitted—but in vain. On July 11 at 11:30 a.m., while descending from the summit back to Camp 4, we realized that our friend, Wolfgang Kölblinger, slipped and tumbled towards the Mummery Rib. We had found his hat at 8,016 metres and saw evidence of his fall imprinted in the snow. Hans and Sepp also reached the summit that same day, but hadn't found any other trace of Wolfgang. Unfortunately, Gunther had to forego his summit attempt for health reasons.

The next day, we descended all the way to basecamp only to learn that between Camp 3 and 2, Miss Go had also slipped to her death. The Korean team was able to bring Miss Go's body back, but no sign of Wolfgang was discovered, even after a helicopter search. For me, returning Wolfgang's backpack to basecamp was the most physically and psychologically draining task that I had ever done. However, that was nothing compared to the phone call that Gerfried had to make to Wolfgang's wife.

It was the first time I had lost a close friend in the mountains. As cliché as it sounds, everyday I think of that insane race over 8,000 metres to the summit to try to find Wolfgang. My memories and feelings towards this new route are dimmed by that terrible day. I sometimes think that the weight of his bag on my shoulders is the only thing I have left to remember. When I look at the pictures taken on our new route, it helps me realize what we accomplished. I climbed the mountain of my dreams, alongside amazing friends—but one of them

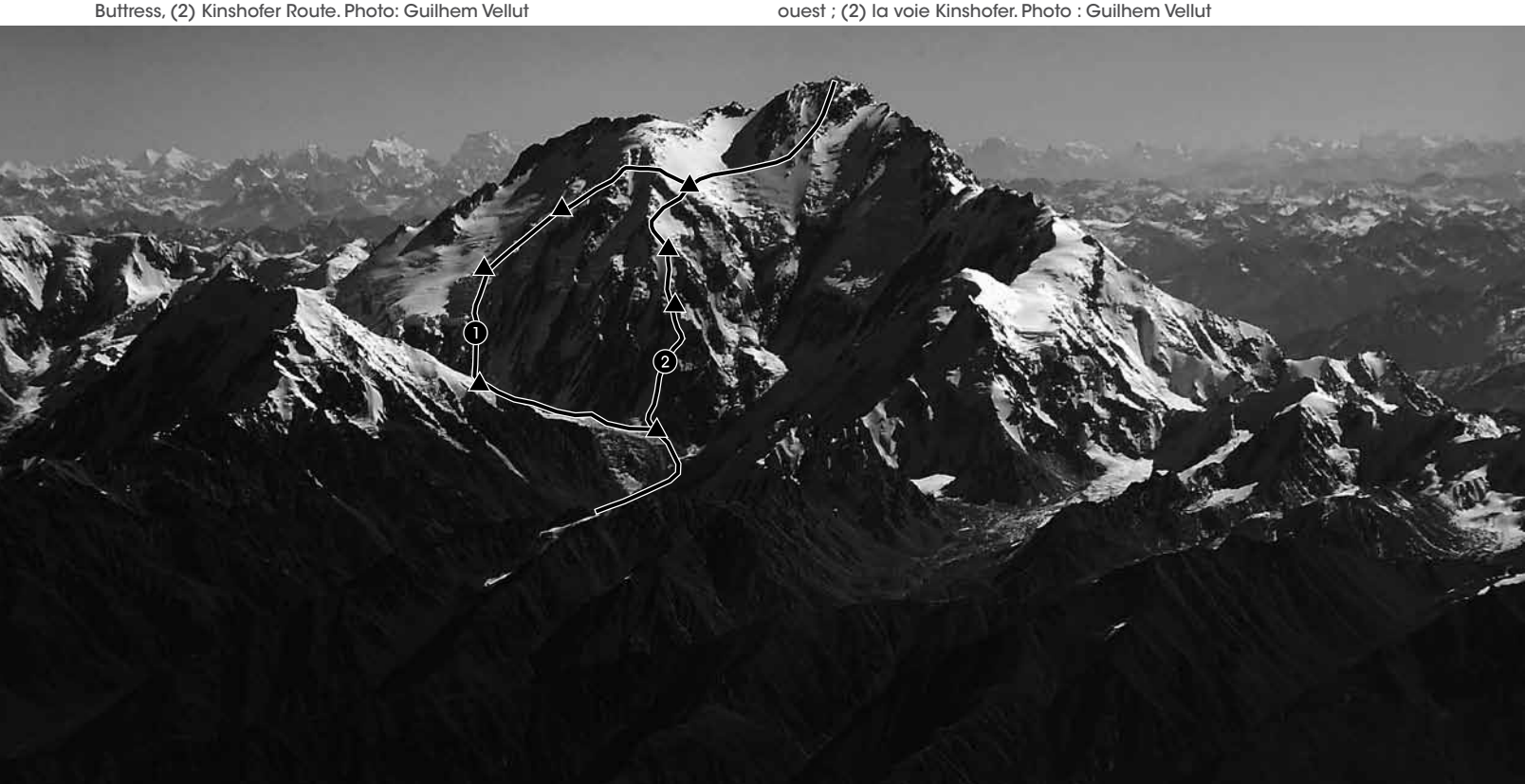
Une telle traverse n'a pas été envisagée, mais nous n'avons plus de choix. Nous acceptons les risques et essayons de les gérer le mieux possible sur cette pente exposée de 50 degrés, couverte d'une neige très profonde. Il serait impossible de s'arrêter avec son piolet en cas de chute. Après deux longues heures de lutte horizontale, nous rejoignons une minuscule vire rocheuse, d'où nous pouvons voir le camp 4 de la voie Kinshofer. Ayant exploré plus de 2 300 mètres de nouveau terrain sur l'éperon nord-ouest, et ce, sans laisser aucune trace de notre passage, nous descendons rapidement les 300 mètres qui nous séparent du campement. Malheureusement, notre célébration ne sera que brève.

Au cours de la journée, nous accueillons au camp 4 nos amis de la voie Kinshofer, qui ont tenté le sommet la veille. Vers 9 heures du soir, un appel au secours nous parvient de l'équipe des Coréens. Apparemment, la Coréenne Go Mi-Sun, qui grimpait avec six membres de son équipe et l'un de nos camarades, Wolfgang Kölblinger, n'arrive pas à descendre par ses propres moyens. Le groupe a atteint le sommet à 19 heures dans de très mauvaises conditions et tente de nous rejoindre au camp 4. Trois porteurs pakistanais se lancent à leur secours, emportant avec eux des boissons chaudes, de l'oxygène et une corde. Hélas ! Ils reviennent sans avoir retrouvé personne. Gerfried et moi décidons de les chercher nous-mêmes pendant notre ascension vers le sommet. Tout juste avant le lever du soleil, nous retrouvons Madame Go et son équipe. Nous leur demandons s'ils ont besoin d'assistance, mais ils déclinent notre offre et poursuivent leur descente. Nous leur demandons où est notre ami Wolfgang. Ils nous répondent qu'ils ne l'ont pas vu depuis le sommet. Nous continuons notre ascension en espérant le rencontrer.

La découverte de son sac à dos et de son piolet à 8 046 mètres

The Diamir Face of Nanga Parbat: (1) Austro-Canadian Northwest Buttress, (2) Kinshofer Route. Photo: Guilhem Vellut

La face Diamir du Nanga Parbat : (1) l'éperon Austro-Canadien nord-ouest ; (2) la voie Kinshofer. Photo : Guilhem Vellut



Louis Rousseau près du sommet du Nanga Parbat.
Louis Rousseau near the summit of Nanga Parbat.
Photo: Gerfried Göschl

didn't make it back home to his family. Nanga Parbat always gives something and always takes something away from those who dare set foot on its flanks. I know now why it is called The Killer Mountain.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to MEC, Fontaine Santé, LOWA, Black Diamond, RAB, New England Ropes, Teko Socks, Abaka and Candice.

Summary

First Canadian ascent of Nanga Parbat (8125m) via a new route (Austro-Canadian Northwest Buttress, VI WI4, 2300m). FA: Sepp Bachmair, Hans Goger, Gerfried Göschl, Louis Rousseau, Günther Unterberger, July 7-11, 2009.

About the Author

Louis lives in Montreal, Quebec, where he works in infectious disease prevention for a regional department of public health. He summitted Broad Peak (8,047 metres) in 2007 via the West Spur/North Ridge route and made an attempt on K2 that same season, reaching 7,350 metres. In 2009, he tried K2 again after Nanga Parbat, only to turn around at 8,350 metres due to high avalanche risk.

nous donne quelques espoirs de le retrouver. Nous continuons nos recherches jusqu'au sommet, mais c'est en vain. À 11h30 le matin du 11 juillet 2009, nous amorçons notre descente vers le camp 4. Lorsque nous découvrons sa tuque à 8 016 mètres et les traces de sa chute dans la neige, nous constatons que notre ami Wolfgang Kölblinger a glissé en direction de l'arête Mummery. Hans et Sepp atteignent également le sommet cette journée-là. Eux non plus ne trouvent rien. Malheureusement, Günther doit renoncer au sommet à cause d'un malaise.

Le jour suivant, nous redescendons tous au camp de base pour apprendre que la Coréenne Go Mi-Sun a elle aussi chuté fatalement lors de sa descente, entre le camp 3 et le camp 2. L'équipe coréenne arrive à rapatrier le corps de Go Mi-Sun, mais même l'hélicoptère ne trouve aucune trace de Wolfgang. Pour moi, c'est physiquement et psychologiquement épuisant de ramener le sac à dos de Wolfgang au camp de base. Cependant, ce fardeau n'est rien comparé à l'appel téléphonique que Gerfried doit faire à la femme de Wolfgang.

C'était la première fois que je perdais un ami proche en montagne. Depuis, bien que cela semble peut-être un cliché, je pense chaque jour à cette course effrénée au-dessus de 8 000 mètres pour essayer de retrouver Wolfgang. Mes émotions et mes souvenirs relatifs à cette nouvelle voie sont voilés par cette terrible journée. Parfois, j'ai l'impression que tout ce qui me reste en mémoire, c'est le poids du sac à dos de Wolfgang sur mes épaules. Lorsque je regarde les photos que nous avons prises dans notre nouvelle voie, cela m'aide à me rendre compte de ce que nous avons accompli. J'ai grimpé ma montagne de rêve, avec des amis extraordinaires. Toutefois, j'ai perdu l'un d'entre eux. Le Nanga Parbat prend et donne toujours quelque chose de précieux à ceux qui osent s'y aventurer. Je comprends maintenant pourquoi on le surnomme « the Killer Mountain » — la montagne meurtrière.

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Résumé

Première ascension canadienne du Nanga Parbat (8 125m), par une voie nouvelle (éperon Austro-Canadien nord-ouest, VI WI4, 2 300m). PA: Sepp Bachmair, Hans Goger, Gerfried Göschl, Louis Rousseau, Günther Unterberger, du 7 au 11 juillet 2009.

À propos de l'auteur

Louis habite à Montréal, Québec, où il travaille dans le domaine de la prévention des maladies infectieuses pour un département régional de santé publique. Il a escaladé le Broad Peak (8 047 mètres) en 2007 par la voie de l'éperon ouest / l'arête nord, et a tenté le K2 pendant cette même saison, atteignant une altitude de 7 350 mètres. Il a tenté le K2 de nouveau, après le Nanga Parbat en 2009, mais a dû renoncer à 8 350 mètres à cause du risque d'avalanche.

Sea to Summit

Jason Sinnes

I am writing a story that started 15 years ago. Having worked frequently in Bute Inlet, I am always inspired when I return there. It is a special, high-energy place where I have often felt a higher sense of being. The stark beauty of 3,000-metre mountains rising dramatically out of the ocean and the turquoise waters flowing from Waddington Range collide to create a humbling scene. And then there is Mount Bute: a stand-alone granite monolith proudly planted between the Southgate and Homathko Rivers.

Photos by Jim Martinello

Jason Sinnes on day three following the traverse pitch below Rat Terrace during the first ascent of School of Rock on the west face of Mount Bute, Coast Mountains. Photo: Jim Martinello

The dream of climbing Mount Bute had almost vanished in the past few years. In fact, my passion for climbing had literally disappeared. Despite my waning motivation, Jim Martinello and I applied for the Mugs Stump Award, and much to our chagrin, our proposed trip was accepted. We decided a third person would be key so we added climbing veteran Bruce Kay to the roster. I welcomed the idea of a team of three because, to be honest, I felt like the weak link. Someone with his experience would be an asset.

Winning the Mugs Stump Award committed us to the plan; then there was just the not-so-simple matter of getting back in climbing shape. With the arrival of spring in Squamish, I focused on transforming myself back into a rock climber. I warmed up on the Grand Wall and then upped the ante on Polaris on the North Walls. The three of us later connected Moving to Montana with the Black Dyke, and together we felt strong and confident. The adventurous spirit was present in all of us for our alpine rock project.

It is not an easy task coordinating three guys who have jobs and families, but we managed to pull it together. Late afternoon on July 19, we flew in by fixed-wing plane from Squamish to the Homathko airstrip. The flight was as spectacular as always, cruising over the Coast Mountains. The colour contrast from the air was surreal as grey granite walls, white glaciers, blue water and endless greenery blend together. Like the advertisement promises, it really is "The Best Place on Earth". The perfect summer weather made it even better.

Our pilot did a few laps to check out the landing strip and then dropped out of the sky, touching down with precision. By the time we had unloaded our gear, my friend Chuck Burchill, who owns and operates the Homathko Camp with his wife, Sharon, greeted us. Gary Webber then bumped us via helicopter to basecamp at the base of Mount Bute. With a flat of beer chilling in the snow and a fire blazing, we discussed our line of attack. We all agreed to attempt the same line that Jim and I had spotted a few years prior. On that ill-fated reconnaissance, we were thwarted by foul coastal weather. The goal this time was to forge a new route up the unclimbed lower buttress to connect with the upper mountain.

Day One

By 6 a.m., Bruce was already packed and approaching the bottom slabs. After soloing the first 30 metres, the ropes came out and Bruce took off up the first pitch. Since there was nowhere to make an anchor, we tied two ropes together and committed to simul-climbing with the three of us spread over 120 metres. The climbing was probably in the 5.7 to 5.9 range but on slick glacier-polished slabs with minimal protection.

Jim took over the lead with me on the end of his rope and Bruce another rope-length below me—all moving together. Jim led up through a small waterfall and continued over the lip. It looked horrible, so I opted for a drier slab variation thinking we were surely on belay by now, or at the very least, he must have had some decent pro in between us. I pulled the short cruxy 5.10+ move and was shocked to see Jim 60 metres above me with only one piece in between us and still climbing through wet rock. I tied a few slings together for Bruce to grab onto so he could skip the tricky moves.

The higher he ascended, the better the climbing turned out to be. We finished the slab in about eight simul-climbed pitches; above that, the wall became much steeper. Jim took off on lead on what looked like a great 5.10 crack pitch that felt like 5.11 to him due to the weight of his pack. We each carried our own packs containing food for three days, a small sleeping bag each and a wall stove. As the climbing became more difficult, the leader would resort to hauling their pack most of the time.

At around pitch 14, we hit a small island of shrubs. The afternoon sun was searing the face and we were frying. Time was ticking. We needed a home before the fast-approaching nightfall. In an attempt to find easier ground, we cut left 20 metres and battled through coastal alpine bush looking for an alternate route. We were out of water and exhausted. A couple of pitches further up, we made the best of ledge-y ground and called it quits for the day. We guessed it was another five pitches or more up to reach the shoulder of the lower buttress and precious snow to melt water. Despite not being able to hydrate and cook food, it was still a memorable night in the Coast Mountains, complete with a stunning sunset.

Day Two

Unsure as of which way to go and with few cracks to choose from, we set off angling left up a diagonal dihedral hoping the route would continue around the corner. Here we found the key link-pitch to the upper shoulder. With more than 300 metres of air beneath my ass, I had Bruce lower me out into space. Legs shaking from lack of food and water, I reached for a left-traversing ledge. A committing move placed me on said ledge, but I still had to move five metres further for any chance of continuing. No gear and awkward moves brought me to the base of yet another shallow crack. A few bad pin placements allowed me some welcomed yet false security. Reversing the ledge was not an option, so I pulled gently off one of the pins to gain a slightly better stance. The thought of falling and ripping the pins was a grim possibility, so I focused through solid 5.10 (maybe even 5.11) moves to reach less stressful climbing.

Easier rock above led us to a snow patch and after 25 pitches we had finally surmounted the lower face. We took a necessary few hours on the shoulder to recover and hydrate. The shoulder to the base of the upper buttress was still mainly 5th-class climbing, complete with a possibly unclimbed pinnacle along the way.

To the right, snow slopes—previously used to access the upper wall—extended below the impressive west face. The next few hours were spent scouting around and trying to

Bruce Kay scoping out the upper buttress at the end of day two.
Photo: Jim Martinello

decide which route to continue up: the 1991 West Buttress (V 5.10 A3) by Michael Down and Greg Foweraker [editor's note: not completed to the summit], or the West Face (VI 5.10 A2, 800m) done in 1986 by Don Serl and Foweraker. Both had commenced from this point and looked to be worthy extensions. The West Face looked immaculate, but not for us. Linking our lower 900-metre new route with the prominent upper buttress was the primo line. Satisfied with our objective for the next morning, we relaxed and basked in the last golden rays of a perfect day.

Day Three

Leaving the bivy gear behind, we started up the buttress that divides the two massive flanks of Mount Bute. The route looked devious but easy climbing led to the base of Foweraker's crux pitch. Like a bunch of pussies with zero group confidence, we resorted to rock-paper-scissors. I lost, damn it, which left me with no choice but to jump on it and get involved. I made the decision just to get up the pitch anyway possible, so I immediately started pulling on gear. Good stemming yet well-spaced gear delivered me to the last crux where, as the story goes, Greg placed multiple stacked leaper pitons for protection. With two fingers in the crack, I was able to stand and place a crappy knifeblade while my foot slowly slipped. The pin looked half decent and allowed me to at least take a breather. I banged in another one and pulled off it gunning for a ledge five metres above. Done. I inspected the other side of the arête and scoped a line continuing up via more shallow cracks.

From our exposed and exciting belay, Jim launched off on another crucial route-finding pitch meandering back and forth on both sides of the arête. He weaved his way up until hitting an engaging finger traverse on the west side. I arrived at his belay to share in his psyche. We both had just led two brilliant pitches and were eager to face whatever adversity remained. Moderate climbing took us for 300 metres to the base of another daunting headwall. The exposure kept increasing with both sides dropping away from our position on the buttress.

Bruce took the sharp end and searched left of the arête to discover 60 metres of finger crack. He made short work of it, and above I led a short off-width section and then stretched the rope out past a two-tiered ledge. I am pretty sure that I was the first person to reach that point since the 1991 ascent party bivied there 18 years ago. I found an old nut that they rapped from and incorporated it into my anchor. Bruce joined me and we knew that we were only one rope length below the massive terrace, which was the previous highpoint. However, a roof above hindered our upward progress. Bruce led off along a right-traversing ledge that, in turn, set us up nicely for one pitch to the terrace. In what seemed like an eternity, Bruce and

Bruce Kay jumaring pitch 10 on the first day. Photo: Jim Martinello

Jim got the rope up this sting in the tail.

With the final headwall in sight, we beelined it for the summit. Moving on adrenaline, I allowed my summit fever to take over and raced ahead not giving anyone an option to descend despite the late hour. Racing across endless granite, I was off in my own world—no time to think, just climb. We finished the headwall in five more golden pitches, which dumped us on the broad summit of Mount Bute. The views of the Waddington Range and the Coast Mountains were truly an inspiration. Forest-fire smoke spilled into the inlet, which stretched west to the low orange sun. We began the arduous process of rappelling by 9 p.m. as lethargy sank in. Back to the terrace in the dark, a cold open bivy seemed like the best option. We nicknamed our bivy Rat Terrace in honour of the large rodent that tried to eat Bruce's climbing shoes during the night.

Day Four

Stiff and cold, we woke up after an uncomfortable slumber. Stuffing feet into frozen rock shoes at 5:30 a.m. is definitely not cool. Multiple rappels and downclimbing got us to basecamp where we rested, packed up and then took all day to descend to the valley bottom. Surrounded by wildflowers and cascading waterfalls, we peacefully walked below the slain dragon as it loomed above.

That night, laying beside an open fire and sipping beer, I reflected on my good fortune to have shared this experience with Jim and Bruce. Drunk and slowly passing out in a sea of tranquility, I could finally say good night to—in Michael Down's words—this "great granite mountain".

Summary

School of Rock (VI 5.11 A1, 1900m, 50 pitches), west face of Mt. Bute (2810m), Coast Mountains, B.C. FA: Bruce Kay, Jim Martinello, Jason Sinnes, July 19-25, 2009.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Mugs Stump Award, MEC and Patagonia for supporting this trip.

About the Author

Jason Sinnes resides in Squamish with his wife, Stephanie, and their two boys, Alex and Max. When not being a family guy or pursuing his passion for Coast Mountain adventures, he works in the forest industry. Despite pressure from friends to switch to the dark side, Jason has managed to avoid succumbing to kite surfing and remains faithful to Stawamus granite.

School of Rock on the west face of Mount Bute. Photo: Jim Martinello


The Secret Water
Jaime Hood

Photos by Andrew Querner

For the umpteenth time, I posthole up to my hip in the isothermal garbage—typical late-May snowpack in the Canadian Rockies. My backpack is filled with equipment of awkward shapes: pelican cases, three-metre-long metal tubes, spring-loaded scales. It is the time of year when any self-respecting climber or skier would have retired to lower elevations to enjoy sunny rock, or better yet, headed south for their annual dose of desert sandstone. But at the moment, I am wearing my scientist cap, not my climbing helmet, so I plod onwards taking in the views and enjoying the privilege of collecting data in such a beautiful place.

I am one member of a multi-person and multi-disciplinary group of scientists that has been conducting research in the Lake O'Hara watershed since 2004. We are interested in understanding the pathways by which water reaches rivers and streams in the mountains. When you dip your Nalgene into an icy creek after a long day in the mountains, that water has a history and a story to tell. How much of that water started as glacier ice? Rainfall? How much is snow that melted two months ago but has taken a detour through rock and gravel to reach this particular creek?

The importance of groundwater in the Canadian Rockies became apparent during a study of the water balance of Lake O'Hara in 2004 and 2005. Measurements were made of stream flow in all of the inflow and outflow creeks, and data was collected on changes in lake water level and lake evaporation. From this data, it was determined that Lake O'Hara is 30 to 70 per cent fed by groundwater, with groundwater becoming more important later in the summer. Of course, the most important question for any scientist to ask is, so what? Why is this important?

The words "climate change" are on the tip of many a politician and water manager's tongue these days. And as many climbers and skiers well know, there is already considerable variability in seasonal snowpack in addition to extensive glacial retreat in the Canadian Rockies. As scientists, we want to understand how these changes might affect the quantity of stream flow, which in turn, has an impact on fragile alpine aquatic ecosystems. As humans, our greatest demand for water often occurs in late summer, after the snowmelt peak has already passed.

There is concern that changes in glacier area may result in declining stream flow during the time of year when consumption is greatest for both humans and plants. Until recently, it was assumed that snow and glacier melt arrived at creeks and streams nearly instantaneously in mountain regions. However,

Previous spread: Jackie Randall coils up cables while removing water chemistry equipment before the winter freeze-up.
Photo: Andrew Querner

Greg Langston checks the Opabin meteorological station.
Photo: Andrew Querner

our work and research in several other mountainous watersheds indicate that rainwater and meltwater are often transmitted through the ground, resulting in a lag time before being released to streams. This adds a level of complexity to understanding how stream flow may be affected by changes in precipitation and glacial extent. Understanding the consequences of changes in annual snowpack, glacier decline and earlier onset of spring snowmelt requires having a thorough grasp on how the hydrological system functions. And surprisingly, the hydrology of alpine watersheds is very poorly understood. There are many studies looking specifically at glacier melt and snowmelt, but very few that also study the groundwater pathways by which these meltwaters reach streams.

To answer many of our questions, we must start at the headwaters to investigate the melt and movement of water on a smaller scale. The Lake O'Hara study is an effort to initiate this research and provide answers to these questions. It is a field-based study wherein we collect as much data on the ground as possible, and it is the only groundwater field site in the Canadian Rockies.

Studying groundwater in an alpine environment is not an easy task. Normally, the main tool used in groundwater research is wells. Monitoring wells are drilled into the ground to map groundwater levels and to track the movement and quality of water. Drilling wells in alpine environments is very logistically challenging, not to mention impermissible within the boundaries of a national park. Therefore, we need to use an arsenal of other techniques to elucidate the information we are interested in.

The large amounts of groundwater inflow to Lake O'Hara prompted us to ask where the groundwater is stored. Alpine soils are very thin (often much less than a metre thick) and water quickly runs off of exposed bedrock. Our sights immediately turned to the piles of rock debris that are glacial remnants, and to the talus slopes that are a constant reminder of rockfall dangers in the mountains. These materials are ubiquitous to mountain regions, and were our first candidate for a means of groundwater storage. A number of geophysical techniques have been used to get a sense of how much of these materials exist.

Researchers in the United States used a variety of techniques, including seismic surveys, to estimate the volume of talus material in a small watershed in the Colorado Rockies, and thus, estimate the potential of this material to store water. They concluded that talus slopes were capable of storing the equivalence of the annual total stream flow. This research captured our interest and was the inspiration for attempting

Jackie Randall collects water samples from a small stream exiting the base of a talus slope. Photo: Andrew Querner

similar geophysical techniques at Lake O'Hara.

Initial efforts have focused on obtaining data from talus slopes and the extensive moraine complex in front of the Opabin Glacier. The glacier does not have a proglacial stream, but rather the meltwater percolates directly into the ground; therefore, we were certain that there was some element of water storage in the moraine material. The main creek draining the Opabin watershed is fed by a series of groundwater springs that drain the moraine complex. The questions were: How thick is the moraine material? What is its capacity to store water? Where in the moraine is the water stored? Over a period of several summers, many geophysical surveys have been conducted to help answer these questions.

The geophysical techniques that have been used include electrical resistivity imaging (ERI), ground-penetrating radar (GPR), seismic and gravity surveys. Conducting geophysical surveys in the alpine is both challenging and comical. Geophysical equipment requires a source of electricity. In the mountains, the only available choice is to use batteries and generators as a power source. Who would turn down an opportunity to go for a hike in the mountains with a car battery or two in their backpack?

ERI is a method in which electrical current is injected into the ground, and the amount of signal returned provides information on the electrical resistivity of the subsurface. Different materials (bedrock, unconsolidated sediment, ice, water) have varied resistivity, therefore, the data can indicate what material is underground and at what depth it is found. The results from these surveys have shown that a few regions of the Opabin moraine contain buried glacial ice. As rock has fallen on the glacier from the incompetent limestone/dolostone cliffs of Schäffer Ridge, it has insulated the underlying ice. This is clearly evident in the ERI imagery. Also evident are regions of permafrost or degrading buried ice. Preliminary estimates indicate that the volume of buried ice within the moraine is similar to the volume of ice contained in the Opabin Glacier.

These buried ice masses are melting at a much slower rate than the exposed glacier ice, and may be a potential source of water long after the ever-so-diminutive Opabin Glacier has disappeared. The ERI data has also provided valuable information on the regions of the moraine that are saturated with water. GPR and seismic surveys are similarly used to image the subsurface through the use of radar waves and elastic waves, respectively, rather than current. For seismic surveys, a "shot" is generated by hitting a plastic plate with a sledgehammer and

Jackie Randall measures the water level at one of many streams on the Opabin Plateau. Photo: Andrew Querner

then the propagation of waves is recorded by a series of geophones. GPR and seismic surveys have provided important data on the thickness of the moraine and talus material and show thicknesses in the range of 15 to 30 metres. The combination of these techniques has led to the present hypothesis that water is stored in depressions in the bedrock at the base of the moraine, and in some locations, water is perched above buried ice that is impermeable to water flow. Work in the upcoming years will help to add clarity to these conclusions.

As much as I have enjoyed the odd stint of travelling in the mountains with geophysics cables and batteries, I generally like to travel a little lighter and preferably on skis whenever possible. Therefore, I have used other approaches in my contribution to the research. Another means of assessing groundwater flow characteristics is to use water balance measurements. We can measure the hydrological components entering the system (snowmelt, glacier melt, rain) and observe how the system's outflow (streams) responds to the inputs. How soon does the stream flow peak following a rain event? Does the stream flow decline slowly or quickly following a big influx of meltwater? Using some mathematical tools and techniques, and evaluating questions such as these can provide insight into the mechanisms of groundwater flow.

However, in practice, some of the field measurements are not obtained easily. As any seasoned mountain traveller can attest, snow in the mountains is not distributed evenly; neither does it melt at an even rate. Every year, at the end of April, we deploy a large field team to measure snow depth and density throughout the Opabin watershed to determine the amount of snow at the peak of accumulation. Measurements are taken on a 30- to 50-metre grid, resulting in as many as 1,500 measurement points. Depth is measured with probes, and snow density is measured in snowpits and with federal samplers (hollow aluminum tubes used to extract a snow core, which is then weighed).

We cannot possibly conduct field surveys of this magnitude every week of the snowmelt season. Instead, the snowmelt must be simulated using numerical models on a computer. Several field transects are chosen for bi-weekly snow measurements and these are used to verify that the results from numerical simulations are correct. Many regions of the Opabin watershed are inaccessible for snow surveys due to difficult terrain and hazard from both rockfall and avalanches. Snowpack in these regions is estimated using a combination of remote laser measurements, satellite imagery and a method whereby photographs of the snow cover are used in conjunction with

Jackie Randall takes advantage of one of the last days of the fall season for stream flow gauging on Upper Opabin Creek.
Photo: Andrew Querner

modelling results to back-cast how much snow was present at peak accumulation. Collecting snowpack data during the peak melt months has brought new personal meaning to the term isothermal. Rubber boots with snowshoes, anyone? For several years, this has been my footwear of choice for peak melt-season snow surveys.

The remaining measurements—glacier melt, stream flow and precipitation—each have their own challenges and triumphs. The Opabin Glacier is a tiny glacier and its remaining days on earth are likely numbered. It is, however, a special place away from the bustle of tourists. I have had the good fortune to cross paths with other creatures that agree, having spotted wolverines crossing over the Opabin Pass on a couple of occasions.

Glacier melt is estimated using a combination of measurements and modelling. Aluminum ablation stakes are drilled into the ice at intervals on the glacier and measured bi-weekly to determine the change in ice depth. The amount of measured melt is, once again, used to verify the results from the modelling efforts. In comparison with quantifying snowmelt and glacier melt, measurement of rainfall and stream flow is relatively easy. While gauging stream flow, I have had many fantastic conversations with passing hikers that are curious as to why I am standing in the creek in waders taking notes. My favourite comment is the time when someone gently asked me if the middle of the creek was a safe spot to be writing in my journal.

Precipitation data is supplied by two automatic weather stations deployed semi-permanently on site. These stations also continuously measure temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and incoming and outgoing radiation, providing much of the data that is used to drive the snowmelt and glacier melt model.

The water balance analyses are still in progress. However, what we can say is that in the Opabin watershed, snowmelt and summer rains contribute about an equal amount to the annual water balance. Glacier melt plays a relatively minor role, contributing two to five per cent of the flow on an annual basis. However, the glacier contribution is more significant in late July and August, contributing an average of 10 per cent of the total water inputs. It is also clearly evident that much of the snowmelt, glacier melt and rain are transmitted slowly through the system, with a delayed release from groundwater storage into the alpine streams. Opabin Creek has a greater amount of water flow in late August and early September than what enters from rain and glacier melt during the same time period, indicating a subsurface reserve of water. Additionally, the

Greg Langston secures the instrumentation on the Opabin meteorological station to ensure it survives another winter season. Photo: Andrew Querner

springs that exit the base of the Opabin moraine flow during the winter months, after rain and snowmelt inputs have ceased.

Our findings thus far indicate that talus slopes are likely of lesser importance as groundwater reservoirs, holding water for only days to a week. With a few more hours of time logged behind a computer screen, we will be able to give a more definitive quantification of how long it takes these source waters to move through the hidden pathways of the watershed.

We are a few steps closer to understanding the hydrology of this fragile alpine ecosystem, with much more work to do. As the years progress, our hypotheses will march towards becoming fact, and we will gain even more confidence in the numbers that we attach to them. Numbers that are hard won with endless hours of scribbling in notebooks with freezing hands, carrying batteries up the trail towards another day of geophysics, or yet another day of post-holing in the mountains.

Acknowledgements

So many people have helped us with fieldwork, and the study would not have been possible without the logistical support of Parks Canada and Lake O'Hara Lodge, and funding support from G8 Legacy Chair in Wildlife Ecology, Alberta Ingenuity Centre for Water Research, Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Science (IP3 Network), Environment Canada Science Horizons Program and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council.

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About the Author

A year away from being Dr. Hood, Jaime Hood is currently working towards her geoscience PhD in alpine hydrology at the University of Calgary. An active climber and skier, she resides in Canmore, Alberta, where she enjoys the featured limestone of the Bow Valley when not slogging through slush and streams in the name of science.

Jaime Hood braves icy waters in early October to remove a streamflow sensor for the season. Photo: Andrew Querner

Meslilloet Mountain

Then, Now and in the Future

Karl Ricker

Meslilloet Mountain from the northwest ridge approach (near "Tripod Mountain") with the east ridge on the left and the west ridge on the right. Photo: Ed Zenger

"Enough," says Ed Zenger. "I've been looking at this mountain from my front room window for 25 years; it's time to climb it!" Thus his endeavour to do so through queries, reading guidebooks and reconnoitering possible approaches to this elusive Meslilloet Mountain has provided the impetus to sort out the fascinating exploits of its discovery by mountaineers. It turns out to be a real tale that has seemingly been overlooked. It's high, it's remote and it can be seen from the northeastern suburbs of metropolitan Vancouver. Guidebooks note that it is rarely climbed because, for decades, there were no roads leading to it. Marine access to the head of Indian Arm, or to Squamish, was required prior to 1959. It is also a mountain with several old names, with Indian Chief being the favourite in keeping with its position at the head of Indian Arm—the fjord that enters Vancouver's harbour from the north.

What's more, the guidebooks mention that it is the closest mountain to the city with a sizeable and still-functioning glacier. That assertion depends on where the measurements are made: from Vancouver's City Hall at 12th and Cambie, then yes, with about two kilometres to spare; but from downtown Vancouver, then not. The tiny Stadium Glacier on the northwest side of Sky Pilot Mountain is 1.7 kilometres nearer. Whereas Sky Pilot Mountain is a one-day trip from the big city, easily reached on the spanking newly built Olympic Sea to Sky Highway, Meslilloet is remote and to ascend it at present is a long two-day venture to test anyone's stamina. Frankly, I found the ascent of Mount Robson in the Canadian Rockies to be a breeze compared to last summer's trip with Ed to Meslilloet—and it is barely half the height.

Physiography

The meslilloet massif lies in a very rugged part of the Coast Mountains, rising abruptly from the head of the steep-walled fjord, Indian Arm, 13 kilometres to the south. Topography in the region has been enhanced by the erosive power of the Cordilleran ice sheets, which covered all but the highest peaks in the region. During the last stage of glaciation, the uppermost tower of the mountain may have been a nunatak, rising 100 to 200 metres above the ice surface. The massif is of giant proportions, 40- to 50-square kilometres in extent, everywhere surrounded by steep-walled, U-shaped valleys that terminate as deep cirque bowls that pock the periphery of the massif from all sides. There are at least 20 picturesque lakes in the cirques, and above them there is a sizeable icefield (four-square kilometres) sloping east and west to the Boise and Meslilloet Creek outlets respectively. The icefield lies on the north side of the east-west aligned summit ridges, breaching the lengthy (six-kilometre) northwest ridge. On the south side, there is a 1,100-metre-high abrupt escarpment, interspersed with short, steep arêtes producing a scalloped feature. Only two of the arêtes have been ascended. The main one heads direct to the summit and is the so-called normal route, which historically, has been the favoured way because of the road and trail access from nearby Indian Arm.

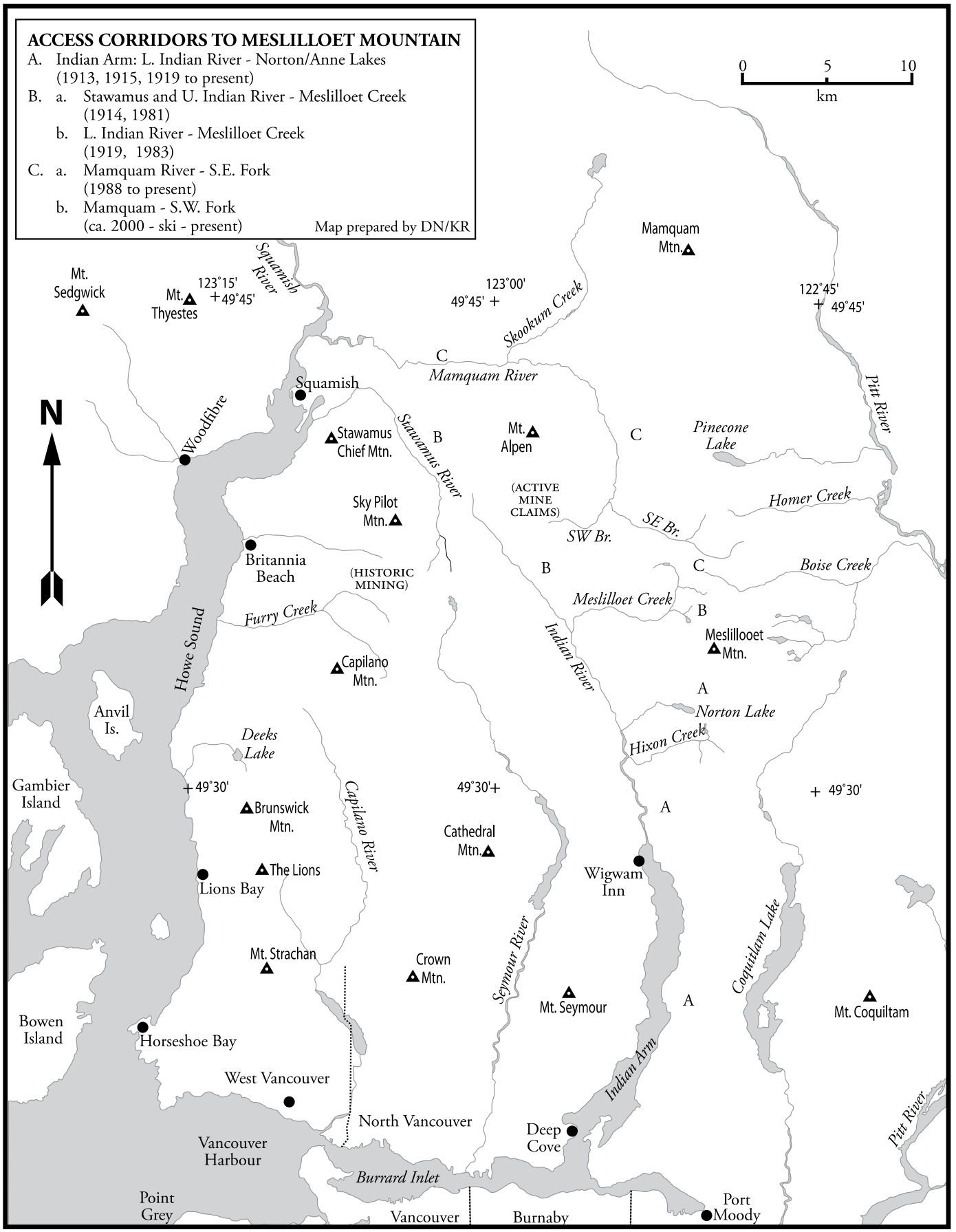
Initial surveys of the massif and its drainage basins on the south side began in 1912 with the summit occupied for critical observations in 1913. The work was for a hydroelectric proposal. In 1928, the summit was re-occupied for further observation by the provincial government giving the peak an elevation of 6,529.982 feet (1,990 metres). Hence, 6,522 feet is the elevation shown on maps produced before 1960. However, federal topographic surveys in the southern Coast Mountains re-adjusted the base datum in the early 1960s, adding about 40 feet to many surveyed peak elevations. Meslilloet's metric elevation increased to 2,001 metres, making it one of the few local mountains to exceed 2,000 metres. In 1970, our military occupied a survey station on the northwest ridge's highest point (unofficially named "Tripod Mountain") [editor's note: Geographical Names Board of Canada requires all unofficial names be in quotation marks], which was re-occupied by a private contractor in 1990.

Geological surveys of the massif also came in stages. Coastline reconnaissance mapping began at the turn of the 20th century by the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). In the 1920s, detailed geological mapping at Britannia Mines extended eastward from Howe Sound to the Indian-Stawamus River divide, with added mineral property evaluations, but the effort by the GSC stopped just short of the massif. However, ambitious and optimistic prospectors pushed their staking endeavours onto it and an ancient claim post was found on the second highest peak of the massif's northwest ridge. In the 1950s, the GSC began full geological surveys of the Coast Mountains. For the so-called Pitt Lake map-area (NTS 92G east 1/2), they sponsored an ambitious PhD student, Jim Roddick, to carry out the work, which took three full seasons (1955-57) to complete, owing to the ruggedness of the terrain and the near absence of any roads. It was a Herculean task employing several student field assistants, at least one of them being a mountaineer. His report and map by the GSC (1965) provided much insight on the character of the vast array of granitic rock types. Not surprisingly, the massif was shown to be monolithic granodiorite (biotite and hornblende enriched) on the summit and east side, but rather deficient of dark minerals and a pinkish pale colour on the west. Granodiorites are one of two typical granitic rock types of the Coast Mountains, and actual granite, as mineralogically defined by geologists, is less than one per cent of all the rocks therein. While Roddick noted a few inclusions of older rocks and quartz veins on Meslilloet, they are minor and of no commercial attribute. The prospector who planted the claim post on the northwest ridge staked the proverbial moose pasture, except in this case it belonged to mountain goats.

Historical Perspective

Historically, the early ascents of the mountain have been garbled by the guidebooks. It is a complicated saga of some really remarkable wandering in rugged mountainous terrain. To describe the efforts, it requires a look at the map on the facing page. Note the "through" valley of Indian Arm, Indian River and low pass to Stawamus River. The massif was approached from both ends, starting from North Vancouver-Port Moody on the south, and Squamish from the north. Also the Hixon, Brandt and Meslilloet tributaries of the Indian River provide access corridors from the south and west respectively. To throw in more confusion, there is the Britannia Beach Mining Camp west of the Indian-Stawamus divide that had mineral exploration efforts extending into this corridor, and hence, the construction of a trail in the "through" valley. Sky Pilot Mountain lies within the realms of the mining camp and its ascent provided the first good views of Meslilloet. To facilitate further discussion as times roll along, there is the Mamquam drainage to the north and the Boise-Pitt basin to the east.

For this discussion, we are indebted to Dr. Glenn Woodsworth who ferreted private papers of Don Munday from


ACCESS CORRIDORS TO MESLILLOOET MOUNTAIN
A. Indian Arm: L. Indian River - Norton/Anne Lakes (1913, 1915, 1919 to present)
B. a. Stawamus and U. Indian River - Meslilloet Creek (1914, 1981)
b. L. Indian River - Meslilloet Creek (1919, 1983)
C. a. Mamquam River - S.E. Fork (1988 to present)
b. Mamquam - S.W. Fork (ca. 2000 - ski - present)
Map prepared by DN/KR
0 5 10
km
N
Mt. Sedgwick
Mt. Thyestes
123°15' + 49°45'
Squamish River
123°00' 49°45' +
Skookum Creek
Mamquam Mtn.
122°45' + 49°45'
Pitt River
C
Mamquam River
Squamish
Woodfibre
Stawamus Chief Mtn.
Stawamus River
B
Mt. Alpen
C
Pinecone Lake
(ACTIVE MINE CLAIMS)
Sky Pilot Mtn.
Homer Creek
SE Br.
SW Br.
Britannia Beach
(HISTORIC MINING)
B
C
Boise Creek
Meslilloet Creek
B
Furry Creek
Howe Sound
Indian River
Meslillooet Mtn.
Capilano Mtn.
A
Norton Lake
Anvil Is.
Deeks Lake
Hixon Creek
Gambier Island
+ 49°30'
Brunswick Mtn.
Capilano River
49°30'+
+ 49°30'
A
Cathedral Mtn.
The Lions
Lions Bay
Wigwam Inn
Mt. Strachan
Crown Mtn.
Seymour River
Coquitlam Lake
Mt. Seymour
A
Mt. Coquitlam
Bowen Island
Horseshoe Bay
West Vancouver
Indian Arm
Pitt River
North Vancouver
Deep Cove
Vancouver Harbour
Burrard Inlet
Point Grey
Vancouver
Burnaby
Port Moody

the B.C. Archives, an old government journal on hydroelectric proposals and developments, and a significant manuscript by Frank Smith that was circulated with the ACC Vancouver Section's *Avalanche Echoes*. There are big surprises in store.

Contrary to guidebook assertions, the first ascent of Meslilloet was not by H. Selfe, P. Long and F. Colburne in 1913, a time when all mountains north and east of Vancouver were under initial siege (1907-23), and usually requiring marine access. They did not climb it until 1914, a few days in September before Don Munday and Frank Smith made their ascent—yes, it was a race. But little did either party know at the time that after an aborted attempt by the B.C. Mountaineering Club in 1913 (the weather and sketchy trail), the peak was climbed in the same season by a hydro-electric survey party. Munday's papers (written about 10 years later) note that the probable first ascent was by W.R. Bonnycastle and a Mr. Davis who were carrying out potential water-storage basin surveys for a private power company. Retrieval of those records from the government publications shows extensive survey work on all basins in the Brandt-Hixon tributaries, and the necessary clues that the Bonnycastle party did indeed climb the mountain by the south ridge, which rises above the Anne Lake basins. Furthermore, they named it "Mount Ida" after Mr. Bonnycastle's wife. Munday's manuscript also hints that the route used by the Selfe party was probably not on the south ridge as the guidebooks might infer.

Rather, in 1914, the race was on between two mountaineering parties to climb "Indian Chief" for the perceived first ascent, both groups unaware that surveyors had been on it beforehand. The two parties used the Stawamus-Upper Indian River trail as the approach. They left the trail for a very rough thrash up the Meslilloet valley to near the head of its basin. Adroitly avoiding one upstream tributary that issues from glacier discharge, the Munday-Smith party went farther upstream to reach either the main northwest ridge, or more likely the spur that runs between it and the glacier-scoured basin. Selfe's route through this *mélange* is unknown, though Frank Smith's notes indicate that the Selfe party also ascended the Meslilloet to perhaps its headwaters, and may have ascended the glacier basin directly rather than climb up to the long northwest ridge above it.

It is known that, while going in, Munday met Selfe's party on their way out of the Indian River trail. As for Munday and Smith, they traversed the long (five- to six-kilometre) arcing northwest ridge over two of its summits, and then crossed the névé of the Meslilloet Creek glacier to reach the summit's east ridge. Thus, their ascent was the third (although at the time they might have been still unaware of Bonnycastle's ascent).

They returned to Squamish using the same corridor except Smith indicates that the glacier was descended through to the base of the lower icefall to the adjacent lake basin and then bushwhacked into the main stem of the Meslilloet. This access corridor from Squamish is roughly 35 to 40 kilometres one-way, and at that time, all on foot, over half of it without a trail. The Selfe party, in their belief of a first ascent, gave the name of Indian Chief. The first recognized mountaineering-party ascent of the south ridge, using the Indian Arm approach was by renowned B.S. Darling (of Mount Garibaldi and Tantalus fame) with H. Graves in 1915 (Smith, manuscript), who also used the name "Indian Chief".

The saga doesn't stop in 1913, 1914 or 1915. Although Don Munday was a reluctant trooper in a World War I battalion and came back injured in action, he was indefatigable. In 1919, with his wife-to-be, Phyllis James, and T. Irvine, they set forth to "Indian Chief", using the shorter Indian Arm, Indian River, Brandt Creek and Anne Lake approach. Their account (in B.C. Archives) describes the trip in detail noting that Wigwam Inn, at the inlet head, established in 1910 as a fancy beer garden, was the point of disembarkation. (The Inn is still there, serviced for a century now by excursion ferries and more recently by vessels from its present owners, the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club). The trail from the Inn led to an abandoned hand-loggers camp near the Brandt Creek tributary, where, surprise, Mr. Davis of the water-survey gang was met, staying in one still-standing cabin. He was gauging local water levels for the six-year-old hydroelectric proposal.

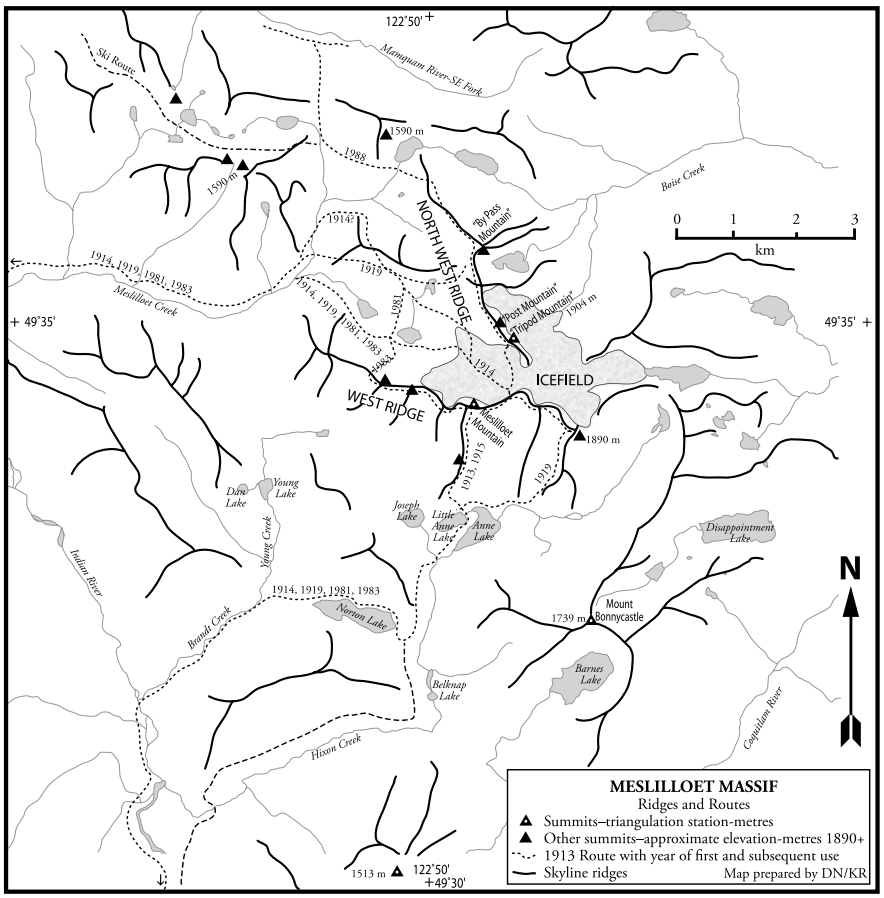
This meeting might have been when Munday first heard of the summit ascent details by Bonnycastle in 1913—his papers recognize the fact. The Munday-James-Irvine party continued from the logging camp to Norton Lake, noting a cabin built on a large rock (see photo *CAJ*, 1975, vol. 58, p. 35), and then passing over a low divide into the then-called "Belknap Creek" (Hixon Creek) to reach the double basins of Anne Lake. At this point there appears to have been navigation errors, perhaps created by intense fog that plagued the trip. Instead of heading due north to reach Bonnycastle's (and Darling's) south-ridge route, they veered northeast onto a similar looking, but more difficult, ridge requiring two camps on it to ascend to a minor peak (GR 144904, NAD 1927) and its first ascent.

The next day, the party followed the edge of the névé lying at the head of the south fork of Boise Creek to reach the east ridge of "Indian Chief" and its ascent to the summit. Desperate to avoid descending what took two to three days to climb, Munday opted for an escape into the Meslilloet Creek drainage to the west knowing from his 1914 trip that the climbing was easier although being a much longer way back to Indian Arm. Not wishing to traverse the tiring crest of the northwest ridge, nor choosing to descend the "Meslilloet Glacier" to its terminus, an escape from the upper glacier on its right (north) side above the icefall was used, providing easy hiking along the crest of the steep wall rising above the icefall and two lakes below it. In 1919, the glacier still plunged into the upper lake (retracted 650 metres by 1951) whereas the lower lake was seen to provide wonderful colours. The party stayed well above both lakes, eventually dropping off a broad ridge into the upper Meslilloet Creek basin, and carrying out the forested descent through it (as used in 1914). Exiting the Meslilloet into Indian River valley, the party wisely descended it, on the valley trail to Wigwam Inn, 15 kilometres away. They completed not only an impressive ascent but also a grand tour of the colossal Meslilloet massif.

Although two routes, with variants on each, had now been

established in only five ascents of the mountain, there are two other historical events that must not go unmentioned. In 1928, the British Columbia Topographic Survey sent G.T. Underhill and companion(s) to the summit of "Indian Chief". The south-ridge route, via the Indian Arm approach, was used and a colossal two-metre-high by one-metre-diameter signal cairn was constructed while on top (the cairn is still there, relatively intact). Underhill's survey notes called the station "Big Chief", rather than "Indian Chief", being also aware of Bonnycastle's designation of "Mount Ida" because he had access to his survey notes (R. Tupper, British Columbia Legal Surveyor, personal communication).

So now the mountain had three names, none officially approved, and reconciliation did not occur until the British Columbia Topographic Survey sent A.J. Campbell with his cumbersome photo-theodolite (and heavy glass plates) to the summit to collect data for mapping (no air photos at that time). Campbell was the surveyor and compiler of the map of Garibaldi Park (1926-28), beginning his career by working for A.O. Wheeler on the B.C.-Alberta Boundary Survey. It was 1940, Campbell was in his late 50s, yet fit for the job at hand and by then was certainly aware of geographic nomenclature struggles, having endured much flack on the matter with his map of Garibaldi Park. Wisely, he discarded all the names used to date and asked the authorities to name the mountain after the creek that drains its western side (Meslilloet Creek). His recommendation was quickly ratified and all maps issued post-World War II show it as Meslilloet Mountain. The origin of the name is a mystery, but the creek had this name before 1913. Lillooet, as we all know, is a name of a village, lake, river, glacier and native band (now known as Lil'wat), but the "Mes" prefix is anybody's guess.



Routes and Approaches since 1950

At present, there are three approaches to Meslilloet Mountain: two historical, a third to be described, and possibly a fourth may develop depending on hydro-electric politics in the Pitt River watershed. Currently, the Indian Arm approach to the south side of the mountain is still used, albeit rarely, as will be explained. This is the approach touted by the guidebooks. The second approach is from the northwest using the Stawamus River roads to access either the route up Meslilloet Creek basin, or going farther south to rejoin the access of the southern approach, using roads on Hixon Creek. The second has always been a problem; the road opened in 1970, but has been plagued with a rough surface, washouts and politics on its use. The third approach, through the mind-boggling maze of logging roads in the Mamquam basin to the north took a while to evolve with the needed spur roads not appearing until 1987. Currently, the Mamquam is the favoured approach, advertised only in Baldwin's 2009 ski touring guide, though first noted in print by Mike Feller (1988).

The southern approach requires marine transport: by scheduled excursion ferry to Wigwam Inn, or water taxi from Deep Cove in Vancouver's inner harbour, or use of your own craft. Logging roads from tidewater began to appear in the late 1950s and reached Hixon and Brandt Creeks by 1964 (Culbert, 1965). Already, there had been British Columbia Mountaineering Club (BCMC) trips using the route as early as 1932, led by Art Cooper, and two or more in the early post-war era by the ACC, led by Alan Melville, who remarked that the Norton Lake cabin was still there. However, the trips were darn few and the usual inclement weather also stymied interest. It was the wrong place to be, cabin or not, when it was wet. The logging road access to Norton Lake eliminated 10 or so kilometres of bushy trail, but by 1959 with the opening of the highway to Squamish, most mountaineers lost interest in using boats to reach mountains. Culbert's guidebook supplement (1969) noted that the Indian River road had reached upstream to the junction to Meslilloet Creek and there was only an eight-kilometre gap in connecting it to the Stawamus River road, which had by then reached the low pass (750 metres). Yet there was little interest at that stage. His replacement guide (1973) mentioned the connection of road systems, triggered by the

construction of a high-voltage power line from the entrance of Indian Arm to Squamish in 1970. Slowly, there were a few takers, initially those who drove southward from Squamish to the south approach, and then up Brandt and Hixon Creeks to climb the normal South Ridge route. It was doable in a weekend. Then the more adventurous entered the scene.

New logging roads were pushed into the Meslilloet basin in the late 1970s. A tantalizing approach, to be sure, but the two parties who accepted the bait were unaware that Don Munday, and possibly others, had already used the approach some 60-odd years beforehand. Certainly, the guidebook authors weren't aware, including Fairley (1986). So, in 1981, Klaus Haring, a well-known and respected solo wanderer, duplicated much of the Munday's route from the northwest except that he climbed out of the cirque lake basins to gain the northwest ridge—a variant to Munday's two routes. His ascent of the east ridge on the summit block was probably the third or fourth, if the Selfe party had used it in 1914.

A much more rigorous and daring caper took place in 1983 and is without precedent. Published by Steve Grant (1984, again in 2009), he and Robin Tivy left Deep Cove by water taxi to unload their road bicycles (narrow tire) onto the Indian River road and then cycled about 22 kilometres to road-end (elevation 650 metres) on the Meslilloet Creek branch. After bushwhacking into the cirque, they attacked the 550-metre-high north-facing headwall above the second lake to reach the west ridge crest of the massif about two kilometres from the summit. Tough climbing followed over several minor summits on a complex of ledges and slabs that required much backing off of blind dead-end leads and searching for alternate ways. Without surveyor tape to mark their way up, the descent proved to be even more obstinate, although camp was reached by 3 p.m. Then the work really began: descend from camp to their bicycles; pedal back to the Indian River road; push the bikes five kilometres in the ascent to "Stawamus Pass" and then descend to Squamish, hopefully in time to catch the train back to North Vancouver. They missed it by three hours, but a friend came to Squamish to rescue them. Nonetheless, it was the first full bike traverse of the Indian-Stawamus road system and they bagged a new route on the mountain itself.

Yet to be utilized was the approach to Meslilloet from Mamquam basin, which, at present, is the favoured way in. The labyrinths of roads were mind-boggling and some climbers were salivating at the wide array of mountaineering opportunities so provided. However, it was not until 1987 that a key road into the southeast branch provided the opportunity to test a third approach. The advantage here is that the roads are better, not requiring four-wheel drive, but the obverse was a longer approach on foot as the 1988 party found. It is four kilometres of tough bush to assault before reaching alpine terrain. About four kilometres upstream from the forks (southeast and southwest) the right-hand edge of a cutblock on the south side of the valley marks the departure point upslope. This position provides the only easy and direct avenue through an obnoxious greasy cliff band, soon to be followed by lots of head-high azaleas and blueberry bushes to reach a saddle at 1,300 metres (GR 100959, NAD 1927). From that point, the 1988 party led by Feller (1988, 2009) continued due south to grid reference 100900 before swinging easterly to another saddle (GR 110948) at 1,400 metres, which overlooks a cirque lake (draining into Boise Creek) where they camped. The next day, they ascended to the virtual terminus of the aforementioned northwest ridge, which, in June, was covered by almost continuous snow for the entire long slog over its minor peaks to Meslilloet's east ridge. The first step of the east ridge was also well-covered in snow, no rock climbing needed; but the second step provided an enjoyable direct and steep ascent to the summit, avoiding the left-hand traverse on easier ground for all but one of their party. It was a long two-day venture for the fully experienced Feller party. However, there are the one-day marathoners. A three-man Varsity Outdoor Club (VOC) party, despite missing the easy passage through the initial cliff band above the road, did the complete tour in 12 hours. Like the Feller party, they attempted a short cut on the way back by crossing into the Mamquam headwaters directly from the campers' lake. The result for the VOC gang was a lot more bush and avalanche terrain to bash, making it an epic to reach their car (see Blair and Nelson, 2006).

For our trip on the July long weekend in 2009, a recce carried out two weeks in advance put us on the right course straight to the first saddle above the road. Here, Ed deviated off the tried and proven route, electing to lead us up steeper bush to an alpine campsite above the previously mentioned and desired lake site (better views!). The following day proved to be a desperate descent through dense bush and cliff bands to reach the lake. Gaining the near terminus of the northwest ridge, which was free of snow due to the hot summer, the first major bump was by-passed easily on its south side. The next three or four bumps were traversed finding an old claim post on the second-highest and an aluminum tripod on the highest, left by the Army Survey Establishment in 1970. Checking the serial number left on a brass disc under the tripod, records retrieved by Robbie Tupper (BCLS) revealed two survey missions (1990 as well) and a precise elevation of 1,904.08 metres (much higher than that registered on Munday's aneroid), and 44 metres above the elevation used in Baldwin's book. The peak was christened "Tripod Mountain" by us before we descended its east ridge to the névé of Meslilloet's surprisingly robust glacier. It was a short trek across it to reach the base of the east ridge. Also free of snow, the rock climb has a 4th-class initial pitch; the second step also begins with a similar pitch, and being pressed for lunch, the left-hand traverse exit to the summit ridge was taken. From the top, both Len Soet and Ed Zenger phoned their wives at their homes in suburban Vancouver, the only spot where a cell signal could be intercepted. From camp it was a 6.5-hour assault and about the same time was needed for the return despite using the saddle route above the lake to shorten the uphill thrash to our alpine campsite. The rain on the following morning provided a desperately slippery descent through the bush back to road level, using Len's GPS to make sure the weakness through the cliff band above the cutblock was not missed.

Ski tourers use a longer route to reach the northwest approach to the massif. The southeast branch of the Mamquam is very awkward for skiers because of the above-mentioned cliff in the steep forest above the cutblock. Baldwin's ski mountaineering guide directs the skiers to the road on the southwest branch, giving explicit instructions to reach spurs leading off it to a junction at 820 metres and road-end at 1,120 metres (approximately GR 064964). This variation adds roughly three to four kilometres of hill and dale travel to the summer approach. A bumpy set of knolls are crossed leading to a chain of six lakes/ponds, the largest and lowest is on the east end near the first saddle ascended on the summer route. Devilish large blocks of talus surround these lakes, and thus as a summer alternative to the usual route, it would be a very awkward and time-consuming ordeal fraught with potential injurious mishaps. For the ski tourer, however, it is smooth slide and glide right through to the usual lake at the base of the long northwest ridge. Avoidance of "Tripod Mountain" (1,904 metres) by skiing down to the glacier is possible, but either way, over or under, the glacier is traversed to the base of the east ridge—a 3rd-class snow climb (on foot) in spring. Because Mamquam roads are not snowplowed, the skier option is limited to late April or early May in most years.

Summary and Access Outlook

In summary, there are three approaches to Meslilloet: the south by way of Indian River-Hixon Creek; the west by way of Indian River-Meslilloet Creek; and the north-west by way of one or two access points in the Mamquam. But in 2000, the Squamish Forest District closed the Stawamus River road with a locked gate, and since then a bridge has been washed out on the upper reach of the Indian River road (the logging has finished). Furthermore, the Meslilloet Creek branch road is also impassable. In the Mamquam basin, upstream from the Skookum Creek tributary, there is at present no road maintenance because the major forest licensee has pulled out. A local prospector, K. Mackenzie, with an interesting sulphide mineral property at the head of the southwest tributary of the Mamquam, has been doing all the road maintenance above the Skookum Creek junction. Each year, winter washouts and treefall across the road increase his voli-maintenance work and a calamitous event will bring his effort to a halt. Thus, the access to any part of the upper Mamquam is now tenuous. The road into its southeast branch, especially, is now in barely passable condition and not-at-all drivable to the point where the summer route departs from it. The future access hangs on renewed cutting activity (unlikely in view of local mill closures), or controversial small hydro developments (there are two already on the lower Mamquam), or mineral property development to a production stage. Any of these scenarios will take years to develop; meanwhile, the B.C. Forest Service refuses to carry out any road maintenance unless an unwieldy large fire erupts.

The high bastille of Meslilloet will once again become aloof, awaiting those few who will try the tidewater access on foot or bike. As one of eastern Vancouver's skyline giant peaks, the "Big Chief" stands alone. Perhaps we need one of those kinds of mountains to draw the continued respect of the local mountaineering fraternity.

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About the Author

Now at the spry age of 74 years young, Karl began climbing in 1950 and his first *CAJ* article was published 30 years ago. A retired consultant geologist (trained in glacial geology), he now resides in Whistler, B.C., where he cheered for his daughter Maëlle, who won a gold medal in boardercross at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.


Sachi

The Cultural Ranges

The Wall

N.C. Moorhead

The stone reared up above the sacred water, some two thousand feet. The pale rock polished and scoured by glaciers had slowly exfoliated great chunks of granite that lay shattered around the base. It was as though some giant was peeling back the layers of an onion to reveal new flesh to the kiss of the sun and the breath of the wind, the tears of the rain and the aspirations of man.

Ever since the first people first came to the alluvial fan of the river of salmon, eyes had soared to where the peregrines nested and the eagle swooped. It was a spiritual, awe-inspiring place. Great seams and cracks crisscrossed and ascended vertically like the weathered lines in an old chieftain's face. In winter, the clouds swirled behind the trees and buttresses in a malevolent way, suggesting evil spirits like the cougar roamed its contours. No human foot had touched the crystalline skin of The Wall.

When the white man came things changed so fast that it would take your breath away. The fallers and the miners ravaged the landscape. The railroaders built iron roads; the loggers, dirt roads. Shipping furrowed the sacred water. Still, The Wall stood aloof to the activity below.

One day, a couple of dirt-bag climbers, one a Canuck, the other a Yank, stood at the bottom of The Wall amid the flaked-off boulders. They thought it would go. They laid siege to the perpendicular face of the monolith. Soon the loggers, the miners, the railroaders, the doctors, the grocers and publicans of the little town at the river mouth all knew what was going on. Someone phoned the press and soon the housewives, the children, the schoolteachers, the nurses, the mechanics and even the mayor had some comment to make to the fifth estate. Television cameras and carloads of rubber-neckers arrived from the city. The road below The Wall turned into a parking lot of lookie-loos hoping to witness a disaster or a triumph.

Word got around that pack rats had devoured the climbers' meager food supplies. Citizens stepped forward with rations; the local blacksmith hammered out pitons for them. The attempt now belonged to the whole town. Their generosity was rewarded when the weary young men finally flopped over the rim onto the summit of the mountain.

The Wall put the town on the map for international and national climbers alike. Now, on any given day in the summer, the license plates in the climbers' parking lot are a lesson in geography, a witness to the popularity of the sport.

Sam stands at the foot of the Split Pillar. It is his 60th birthday.

It has been 20 years since he and his friend Richard had decided that life was probably over at 40 and they better get their asses up The Wall before it was too late. It had taken them two days of placing pegs and hammering them in, hanging étriers, stepping up and repeating the enervating process. They were on the original route up the bolt ladder pioneered so many years before. The pair had slept on a hanging belay station and kicked several aggressive pack rats to their doom.

Whilst they were manfully labouring upward on their second day, they were overtaken and passed by two 15-year-olds in skin-fitting fluorescent Lycra, high on something. They climbed free without the need for étriers and the heavy equipment demanded in artificial climbing.

Richard had shaken his head gloomily and said, "The shape of things to come, old boy. You and I are done for."

Of course his pessimism quickly disappeared when they had finally reached their destination, Belly Good Ledge. They had successfully completed the route. They celebrated their senior statesmanship in the pub in the time-honoured fashion, by raising a glass of Cooper and Baldwin pale ale to "Old Farts!"

Today, Sam—never to say never again—is about to ascend the most spectacular pitch of the climb. He has kept his mind and body honed to the problems of the rock for two decades. He climbs, free of the encumbrances of his youth. Placement of protection will ensure short drops, should his feet fail to keep in the hold. Pendulous swings are likewise minimized by proper placement of secure safety devices. To this end, a selection of friends, cams, stoppers, pitons and hexes hang from his climbing harness.

Stuart has taken the first pitch and yells down, "Climb when you're ready."

"Climbing."

"Climb on."

The great pillar stands, separating itself from the face. The cleanness, the verticality, the smoothness of the rock and the giddying exposure all focus Sam upon the next move, and the next and the next. He joins his son halfway up the Pillar on a small platform of rock.

"Way to go, Dad! Your lead."

Sam quickly checks that the waist belt of his harness is still double buckled. Stuart nods approvingly.

Funny, Sam thinks, I used to worry about Stuart wanting to be a guide.

His friend the Professor had said, "Sam, if you had told your son to practice the piano everyday and then said, 'No, no, don't become a concert pianist,' what would you be? Crazy! I tell my friends about your children. They both have managed to live and work in national parks. How successful is that?"

Sam had laughed at his own foolishness.

Soon he has cleared the top of the pillar. The next section, the Sword, requires a layback leading to thin fingertip moves to a small ledge. He pauses and looks down. The green fuzzy stuff is the pointed ends of the tops of the fir trees below. The road and the insect cars are irrelevant in this world of air and space. The sun is glinting off the waters. Ravens glide and do death spirals in the air as part of their courtship display.

It gets them every time, he thinks.

Stepping left out of the corner onto the face Sam sees fresh air between his feet. Up the flakes and layback right under the roof where there is a chain anchor. He passes the anchor and up the bolt ladder, to the stance where Stuart has set up the belay.

"How's it going, Dad?"

"Good."

Stuart takes the next pitch up Perry's Layback. The rock arches in a curve overhead. This demanding section thankfully ends by wedging into a chimney to rest before popping out onto a large ledge known as The Flats.

As Sam reaches the belay, he notes that the terrain is a little less intimidating. Sam climbs through, passing old bolts and surmounting a bulge on the left. He face climbs and gets over a crux that stretches him, to find sanctuary at a belay point beside a tree.

Stuart climbs through and takes on the undercling with his hands whilst his feet push against the rock. Quickly, he then moves rightward and back left until he gains Belly Good Ledge by ascending a short corner. He brings up his dad.

"Happy birthday, Old Timer!"

"Thank you. That was wonderful, Son!"

The pair traverse the ledge to the descent through the trees, over terrain that would freak out those of a horizontal inclination. Both climbers are very happy with their performance.

Of course The Wall is indifferent to the efforts and progress of men. It stands mute in the sunshine and appears to be not such a forbidding place after all.

The spirits of the Raven, Eagle and Thunderbird laugh. They have been here for thousands of years and will probably still be here, when the sun sets one last time.

[Note: This story is a work of fiction.]

Protecting Your Lifestyle

Lindsay Elms

A few years ago in one of the *Bushwhacker* newsletters from the Vancouver Island Section of the ACC, Peter Rothermel wrote: "So what's in a helmet? Hopefully your head, safe and sound!" It was a serious report on helmet use and it got me thinking about climbing helmets. It has taken up until now to put my own somewhat warped twist on the subject.

What would you think if you heard there is a relationship between a condom and a climbing helmet. I hear you chortling and rhetorically articulating, "Who is this dickhead?" Of course, there is no comparison in size between the two objects; however, there are some "real" men out there with big egos who brag about the size of a certain wiener that could fit into a climbing helmet!

Okay, let's have a serious look at what both of these objects are used for.

A condom is a rubber sheath worn on the penis during sexual intercourse as a contraceptive device and is recommended by the National Health Board to be used to practise safe sex. A condom will help prevent infection from sexually transmitted diseases, some of which can dramatically affect your lifestyle. A helmet is considered a protective device that is worn by soldiers, policemen, snowboarders, motorcyclists and mountaineers when there is danger of receiving a head injury or death, both of which can dramatically affect your lifestyle.

So we see that using a helmet or a condom will allow you to continue enjoying the particular lifestyle you are accustom to and protect you from potentially life-threatening situations. Now what exactly is it that a helmet and a condom cover? You don't need to be a brain surgeon to figure that out. One covers the skull that contains the brain while the other covers the penis, both of which are considered organs. So what is an organ?

From the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*: Or·gan *noun* **2 a** a usu. self-contained part of an organism having a special vital function. **b** esp. *jocular* the penis.

I'm not going to get into statistics over how many people would say that the brain is the only vital organ, but if you ask any male, his penis is pretty damn important. In fact, I have often heard said that a man's brain can be found in his pants exactly where his penis is located. For woman, only one of these two organs is essential (you guess) but some get pleasure from the other (this information is supplied by Masters and Johnson's reports.) However, joking aside, both of these organs are important to the continuation of our species at this point in our scientific evolution.

Now the big question is why some people are so averse to wearing these protective coverings. I have seen many climbers over the years who shun the idea of wearing a helmet. Yes,

helmets were once heavy and clunky, but there is also that macho attitude associated with them. Some males say only a sissy would wear a helmet. Often the same statement can be heard concerning the use of condoms. Nowadays, technological advances have made helmets much lighter in weight than their earlier predecessors and are anatomically designed for greater comfort. They even come in different colours to suit your personality, the colour of your spandex or the climb you're doing. Condoms also come in different colours, shapes, textures and flavours, depending on you're partner at the time and you're sexual preference.

So, if it is recommended that consenting adults use condoms to practise safe sex, then why shouldn't mountaineers wear their climbing helmets to practise safe climbing? Next time you're in your local mountaineering store check out the range of climbing helmets and I guarantee a pharmacy that sells condoms won't be too far away. Remember, even seemingly minor head injuries can have lasting effects. Months, even years later symptoms such as loss of memory or aggressive behaviour may manifest themselves, even though the initial trauma did not seem severe. Of course, the worst-case scenario is death.

Thirty-seven Years Later

Bruce Fairley

With the customary lack of fanfare that has been his lot over the years, David Jones became an honorary member of The Alpine Club of Canada in the spring of 2009. Few would argue that he is now the leading mountaineer of all time in the Selkirks, where he has more than 130 new routes in every part of the range, including the Ohno Wall, the range's first grade VI, and for many years its toughest climb. He was also Canada's leading Himalayan climber of the 1970s, climbed Mount Logan four times, twice by new routes (one of which was the beautiful Warbler Ridge), put up a couple of cutting-edge coastal climbs and added buckets of new rock routes to various cragging areas around B.C.

For all his accomplishments, he is considerably less well known than many other figures in Canadian climbing, having been somewhat rescued from obscurity, however, by Chic Scott's treatment of his career in *Pushing the Limits*.

One good example of an overlooked accomplishment is Jones' route on the northwest aspect of Eagle Peak in Rogers Pass, which he climbed solo on July 23, 1972. Jones gives this route a rating of 5.7 in his current guidebook, *Selkirks South*, with a time estimate of six to seven hours.

Almost exactly 37 years to the day that Jones put up the climb, my friend Jeff Dolinsky and I repeated the route. We found about 12 pitches of climbing with the upper wall being quite sustained 5th class, and we took three times longer than the guidebook's estimate.

I have now spoken to four other parties who have repeated the route and all agree that the correct rating for the climb is 5.8. No one has come anywhere close to regaining Rogers Pass after summitting in the time suggested in the guidebook. There are a couple of strenuous jam cracks to be overcome on the climb, and the route-finding is not as straightforward as one would believe, given that the buttress line seems quite distinct from the road. The difficulty surprised me right from the start. Within the first few body lengths on the first pitch, I already had a couple of cams for protection.

It occurs to me that at the time it was climbed, Jones' route on Eagle must have been one of the most outstanding solo efforts in the Canadian mountains to that date. It is difficult to call to mind comparables. In terms of new routes, H.F. Ulrichs soloed the northwest face of Mount Stephen above Field, B.C., in the early 1900s, and Tom Fyles soloed The Table in Garabaldi Park. Bob Hind had soloed Mount Louis near Banff back in the 1940s, and Hans Gmoser soloed Mount Sir Donald at Rogers Pass shortly after arriving in Canada. None of these climbs would have come close to the sustained level of difficulty of the Northwest Buttress of Eagle. Any solos on Yamnuska located in the Canadian Rockies' Front Range to that date would have been of established routes. So the Northwest Buttress of Eagle likely has a larger place in Canadian climbing history than is generally recognized, and it is still, of course, a climb well worth repeating.

The Northwest Buttress (sun-shade line in the centre of the face) of Eagle Peak, Rogers Pass. Photo: David P. Jones

Trad Dad, Rad Dad

Jenny Randall

When I was one year old in 1984, my dad helped save the Smoke Bluffs in Squamish, B.C. This magical cluster of classics was to be sold, built on and closed off to those who loved it most. Now, in 2010, the Smoke Bluffs have had houses on them for years. But they are still very much climbed on, too, and protected to a large extent, thanks to a phone call made one afternoon to downtown Vancouver 26 years ago.

At that point in his life, my dad, John, was 40, an accountant, husband and father of three, wilderness enthusiast and President of the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC). This Federation represented all outdoor-based clubs in B.C. at the time, of which there were around 30, giving the FMCBC almost 5,000 members. It ran courses in climbing and outdoor safety (Peter Croft was an instructor); lobbied for conservation and access rights; built paths and fought to protect B.C.'s pristine mountain wilderness, an ongoing battle that was about to get just that little bit harder.

Not that Dad knew it. While he worked in his office, dreaming of mountains and rivers, Jim Rutter, manager of the FMCBC, was discovering the Smoke Bluffs were to be bought by a property developer and closed to the public the very next day.

That's when the phone rang.

Neither Jim who called, nor John who answered, knew what to do. After some discussion, there was a pause as Dad tallied up his life savings. "Tell them I'll offer $70,000," he said, and to their surprise the offer was accepted. Suddenly, the Smoke Bluffs belonged to Mr. John Randall—and were safe.

Of course, this last-minute rescue was exciting, possibly heroic even, but Mr. and Mrs. Randall weren't really in a financial position that allowed for the purchase of crags willy-nilly. With the Bluffs being temporarily safe, the FMCBC had time to act and, luckily, agreed to purchase them. Thanks to Jim's efforts in securing a loan from Mountain Equipment Co-op—which from that day on would become a key voice in the fight to protect Canada's wilderness—the bluffs became the property of the Federation, which quickly put fundraising schemes into motion to secure the area once and for all and repay the loan that saved them.

Fundraising schemes by the Federation included casino nights (where club members worked as temporary staff for 50 per cent of the takings), and the sale of stickers and voluntary memberships for that year's climbing on the Smoke Bluffs. But a particular fundraiser stands out to me, and in years to come it would significantly affect the events of my climbing career.

The idea was to sell sweaters and T-shirts with an image of the infamous Split Pillar of The Grand Wall emblazoned across them, as well as the words "Climb On!" It being the '80s, the sweaters were neon and became an integral part of Dad's wardrobe for many years. He had two: one white with a green image and pink words; the other fluorescent green with a white image and pink words. (The white one was inevitably stained into oblivion, but the green one survived.)

Unsurprisingly then, it was Dad who got me into climbing. On the day of my initiation, I was nine and into ponies. It was a windy Saturday and we walked to the base of a shrubby crag on the east coast of Scotland to where we had moved. Dad put on his ankle boot "stickies" and Whillans harness, handed me a half rope to put around my waist and set off up the cliff. Unsafe? He was part of the "leader never falls" generation so it was far from unsafe, which was lucky because he got a bit stuck up there. But he made it, of course, set up a top-rope, came down, handed me his shoes and harness, and all of a sudden it was my turn. With size 10 boots on my size three toes, five metres from the ground, the wind pulling at my hair

and clothes, I realized this was terrifying. I came down before reaching the top, unsure of how I felt. Climbing required waiting, getting cold and being scared. As I followed Dad back to the car, I quietly figured I'd just do it once in a while to humour him. My two older sisters wouldn't, so someone had to.

Over the years, however, he was gently persistent. He told me what a great climber I was as I clambered up hay bales in our barn. We scrambled in the mountains on weekends. He took me to a sea stack, handed me some nuts and told me to "Go for it!" So I did—for a few metres at least. I got to a shallow crack and placed a nut. I watched it fall out, and I climbed back down.

A year or so later, we went to Dunkeld and stood together at the bottom of a route. Again, I borrowed Dad's gear, tried to figure out nuts, couldn't, and backed off. On our next adventure we went to Edinburgh and tried out plastic. No nuts to worry about, just moves. We even used a belay plate (because we had to), and that first day in the gym was the day the bug well and truly bit me. Finally, a decade after my first day on rock, a pair of my own climbing shoes came my way and things have never been the same.

Then, one day in my final year of university, Dad was rooting around in a trunk of old clothes when he found something he'd forgotten about. Next time I was home, without ceremony, he handed me the green Climb On! sweatshirt because he thought I might like it. I did like it. I wore that sweater with pride. And when I found out what the image on it was, and that it was real and maybe even possible, I made a decision then and there to climb it one day. Right away this route felt important, partly because it looked cool, but mostly because that image had strong links to something Dad had believed in enough to put every penny on the line for. What's more, he had never climbed it, so I would do it for us both.

By that stage, I had already spent some time in Squamish. I had looked in awe at The Grand Wall through binoculars. I did my first multi-pitch on The Apron beneath it, my first 5.9 in the Smoke Bluffs that you could see the Split Pillar from. It was a route that had been looming in my consciousness for years.

Then, in 2008, I moved to Vancouver to attend film school for a year that I imagined to be half school, half climbing. In reality, it turned out to be 99 per cent school and one per cent climbing. Fatter than usual and stuck in the city, I ached for Squamish and the freedom I associated with it. It was only 40 minutes up the road, but my tightly packed schedule and newfound fatness made climbing the Split Pillar seem further away than ever.

In early 2009, graduation finally came and my boyfriend and I knew we had the opportunity of a lifetime up for grabs: it was February and we had nowhere to be until September. The plan was obvious and barely needed discussing. We scraped some money together, bought a van, packed up and went.

Unfit (and still quite fat on my part), we got spanked at Smith Rock and educated in Joshua Tree. We climbed until our skin wore through in Bishop. We lived in a car park in Lake Tahoe and found projects on Split Boulder. We dodged rain storms in Yosemite, watched head torches dance on El Capitan and promised to return for The Nose one day. We met rattlesnakes at Lover's Leap and got stuck in the snow. Then, fitter and stronger, we headed for Squamish, where we honed our granite skills, pushed our grade and fell in love with the place on a whole new level.

Going for The Grand Wall on our last day in Squamish seemed a fitting farewell. Body-wise, we were more than ready for the challenge, but mentally, we were fragile. Our nerves had been rattled some weeks before as Al hurtled to the ground from 10 metres up due to my faulty belaying (he'd done the crux, I was trying to take a picture…), and so our trust in what had seemed an infallible system and partnership was somewhat askew. But it was our last chance and I had to do it, so we swallowed our nerves and went for it anyway.

First up was a harsh wake-up call on Apron Strings at 7 a.m., followed by a slippery Mercy Me and then, of course, the infamous, fantastic yet terrifying Split Pillar. I looked up and went for it. A battle commenced in a style far from the effortless cruise I'd imagined my send to be. From there, Al cruised The Sword and then we struggled up Perry's Layback. Once that was conquered, we flopped onto a ledge knowing the worst was over.

Having ticked The Grand Wall off our list of goals, we shared an enormous sense of accomplishment and, I think, relief. The idea of climbing that route was no longer hanging over us, we had survived without dropping anyone and we had been there for each other from start to finish. Without taking a breath over dinner, we talked about our experience. Wearing the Climb On! sweatshirt had a whole new meaning now, a circle had been made complete.

Hanging around Vancouver waiting for a plane, Squamish felt far away. We had left our beloved van, packed our bags and felt a little empty knowing our simple, exhilarating lifestyle was about to be replaced with a job and the city. Something had clicked within Al and me, and we felt inextricably attached to the travelling climbing community that had become our new home. And with this came a new appreciation for organizations such as the Climbers' Access Society of British Columbia and its predecessors like the FMCBC. If there weren't people around like John Randall that day in the '80s, our trip would have been a very different one.

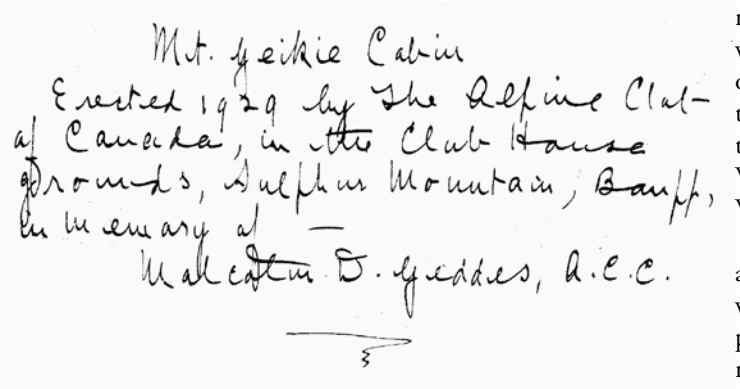
When I got home from my travels, Dad was 61. We hadn't climbed together in 18 months, but I knew every breakthrough I'd made during that time was firmly linked to the days when he handed me nuts and told me to go for it, leant me his stickies or bought my first ATC. Climbing The Grand Wall was a tick for us both.

Fluorescent green wasn't really his thing anymore, but the Climb On! sweatshirt remained a flag to the efforts he had made in securing the safety of a cherished climbing area. With this in mind, I took mine to a print shop and had a new one made: navy blue with a white image and orange writing, something a little toned down for my more mature, slightly more sensible father. It's not everyday you have to get changed because you're stepping out the door in the same sweater as your dad.

Walking Grandfather's Walk

Karen Probert

We grew up with stories of our grandfather's mountaineering exploits. He died on Mount Lefroy about 10 years before the eldest of my siblings was born, so we never heard the stories first hand. It wasn't until 1991, while helping my mother sort her belongings prior to a move that I first remember seeing the photograph—sepia-toned and glued to a grey mat. It had the following wording on the back:



The writing had that sharp-sided, slightly uneven look of a straight-edged pen nib and was in liquid black ink with a flourish beneath Grandfather Geddes' name. Now I was intrigued.

Also in 1991, I read about the Fay Hut being restored and reopened, so I began my on-and-off search for information about the Mount Geikie Cabin. I wrote to the ACC, sending them a copy of the photo and inscription. Over the next few months, all they could tell me was that the cabin had been dismantled, probably in 1972, along with the main ACC Clubhouse, under duress from Parks Canada.

Life got in my way, and I allowed the file and photo to languish until 1996 when I wrote to the Whyte Museum of The Canadian Rockies located in Banff, which archives the ACC's records. They sent me some information and referred me to accession numbered files in their archives. Again, I set the file aside.

In the summer of 2008, residing part-time in Canmore made the archives accessible on a regular basis. I decided to pursue this long-held dream of finding out more about this cabin. Starting in the *Canadian Alpine Journals* at the Whyte Museum and asking lots of questions of wardens and other Parks Canada staff, I looked at maps and read many accounts of Grandfather Geddes' exploits. Through this process, I corrected some information we had seen about him elsewhere, and with the help of my siblings, compiled correct information which we posted on Peakfinder (peakfinder.com), a very interesting website.

While searching through the old records, I found that this grandfather of mine had made five first ascents, of which only four were previously known to the family. The list of his climbing partners and contemporaries reads like a "Who's Who" of alpining in the 1920s, and I recognized quite a few names of famous climbers from that time. We had known for many years that there is a peak in B.C. named for him, but also uncovered the information that a glacier near that mountain is also named in his honour. This research, which started out in a straight line to find out information about a specific old alpine hut, was branching out in many directions and taking me into files and books that I would never have looked into without the comments of several people or a statement in some other book which led me there. When I mentioned his name to another researcher, she said, "Oh, is he the one who wrote the song for the ACC songbook from the 1920s?" A songbook? Whoever would have thought to ask? But right there in the Whyte Museum was a copy.

I read the words, Googled the tune (Bonnie Dundee) and am richer in spirit for knowing this. As Grandfather Geddes was also known for his poetry, I should not have been surprised. Despite discovering that many archival databases are not user friendly without an academic background, I managed to find lots of information. It wasn't until a Parks Canada employee remembered a colleague, no longer in Banff, who, it was suggested, might know something about this site. His suggestion, by e-mail, of the whereabouts of the old cabins sent me on a drive up Mountain Avenue towards the Banff Upper Hot Springs where I found a pull-out. This area of Sulphur Mountain is ecologically fragile and Parks Canada designates it as a protected wildlife corridor. By the time I had located the pull-out, there was snow cover on the ground, so any further exploration would require two things: permission from Parks Canada to enter the site and more accommodating weather conditions.

By June 2009, I had an e-mail from Lori Dowling, heritage programs officer for Banff National Park, saying that entry permission had been granted. My elation grew. My supportive husband, son and daughter-in-law accompanied me when we met Lori and a colleague on a cool, wet Thursday in Banff. We followed their car up to the parking lot that I had located the previous autumn. It was exciting to realize that on my own I had actually found the right place. A quick walk up a trail brought us to a man-made meadow. We could see the possible footprint of at least three buildings. There were some pipes sticking out of the ground, old electrical equipment and cables visible, the moss-covered remnants of retaining walls or building footings, a concrete-lined pit, sawn board chips with old paint and some other items. We looked, touched and photographed, then left things as they lay.

We took lots of photos, including some of the plaque commemorating the old ACC Clubhouse. Unfortunately, no specific reference was made to the small cabins or a memoriam to M.D. Geddes.

Although I never met my grandfather, and now cannot even tell my mother (who passed away in 2007 at the age of 101 years), I feel a connection. On that mountain meadow that day, my mind kept repeating, "He walked here too."

The search for information is far from complete, so I'll continue with other avenues to explore. I've met a researcher who has informed me that more than 20 cabins were, at some point, spread over the site I was on. As yet, I've not been able to pinpoint the exact location of the Mount Geikie Cabin, but I'll dig deeper and further until I've exhausted all possibilities. Only phase one of this journey has ended.

1929 photo of the Mount Geikie Cabin that was located at the base of Sulfur Mountain in Banff. Photo: Probert family collection

The North

Baffin Free Climbing

Jon Walsh

Chris brazeau and I spent four weeks in Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island climbing the granite walls and ridges of the Weasel Valley. We left home with some inspiring photos, vague beta and a lot of excitement. After three flights from Calgary, we arrived in the small fishing village of Pangnirtung and met our Belgian friends Nicolas Favresse, Olivier Favresse, Seán Villeneauva and Stéphane Hanssens, and Silvia Vidal of Catalonia at the local campground. Together, we hired a boat to take us to the trailhead at the end of the fjord. The main goal of our trip was to climb Mount Asgard—Baffin's most famous and arguably most beautiful peak.

To reach Asgard's south side requires a 42-kilometre approach up the breathtaking Weasel Valley on decent but rugged trails for the first 32 kilometres to Summit Lake, then moraines and glaciers for the final 10 kilometres. This involved ferrying many loads of gear and food, as well as climbing whatever other peaks inspired us along the way. Numerous frigid stream crossings and a few moraines challenged our crippling loads, but the valley rewarded us with constant views of remarkable mountains and dramatic glaciers as wildflowers bloomed in the surrounding tundra.

Over the first week, we carried three 25- to 30-kilogram loads for 15 kilometres to the Rock Garden, which would serve as basecamp for the rest of the trip. Mount Thor's South Ridge route turned out to be the warm-up climb. Thor's overhanging west face is the highest vertical drop on the planet and it dominated our view from camp. Some fine bouldering as well as musical jamming from our European friends kept us entertained for a couple of rest days before we felt like it was time to head for Asgard. The Belgians are notorious for bringing their instruments on all their climbing expeditions, and this one would be no different. As if their loads weren't big enough, they also packed an accordion, mandolin, tin whistle, harmonica and drums.

The weather was perfect and would stay good for the entire month. This was very lucky, especially after hearing past stories of constant drizzle. Three emergency shelters dotted the trail to Summit Lake and were equipped with solar powered radios. Twice a day, a weather forecast was broadcasted from Pangnirtung and it soon became almost comical that virtually every day was forecasted to be sunny. With great weather and 24 hours of daylight, there were no excuses—other than being sore from load slogging. A healthy supply of Ibuprofen more or less solved that problem. By the end of the trip, it had rained a total of about one hour, and we were able to use the few cloudy days to hike and rest.

After leaving the Rock Garden, it took a couple of hiking and rest days before we were in position to attempt Mount Asgard. One of those rest days was at Summit Lake where we said goodbye to the Belgians and Sylvia. They were heading for the west face of Asgard's South Tower, which required an extra 15 kilometres of hiking along the lake and then up the Turner Glacier. But first, they treated us to a superb jam session on a floating ice floe in the middle of the lake. Easily the most spectacular venue for a concert I've ever seen.

Chris Brazeau on the upper portion of the Scott Route on Mount Asgard. Photo: Jon Walsh

Jon Walsh following the 5.12a crux (pitch eight) during their first free ascent of the south face of Mount Asgard's South Tower. Photo: Chris Brazeau

Jon Walsh starting up pitch eight of Stories in Stone on Mount Walle. Photo: Chris Brazeau

That evening, after three hours of hiking above Summit Lake, we found a massive boulder with a flat top on the right side of Caribou Glacier. It was the only suitable camping spot anywhere, and eventually we would spend 12 nights on it. From there it was anywhere from 1.5 to 2.5 hours of straightforward glacier travel to Asgard, and just more than an hour to Mount Walle, another fine-looking objective. On our first outing, we weren't exactly sure which line we were going for until we wound up on the Scott Route on the aesthetic east buttress. The rock and positions were amazing and the climbing was fun. It mainly consisted of route-finding up slabs and 5.9 hand jamming capped by the notorious 5.11 squeeze chimney.

The day proved to be a great scoping mission for other objectives as well. With a classic ticked, we were ready for some first ascents. Upon descending, we stashed our gear at the base of the south face of the South Tower and returned to basecamp to pick up another two weeks of supplies for the main event.

Our second route on Asgard was on the south face of the South Tower. We thought we were on an entirely new route until we found a bolt at the route's crux—the second last pitch. It's hard to say for sure but we probably climbed at least 50 per cent new terrain to the right of the Italian Route and 50 per cent of the Italian Route itself. The route went in nine high-quality 60-metre pitches of mainly 5.10, save the second last pitch, which was 5.12-. Sunshine and T-shirt conditions the whole way made it especially enjoyable. It was probably the first free ascent of the South Tower and took about 16 hours round trip from the boulder camp on the side of Caribou Glacier.

Unfortunately, the tag-line wrapped around a sharp flake while rappelling. When we pulled it, five metres of the sheath got completely shredded right in the middle of the rope. This proved to be an interesting development as we had at least 10 days of food at our camp on the glacier, and the back-up tag-line was 45 kilometres down valley. All said and done, it was one of the best routes we've ever climbed and we highly recommend it.

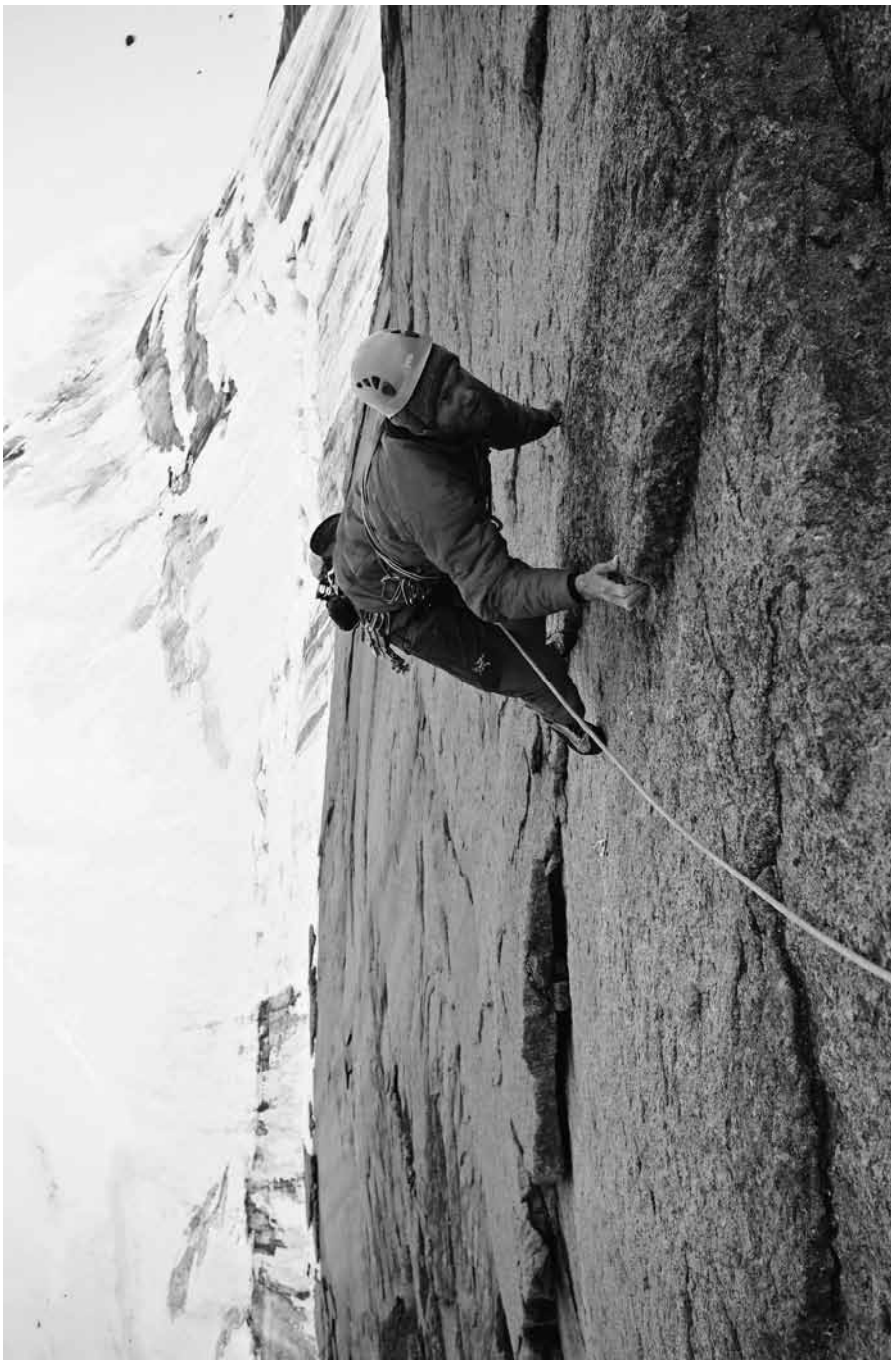
Next up was the east face Asgard's North Tower, to the right of the Scott Route. It is hard to say whether the first half had been climbed or not, but we climbed about 10 very nice pitches up to 5.11- in order to reach the upper headwall. We then followed an obvious crack system to the right of Line of Credit that provided the highlight of the trip—eight 60-metre pitches, six of which were 5.11. These were often run-out with delicate face climbing linking the cracks. Definitely some of the best quality stone we've ever touched. Magical face holds seemed to appear every time a crack closed out, including golden huecos, ergonomical jugs and a tufa. Yes, a tufa on alpine granite that made for some nice pinching while switching cracks. Quartz intrusions also adorned the stone adding some nice features to wrap ones fingers around.

The sunny conditions melted the summit's ice cap, and wet rock forced

us right near the top. Only one body length didn't go free due to water on a small ledge. It would have been the crux, but 5.12 fingertip laybacking with wet shoe rubber wasn't happening. More wet moves, up to 5.11+, constantly made us dig deep, but we managed to onsight the rest of the headwall. Rappelling from this height with one 60-metre rope was not an option (we didn't have a tag-line because it had been chopped). Once on top, getting off with one rope wouldn't be a big deal down the normal Swiss Route, but as we gained height on the increasingly damp headwall, it felt intensely committing as 800 metres of rappelling (about 20 to 30 rappels) would have likely been required. Needless to say, we would have left our entire double rack of cams and nuts behind if we had to bail. A couple of weeks later, the Favresse brothers repeated the first two-thirds of our headwall route (they followed our chalk), but drier conditions permitted them a more direct finish [see page 34]. Our camp-to-camp time was 22.5 hours, with the approach being more than two hours.

In the 28 days inside the park, we spent seven climbing, 11 schlepping loads and 10 resting. The hiking was definitely the most demanding part, and we figured we hiked close to 400 kilometres in four weeks. Two-thirds of those kilometres were with fully loaded packs. We climbed all our routes in a light-and-clean style, always trying to find challenging yet aesthetic lines. All said and done, we had a great time, great weather and the entire expedition unfolded smoothly. We climbed more than anticipated, and the adventure was everything we hoped it would be. Our expectations were exceeded, and we highly recommend the area to those looking to get away from the crowds and experience exotic granite in a wild environment.

Chris Brazeau on pitch five of Stories in Stone on Mount Walle. Photo: Jon Walsh



Acknowledgements

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Summary

South Ridge (IV 5.8), Mt. Thor. Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 6, 2009.

The Scott Route (V 5.11-, 1200m), east face of Mt. Asgard's North Tower (2011m). Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 12, 2009.

First free ascent of Mt. Asgard's South Tower, Brazeau-Walsh (V 5.12-, 600m) on the south face. FA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 18, 2009.

Stories in Stone (V 5.12- A0, 600m, 16 pitches), Mt. Walle. FA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 20, 2009.

Brazeau-Walsh (V 5.11+ C1, 800m), east face of Mt. Asgard's North Tower. FA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 23, 2009.

South Ridge (with new variations, IV 5.10, 600m), Mt. Menhir. FA: Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 27, 2009.

Attempt (5.11R, 400m) on the west face of Mt. Tirokwa. Chris Brazeau, Jon Walsh, July 30, 2009.

Baffin Babes

Vera Simonsson

"Is it just you? You have someone with you, don't you?"

I ask the hunter what he means as he stands in front of me dressed in a beautiful sealskin outfit keeping him warm in spite of the -35 C.

"I mean you have a man with you, don't you?" He looks surprised and confused when he looks over my shoulder towards our tent. He is waiting for a man to open the vestibule and come out to say hello. Instead, three arctic queens steps out.

It took us (Vera Simonsson and Emma Simonsson from Sweden; Kristin Folsland Olsen and Ingebjoerg Tollefsen from Norway) more than a year to prepare our Baffin Babes expedition. Seeking sponsorships, educating ourselves about the area, testing out the equipment, calculating calories and acquiring permission from authorities were some of the tasks we had to solve. Combined with the practical planning, we prepared physically by pulling car tires though the forest and building up fat reserves in our bodies. By eating spoonfuls of oil before going to sleep, we managed to gain six kilograms each prior to departing.

On March 10, we finally started our big adventure, setting off from the small Inuit village of Qikiqtarjuaq with 80 days planned to reach Pond Inlet. The sun was shining over the frozen Arctic Ocean to the east; the magnificent mountain flanks rose dramatically to the west. It was -38 C and a light breeze stained my cheeks bright red. With big smiles, and a bit of nervousness, we took our first ski steps dragging our hundred-plus-kilogram sledges. Ahead of me awaited a quarter of a year adventure along side my best friends. A great feeling rushed through my body as I took a deep breath. I knew that this trip was going to change my life in many ways.

In the beginning, we felt small and a bit lonely in the big landscape. But as the days passed by, we settled into our routines enjoying the good conditions along the fjord ice. After a week, the terrain suddenly changed and we were surrounded by huge pack ice formations. The ice towered up like big sculptures, each one a unique masterpiece of natural artwork.

Our first leg from Qikiqtarjuaq to Clyde River was characterized by the cold. Early in the morning when the sun was still low on the horizon, we waved our arms and legs over and over again to get warm blood flowing before we could start skiing. With facial masks protecting our skin and four pairs of gloves layered over one another, we travelled north. Some days we never really warmed up no matter how hard we tried. At night, while the northern lights danced across the sky, we'd run a few laps around the tent to get warm before it was time to curl up in sleeping bags. The nights could sometimes feel infinitely long. Even though we gained weight before the trip and added oil to our meals, our reserves were burning rapidly.

As the days crept on, the sun remained longer in the cold clear sky and started to warm our faces. Breathtaking views in all directions stunned us. A calm feeling spread throughout my body and I felt so alive. The motivation behind the expedition was simple: I'm happiest under the open sky. To see the frozen horizon every morning, live on what you can drag behind you and breathe the cold fresh air all day is a fantastic feeling.

After 30 days, we arrived at Clyde River. Warmly welcomed by children running towards us on the ice, they helped us to pull the sledges the last bit. In the village, polar bear skins were hanging next to sealskins. Compared to a few years back, some hunting grounds have become increasingly difficult to reach due to thin pack ice and wider leads. We stayed here for a few days resting and eating in preparation for the next 50 days.

With 120 kilograms in each sledge, we set off for the second leg. After just a few hours, Ingebjoerg started to vomit, and for the next two weeks we all struggled with stomach illness. The mighty walls of Sam Ford Fiord helped heal our sick bodies. Instead of rest days and despite throwing up the night before, we all climbed Broad Peak, satisfied with

Vera Simonsson, Ingebjoerg Tollefsen, Emma Simonsson and Kristin Folsland Olsen (from left to right). Photo: Vera Simonsson

Emma Simonsson struggling with her 120-kilogram sledge outside Maud Harbour. Photo: Vera Simonsson

360 degrees of breathtaking views.

Being on an expedition for such a long time means working hard together. Living in a small tent, we had to co-operate in order to stay friends. Add the cold and hunger and it's even more important. We didn't have an expedition leader per se; instead all decisions were made together as equal team members. Problems had to be solved and misunderstandings clarified. Good communication was the key. Every Sunday we had a "psycho-hour", where we discussed issues so nothing simmered below the surface. Sometimes it was hard to take the criticism, but we always resolved conflict with trust and respect towards each other. Every day on the ice we became stronger and stronger as a team.

The glacier crossings were our biggest challenge during the traverse. Large meltwater channels in the sea ice blocked our way, forcing us onto the glaciers. On May 17, the clouds were hanging low, creating a total white-out. With no reference points to focus on, contours blurred in front of me. I stared down at my compass and tried to maintain course. Ingebjoerg suddenly screamed "Crevasse!" A bottomless crevasse appeared under her skis. In silence, we roped up.

As spring arrived, the days became warmer and we could finally start to remove some layers of clothing. Skiing in just our underwear was a big difference compared to the first month of the trip when, in 30 days, we didn't once take off the three layers of long underwear. When we passed a breathing hole used by seals, we reckoned it was time for the babes to freshen up. We expanded the hole, and one by one, skinny-dipped—cold yet refreshing.

After 76 days, I suddenly realized that everything had an end. With a lump in my throat, I stared out over the frozen sea towards the horizon. A tear flowed down my cheek. It was a happy tear. On May 31, we reached Pond Inlet. During two and a half months, the sky had been our roof. We had pushed our limits and had an amazing amount of fun together. The tracks we left behind are long gone by the Arctic wind, but the tracks Baffin Island left on me will remain forever.

Emma Simonsson skiing towards Eric Harbour. Photo: Vera Simonsson

Power of Silence

Ines Papert

After a long journey in mid-July 2009, Lisi Steurer and I arrived in the far northwest of Canada. The reason we travelled all the way from Germany was to visit one of the most beautiful and wildest rock-climbing areas in the world—the Cirque of the Unclimbables. We flew to Fort Nelson where we were immediately attacked for the first time by thousands of mosquitoes. The next morning, our floatplane arrived on time to bring us to Glacier Lake in Nahanni National Park.

Here we met our Canadian friends Chris Atkinson and Marc Piché who had already spent a week in the Cirque climbing and were now going to act as photographers for us. After dealing with the huge talus slope that guards access to the Cirque, we strolled into Fairy Meadows—our home for the next three weeks. We Europeans do not have a lot of possibilities for granite trad climbing so I spent the previous two weeks in Squamish warming up. But the Chief is urban and the Cirque is wild. Everything was much bigger and better than I had expected.

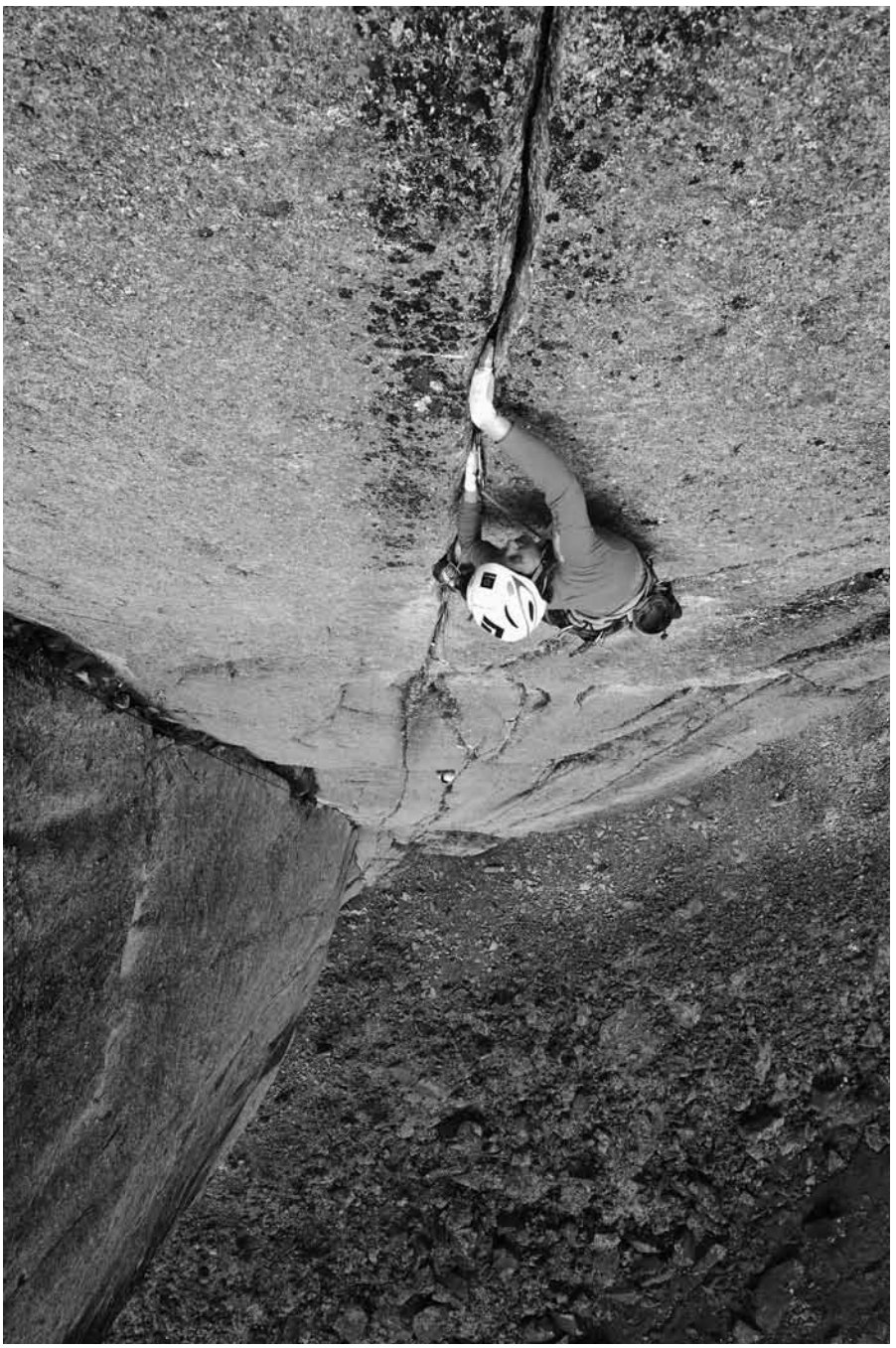
The first few days were spent working on Riders on the Storm on East Huey Spire—a 400-metre Yosemite-quality wall. It was established in 2003 by Evan Stevens and Johann Aberger with only one pitch requiring a bit of aid (5.12 C1). We were hoping to eliminate this aid for the first free ascent.

The first pitch was an off-width. Only graded 5.9, it was challenging enough and reinforced how difficult granite crack climbing can be. After this burly start, we enjoyed dihedrals and finger cracks up to the crux pitch. Two more days of working the moves fine-tuned our crack technique enough that on the fourth day we managed to redpoint the entire route. The tiny summit was the perfect apex for jelling our partnership and friendship.

Back at camp, we visited our neighbours (from the United States) who had just climbed our next planned objective—the classic Southeast Face of the classic Lotus Flower Tower. Their girlfriends had come along with them acting as basecamp cooks. Food was prepared everyday for their heroes when they returned from their climbing endeavours. Lisi and I wanted our own camp cooks, but Chris and Marc just laughed at this idea. At least Chris woke up with us at 3 a.m. the next morning to guide us along the trail in the darkness.

At 5 a.m. we left the ground, but

Lisi Steurer on the first free ascent of Riders on the Storm on the south face of East Huey Spire. Photo: Chris Atkinson



the first 60-metre 5.10 pitch took a long time due to wet rock and my own fatigue. I was unsure I had the energy for 18 more pitches. However, by the time we arrived at the upper headwall, we both had big, big smiles in anticipation of perfect cracks and chickenheads. One unforeseen challenge: at the last anchor before the top, I dropped one of my climbing shoes and had to climb the final 5.7 pitch in bare feet.

Our final objective was the south face of Middle Huey Spire. It only contained one route (Austrian Route, 5.9 A3, Kosy-Lackner-Weilguny, 1977), leaving the steep left side untouched. After a huge thunderstorm, the weather became sunny and warm again, which was also a wake-up call for the swarms of mosquitoes to return. Escaping the bugs, we started up the first two pitches of the Austrian Route and then moved up and left into "our" dihedral. The rock became steeper and steeper, providing excellent finger and hand jamming. The crack ended at a face pitch where I took a huge fall onto a suspect knifeblade. After an eight-metre flight, I stopped next to Lisi. This was justification enough for me to place four bolts in this section. (There are four protection bolts on the entire route plus bolted anchors.)

After three days, we finished our new route with the help of aid climbing. We had a full day of rest and then headed back swinging leads with the plan of a team redpoint. Lisi led the fantastic 5.13a pitch, but then ran out of energy on the higher pitches. I managed all the leads free, thus completing Power of Silence.

Summary

Riders on the Storm (5.12, 11 pitches), south face of East Huey Spire, Cirque of the Unclimbable. FFA: Ines Papert, Lisi Steurer, July 22, 2009.

Power of Silence (5.13a, 11 pitches), south face of Middle Huey Spire. FA: Ines Papert, Lisi Steurer, July 30-August 3, 2009. FFA: Ines Papert, August 7, 2009.

The south face of Middle Huey Spire: (1) Power of Silence, (2) Austrian Route. Photo: Chris Atkinson

Broad Peak

Dave Turner

Baffin island has an absolutely amazing landscape of frozen fjords, exotic wildlife, massive big walls and sea ice as far as the eye can see. I went there in early April and did not return until the second week in June, having the experience of a lifetime along the way.

Not knowing exactly what I would find in way of skiing and climbing objectives, I brought the full arsenal of toys: big wall and alpine climbing gear, touring skis, and enough food and fuel to last a few months. My outfitter dropped me off in the Walker Arm of the Sam Ford Fiord, right in the middle of a climber and skier's paradise. I set up basecamp in a centrally located spot right at the foot of the impressive Polar Sun Spire.

I climbed or skied almost every day, despite the -30 C temperatures. The skiing was great with an abundance of couloirs and chutes to rip, and a nice deep layer of powder snow in the gullies. I also made many little forays into the other fjords, sometimes travelling 50 kilometres at a time to go out and explore. On the windy days, I would set a kite and race across the sea ice, being pulled at 60 kilometres per hour—exciting stuff.

Once the temperatures went up in the beginning of May, I started my climbing missions. The biggest unclimbed wall in the area was a tower called Beluga Spire, situated between Polar Sun Spire and the Walker Citadel. It is a 1,400-metre monster that had been BASE jumped but never climbed.

I slimmed down my gear to a minimum to try this peak, leaving behind the portaledge, bolts, static rope and partner (obviously). After three days of climbing, I made it to halfway, but had to turn back due to very cold

Dave Turner's solo route on the previously unclimbed north face of Broad Peak. Photo: Dave Turner

temperatures that were affecting the frostbite on my toes that I had sustained a few weeks earlier on a ski mountaineering adventure. I tried Beluga Spire again a few days later, going even lighter—no second rope, haulbag or anything unneeded. I was going as light a possible, but had to descend due to my toes going numb in climbing boots, and had to leave a good deal of my rack in order to bail.

After getting shut down on Beluga Spire, I shifted gears and switched objectives to a new route on Broad Peak. The route I was contemplating was a giant: a 1,400-metre rock and mixed route sitting right on the impressive north face of Broad Peak. I knew I could do it if I brought all the gear needed for a big-wall first ascent, but I wanted to continue my light-and-fast strategy and try for this route in a continuous ascent. I took just one 70-metre rope, my one-man tent, and food and fuel for 48 hours. I spent 39 non-stop hours on the ascent, taking advantage of the 24-hour sunshine of the Arctic to climb the route without a bivy. The line was beautiful: a few pitches of mixed to get onto a spur, then a difficult knife-edge arête, which led to an easier hanging snowfield. Above, a 400-metre headwall went at 5.10 A3 as the crux, followed by a super rad ice arête to the summit. I descended the south ridge and gully, the only previously established route on the mountain. It was one of my biggest climbs set in the most beautiful area I have seen. A route of a lifetime!

By the beginning of June, after 65 days of pretty much being alone, it was time to go home. Eventually, my Inuit friend came to get me, and the trip wound down. But not before I saw polar bears, seals, caribou, foxes, crazy big walls, super couloirs, virgin peaks and so much more.

Summary

Attempt on the north face of Beluga Spire, Sam Ford Fiord, Baffin Island. Dave Turner, May 2009.

The North Face (VI 5.10 A3 60°, 1400m) of Broad Peak, Sam Ford Fiord, Baffin Island. FA: Dave Turner, May 2009.

The unclimbed north face of Beluga Spire showing Dave Turner's solo attempt. Photo: Dave Turner

Craig McGee approaches the Incisor on Mount Combatant:
(1) Belligerence, (2) Defiance, (3) The Smoke Show.
Photo: Joshua Lavigne

The West Coast

Defiance

Joshua Lavigne

Our team of four Canadian climbers, Scott Everett, Craig McGee, Carlyle Norman and I, caught a flight into the Waddington Range at the end of August 2009 where we set up camp at Sunny Knob. With unseasonably cold temperatures (-10 C) but clear skies, we climbed the über classic Skywalk Buttress (ED1 5.9, 600m) on Mount Combatant as a warm-up. After this initial climb, we were ready to split into two teams and turn our attention to our respective objectives. Craig and I had our eyes set on establishing a free route up the centre of the Incisor and then continuing along the moderate ridgeline to the summit of Combatant. Scott and Carlyle had a vision of completing a traverse from the Gnat's Tooth to Serra One—approximately 1,500 metres of climbing.

On August 26, Craig and I went out for a day trip to establish the lower portion of the route on the Incisor. We quickly encountered steep technical climbing, including multiple 5.11 pitches that were loose and run-out, and a crux (pitch six) of intricate thin crack climbing that required some cleaning and the addition of two fixed pitons. We discovered several pins after the crux pitch, which led us to believe that we had stumbled upon the route Belligerence (we figured that we shared about four pitches of this on our final ascent). After climbing seven pitches of sustained granite, we rapped off and left our two ropes fixed on the first three pitches.

The weather forecast called for several days of warm temperatures and clear skies, so we rested for a day in basecamp and enjoyed the spectacular surroundings. We returned to the foot of the wall with the intention of only spending one night out and returning to camp the next day. After ascending our fixed lines, we led in blocks with the second jugging with the pack. Back at the base of pitch six, Craig left the belay with only the bare essentials, throwing himself at the thin crack climbing with determination and focus. On his first attempt, he ripped off a key face hold as he was exiting the tricky moves and pitched off. It took him two more attempts and some additional cleaning to finally send it at 5.12.

Above, the wall became steeper and the cracks that we hoped would provide difficult and clean free climbing were thin and bottomed-out. We attempted to free two separate lines, but after four hours of rejection, a summer snow squall, fading daylight and our combined faltering determination, we finally resorted to aid climbing on pitch nine. By the end of the day and 15 sustained pitches later, we found a comfortable bivy directly below the summit of the Incisor and fell asleep under a clear sky and warm temperatures.

The next morning, we continued climbing along the Jawbone, which connects the Incisor to the upper ridges of Mount Combatant. The rock in this section of the route was loose and dangerous and at times completely terrifying. Thankfully, after eight pitches, we topped out unscathed on the Incisor. We scrambled up a scree slope to the base of Toothless Tower where we had lunch and stashed gear. We continued simul-climbing to the summit in three long pitches. The rock on the Toothless Tower, in contrast to the Jawbone, was some of the most spectacular stone either Craig or I had ever touched. With light loads on our backs, we eagerly padded our way up this immaculate tower of golden granite. After 20 hours of climbing, we sat on the summit enjoying the fruits of our labour: a warm breeze, a jaw-dropping view of Mount Waddington and a route to remember.

While up on our route, Scott and Carlyle had started to push their traverse up the long and complicated ridgeline towards Serra One. They started their ascent below the Gnat's Tooth, soloing and simul-climbing the majority of the terrain. They arrived at their first high point in the late morning where they took stock of the route ahead. The warm temperatures (25 C) had started to deteriorate conditions along the route, which required several mixed gullies to climb. After watching a few refrigerator-sized blocks clear the path ahead, they decided to abandon ship and refocus their energies. They were both a little discouraged with the conditions and really just wanted to rock climb, so they decided to forsake dreams of grandeur and have some fun.

They left for the Plummer Hut the next day with the intention of climbing several smaller peaks. They summitted Claw Peak and then The Blade where they enjoyed amazing views, splitter weather and a whole bunch of solid granite. Returning to camp, they were greeted with margaritas and a celebration under a silvery moonrise.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank MEC for their support.

Summary

Defiance (ED2 5.12 A3, 1150m), Mount Combatant (3756m), Waddington Range. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Craig McGee, August 30-September 1, 2009.

Fraser Valley Serendipity

Drew Brayshaw

In 2009, I was involved in two alpine first ascents in the Fraser Valley region, though neither one was intentional. In both cases, we set out with good intentions of repeating an established climb, but circumstances intervened and forced a change in plans.

First off, in late June, Jesse Mason, Marc-Andre Leclerc and I set off to try and climb the Nesakwatch Notch route on the North Nesakwatch Spire, first established in the mid-'80s by Nick Jones and Kirt Sellers. This route—which features a long approach on snow and then an aesthetic narrow chimney/couloir with some huge chockstones, followed by a sharp rock ridge to the summit of the spire—has had few, if any, repeats, and has always appealed to me as a good looking line. Unlike the rest of the long routes rising out of Centre Creek to the Rexford Group summits, it is apparently pretty condition-dependant: you want to catch it while the upper rock ridge is dryish, but while the lower couloir is still snow-filled. Nick and Kirt did the first ascent in early July, and so we expected we would be hitting the sweet spot on this one.

Marc, Jesse and I left Chilliwack around 4:30 a.m., circumvented the locked gate at the bottom of the road by driving Jesse's truck around on a quad track, and then forced it through the alder all the way to the overgrown pull-out right beneath the climb in the valley bottom. We left the car at 6 a.m. and crossed the creek on a nice fallen log. A short section of bushwhacking, only a few hundred metres long, got us onto avalanche run-out snow at the base of the massive gully dropping down from the Spires and Rexford.

We plugged away up the avalanche debris gaining elevation up the gully to a spot, where in hindsight, we should have veered out left to gain the higher bench immediately below the northeast ridge of Rexford. Instead, we continued straight up the gully to a melted-out waterfall, and then plunged into steep bush to its right. An hour or so of silly crampons-on bush shenanigans—kick-stepping up mud gullies, crawling through devil's club, downclimbing and traversing through overhanging thickets of alder—got us back into the gully well above the waterfall, only to find we needed to cut out left again to pass another one.

Once past this second obstacle, we made good time scrambling on the heathery rib to the right and finally got up onto the benches below the pocket glacier underneath the Spires. From this vantage we could finally see into the guts of the Notch couloir. The upper chockstones were well covered with snow, but the bottom had totally melted out and presented a forbidding aspect, with what looked like two pitches of blocky mud until the snow was reached. Mmmm, no!

We switched tactics. The new plan was to head up the Priest-Coupe couloir,

The Direct East Buttress on South Nesakwatch Spire. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

which splits the South Spire off from the main massif of Mount Rexford. This is another rarely climbed route that looks pretty attractive from a distance and which I have wanted to do for a while. From the base of the Notch, we wandered left and up the snow-covered pocket glacier to below the couloir, but when we arrived at the apex of the pocket glacier, where the route proper starts, we found a rather large and unpleasant bergschrund blocking our progress. Marc approached the edge, glanced into the depths, eyed the overhanging far wall of soft snow and retreated. We convened to consider our options.

"What do you think?"

"Well, we can't get across that right now. Maybe we can climb around it on the rock to the right?"

"Yeah, that looks like it will go, and then we can get back in at that ledge up there…."

"Why get back in? Why not just keep going up that rock buttress? Are there any climbs up there?"

"Well, in the 1974 Culbert guide, it says something about there being a rock route out on the face to the right, but then the Beckey and Fairley guides don't say anything more about it and so no one really seems to know if anything was ever actually climbed there or if it's just a typo in the Culbert."

"OK! Let's do that."

And so we did. The rib gave delightful climbing, 10 pitches of it, mostly in the 5.7 range with one or two pitches hitting 5.8, and two of Marc's pitches included avoidable but enjoyable sections of 5.9. Because of the early-season conditions, there were a few snow patches we weaved around and a few wet cracks, but these did not hinder the climbing unduly or reduce our enjoyment. On the last few pitches, we could see another party of climbers across the way on the North Spire, and we let loose with a couple of wild yodels in their direction. We reached the summit around 7 p.m. and began to seriously consider descent options. The car was high in Centre Creek, but the thought of a potential bivy and the bushes to wallow through if heading back down that side (not to mention multiple rappels) made it unattractive. On the other hand, the Nesakwatch side had the advantage of a good trail down to the valley bottom, but also a 26-kilometre walk back around to the truck. We ended up going for the Nesakwatch side.

Two short rappels plus a lot of glissading saw us to the trail, and we were on the logging road and starting the long walk around at about 10 p.m. Meanwhile clouds were steadily building over Slesse, and after nightfall, rain started spitting. Around midnight, near the junction of the Centre and Nesakwatch roads, we decided to pack it in and bivy for the night. This spot is relatively near the main Chilliwack Valley road, so there are a lot of old campsites in the forest complete with garbage, fire rings and shotgun shells. We picked one with an especially large fire pit and started a fire, then lay down in the dirt on our packs and waited out the rest of the night. Jesse and Marc had hooded jackets, which they pulled over their heads. I didn't, and found the intermittent periods of rain, as well as mice running back and forth across my back and over my head, to be less than conducive to a good night's sleep. On one such occasion, while rooting around in the woods for additional semi-dry wood for the fire, I found a discarded Smirnoff Ice carton, which I fashioned into a sort of bonnet; thus clad, I was able to manage a few spells of actual sleep in between shivering.

Around dawn we got up, hid our packs in the bushes and walked the remaining 14 kilometres back to the truck. We changed into some dry clothes and drove back to our packs. Then it was off down the valley to get into cell range, call our loved ones and hit up the nearest cafe for a big greasy breakfast.

A few weekends later, a whole crew of us got together with plans to head up into the southern Chehalis and make a quick run up and across the Bardean-Stonerabbit traverse for a good day of aesthetic scrambling on solid rock. Once again, the fates had other plans. Jesse Mason, Graham Rowbotham, Doug Wilm, Jackie Bonn and I met up at the Sasquatch Inn around 6 a.m. and drove down the Chehalis FSR for 25 kilometres, only to be stopped by a locked gate and active logging with trees dropping on the road ahead. The wizened little gnome manning the gate absolutely failed to open it for us, even in the face of proffered bribes, wheedling and threats, so we had to regroup and decide on another destination.

Plan B was Urquhart. A few hours later of driving, we arrived at the turnoff where the Cogburn Creek FSR leaves the East Harrison FSR, only to find a massive wall of logs blocking the gate. Lakeside Pacific, the forest licensee, had gotten irked with weekend yahoos messing with their gates and gone large on security. It looked like Urquhart was also out. Fortunately, the nearby Talc Creek road that leads to the Old Settler was un-gated. We all squeezed into Jesse's truck for the last few bumpy kilometres with one stop for rock rolling to clear the way. Finally, by 9:45 a.m., we made it to the trailhead. We proceeded to arrive at Daiphy Lake by noon or so, and split into two parties—Doug and Jackie off to the west buttress of the south peak of the Old Settler, and Graham, Jesse and I to do a little investigation.

Many years ago when Doug, Shane Cook and I had climbed the Settler's northwest ridge out of Settler Creek, the flat-topped tower standing off to the northwest at the toe of that ridge had caught my attention. Since then I had had plenty of opportunity to eye it and research it and had found no mention of any ascents, although there are some nearby mining claims. It was this summit (lying two kilometres west of the north summit of the Old Settler, and with 140 metres of relief above the intervening col, it certainly meets the criteria of a separate summit) that I proposed to Jesse and Graham we should climb.

From Daiphy Lake, we wandered towards the northwest, gaining elevation steeply through an unbelievably lush meadow with plants that were waist-deep at times. Although beautiful, this also provided slow footing, and Jesse was stung by a wasp that flew up the leg of his shorts. Eventually we gained the toe of the Settler's northwest

ridge and then had to drop into the deep col separating it from our flat-topped objective. From the col, we proceeded along the east flank of the summit's south ridge until a prominent rotten gully (3rd class) could be climbed back to the ridge crest. From there it was an easy bushwhack through krummholz to the base of the final summit cliffs. We split up here, each choosing a separate line. They all went at stiff 4th class or low 5th class for 50 metres or so, and we met up on the broad and level summit for lunch. Careful examinations revealed no traces of a cairn or previous passage. We remedied this with massive construction.

Once we'd accomplished some well-deserved summit lazing, we carefully downclimbed the upper cliffs and then retraced our route back to the lake, this time without any unfortunate bee encounters. We met Doug and Jackie at the lake around 7 p.m. and were back at the vehicle before it was dark enough to require headlamps.

Summary

Direct East Buttress, (III 5.9, 10 pitches), South Nesakwatch Spire, Skagit Range, Cascade Mountains. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Marc-Andre Leclerc, Jesse Mason, June 26, 2009.

South Ridge (low 5th class) of The Unsettler (1924m, GR 979856, NTS 92 H/12), Lillooet Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Jesse Mason, Graham Rowbotham, July 11, 2009.

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

The year 2009 was a successful one for mountaineering on Vancouver Island with two first winter ascents and several new summer routes. However, one factor that seriously hindered climbers in Strathcona Park was a huge forest fire that burned uncontrolled for several months in the pristine Wolf River valley. Although this valley is not used as access to the heart of the park, the smoke from the fire hung around like a bad smell and B.C. Parks suggested that hikers and climbers avoid the area.

Of the 16 mountains on Vancouver Island over 2,000 metres, only six or seven of them were known to have been climbed in winter as of the end of 2008. The Golden Hinde (the Island's highest) has only had one winter ascent; Elkhorn (second highest) has had a few; and Mount Colonel Foster (fourth highest) appears to have had three winter ascents. Rambler Peak (fifth highest) has had one winter ascent and that was in 2003. The others are Mount Albert Edward, Kings Peak and Mount McBride. On January 29, 2009, Curtis Lyon with brothers John and Mike Waters made the first winter ascent of Mount Cobb (sixth highest) from Cervus Creek via the north face. This was just a prelude for their more ambitious plan on Victoria Peak, the Island's third highest peak.

The unclimbed north face of Little Eiger. The Elms-Wille route is around the ridge to the left. Photo: Lindsay Elms

Victoria Peak had thwarted a number of attempts by strong climbers over the years. The first serious attempt was in January 1986 by Rick Johnson, Matt Lunny and Don Newman via the north face. Although they got close, the final headwall was found to be too technical and they had to retreat. In the 1990s, there were rumours of a couple of more attempts, but no details were made available. However, neighbouring Warden Peak saw at least two winter ascents. It wasn't until 2006 when two separate parties attempted the peak. John Waters and Curtis Lyon got as far as the initial pitches on the Sceptre Gully route on the west face but were forced to retreat. The second party consisting of Aaron Hamilton, Rob Grant and Keith Nelson were also foiled by the weather. However, with one first winter ascent under their belt for 2009, John Waters and Curtis Lyon returned in early March with Louis Monjo during a high-pressure system. The logging road up the White River was un-drivable due to the huge amount of snow so the three of them rode on a snowmobile (one was pulled on skis) the 40 kilometres to the base of the peak. The next day, they soloed the first 150 metres to where the gully narrows to 10 metres with steep

sidewalls (their February 2006 high-point). The next 55-metre pitch was the crux. John climbed on the left side of the gully up steep rock and some WI4 ice/snow. Pro was sparse, but he did get a few stubby ice screws in the pitch. The next pitch was a narrow 30-centimetre-wide ice runnel followed by a short awkward groove and then another skinny ice runnel. After that, it was 70-degree snow and ice until a steep rock step brought them to the ridge 30 metres from the summit, completing the coveted first winter ascent of Victoria Peak.

Summer was just as exciting for alpine action on Vancouver Island. On July 24, Valerie Wootton, Frank Wille Jr. and I flew into Paradise Lake, a rarely visited high alpine lake in the small Tranquil Creek Provincial Park northeast of Tofino on the island's west coast. Over the next few days, we made the second ascent of Velella Peak and Rhino Peak, which had first been climbed in 1985 by Rob Macdonald, Rick Eppler, Andrew Macdonald and Anne Denman. On July 27, Frank and I then made the first ascent of the unclimbed peak we dubbed Little Eiger (1,521 metres). Although this is an unofficial name, the climbing community has recognized it for 25 years. After descending to a col between Tranquil Creek and the Kennedy River, we forced a route through the lower defensive bush-ridden bluffs onto the west ridge. After traversing around under the north face, a route was found up a nasty gully on the peak's eastern aspect to the unclimbed summit without any technical difficulties. The north face looks to offer some interesting three- to four-pitch routes—but not at the same grade as its European name sake.

A week later, Rick Hudson and Sandy Stewart were in Strathcona Park making the first ascent of the south ridge of the Golden Hinde. What is usually a six- to eight-day round trip, the pair made a quick three-day round trip into the mountain, having left Arnica Lake on July 4 and getting back to the car on July 6. On the morning of July 5, they arrived at the Golden Hinde's basecamp where they headed up scree slopes to the base of the south ridge. No technical climbing was involved and the gendarme halfway up the ridge was found to be easier than they had anticipated. Overall, the ridge was graded 5.5. The descent was made down the standard southeast gully.

On August 17, Grant McCartney along with John and Mike Waters put a new route up on the east face of the northeast summit of Mount Colonel Foster [see page 96]. John has climbed almost every route on the Colonel and said this one was his hardest yet. Although Mount Colonel Foster has gone many years without ascents, it has seen renewed activity in the past few seasons, and this summer was no different—the mountain saw several ascents, including a couple of summit traverses.

Meanwhile, further to the south, Francis Bruhwiler and Randy Mercer put up a new route on the east buttress of the northwest summit of Triple Peak on August 30. Triple Peak is located at the head of the Marion Main logging road off Highway 4, a few kilometres after crossing Sutton Pass. Although the 350-metre route is 5.7, it is only the top two clean pitches that go at that grade. The lower pitches are 4th- and low-5th-class vegetated ledges and gullies. They descended by scrambling and rappelling down to the col between the northwest and main summits.

The East Buttress on the northwest summit of Triple Peak. Photo: Francis Bruhwiler

The Colonel

John Waters

First attempt. My twin brother Mike and I had not climbed the Colonel for three years. New families and "real" jobs had kept us away from our favourite peak on Vancouver Island for too long. With the slumping forest industry, we both found time off in August and quickly made plans to put up a new route. There are still good lines to be climbed on the 1,000-metre east face, and after inspecting many photos, we decided to try a crack system up the steep buttress on the northeast peak.

Everything was going fine: we woke early, crossed the snowfield and started to climb easy 3rd-class rock up the lower slopes of the northwest peak. The expected start of our new route was just above a small snow patch. The route appeared steeper and steeper as we got closer. By the time we reached the small snow patch, the route seemed too steep and serious. Without much discussion, we decided that we were not going to climb that day. We both lost motivation and honestly felt a little intimidated by the tall face after being absent for so long. We did some good reconnaissance from nearby ridges and vowed to return as soon as possible.

John Waters and brother Mike (leading) start up the first steep pitch on the upper buttress of Double Shot. Photo: Grant McCartney

A couple of weeks later we were once again hiking the easy 12 kilometres up the Elk River trail to the small lake at the base of Colonel Foster's east face. For this second attempt, we recruited our good friend Grant for his adventurous spirit and "get 'er done" attitude. The only other time he had been on the mountain was in 2005 when Grant and I scrambled up the south gullies to the southwest summit. The three of us had a good night's rest at Foster Lake and were up at 5 a.m. brewing coffee to wash down our breakfast of sticky instant porridge. Not a real alpine start, but we were confident and determined that everything would work this time and figured we could bivy if necessary.

The snowfield at the base was unusually hard so we strapped on light crampons and started the easy plod up the 45-degree slope. A couple of hundred metres of free and easy elevation gain on this face is always welcome. Once on solid rock, we scrambled up the easy 3rd-class buttress of the northwest peak route for about 150 metres to just above the small permanent snow patch in the gully on the left. Climbing the next pitch was critical for the route's success, as it was the only weakness through the steep gully wall that led onto an easier-looking ramp and the main objective of the upper buttress. I apprehensively tied in and climbed a steep right-slanting flake and then traversed left away from the gully and onto the ramp. Grant and Mike wrestled up the awkward flake with their backpacks. We considered calling the pitch easy 5.10, but since alpine always seems harder with packs and exposure, we'll stick with a 5.9 grade.

Happy to get that pitch done, we put the ropes away and continued to scramble about 200 metres of fine rock up the right-trending ramp to the big ledge system. This section was mostly 4th class with some steep and exposed low 5th class on less than ideal rock. There were a few sketchy spots where I wished Mike could have tossed down a rope. And if he hadn't burned off out of sight, I would have asked him. With some major exposure, we traversed 30 metres left on ledges to a nice treed platform below the steep headwall at about 1,600 metres. It was 9 a.m. so we felt confident that we would have time to make the summit unless the next 400 metres became very difficult. We scrambled up about 50 metres to a short chimney and obvious crack system that split the upper buttress.

We roped up again and got ready for what we suspected would be the most challenging part of the route. Mike led up the steep chimney, which turned out to be easier than it looked, and continued left up a steep but short face to the main grooves of the buttress. Grant and I struggled up on second and wondered how Mike led the run-out terrain so effortlessly. Mike somehow climbs these difficult alpine pitches with unusual calmness and efficiency, seemingly without any notice of the dangers involved. He takes a pragmatic approach to his climbing, concerning himself only with the present work at hand. He doesn't worry about the "what ifs" or "maybes" and just deals with what he can control: himself and the immediate rock within reach.

Mike was excited about the next pitch of steep cracks, and with a quick transfer of gear, he was off into the unknown. Half way up, he had to sneak around a hanging semi-detached "dagger" flake before banging in a solid piton at a safe belay ledge above. With momentum, I took the next pitch up a steep groove to a small overlap. I finally placed a piece of gear before pulling out

right and continuing up another crack. After a long pitch, I slung a rock horn and belayed beside a boomerang-shaped lichen patch on a roof above.

Grant took the next lead up ledges and cracks to a fine belay below an overhanging off-width. I wasn't so keen on the nasty off-width 800 metres above Foster Lake, so I detoured a little left to a wide right-slanting ledge and belayed from another quick and easy rock horn. This was some of the most sustained climbing we have done on Colonel Foster with solid rock, good gear and nice belay ledges. A short 50-metre section of 3rd class led to a perfect corner. With the summit ridge in sight, I led the last roped pitch up the fun corner to a small notch on the top of the buttress. We put the ropes away and traversed left for about 25 metres, then finished up loose 3rd-class gullies to the summit of the northeast peak. In total, it took us nine hours from Foster Lake to the top. To my surprise, I spotted two climbers on the northwest peak. This was the first time I have ever seen other climbers on the mountain. The summit traverse has only a few moves of 5.8 climbing, but the intricate route finding, loose rock and major exposure are a big challenge. Climbers generally underestimate the time required to complete the 2,200-metre long adventure and often get benighted. Having traversed the mountain a few times from different peaks, we moved quickly across to the main summit.

We signed the summit register and basked in the sun, resting our legs for the long bone-jarring descent. We continued south along the precarious and exposed summit ridge, which required a couple of rappels, and then strapped on crampons to traverse the upper glacier. The summit ridge was then regained between the gendarme and the southwest peak. From the southwest peak, we dropped down about a hundred metres before climbing back up to the southeast peak. Grant was happy that Mike and I knew our way along the traverse, commenting how he surely would have taken much more time wandering through the loose boulders if we weren't there. From the southeast peak, it was a simple slip and slide down easy gullies and talus to the flat south col. Wobbling down the wide gully toward Foster Lake, our normal speedy glissade was cut short due to a huge crevasse that recently opened. We simply deeked left to easy rock ramps. Finally back at camp, 15 hours after leaving, we each had a swig of the celebratory whisky Grant brought for the occasion. We lazed around the stove, told climbing stories and proceeded to eat all our food except for a few packs of oatmeal that we saved for morning. This adventure is finished but we've already started planning more trips to the quiet and secluded peaks of Vancouver Island. Mount Colonel Foster will see more attempts by Mike and I seeking the unexplored rock and exposed ridges. And besides, we stashed half a bottle of whisky in a cairn at Foster Lake.

Summary

Double Shot (TD 5.9, 1000m) on east face of northeast peak of Mt. Colonel Foster (2134m), Vancouver Island. FA: Grant McCartney, John Waters, Mike Waters, August 17, 2009.

Double Shot on the east face of Mount Colonel Foster. Photo: Mike Waters

Silent Towers Again

Chris Barner

Strangely, the Coast Mountains are kind of quiet these days. A few years ago, after Don Serl published *The Waddington Guide*, the board at White Saddle Air Service was festooned with names and pick-up dates, but this year we were one of only a few groups expected. The chopper abandoned us and we enjoyed the moment when silence takes over. We stood for a while in euphoric yet humble reverence before bending our backs under heavy loads that waited to be shuttled to our camping location. It was quick and convenient to be able to re-occupy the 2007 camp and we were set up by early afternoon. We spent the rest of the day rambling up onto the ridge east of the valley, where we stared down the Dent Rouge Glacier at the 2005 camp and reminisced about the Heathens expedition to Mount Reliance last year.

In the last rays in the retiring sun, music and the aroma of a meal cooking drifted through the moraine. The face we attempted in 2007, which was to be our main objective this trip, looked as forbidding as ever as we glassed it. We expected to make good progress on the first 200 metres that we were already acquainted with. The only problem seemed to be the oppressive heat checking in at 32 C in the shade, but unlike our last visit here, there was ample running water to be found. After dinner, we basked in the beauty of a colourful sunset and a crescent moon over Klattasine, enjoying scotch and doobies in the moraine.

In the morning, the work began as we toted the entire rack of aid gear and a couple of ropes to the base of the route. Paul did a masterful job of leading the first pitch in a few hours and the rope was fixed by 1 p.m. It was already brutally hot on our south-facing wall, so we bailed to the shade for a beer and a coke. Later as darkness fell, we cooked up bacon cheeseburgers—Coast Mountain comfort food.

We headed off to work at 5:45 a.m., and by 8 a.m., I was heading up the

Piss and Crawl Wall on The Talon (unofficial name) in the Silent Towers. Photo: Paul Rydeen

60-metre A3 corner that Paul led two years ago. I tried to slot a nut that slipped and when I pulled on it, I grated my knuckles on the crystalline rock. Within seconds, I was gushing blood all over my gear and clothes, and the granite wall as well. Once I regained composure, I negotiated blown-out knifeblade placements, then inspected a blank-looking section for a second before excavating some pins of questionable pedigree. Still bleeding profusely, and now quite frightened to boot, I gained the corner proper where the gear improved but the circumstances became more menacing. I grovelled up the deep, narrow feature alternately admiring and cursing Paul's endurance and ingenuity. Eventually, I emerged from the corner with my harness twisted sideways and my shoes half spun around my aching feet. I battled on, and after five hours of grim duty, I finally fixed the rope. Exhausted and leaking from a selection of wounds, we rapped to the ground.

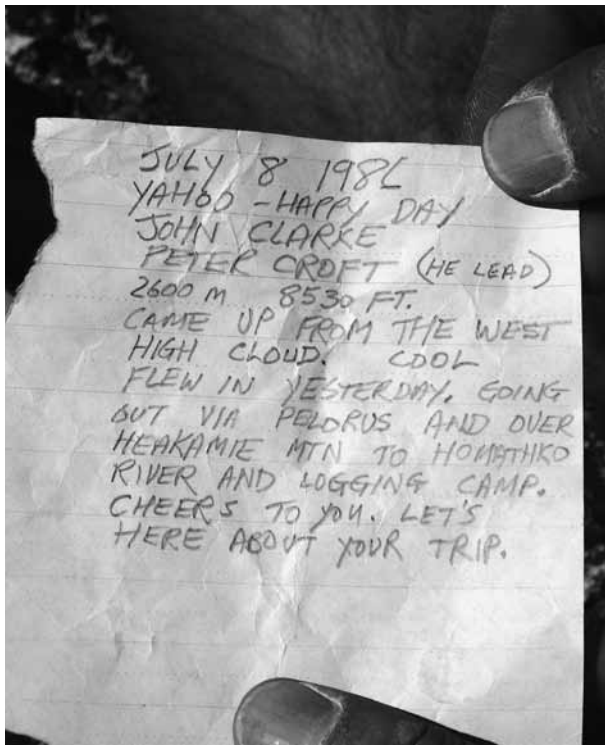
The next day, I hauled the bags and filmed Paul as he cleaned the "hell corner". He and the sun arrived simultaneously at the belay around 10 a.m. Paul was able to negotiate about 30 metres of leading before the sun really gained intensity by noon. We bailed by 1:15 p.m. and took some time to collect water where it trickled down through a few patches of flowers over a slab in the moraine.

Back at the tent, we broke a new record with a temperature of 52 C inside—Death Valley in the alpine! Being limited to half-days by the excessive heat definitely slowed us down, but at least we were climbing a bit everyday, and the technical crux was behind us already. Spirits were high as the fantastic granite monoliths around us were bathed in the pastel light of a hazy, forest-fire sunset.

We rested the following day until we realized that somehow we had broken one of the tent poles while opening the tent door. We disassembled the house and mustered up some ingenuity. Duct tape, plastic utensil handles and the lid from a can left us residing in a deformed but functional tent, hoping that if the weather decided to change, it wouldn't change too much. It seemed impossible, but the weather report called for more of the same—sunny and hot.

Paul was back leading by 8 a.m. on July 30, and it wasn't long before he was through some blocky roofs to the third anchor—our previous high point. I began the fourth pitch near noontime. Ten metres of tricky stuff delivered me to a sweet part of the crack that in turn led to a feature we dubbed the black roofs, and at last, began the really steep ground. I drilled a bolt and rapped.

I continued the next day aiding around the roofs to easier ground and scrambled eight metres to a good belay. In short order, Paul led one more pitch of lichen-y but free-climbable rock to a luxurious ledge. In fact, it was so big we could remove our shoes and harnesses and scamper about scoping out the upper tower and the ever-expansive view. We decided that the rest of the route appeared to be free climbing.



The summit register from 1986. Photo: Paul Rydeen

We rapped the lines with big loads of wall gear and stumbled home through the moraine with backpacks and calf muscles bulging. With no end in sight to the perfect weather, we took another rest day, passing the time hydrating, playing mosquito volleyball and munching blueberry pancakes. The temperature had finally dropped to the mid-30s. It almost felt chilly, making it much easier to eat and get a decent night of sleep.

On Sunday, August 2, we completed the long jug up the ropes to the ledge. I headed off for a chimney-like feature that was free of lichen, and jammed a fist crack in the back of it to an uncomfortable but spectacular belay. Paul led an exposed and unlikely traverse to some huge flakes nested on a ledge that interrupts the steepness of the entire upper face. We moved the belay along this to an attractive corner. Paul led the corners to a ramp, which he followed to the summit ridge. We walked the last 15 metres together. The upper section of the route had gone in four long pitches of free climbing to 5.9.

Only being noon, thus way ahead of schedule for the day, we wandered around the spacious and fascinating summit for a couple of hours, gawking and taking pictures. We read John Clarke and Peter Croft's unusually well-preserved register from their 1986 trip and marvelled at Peter's exploits. With John, he climbed the west face for the tower's first ascent, then after descending, Peter free-soloed the south buttress of the tower to make the second ascent of the peak in the same day [see *CAJ*, 1987, vol. 70, p. 37-40].

We humbly added our own story to the back of the note.

Summary

Piss and Crawl Wall (V 5.9 A3-, 400m, 9 pitches), south face of The Talon, The Silent Towers, Coast Mountains. FA: Chris Barner, Paul Rydeen, July 26-August 2, 2009.

South Ridge (easy 5th class) of Wolverine Tower, The Silent Towers, Coast Mountains. FA: Chris Barner, Paul Rydeen, August 6, 2009.

Checking on Little Brother

Bruce Fairley

Reliance mountain is the only 10,000-foot peak of the Coast Mountains located on the axis between the Waddington massif and Mount Queen Bess. Architecturally, it lacks the splendour of the Waddington Group or the symmetrical grace of Mount Queen Bess. It is also difficult to access. Only one party has ever approached the mountain without air support, and that was the Mundays and Henry Hall in 1946 who used horses. It took them more than a week to get into position to climb and the approach involved a very tricky crossing of the Homathko River to gain the north side of the mountain. So with such disadvantages to its account, Reliance it is a bit of an overlooked little brother of the Coast Mountains, whose virtues are less apparent than its more famous neighbours. After the Munday's ascent, the peak was left alone until 1983 when John Manuel and Richard Suddaby made the second ascent via the 3rd-class Southeast Ridge.

Having climbed Queen Bess a couple of times, from whence a good view of Reliance can be had, I recalled during the fall of 2008 that there was a distinct northeast rib on the mountain which I thought would make a fine route. I importuned my friend Harold Redekop to hop into his plane in Williams Lake and fly out to take a look. He sent me back some wintry pictures and an encouraging report.

The new Cruikshank-Fairley route on the east face of Reliance Mountain. Photo: Harold Redekop

We recruited Brian Cruikshank, a climber of a younger generation with significantly more rock climbing talent than possessed by either Harold or myself, and flew in to Reliance in July 2009. We camped right below the east face in lovely tent sites fashioned over the years by the Heathens of Vancouver Island.

Harold decided that his training regime had not been sufficiently rigorous over the spring, so it was only Brian and I who set off on a fine morning on July 20 to have a better look at the rib. We ascended a morainal ridge from basecamp, then the broken and crevassed glacier clinging to the bottom half of the face. As we climbed higher, it became evident to me that the rib would likely require a fair lick of hard 5.10 climbing, so exercising my prerogative as the elder statesman of the party, I announced that we were detouring to the east face, a decision which Brian took with his usual good grace.

We gained the face by traversing onto the lowest tongue of rock. I started up fine quality granite corners and face moves in boots, but quickly ran into sufficient 5th-class climbing that forced me to switch to my circa 1986 Fire rock shoe in order to grapple with the technical challenge. Despite a bit of seepage, the climbing was pleasant mid-5th class with good protection. Brian led up and mercifully traversed out right under a roof, forgoing what no doubt would have been some deliciously hard direct moves up the overhang. Five more pitches of climbing up to about 5.8 took us to a snow patch. The route finding had been enjoyable without being overly taxing and the rock quality was mostly very pleasant.

At this point we were faced with the

choice of heading left and continuing on rock, or right and onto the snow, which looks like a pictograph of an ancient dancer. We were both happy to stick to rock, and Brian led two further pitches, the ninth being the crux of the climb at alpine 5.9+. It involved some steep laybacking and stemming on good holds. My lead then took us to a snow eyebrow where we had a brew.

We had spoken optimistically of perhaps overcoming the face in a day, though I was skeptical and carried bivouac gear. The lay of the rock did not aim towards the summit, but pushed us off left. It was now getting late and Brian took over the leading, pushing to at least get us to the crest of the southeast ridge. However, a zone of loose brown, decomposing rock slowed us down. Brian led through heading for a rib of granite, while I dodged flying debris at the belay. A party with more patience or time might try skirting this zone to the right where the rock looks better, though steeper.

So as darkness fell, we settled into a reasonably comfortable bivouac on the usual sloping ledge about a pitch and a half below the ridge crest. We had a fine morning's sunrise and dawdled a bit in our eerie, enjoying the vista over the Homathko and across the Coast Mountains to Good Hope, Grenville and Bute. A pitch and a half of blocky stone took us to the ridge, from where a wandering line over 3rd-class rock (essentially the Manuel-Suddaby route) led to the infrequently attained summit. On returning to camp, we learned that Harold, starting at the col between Reliance and Determination, had soloed the south ridge of the slightly lower west summit of Reliance on mostly 3rd- to 4th-class rock with some 5th-class moves higher up. This was likely the first ascent of the ridge. A couple of days later, we all made what is likely the first ascent of the west ridge of Corgi Mountain at the head of the Reliance Glacier, which was about 250 metres of 3rd-class rock with a short easy 5th-class pitch right at the top.

Amazingly, the Mundays had in mind as far back as 1946 that the Reliance area would make a good spot for an ACC General Mountaineering Camp. Their approach did not pan out, but certainly the alpine basin to the east of Reliance Mountain makes a fine base for a week of general mountaineering, with pleasant snow and rock objectives, and the lure of the one big peak, little brother though it be. And of course, for someone keen, the rib is yet inviolate.

Summary

East face (V 5.9+, 1400m) of Reliance Mountain (3147m), Coast Mountains. FA: Brian Cruikshank, Bruce Fairley, July 20-21, 2009.

South ridge (5.5, 1100m) of the west peak of Reliance Mountain. FA: Harold Redekop, July 20, 2009.

West ridge (5.4, 250m) of Corgi Peak (2770m). FA: Brian Cruikshank, Bruce Fairley, Harold Redekop, July 24, 2009.

Desire

Mike Pond

Sometimes things just work out right. Maybe we finally reached a critical mass of failure. After so many trips wracked with botched logistics, sickness and poor weather, the typical expedition problems took a holiday and let us sneak in to the normally inclement B.C. Coast Mountains without a hitch. Our team of young Seattle-based climbers completed three beautiful, moderate first ascents in the alpine near Bella Coola in bluebird weather that lasted our entire trip. Perhaps the mountains were being nice. Perhaps we were just lucky.

With the support of the American Alpine Club and the McNeill-Nott Award, Brianna Hartzell, Eric Dalzell, Matt Van Biene and I planned to climb in the Desire Cirque in search of new alpine routes. We had minimal information about the area except that we knew Desire Mountain had only seen one set of feet on its summit from a sole first ascentionist—John Clarke in 1993—via the non-technical west side [see *CAJ*, 1994, vol. 77, page 78].

After driving 17 hours north from Seattle in July heat, our heavy-loaded vehicle arrived in the beautiful Bella Coola Valley, whose granite walls tempted to lure us away from our alpine objectives. We resisted the call of the granite siren—barely.

With the help of the grant money, we hired a helicopter that whirred past days of bushwhacking in six minutes. We were dropped off high on the Desire Glacier and set up a ridiculously well-stocked basecamp, from which we did three single-day climbs of the nearby peaks, starting with Desire.

During the previous winter, Brianna Hartzell, our expedition leader, stumbled upon a John Scurlock photo of the east ridge of Desire Peak. She was immediately smitten, and for good reason. Beautiful and long, the knife-edge rises out of the deep valley, steep on both sides and fluted with copious B.C. snow. Studying the photo, we anticipated a long, mixed snow and rock climb with several vertical sections. What we found, however, as we buzzed the ridge in the helicopter is that the Scurlock photo, taken headlong, made the ridge look more intimidating than it was. What we climbed was an aesthetic, moderate ridge that reminded us of our home peaks in the Cascades.

In the early alpenglow on July 21, our team of four accessed the east ridge via the Desire Glacier, where we touched the broken yet solid alpine granite we hoped so much to find. We roped up and travelled in two rope teams of two, with Eric and Matt in

Desire Mountain with the east ridge forming the right-hand skyline. Photo: Matt Van Biene

front, and Brianna and me second. We followed the ridge crest for most of the day, mostly simul-climbing on terrain that was never too hard yet never boring. The majority of the climbing ranged between 4th class and 5.8 rock, with the occasional snow patch for variety. Though the climbing itself was not technically challenging, it was very enjoyable, offering almost-constant exposure on both sides on generally sound granite. And, to boot, we were treated with clear skies and stunning views of the vast Coast Mountains the entire time.

The ease evaporated, however, when we regrouped on a plateau to see an imposing headwall above us. From our vantage point, it appeared loose and steep. It was the final obstacle to the summit. After a candid discussion, our team decided to split: Matt and I would push on while Brianna and Eric opted to descend via our ascent route. After three rappels into a notch, Matt and I climbed up the headwall on rock that yielded a surprisingly easy passage. Two 60-metre pitches of run-out 5.8 mellowed to simul-climbing terrain that we rode to the summit. We tracked across the summit snowfield to find a small cairn, the only evidence we found of other climbers. From the summit, we descended 3rd-class terrain and rappelled twice to access the glacier and our basecamp below. Hours later, as we recounted our first ascent, the four of us were treated to the summer spectacle of the aurora borealis that danced like a neon sunset over the sea of peaks that lay beyond. What a day that was.

The following day, still buzzing from Desire, Matt and I climbed a shorter but equally enjoyable ridge we spotted the previous day. After leaving camp, a few hours of mellow glacier travel led to the base of what we would call Menergy Ridge (so named after an outrageous parody advertisement for energy gels). Mostly 4th-class climbing, with occasional 5th-class steps, led to the summit of the Gail Needle, named in honour of Matt's beloved Aunt Gail, who had recently passed.

Finally, on July 24, Matt and I laced up the shoes and completed the Wanderlust Traverse. From our camp below Desire, we followed the ridge of the Desire Cirque, passing the Gail Needle, and ascended Wanderlust Peak via four long pitches of splitter 5.10 and steep snow. After making a cairn, we descended steep snow on Wanderlust's south side, which led to a 2nd- and 3rd-class ridge over two less-technical peaks. As the climb eased in difficulty, the rock quality proportionally deteriorated, until we finished the traverse on scree up the final mountain. In lieu of any name on our map, we dubbed it Mount Birthday Suit. Hey, it was my birthday, and I tagged the summit pyramid, err, alone. No pictures to follow. Matt and I then backtracked the ridge, bypassing much of the technical climbing on Wanderlust and the Gail Needle, and traversed the Desire Glacier below, arriving in camp to finish a brisk 15-hour day.

For our group of young, motivated and mostly-nomadic climbers, Desire and Wanderlust proved to be apt names for the mountains that represent our lives at the moment. Fueled by our passion for high, open spaces, climbing has been the means through which we travel, the motivation for our fitness and the spice of life. And sometimes, everything wrong and petty and impossible fades away, and like the aurora in the northern summer sky, the raw beauty of the world shines through and dances for a small audience of believers.

Summary

East ridge (IV 5.8) of Desire Mountain (2594m), Pacific Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Mike Pond, Matt Van Biene, July 21, 2009.

Menergy Ridge (III 5.9), Gail Needle, Pacific Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Mike Pond, Matt Van Biene, July 22, 2009.

Wanderlust Traverse (IV 5.10), first ascents of Wanderlust Peak and Mt. Birthday Suit, Pacific Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Mike Pond, Matt Van Biene, July 24, 2009.

Nusatsum

Grant McCartney

Nusatsum mountain lies in between the Nusatsum and Cahootin river drainages, and dominates the skyline looking east from the western end of the Bella Coola valley. The North ridge is a very prominent feature on the skyline and is sure to capture any climber's eye, as it did ours. Climbing information for the area is limited, and so are local climbers. From what we could discern, this line had never been climbed. The first ascent of the mountain in 1952 took the northeast ridge; more recently, it looks like other parties may have come from a southern pass, referred to as Mosquito Pass, through less technical terrain. With our team's adventurous spirit, double ropes, cams and nuts, we figured the steeper and more alluring north ridge deserved some exploration.

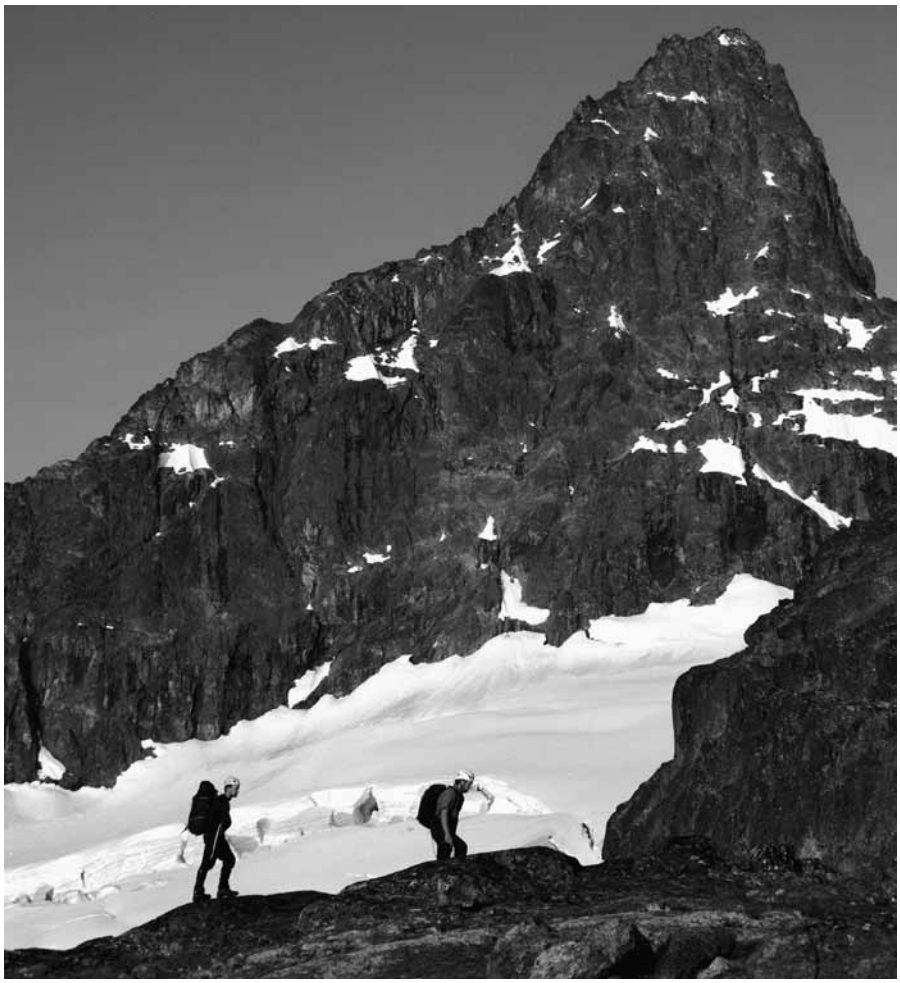
Starting in the Cahootin drainage shortly up the forest service road behind Alex's house, we set off mid-morning ascending a north-northeast ridge of old growth timber before reaching the alpine and setting our bivy around 1,750 metres. We had scouted this approach weeks earlier so things went smoothly to the bivouac. The day's hike was somewhat strenuous and hot with plenty of mosquitoes encouraging us the whole way—pretty much exactly what is to be expected when mountaineering on the Coast in July.

After a short snooze, Jia's watch alarm sounded the 3:30 a.m. buzzer to start the day. After some quick eats of whatever our stomachs could handle at that hour, we geared up, left the sleeping gear behind and were off before the sun was up. The terrain along the approach turned out to be 3rd- and 4th-class scrambling shortly after setting off, but eased again before reaching the obvious base of the north ridge we had been ogling for so long from town. Our weather was holding as we basked in morning alpine sunshine looking down on a blanket of white cloud hiding the valley.

Basking soon turned to go time—harnesses were put on, ropes stacked, gear sorted and the leader was gone. After a few pitches, we pondered turning back due to somewhat poor rock quality, but the pondering didn't last long and the commitment was made. Four more roped pitches, six in total, saw us to the summit. The crux waited for us on the final pitch where Jia lead a lengthy exposed 5.9 traverse.

Now the greater challenge began with the descent. Opting not to descend our route due to the crappy rock and foreseen rappelling difficulties, we began heading down the normal route to a bench on the south side only to be met with some difficult route-finding choices. With daylight dwindling and still more than 1,800 metres to the valley floor, we needed to make a decision. After discussing our options, we chose to head down the east side into the Cahootin drainage to face unknown coastal bushwhacking territory. After a lengthy 3rd- and 4th-class downclimb, then a downhill-running bushwhack through goat and bear trails, we found ourselves back at the Cahootin Forest Service Road at 11 p.m., 20 hours after we left our bivy.

Grant McCartney and Alex Boileau approaching Nusatsum Mountain. The north ridge is the right-hand skyline. Photo: Jia Condon



Summary

The North Ridge (IV 5.9, 300m, 6 pitches), Nusatsum Mountain (2575m), Bella Coola. FA: Alex Boileau, Jia Condon, Grant McCartney, July 14-15, 2009.

A Coast Range Odyssey

Lena Rowat

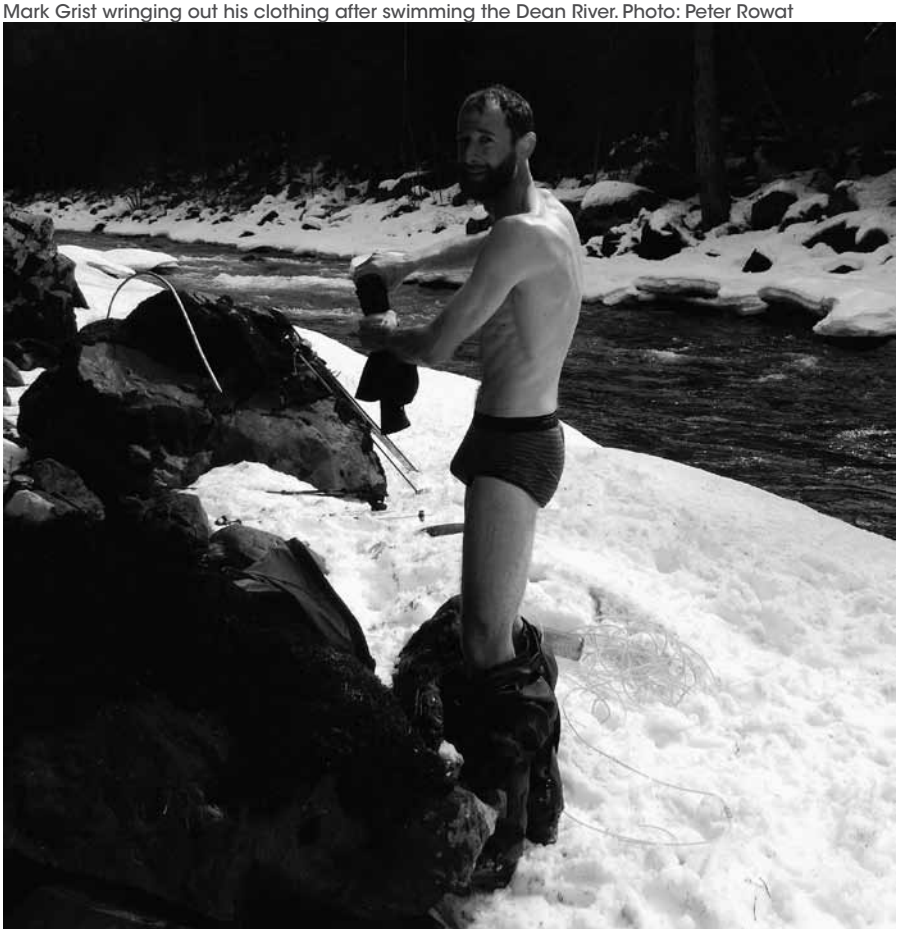
My parents met in REI in Seattle in the summer of '68. My dad was spending his year's earnings like a kid in a candy shop, preparing to go into the Logan Mountains of the Yukon, while my mom was looking for a ride to Alaska for a summer of adventure. A mutual friend hooked them up. My sister was born the next summer and I came along a few years later having already travelled into the Waddington Range in utero. Despite such telling beginnings, I did not come to really appreciate mountains until after I finished college. At a loss for other ways to occupy my time, I resorted to the ski-bum life—and loved it. I progressed to backcountry skiing, leaning heavily on the skills I had reluctantly acquired during a childhood of being dragged through the mountains.

A friend that I met while tree planting convinced me that hiking part of the Pacific Crest Trail with her would be a fun way to avoid returning to school that fall. Before then, I didn't think that I really liked hiking, but I loved that month I spent backpacking and I started to scheme on doing a ski version of such a journey. The next summer my dad convinced me that it would be a good idea for he, my sister and I to try to climb Mount Waddington together, even though I probably hadn't put on a harness since I had been dragged across a glacier sometime in my early teens. Surprise, surprise, we didn't really climb all that well together, and wisely turned around under bluebird skies after taking some photos of my sister and I doing acrobatics by the base of The Tooth. But after looking out over the huge glacial terrain, and pouring over the maps of the area, it occurred to me that the Coast Mountains might lend itself well to a skiing version of the Pacific Crest Trail. When, the next year, a friend invited me to climb Mount Logan, and I deferred in favour of ski touring, and then later regretted missing out on that adventure, I realized that this would make a natural endpoint to such a journey. Mount Logan lines up perfectly with the route to present a good technical climb up the one side, and then a great ski descent to finish by.

Now I can say, definitely, that my hunch was correct. The journey was superb. I completed it in three one-week to three-month segments—five different trips over the course of eight years. Last spring I finally filled in the last gap—Bella Coola to Kemano—with my 67-year-old father, Peter Rowat, and a great buddy Mark Grist. I still cannot believe that my dad made it through some of that stuff. While it didn't surprise me that he sometimes could lead on the ascents, being of Scottish upbringing he has never been much more than a survival skier. You know the sort, where you always think the next frame will show a crash. He survived many a trying descent with a heavy expedition pack and often through thick trees and isothermal snow.

The crux of the trip was the crossing of the Dean River. It is the only river in the whole Coast Mountains that doesn't present an assisted crossing, like a bridge or a possible boating arrangement. We skied back and forth along the shore, trying to find a spot that summoned our courage. Mark booted his way over a cliff and came back reporting a spot where he was sure he could see ground all the way across. Two steps in the strong, icy torrent and I was up to my boobies fearfully eyeing the rapids a few metres downstream. We regrouped and headed up stream to a stretch of less turbulent water. My backpack contents were double-bagged in my pack so I jumped in and swam for the other side

Mark Grist wringing out his clothing after swimming the Dean River. Photo: Peter Rowat



Lena Rowat emerging from the Bella Coola valley. Photo: Peter Rowat

towing a rope. We tied the rope to trees on either side and managed to slide the rest of our gear across. The two fellows then swam across without incident, thus allowing us to continue to our food drop.

My dad's skis brought on another adventure. On the morning of the fourth day, as we de-skinned, he noticed that one of his skis had cracked across through the base near the tip. We went for a MacGyver fix. The result was duct taping the skin to the ski so the skin could act as a splint. A few days later, we came to a small alpine slope with a nice fluffy layer over a firm crust. Dad couldn't resist. He removed the structurally integral skin risking his ski for some real turns. Mark and I got down the short run to a lake and set up camp, but we started to worry when Dad didn't show up. Our search found him post-holing with a very floppy-eared ski sticking up on his pack.

"Call the helicopter," he said. "I am done." We decided that if we were going to pay for a chopper, we might as well get it to bring in new skis rather than take Dad out. He was delighted in being able to remove his skins and enjoy some turns again.

The next misadventure came after our second and final food cache, when Dad decided to plow ahead of us through a pass in a white out. We had just sat out an intense storm for three days and were getting worried about making it to Kemano in time for our boat ride out, so we were pushing on in bad weather. After removing skins, I followed Dad's tracks carefully as there was nothing else to focus on. They were barely visible, and then they seemed to disappear completely. I peered closer and approached carefully to the point where they seemed to disappear, and suddenly I was looking at least five metres from the lip of a cornice that had so curiously presented itself in the middle of a bowl. Unbelievably, my father was on his feet and trying to hike up to warn us about the cornice. One of his bindings was still attached to his boot—without the ski. Besides his ski and a small scratch on his chin, he was fine from his fall.

"Call the helicopter!" he repeated. And with the mounting concern of running out of time, I agreed. Fortunately, the weather dismissed that as an immediate option, and Mark was there to chime in with his usual confidence that we could surmount our challenges. As we carried Dad's skis and he post-holed down the slope to a reasonable camping spot, the weather miraculously cleared. It lifted our morale, helping to lend hope to Mark's idea about remounting the binding. Golf-tee tips glued into the holes provided something for the screws to set into, and we dozed for a few hours in the warm sun while it set. That evening, we again put our handiwork to the test, trying to make good of the clear weather.

Miraculously, both the binding and the weather held beautifully for the last week of our traverse. We pushed hard to make up for lost time. With just 23 days of food planned for the trip, we luckily came upon a stocked cabin on the 24th day for lunch. That night, we slid down an abandoned mine road toward the lights of Kemano at 10 p.m., only slightly hungry. Kemano is truly a magnificent spot smack central in the Coast Mountains. It felt like a perfect place to finish my disjointed ski journey from Vancouver to Mount Logan.

Summary

Ski traverse from Bella Coola to Kemano, Coast Mountains (24 days, 250 kilometres in distance and 15,000 metres of elevation gain). Mark Grist, Lena Rowat, Peter Rowat, April 4-27, 2009.

Kitimat Traverse

David Williams

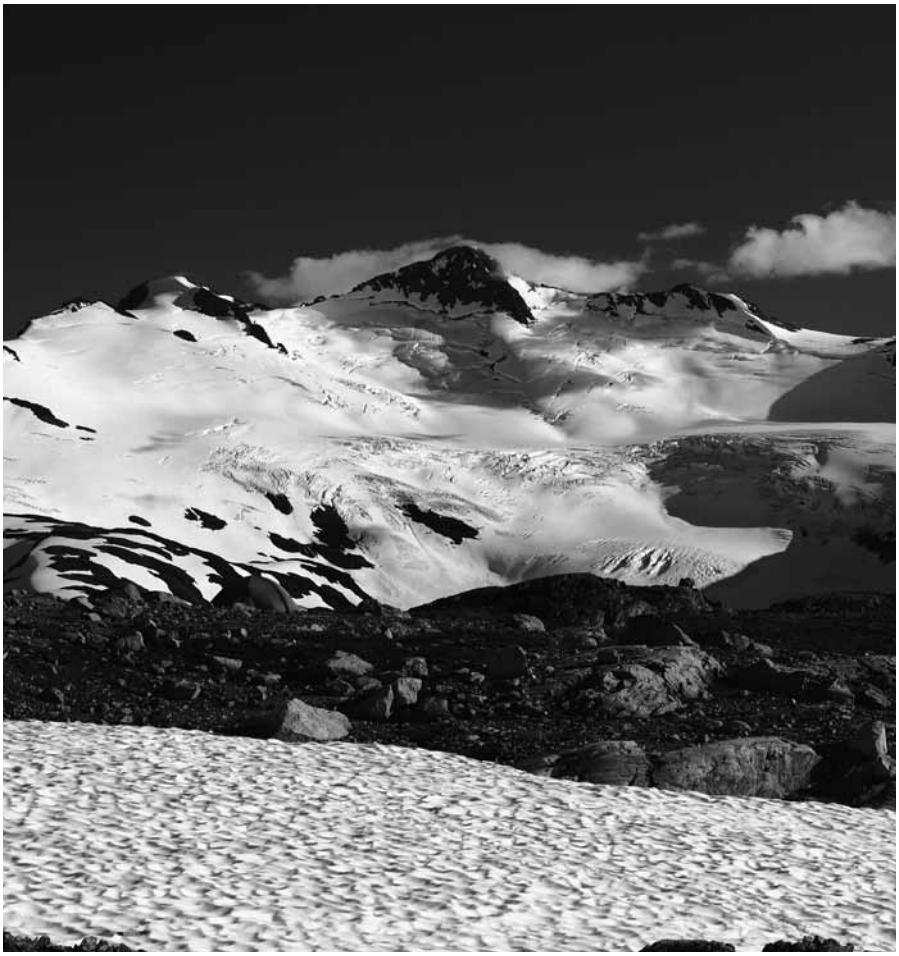
I pondered over maps for quite some time before deciding on a destination for a summer 2009 traverse. Mark Grist and I have talked on numerous occasions about the discontinuous ridge system bounded by the Kitlope River to the west, the Kimsquit and Kapella valleys to the south, the Gamsby River to the east and the Tsaytis valley to the north. This is an area of pristine valleys sandwiched between the Kitlope and Tweedsmuir Provincial Parks. The 1:50,000 NTS maps have a 20-metre contour interval with plenty of missing contours, which makes it appear impressively rugged and difficult to judge whether the terrain is negotiable. In addition, a south-to-north traverse from Kimsquit Lake to Tahtsa Lake would require a crossing of the Gamsby River. With all these considerations, I was unwilling to commit myself to what might otherwise be a wonderfully wild and remote route. However, while continuing to scour the maps, I noticed a feasible looking route to the east of the Kimsquit and Gamsby valleys, with a floatplane pick-up at Tahtsa Lake to finish. This route would provide good views to reconnoitre the more westerly line. On the morning of Sunday, July 12, Terry Jarvis and I flew into Salahagen Lake (53°13.4' N, 127°3.5' E) with Nick Hawes of Lake District Air from Burns Lake. We had difficulty finding a spot on the shore to drop us off since the water level was high and the shoreline awkwardly flooded. But soon we were shouldering our two-week loads of food and supplies through the forest west to the col (53°13.4' N, 127°5.7' E), situated between Mounts Cosgrove and Kastberg.

From the col, we descended southwest for 1.5 kilometres to the 1,200-metre level and then travelled northwest, descending initially through delightful meadows and then bush to the Smaby Creek valley. We opted to walk north up the valley bottom following the creek rather than thrashing directly west back up to the high country. Neither of us was up for a bush thrash late in the day. Rather than be forced out of the valley, we made camp at the mouth of a small canyon and enjoyed our first night out in our remote world. In the morning, with only minimal thrashing, we were soon around navigating the valley constriction and treated to delightful scenery as we made our way to the col (53°15.8' N, 127°10.9' E) between Smaby Peak and Mount Musclow. After a quick lunch, we left our packs behind to ascend the southwestern slopes of Mount Musclow, followed by a scramble up the west ridge to the southern summit (53°16.1' N, 127°9.0' E), which appeared to be at least as high as the labelled summit situated a kilometre north. Eutsuk Lake dominated our view of the lake country to the east. Returning to the packs, we traversed around the northern slopes of Smaby Peak and made camp (53°15.6' N, 127°13.0' E) in the basin situated between Price and Smaby Peaks. I spent the next hour doing recon on our descent for the morning to Surel Pass. This was to be one of the crux descents of the trip. Fortunately, a reasonable route presented itself down a steep but straightforward snow gully. I rambled back to camp happy with the knowledge that we could avoid the alternate route, which, while technically straightforward, would have led us into the horribly bush-choked valley bottom coming up from Surel Lake from the north. A lovely evening unfolded as we

Terry Jarvis approaches the summit of Mount Bolom. Photo: David Williams

sat perched above Surel Pass peering down to moose heaven with the sound of running water all around and glaciers descending off Smaby Peak dominating behind.

Surel Pass is a delightful spot consisting of extensive alpine meadows broken up by small clusters of trees and covered with ponds. We ran into a big brown critter here munching on shrubs and shoots. Rising up on his hind legs to get a better sniff, he appeared enormous. But this mass of muscle and fur soon darted into a small copse of stunted spruce and blueberry, stopping several times to turn around, stand up and take in another look of us before crashing off through the bush again. This majestic animal seemed lonely in this immense space. For the next hour or two we made haste, often looking over our shoulders to check that we were not being followed as we made our way to the basin at the headwaters of Chatsquot Creek. That afternoon, while wandering around in the beautiful high, alpine terrain surrounding Mount Stranack, we ran into a couple of caribou. We made camp on the ridge (53°18.6' N, 127°15.9' E) a little northwest of Mount Stranack and wandered up to the summit in the late afternoon. Easy travelling followed the next morning as we moved northwest past Ptarmigan Peak and dropped down to the pass at the headwaters of Ear Creek and Lindquist Lake (53°20.0' N, 127°19.0' E). A small lake is situated at this constricted pass. Huge moose tracks and a well-worn grizzly trail were evidence to the volume of big game passing between the lake country and the Gamsby-Kitlope drainages. As we ascended out of the pass, horrendous krummholz on the wind-scoured ridge battered us and sapped our energy. We made camp next to a tarn just above treeline (53°20.8' N, 127°19.6' E).



Khawachen Mountain. Photo: David Williams

The morning of day five began with drizzle and cloud. Shortly after lunch, we headed to Lindquist Pass and ascended the southeast slopes of Mount Irma. We pitched tent a little below the summit (53°22.5' N, 127°21.0' E) in horrible weather, but were soon warming ourselves with steaming mugs of soup. The weather was not brilliant the next morning but was usable, and soon we were at the top enjoying the expansive changing views among the clouds across the Gamsby River valley. Back to the traverse, we headed northwest along the ridge crest through lovely alpine country before descending northeast down McCuish Creek and then west to near McCuish Pass, before beginning another brutal bush climb. We camped at 1,525 metres (5,000 feet) just above a small lake two kilometres to the southeast of Sias Mountain (53°24.9' N, 127°21.8' E).

The next morning, at the col one kilometre to the northwest of Sias Mountain, we were pounded by sleet and gave up on the idea of ascending this summit. Instead, we opted to get down to more hospitable terrain to make camp a little above another gorgeous pass to the northwest (53°26.5' N, 127°23.3' E) of Sias Mountain. The eighth morning dawned rather dank and with this we had a slow start. As the clouds gradually lifted, we moved northwest down to the pass and then up onto the broad ridge beyond. When possible, we avoided camping down in the bear-infested valley bottoms. We descended a kilometre or two to the northwest and camped at treeline (53°27.9' N, 127°25.2' E). It would have made for a very long day to descend to the Gamsby River at this point and climb back up the other side. We enjoyed this stupendous perch above the headwaters of the mighty river, ringed by coastal ridges and topped with ice cliffs and "whipping cream".

The descent to the Gamsby through delightful open forest and meadows turned out to be straightforward. In gorgeous weather, we ascended the valley opposite swinging west and then southwest to camp at the col (53°28.1' N, 127°29.4' E) just to the northwest of Peak 6976 (2,126 metres) in the late afternoon. We were now fully immersed

in ice and granite, and after pitching camp, we made for the summit of Peak 6976 (53°27.8' N, 127°28.8' E).

Day 10 was to be our big peak and only full-day side trip of our journey. Luckily, we were treated to a day of perfect blue skies for ascending Khawachen Mountain (2,260 metres, 53°26.4' N, 127°32.8' E). The climb involved a wonderful jigsaw puzzle of a route as we weaved our way around slots, initially travelling west and southwest—one moment on the rock of the east ridge, the next contouring on steep snow—until we found ourselves at the cairned summit. The summit register informed us that the peak was first climbed by Peter Crone of the UBC Varsity Outdoor Club, followed by Glenn Woodsworth and Tom Richards in 1977, and then Peter van der Hyden and Ken Brown in 1978. We had likely made the fourth ascent of this remote glaciated summit, though probably the first ascent traversing from the south.

The views were breathtaking, dominated to the west by the impressive and booming ice cliffs descending from Peak 7411 (2,259 metres, 53°24.6' N, 127°41.7' E), which was first climbed by John Clark and companions in 1993 [see *CAJ*, 1994, vol. 77, p. 78], and the still likely unclimbed Peak 7335 (2,236 metres, 53°26.4' N, 127°32.8' E) across the Tsaytis valley. In the late afternoon, we were briefly delayed by a ptarmigan mother that had violently chased us in the morning. A standoff ensued as she guarded her chicks just before we returned tired and dehydrated to camp after a great day.

During our journey, we noticed that lakes under the influence of the Kenney Dam on the Nechako River are surrounded by swaths of drowned trees. This observation led us to conclude that our proposed pick-up spot on Tahtsa Lake would likely be compromised. So we placed a satellite call to Lake District Air and arranged to be picked up at the northern lobe of Blanket Lakes instead. Fortunately this rerouting shortened the trip by only a couple of kilometres. Over the course of the next three days, we headed west into the pass (53°28.4' N, 127°32.4' E) at the head of the Seel Lake drainage and then travelled north and northeast along the ridge crest to the east of Laventie Creek. We made camp on day 13 (53°34.6' N, 127°28.2' E) two kilometres northwest of Mount Bolom on a wonderful heather bench. Earlier that afternoon, we had wandered north along goat trails to the summit of Peak 7000 (2,134 metres, 53°36.3' N, 127°29.4' E). This summit proved to be a terrific vantage point to view the impressive ridge crest we had travelled along during the previous two days. From here we could see south to Mount Irma. We noticed that the shoreline of Tahtsa Lake was extensively lined with drowned dead trees so our decision to change the pick-up location was a sound one.

The following morning after ascending Mount Bolom (2,073 metres, 53°34.0' N, 127°26.9' E), we initially attempted to drop directly southeast down the ridge crest to the delta lobe in the centre of Blanket Lakes. However, the ridge crest from 1,890 metres (6,200 feet) onwards consisted of a nightmarish series of crumbling gendarmes. To negotiate this would involve either teetering low-5th-class scrabbling or tenuous traverses around the base of the towers. We spent considerable time trying to negotiate these, but in the end opted for an alternative route to Blanket Lakes.

From that point on the southeast ridge (53°33.6' N, 127°26.5' E), we dropped north onto the glacial slopes to the east of Mount Bolom and traversed over to the top of a ridge (53°34.0' N, 127°25.5' E). Flanked by impressive canyons, this appeared to drop directly to Blanket Lakes. I was not particularly happy about taking this route down because the map indicated the likely presence of small cliff bands. Above the trees, this was a wild crest to walk down with canyons to either side of us, surrounded by peaks and a shimmering lake below appearing just steps away. We carefully adhered to the compass needle and made rapid progress, initially following goat trails littered with fur. We encountered a couple of slabby sections but these were not overly steep. Finally using a narrow descending ledge across the lower cliff band with one hand on the cliff and the other against the bark of tall prickly spruce, we snuck around to the base of the eastern canyon at the bottom of a 60-metre waterfall.

After thrashing through alder, we followed the creek to the northern lobe of Blanket Lakes (53°33.1' N, 127°24.9' E). Here, we dropped our packs, stripped naked and washed away some of the grime and tired feeling in the crystal cold water. We spent a very pleasant evening enjoying our last night out in the wilderness. Using only the inner mesh tent with no fly, we fell asleep looking out across the lake between our toes.

Summary

Summer alpine traverse in the Kitimat Ranges of the Coast Mountains from Salahagen Lake (53°13.4' N, 127°3.5' E) to Blanket Lakes (53°33.1' N, 127°24.9' E). 15 days, 116 kilometres of distance and 11,150 metres of elevation gain. Terry Jarvis, David Williams, July 12-26, 2009.

West ridge (2nd class) of the south summit of Mount Musclow (2195m, 53°16.1' N, 127°9.0' E). FRA: David Williams, July 13, 2009.

Northwest ridge of Mount Stranach (1707m, 53°18.0' N, 127°15.1' E). David Williams, July 14, 2009.

Southeast slopes and upper east ridge (3rd class) of Mount Irma (53°22.6' N, 127°21.0' E). 2nd ascent: Terry Jarvis, David Williams, July 17, 2009.

North ridge (3rd class) of Peak 6976 (2126m, 53°27.8' N, 127°28.8' E). 2nd ascent: Terry Jarvis, David Williams, July 20, 2009.

Northeast slopes and upper north ridge (4th class) of Khawachen Mountain (2260m, 53°26.4' N, 127°32.8' E). 4th ascent, new route: Terry Jarvis, David Williams, July 21, 2009.

South ridge (2nd class) of Peak 7000 (2134m, 53°36.3' N, 127°29.4' E). FRA: David Williams, July 24, 2009.

Northwest ridge (3rd class) of Mount Bolom (2073m, 53°34.0' N, 127°26.9' E). FRA: Terry Jarvis, David Williams, July 25, 2009.

Hozomeen

Andy Traslin

I couldn't decide what to do: try and ski a new line on the north peak of Hozomeen Mountain in the North Cascades or enter a mountain bike race in Squamish. For some reason, I decided that I could pull off both in the same weekend. I would need to complete the 30-kilometre mountain bike race on Saturday, then immediately after drive the four hours from Squamish through Vancouver to Hope and up the Silver-Skagit road to the unknown trailhead, then hike 10 kilometres with 2,000 metres of elevation gain up through a forest and along a lengthy snow-covered ridge to a bivy.

The race went without any problems aside for the usual suffering. I B-lined it in my car to the Flood-Hope road, a road I had driven many times. I was to meet a couple of American friends, Sky Sjue and Drew Tabke, who had scoped out this same descent. The gravel road was crowded with tons of locals milling around their tents and cars parked along the side. It was the long weekend and people were starting to party hard, complete with a full-on boxing match. I just kept driving not really knowing if I would even find my friends. Eventually, I spotted a Volkswagen van with Utah plates that had to be them.

Now for the fun part, I had to find them on the ridge. The hike started fine on a nice single-track trail. Light was fading and so was I. Doubt was creeping in so I laid down for a bit, falling asleep for few minutes. I made sure to wake up, because if I didn't, my efforts would have been a total waste of time. I continued into the dark night feeling like I was in space. After a while, I found ski tracks in the snow, which led to their hidden bivy.

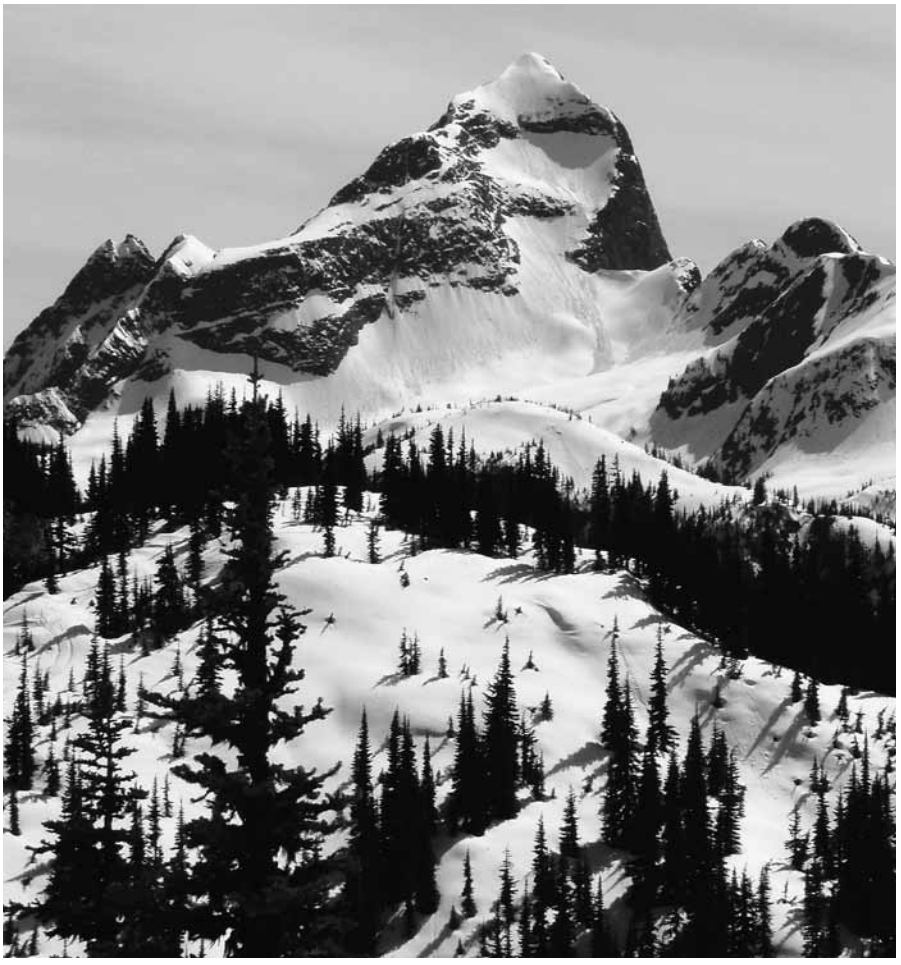
Sky and Drew were highly doubtful I would make it, so I made sure to wake them up at 2 a.m. to inform them of my arrival. We arose again around 5 a.m. and immediately struck out towards the peak and soon crossed the 49th parallel—Sky and Drew returning to their native country. The ascent would have been flavourful enough with the short 60-degree ice and rock choke in the middle of the face and its remote location, but it was significantly spiced up by the occasional wet slides releasing from the climber's right side of the face as the early morning rays struck these east-facing snowfields. Consequences would have been serious if struck by one of the slides sending you over an exposed cliff into oblivion. Our route kept us mostly in safe terrain, but the occasional meander into the danger zone was definitely uncomfortable. Drew and Sky are fast even when they aren't scared, but with that morning's little extra motivation, we were at the top in no time. We lingered on the summit and enjoyed vast views of the North Cascades, Skagit and Manning Provincial Parks.

The skiing wasn't phenomenal, but the aesthetics of the line and the excitement of the climb made it extremely rewarding nonetheless. We skied the whole face except for where we had to downclimb the 60-degree ice and rock choke. Relieved to be off the face, we stopped for a well-deserved break in the sun before returning to our bivy to pack up before the long trudge down.

Summary

First ski descent of the north face of the north peak of Hozomeen Mountain (2459m), Cascade Mountains. Sky Sjue, Drew Tabke, Andy Traslin, May 17, 2009.

The north face of the north peak of Hozomeen Mountain. Photo: Andy Traslin



The Interior

Labyrinth

Jon Simms

Quite a lot of difficult free climbing has been accomplished in recent years around the Snowpatch-Bugaboo cirque, including Divine Intervention, Midnight Route and Sendero Norte [see page 25]. The potential definitely abounds for more of the same on the high walls above Applebee campground. For people with a thirst for adventure but limited time, the front side of the Bugaboos is a word-class alpine granite venue.

Much of this hard work and effort comes from a special ring of friends from Golden. These finely honed mountain units enjoy simple, happy lives in balance with the constantly changing alpine environment.

In August 2009, Jon Walsh and I added our own contribution to big-wall free climbing on the daunting east face of Snowpatch Spire. We named the line Labyrinth since it is, indeed, a complex maze. This visionary route had been attempted by Jon as well as others in the past—all of whom were shut down by either slam-shut corners, flaring bum cracks or just plain hard climbing.

Jon and I spent the first day retracing his old steps of the first three pitches. Quality climbing up to 5.12- was freed and lines were fixed. Back at it the next day, we focused on free climbing and onsighting as much as possible. If more than a few points of aid were necessary then we looked elsewhere for a more viable option. This philosophy has helped me in the past with the quick establishment of quality alpine rock routes and a greater chance for success.

Jon Simms on pitch three during the first ascent of Labyrinth on the east face of Snowpatch Spire. Photo: Jon Walsh.

Just below the obvious mid-height roof that splits most of the east face wall, Jon established a run-out, knifblade lead with a roof sequence that took three bolts. After establishing our line to this high point, we ran out of time, pulled our lines and descended. We would have to come back the next weekend to try to free this pitch and finish the route.

The following weekend arrived and we climbed to our high-point on the Saturday. We finished equipping the roof and freed it by evening. At 5.12-, it was one of the two crux pitches of the route, the first being lower down on the third pitch. Half of our time that day was spent hauling the pig, which carried overnight gear, food and water. Again we fixed from our high-point, but this time spent the night just below the main roof pitch on terraced ledges. When 5 a.m. arrived on Sunday, we prepared for the commute back up above the roof. Instead of hauling the pig for the rest of the day, we decided to lob the bag off (quite a funny site to witness at 6 a.m.).

The angle of the east face changes halfway up—from slightly overhanging to slightly less than vertical. Time accelerated; ground was covered much quicker. Pitches were sent easier and time spent leading happened faster. Our progress above the roof section consisted of quality 5.10 climbing for another four pitches until we spotted a striking 100-metre open-book corner. We eyeballed this corner system from two pitches below, trending and aiming for the base of it. A sustained 5.11 finger and tips crack was encountered for the whole length of this dihedral system. To top it off, a spicy off-width finish had us on Snowpatch's north summit. I invite solid granite climbers to test their skills for the onsight bid.

Summary

Labyrinth (V 5.12-, 14 pitches), east face of Snowpatch Spire, Bugaboos. FA: Jon Simms, Jon Walsh, August 2009.
Gear: Double set of cams from green C3 to #3 Camalot (plus one #4 Camalot and one purple C3), single set of nuts.
P1: 5.10, 55m. To the right of the biggest black streak, climb finger-locks up a right-facing corner to an ear-shaped flake. Go through a small roof, then move right into a left-facing corner and up to a ledge. Another 15 metres of left-facing corner leads to the belay ledge.
P2: 5.11, 30m. Climb steeply up face cracks on the right wall. Move right through a slot (crux) to flakes and lower-angle terrain. Step left past a small roof into another low-angled dihedral. After about 10 metres, step left to a stance with an old sling around a horn and belay off small gear in a good crack.
P3: 5.12-, 35m. Continue up an easy hand-sized corner until it steepens. Follow overhanging face crack on the right wall, until possible to move left onto the left wall and continue up into steep blocky terrain. Traverse about seven metres left to the belay.
P4: 5.11-, 60m. Head easily up and left through more blocky terrain to a big ledge. From left side of ledge move up and left in a small corner, then delicately across a slab to a thin right-facing corner. This leads to the right side of a large pointy flake with chockstones behind. Optional bivouac ledges can be found on left side of flake.
P5: 5.10, 45m. Move up and right into a white left-facing corner that gradually increases in size to #4 Camalot. Thin

gear is possible after eight metres of off-width 5.9 laybacking (second #4 Camalot optional). Belay at a small alcove after the wide section.

P6: 5.10, 25m. Continue up the corner system on hand jams until it arcs left. Make an undercling traverse until it is possible to move up and right. Belay on top of flake with #3 and #4 Camalots.

P7: 5.12-, 25m. Climb the face above with good small-gear options. Climb the right side of a flake before moving left past two bolts (and a couple of fixed pitons). Bouldery moves left through the roof gain a third bolt. Move three metres left and make a slabby dyno to reach a horizontal flake crack. Move back right to a semi-hanging belay below the next roof.

P8: 5.10, 40m. Traverse right under roof along the horizontal flake crack. Continue sideways to a good stance for the belay. It might be possible to continue another 20 metres to a nice belay ledge.

P9: 5.10, 55m. The route now follows the 1977 Parker-Brashaw route. From the big ledge, traverse to the right for 10 metres to an excellent left-facing corner containing a hand crack. At the top of corner, move right past a pinnacle to a grassy belay ledge.

P10: 5.10-, 45m. Step left from the belay and climb a low-angled corner and easier terrain with many options for climbing and belaying on left side of major gully.

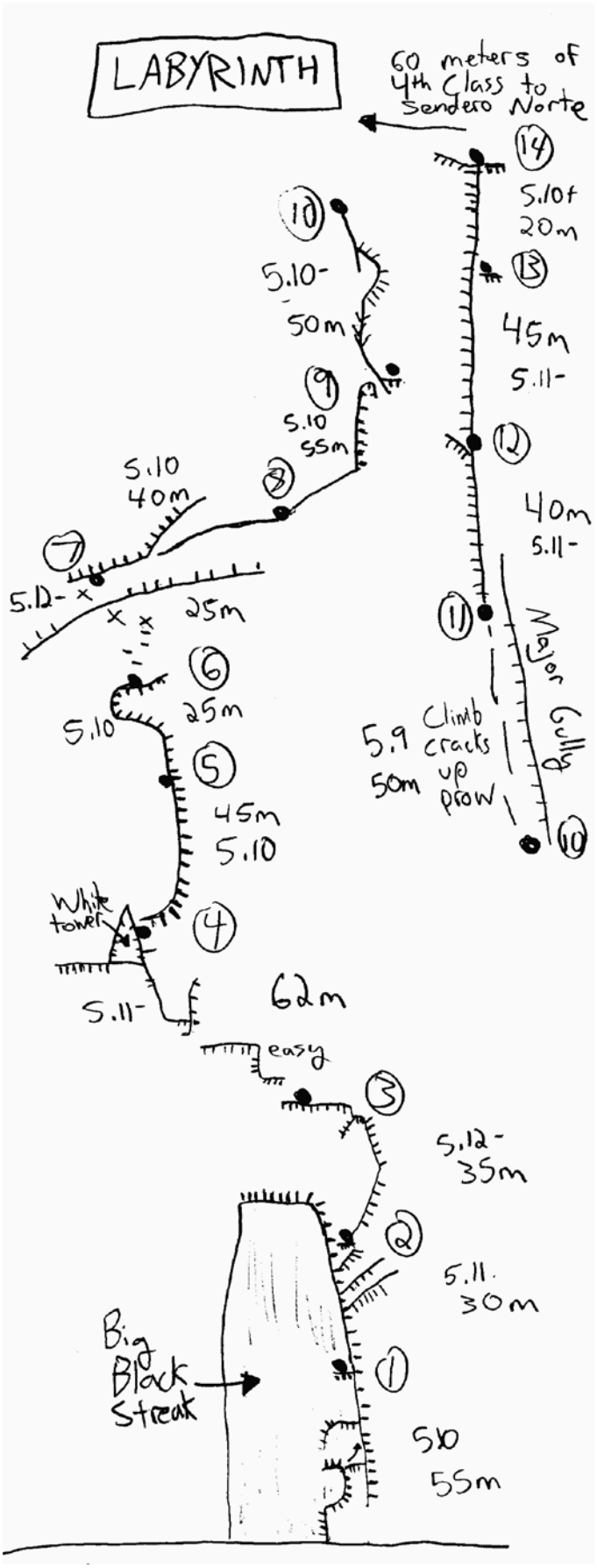
P11: 5.9, 50m. Continue up flakes and cracks on left side of gully, aiming to belay below the obvious steep, clean 100-metre dihedral just left of main chimney.

P12: 5.11, 40m. Climb splitter corner easily for 15 metres to a stance. Continue up thin corner with increasing difficulty to a belay stance.

P13: 5.11, 45m. Excellent sustained finger jams lead to a belay at base of an off-width.

P14: 5.10+, 20m. Layback the off-width crack to summit ridge.

Descent: A 60-metre horizontal 4th-class traverse to the left (south), staying on the east side of the ridge, leads to the top anchor of Sendero Norte, which can be descended in 11 double-rope rappels.



Farnham Tower

Kirk Mauthner

With a sheepish chuckle, Mike Baker called me saying that his mom wanted me to join him and his friend Lucas Rosnau up Mount Robson that weekend. Mike and Lucas had recently climbed some not-oft-climbed peaks in the Purcells, partly to gather summit rocks for the commemorative cairn that was to be built in Wilmer, B.C., as part of the Conrad Kain Centennial Celebrations. But Robson was a step up, and apparently their proposition to climb it was acceptable to Mrs. Baker with the provision that I guide them. "Mrs. Baker needn't worry," I told Mike, as the peak is currently out of condition and the weather didn't look favourable anyway. So after getting the thumbs-down on several suggested alternatives, I knew their keen sense of adventure would be in the bag when I suggested we attempt a new route on a prominent local peak. Conrad Kain made the first ascent of Farnham Tower in 1914. No convincing was required; they were in.

On the evening of August 7, we drove from Wilmer and camped at road's-end up MacDonald Creek. With more than 2,200 metres of elevation gain ahead of us, we left at 2 a.m. the next morning and worked our way up the loose shale of the east ridge, essentially following Kain's route to the tower proper. Halfway up the ridge, Mike put a large gash on his hand from the sharp rock. At first, it looked pretty serious and my little Steri-strips didn't look like they would work at all. I then remembered I had this medical crazy glue that an American doctor had given me for "fixing big wounds". This seemed to qualify and Mike was our guinea pig. I must admit that the stuff is amazing! Problem solved, climbing continued.

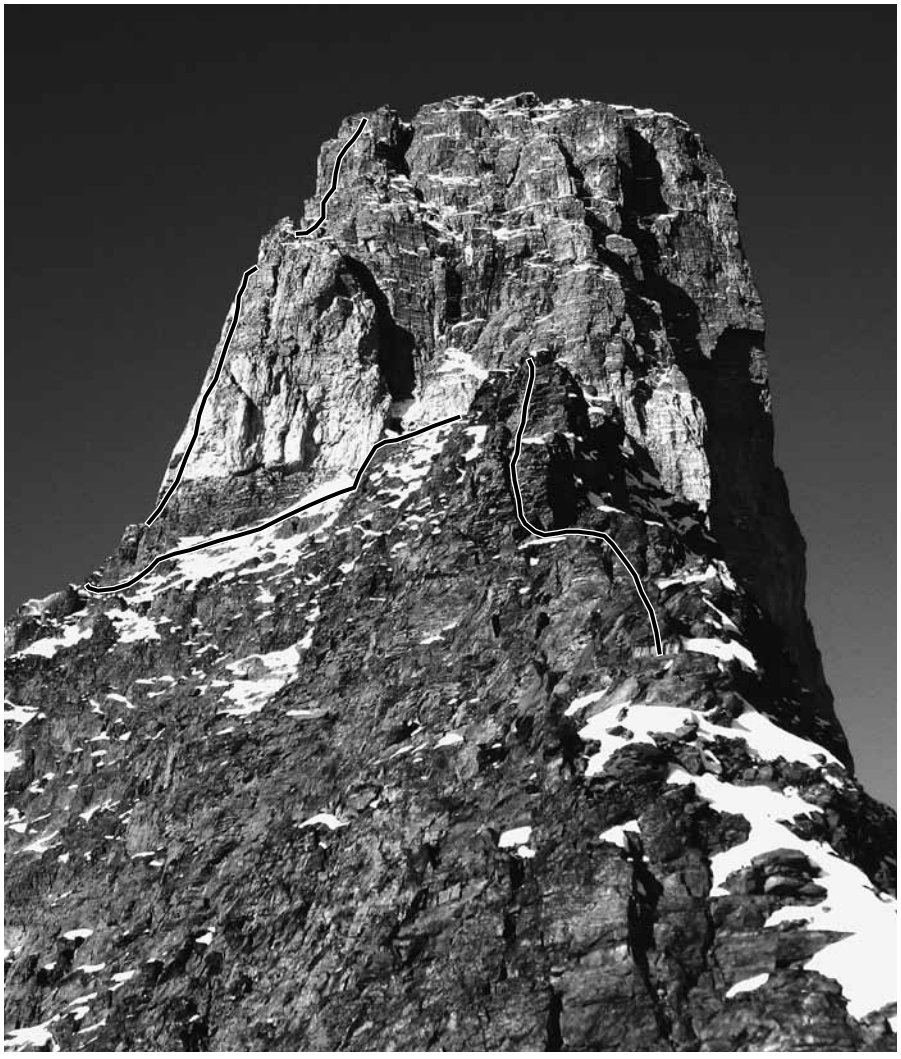
Once we traversed across the dreaded red shale band, which really isn't that bad, we turned the corner to view the south face of the tower. From here, our new route begins. Clean white quartzite on the proper southeast corner revealed some excellent cracks with mostly solid rock. Five 60-metre rope-stretching pitches of mostly alpine 5.8 with hints of 5.9 led us to the false east summit. This is separated from the true west summit by an incredibly intimidating deep cleft, clearly too far to jump across. Near the centre of the cleft and slightly north, a chimney system weakness makes its way up the opposite wall. A 30-metre rappel into this icy abyss provided access to this chimney system and ultimately, the final pitch of climbing to the true summit.

We enjoyed reading the summit register entries, dating all the way back to Frank Stark's climbs of the tower in the '50s. There were very few entries from the '70s to present day. We descended the normal route down the southwest corner, then over to the start of our route, and eventually back down the east ridge, returning to our vehicle by 9:15 p.m., just before darkness. It was an unbelievably rewarding and fun day. Once again, Mrs. Baker can rest easy.

Summary

The True Southeast Corner (IV 5.9, 5 pitches), Farnham Tower (3387m), Purcell Mountains. FA: Mike Baker, Kirk Mauthner, Lucas Rosnau, August 8, 2009.

The True Southeast Corner on Farnham Tower. Photo: Tim McAllister



Lost in Space

Evan Stevens

These days, many of my climbing adventures are spawned in a similar way. After a long summer day of climbing on the Chief in Squamish, my friends and I rally back to someone's pad with a quick stop at the grocery and liquor store for barbecue-ables and beverages. In the waning hours of the day, our protein recharge is grilled up while chalk-covered hands leave fingerprints on beer bottles as we gesture and re-enact the day's whippers and sends. At some point, we all start talking about the mountains and the great walls that await free climbs. The bullshit is sprayed, half-assed plans are made, too many beers are drank, and the day ends with some loose plans to meet over an Americano in the morning before heading back up to the Chief.

Every summer has its alpine missions, but last summer was a little different. All winter I work as a ski guide in the northern end of the Valhallas, a sub-range of the Selkirk Mountains in B.C. On the clearest high-pressure winter days, my gaze extends southward to the rocky gneiss walls and spires of the Mulvey Basin area. A few summers back, I climbed one of the pre-eminent alpine rock routes in B.C.—the South Ridge of Mount Gimli. At 5.10- and about eight or nine pitches, with an easy 4th-class descent, a quick two-hour walk from the car and unbelievable camping at the base, it doesn't get much better. I couldn't help but be captivated by the looker's-left skyline, an impossibly leaning 300-metre skyscraper buttress. Rumour had it that there was a route up its flank called Space Buttress that was not yet freed.

So, at one of these early summer post-climbing eat-spray-drink-a-thons, I got my chalky mitts on a new copy of the *West Kootenay Rock Guide* and the rumours were proven true. The guidebook had it graded at 5.11+ A2 and definitely not freed. I sat Jeremy Blumel down at my table and made him look at the route photos and descriptions. The Space Buttress line weaved its way amongst features along the blunt prow of the west face of Gimli.

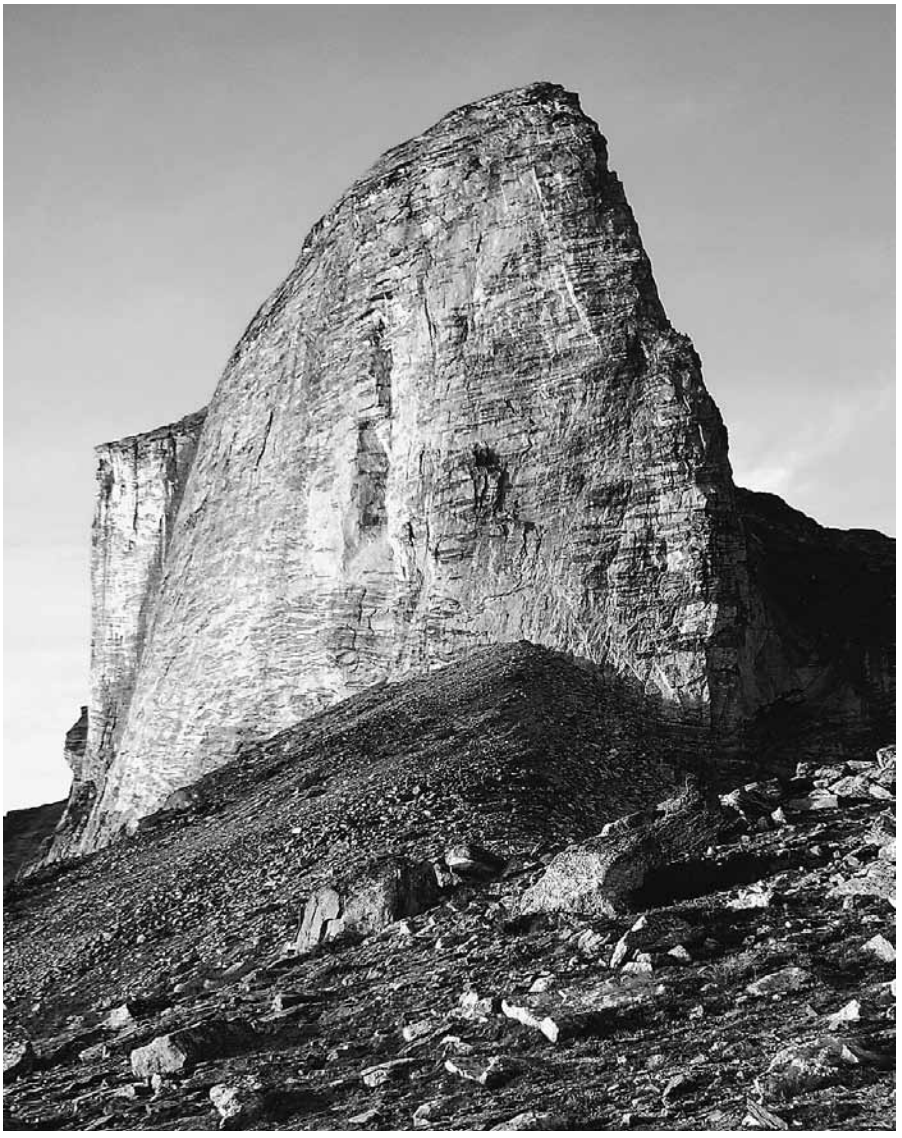
"It's low-hanging fruit! This is what we are all about—10-pitch, almost-free routes on alpine rock walls!"

I told him stories of crazy horizontal dikes and face holds that would appear as cracks dissipated. The rock was just *so* climbable there—we had to check it out. I forced him into confirming some dates to go for a session in the Valhallas.

A few weeks later, in mid-August, I rolled down to his pad in Vancouver where he was just finishing up his teaching degree. Even though Jeremy was not in full cranking shape, I was not worried. On his off days, he can crush the tiniest crimps until juice comes out of them. He can stand all day on footholds that you didn't even know existed. If there is a granite technician in Squamish, it is Jeremy.

We threw the full gamut of gear in the back of the truck: pins, heads, bolts,

Mount Gimli showing Space Buttress (left skyline) and the classic South Ridge (right skyline). Photo: Jeremy Blumel



drills, jumars, ropes, camping gear, packs, shoes, food, and more food. We wanted to be prepared for all scenarios. We drove through the night from the Coast to the Kootenays with old-school techno podcasts and new-wave hip-hop beats getting us psyched for what lay ahead. No work, all play, and trying to free climb an alpine big wall. Finally, at midnight, we arrived in the parking lot after many kilometres of bumpy logging roads and set up a ghetto parking-lot bivy.

In the parking lot the next morning, Jeremy caught his first glimpse of Gimli. The improbable architecture of the formation rightfully blew him away. We packed the gear frantically in hopes of getting a camp set up at the base and checking out the first few pitches in the afternoon. The plan was to give the route a shot as is—try to free it from the ground up with no fixed lines. After hiking in and setting up camp, we walked the half hour to the base of the wall. With every step closer, the top half of the route reared further over our heads. Gulp.

The approach shoes and packs stayed on as we 4th-classed the first 5th-class pitch to a half-decent ledge. The follower wore the pack as we cruised through to pitch four, the first unsolved crux of the route. Jeremy dogged, stepped on bolts and pulled his way through the pitch, and even while following, I flailed at trying to figure out the mystery 5.13 slab moves of the crux. Jeremy tried on toprope as well, but without luck. On another attempt, I figured out a variation that avoided the bolt ladder, but involved some side-of-the-skyscraper doctor-delicate traversing way past the last gear. It went free on the comfort of toprope at 5.12-. I kept us moving up pitch five, and onsighted the 5.11d R pitch, which included an obligatory wet, hard and loose section.

By early afternoon, we found ourselves at pitch six—the other unsolved crux. Jeremy battled his way through some deep-slot mud wrestling and made it to a shiny bolt that protects a long reach out a one-metre roof to an obtuse corner on a wee headwall. More pulling on gear, swearing and calling for Mommy allowed us to get another toprope set up. With the rope tight above my head, I unlocked the sequences to pull us over the lip to the belay ledge. I lowered Jeremy in to try as well. 12b? 12c? We'll just say 5.12, but not too spicy. Looking over the topo, we decided that the rest of the pitches would be cruiser and we pulled the plug for the day hoping to try for an all-free, in-a-day ascent the next morning.

The sunrise alarm went off. With no seracs to dodge and the rock getting warmer by the minute, we leisurely sipped our coffee and geared up. Our plan was to try our pitch-four variation as it was, without adding any fixed protection. We had left our hammers and bolt kit at the truck, so we hoped we could send it in good style and continue to the summit. Fear and reason set in as Jeremy tried to send the run-out 5.12- moves of our variation, so we decided to call in the reinforcements. After a few minutes of ethical debate, we reasoned that the route already had both protection and anchor bolts, and had been established in a reasonably safe style. With light packs, we jogged down to the truck for the bolt kit.

Round three and we were psyched to send. Quickly, we got to the first crux pitch and I augered in for the water-torture belay as Jeremy hand-drilled his first bolts ever. Drip, drip, drip, bang, bang, bang for the next hour as he plugged in two bolts and I got soaked in the shade at 2,500 metres. We decided that two bolts to protect the 5.12- climbing would be adequate, and that the skyscraper traverse back into the original route is only 5.11 and, therefore, can remain boltless. We pulled the rope and Jeremy fired it first go. I beat myself, yelled, stamped feet and swung my hands wildly in an attempt to re-warm so I could send the pitch on second. Somehow, I barely hung in there, and before I knew it, I was firing off the next pitch. It felt just as wet, scary and hard as the first time, but the motivation of freeing the line on this incredible peak carried me on.

Jeremy freed the next crux pitch first try as well, bringing us to new terrain with a few pitches separating us from the summit. We dispatched a 45-metre flakey but stellar 5.11 corner and entered a zone of no distinct lines. I sent Jeremy up what I thought was the right direction, but when we returned to the ground after the route it became evident I sent him the wrong way. So we ended up creating a new two-pitch finish to the route. The second-to-last pitch was terrifying at 5.10+ on crumbling holds with a belay that consisted of about eight pieces. Finally, 10-metres of rock separated us from the summit, but what an insane 10-metres of rock it turned out to be. Jeremy proved he has his climbing technician merit badge as he plugged in a few cams and busted out a totally improbable traverse on wafer-thin horizontal dykes with a clean 300 metres of air below his feet. His gear grew further and further away as he sent the 5.11 R summit pitch and belayed me up off a few large, loose flakes tied together.

It was great to realize a dream. Freeing an alpine wall has been a fantasy of mine ever since my first big trip into the hills with Micah Dash and John Dickey in Greenland in 2002. Our eyes were way bigger than our stomachs as we tried to free a wall there a long way from home and with hardly any food. After that journey, I took some time off of the adventure circuit and repeated classics, honed my skills and became a fully-certified mountain guide. Micah kept hammering at it and was living his dream, climbing hard in the mountains until he died last spring. I brought a piece of gear of his along with me on Gimli, and was psyched to keep his dream alive.

On top, I pointed out a few things on the endless horizon of peaks to Jeremy: a little known alpine wall in the next range north; some barely explored summits and walls 100 kilometres to the northeast; a remote but attempted granite wall 50 kilometres to the east, two mountain ranges over. I can't wait to keep the dream alive next summer.

Summary

First free ascent of Space Buttress via Lost in Space variation (IV+ 5.12R, 300m), west face of Mt. Gimli, Valhalla Range, Selkirk Mountains. FFA: Jeremy Blumel, Evan Stevens, August 9, 2009.

Spray On

Will Gadd

When I was about 15, I boulder-soloed a broken-off pillar in Maligne Canyon. I had to jump for the remnants dangling above my head, get a stick, and then do a couple of one-arm lock-offs to get established (figure-fours hadn't been invented yet). In the years since then, I've often looked back at those moves and thought they were still about the most powerful pure-ice moves I've ever done. And I like using physical power. There's just something about trying really hard that satisfies me in a way that nothing else can. If I'm not trying, I lose interest—a typical ADD kid.

In the early '90s, I lost interest in ice climbing because I felt that I could literally climb anything that wouldn't fall down. The only way forward was to tackle ever-more marginal climbs (thinner or free hanging) or climbs under seracs. Neither option appealed to me after I did each a few times, nor did it fulfill my desire to try hard. I don't like roulette—the odds are poor. I continued to climb ice because I just liked the aesthetics of climbing ice, but I saw no room for the sport to grow into something new and different. Like sport climbing in the same era, it had become stagnant.

In the late '90s, mixed climbing happened, and all of a sudden wild icicles, really hard moves and gymnastic dynamics drew me back into winter climbing like a feral dog to steak. The winter climbing universe was wide open again, and I loved it. While in Iceland, climbing mixed routes about 10 years ago, I led what then was likely the hardest pure ice route I'd ever seen or heard of. The route formed from wind-blown water that had blown sideways and frozen into a two-centimetre layer on a gently overhanging 40-metre wall. I was in the best shape of my life, but it took everything for me to climb that route. There were maybe five pieces of marginal gear in the pocketed lava; nobody else wanted to even follow it. I assumed routes like that were a one-off, but the idea of spray ice kept popping up in my mind at night.

In about 2008, I realized that mixed climbing as a technical discipline had reached its own stagnation point, where the quest for technical difficulty was taking the climbing farther and farther away from the aesthetics I love in ice climbing. Ice climbing is sort of like big-wave surfing or powder skiing; it's a personal and aesthetic experience. I love both technical difficulty and aesthetic climbing, so I moved away from pure drytooling and more toward super-aesthetic ice. Damn stagnation points! In the past five years, I've focused on the fringe of ice climbing. Icebergs, ice in underground mines, huge new lines in remote areas, big linkups—stuff that pushes at the mental limits of ice climbing. This has been absolutely great fun and opened my mind, but I was always looking for a huge cave with ice all over it. This seemed a physical impossibility, but I held out hope that exactly the right combination of groundwater, karst water flow, temperatures and terrain would combine to form a dragon's mouth of ice. I scoured the Internet for many, many nights looking for wild caves filled with ice. I finally found a picture of the 140-metre Helmcken Falls, with some sort of snow or ice on the overhanging back wall. Somebody had written a caption under it that the ice was unclimbable. Perfect!

Over the next two years, I tried to visit Helmcken several times, but it's a long way from anywhere, and nobody ever seemed able to go when I could. Even my normally stalwart partner, David Dornian, had excuses. Finally, in January 2010, my good British friend Tim Emmett showed up. We drove the nine hours from Canmore in a stew of uncertainty. When we finally looked over the rail at Helmcken, we didn't even know what to think. If 140 metres sounds big, it's a lot bigger in person. There was ice, but not much. We worked our way down to the narrow ice bench under the falls, and had to throw rocks ahead of us to knock off the icicles barring the way. What we had thought were about 10 inches long were 10 feet, and the 10-footers were a hundred. The first time I swung at the ice and realized that I was standing at the base of a potential

Spray On behind Helmcken Falls. Photo: Tim Emmett / Will Gadd collection

200-metre radically overhanging pure ice route was one of the best single moments of my life.

In the end, I bolted up about 20 metres by climbing on the 45-degree ice (yes, 45!), hanging off my tools in the often marginal ice, and then scraping down to the rock for a bolt. My tools blew a few times, sending me on spine-jerking falls. I sorely wanted to do the route on natural gear, but there wasn't any. The volcanic rock is as compact as water-worn limestone, but without the pocket features. In some older photos I found of the cave, there was more blue ice on the walls. Maybe in those years it would be possible to climb on screws or natural gear, and that would be cooler. Not necessarily better ethics (as climbing ethics are an oxymoron beyond environmental concerns)—but just cooler.

The climbing was real ice climbing. Lock off, reach, swing to get a stick, not so good, swing again, fuck but my arm is pumped and I'm only two moves off the ground. I rated the climbing as WI10 for two reasons. First, that's how hard it felt. WI7 never seems that hard to me even if it's very dangerous; it's mainly an ego grade based on perceived danger. How do you rate perceived danger? Nobody ever falls off WI7, so it can't be all that hard technically, right? M7 is usually harder technically and physically if not mentally. So this ice climbing was as hard, or harder, than M10, but it's not drytooling and it's not mixed because there are no rock moves—not a single one! You just have to go and try it to see for yourself. It is absolutely the coolest stuff ever.

The second reason was less rational but maybe more important: to have some fun with ice grades. I simply don't believe in them anymore. A WI4 can be harder than a WI6, yet read the magazines or Internet forums and the claims of WI7+ are as common as the grade is baseless. Oh, and strippers use spray-on nipple covers in some U.S. states. Makes sense, eh?

The arc of the cave is at least half a kilometre, and about 150 to 200 metres in potential vertical route length. I figure there's room for at least a hundred insane routes, ranging in grade from WI5 to WI15. We're going back to the future next winter so come check it out! The coolest thing would be to see it developed by a crew of people so psyched to climb the next evolution of ice. Aesthetics and technical difficulty have merged, and now I have at least another five years of projects to do.

Summary

Spray On (WI10, 20 metres), Helmcken Falls, Wells Gray Provincial Park, Cariboo Mountains. FA: Tim Emmett, Will Gadd, January 29, 2010.

Will Gadd on the overhanging ice features of Spray On. Photo: Tim Emmett / Will Gadd collection

The Sweet By and By

Carlyle Norman

I HAVE DREAMT of putting up new routes, thinking it would be a pivotal moment in my development as a climber. Something about forging a new line up a face without the input of the outside world has always appealed to me. The freedom of being adrift amongst a sea of uncharted rock with only instincts to act as a compass seems ideal. In idle moments, I've schemed clever route names and imagined the satisfaction of knowing that I had offered something back to a community that has given me a great deal. In July 2009, the opportunity unexpectedly presented itself in the Bugaboos. Although that day on Pigeon has become a precious memory, the experience is filed amongst a flock of amazing, memorable days and does not stand alone in virtue of being a (probable) first ascent. It has led me to put a great deal of thought into the difference between the experiences that we expect to stand out as exceptional and the ones that actually do. The challenge for me lies in reconciling the gap between the two.

The Sweet By and By on the southeast face of Pigeon Spire. Photo: Marc Piché

It has yet ceased to amaze me that arriving at the summit of any peak on any given climbing day is rarely the apex of the adventure. It is much more common for me to feel a surge of elation upon seeing the sun reflecting pink on the snow in the morning, the sight of a tiny private garden sprouting out of an unexpected mossy corner, the magic of linking several perfect climbing moves, and the sight of a warm, dry sleeping bag at the end of it all. I have rushed through summits sometimes for pragmatic reasons, but often out of excitement to finally be changing the vectors of movement. Many of them I cannot remember. Although they appear physically significant, they are merely part of the technical makeup of climbing; similar to the type of rock or the number of pitches you do. The moments in passing—the "by and by"—are what I have come to obscurely treasure and, ultimately, what continues to get my butt out of my sleeping bag.

In what seemed to be an increasingly busy summer, Joshua Lavigne and I found ourselves with a coinciding free weekend and jumped at the chance to play around in the Bugaboos together. With no specific ambitions or plans, we opted to climb the east face of Pigeon Spire via Cleopatra's Alley, neither of us ever having seen this side of Pigeon.

We got a lazy start, which is not uncommon to our alchemy, and trumped over to Pigeon via the Bugaboo Glacier, wowed by the view of the enormous south face on Snowpatch and the crumbling icefall between the two peaks. We simul-climbed the first third of the route and arrived at the steeper upper section breathing heavily. As the rock steepened, it became dirtier, drippier and riddled with crumbling, downward-facing flakes. Regardless of the technical difficulties, the climbing would be scary and involved.

Sitting at the base of the first pitch of challenging climbing, we took a breather and tried to rehydrate and re-motivate. We sat there soaking in the sun and idly gazing around with eyes that had lost the blinders of upward momentum. And then it appeared! Just around the corner, a clean vertical face fractured by a steep hand crack presented itself. It looked beautiful and was completely inspiring. To get to it all, we would have to rappel half a pitch, make a simple traverse to the base of the crack and we would be in splitter climbing heaven.

As some would have guessed, things did not unfold so easily. The traverse turned out to be just as scary and involved as the climbing we were trying to avoid. Upon arrival at the base of the aforementioned hand crack, I had to deliberately flex my sense of humor muscle and decline the lead. "Splitter climbing heaven" turned out to be a nether world of fused cracks and tricky pro. We had been lured in and fooled, but luckily, I was there with Joshua.

Joshua's super power doesn't get busted out all that often; but in times of need, he can slip into that proverbial phone booth and seamlessly emerge donning (the again proverbial) red and blue spandex. He is the best kind of partner to have in a pinch—when conditions get worse, he gets better. I witnessed him change costumes and brilliantly float past an old pin, stuff a few purple TCUs into invisible cracks and set a hanging belay 30 metres later. The climbing was steep and technical, and kept us huffing for another pitch. I remember climbing past an old nut with a carabiner on it (most likely a bail piece), and had I not been so focused on making it to the next belay ledge, I probably would have taken a moment to enviously reflect on the prospect of going down.

Pitches floated by, some dirty, some horrendously dirty, all speckled with moments of beauty and perfection. We were eventually deposited beneath a cozy gully that would lead us to the summit. Staring out on the Vowell Glacier, I remember being too worn (or perhaps blinded by the lichen garden in my eyes) to give the view the reverence that it deserved.

Sometimes the days that we expect to be great accomplishments are the most feckless. Oddly, we cannot force greatness in the mountains, so we must learn to let go of control and expectation. The mountains are not to be controlled, rather they demand that we accept whatever conditions they offer, and yield. Similarly, the expectations that accompany certain summits or the conclusions of long-term goals may not lead to the expected emotional end. Yet something still manages to get us out the door. I notice that the more willing I am to yield, the more I am able to accept the conditions around me and not label the end result. I am more likely to take a quiet breath between pitches or hard moves. These junctures of reprieve in an environment that offers none are what keeps calling me back. And in that instant, I can briefly smile, momentarily aware of the sweet by and by.

Summary

The Sweet By and By (TD 5.12+, 14 pitches), southeast face of Pigeon Spire, Bugaboos. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Carlyle Norman, July 2009.
P1-P5: 5.7, 200m. Start as for Cleopatra's Alley climbing its first five pitches to the base of the headwall. Once below the headwall, traverse left to a single fixed piece and make a 20-metre rappel.
P6: 4th class, 60m. Scramble up a grassy terrace, traversing up and left. Belay in a large corner on a slab. The next pitch starts on flaky holds up a blank headwall.
P7: 5.10+, 20m. Run-out face climbing leads to a slabby ledge in a corner.
P8: Traverse left on the ledge to the base of the crux pitch.
P9: 5.12+, 30m. Climb a thin, flaring seam on TCUs. A triple set is recommended. Belay in a triangular pod.
P10: 5.11+, 50m. Strenuous climbing off the belay leads to a ledge and a rest. Continue climbing right on perfect finger locks to a crux and a ledge.
P11: 5.10, 50m. Climb up a clean hand crack with a short traverse right in order to continue up a corner to belay below a roof.
P12: 5.10, 30m. A dirty, wide crack. Belay on a large flat ledge on the left.
P13: 5.8, 100m. Climb around the corner and up a gully to the cleft below the summit.
P14: Scramble to the summit.

Regrouping in Mulvey Basin

David Lussier

Back in september 2008, after completing the North Ridge Bypass on the west face of Gladsheim Peak [see *CAJ*, 2009, vol. 92, pp. 106-107], I noticed an eye-catching line that featured a 90-metre right-facing corner halfway up the south face. At 2,820 metres above sea level, Gladsheim is the highest peak of the Mulvey Group in the Valhalla Range. It is sharp and aesthetic, and boasts various clean alpine rock walls separated by fine exposed rock ridges on all sides. There is no easy way to get to the summit, thus its geometry has attracted climbers for many decades, including Fred Beckey who pioneered an excellent moderate alpine route on this same face back in 1976.

Our camp was located on the north side of Mulvey Basin near the steep headwaters of Mulvey Creek, and by the time we had walked back there, my climbing partner Ramin Sherkat was just as enthusiastic as me to give the south face a try. From our ground perspective, the main challenge seemed to be finding a way through a small, blank section blocking access to the white dihedral. The dihedral on the south face was aesthetic and the climb appeared continuous above it—all ingredients for a great route. We committed to trying the route, and if the rock was as barren as it looked, we had a hand drill and would consider placing a bolt for protection.

The next morning, we began our ascent up two interesting pitches of 5.8 climbing through a steep gully/chimney system that lead to the right of the white dihedral. From there, we faced a steep, blank five-metre section. Upon a closer look, we noticed some small knobs and crystals on the wall that looked tricky but climbable. Given that the thin crack line ahead appeared promising, we decided to continue through the blank section. I managed to hand drill a bolt to protect the face-climbing crux, which went at 5.10d. From here, we ascended the slightly easier but thin and discontinuous crack line above. This provided enjoyable climbing up to the base of the white dihedral.

Super cool views, fun stemming moves and great jamming came next as we climbed the clean corner in two 45-metre pitches in the low-5.10 range. The corner crack provided good gear with the exception of one thinner section where a piton was placed for protection. I learned later that local climbers, Mark Austin and Dave Scott, had climbed the first two pitches of this route in the early ’90s. Like us, they had been attracted to this feature, and probably would have completed the route if they had a drill.

Above the corner, we followed chimneys and cracks for one more long pitch. Though it only looked like a few more pitches to reach the west ridge, we decided to rappel since we only had one more hour before dark. Considering it was early fall, I sensed I may have to wait for a while to finish the route.

Indeed, it was a full year later until I hoisted my heavy pack over the Gimli col and descended once again into Mulvey Basin aiming for a camp close to Gladsheim peak. I had been away all summer guiding in the European Alps and had missed the wilderness aspect of climbing in British Columbia. I longed to return to complete the route. Parenting has led me to redesign my personal exploration in the local mountains. Previously, I would wander into the Valhallas, set up a basecamp, and enjoy the luxury of time. Over the course of a week or so, I would scheme a plan of routes to climb or new objectives to tackle. Now, working on a new route involves climbing late in the season

Roger Yim following pitch five during the first ascent of The White Dihedral. Photo: David Lussier

after guiding has wrapped up, usually done in short trips and often with various partners. This time, another good friend, Roger Yim, joined me.

Roger and I followed traces of last year's climb to the top of pitch six. Climbing it a second time gave me a chance to really evaluate the accuracy of the grades and reaffirm the quality. From my previous high point, there were only two more pitches to reach the west ridge. This provided some interesting challenges ranging from 5.9 to 5.10+, including more steep plumb-line cracks, a few roof moves and a wildly exposed chimney finish. A perfect ending for an already pretty classic line.

We had topped out on the West Ridge, but the walk to the summit was perhaps 15 minutes further. Satisfied and happy to be done our route, we decided to rappel back down as threatening dark clouds built above us. As we descended rapidly back to camp and eventually home to my family in Nelson, I kept my eyes peeled for the next reason to regroup in Mulvey Basin.

Summary

The White Dihedral (III 5.10d, 300m), south face of Gladsheim Peak, Valhalla Provincial Park. FA: David Lussier, Roger Yim, September 6, 2009. Note: First attempted in August 2008 by David Lussier and Ramin Sherkat.

Approach: From a camp in Mulvey Basin, hike to the long south-facing couloir (Trireme Couloir) between Gladsheim Peak and the Trireme Wall. This couloir provides regular access to the West Ridge of Gladsheim. Work up the couloir (talus/snow) for 150 metres until a grassy ramp on the climber's right side can be gained. Scramble up this to a sloping ledge directly below the route. The white dihedral above provides a good landmark.

Gear: Single set of nuts and cams (to 3.5"), a few extra TCUs to 1.5", two 60-metre ropes.

P1: 5.8, 30m. Climb slabby cracks to a right-facing corner and eventually a gear belay on a grassy ledge.

P2: 5.8, 30m. Step left to a piton and climb a 10-metre-long blank corner. Climb up right, then back left following cracks/corners in a deep, wide chimney. Belay from gear at a good ledge on right side.

P3: 5.10d, 35m. Go up and left a few metres towards a bolt on the blank left wall of the chimney. Climb past it (crux), heading left towards a right-slanting crack. Continue up this to another crack passing two fixed pitons. At the second piton, move left five metres across a slab to a one-bolt/gear belay at the base of the white dihedral.

P4: 5.10a, 45m. Stem up the right-facing corner passing one piton to a one-bolt/gear belay on a narrow stance.

P5: 5.10b, 45m. Continue up the dihedral passing a few overhangs to a grassy ledge inside a chimney with another one-bolt/gear belay.

P6: 5.9, 45m. Go up the chimney to a steep wall. Step left onto a slab beside the chimney and climb up into a larger chimney above. Climb cracks and corners on the left side of this to a piton/gear belay in a large open scoop.

P7: 5.9, 45m. Move up to an overhang with two steep cracks. Climb the thinner left one to a ledge above. Continue up a right-facing corner to a gear belay on a ledge system at the base of a steep tower.

P8: 5.10d, 40m. Move the belay left 10 metres (past all the wide cracks). Climb a steep, shallow and blocky left-facing corner capped by a short roof crack (crux). Follow a small ledge back to the right and the base of a steep chimney. Belay here on gear (recommended) or continue up the chimney (5.9) with major rope drag to the West Ridge.

P8 alt.: 5.7, 40m. Go right around the east side of the steep tower. Scramble up loose talus to the base of a nice right-facing corner. Climb this to the West Ridge.

Descent: Seven double-rope rappels via the alternate finish take you back down the route. It is also possible to descend the regular West Ridge route (with a few short rappels) and the Trireme Couloir.

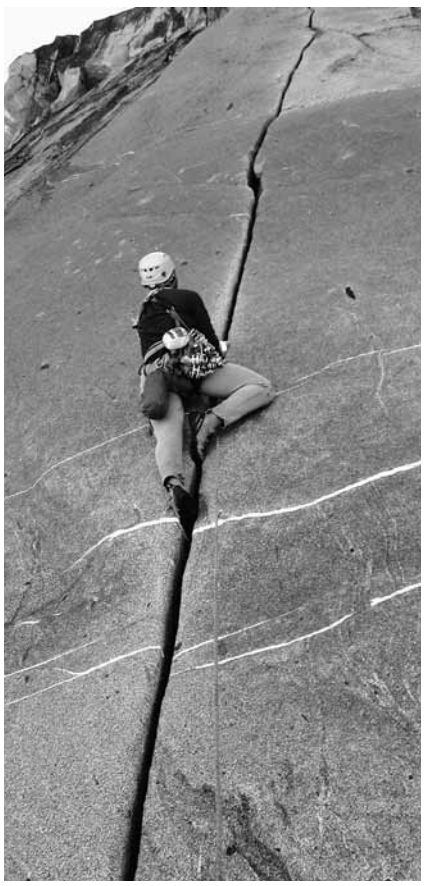
Roger Yim descending from The White Dihedral on the south face of Gladsheim Peak in the Valhalla Range. Photo: David Lussier

Adamant Traverse

Mark Landreville

On july 25, 2009, Carl Diedrich, Kale Semar and I were flown by Alpine Helicopters from Kinbasket Lake up to the moraine between Fairy Meadow and Friendship Col. Our plan was to complete the fabled Adamant-Austerity Traverse, first done in 1968 and touted in *Selkirks North* by David P. Jones as "one of the finest high-level routes in the entire Selkirks." After setting up camp, we climbed to the Gothics Glacier via Friendship Col and hiked to the top of Sentinel Peak to have a look at what we were in for. Our planned route up the Granite Glacier to the North Ridge of Adamant Mountain didn't look promising, as the glaciers were very broken up and snowbridges were going or gone. The extremely warm temperatures and 4,500-metre freezing levels didn't make glacier travel look very attractive either.

Carl Diedrich on pitch one of the North Face of Gibraltar Peak. Photo: Mark Landreville



A hike to the edge of the Granite Glacier the following day didn't reveal anything more promising about the route.

Kale suggested that rather than just climb Adamant via the Granite Glacier, which appeared to be impassible, we should start at Pioneer Peak, which anchors the east end of the Adamant Group, and traverse the entire group, including the seldom-climbed Stickle. In order to do this, we would have to rappel the 210-metre ice face below the summit of Pioneer Peak to reach the glacier between the Stickle and the East Ridge of Adamant. It was a much more committing venture than we had planned for, but it looked like the only realistic way to get on top of Adamant.

The following day, we packed glacier gear, a light rock rack, a couple of very skinny ropes, a Megamid, and enough food for three to four days, then headed towards Friendship Col. The weather didn't look very promising as we started up with towering clouds and rumbles in the distance, so we decided to camp at Friendship Col to see what would happen. The next morning was clear and cold, and we were on our way. We were on top of Pioneer Peak early the next morning, looking down the ice face that we needed to descend in order to start the traverse.

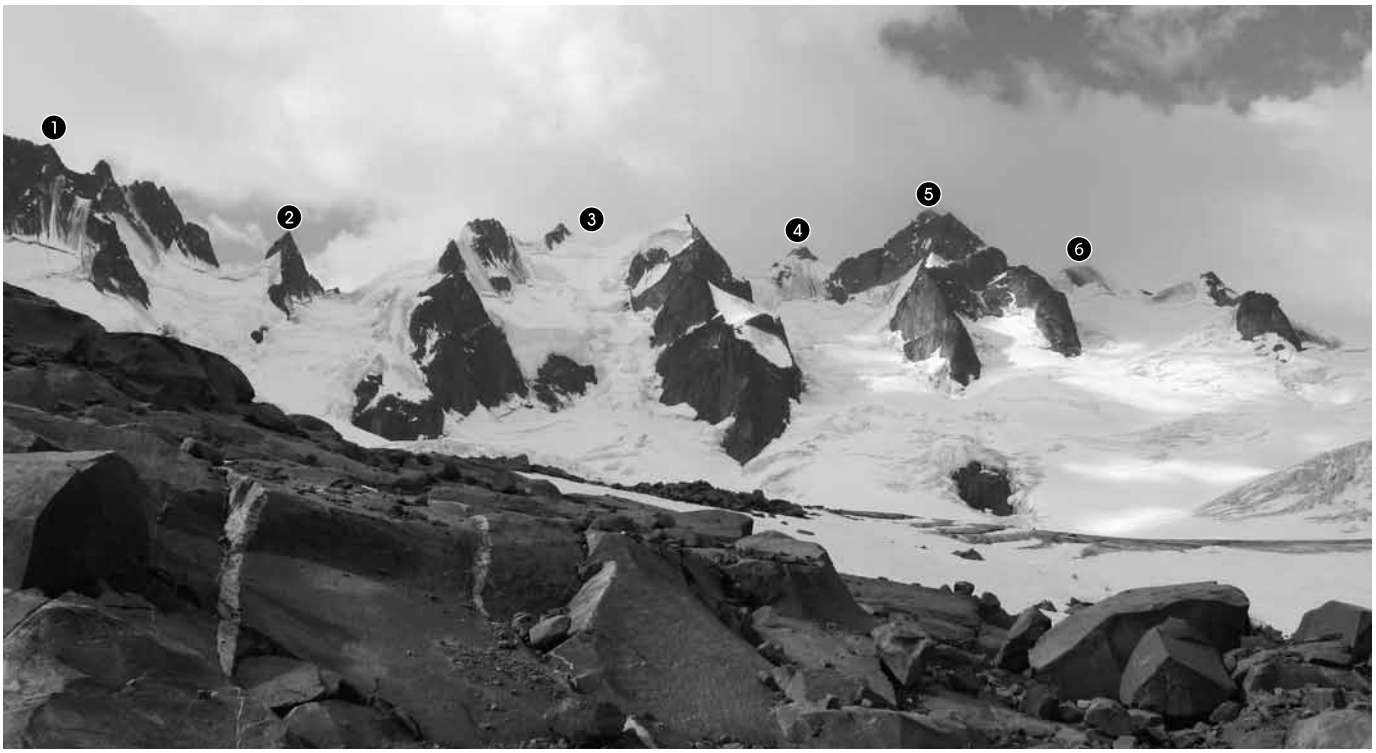
The ice face was well frozen and we used V-thread anchors for the rappels. After dropping over the bergschrund and pulling our ropes, we effectively cut off our retreat and were now obligated to complete the traverse. Our next problem was to get up the drippy ice that was covered with sugar snow and festooned with slots to get to the rock on the Stickle. It felt as though the route up the ice was disintegrating as we ascended it and it was a relief to be on solid rock. Once on the rock, we made a few routefinding false starts, but after several pitches up to 5.7 difficulty, we found ourselves on the summit of the Stickle.

Several extremely steep rappels off of the summit brought us into the glacier-filled basin between the Stickle and a rocky crest that connected to the east ridge of Adamant. After doing an end-run around some very large crevasses, we traversed a very steep knife-edged snow ridge that ended on the rocky crest.

We thought that the rocky crest that we reached would be easier going, but the crest was knife-edged and gendarmed, and we had to traverse the south side beneath it on very loose rock, wet slabs and steep snow. We reached a notch under the east peak of Adamant as daylight was waning and realized that we weren't going to be spending the night on the spacious summit of Adamant as we hoped. There was a ledge under the notch that was comfortable enough and had a nice view of Mount Sir Sandford looming across the valley. As we brewed up and settled into our ledge, we debated the merits of climbing the East Ridge versus rappelling down from the notch and traversing the glacier to the upper North Ridge of Adamant. The rock on the ridge looked solid, but was quite blank at the start. We were becoming quite adept at doing free-hanging rappels by this time and decided that we would descend from the notch.

The following morning, we rappelled off of the ridge into the basin beneath the east and main peaks of Adamant. It seemed to be a simpler way to the summit of Adamant Mountain. We were able to get up over the bergschrund on this glacier via the only remaining snowbridge and summitted on Adamant by the upper North Ridge. It was 9 a.m., and although it was cold and windy, it was a relief to be out of the exposure, at least temporarily.

We were now on familiar terrain, but we still had a ways to go. There were more overhanging rappels, masterfully engineered by Kale. The next summit was Turret. We napped for about an hour on the comfortable summit in the midmorning sun. After that, it was on to Austerity, which we climbed via the



The Adamant Group showing the traverse from Pioneer Peak to Ironman. The Horn and Unicorn Peak to the right, out of view: (1) Pioneer Peak, (2) The Stickle, (3) Adamant Mountain, (4) The Turret, (5) Austerity Mountain, (6) Ironman. Photo: Mark Landreville

relatively simple, but loose, East Ridge.

Austerity offered another comfortable summit for napping. We were on a much less urgent pace than the previous day. We did our first non-overhanging rappels of the trip down the West Ridge of Austerity, which looked like it would be an enjoyable climb. We continued on to Ironman, which anchors the west end of the main Adamant peaks.

An interesting mixed move from a snow finger brought us to the top of Ironman. It was getting late in the day and the clouds were building up again. We rappelled and downclimbed the ridge that descends Ironman and divides the two branches of the Granite Glacier. This culminated in a rappel down some ice and a glissade over the bergschrund to get to the lower part of the Granite Glacier below Unicorn Peak and the Horn.

We found a comfortable camp in the scree between the upper margin of the glacier and the peaks of Unicorn and the Horn. The following day, we climbed leisurely ascents of both summits. We still had to cross the very crevassed Granite Glacier to get back to basecamp, so we decided to get an early start the following morning due to the horrible snow conditions.

A simple route through the crevasses presented itself, and we arrived back at basecamp by 8 a.m., still early enough for our first coffee in four days. Later that morning, Kale's friend from Fernie, Louisa Cotton, dropped in to join us, having dove-tailed a flight to an ACC camp. She entertained us with various off-colour and Canadian jokes (she hails from England and Australia), and fed us roast chicken and Kokanee beers. We spent the following week swimming in the nearby lake, resting and climbing some fabulous rock routes in the Gothics.

Carl and I climbed the North Face of Gibraltar Peak, which involved launching from the edge of a moat into an incredible splitter crack, while Kale and Louisa climbed the Toadstool and raved about the quality of the rock on this neighbouring knob. Kale and Louisa decided that the more austere (and bug-free) environment of Friendship Col was preferable to the company of Carl and I, so they headed up to the col just in time for the first unclimbable weather of the trip. They spent several days field testing Louisa's new tent and doing battle with the Super Snaffler who resided up there.

After a couple of days of questionable weather, all four of us reunited on the Gothics Glacier for another day of spectacular climbing on the east peak of the Gothics. We then concluded the day with a mass ascent of Pioneer Peak via the mixed upper East Ridge.

Kale and Louisa remained up on the Gothics Glacier that evening, and the next day traversed Pythias and the Houdini Needles to Mount Quadrant. They returned to basecamp that evening with Kale looking like a fully-laden mule. It was difficult to imagine carrying a load like that on the technical traverse. We celebrated heartily that evening with the last of our provisions. We got an early flight back to Kinbasket Lake the next morning to finish an incredible two weeks in the Adamant Group.

Summary

Traverse of the Adamant Group from Pioneer Peak to Unicorn Peak (eight peaks in total over three days), Selkirk Mountains. Carl Diedrich, Mark Landreville, Kale Semar, July 29-31, 2009.

The Rockies

The Undertow

Steve Holeczi

I can't count how many times I've driven down the Icefields Parkway with Mike Verwey looking for ice lines, mainly making them appear from nothing. Screaming down the road, throwing frustration back at the world because in the end, it "wasn't there," or even more frequently, because "I wasn't there." It's constant though, that cycle. Every friggin' year when conditions get good, it's the same thing eating a hole in the stomach and building the psyche. It's the cycle you see welling up in some people around here as they stare off into space, not caring about anything else. Then finally you see the line—*THE* line—and it's time to crank the engines, round the cavalry, stoke the fires, it's green lights go. But maybe after one attempt first….

I've never really paid attention to Tangle Ridge during the dozen or so times climbing and guiding on Shades of Beauty or Curtain Call. J. Mills had introduced me to "*THE* line" via a nice little digital photo. Mike and I drove out one day after climbing and had a look. "Sweet Jesus!"

The next week, J. and I headed out during a nice spell in April to try it in a day. We camped and cooked cheese smokies over a fire and swilled beer by the river on the David Thompson Highway. One conclusion has come to my attention this winter: cheese smokies equal power.

After climbing Shades of Beauty the next morning, it became quite apparent that this was going to be a hard ride. Not that it should be a surprise that the snow sucked on a Rockies route, but it *really* sucked. From the top of the ice, we traversed left on a hanging ledge through junky facets for a few hours past large avalanche slopes to a hanging basin below the north face. Seeing that wild piece of ice up close and personal for the first time was a love affair.

Faint periodic tracks and an old camp from someone else were encountered on what came to be our reconnaissance mission. Two other parties had apparently slogged up this valley and got bogged down in the sea of sugar and wind slabs. We wallowed in the junk through the flats, taking 1.5 hours to go less than a kilometre. Ah, what a life. The trees finally faded away and were replaced by avalanche debris, which made things move quickly up the broad slopes to the base. Unfortunately, as we neared the climb the snow changed from debris to punchy wind slabs in steeper terrain. We pulled the pin on our mission some 100 metres below the route.

Knowing we'd be back for a second round, the shovels came out and a trough was excavated to make the going easier when we returned. Sounds like a blast, I know. Groundwork in the Rockies is pretty much mandatory on bigger routes, and for some reason it's kind of a fun and satisfying endeavour. The only part about doing the groundwork is the fear that someone else will reap the rewards first. A storm rolled through that next week, which made me feel better as it decreased the possibility of getting scooped. We just hoped the shoveled trench didn't fill in.

The next week brought Mike Verwey into the mix and the three of us headed up the trough. We decided to bivy in the hanging basin just in case we were re-breaking trail. Luckily, it was cruise-y travel and we arrived at the bivy in a few easy hours. There was time to kill and it didn't take long for the slander to start in earnest. Comments like I look like a white gorilla while thrashing through the trees, breaking branches and toiling in the sugar. I'm sure it was said in an endearing manner for I surely move like a gazelle in the forest. It also didn't take long for the smokies to make their standard appearance. I don't know where the coyote puts his food, but J. can pack in the chow for such a skinny guy.

Four a.m. signaled a quick breakfast of chocolate-covered espresso beans and instant noodles. The ration of smokies had been demolished the previous night, which, overall, was quite worrying. At one point, I was looking over at Mike's camp and he was just standing by a tree like a mole in the dark—wrong headlamp, dead batteries, no big deal.

We pounded up the 350 metres to the base of the most beautiful ice line we had ever seen shooting straight up to the heavens. The snow was bomber this time and the clear skies kept things cold and tight.

We led in blocks, hooting and hollering all day long at the quantity of superb ice climbing and at being in a big place. No rock rack was necessary; only ice screws. Rock walls framed the slender line and the big-wall feel was augmented as the valley got further and further away. How does it get any better than 600 metres of continuous and sustained ice climbing with no snow wallowing. The seventh or eighth pitch was the crux, which was one of the best pieces of frozen architecture we'd ever been on. Climbing up to J. on that pitch, we were pretty much convinced we were

Mike Verwey leading on the first ascent of The Undertow with the crux visible above. Photo: Steve Holeczi

going all the way to the summit.

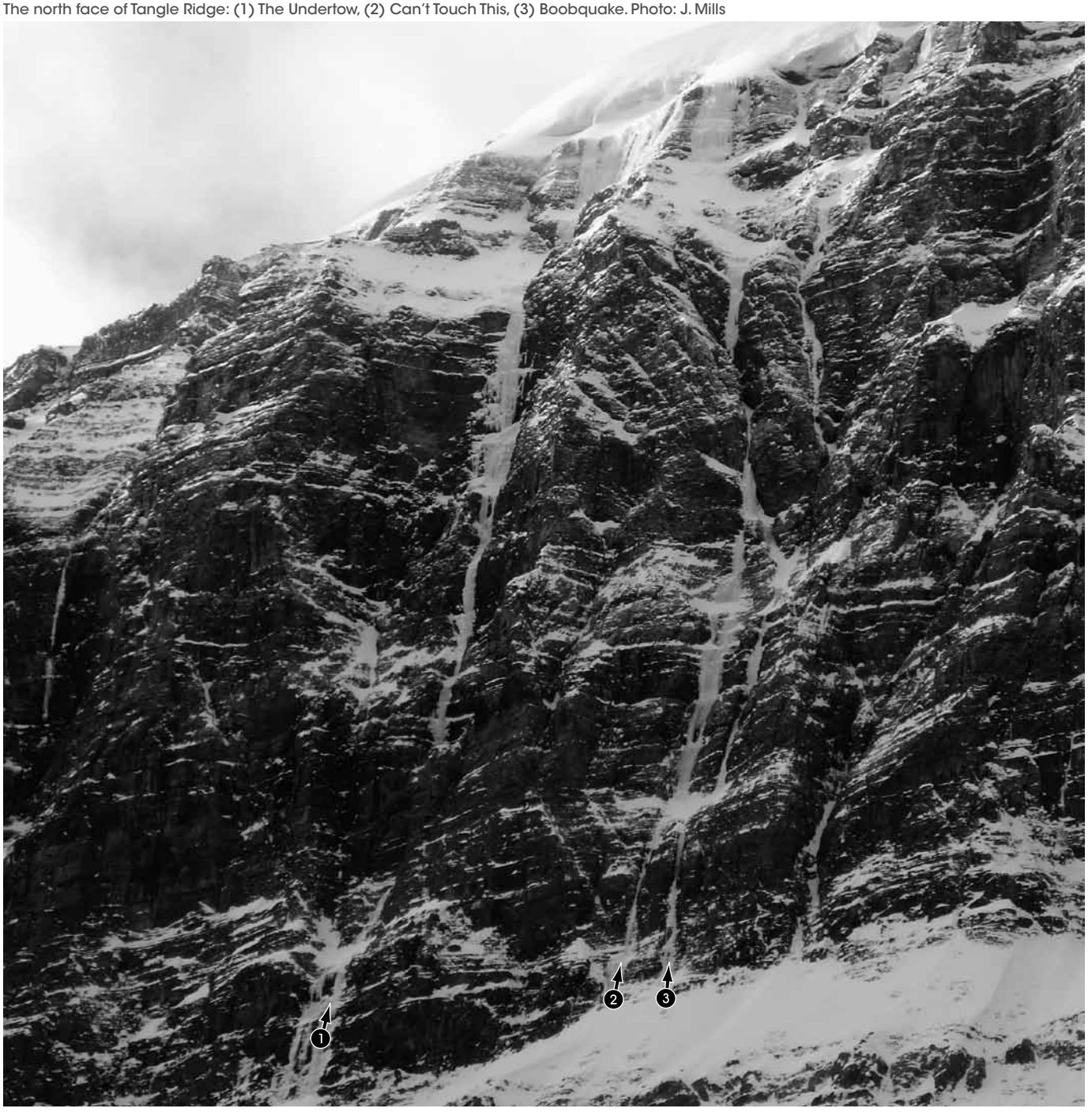
The upper basin opened up into sweeping sheets of ice with many options. From the top of the last ice pitch, we simul-climbed up to the overhanging but benign ice cliff that leaned over the route. It's pretty rare to find a "friendly" band of seracs. Normally, you are willing the random universe to not let them turn you into pink mist. "There, boy, good boy." These particular ones had water ice pouring over them with an easy exit out right. Another few pitches of mellow simul-climbing on alpine ice and snow led to the summit of Tangle Ridge.

We soaked in the rays of the sun and took in the views of the Columbia Icefields, Mount Alberta and Mount Columbia before starting back down the route. After fourteen 60-metre rappels on V-threads, we arrived back at the base, very thirsty and very hungry. We slammed back some noodles in camp, packed up and booted it back home, arriving at the car 18 hours after waking up that morning.

Summary

The Undertow (V WI6, 600m), first ascent of the northeast face of Tangle Ridge, Icefields Parkway, Jasper National Park. FA: Steve Holeczi, J. Mills, Mike Verwey, April 13-14, 2010.

The north face of Tangle Ridge: (1) The Undertow, (2) Can't Touch This, (3) Boobquake. Photo: J. Mills



Tangle Ridge

Raphael Slawinski

Given that I live on the doorstep to the Canadian Rockies, it's probably just as well I'm not a devoted rock climber. Don't get me wrong, I love rock climbing, and I'd been going up to Yam and Bataan since the middle of March. But when the weather turned cold and snowy *again* in April, I was just as happy going ice climbing—especially when it was ice like the stuff on the north face of Tangle Ridge. I'd heard rumours of big ice back there, but it wasn't until I saw photos of the new route Undertow [see page 125] that I realized just how cool it was.

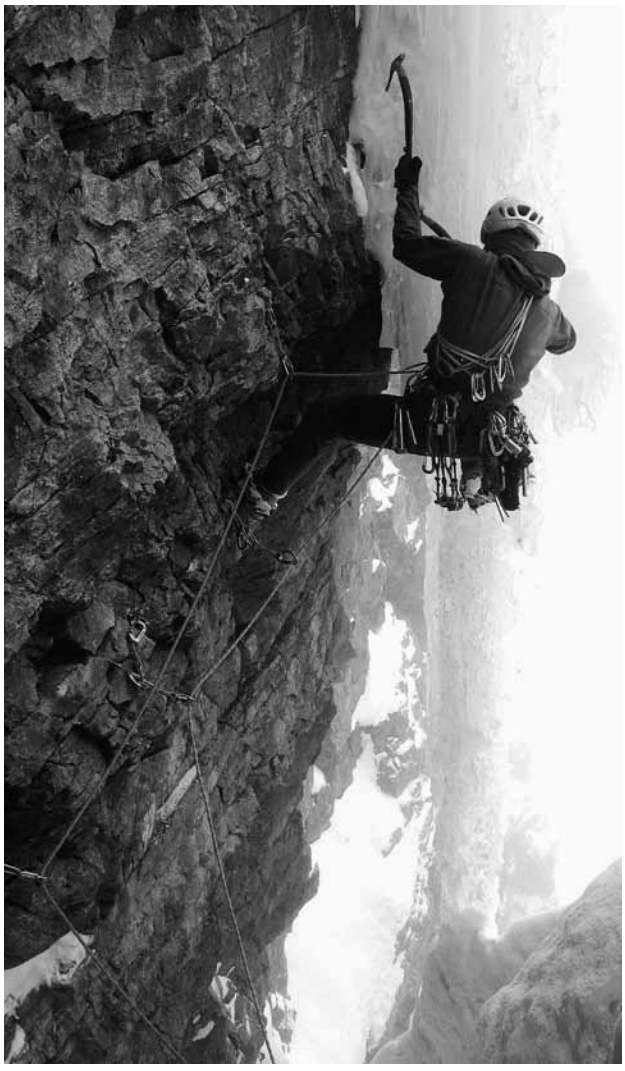
On Sunday, April 25, Dana Ruddy, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted and I had an early start and hiked up Beauty Creek. The approach was long (almost four hours) but straightforward, and the tedium was nicely broken by having to climb Shades of Beauty an hour into it. We considered making a foursome on Undertow but thought this might involve too much standing around. In the end, Dana and Ian teamed up for that route while Eamonn and I decided to have a look at one of the lines on the right. The middle line looked juicy and enticing, but the hint of a hanging dagger halfway up made it an uncertain proposition. The rightmost line sported a lengthy mixed section but didn't look too unlikely, so we went for it.

The result was Boobquake, a fun and consistent line up an impressive face. The climbing was never desperate but always entertaining, and the position on the hanging ramp on the sixth or so pitch was outstanding. We topped out into the late afternoon sunshine, and took our time on the summit identifying peaks near and far: "Wow, there's Alberta. And aren't those the Twins?"

The descent made an already great day even better—a quick run down the scramble route on the backside had us at the highway in a little over an hour from the top. The name? It's a reference to a witty response to a piece of self-righteous nonsense. Google it online.

The place had us inspired, plus the weather on the first weekend of May didn't look any more promising for rock climbing. And so on Saturday, May 1, Simon Parsons, Eamonn and I got up at 2 a.m. and yet again made the long drive up to the Icefields. This time the goal was the middle line—dagger and all. Failure was a distinct possibility, but I simply couldn't walk past a line like that without giving it a try. The bottom pitches went quickly and by early afternoon I was climbing a column of excellent ice into the cleft hiding the dagger. At first glance it looked climbable, but upon closer inspection turned out to be dangerously fragile. The solid ice above was almost, but not quite, close enough to touch.

In the end, an overhanging rock traverse from the left proved the key (in the spirit of full disclosure, I placed the protection pitons on aid). While I was frigging around equipping the pitch for the pinkpoint, the weather took a turn for the worse. Fed by a steady snowfall, the bowls above us started spitting avalanches at regular intervals. But though the sky went dark a few time while we were climbing the crux pitch, nothing too big came down. The dagger pitch may have been the technical crux, but the snow-wallowing leading to the final pitch pouring from the summit ice cap was certainly the physical crux. "Argh!!! Fuck!!!" Nothing builds character quite like digging a trench up bottomless snow. We topped out in a whiteout. "Glad we know the way down!"



Raphael Slawinski on the crux of Can't Touch This. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Summary

Boobquake (WI4+ M5, 600m), northeast face of Tangle Ridge, Icefields Parkway, Jasper National Park.
FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, April 25, 2010.

Can't Touch This (WI5+ M6, 600m), northeast face of Tangle Ridge.
FA: Simon Parsons, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, May 1, 2010.

God Lives

Glenn Reisenhofer

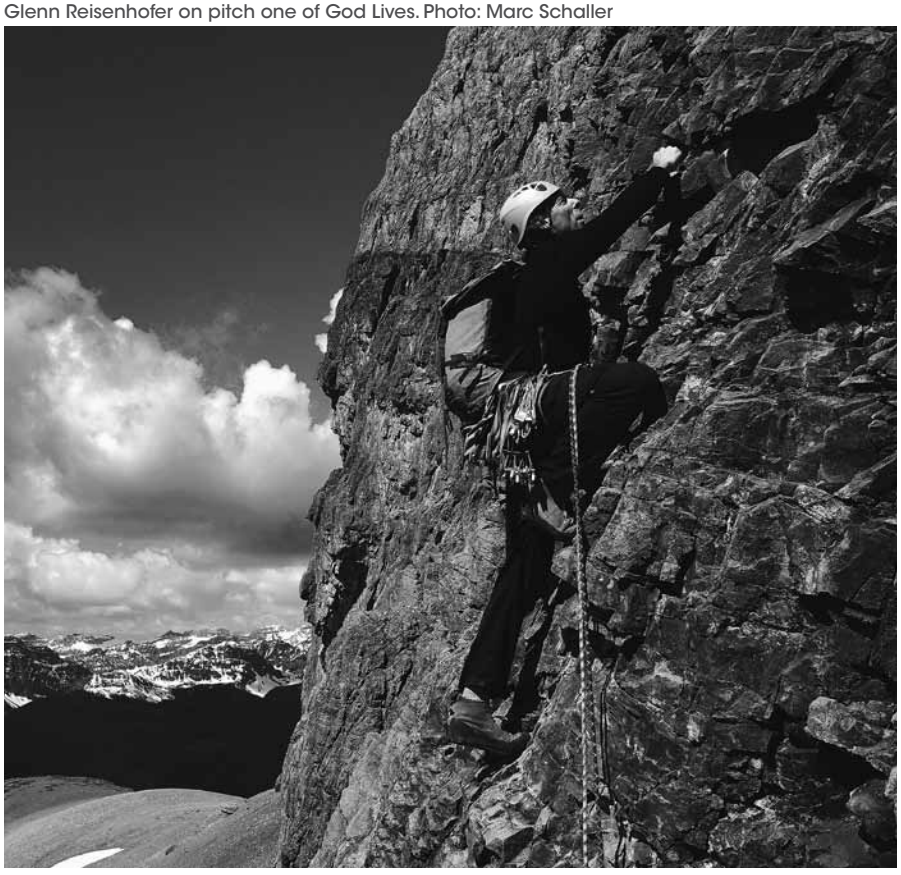
To a climber, Castle Mountain is predominantly a rock-climbing area. A few ice smears occupy the north end and a smattering of ice exists elsewhere, but the peak is known for its rock. At present there are approximately 31 routes on Castle, but for an eager team a few new lines still await.

This particular story starts out with a lone man heading up the trail with the idea to link a few routes together. He had tried this endeavor before, but never completed his quest. This time he hoped to cash in on all his previous hard work. As he scrambled towards the upper tier, he noticed a new and inviting line directly above the approach. Several hours later, he found himself quite high up and unable to continue. He ignored one of his key rules while soloing: don't climb anything that you can't downclimb.

Now he stood on a smallish ledge with no chance of continuing, no willingness to reverse the last set of moves and no rope. He decided to sit for a while and think the situation through. As his synapses were firing at an explosive rate, a party appeared on the nearby Bass Buttress. With embarrassment, he yelled across to the party for assistance. Within four hours, a Parks Canada helicopter was slinging him off the mountain. Falling down and away from the cliff at tremendous speed was a crazy feeling, particularly when his primary carabiner was not locked—something he corrected in short order.

Seven years later, our rescued hero returns with gear and a rope—plus two companions, me being one of them. Time had altered the exact location of the route he had once tried. Everything looked much too difficult. Traversing westward past two gullies (the first being the descent gully) delivered us to an easy open face. The start of the route was marked with black rock that lines up perfectly with a deep V in the cliff system below and behind. Most of the rock around it is brown. Sickle Ridge is to the left (west).

Glenn Reisenhofer on pitch one of God Lives. Photo: Marc Schaller



The three of us found the first four pitches to be quite straightforward with a bunch of variations to take. No matter which variation is taken, they all lead to the upper headwall. The good rock on our left suckered us to the top of Sickle Ridge with no way off. A bit of downclimbing and we tried the obvious, albeit horrible, rock gully to the right. This snuck us around and to the top of Sickle Ridge. This is the point where the ridge joins the headwall. The sixth pitch tackled the short wall directly above the ridge to a left-leaning ramp. Another semi-steep wall led to a gigantic ledge just below the top. A nice crack and ridge took us to the summit on pitch eight.

The climb is quite easy and, in most places, enjoyable. It contains the Rockies' standard quality of rock for a route of this nature: some good, some bad, some loose, some fab. The bad rock is short-lived. There is no fixed protection on the route.

At the top of the route, one gets the rewards of one's efforts: a great view of the Bow Valley. It is at times like these that the spirit is rekindled, the body can relax awhile and we are all the best of friends. On the plateau below, we noticed a rounded buttress with a rich colour of rusty orange rocks. Upon closer scrutiny, the orange rocks seemed to contain an order. With our squinting eyes we could make out the words "God Lives". Who would have thought that after all these years we had been climbing on hallowed stone?

Summary

God Lives (III 5.6, 8 pitches), Castle Mountain, Banff National Park.
FA: Myles Dickinson, Marc Schaller, Glenn Reisenhofer, June 13, 2009.

Alberta in a Push

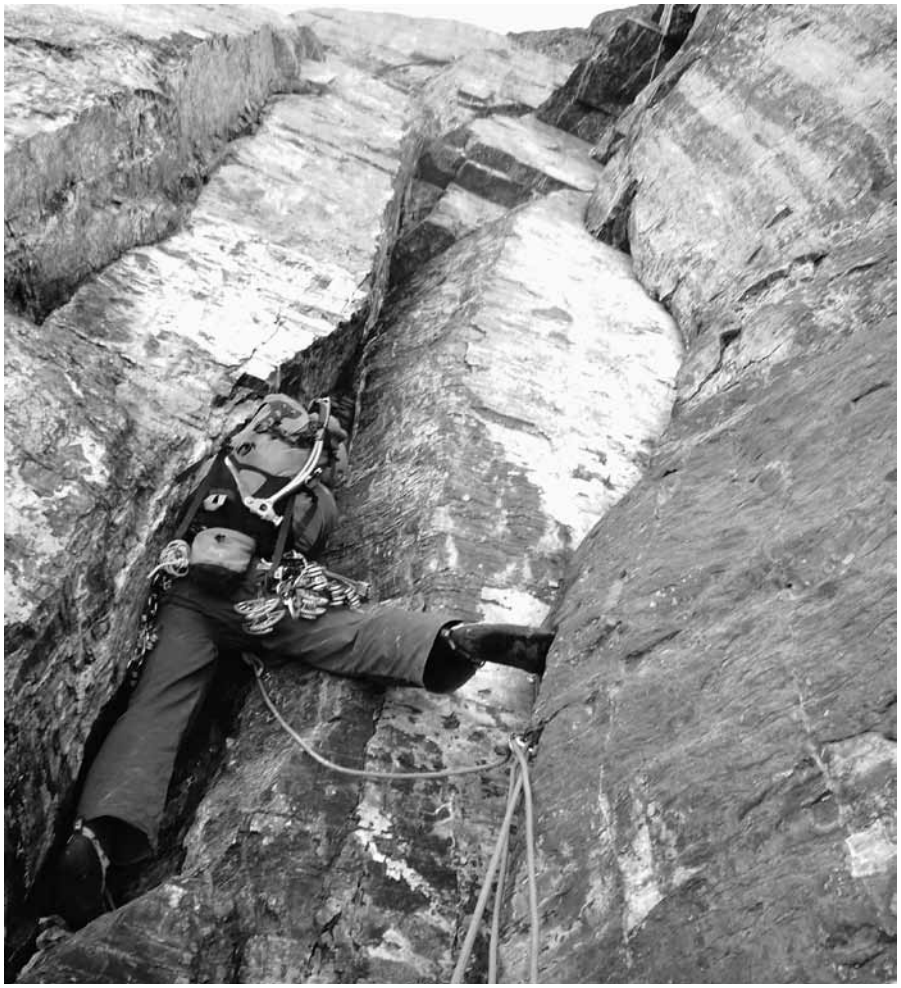
J. Mills

I hooked up with Dana Ruddy from Jasper for an ascent of the Lowe-Glidden route on the north face of Mount Alberta. The route has lots of history but despite many attempts, it has not been climbed for more than 20 years. With good weather and so-so conditions, we managed to make the first single-push ascent of the route and free climbed it all (previously 5.9 A3), except for a couple of hangs and a fall at the crux in order to chip ice off the hand holds.

On the first day of the trip, we hiked over Woolley shoulder to the Lloyd MacKay Hut. The views from the pass were spectacular with the biggest faces in the Rockies dominating the scene. We also took a couple of hours to go scout the route before settling in for a few hours of sleep.

Starting at dawn, we hiked, rappelled and crossed a glacier in order to reach the base of the face. A couple of easy rock pitches gained a long traverse to the base of the ice section. We chose to solo the 500 metres of 55-degree ice in order to save time and reach the base of the headwall before the day warmed up too much and rocks started to fall. A couple of calf-burning hours later, we reached the start of the notorious yellow bands. Despite the loose rock and lack of gear, we found the climbing to be fairly easy and quickly made our way through the two long pitches of yellow rock. Then the real difficulties began.

Pitch after pitch of tenuous rock climbing with frozen fingers, snowy holds and not-so-great rock quality drained our energy as we slowly picked our way up the face. We managed to free climb everything up to the A3 roof, but at this point, despite managing a number of 5.10 moves with marginal gear, Dana had to hang on the rope in order to clear ice and snow off the holds near the end of the pitch. After a couple of hangs and an exciting fall onto an old piton, he made it to the belay. Above this belay we were confronted with three metres of ice, which required me to change back into boots and crampons for a very, very short four-metre pitch. Back in rock shoes, we climbed another five or six pitches up to 5.10 as the day turned to night. In the darkness, we cooked some dinner, melted some snow and attempted to sleep.



Dana Ruddy starting up the crux pitches of the Lowe-Glidden Route on the north face of Mount Alberta. Photo: J. Mills

Less than 20 minutes later, we decided it was too cold for shut-eye and opted to keep going. A short rappel gained the edge of the upper ice slopes, thus beginning the pound up the 65-degree ice for a few rope-lengths to the summit. Exhausted and in the dark, we started the long descent down the standard Japanese Route. Exposed scrambling, seven rappels and tons of loose choss were encountered. Finally, after 30 hours on the move, we made it back to the hut. The small shelter was occupied so we ate the rest of our food, drank a couple of cups of coffee and marched for another five hours back to the car.

All in all, it was a great adventure with an excellent partner and we were both psyched to have completed one of the most difficult routes in North America. Sleep came easy that night.

Summary

First single-push ascent of north face of Mt. Alberta (3619m) via the Lowe-Glidden Route (VI 5.10+ A0), Jasper National Park. J. Mills, Dana Ruddy, August 3-5, 2009.

Winter Fun

Eamonn Walsh

The winter of 2009-10 started out snowy, so skiing seemed to make the most sense as people talked about what a great start to the ski season it was. By the time January rolled around, it basically stopped snowing until March, and conditions became really good for being in the alpine. Suntori on Mount Wilson has always appealed to me. I had seen it only one time before and it looked beautiful—a steep gully-type line through the upper third of a vast mountain. It was downright irresistible, especially since it looked to be fat. I mentioned the prospect of climbing it to J. Mills who instantly agreed it was a great idea. J. is one of the most talented and experienced of the younger alpinists in the range, as well as a motivated guide. He loves climbing alone, with friends, and exploring every nook and cranny in our amazing mountain range because it is what he likes to do—a true mountain man.

On January 5, we drove north and looked at our approach options. Totem Pole would be the best, but it wasn't formed (not even the lower pitches), so we hiked up Lady Wilson's Cleavage and traversed the tree bench and slope for a kilometre in very deep snow. After four hours, and just before the drainage that contains the climb, we found a nice sheltered spot to bivy. We ditched our stuff and broke trail to the base of the first pitch, then returned for dinner and some sleep. That night, the trees were going off like rifle shots as the temperature dropped to -30 C. We were in a two-man sleeping bag—dubbed the Brokeback Bag—with lots of clothes, so we were pretty warm.

In the morning, we followed our tracks to the drainage, but found them to be buried. Once at the base of the technical climbing, J. took the lead and managed to free the aid, even in the frigid temperatures. It was pretty cool to be up here doing a line our friends, the Daves (Edgar and Marra), had done years ago with Cory Bolano. At the top of the tier, the temperatures were suddenly very warm and the sun was adding to our concern of wet slides releasing from the large bowl above. We bailed. As we descended, it was noticeably much colder than our high-point. An inversion had moved into the region that day.

After a stint of work, conditions were downright amazing, as was the weather. I just wanted to be out in the mountains, get up high and enjoy this amazing range. Mount Fryatt is one peak I have meant to climb for a while, and though the southwest face doesn't look appealing in the summer, I thought perhaps in winter conditions it could be more interesting. Rob Smith and I left the car at 3:20 p.m. on January 22, with the intention of camping whenever it turned dark. When darkness fell, the half moon was so bright that we decided to keep going. We arrived at the hut by 9 p.m., and rather than set up the tent in -18 C, we settled into the small room in the front entrance of the hut. It was big enough for us to sleep and cook in quite comfortably.

The following day, we set off at 9 a.m. with the idea of breaking trail, ditching our gear and then returning the following day for a summit bid, but travel was so good that, again, we just kept going. We were on top by 5 p.m. where the sunset rewarded us with an exceptional viewing experience. I was quite moved by the beauty before us. We made it back to the hut by 8:30 p.m. and the following day saw us out by 2 p.m., finishing a super fun outing and quite the slog.

We could have stayed in one more day to ski in the exceptional conditions, but my mind was somewhat preoccupied with returning to Suntori. J. was working, so I decided to re-break the trail and stash some gear, sandwiches and such so we could then hit it without bivy gear. And that is just what we did. On January 28, we left the car at 3:15 a.m. and returned to it by 7:10 p.m. We didn't even get to make use of the beautiful full moon, except on the drive home. The crux felt easier in warmer temperatures and lighter boots. J. crushed it again and I was even able to follow it clean, making for a better feeling of accomplishment. The WI6 corner pitch was in easier shape but was still absolutely excellent climbing. Total elevation gain from the car is 1,600 metres; however, it is the upper 700 metres that contains all the interesting stuff. It consists of 10 technical pitches to reach the large snow band below the upper quartzite towers. The snow conditions were great here so we packed in the rope and began slogging. We found the gully through the quartzite towers to be quite easy, so we continued un-roped, finding nothing harder than a few low-5th-class moves. Once on the summit ridge, a quick ramble brought us to the top of the northernmost tower. A truly classic alpine line!

After two failed attempts on two other big objectives, I found myself back on Wilson, this time with Raphael Slawinski. We wanted to climb Living in Paradise and then continue through the quartz towers to the top of the wall. On February 13, we left the car at 5 a.m. and followed the trail from my ascent with J., which was still in great shape. We were at the base by 7:45 a.m., and off went Raphael. He led all the ice pitches, some of which were quite hard, and I followed as fast as I could, worried about the heat of the day (but luckily, the forecasted clouds materialized to block the sun). Hats off to the late-great Dave Thomson and the alive-and-well Tom Wolfe on this one. The first tier consisted of true WI6 climbing; the second tier was nice WI4; and the last tier was also quite difficult ice climbing at WI5+. Again, the total gain from the car was 1,600 metres with the technical stuff being in the upper 700 metres. Our Living in Paradise Integral involved seven pitches, one of which included some simul-climbing. This brought us to the

massive bowl above where I got to pull my weight. Having been tromping all over the range all winter, I happily took off slogging madly towards the gully breaking through the southern end of the quartz towers. This is the gully that Jon Walsh and Raphael had descended in 2008 after climbing their über-awesome alpine route Dirty Love. We didn't find any of the anchors, but it didn't matter as we needed to use the rope only once through this section. We topped out at 4:15 p.m., and a quick jaunt down into Lady Wilson's Cleavage brought us back to the car by 6:20 p.m. Another amazing alpine waterfall ice climb was in the bag.

About a week later, my friend Chris Geisler (a.k.a. Rob J, a.k.a. the Reincarnation of Baby Jesus, a nickname that is a bit too lengthy to explain here) came out from the Coast for some climbing. Conditions and weather were still amazing and the road into Mount Edith Cavell had just been re-opened. Cavell is another mountain I have always thought looked like an interesting winter objective. On February 20, we left the parking lot around 9:30 a.m. in anticipation of a long day of trail breaking, but instead found a groomed trail to near the base of the north face and lots of people traffic. As a result, we were at our destination long before we expected. Some gullies on the far left of the north face looked appealing, so we skied up to the base of the most obvious one and started up it at 5 p.m. We flew up névé snow to a point where we had three options. The left branch of the gully was the most snow-free. After a short distance, this ended in a rock wall with some dribbly ice. I started up this as it got dark and after a long pitch, we were cruising again. At 10 p.m., we made a bivy just below the East Ridge. We could hear the wind roaring above so it seemed a good idea to stay on the sheltered side of the mountain. I managed to fabricate a nice ledge after digging out snow and then rubble. After some stove malfunctions, we finally got dinner and fluids going. In the morning, Rob J led us to the ridge, and then the slogging began. It was pretty cool to be climbing the upper East Ridge again; the last time I climbed the classic line was with my brother, Brendan, almost 12 years ago. We both wore big double plastic boots even though it was July, and had too much gear. We also made the rookie mistake of walking down and out the backside. Rob J and I summited in gorgeous, windy weather. I was impressed with the depth of his ability to suffer as he had basically come from sea level and done nothing more than work on movies for the past several months. We summitted at 3 p.m. and were back at the skis by 6 p.m. The gully start we took to the East Ridge deposited us at 2,600 metres, a little ways below the horizontal mid-section of the ridge. Our winter variation was mostly easy, except for two pitches.

J. Mills freeing the crux of Suntori during its second ascent. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

On the way out, we stopped in at the hostel to see if the people staying there could spare some water. The kind folks did just that, plus gave us some wine and even some of their dinner. For me, it was one of the most varied winters ever: lots of skiing, alpine climbing, ice climbing and an early start to the rock season. Life is good here in these mountains.

Summary

First winter ascent of Mt. Fryatt via the Southwest Face (II 5.4, 400m), Jasper National Park. FWA: Rob Smith, Eamonn Walsh, January 22-24, 2010.

Suntori (V M7 WI5+, 1600m (700m of climbing)), Mt. Wilson, Banff National Park. FFA: J. Mills, Eamonn Walsh, January 28, 2010.

Living in Paradise Integral (V WI6, 1600m (700m of climbing)), Mt. Wilson. Banff National Park. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, February 13, 2010.

Indirect Start (III M5, 1000m), East Ridge of Mt. Edith Cavell, Jasper National Park. FRA: Chris Geilser, Eamonn Walsh, February 20-21, 2010.

The Donut Hole

J. Mills

When the icefields parkway is engulfed in storm and snow is falling, most climbers stay away. However, at the confluence of the rivers Mistaya and North Saskatchewan, there is a weather phenomenon that can often be taken advantage of. I have heard it called the Wilson Window, the Cline Rain Shadow, or my personal favourite, the Donut Hole. Oftentimes in this area, it does feel like you are surrounded by a donut of bad weather while you climb upwards towards the hole of blue. The following routes were climbed inside the Donut Hole while bad weather engulfed most of the Rockies.

Visible from the road on the east face of an unnamed peak between Mount Wilson and Mount Cline, Hosers of Darkness goes up the obvious gash above the largest avalanche cone. It is quite serious for its size, and is recommended for anyone who likes thin ice and an alpine feel. My first attempt at this route was with Jody Sutherland. We started early, but the moment the sun hit the mountain we began getting hit by sloughs, cornice fall and rock fall. We rappelled as fast as we could. A couple of weeks later, Brent Young and I left the car at midnight and climbed the entire route under the cover of darkness.

Hosers of Darkness. Photo: J. Mills

The first three pitches were steep, thin and detached with virtually all pro being found in the rock on the sides. Pitch four was the crux, and a fantastic crux at that. I pulled through a couple of body lengths of overhanging rock with good gear (including a fixed pin) onto the thin, broken curtain above. After wrestling in some rock gear, I was able to continue up to the end of the real climbing.

In march 2009, Dave Edgar and I made the first ascent of an unformed pillar on Triangle Peak, which is along the David Thompson Highway about 10 minutes from Saskatchewan River Crossing. The climb is visible from the road, high on the cliffs across the river near Thompson Creek. It's named after what used to be the favourite beverage in the Nordegg bar, and the fact that, years ago, I thought this peak was called Corona Ridge.

After holding our breath and crossing an ice bridge over the river, Dave and I had a lovely time bushwhacking uphill on our skis for 3.5 hours. Apparently Dave knows lots of naughty words. We bivied in the highest trees below the route in order to get an early start the next morning. The climb started well left of the upper ice and followed the only major weakness through the lower two cliff bands. Once below the route proper, I climbed a few ice mushrooms, then worked up and left, following weaknesses in the rock for 30 metres to reach the ice. The

first 20 metres was a bit rotten but has decent gear and wasn't too hard. Above this, the crux moves are not very well protected but the rock is good. The last gear at the crux moves is about three metres down and behind a suspect flake. There are no bolts on the route, nor should there ever be.

Above the crux, I had to make a strenuous pull through a small roof onto the thin strip of ice, which I followed to a rock belay under a roof. This past winter (2010), there appeared to be ice covering most of the hard mixed climbing on this pitch, but nobody made the trek back there to find out. Dave pulled back onto a very steep iced-up arête, of which neither of us had ever seen anything quite like it before. From the top of this unique ice feature, he continued up a steep and exciting chimney to a belay on a small perch. I then lowered to the right until I could pendulum across to the main ice flow, which was nice WI4 to the top.

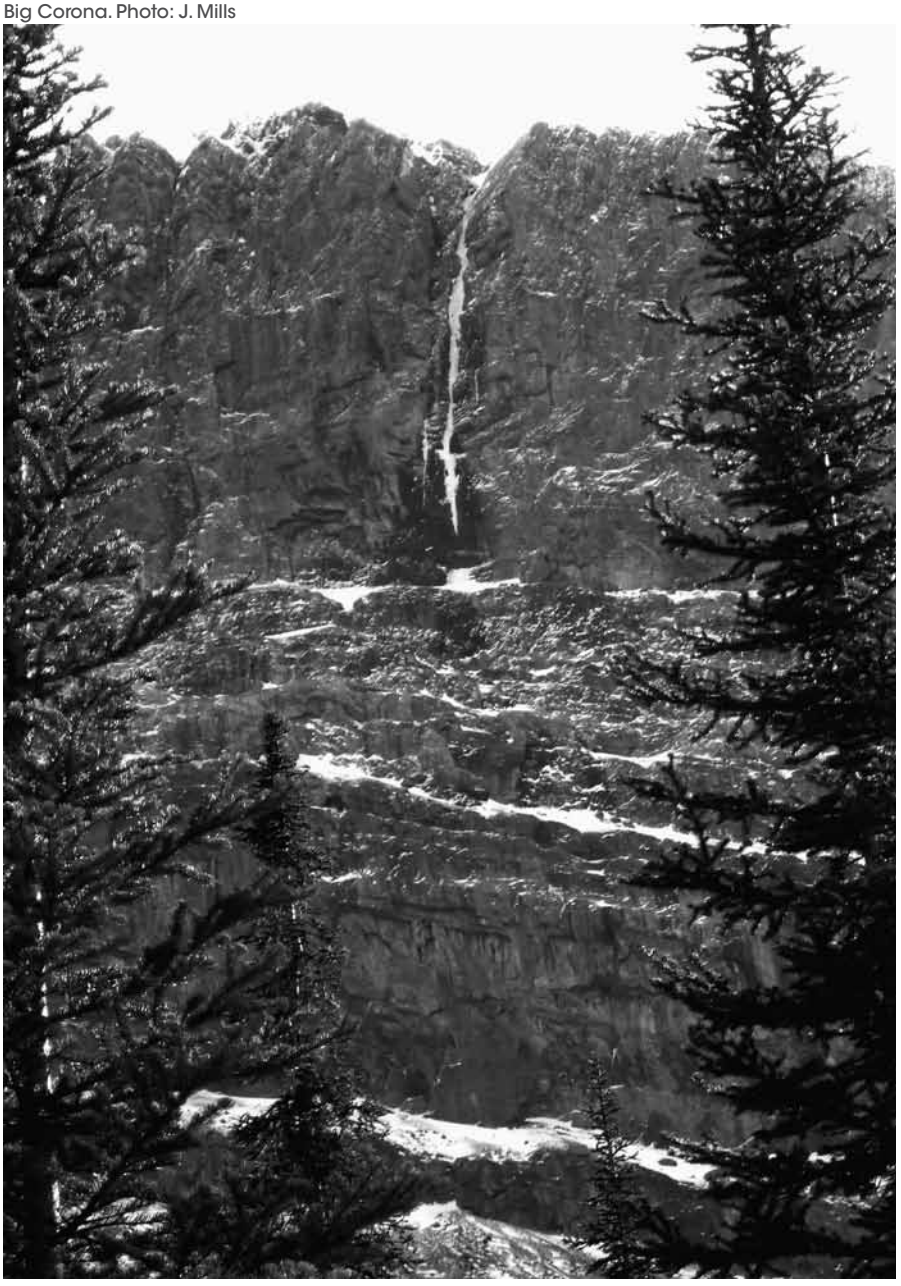
We arrived back at the base just as it became dark and carried our skis down through the bush, which was great fun especially when it started raining. To top it off, we arrived at the river to find it open and flowing rapidly. Randomly selecting a direction, we started skiing and eventually found a scary ice bridge to cross on. Once on the other side, it was raining hard, so we decided that instead of just skiing the last 500 metres to the road, the best way to end our outing would be to get lost and ski around in circles while bushwhacking through the darkness for another three hours. At 2:30 a.m., we finally found the highway and collapsed into our cars. Despite our navigational errors and the burly approach, the climb is excellent and well worth the effort. It is by far the hardest route on the David Thompson Highway.

If you have eagle eyes, the top of another route is visible from the David Thompson Highway, but I never noticed it until exploring the valley on foot a number of years ago. It is located on the west face of Triangle Peak in the valley behind Mount Murchison. The route had been on my list for years and I finally found a chance to try it last fall. Since the approach is quite long (about four hours), we decided to hike in the day before and camp in the forest below the climb. I have gone four different ways into this valley, all of which start near the Crossing warden station. They all take a long time and involve lots of bushwhacking.

In the morning, we got up at first light and walked the remaining 20 minutes to the route. The first pitch was good climbing on rock and thin ice, and turned out to be the crux of the route. Above the first pitch, a long gully with a few short ice and rock steps led to the main portion of the route. Four pitches of excellent ice climbing culminated in a steep but short WI5 pillar. We quickly rappelled the route and walked out in fading daylight. Overall, it was a fun exploratory trip to a rarely visited valley.

The last route is arguably outside of the Donut, but I decided to include it anyways. The ice is just visible from the road in a narrow gully on the headwall up and left of Balfour Wall on Mount Murchison. It always looks unformed from the road and usually isn't there at all. I had been watching this one for

Big Corona. Photo: J. Mills



many years before deciding to head up there with Mike Adolph. The approach from Balfour Wall parking lot took 1.5 hours to the start of the gully. The first pitch was 25 metres of rotten WI3 ice leading to a 15-minute snow walk. The real climbing begins on a series of slender pillars on the left-hand wall. The first 30-metre section of ice was completely detached from the rock and was way too dangerous to try. Fortunately, we had a full rock rack, so we headed up the rock on the left side. It proved to be challenging but excellent mixed climbing with lots of drytooling moves, a few splatterings of ice and even a few fist jams in a crack near the top. Our 70-metre ropes just reached a safe belay spot below the upper pillars. The pitch was about M6 and had good gear. The next pitch was one of the most amazing ice features I have ever climbed. Instead of tackling the pillars directly, we climbed into a chimney behind the ice. There was ice plastered to both walls, which made for some really interesting climbing. After 15 metres in the steep, icy chimney, we went through a tunnel in the ice and emerged on the upper part of the pillars. Another 20 metres of steep chandeliered ice led to the top. With some creativity, the pitch protected quite well. We named the route Sails for Seniors, in honour of all our climbing buddies that are trading in ice tools for paragliders, kites and sailboats.

With these four routes completed, there is really no new route potential in the Saskatchewan River Crossing Donut Hole—so don't bother looking.

Facile Monster. Photo: J. Mills

Sails for Seniors. Photo: J. Mills

Summary

Hosers of Darkness (V WI5X M6+, 220m), David Thompson Highway. FA: J. Mills, Brent Young, March 2008.

Big Corona (V M7 W5+ A0, ca. 500m), Triangle Peak. FA: Dave Edgar, J. Mills, March 2009.

Facile Monster (IV M5 WI5, 420m), Triangle Peak. FA: Steve Holeczi, J. Mills, Eammon Walsh, November 2009.

Sails for Seniors (IV M6, WI6, 125m), Mount Murchison. FA: Mike Adolph, J. Mills, March 2010.

Lupercalia

Steve Holeczi

Instead of spending Valentine's Day with my lovely girlfriend, I spent it with the not-so-lovely JP Kors in the Helmet Falls area. (My girlfriend didn't buy the excuse that Valentine's Day should really be a day off from each other because every day is so special with me.) It's a bit of a slog to get into the area, but mainly flat, and our buddies had previously pounded a trail. That's called good tactics. The other good tactic is that now since I am a national park employee, I can use the warden cabin instead of camping. However, we had a rough night as the cabin was way too hot from constantly stoking the fire and I was way too full from eating bacon, pasta and dessert. I remember having a much better time 12 years ago sleeping in a wet bag outside the hut with two friends, their dog and a box of pretzels.

Anyways, the next morning we skied into Helmet Falls to try some ice that my friends Eamonn Walsh and Greg Thaczuk had spied on their earlier failed attempt. We climbed up the first pitch of Helmet Falls, which is a low-angled apron followed by deep snow to a rock anchor. I broke out a shovel here to feel like I was in Peru, and made a trench up the gully towards the main falls. This is where Eamonn had taken his ice-lens whipper the month before.

From the base of the main falls, we branched off left on steep snow and easy ice (good shoveling opportunities here). It is important to make sure the trench is nice and deep so it looks hardcore. This slope would be very exciting for your sphincter if snow and avalanche conditions weren't optimal.

Once at the base of the upper wall, we started up the right hand of two obvious flows. We climbed three 50-metre pitches up to WI5 on a mix of both good and junky ice. We called the route Lupercalia, which was the pagan festival predating Valentine's Day. From high up in the amphitheater, one can't help but admire the ambiance of this secluded corner of the Rockies.

Ambiance aside, it was certainly time to get out of there as we had eaten all of our two pounds of bacon. Three and a half hours on a good trail and we were back to the highway. I would recommend this place as a remote ice-climbing destination, especially now that there are more lines to climb in addition to the classic Helmet Falls. Plus, you will most likely have the place to yourself.

Summary

Lupercalia (IV WI5, 300m (150m of new terrain)), Helmet Falls, Kootenay National Park. FA: Steve Holeczi, JP Kors, February 14, 2010.

Lupercalia is the smear to the left of Helmet Falls. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

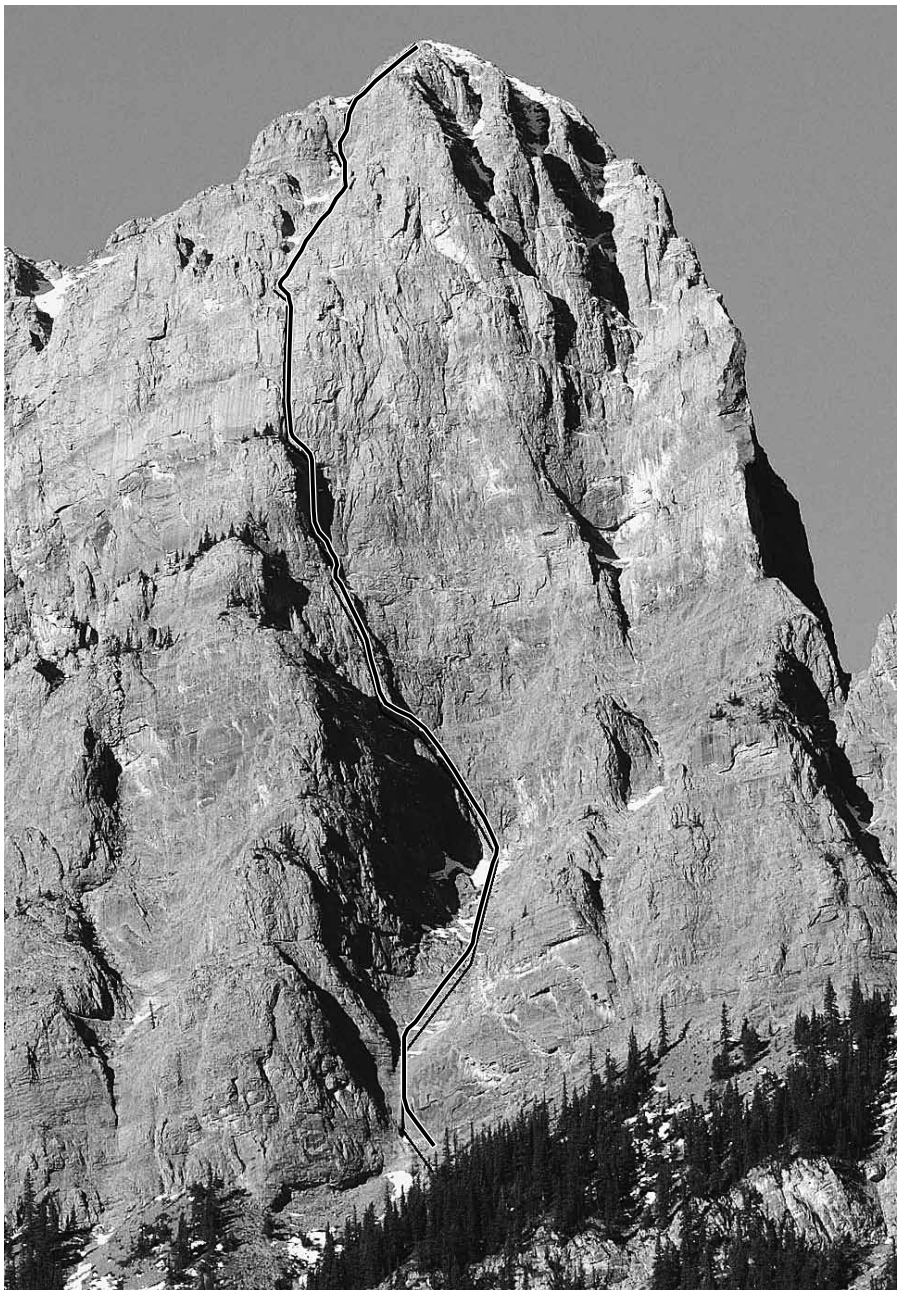
Bow Valley Rocks

Brandon Pullan

Chris perry's tattered guidebook laid in pieces on my dashboard as I rummaged through the loose pages trying to figure out my day. With a hangover about to kick in, we just headed up whatever. That's how the summer went. It's that easy in the Bow Valley to climb a new route. Last summer, we left the guidebooks at home for the most part and went foraging around the walls looking for weaknesses to muckle up and call our own.

First up was Rim Job. The north side of the Rim Wall lies west of West Wind Pass, facing the imposing Wind Tower. A keen buddy, Matt Brooks, was in town, and after a night of taste testing some delicious whisky, we headed up early via the pass. The wall was wet but we pushed on. A pin here, a pin there; traverse here, go up there; the usual route jibber jabber played out. The crux was high up on a thin slab where we left a pin, the only one to mark the best place to pass. The upper chimney was tight and wet but yielded.

Eastern Posers on the Second Buttress of Mount Rundle. Photo: Brandon Pullan



Next was Niagara on the Bow. Urs Kallen, a name synonymous with big alpine ascents in the '70s and who can still handle his own on the sharp end, dropped me a line and mentioned some new route thing-y. That was enough for me to be interested. We headed to Mount Cory outside of Banff where we found some corners and climbed them. I popped in a number of bolts on the compact limestone, as Urs was nice enough to bring his drill. The route was fine and the sun hot, trees green and stone grey. I had just read Mark Twight's "Glitter and Despair" from his book *Kiss or Kill*, and although this route had its moments, it was basically as casual as sitting next to a lake when compared to that real climbing stuff.

Following this, I met up with another Bow Valley pioneer, Andy Genereux, to tackle his stomping grounds, Yamnuska. I was dragging my ass, as per usual, after a scotch-drinking party. Parched mouth, dehydrated with the mid-summer heat sucking any liquid I had left out through my forehead. Andy's routes are often at the centre of controversy, but I couldn't care less—climbing is climbing. We added a cool new route near the middle of the mountain. We placed a few bolts, but the protection was mostly small gear on fine rock, which was enough to quickly eradicate the headache.

Next, I aimed my sights on a wall above Canmore next to EEOR—the Second Buttress of Mount Rundle. The first attempt ended in de-motivation once the hail picked up. I headed back later with a keen partner. When I arrived in the valley, the staunch guard made it clear quite quickly that easterners need

to earn their stay. More or less, we are posers compared to the real mountain men. I am 100 per cent poser. In my mind, there have only been about a dozen real climbers in the Rockies and most are out of commission these days; the rest of us are recreation types who rock the brands and talk the talk. So, keeping that in mind, I dubbed the route Eastern Posers. It ascends directly up the east face of the rock pile. I tossed in three hand-drilled bolts for belays, but in between those is seemingly unprotectable stone. One pitch in particular took three hours. And that was after climbing The Maker and Freakout, notoriously run-out Bow Valley routes without a hitch. To all the eastern posers, I salute you.

In the spring, I headed to the CMC Valley with a buddy who wanted to climb some virgin rock. Bevies in tow, we humped up and over to the CMC Valley tucked so nicely out of sight behind Yamnuska. We quickly found a gravy-looking line on Mount Doom where there had been not a single new route for nearly 40 years. The rock quality was typical for the area—loose-y goose-y with some surprisingly great rock scattered about. Matt Roy named our route Back to Basics because for him it was a way to see how it's done: a natural line with some gear (mostly decorative), leaving nothing on the route.

On my 30th birthday, I headed up to the west face of Grotto Mountain, right in Canmore. I decided to try this often-looked-at face all on my lonesome. After the typical bushwhacking, the route starts with a nice curtain of ice, then follows some gullies with ice and snow, and exits up a thin icy veneer into a "shit, I'm screwed" headwall. Before the tuck-the-tail-and-bail manoeuvre, I checked my options and Ta-da!, a flakey ramp-y thingy with an iced-up corner revealed itself. On the ridge where I was deep into my alone thought, two Europeans appeared.

"Where did you come from?" they asked with a Swiss accent.

"The face."

"Oh, the face. Like we do back home!" and then they yodelled for me.

The Bow Valley stretches east to west, walled by peaks of limestone, most of it never before touched. Leave the guidebooks at home and immerse yourself in a sea of grey—and don't forget the bevies.

Summary

Rim Job (5.10, 450m), Rim Wall. FA: Matt Brooks, Brandon Pullan, September 2009.

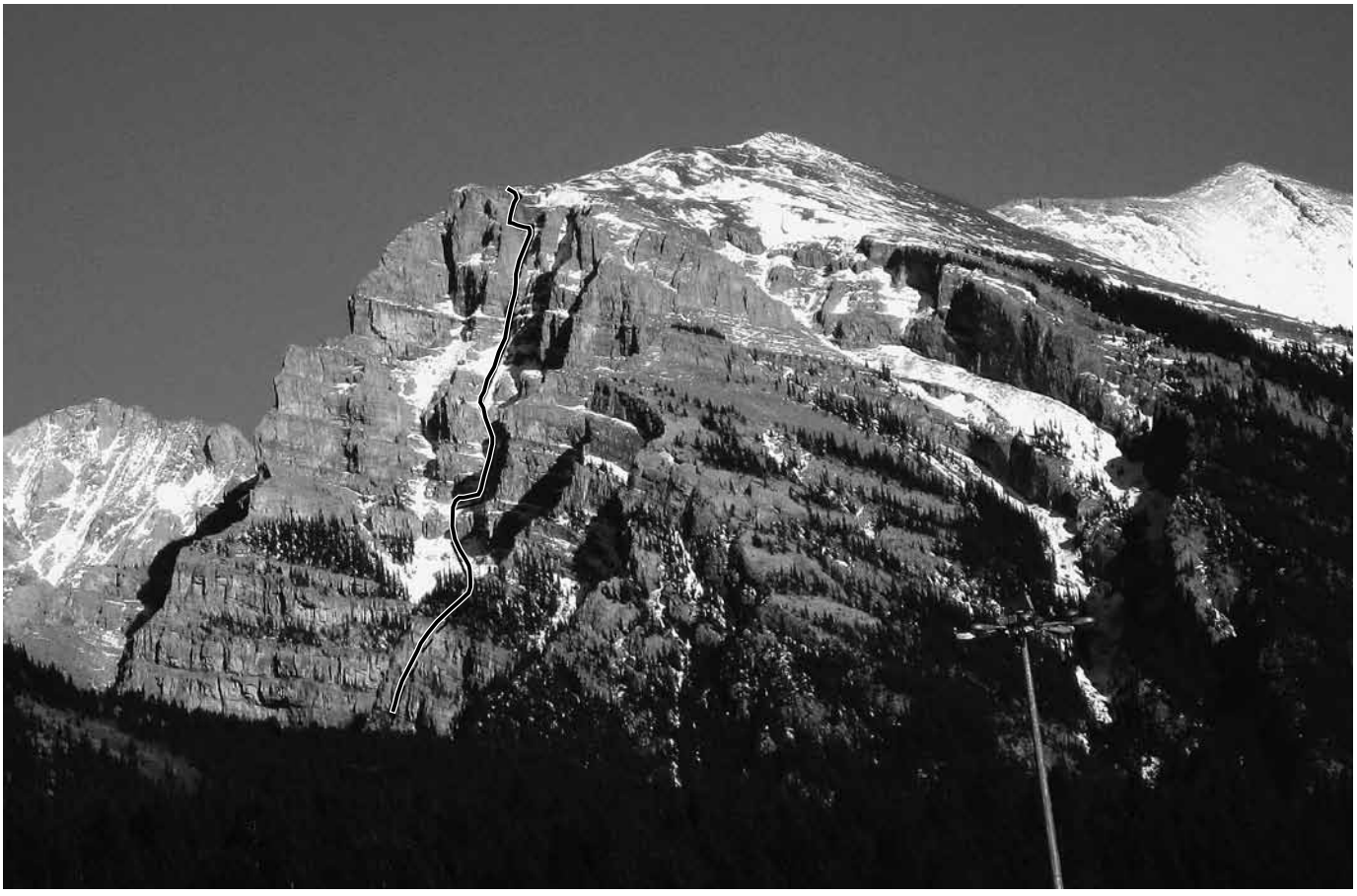
Niagara on the Bow (5.9, 250m), Guides Rock, Mt. Cory. FA: Urs Kallen, Brandon Pullan, September 2009.

Eastern Posers (5.9+, 450m), Second Buttress, Mt. Rundle. FA: Matt Brooks, Brandon Pullan, September 2009.

Back to Basics (5.9, 170m), Mt. Dome, CMC Valley. FA: Brandon Pullan, Matt Roy, April 2010.

The Yodel (II 5.7 WI3), Grotto Mountain. FA: Brandon Pullan, April 2010.

The Yodel on Grotto Mountain. Photo: Brandon Pullan



Mount Erasmus

Rick Collier

A CHUNK OF MOLTEN MOON, orange and wispy with cloud, drifted interminably across the inky sky, sinking at long last behind the ghostly Lyells. A vanishing that brought with it an even darker canopy, one in which now turned ever so slowly the great wheel of the Milky Way and the vast hoop of the constellations. Teeth chattering, I tried to recall my university astronomy courses and knit together these ancient patterns in the sky. And, yes, after considerable concentration, there, frozen in time, hung tiny Delphinus, the leaping dolphin. With more scrutiny, nearby but much smaller, Sagitta, the arrow, revealed its two clusters of stars that from time immemorial intended good fortune for travellers. Perhaps then this night would pass without accident or discomfort of too dreadful a sort.

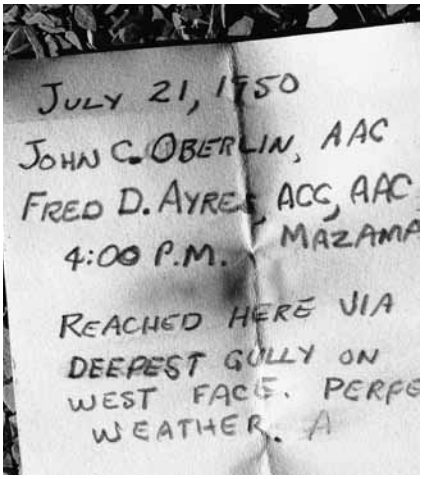
Such was my hope in any case, and these games kept me from dwelling on the collective misery of my climbing party, each of us shivering in his own little trench in the scree. And stargazing also helped pass the time. Well, sort of. Except that when at last, unable to resist any longer the impulse, I glanced at my watch, the glowing dial read only 12:30 a.m. Sigh. There were at least four more hours to endure before we would discern the slightest bit of pink in the sky.

So how did we three come to be so ungraciously bedded down at 3,000 metres in sub-zero temperatures on the west slopes of Mount Erasmus in an unplanned and unwished for bivouac. Therein lays, of course, a tale.

MOUNT ERASMUS is fascinating for many reasons: it is remote, difficult to get to and a significant component of the high uplift west of the Icefields Parkway that includes Outram, Forbes, Amery, the Freshfields, the Mons/Lyell icefield and the Monchy-Willerval icecap. It is also a peak that many in the climbing community talk about but seem never to get up the steam to check out. And, it possesses an odd nomenclature. Erasmus is one of the few mountains in the Rockies not named for a discredited WWI general, or for some obscure bureaucrat in the early employ of the CPR. Neither was it named, as many think, for the great Renaissance humanist, theologian and philosopher, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. Instead, it commemorates the Métis fur trader and guide, Peter Erasmus (1834-1931), who assisted Sir James Hector in his explorations from 1858 to 1859.

Mount Erasmus is also of noteworthy elevation, rising to a height of 3,265 metres, which places it 81st of the highest 100 summits in Alberta. Most of these lofty peaks are ascended with some regularity; but not Erasmus, which, prior to our climb, had had only two recorded ascents. The first was executed by the well-known American alpinist Fred D. Ayres with his longtime climbing partner John Oberlin in 1950. Ayres is renowned for several major ascents in the western world, among them the second ascent of Mount Alberta in 1948, many technical climbs in the Tetons in Wyoming and the first ascent of Salcantay (6,270 metres) in the Peruvian Andes.

Erasmus was climbed for the second time in 1987 by Tom Thomas and Gil McCormick, who forded the North Saskatchewan River, bushwhacked up Arctomys Creek valley (Valley of the Lakes) and then in a series of lightly provisioned bivouacs clawed their way up the 800-metre north face, a face composed of vertical and overhung rock and ice, with the rock possessing (as we ourselves were to discover 22 years later) the quality of broken teeth. Indeed a remarkable *tour de force*, although it is probable Thomas and McCormick did not reach the true summit via their route because their likely point of exit from the north face onto the summit plateau is an appreciable distance from the true apex. More importantly, they were hustling to avoid a storm and needed to start their downclimb and rappels with alacrity [see *CAJ*, 1971, vol. 54, pp. 89-90].



The summit register from Mount Eramus showing the 1950 first ascent.
Photo: Rick Collier

The approach to Erasmus, following the suggestions of Ayres and Oberlin, demands a pretty stiff price of admission. Starting at the Glacier Lake staging area near Saskatchewan River Crossing, Manfred Czechak, John Holmes and I humped our tentage, climbing gear and six days worth of food along the North Saskatchewan River, over the Survey Peak crest, down to the lake and along its north shore and further west, contending at times with snarls of deadfall and blowdown—about 13 kilometres for the first day. If anything, the next day's ticket was even pricier: 700 metres of thrashing up through the bush on the north side of Glacier Valley bypassing "a low-lying band of cliffs above and on the right" [see *CAJ*, 1951, vol. 34, pp. 37-42]. After several sweaty hours of scrabbling over deadfall and squeezing through scrub pine and of VO2 max and ignition-level tachycardia, we reached sub-alpine krummholz and contoured east around the shoulder of the long south ridge of Erasmus and into a delightful little valley, one whose charms—wildflowers, a burbling stream and plentiful meadows—tempted us to forget our travails of the morning. We set up our camp and then explored the

next section of the Ayres-Oberlin route. Sixty years ago, these two pioneers had been able to follow a well-established goat trail, one that permitted our caprine friends to migrate back and forth between the Arctomys and Glacier valleys. Thus their mantra was "Follow the goat!" But by the summer of 2009, this traverse had for unknown reasons been long abandoned and the goat trail fallen into desuetude, making it difficult, if not impossible, to follow.

Even though it showered with gusto that first evening, we awoke the next morning (July 31) to bluebird skies—a better day for a tough ascent could not have been ordered up from eBay. After a quick hot drink and cereal, we trotted up the meadow alongside the stream, the sun barely silvering the vast rock walls protecting our little valley. Stumbling and grumbling in the usual early-morning climbing stupor, we boulder-hopped back through the elbow of the cwm and slogged up the scree to the 2,485-metre saddle to the northeast (not northwest, as Ayres states). This was where the fun began. We followed the evanescent goat trail—scree and easy scrambling—up the northwest ridge and around "the left side of a 300-foot rock tower . . . [and] into a couloir [that went] steeply up . . . for [another] 300 feet to an apparent saddle on the top of the ridge."

But here the goat trail fizzled and we were left to our own devices, navigating up the 150-metre "maze of ledges and cliffs" frowning above us. This we did by zigzagging back and forth on scree ledges, thereby scrambling successive cliff bands with a decent margin of safety. Finally, after much backtracking and time, we reached the 3,000-metre T-bone between this southeast ridge and the main north-to-south Erasmus-Sullivan ridge.

Again, as did Ayres and Oberlin, "we followed the top of the [main] ridge northward until it became too narrow [to proceed], then descended 30 feet on the west side and continued [north] on ledges to the sharp notch south of the prow [actually a substantial outlier] of Erasmus"—a lengthy, tedious traverse on exposed, mushy scree. Beyond the notch was more of the same, but at a less impressive angle. Because of numerous drainage scallops, this part of the approach was a very slow two kilometres. Eventually, we punched up a steep 120-metre couloir of hard-packed snow and ice and contoured further north to Ayres' "major cleft", one that "consisted of two narrow, parallel gullies separated by a steep-walled rock fin . . .", each gully being "about 500 feet long and [rising] quite steeply", an observation that to our upwardly craned necks seemed something of an understatement.

Even more consequential, these couloirs back in 1950 "contained a considerable amount of ice . . . [and] steep snow." Sixty years later, the left-hand gully was bare of snow or ice, and the right-hand was smeared with but a thin rime of snow-ice that clung uncertainly to one side and then the other. Tumbling down over successive cliff bands were waterfalls, cascades that appeared and disappeared under the precarious ice shelves. "Dear me," one of us remarked, "it looks as though conditions have deteriorated since the first ascent," although the actual words were somewhat more rough-edged. The fact was that Ayres' detailed description of the rest of the climb was now useless.

But we'd come this far, and no mixed rock, ice and unfrozen waterfall climbing was going to stop us now. We first probed up the central rock rib, with John leading smoothly until skunked by

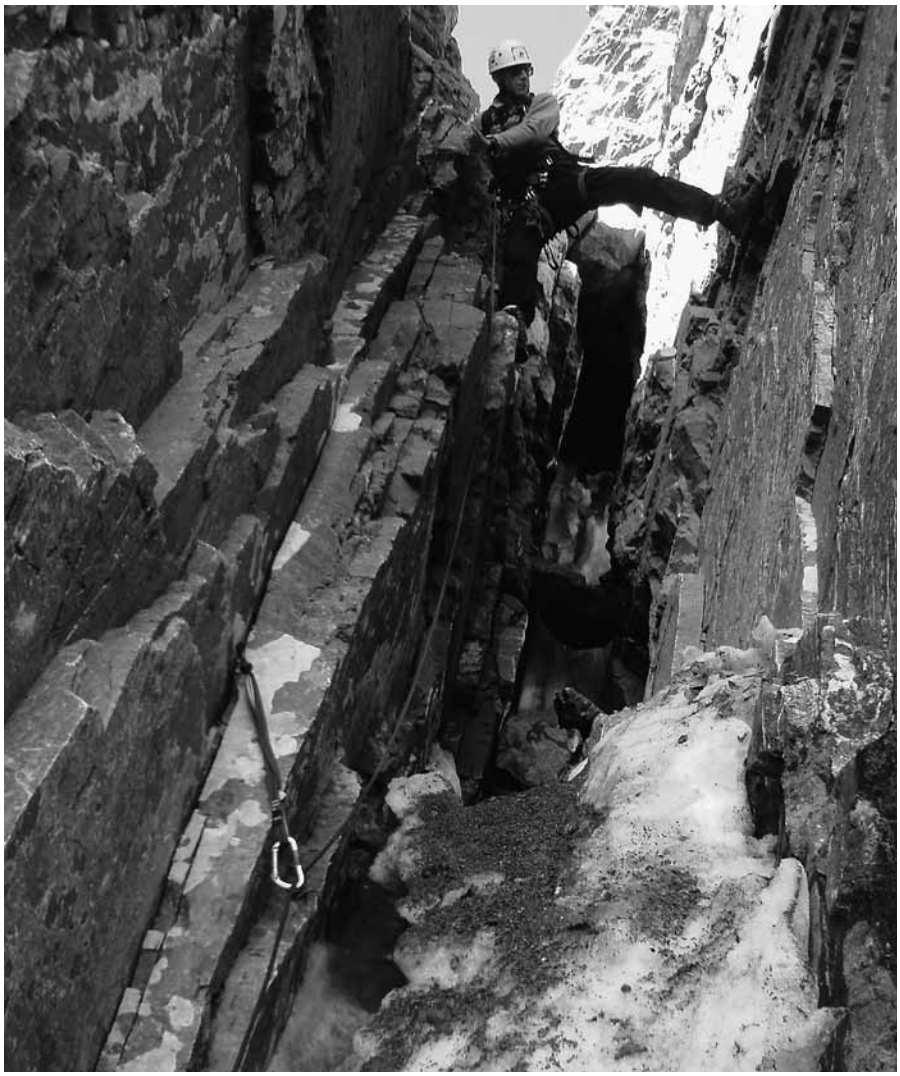
The west face of Mount Eramus. Photo Rick Collier

a series of crumbly overhangs. The left couloir was wet, slimy and undercut, which left only the patchy ice in the right-hand drainpipe. We cramponed across the upper rim of the snow couloir beneath the rib and scrambled ledges up into the start of this narrow couloir. I tied into the sharp end of the rope and, to avoid taking a cold shower, led across steep thin ice, up a complex wall on the left (5.7-5.8) and into an alcove, from which I traversed on marginal holds back out into the couloir but above the waterfall.

John led the next pitch up steep, undercut snow-ice, occasionally bridging the entire gully wall to wall. Another pitch, similarly strenuous, and we were staring at a second, higher waterfall. A feeble tongue of ice reached up toward the cascade, ending in a slick pinnacle overhanging the dark maw into which the cataract plunged. No choice here but to frontpoint to the apex of this icy *aiguille*, balance with lavish caution a metre from the plummeting deluge, judiciously remove one's crampons, and then, with minimal and shaky pro in place, bridge up smooth rock for several metres before swinging left and finishing off by crimping minute holds on an overhanging face (5.8). And, oh yeah, much of the rock was rotten enough to require non-organic gardening.

But now, after four ugly pitches—pitches sufficiently intimidating that I wondered what the hell someone of my advanced years was doing scrabbling around here—the angle of the couloir eased off. One more grit-covered ice slope of about 40 degrees, and friendlier territory beckoned us on, which is simply a way of saying we should have retreated—the clock by this point having ticked well into late afternoon. But, of course, we didn't. We already knew what our fate was going to be, so what the heck, we might as well bag a summit and be successful as well as headstrong and foolish.

A dank, loose but reasonable scramble up a chimney, and we emerged from the gully onto surprisingly benign terrain. A rounded dome of scree and snow rose effortlessly to the south, and all that remained was a 100-metre plod up the eroded summit platform to the high-point.



Manfred Czechak climbing pitch four on the west face of Mount Eramus. Photo: John Holmes

Once there, we toured the corniced snowcap, took photos of the Lyells, marvelled at Forbes thrusting like an arrowhead into the blue sky (none of these peaks a great deal higher than we) and excavated the small cairn just below the snowfield. Secreted in a corner of this cairn, we discovered a tiny rusted can containing the original ascent record of Fred Ayres and John Oberlin from July 21, 1950—a delightful surprise! But not delightful enough to keep us from noting anxiously how far in the west the sun had already sunk. Which is how we came a few hours later to be grovelling the night away in the scree on the west flank of Erasmus. Hubris? Wanting a summit so bad you're willing to suffer the agonies of the damned for it? No doubt about it. But then who amongst us has not so sinned?

In hindsight, however, I suspect we should have spent the night on the summit, a decision that would have, by dawn, permitted partial freeze-up of the snow and ice that was now melting and plunging down the couloir. But we didn't; we bashed and gardened back to the top of our technical pitches, and then fixed five raps down to easier ground. What's to say here? Pins, webbing, rings, back-up cams, we all know the drill, and we've likely done it as light fades and when we're exhausted. But our hubris on Erasmus had garnered us additional punishment—while we were finishing our ascent, parts of the ice shelves, now beneath us, had collapsed and vanished, and, from snowmelt above, the flow of water down the couloir had doubled.

It was cold, wet work in the encroaching dark to get from one rap station to the next, each of us taking more than one frigid bath as our feet slithered on wet rock, swinging us into a roaring waterfall.

But of course we finally made it down into the scree, where we dug out niches, wriggled into all our extra clothes, ate the shreds of our remaining food and waited and waited, shivering, watching the stars, counting the minutes. Not sorry at all that we hadn't turned back.

Summary

Second ascent of the Ayers-Oberlin Route (IV 5.8) on the west face of Mt. Eramus (3265m), Banff National Park. Rick Collier, Manfred Czechak, John Holmes, July 31, 2009.

Quit Not Ridge

Glenn Reisenhofer

"Whose idea was this trip anyway?"

Glenn quickly rebutted with a Cheesmond-ian saying: "It's all good training, man."

"Yeah, we've heard that one before."

The air temperature continued to invade their once good mood and caused them to dig deeper into their energy reserves. Their skiing objective was to sneak through three cols and utilize one ridge system from Bow Lake on the Icefields Parkway in Banff National Park to Golden, B.C., in the Columbia Valley to the west. Some overnight snow loading steered them away from Isolated Col. After some steep bush crashing and heavy trail breaking, they found themselves approaching Kiwetinok Pass. In the Stoney language *kiwetinok* means "on the north side". That was the side they were on; however, they desperately wanted to be on the other side, particularly Steve, as he felt the cold invade his bones fiercely that day.

The trio was blessed with a wondrous mid-calf powder descent towards the headwaters of Kiwetinok River. Wolverine tracks greeted them as they rolled into the dark, semi-oppressive woods. Camp cuisine consisted of a hearty meal with a topping of damp stove-related moisture.

"Maybe we should cook outside the tent tomorrow night."

"Yeah, my bag's already wet."

The jokes were pushed aside and the usual evening antics were replaced with shivering and survival methods. To dispel the grim settings, someone joked, "I can't wait for tomorrow so I can break trail to stay warm."

A polar sun lit up the day's objective—Kiwetinok Ridge (GR 256012, NTS 82 N/7). A debate ensued over the best route up, but whichever way they went heavy trail-breaking was a significant variable in the equation. They finally decided on zigzagging up the east-facing slopes. Not being mathematicians, they had not factored in the slope's angle, or its tree density. The crew was reduced to breaking trail for short bursts, only to be replaced in short order by an already tired, non-fresh member.

With the summit ridge in sight, a not-so-pleasant cliff band kept them guessing as to their best line for the remainder of the ascent. Not only did it prove to be tricky, it also caused extra grief with its hidden and well-placed air pockets. Without the other two knowing, Ian decided to tackle the cliff band directly while Glenn and Steve took a less technical, albeit longer, line.

Near the summit, an open sweet line descended the ridge towards the south. With Ian below, Glenn and Steve immediately skied down towards him. He had made it to the ridge an hour earlier. Together, they continued down a nifty powder run with the afternoon sun highlighting the surface hoar crystals like a child's sparkly necklace.

The ski down the ridge continued without end. The trees were getting thicker and more troublesome to negotiate. Rubber-leg syndrome plagued the team like a friend who wouldn't leave the party. They tried to follow the ridge down to the junction of the Amiskwi and Kiwetinok Rivers, but the trees had other plans. The spruces wanted them to drop down into the Amiskwi Valley instead. At some point while heading down, someone dubbed the crest the Quit Not Ridge. As if they hurt the mountain's feelings, the ridge decided that it was not yet finished with the skiers and broke Glenn's binding. This made an already difficult descent more memorable. On later recollection, they hadn't even considered going to the summit despite being so terribly close. The cold must have been getting to them.

Glenn volunteered to ski out on his own while Steve and Ian continued, but they had had enough of the cold. They made their final camp at the junction of the rivers Amiskwi and Kiwetinok (GR 268969). Every small task took its toll, but they finally managed to light a fire, which proved to be a useless source of heat as they were too tired to properly construct it. Three fatigued adventurers watched the fire and their heat dissolve away into the snow.

In the morning, they saw a dipper playfully diving under some open water for its breakfast. As they prepared to depart in a frozen stupor, the dipper repeatedly taunted them with its bold underwater acrobatics. The bird was seemingly unaffected by the polar environment. Nature once again proved to be mysterious as well as tough. Once they reached Field and a hot cup of coffee, a friendly local told them that the morning temperature was -29 C. With that news, our protagonists made a pact to never ski tour overnight unless it was in April.

Summary

Attempted ski traverse from Bow Lake to Golden. Steve Morris, Ian Sherrington, Glenn Reisenhofer, March 6-9, 2009.

Cataract Peak

David P. Jones

Cataract peak, located in the headwaters of the Pipestone River, variously 3,320 to 3,333 metres high, is one of the loftier peaks of the front ranges. The peak can be seen from the vicinity of Lake Louise and is very prominent when viewed from the summit of Mount Hector, which is only a short distance to the southwest of Cataract Peak.

Joseph Hickson, reviewing proof sheets of the second edition of Palmer and Thorington's 1930 *Climbers Guide to the Canadian Rockies*, determined that Thorington's claim to the first ascent was in error, subsequently making the first ascent with Edward Feuz Jr. in July 1930. A photograph taken by Edward Feuz during this trip shows a significant glacier on the northwest flanks, which combined with the larger valley glaciers provided a relatively easy and convenient route to the upper west-trending ridge that leads to the main summit.

The second ascent appears to have been made by Katie Gardiner and Edward Feuz Jr. in September 1937, presumably by the original ascent route. It is unknown whether the peak saw any further ascents until September 1988, when Graeme Pole and Alex Taylor made the first ascent of the southwest ridge. As far as can be determined, a Collier party made the fourth ascent in September 1995.

Faced with a weekend of unsettled weather in late September 2009, Gord Bose and I decided to hike in over north Molar Pass and camp at Fish Lakes, with a plan to climb Cataract Peak if weather permitted. We arose very early on the morning of September 26, and set off for the Pipestone River in threatening weather. Climbing up beside Cataract Falls, we encountered first rain, and higher up, snow squalls, but not serious enough to deter proceeding.

The lower approaches to the southwest ridge did not look particularly attractive so we continued up valley, following goat tracks along the crest of the moraine that hugs the base of the northwest slopes. Nearing the head of the valley, we climbed steep moraine, scree and small rock steps to find ourselves perched on rocky ledges between two cliff systems: one below and one directly above.

Initially, the cliff above did not look very promising, but with closer inspection, we noted a steep right-trending ramp feature that appeared to lead to easier ground if we could gain the base of the ramp. A short section of steep climbing between minor waterfalls brought us to the ramp, which, as we surmised, lead to the top of the cliff. Above, ice-cored, morainal material lead to a remnant of the glacier that Hickson ascended during the first ascent.

Crossing the remains of the glacier, we gained the crest of the upper southwest ridge and the junction with the regular routes. Here, we were met with a strong and bitterly cold wind. We climbed largely along the crest of the ridge with minor deviations on the northwest flanks. Nearing the summit, the wind strengthened and we were forced to proceed crouching or on our hands and knees to avoid being blown off the summit ridge. Needless to say, our visit was very brief and we stayed on the summit only long enough to sign the register before retracing our steps down the ridge. We downclimbed and made one 30-metre rappel to descend the cliff below the glacier to gain easier terrain leading to the upper valley. It seemed like a long descent down the valley to the Pipestone, but an even longer climb up the valley to return to our camp at Fish Lakes, which we arrived at shortly after dark, making for a 12-hour day.

Overall, it was a very satisfying climb even though we had relatively poor views of the surrounding mountains. In reviewing Hickson's account of the first ascent and the accompanying photograph, it would appear that we ascended the northwest face approximately where the glacier ended in a large ice cliff in 1930.

Summary

North Face/Southwest Ridge (AD 5.0), Cataract Peak (3334m). FA: Gord Bose, David P. Jones, September 26, 2009.

The North Face/Southwest Ridge of Catatract Peak. Photo: David P. Jones

Dungeon of Doom and Gloom

Rich Gebert

When I soloed the Fred Beckey East Face route on Tonquin Valley's Oubliette in 2004, I needed only four casual half pitches of self-belaying. With the same 5.7 rating, how bad could Oubliette's neighbour Dungeon be? I was to find out.

For starters, every good dungeon has a torture chamber. Dungeon's was at the beginning in the form of a deep chimney. Why not climb the nice long crack 50 metres to the left that becomes a wide gully, I thought to myself. But I stayed true to the route and entered the nasty fissure, trying not to touch anything that would get my still-like-new pack dirty. An ugly, filthy, dirty beast it was right from the start. There were large boulders tossed in, jammed in ways that made me cringe to have to use them as holds. After three pack hauls, my shiny new pack was dirty and torn. The real fun began further on as the gully got steeper and the rock became progressively more rotten. The only way out was via a scary unprotected traverse on a dirt ledge without secure holds. It was bad luck for me, though, as I snagged the rope hauling the pack out and had to go back for a second turn. No one should ever have to go in there twice!

Finally, after two time-consuming traverse pitches, I was climbing without the rope for the first time that day. I quickly gained a few hundred metres past the pocket glacier before I needed to set up my first bivy. This was to be the last of my unroped climbing.

With the morning came clouds, and visibility dropped to around 50 metres. Since the rock was dry and the torture chamber was still fresh in my mind, the easy choice was to continue up. I self-belayed and eventually arrived at the crux. It was a classic Beckey beauty. After that, the route moves right onto the ridge crest, so I went over to have a look. Above seemed steep, to the right and down were grey voids. I moved back left and continued up. After four or five long pitches—that included route searching, false starts and plenty of 5.7—I came to a narrow ledge and night fell once again. The only way ahead was through a slot and around a large block above me. Perhaps it was a gully to freedom. I decided to check it out before bed. There was no gully present, but I climbed the block anyway. From here, a steep corner with interesting holds rose steeply into the fog. It looked harder and had no guarantee of exit. So, in the spirit of Conrad Kain, I lassoed a boulder and rapped down. Not in keeping with Kain's style though, the rope got stuck and its rescue would have to wait till morning.

The upper third of the east face of Dungeon Peak. Photo: Rich Gebert

At this point, I was in a bit of trouble. A sheer wall was guarding the ridge crest. Retreat had been out of the question for several pitches. For the descent, I brought some odd nuts and 10 metres of old static rope. I also had 30 metres of three-millimetre poly-coated Kevlar (used to hold large promotional balloons) to try out for sling blocks and threads, probably doubled. Even if I used all this and my beloved cams, I only had one real rope for rappelling so there's no way I would attempt a bailout.

In the morning, the fog was still thick but glimpses of the valley and neighbouring peaks were briefly given. The tradeoff for this was that now it was snowing on and off. I thought there was a chance my bivy ledge might get me over to where I should be. My only lucky break was granted. After a delicate fully belayed traverse with protection for the second (me), a rappel and one more traverse, I was back on route. Because the rock was wet from snow, I couldn't solo the easier climbing and had to self-belay the final five pitches to the very top. I essentially climbed this beast twice due to all the self-belaying and seconding.

I had studied the descent carefully, but there was something special about a knife edge of loose wet slippery blocks, in little or no visibility, unroped. I soon gave up on the humps of the northwest ridge and modified my way to the Dungeon-Redoubt descent gully. I made it halfway down and had to set up my third bivy, this time on a homemade ledge above a cliff.

By the time I reached the bottom, I had used most of my descending gear. The tiny Kevlar worked great and would thread behind the tinniest flakes. I side-sloped the wet talus all the way to Drawbridge Pass for the safest way back to my cache. Despite the epic, I made this climb in four days. I never stepped outside of my safety zone or compromised my meticulous, albeit time-consuming, technique.

Summary

A solo ascent of the east face (IV 5.7) of Dungeon Peak, Tonquin Valley. Richard Gebert, August 3-6, 2009.

Sarah Garlick on the first ascent of Billfish Dihedral on Chaleur Blow Me Down, Chaleur Bay, Newfoundland. Photo Kirsten Kremer

The East

The Bachelorette Party

Janet Bergman

A few hours after the last call at Alycia and Timmy's wedding on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Sarah Garlick and I, both bleary-eyed from a fun night, drove northward. We had exactly three weeks until Sarah's wedding, just enough time for a quick climbing trip to Newfoundland.

We stopped at Logan airport in Boston to pick up Kirsten Kremer, who had arrived in the early morning hours from Alaska; stopped again at Trader Joe's for groceries; and one final time in New Hampshire to pack Sarah's Previa minivan with climbing and camping gear before continuing up Route 95 to Canada.

Eighteen hours later of driving, we caught an overnight ferry from North Sidney on the eastern tip of Nova Scotia to Port Aux Basque in Newfoundland. The next morning, we sprinted the Previa from Port Aux Basque to a small town called Burgeo for the coastal ferry to Francois (pronounced France-way by locals), a remote fishing town accessible only by water.

Finally, after 30-plus hours of travel, we arrived and met our hosts, the Georges. George Durnford helped with marine logistics for the first climbing party to visit the area more than 10 years ago and was very familiar with our needs and interests. His friend George Fudge would provide our transportation. The men were quite a pair, both with Newfie accents as thick as their plaid wool jackets, and both unsure what to make of three women on a climbing adventure. We were shown to a camping site behind the church and made plans to meet on the boat dock before dawn to finally get a glimpse of the cliffs we had come for.

George's pride and joy, *Royal Oak*, is a lovely blue and white fishing rig. He gave us a full tour of three finger-like fjords before we decided on the unexplored (by climbers) Chaleur Bay. The bay was once home to a whale oil factory and now is only used as a small weekend beach retreat by locals. Beyond their beach cottage zone were several stunning cliffs. The two most attractive ones were Blow Me Down (same name, but a different cliff than the highly developed and much larger Blow Me Down in Devil Bay) and another unnamed cliff that looked to be shorter but stacked with bottom-to-top crack systems.

We found our "Camp Paradise" directly across the fjord from the cottage retreat, with a freshwater stream running through. We loaded up our trusty *Rojito*, a red plastic rowboat George Fudge loaned to us, and transferred our gear one final time to set up camp.

Morning dawned sunny and gorgeous; in fact, we were yet to see a cloud since we left New Hampshire. The three of us piled into *Rojito* with two oars and two paddles, and set course for the nearest cliff—the short but stacked-with-cracks wall. We tied *Rojito* to a boulder and scrambled up for nearly an hour through thick krummholz and pitcher plants.

We picked a crack system that split the right side of the wall, and Sarah won the ro-sham-bo. She led up a straight-in 5.10 finger and hand crack, and we enjoyed another three pitches of decent quality but somewhat sharp corner and crack climbing to the top. We surveyed the beautiful scene from the summit and took an easy bushwhack back down to the base.

As we arrived at *Rojito*, so did George Fudge on *Royal Oak* to give us a ride back to camp—a perfect way to end our first day. We named the climb The Squid Cracks, in memory of two squid that had been left on our beach camp that morning by the tide. The next morning, an entire school of billfish (a silver needle-nosed variety) was left abandoned on our beach by the tide. Not knowing if all the dead sea life signaled good luck or bad, or nothing at all, we packed a double rack of cams, a light pin rack and two ropes into *Rojito* and headed out for the hour-long row to the base of Chaleur Blow Me Down. The cliff is a prow-like structure jutting straight into the water, so we were able to row its entire length to inspect for possible lines. The most striking feature was a steep dihedral.

Again, we tied *Rojito* to a boulder, changed from rubber boots to approach shoes and krummholz-bashed to the base. Sarah took the full-length approach pitch, which proved steeper than it looked, to the base of the overhanging dihedral. As I racked up, we watched three big boats cruising past us and out of sight toward the far reaches of the fjord lake. My pitch was wide lay-backing. Kremer's was a steep, clean 5.10 off-width. And finally, Sarah's pitch was a splitter 5.10 layback hand crack. We meandered up the rest of the cliff, which was of mixed quality. One of the exit pitches was a legs-wide chimney—Kremer's specialty. As she climbed towards the summit, the same three boats chugged slowly past us in the other direction, loaded down with their cargo of tree trunks. Apparently, it was our friends from Francois preparing for winter.

On the first rappel, we put a core-shot in the rope, which shook us up and

slowed us down. Just as were dealing with that, *Royal Oak* approached from the distance and a woman's voice floated up through the darkness, "Should we wait for you?"

"No thanks, we will be a while," yelled Kremer calmly.

"Well, George told us to give you a ride back. Y'all know it's going to rain, right?"

"Shit," said Sarah under her breath anxiously as she cut the core-shot rope.

"We'll be OK! Don't worry about us!" yelled Kremer out into the night.

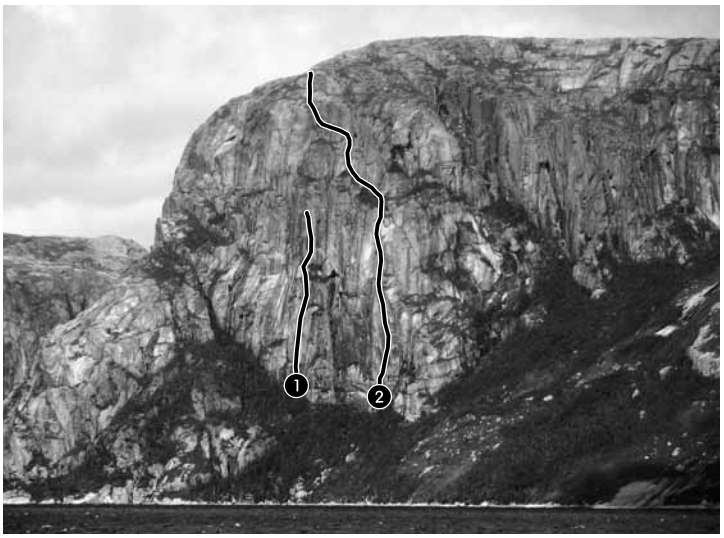
Hours later, we stumbled back to *Rojito* and rowed across the fjord, arriving at Camp Paradise as the skies let loose and poured for the rest of the night.

Morning dawned bluebird again, but we were wrecked from the effort on the Billfish Dihedral, so we lazed around hunting mussels and blueberries, and planned the next adventure.

We set our sights on the next bay over called Rancontre Bay. We hiked up to the height of land, set up camp and then dropped down to a cliff called St. Ilians. A perfect black dihedral crack split the left side of the face and we went straight for it. Kremer led a full rope-length pitch of stellar 5.10 crack climbing, and then Sarah and I each got a pitch of "5.chossy" kitty litter. It was an easy walk from the summit back to our advanced camp.

The morning dawned stormy, so we packed up and headed back to basecamp. We had time left, but with the deteriorating forecast we called for a pickup from George Fudge. Moose antlers were mounted to the bow of *Royal Oak* when he arrived and they spun tales from the first day of hunting season as we made our way back to Francois.

We stuck around one more day to take the local kids climbing on a small cliff above town before heading home in time for Sarah to walk the aisle and tie the knot, scabs still healing on the backs of her hands from our memorable adventure.



Chaleur Blow Me Down: (1) unfinished attempt. (2) Billfish Dihedral. Photo: Sarah Garlick


Squid Cracks on High Tide Wall in Chaleur Bay. Photo: Janet Bergman


The Black Crack on St. Ilians in Rancontre Bay. Photo: Kirsten Kremer

Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank the following for their support: Mountain Hardwear, Outdoor Research, La Sportiva, Sterling Rope Company and Sea to Summit.

Summary

Squid Cracks (5.10+, 150m, 4 pitches), High Tide Wall, Chaleur Bay, Newfoundland. FA: Janet Bergman, Sarah Garlick, Kirsten Kremer, September 4, 2009.

Billfish Dihedral (5.10+, 240m, 8 pitches), Chaleur Blow Me Down, Chaleur Bay. FA: Janet Bergman, Sarah Garlick, Kirsten Kremer, September 5, 2009.

The Black Crack (5.10+, 150m, 3 pitches), St. Ilians, Rancontre Bay. FA: Janet Bergman, Sarah Garlick, Kirsten Kremer, September 7, 2009.

Attempt (5.11, 5 pitches), Chaleur Blow Me Down, Chaleur Bay. Janet Bergman, Sarah Garlick, Kirsten Kremer, September 10, 2009.

Voices from the Deep

Peter Thurlow

"Two voices are there: One is of the sea, one of the mountains: each a mighty voice." William Wordsworth's poetic words could have been written precisely with Newfoundland in mind.

Over the past few years, there has been increasing awareness of, and interest in, the ice-climbing potential that the most eastern tip of North America may contain. For more than a decade, only a few adventurous souls have stepped off the grid in search of rumoured crystalline gems and a different sort of winter climbing experience that Newfoundland most certainly offers. A constant theme has arisen from these ventures: hard work and fickle weather, with a sense of real potential. This is indeed a rugged land, and the above challenges are, in my mind, an accurate portrayal of this sometimes brutal, sometimes spiritual, but always rewarding landscape.

I was born and bred on this chunk of weathered rock—a geological marvel; an obvious landscape that is the consequence of constant meteorological strain. It's a simple equation: put a resilient piece of granite smack dab in the middle of the North Atlantic, add a constant battering of the sea and watch it morph over a few million years (10 times older than the Rockies) into a unique setting with a character endemic to this lonely part of Canada. This character, one built by the sea, is in my mind what provides Newfoundland with its most unique climbing venue. While the fjords of Gros Morne have there own unique flavour and have been the centrepiece for visiting climbers, these coastal wind-scoured cliffs, with the force of the black Atlantic at foot, really do offer up a totally different climbing experience. I once heard a climber say, "If you have the spirit, you climb whatever your local topography has to offer." With more than 10,000 kilometres of coastline, one quickly recognizes the vast possibilities.

Coastal communities are frequent, permitting relatively easy access to a good portion of the island. From these simple, picturesque out-ports, one only needs to take a walk along the ocean to discover the next climb—a low-tide stroll in some areas, a rappel reconnaissance in others, to the extreme of boat-based remote-access fjords. There are massive stretches of coastline that have never even been viewed through a climber's eye. Snowshoe, ski, snowmobile, boat? How far do you want to be removed? Truth be told, you don't have to go very far at all to really feel very far removed. Once you lower into a climb, all signs and sounds of human presence are obscured by the dynamics of the Atlantic. The wind, a familiar force, accompanied with the sounds of a vast body of water provides an audio combo so powerful and pure that it is a real part of the experience. Throw in some horizontal precipitation and a solid swell, and the word raw as we know it is redefined. Never once have I followed a broken trail to the foot of a climb. Never once have I hooked a previous climber's placement. Every objective, whether climbed before or not, provides a virgin experience.

Once at sea level, a strange sense of fear mixed with serenity settles in. I've often thought to myself while hanging from blue ice with heavy black waves below, that I've never felt so exposed in my life, all the while only five metres above sea level. It's easy to feel small in the mountains; but one can feel just as miniscule on the ocean.

Very few records for these climbs exist. Small local contingents, based out of St. John's in the east and Corner Brook in the west, have picked away at the obvious objectives over the years, but substantial areas of intriguing potential have yet to be tapped. The 2009-10 season in Newfoundland, like many other Canadian areas, had an atypical winter. As I watched the jet stream meandering around Florida for most of the winter, conditions really did not come together for the majority of my visit. Warm weather and a dry fall produced lack-luster ice conditions, and many usually consistent coastal climbs did not even form. Others provided a totally different ride than previous encounters. A couple of new lines fell, but pitches seemed few and far between compared to previous visits.

The Bottle Cove area is a gorgeous, easy-access crag less than a 45-minute drive from Corner Brook. A half-dozen classy lines exist in this concentrated little area with many more as you peer down the coastline. Low tide provides a tidal-pool base, which also acts as a wave break for the ever-present swell. Access is by rappel only, so you have to climb out before high tide settles in. Our two new routes paralleled one another and offered technical and featured ice rising directly from the water. Blue ice set against the pure contrast of the black ocean makes for a classic Newfoundland setting.

Summary

Wave Rave (WI5, 25m), Bottle Cove, Newfoundland. FA: John Gale, Stephen Gale, Ben Moon, Peter Thurlow, January 24, 2010.

Swell Spell (WI5, 25m), Bottle Cove, Newfoundland. FA: John Gale, Stephen Gale, Ben Moon, Peter Thurlow, January 24, 2010.

Swell Spell at Bottle Cove, Newfoundland. Photo: Ben Moon

Southern Ontario Mixed

Nathan Kutcher

Southern ontario is an unlikely spot for winter climbing. The southern latitude and the moderating effect of the Great Lakes create a short and fickle season that, even during a good year, will only go from mid-December to mid-March. Losing a month of climbing on either end is not uncommon, and in a particularly bad winter, the season may only last two months. This short season is made more challenging with the frequent frozen-lake crossings that are mandatory for accessing the majority of the cliffs. It seems that by the time the lakes finally freeze-up and the ice starts getting good, the season is almost over.

Mixed climbing in Southern Ontario has existed for a long time, but with few exceptions, most new route development had centred around pure ice climbs. Until recently, most of the steep faces with partially formed flows had remained untouched. This, however, has recently changed, thanks primarily to a few motivated people who, over the last four years, have steadily increased the number of mixed climbing options in the area. The cliffs passed over by previous visitors have proven to be an untapped goldmine of new routes, the surface of which is joyfully being "scratched". Once frozen together, the cliffs that were deemed too chossy or wet for rock climbing, or where ice never fully formed, have provided a perfect breeding ground for great mixed lines.

Southern Ontario is unique since it has mixed climbing opportunities on both limestone and Canadian Shield granite cliffs. The steep limestone lends itself to difficult sport-mixed lines such as Sugar Rush (M10), Flameburger (M10-), Employee of the Month (M9+) and Left Princes (M9). The granite cliffs offer a more trad-mixed flavour with the occasional bolt protecting blank sections on otherwise naturally protected lines. Some great examples of these trad climbs include You Might Pray (M7+ R), No Bones About It (M7+) and Where Posers Dare (WI6- M7). Unlike the limestone mixed routes, these granite lines provide engaging climbing while placing your own gear. As the momentum builds, easier mixed routes are bridging the gap between the traditional pure ice routes and the rising number of difficult lines.

Although the 2009-10 season was much shorter than average, a number of excellent new routes were still established. While most of the activity focused on the granite crags further north, the first newly completed mixed line was my limestone drytool route, Highway Robbery (M9+/10-, 14m). The route begins with powerful moves out a body length roof to a tiny first-tooth pocket at the lip where you must cut your feet into a dead-hang without swinging while moving onto the steep headwall. This technical crux is followed by long pulls and pumpy climbing before hitting the slopey holds of the redpoint crux just below the anchor.

With the lakes finally frozen and the limestone areas still lacking any real ice, Rebecca Lewis and I established Handicap Accessible (M7, 20m) at Diamond Lake. The route climbs a crack system to the left of Where Posers Dare, joining the existing line near the top and finishing at the same anchor.

After some mixed route exploration in the 2008-09 season, Raven Lake saw two new lines go up this year with others waiting in the wings. Andriy Kolos started things off by climbing a series of ice smears to an engaging drytool section that resulted in No One Mourns the Wicked (WI4 M6, 27m). On the same section of cliff, Lewis and I linked thin ice smears to a long section of technical drytooling between a couple of more thin patches of ice, creating Inch Worm (M8-, 27m).

With the ice finally shaping up in February, climbers began attempting, and eventually completing, a few more lines. Without a partner, I headed out to Sherbourne Lake hoping to meet some friends that were supposed to be there for the day. Unfortunately, no one else showed up and I resorted to climbing rope-solo in order to add a direct start

Fernando Nuflo on No One Mourns the Wicked. Photo: Imola Kerekes

to The Highlander (WI5). The new line, The Quickening (M7-, 30m), climbs on good holds out moderately steep rock, passing two bolts and horizontal cam placements up to an exciting transition to the hanging dagger and steep ice above before finally joining the last 10 metres of The Highlander.

That same weekend, Kolos and Pascal Simard were busy at McCauley Lake connecting a steep line of pillars and establishing Adopt-a-Drip Project (WI5+). The team then started work on a new mixed line, which they completed the following weekend. Their route The Independence of Oft-linked Items (M6+, 25m), climbs along a fat ice smear up to a roof with a traverse before pulling the lip onto the ice above. The line requires a variety of mixed climbing skills with plenty of gear between the fun and sometimes challenging moves.

On the last weekend of February, I once again found myself heading out solo. This time I was on my way to McCauley Lake. Luckily, I ran into Simard who had just completed the first ascent of another new line, Quickly Out of Trouble (WI4 M6, 20m). This attractive, moderate ice line is guarded by a short section of drytooling up steep rock. After a quick chat about what had been happening that season, the discussion quickly turned to the beautiful but improbable-looking wall left of The Independence of Oft-linked Items.

Black streaks stain the steep, blank-looking wall and lead up to a spectacular double dagger dripping from near the lip. Simard assured me that the wall was heavily featured and a line would surely go up it. It was near the end of this day that I found myself casting off up the steep wall with a small rack and my soloist. The wall turned out to be quite blank but had just enough holds to hook my way up as I aided and bolted the new line. Well after dark, I finished equipping Forked Tongue Devil (M7+, 20m). Fortunately, Simard was motivated enough to make the three-hour drive back the next day to climb with me and give a real belay on this powerful and technical route.

With alpine starts for short routes and regular three- to four-hour drives to access some of the "local" crags, the small number of motivated mixed climbers must seem insane to the outsider. Southern Ontario has never been, and will likely never be, a destination area for most folks, but it does have high-quality routes worth staying home for. It's easy to climb at a different cliff every weekend and with new cliffs being found every year, the best routes are still waiting to be discovered.

Nathan Kutcher on his new route Highway Robbery. Photo: Rebecca Lewis

Summary

Highway Robbery (M9+/10-, 14m), The Gorge. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, January 16, 2010.

Handicap Accessible (M7, 20m), Diamond Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, January 23, 2010.

Inch Worm (M8-, 27m), Raven Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, January 31, 2010.

No One Mourns the Wicked (WI4 M6, 27m), Raven Lake. FA: Tiago Varella Cid, Andriy Kolos, Anthony Nguyen, Fernando Nuflo, February 18, 2010.

The Quickening (M7-, 30m), Sherbourne Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, February 20, 2010.

Lightweight ID (WI3+ M4, 25m), McCauley Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Pascal Simard, February 21, 2010.

Quickly Out of Trouble (WI4 M6, 20m), McCauley Lake. FA: Isabelle Jette, Pascal Simard, February 27, 2010.

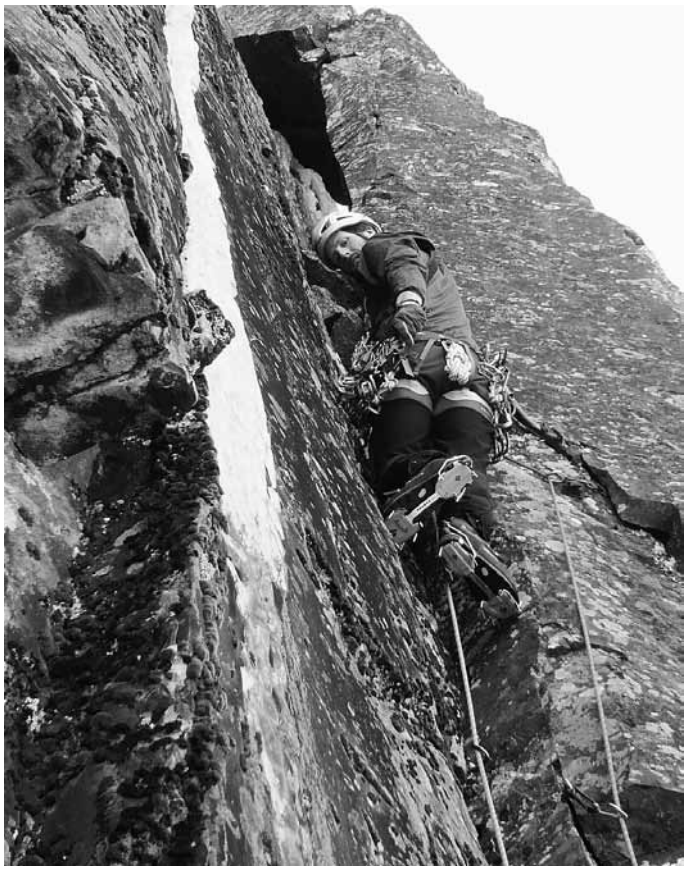
The Independence of Oft-linked Items (M6+, 25m), McCauley Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Pascal Simard, February 28, 2010.

Forked Tongue Devil (M7+, 20m), McCauley Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Pascal Simard, February 28, 2010.

Wee and Timorous Beasties

Dean Einerson

This year, the nipigon ice season came in like a lamb—a sad, sick little lamb that was not long for this world. After furiously training on backyard woodies from St. Paul to Thunder Bay, the ice climbing elite of the middle Americas were poised for a season par excellence. But by January, many knew what some were loath to admit: the ice was not growing. On the contrary, it was receding into something akin to window glass after a house fire. With every bouncing, gonging swing, the collective psyche of WI6 aspirants dwindled. The ACC discussion threads became dark, brooding places. Some turned to drink, others marriage. A few sought solace among the slightly larger routes of the Rockies, enchaining Waiparous lines in a vain attempt to keep the spectre of Ontario ice at bay [Editor's note: Scott Backes and Matt Giambrone linked Cryophobia and Hydrophobia in a day]. I heard talk that one poor fellow managed to cleave a shock-loaded biner through his middle finger rather than return home to face the ragged shreds of a winter long bereft of dignity.



Dean Einerson on the first ascent of Pisa at Kama Hills.
Photo: James Loveridge

While this winter was perhaps one of the shorter Ontario ice seasons in anyone's memory, a few new routes were put up in the Orient and Kama Bay areas. In mid-January, Adam Daley and I joined a few intrepid souls from Wisconsin and braved a -15 C day to climb Learn to Swim (M5 WI 4, 50m). The route sits between the two popular ice climbs of Ranxerox Tangent and Remember the Day. Very much a thorn between two roses, Learn to Swim presented awkward chimney climbing to a roof and insecure moderate ice to the trees above. As a visiting climber from Canmore once said, the climbing was "more alpine mixed than alpine mixed!"

Hoping for more of the same, James Loveridge and I made good use of the thin snowpack to explore the outer gullies of the Kama Hills. We found two climbs side by side that were perfectly suited to our individual strengths: James' being strenuous, run-out ice dribbles, and mine being easy-to-protect chimneys that I can rest my bum against. The first route, Pisa (M5 WI4+, 30m), ascends a corner, threading into and out of an improbable leaning tower smeared with verglass.

Back on the ground and with temperatures rising enough to question his sanity, James launched onto Doumo (M7 WI5+, 30m). After relieving the route of a large quantity of rotting ice, mixed moves led to a 20-metre dribble of ice 30 centimetres wide. This experience may have convinced Mr. Loveridge to take his poison neat from here on out.

Going *sans* ice, James established two new, well-bolted drytooling lines adjacent to an ice climb called Amy R in Orient Bay. Tatooine (M8, 25m) and Arrakis (M8+, 25m) are similar in character as they both have difficult starts and only get harder as you go. Each route ends after turning a large, frightful overhang. Wes Bender of Thunder Bay also established a new bolted mixed line in the Amy R area. Manufactured Inspiration (M7, 25m) ascends a rounded arête to a hanging curtain. Wes optimistically bolted the route so screws would be needed to top out, leaving late-season contenders the option of personal growth or a single-bolt rappel. Such was the amazing disappearing ice season in Orient Bay. In the end, these wonderful little routes illustrate the great lengths people will go to avoid climbing brittle northern ice.

Summary

Learn to Swim (M5 WI4, 50m), Orient Bay. FA: Adam Daley, Dean Einerson, January 16, 2010.

Manufactured Inspiration (M7, 25m), Orient Bay. FA: Wes Bender, Brain Bottan, February 15, 2010.

Pisa (M5 WI4+, 30m), Kama Hills. FA: Dean Einerson, James Loveridge, March 5, 2010.

Doumo (M7 WI5+, 30m), Kama Hills. FA: Dean Einerson, James Loveridge, March 5, 2010.

Tatooine (M8, 25m), Orient Bay. FA: James Loveridge, February 21, 2010.

Arrakis (M8+, 25m), Orient Bay. FA: James Loveridge, March 7, 2010.

M&M Ridge

Michael Lederer

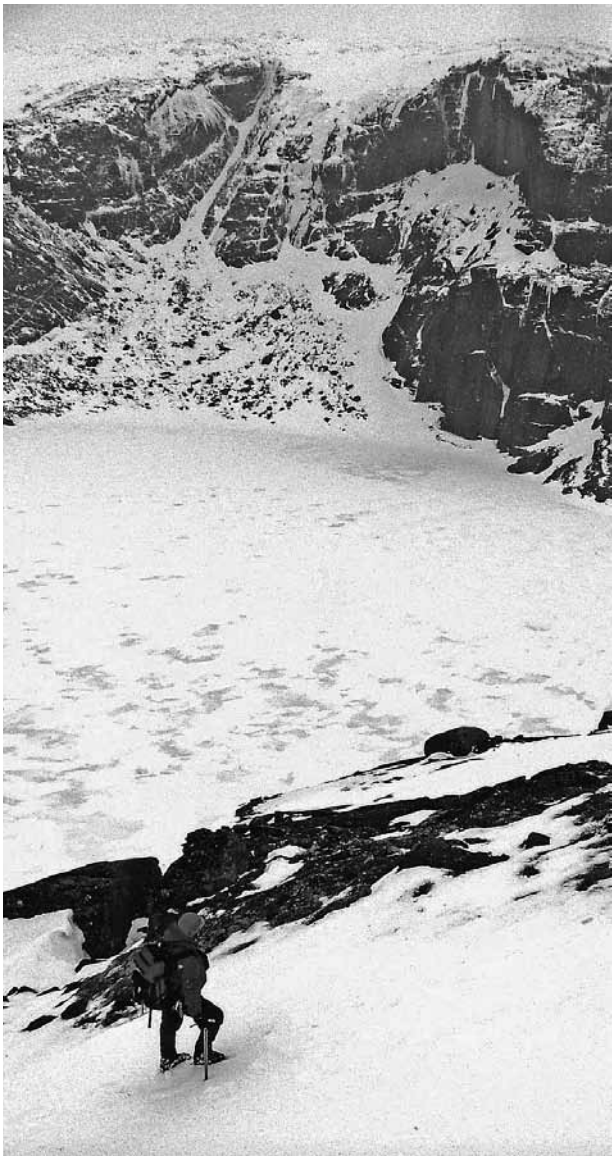
In early spring, fellow New York Section American Alpine Club member Mike Barker and I set out to explore the English Mountains of Labrador. This low subarctic range comprises of the easternmost and highest part of the Mealy Mountains. In February 2010, the Canadian government announced it will grant long-sought national park status to these remote mountains. It will be the newest park in the system, and, covering more than 11,000-square kilometres, the largest in Eastern Canada. The peaks reach elevations of more than 1,180 metres with bare alpine summits, and are flanked by cliffs of clean anorthosite and granite. The English Mountains have no record of technical mountaineering or climbing, but offer many opportunities for new routes in a scenic, and more importantly, now protected wilderness setting.

On March 27, 2009, we travelled by turbine single-Otter ski plane from Goose Bay to a dramatic cirque (GR 004430, NTS 13 G/10) where we established a basecamp for the week. A succession of harsh, extended arctic windstorms hampered our climbing efforts; however, we had a sufficient break in the weather to climb the snow and rock ridge that rose north-northwest from our basecamp. We dubbed it M&M Ridge: the ice melts in your mouth *and* in your hands.

The interesting part of M&M Ridge, from a mountaineer's perspective, is the initial 350 to 400 vertical metres. The summit is nearly a flat extra half kilometre of wind-blasted gravel and stone away, rising only an additional 100 vertical metres. The local topography is very complex, and the weather can be pretty dicey. All of which made route-finding exceptionally time-consuming, notwithstanding the benefit of about 70 years of collective mountaineering experience between my partner and me. We spent two days at the task, using the old trial-and-error method, retreating to our camp each night. On the third day, with an early start and the benefit of our prior efforts, we successfully strung together the final route to the top and made it back to camp just after sunset.

The route was a mixture of scrambling over modestly angled rock and climbing up somewhat steep variable-condition snow to bypass four cliff bands and vertical crags. The snow reached angles of 55 or 60 degrees (likely steeper; I tend to underestimate), some in thigh-deep drifts, some in really thin patches atop steep moss-covered slabs, and some frozen hard enough to mandate front pointing over short stretches. We were able to cover the steeper sections using conventional single-piolet techniques. In compliance with Murphy's Law, the steepest, most difficult snow pitch was also the most exposed. It put us 220-airy metres above the frozen lake below. Although we carried a rope and sparse rack, we opted to climb unroped, since anchor placements were either not available or would have been too time-consuming.

The English Mountains have lots of untapped climbing and winter sports potential. There were abundant, fully formed frozen waterfalls and very steep and narrow snow chutes, some in excess of 600 metres. The granite walls appear quite clean with featured rock and numerous dykes slicing upwards. During our stay, there was almost no evidence of rockfall or avalanche activity. There is also ample ski terrain for those inclined.



Mike Barker on the lower portion of M&M Ridge looking southwest towards some of the unclimbed rock and ice potential of the English Mountains of Labrador. Photo: Michael Lederer

Summary

M&M Ridge (III, AD, 70°), English Mountains, Labrador. FA: Mike Barker, Michael Lederer, April 2, 2009.

Foreign

Pumari Chhish East

Raphael Slawinski

In the summer of 2009, three of us Canadian Rockies locals travelled to Pakistan to play in the bigger hills of the Karakoram. Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted and I returned to the Hispar Glacier area, a region we first visited in 2006 when we unsuccessfully attempted the southwest face of Kunyang Chhish East (ca. 7,400 metres). Even though Kunyang East is one of the most beautiful mountains I have ever seen (and remains unclimbed to boot), in 2009 we decided to experience another mountain: the (also unclimbed) Pumari Chhish East (ca. 6,900 metres).

We left Calgary on June 10, and on summer solstice, arrived in basecamp at 4,500 metres, a wonderful grassy spot perched above the Jutmaru Glacier. While basecamp had great bouldering, it also offered a front-row view of our objective to remind us of why we were there. The first order of business was to acclimatize, and so on June 26, we summitted a previously unclimbed 5,900-metre peak in an 11-hour round trip from basecamp (most of the smaller and a few of the bigger peaks in the Hispar Glacier area are still unclimbed). We named the peak Rasool Sar in honour of our cook, guide and friend, Hajji Ghulam Rasool. While most of the "climbing" on Rasool Sar consisted of slogging up a steep snow slope, there was an amusing bit of corniced ridge toward the top. A few more acclimatization hikes, with three nights spent above 5,600 metres and one foray above 6,000 metres, and we declared ourselves ready for the main attraction.

Raphael Slawinski attempting the south face of Pumari Chhish East. Photo: Ian Welsted

Initially we had planned to attempt Pumari Chhish East via its south ridge, first tried in 2007 by Steve Su and Pete Takeda. But after wallowing in horrible snow on a few ridge climbs (bad snow is something most Karakorum ridges seem to share, from my experience), the corniced south ridge lost some of its appeal and we turned our attention to the southeast face to its right. On July 16, we bivied below the face at 4,800 metres. The following morning, we got going well before dawn to take advantage of cooler temperatures. We made good progress up snow and ice fields, followed by a beautiful ice hose to the base of the rock headwall at 5,700 metres. While Eamonn prepared a tent platform, Ian and I did one more pitch of reasonably difficult mixed climbing. Leaving a rope fixed, we descended to a waiting dinner. While the terrain above looked hard, it was perhaps not impossibly so, even for lightweights like us. Unfortunately, we never did get to come to grips with it: the effort of a big day, the altitude, but above all, a heavy meal of freeze-dried chili and cheese had me throwing up all night. In the morning I could barely stand, and so down we went.

On July 28, Ian and I (Eamonn having left to drink beer in Ireland) once again packed our packs and approached the foot of the southeast face for another attempt. Unfortunately, during the intervening 10 days of warm weather, the ice hose we climbed on the first attempt had melted out. While we sat trying to decide whether we should still try the face under present conditions (after all, the word on ice climbing these days is that "it don't have to be formed to be formed"), a large wet-snow avalanche swept the gully in question. The very same evening, we were back in basecamp.

In between the two attempts (if they could be called that) on Pumari Chhish East, and before Eamonn left us, the three us climbed a route on a circa-6,300-metre peak almost directly above basecamp. On July 20, starting from a bivy at 4,900 metres below the southwest face of the peak, we soloed some 900 metres of serac-threatened snow and ice to reach a steep rock wall streaked with ice. We climbed it in eight long, sustained rope lengths to reach the summit ridge at 6,200 metres. The late hour, deteriorating weather, but mostly horrible snow conditions (waist-deep crud over rock slabs and hard ice), combined to turn us around. We rappelled through the night and arrived back at our bivy site 22 hours after setting out. While we did not tag the summit, we were psyched to have established one of the best alpine mixed routes any of us has ever done (and this coming from a crew with routes like The Wild Thing, Moonflower Buttress and Denali Diamond on their résumés). We also took the liberty of naming the still-unclimbed peak Lunda Sar, which roughly translates as "Second-hand Peak".

Finally, just a few days before leaving basecamp and heading back home, Ian and I made the first ascent of Khani Basa Sar (6,441 metres), a reasonably major peak on the ridge separating the Jutmaru and Khani Basa Glaciers. The peak had been attempted before by several different expeditions; in fact, on an earlier acclimatization foray up its south ridge, we came across traces of a Korean expedition.

Leaving our bivy at 4,800 metres at the ungodly hour of 3 a.m., we made

for the southwest rib of the peak, which neatly separates two couloirs capped by giant seracs. After a few worrying moments, when we thought that while stumbling around in the dark we might have blundered into one of the aforementioned gullies, we decided we were in fact on route and continued up pleasant névé and rock scrambling. Shortly after dawn, we roped up at a short mixed wall, and continued above on 55-degree ice. The crux of the route was a narrow bit of snow ridge (of course!) leading to the summit plateau. One serac wall proved especially troublesome, but after I took a lead fall (and landed on a pleasantly soft snow mushroom) when my tools ripped out of overhanging fluff, we managed to get up it. After a short brew stop, we continued upward on much easier terrain. We summitted around 6 p.m., and were rewarded with a panoramic view of the Karakoram, K2 included. The descent was not entirely straightforward, especially reversing the snow ridge, but we persevered and stumbled back to our bivy exactly 24 hours after leaving it.

I highly recommend the Jutmaru Glacier area at the foot of the Pumari Chhish massif. It is a wild, deserted and awesome place. There is also no shortage of things to do, from granite bouldering around basecamp to super-alpine objectives on the south faces of Pumari Chhish. In either category, our expedition has barely scratched the surface of what is possible.

Acknowledgements

This expedition was supported by the John Lauchlan Award, and sponsored by Arc'teryx, Black Diamond, Scarpa North America, Sterling Rope and Hammer Nutrition.

Summary

First ascent of Rasool Sar (5900m), Jutmaru Glacier, Hispar, Karakoram, Pakistan. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted, June 26, 2009.

Attempt (WI3 M6, to 5700m) on the southeast face of unclimbed Pumari Chhish East (ca.6900m). Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted, July 16-17, 2009.

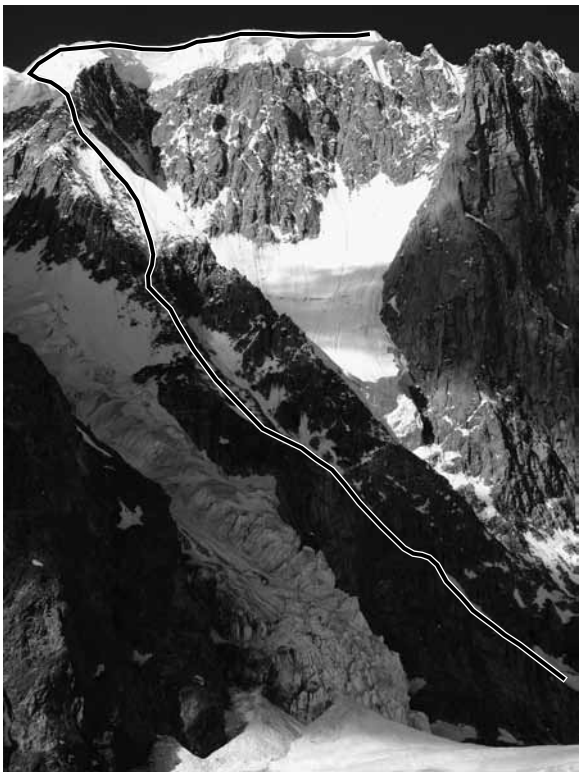
Attempt (WI4 M6, to 6200m) on the southwest face of unclimbed Lunda Sar (ca.6300m). Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, Ian Welsted, July 20, 2009.

The first ascent of Khani Basa Sar (6441m) via the southwest rib (AI4). FA: Raphael Slawinski, Ian Welsted, July 31, 2009.

The attempt on the southeast face of Pumari Chhish East. Photo: Ian Welsted

The attempt on the southwest face of the unclimbed Lunda Sar. Photo: Ian Welsted

The southwest rib of Khani Basa Sar. Photo: Ian Welsted



Bluebird in Alaska

J. Mills

The skies were bluebird with no trace of wind, so we had no excuse to stop. We just kept going and going right through the night, the next day and the next night again. The terrain blurred together and our memory of any particular section became fuzzy. Finally, after an ultra-marathon-like effort with little sleep, little food and even less water, we reached our goal. The thing we had been dreaming of for months and striving towards for days had actually been achieved! We had done it! We had persevered for more than 40 hours and driven Dave's truck all the way from Jasper, Alberta, to Talkeetna, Alaska.

Now what to do? Dave Edgar, Jody Sutherland and I had really done no planning beyond salivating over guidebook pictures for the past few months. Details such as food and gear were dealt with by just throwing in whatever we wanted. I don't think any of us really knew what all was actually in the duffels until about halfway through the trip. There was no time for counting since, as I've mentioned, the weather was perfect. We still weren't even sure which glacier we were going to fly to. That was solved when we met some climbers coming out of the Ruth who told us that the climbs we wanted to do there were falling apart. So, after a moment of discussion, we decided to fly straight to Kahiltna basecamp. After one more flurry of packing, a flight that we will never forget and a couple of hours of sleep, we found ourselves racking up at the base of the Moonflower Buttress on Mount Hunter—still less than 60 hours after rolling out of Jasper!

We probably should have rested properly; we probably should have done a warm-up route. But we figured this might be our one spell of perfect weather and we had better take advantage of it. Surely the clouds would roll in soon enough and we would be forced to rest to the point of insanity for days on end. That's what happens in Alaska, right? Anyways, there we were gaping up at one of the biggest walls any of us had ever seen when Dave just grabbed the ends of the ropes and started pounding up the initial ice slopes. I don't know anyone who can put 60-degree ice slopes below them quite as efficiently as Dave. He was therefore saddled with the hard work of leading them many times throughout the trip. The features we had read about began to fall beneath us, and we began to learn about climbing in Alaska. Narrow ice runnels, lots of stemming and way better rock protection than in the Rockies had us hooting and hollering up the first dozen pitches of the climb.

We thought the crux of the day was over when we made it up the Prow pitch and climbed onto the moderate ice above. Having never been to Alaska before, we hadn't given much thought to where we would lay down our bivy sacks for the night. At home in the Rockies, it's just a matter of finding a nice ledge or digging a quick hole in the snow. As it turned out, Alaska is a bit different, and three hours of hacking out a pitiful ledge ended up being the undisputed crux of the day. Despite the cramped quarters, we slept like babies. That is to say, we woke up every hour or two and fussed about a lot. However, we did manage to get a few hours of shut-eye before deciding it was morning.

We were exhausted, but the climbing was unbelievably good and spirits remained high. Another 15 or so pitches of steep ice and mixed climbing finally saw us to the top of the Moonflower Buttress. We had hoped to camp at the top of the buttress and climb the remaining 750 metres of easier terrain to the summit the next day. However, our growing uncertainty about the weather led us to the conclusion that we should descend instead. The thought of rappelling 1,200 metres through the night was daunting, but it paled in comparison to the thought of chopping another bivy ledge into the 50-degree ice. The descent went smoothly and we skied back to camp by midday where we were greeted by our friend Eamonn Walsh from home, as well as an international collection of people who would become friends over the next couple of weeks.

When the shock had finally worn off, we didn't quite know what to do with ourselves. The Moonflower had been our only really concrete goal for the trip and now it was done just three days after leaving home. At first, we satisfied ourselves with doing a bit of exploring in our duffel bags full of food. It turned out there were more than 150 sausages, four bags of meat, exactly one million granola bars and enough coffee to give an Alaskan moose a heart attack. At least we had the important stuff. We happily commenced the first of many fat-loading days. However, there were two problems we couldn't escape that prevented us from fully relaxing. The first and biggest problem with our relaxation program was that the weather was still absolutely perfect. Everything we had heard about Alaska led us to believe that not a single day of clear skies should be wasted—the next storm was surely just around the corner.

The second problem was that none of us could keep our eyes off the summit of Mount Hunter. It was absolutely beautiful above basecamp as it rose above 2,000 metres into the sunshine. It was during these initial days of rest that a new plan began to form. We simply could not ignore that we wanted to climb the wall again and ideally, carry on to the summit. The other well-known route up the wall is Deprivation. It had been climbed a handful of times in the past few years, but rumour had it that the initial ice pitches weren't fully formed this year. The other problem with Deprivation was that it looked like there would be excessive amounts of traversing across low-angle ice high on the route—not exactly our favourite type of climbing. So, we decided we would do some of the easier climbs around

basecamp while waiting for the inevitable bad weather to roll in.

A great day was had on the Southwest Ridge of Mount Frances. Lots of moderate mixed climbing and some cool snow features led us quickly up the ridge. We swapped leads throughout with Jody getting the steep 5.8 crux pitch about two-thirds of the way up. The summit had jaw-dropping views of the surrounding giants, including Denali, Mount Foraker, and of course, the ever-present north face of Mount Hunter, which was still holding much of our attention. It was so nice on the summit of Frances that we hung out for almost two hours.

One more day of rest in the sun and then finally we were relieved by some bad weather. The wind was strong enough to blow down our 60-centimetre-thick snow walls. Luckily, we had already put the skills learned during our Canadian childhoods to good use and had built the only snow cave in basecamp, in which we remained quite comfortable. The wind only lasted a couple of days on the glacier, but it was visibly still howling way up on the high peaks for another three or four. This meant we finally got the rest we had put off since leaving home 10 days earlier.

Just as we were beginning to get restless, the wind died down and the weather was once again perfect. We packed up a light rack and headed towards the Mini-Moonflower, a 900-metre couloir of mostly moderate ice leading to a small sub-summit of Mount Hunter. About an hour into the ski approach, we scoped Deprivation and saw a slender ribbon of ice slicing a direct line up through its endless traverses. The feature looked so good that we were easily able to convince ourselves that we could somehow find a way through the lower unformed sections of Deprivation in order to get there. As we continued skiing, we saw that someone was already on the Mini-Moonflower, so we dropped most of our gear and made a quick ascent of the West Face of Kahiltna Queen. Snow conditions were good so we didn't end up using the rope all day, except for a single 20-metre rappel on the descent. It felt good to just move quickly with two great friends, high on a beautiful mountain in Alaska. The climb was straightforward, and despite lacking much in the way of technical difficulty, turned out to be one of the highlights of the trip. Just plain fun!

J. Mills starting up the crux of Deprivation during their first ascent of the HOD variation. Photo: Dave Edgar

Back at camp, enjoying more good times with sausages, coffee and scotch, we had made friends with many of our neighbours. However, socializing in basecamp could only keep us occupied for so long, and eventually we decided to cache some gear at the base of Deprivation in order to get a closer look at the route. In stark contrast to our kamikaze approach on the Moonflower, we spent endless hours discussing our potential strategies for Deprivation. The main debate was whether or not to take bivy gear. This was resolved when Jody decided not to join us. His boots had been giving him difficulties all trip and had worn a gaping wound into his shin. He gave us full moral support and helped with the preparations in every way possible. With it being down to just the two of us, Dave and I concurred that carrying all of the bivy gear in the second's pack would be highly unpleasant. Light and fast it was.

We timed our start so that we would be climbing the easy lower ice during the brief single hour of Alaskan darkness. It turned out that the easy lower ice started with an overhanging and rotten bergshrund that was

hidden from below—indeed a wake-up call. Above this, a few pitches of nice WI4 ice and easy mixed led to the anaemic crux pitch. It turned out that everyone was right: the crux pitch was not in. However, we managed to fight our way up it using every technique we had ever learned in the mountains. My personal favourite was sticking my gloves in my mouth for a few bare-handed overhanging moves 60 metres up. I called that move "desperation", and it is one I try not to bust out too often. At the top of that 71-metre pitch, Dave and I both agreed it was the hardest thing we had ever climbed. As he so often does, Dave provided the voice of reason by suggesting that we take a few minutes to eat and drink. Somewhat recovered, we continued on. Another dozen pitches of fantastic Alaskan ice runnels fell below us and brought us to our proposed variation. The ice we had spotted from below was hidden in a corner to our left, but a short traverse revealed a beautiful strip of thin ice leading up as high as we could see. Five long pitches up to WI5 and a bit of mixed climbing led us through the rock bands. We were psyched to have avoided the traverse and to have completed a new variation on such a big route.

We finished up the buttress and climbed into a crevasse to make dinner, about 26 hours after leaving basecamp. Two hours of eating and drinking produced nothing but shivering, so we continued upwards. Soon we crested the ridge and emerged into glorious sunshine. We hastily organized our ropes and packs into a bed of sorts and tried to get some sleep. Dave was comatose immediately, but I was left drying my boots and wishing I hadn't just eaten three handfuls of chocolate-covered espresso beans. After about an hour, I could feel my muscles seizing up so I woke Dave to continue. The rest of the climb to the summit of Hunter was a blur of endless ice slopes, exciting corniced ridges and some easier snow slopes that gained the top. On the summit, we were elated but exhausted. At this point, we had been moving for about 35 hours and it was hard to feel anything but tired. The wind was blowing and we had no energy to spare, so we soon started down. Lots of downclimbing, 25 or 30 rappels, one stove break and nine hours later, we were back at our skis. On the steeper slopes, skiing was completely out of the question so we threw them downhill and stumbled after them. I will never forget staggering into basecamp and finding Jody ready with a feast of fried chicken, bacon and cheese.

We stuck around for a couple of more days of thanking the weather gods and lounging in basecamp before flying out to the metropolis of Talkeetna. The most important thing I learned on the trip was that the weather is never bad in Alaska.

Summary

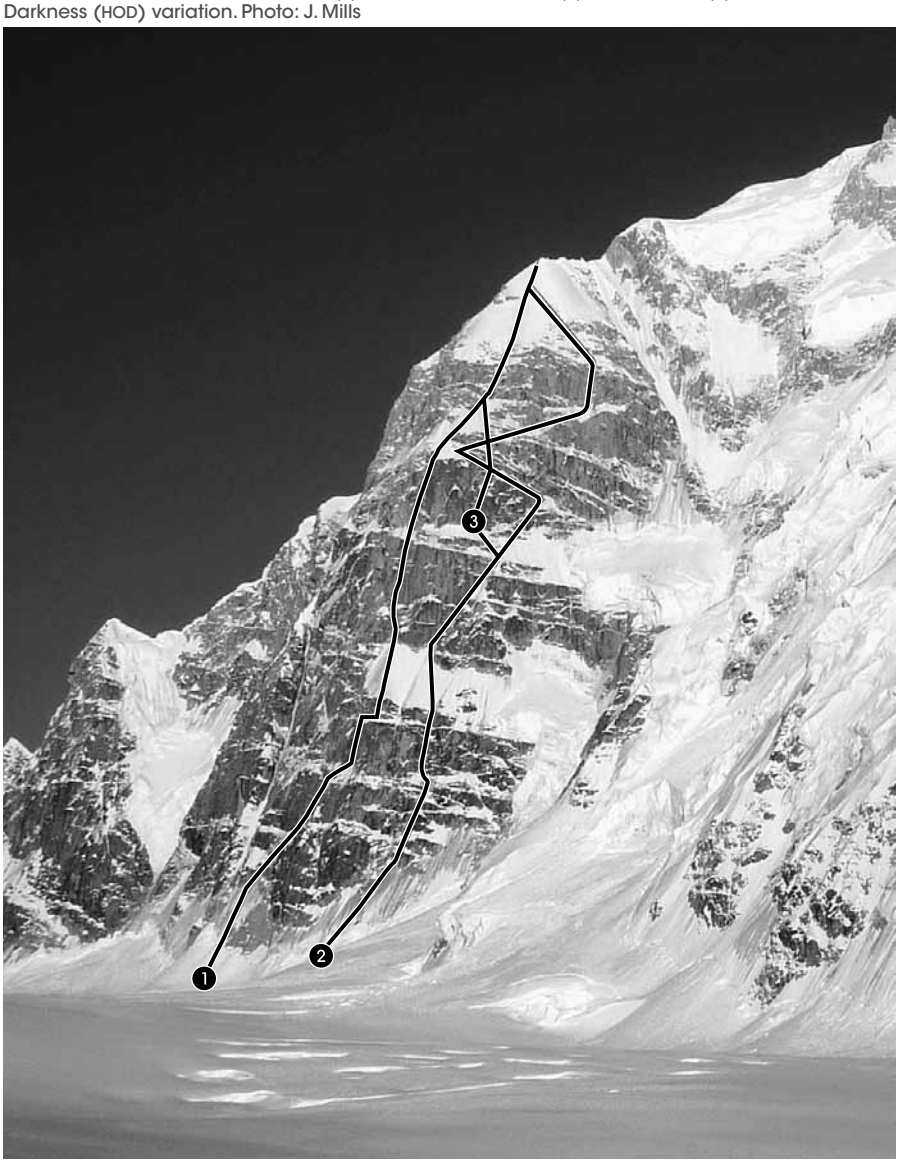
Moonflower Buttress (VI AI5 M7 A0), Mt. Hunter (4415m), Alaska. Dave Edgar, J. Mills, Jody Sutherland, May 2009. Note: Only to the top of the buttress; not to summit.

Southwest Ridge (IV 5.8) of Mt. Frances. Dave Edgar, J. Mills, Jody Sutherland, May 2009.

West Face (IV AI3) of Kahiltna Queen. Dave Edgar, J. Mills, Jody Sutherland, May 2009.

Hosers of Darkness (HOD) variation to Deprivation (VI AI5 M7), north buttress of Mt. Hunter. FA: Dave Edgar, J. Mills, May 2009.

The North Buttress of Mount Hunter: (1) Moonflower Buttress, (2) Deprivation, (3) Hosers of Darkness (HOD) variation. Photo: J. Mills



Zartosh

Graham Rowbotham

The sweep of the great mountain ranges of Asia—west and north along the fringes of the Tibetan plateau and Chinese Xinjiang—culminate in the Pamirs within the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of eastern Tajikistan. The Pamirs are home to some of the highest peaks in the former Soviet Union, including Ismoil Somoni at 7,495 metres, previously known as Peak Communism and Peak Stalin at various times.

In August 2009, Adam Thomas, Jock Jeffrey, Simon Woods and I travelled to the Muzkol Range in the Tajik Pamir to attempt the first ascent of Zartosh (6,130 metres). This peak had previously been attempted several times in the late 1990s by commercial expeditions run by Executive Wilderness Programmes (EWP), a UK outfit. They had made three attempts to climb Zartosh via the northwest face from the col with the neighbouring White Pyramid Peak, and one attempt via the spectacular north face, which had ended in tragedy. Although unsuccessful on Zartosh, EWP recorded first ascents of many of the surrounding peaks.

Setting out from the UK, New Zealand and Canada, we converged in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, at the end of July. Here, we made final preparations for the four-day drive to the eastern Pamir while we waited for our registration documents and permits.

On leaving Dushanbe, we had a sweepstake to guess how many police check-points we would encounter on the first day's drive. My guess of eight was surpassed before we even reached the outskirts of the city. Fortunately, the frequency dropped off substantially as we drove further east, although on one occasion we were flagged down and our driver was taken aside and fined heavily for the serious offences of having a dusty vehicle and carrying luggage on the roof rack.

The trip from Dushanbe to the Muzkol Range was spectacular. The section from Kala-i-Khum to Khorog follows the Panj River valley, which forms the border with Afghanistan. This area is still full of landmines—a legacy of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. After seeing a road sign graphically depicting a leg being blown off and seeing a sapper defusing a mine only a few metres from the side of the road, we were a little more cautious about wandering far from the vehicle during pee stops.

Although the road ended somewhat short of our intended basecamp, this did not stop our intrepid driver from continuing up the moraine for some distance from where a short carry enabled us to set up camp above a small stream.

During the next week, we established a highcamp on the glacier at 5,100 metres with an intermediate moraine camp at 4,500 metres. We also climbed Leopard's Tooth (5,470 metres), first climbed and named by EWP in 1997.

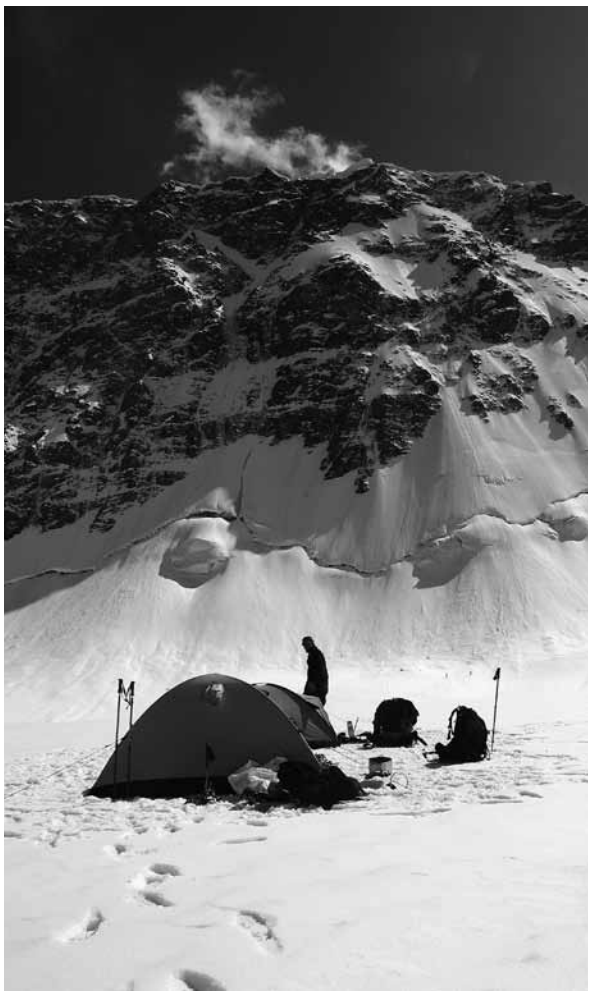
Up to this point, the weather had been very stable, although we ate a lot of dust at basecamp as a result of the notorious Pamir winds that picked up each afternoon. This changed on the night of August 16, at which point, it proceeded to snow, albeit lightly, every night for the next week.

Heading back up to the glacier, we carried the tents a little higher to the foot of the 800-metre north face of Zartosh. On August 22, Simon and Adam attempted the face, reaching a height of around 5,650 metres before retreating due to unconsolidated snow on technical terrain and the prospect of at least one bivouac in less than favourable conditions.

On the same day, Jock and I set off to climb White Pyramid Peak (6,060 metres), first climbed by an EWP expedition in 1998. Deep snow on the slopes leading up to the Zartosh-White Pyramid col made for particularly heavy going. Jock was also battling to regulate his type 1 diabetes, trying to decide whether the way he felt was due to the effects of altitude or blood-sugar imbalance. At the top of the slope, I made for a patch of sunlight at the far side of the col where we could take a break.

After crossing a perfectly safe-looking area of snow, I suddenly felt a

A foreshortened perspective of the unclimbed 800-metre north face of Zartosh. Photo: Graham Rowbotham



sharp tug on the rope and instinctively dropped to the snow and dug in my ice tools. I looked behind. There was no sign of Jock, only the rope leading to the edge of a hole that had swallowed him. A few moments later, a pair of snow-caked sunglasses flew out of the hole. Then I was gradually able to start taking in rope as Jock hauled himself out. However, this was nearly the last straw for Jock as the effort of extricating himself almost put him in a diabetic coma.

We hung out at the col while Jock took a blood-sugar measurement and then pounded down a bunch of chocolate bars. Understandably, given Jock's condition, we discussed turning back. However, Jock is tough and determined, and after the chocolate fix kicked in, only a little encouragement was required for him to agree to climb the final 100 metres up the ridge that led to the summit.

On returning to high camp, Adam was keen to make another attempt on Zartosh. Although the prospect of slogging back up to the col was not particularly appealing to me, the summit of White Pyramid had provided a good vantage point to scope out a route up the northwest face of Zartosh from the col and I'd seen what looked like a reasonable-looking line. So Adam and I stayed up at the high camp, while Simon and Jock descended to basecamp.

On August 24, we set out at 5 a.m. up the ridge and snow slopes to the col. Although our tracks from two days earlier had filled in with spindrift, the going was still a lot easier. After a short break at the col, we started up the face. The down jackets stayed on due to the wind, the shady aspect and the -12 C temperature. I led off up the gully in deep powder. Reaching the first rocks, the angle steepened and I excavated a placement for an ice screw to protect some precarious climbing on loose snow that was overlying hard ice.

I led on up a snow/ice gully to a rock step, which I could protect from below with a good nut. The rock step was technical and loose, but soon turned into easier-angled snow, which I followed to a good spike belay below a small rock wall. Adam took over and headed left up easy snow to the base of a steep rock band baring the route to the summit ridge. A groove that I'd spotted from White Pyramid proved to be the key to overcoming the rock band. Adam surmounted this with a few tricky moves that proved to be the crux. This gave access to a ramp leading to more broken but easier rock. At this point, the summit ridge looked within reach. The fat lady wasn't quite singing yet, but she was definitely warming up.

Jock Jeffery on the Southwest Ridge of White Pyramid Peak with the northwest face of Zartosh behind showing the line of first ascent. Photo: Graham Rowbotham

The summit ridge was a perfect knife-edge of snow rising up with huge cornices over the north face, and broken rock and snow to the south. We short-roped a series of small steps and steep, unconsolidated snow, reaching the summit cornice in time for a late lunch and plenty of time to soak up the scenery.

On our return trip to Dushanbe, we took a more southerly route along the Wakhan Corridor, which follows the border with Afghanistan and provided magnificent views of peaks in the Hindu Kush.

To fill in the last few days before our flights home, we took a mini-trip to the western side of the country where we hiked in and camped at a lake. Since this was close to the border with Uzbekistan, we inevitably ran into an army post. A young private took our passports and started studiously copying details into a large ledger. When he'd finished, I snuck a look at what he'd written and was amused to see that both Adam and I had our names registered as Mr. Visa. I considered it prudent not to point out his little inaccuracy.

Arriving back at Vancouver airport, the immigration officer asked where I was coming from. "Tajikistan," I replied.

There was a long pause. "Where is that?"

I hesitated and then thinking it was perhaps best not to mention its proximity to Afghanistan and the cross-border drug and arms trade, just said, "Central Asia."

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation for their generous support.

Summary

First ascent of Zartosh (6130m) via northwest face from Zartosh-White Pyramid col, Muzkol Range, Pamirs, Tajikistan. FA: Graham Rowbotham, Adam Thomas, August 24, 2009.

Manaslu

Helen Sovdat

In spring 2009, I received an intriguing note from my friend Val Pitkethly: "Hiya, do you fancy climbing Manaslu this fall?" Val is a trekking guide with a myriad of connections in Nepal, and knew of a deal to share expenses with a commercial group. Along with Mel Proudlock, a climber from England, I took her up on the offer. As a mountain guide, this was an appealing idea as it was the chance to climb a big peak for myself without the worries of leading. In 1996, Val proposed the same deal to climb Cho Oyu (8,201 metres), but she never made it on that trip. Just weeks before our departure, she had a rock-climbing accident on Mount Rundle and ended up severely injured. The rest of us continued with the trip and summited Cho Oyu in October 1996. After a long recovery, Val was able to climb again and went back to summit Cho Oyu 10 years later in 2006. Now she was proposing another 8,000er. I had thought that neither of us would ever climb a second 8,000-metre peak, but this was a good opportunity, and 13 years is long enough to forget the pain.

The name *Manaslu* translates to "mountain of the spirit". It is the eighth highest peak in the world and was first climbed by a Japanese team in 1956. It stands northwest of Kathmandu near the source of the Burhi Gandaki River and forms the apex of the popular Manaslu trekking circuit. Although a special permit is still required to trek in the Manaslu region, the peak is now attracting climbing expeditions looking for cheaper and more reliable alternatives to peaks in Tibet. Val's connections served us well as we ended up with a jovial group from the UK and a well-outfitted camp. In addition to camp services, we hired our own Sherpas—Ngima and Tenzing, two fine young men from families that Val has known for many years. Both of them have climbed Everest multiple times and several other peaks such as Pumori, Ama Dablam and Dhaulagiri. There were 11 expeditions on the mountain when we were there and roughly 100 people from several different countries. At least 10 people were vying for the first ski descent of Manaslu, and in the end, three skiers were successful, one Chilean and two Brits.

Our trip started with a rugged day's drive from Kathmandu to the town of Arughat. From there, at 500 metres, it was going to be a huge vertical gain to the 8,163-metre summit, but we were prepared to work hard. Besides, the long walk to basecamp was stunning. Lush forests, rice fields and waterfalls dominated the scenery. The valley often narrowed to a spectacular gorge, and the trail crossed back and forth across the river on rickety cable bridges. The villages became smaller and more rustic as the valley climbed towards the Tibetan border. Three high passes gave access to local trade routes. We saw long trains of yaks heading down the valley laden with Chinese rice and sugar and then return with loads of wood to Tibet. The trek to Samagoan (3,400 metres), where the trail branches to basecamp, takes about five days and offers fitness training but very little acclimatization benefit. It is just too low in elevation. Quite a few climbers now fly to Samagoan in order to start acclimatizing sooner and avoid the leeches of the lowlands.

The scenic basecamp for Manaslu sits at 4,900 metres on the north flanks of the peak. From there, we set up four highcamps on the mountain. The climbing starts with a low-angle but spectacular glacier walk to Camp 1 (5,640 metres). There are some crevasses to cross but travel is easy. Negotiating the icefall to Camp 2 was one the cruxes of the climb with a series of short, steep steps ascending through a maze of crevasses. Here the route passes under an active icefall for about 400 metres. We managed to tuck our tails and run under the face several times without incident. Camp 2 was situated at 6,380 metres, just above the icefall. From there, moderate-angle slopes lead to Camp 3 (6,830 metres) located at the col between main and north summits of Manaslu. Going to Camp 4 (7,400 metres) involved grinding up a steep face with icy steps. The length of this notorious avalanche slope was demoralizing, but at least the snowpack was stable. From Camp 4, a long gentle slope eventually kicks up to an airy, corniced summit ridge.

One of the highlights of the trip for me was helping to fix the lines through the icefall between Camp 1 and 2. Along with some other guides, I carried up rigging, set anchors and dragged ropes. Hammer and pickets in hand, I was thrilled to be up there working. Even if just for a day, it was a treat to be a route-setter on Manaslu. The fixed lines minimize the chance of falling off a steep slope or into a crevasse, but Manaslu is still a hazardous mountain. Horrendous weather along with unfortunate accidents involving avalanches and icefall have given the peak a dangerous reputation. Lucky for us, the avalanche hazard was low and the massive icefall between Camp 1 and 2 wasn't very active. Even so, there was one fatality in the icefall that season. After our departure, a Slovenian climber was hit and critically injured as he was traversing under the ice face. There was an impressive rescue effort, but he was not evacuated in time to survive. After the accident, I questioned my risk tolerance. Any one of us could have been hit at any time, but it was a numbers game that we were willing to play. We had seen only one major ice release in three weeks, so it seemed a reasonable risk to take, and with each pass under the seracs, I felt less vulnerable. But it was just complacency and blind faith that increased my confidence.

It was a challenge to keep my motivation up and my health intact, both of which are basic requirements to even have a chance at the summit. I could have used more rest days, but Val and

Mel inspired me to get up, keep going and attend to the details of surviving at altitude. Val was always positive and helpful; she watched out for us and kept us working as a team. Also a little superstitious, she felt it was important to adhere to the Tibetan calendar. The climbing was to happen on lucky days, and resting on unlucky days. This worried me more than I let on, as I wondered what would happen if we got the dates wrong and we were unlucky.

Mel, a geophysicist, was meticulous with his gear. He was constantly reorganizing and tinkering. While I would agonize over what to carry and worry about how much it weighed, Mel would bring it all, including doubles, just in case. The extra weight was not an issue for him. Systems and good habits are what keep you alive. We carefully heeded to the rules of hydration, forever melting snow and forcing down the liquids. I paced myself slowly and took time to attend to personal details. It was nice to not be guiding for a change. My energy was focused inward and it was all I could do to take care of my own needs.

After only three weeks on the mountain, we decided to push our summit attempt ahead to September 28. The weather forecast was for strong winds and we wanted to be down before the jet stream hit. Summit day dawned clear and cold, and according to the Tibetan calendar it was a lucky day! We woke at midnight to prepare ourselves for the walk to the top. It took forever to get my boots and my multiple layers of clothing on. Eventually, I emerged from the tent armed with hot water bottles, hand warmers and snacks stuffed everywhere. Then I clumsily struggled with my oxygen system until Ngima showed up to help sort out the breathing apparatus. When all of the equipment was set, I could hardly move or see anything. Finally, I slowly started slogging up the slope with Val and Mel. Conditions were perfect and we reached the summit after six hours of walking. I was relieved to be on top of Manaslu and thrilled to see such a spectacular view. It is said that you can see seven other 8,000-metre peaks from the summit, but we were only able to pick out Annapurna, Dhaulagiri and Shishapangma. We had been lucky to reach the top in good conditions and favourable weather. The next day the winds picked up and the peak did not get climbed again that season.

Tenzing Sherpa, Helen Sovdat, Mel Proudlock and Val Pitkethly (front to back) on the summit of Manaslu. Photo: Rob Casserley

After the climb, Val and I delivered medical supplies to the village of Samdo, where she has a strong connection to local Tibetan families. She has been delivering supplies and helping with training so that they can handle their own basic health needs. Before her initiative, they had nothing to deal with emergencies themselves and had to walk three days to the nearest health post. Val is also a key figure with Light Education Development (LED), which builds and delivers solar-powered LCD lights to remote villages in developing countries. After a quick visit with some of Val's friends, we continued on our way to complete the Manaslu Circuit via Larke Pass (5,200 metres) to Besisahar (760 metres). The four-day walk out allowed us time to contemplate our adventure and approach civilization slowly.

We were thankful to walk away from Manaslu in good health and as good friends. The "mountain of spirit" had granted us safe passage to the summit and back.

Summary

First Canadian ascent of Manaslu (8163m), eighth highest mountain in the world, via the Japanese Route (normal route), Nepal. Val Pitkethly, Mel Proudlock, Helen Sovdat, August 28-September 30, 2009.

Oman

Graham Rowbotham

New zealand resident Paul Knott and I visited the Western Hajar in the Sultanate of Oman for a three-week period spanning Christmas and New Year 2009-10. This 300-kilometre chain of limestone peaks lies in northern Oman, with the waters of the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea to the north and east, and the wide-open desert of the aptly named Empty Quarter to the west. Technical climbing in Oman was pioneered by Raymond Renaud who, in 1979, climbed the 900-metre-high prominent pillar that separates the south and southeast faces of Jabal Misht (2,090 metres). Reportedly, their feat impressed locals so much that a helicopter was dispatched to airlift them from the summit to a grand reception at the Sultan's Palace.

We initially based ourselves near the hamlet of M'Seeb where we enjoyed the generous hospitality of the friendly local goat herders. Our first route, The M'Seeb Rappers (TD- 5.8, 460m), was on the southwest face of Jabal Kawr (2,565 metres), to the left of the prominent buttress on which lies The Queen of Sheba, a route climbed by Oman climbing activist Geoff Hornby and partner Paul Ramsden in 1999. Below the crux roof, we came across a piton with an old carabiner and a sling of nylon rope around a nearby bush. It seems likely that this was the location of one of Bill Wheeler's two unsuccessful attempts to climb the face, before he finally succeeded in 1983 with Chris Fenton and Vaughan Hewitt on the 560-metre National Day Route (D- 5.7). Bill was one of the country's most prolific pioneers, and he recruited various partners for his climbing exploits. The novelty of this ascent resulted in receiving extensive coverage in all the Omani newspapers.

On Boxing Day, we made an attempt to climb a route up Nadan Pillar, a striking feature rising 800 metres from the gorge that leads to the hidden cirque of Nadan. An improbable road has recently been pushed through the ancient boulder choke to Nadan village, but has already been rendered impassable in places by rockfall. While I was leading the first pitch, a foothold unexpectedly snapped off. Fortunately, I was sufficiently in balance to avoid bagging any airtime. We continued up for five or six more pitches on some friable rock before being stopped by the steep wall of a tower on the upper section of the pillar. The rock, like much in the Western Hajar, was extremely sharp and featured, ideal for snagging ropes. The wind also picked up as we rappelled, blowing the ropes sideways. We could hear the call to prayer from a distant mosque and considered ourselves fortunate that our own prayers for the ropes not to get stuck seemed to be answered.

For our next route, we scrambled up a *wadi* (canyon) to enjoy a splendid moonlit bivouac below a feature that we named Mabos Pillar, after a nearby village. This lies to the northwest of M'Seeb and is the less-steep neighbour of Kawr Pillar, which was climbed in 1999. Our route, which we called Anhydrous Living, involved more than 900 metres of climbing, but some careful route finding to avoid steeper walls kept the grade to a moderate 5.7. Darkness fell as we descended the last section of a gully, but we could see a light coming towards us. It was a shepherd who invited us back to his remote hamlet where we enjoyed coffee brewed on an open fire. We weren't allowed to leave until we'd also accepted some dates. There were incredulous looks as we finally bade farewell and headed off into the night towards our bivouac site, which lay in the opposite direction to the nearest village.

We then moved to a campsite below the north side of Jabal Misht. This is perhaps Oman's finest high-mountain rock-climbing venue. We drove around to the south side to hike in and climb a very enjoyable route to the summit of the most westerly tower, while Egyptian vultures soared overhead; hence, the route name Vultures Keep. This route lies to the left of Rock Vulture, which Paul had climbed on a previous visit to the Oman in December 2007 with fellow Christchurch resident Richard Simpson. We descended the north side to our camp, and early the next morning hitchhiked back around to collect our vehicle.

Following this, we travelled north to investigate Jabal Murri, a rocky massive that we'd seen from the summit of Jabal Misht. Here we ascended Amqah Tower, its westernmost feature. After one pitch of mid-5th class, this was mainly a scramble to its scenic top.

Our final climbing venue was Jabal Nakhus, which we reached by following the main highway via Wadi Hawasinah. This area is also known informally as The Chains, due to some chains that were installed by the British Army many years ago to give access to the upper part of the wadi. A route up the left side of its appealing east face was climbed in January 2009 by Ian Gough and Joe Sambataro. We took a narrow crack line nearer the centre of the main face. This provided several pitches of excellent, well-protected climbing, but the exceedingly sharp rock made our hands resemble raw beef burgers. We continued to the ridge to complete Hand Grater (5.9+, 340 metres).

Non-climbing highlights of the trip included a visit to the very impressive Grand Mosque in Muscat and several historic forts, as well as kayaking and swimming in the warm waters of the Gulf of Oman. We encountered very friendly locals but no other climbers during our stay.

Summary

The M'Seeb Rappers (TD- 5.8, 460m), southwest face of Jabal Kawr. FA: Paul Knott, Graham Rowbotham, December 23, 2009.

Anhydrous Living (TD- 5.7, 920m), Mabos Pllar, Jabal Kawr. FA: Paul Knott, Graham Rowbotham, December 30, 2009.

Vultures Keep (D+ 5.8, 460m), south face of Jabal Misht. FA: Paul Knott, Graham Rowbotham, January 3, 2010.

Amqah Tower (one mid-5th-class pitch, 200m), Jabal Murri. FA: Paul Knott, Graham Rowbotham, January 5, 2010.

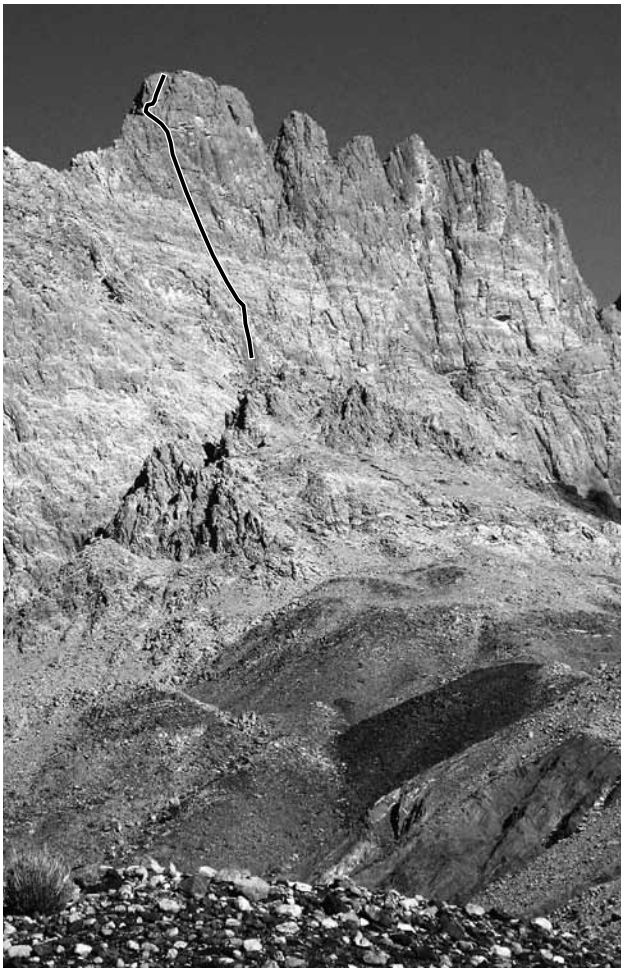
Hand Grater (5.9+, 340m), east face of Jabal Nakhus. FA: Paul Knott, Graham Rowbotham, January 7, 2010.

Right top: Hand Grater on the east face of Jabal Nakhus. Photo: Graham Rowbotham

Right middle: The M'Seeb Rappers on the southwest face of Jabal Kawr. Photo: Graham Rowbotham

Right bottom: Anhydrous Living on the Mabos Pllar of Jabal Kawr. Photo: Graham Rowbotham

Below: Vultures Keep on the south face of Jabal Misht. Photo: Graham Rowbotham



Reviews

Deep Powder and Steep Rock: The Life of Mountain Guide Hans Gmoser

by Chic Scott, self-published (2009)

Hans gmoser never wanted a biography to be written about him. But he would have liked this one.

Three years were spent researching and writing *Deep Powder and Steep Rock: The Life of Mountain Guide Hans Gmoser*, Chic Scott's first biography. To call the project ambitious would be an understatement. Biography, a description of someone's life and times, is a literary genre unto itself. Writers take years to learn and perfect the craft. Nevertheless, after Hans Gmoser's death in 2006, and upon personal request from the Gmoser family, Scott embraced the daunting task with the same enthusiasm the author brought to bear on both *Summits and Icefields* (1994)—what *Couloir Magazine* called "the best [ski] guidebook yet published in North America"—and, perhaps his greatest writing effort, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering* (2000).

But forget for a moment that the genre was new literary terrain for the guidebook-author-cum-alpine-historian. This was no mere reclamation tale of some forgotten figure from the sport's dusty archive. Hans Gmoser was arguably the most prolific postwar mountaineer in Canada. He was a founding member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG), the so-called father of heli-skiing, and the filmmaker and businessman, whose entrepreneurial flare put the Rockies and Columbias back on the world stage. Gmoser was a central pillar in the mountain community, and few escaped his shadow. "Everyone working in the mountain adventure business in Western Canada today," Scott says, "owes their job to Hans." His death at age 73 from injuries sustained from a cycling accident sent shockwaves through the mountain towns of Western Canada and beyond.

A heavy load for any biographer to carry. Oh yeah, did I mention Scott bankrolled and published the book himself?

Over 384 pages, enriched with nearly as many pictures, *Deep Powder and Steep Rock* provides an intimate portrayal of Gmoser, whose life embodied that familiar "rags-to-riches" myth of the self-made immigrant, the classic North American success story. Readers learn about Gmoser's austere beginnings in pre-war Austria, his development as a climber and guide in Canada during the 1950s, his remarkable career in the early '60s as a filmmaker and expedition leader, and, of course, the subsequent birth of heli-skiing and the evolution of his company, Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH). International acclaim followed. By the 1980s, Gmoser was one of the most celebrated mountain guides in the world, leading prime ministers and kings and queens on their plush alpine vacations. He ended his public life wealthy and much honoured, "a sort of 'Mountain King' himself," one critic noted. It's hard not to admire a life built of determination, toughness, loyalty to friends and not much else. Few have known such success.

Typical of Scott's writing style, much of *Deep Powder* relies on Gmoser's own words, gleaned from his diaries, expedition journals, film commentaries and personal correspondence. Scott also makes excellent use of secondary-source material to situate Gmoser's formative years within the wider historical context of Austria and the Second World War. Canadianists may lament that the same treatment isn't extended to the remainder of the biography; but, nevertheless, the sheer bulk of primary material employed—not to mention the addition of Scott's own personal recollections of Gmoser—easily sustains the narrative and gives history buffs on this side of the pond gristle to chew on for years to come. The special hardcover edition includes a DVD of three of Gmoser's promotional films—all archival gems; wonderfully reproduced—makes its 50-dollar price tag a steal of a deal.

Where *Deep Powder* most succeeds, though, is in its gentle honesty. Taken beyond the myth, readers are given a unique glimpse into the more troubling aspects of Gmoser's drive and ambition. To his credit, Scott doesn't shy away from discussing Gmoser's autocratic nature, his hard right-wing politics or his troubled private life as a husband and father. We learn about Gmoser's near inability to cope with the risks of heli-skiing as the fledgling industry grew and took fire from factions within the avalanche community as being "too dangerous" and "morally [in]defensible." We learn how Gmoser struggled to reconcile his deeply romantic views of nature with the ego-driven, hyper-consumptive aspects of heli-skiing culture; and how, looking back on it all, he felt a bit like "the Sorcerer's Apprentice or maybe like Doctor Faust." We meet the "Elder Statesman," who worked quietly behind the scenes for the wellbeing of the mountain community, "avoided the limelight and seemed almost embarrassed by all the fuss made over him." He cringed at the idea of a biography and even requested that there not be funeral or memorial service for him when he passed away. "I spent half my life trying to be recognized," Gmoser once told Scott. "And half my life trying to be forgotten."

On May 9, 2009, nearly 500 people attended the book launch for *Deep Powder* at Mount Norquay. A bus service ran all evening, shuttling party-goers from behind the Mount Royal Hotel in Banff up to the local ski hill and back. From Calgary to Revelstoke, all points in between, and beyond, people came together to toast Scott for his efforts, but also to celebrate the life that had touched them all. It was a celebration of a community and a night to remember.

—Zac Robinson

Hooker & Brown

by Jerry Auld, Brindle & Glass (2009)

Mountaineering fiction as a literary genre is still very young. The stories climbers tell about courage in the face of clear danger and the challenge of overcoming physical and psychological limitations are usually so extraordinary in fact that they don't need fiction to enhance them. Jerry Auld's first novel demonstrates, however, that there is an important role that fiction can play in interpreting the meaning of identity-defining adventure experiences within the larger context of personal philosophy, regional history and sense of place.

Like Auld himself, the main character of this book is obsessed with the Rocky Mountain past and the mythology that has emerged from that history. The plot revolves around Mounts Hooker and Brown, the two giants named in 1827 by botanist David Douglas whose exaggerated heights attracted climbers from all over the world to search for Himalayan-sized peaks in Canada's remote mountain West. In this novel, however, the two great peaks are not just the object of summit-oriented mountaineering passion, they are also highly symbolic of the duality that underlies so much of contemporary reality. In these two fabled mountains, the main character discovers the tension between true and false, fact and fiction, being and having, and the possible and impossible. There is also a tension between what we carry around in our minds and what is real in the landscape.

The young climber at the centre of the plot has a fascination with myths, maps and names. For him, they are as much the bedrock of place as the trails and ledges that lead him to the summits. For him, the mountain landscape around him is animated by the historical figures that cut the first trails and made the first ascents. His passion for history is such that at one point in the novel when he and the heroine—a young woman from Quebec working as an interpreter in a provincial park—are out climbing, she interrupts his historical reverie to inquire if he wants to climb the book or the rock. He can't decide because he isn't sure it is possible to ascend one without reading the other. From this we realize that *Hooker & Brown* is essentially about readings; readings of history, of place and time and how we find our way into the landscapes we love where we have experiences that make us who we are.

One of the joys of this book is the quality and thoughtfulness of the historical and philosophical interpretation entwined within the plot. If you love the mountaineering history of the Rockies, you will not be able to put this book down. All the major historical figures have found their way between the covers. David Thompson is there, David Douglas, Norman Collie and Arthur Philomen Coleman. We even find James Outram racing for summits in Auld's ingenious plot. Auld loves these characters and in the end dedicates the book to them. But there is far more to this book than just history.

Through Auld's carefully calculated re-telling of the old legends of the Rockies, we discover that history is a double-helix up which we climb through time not quite repeating but replicating events of the past. Sometimes we improve on the performance of others before us. Sometimes we don't. But whatever happens, the landscape leaves an indelible impression us.

Auld's fine writing and engaging story-telling invite the reader to establish his or her own place in the history of the amazing landscapes of the mountain West and to occupy that place with confidence. Like the characters in the book, the reader will also discover that at least in the mountains it may not be necessary to choose between opposing philosophical or moral summits—the mountains have a way of doing that for us.

With this powerful and highly poetic first novel, Jerry Auld achieves a new peak in the literary interpretation of nature, history and culture. It is a book about the power of maps and dreams that explores our relationship to gravity and ghosts; rock, water and place with an ending that will leave the reader breathless. Auld confirms once again that no one returns from the high places unchanged.

—Bob Sandford

Beyond the Mountain

by Steve House, Patagonia Books (2009)

If you're looking for a book to give to your mom, your non-climbing boyfriend, or worst of all, your psychiatrist, in the hopes that it might help them understand or support your climbing, then do not buy this book. Give a non-climber *Beyond the Mountain* and they're far more likely to disinherit, dump or institutionalize you than they are to understand you.

But exactly the same things that might sensibly chase the non-climber away—House's naked discussions of the darkest consequences of climbing, including several chapters devoted to his partners who have died; his blunt portrayals of the sometimes imperfect and self-serving relationships between partners; his admissions of his own egotism and selfishness—make *Beyond the Mountain* a remarkable book for the serious climber.

Like the mountains themselves, mountain books serve us best when they act as mirrors: we climb or read and ask ourselves, can I *really* do that? It's a challenge that seems all the more

tangible and meaningful in House's book. He holds the mirror very close when he climbs—his big, absurdly dangerous alpine routes (like the Rupal Face of Nanga Parbat, the Slovak Direct on Denali, a solo of K7, the North Face of North Twin), are the kind of climbs that illuminate every human flaw—and he held it just as close when he wrote this book. *Beyond the Mountain* asks the reader to consider very closely whether he could live up to the same standards of performance, commitment, style and honest self-evaluation that House lives: If you're not willing to commit *everything*—even your life—to a climb, you aren't really climbing. If you could have gone faster, lighter or more directly up a mountain, you have to go back and try harder. If you leave anything behind or give into doubts on a mountain, you should feel shame. If you're can't admit that you think what you do *is* special, and don't understand that that feeling of "specialness" gets you up mountains, look more closely at the mirror.

That level of honesty, though, can create problems in a book just as it can on a mountain. Self-evaluation can look like self-absorption, accurate appraisal of accomplishment like arrogance, commitment to a path like self-righteousness. To his credit, House deals with those extremes just the way he faces extremes in the mountains: by tackling them without pretense or unnecessary protection. It can be irritating when he says so out loud in the book, but House knows that he's doing things that other people simply can't or won't, and he doesn't apologize for it. What he and his brethren do *is* harder, better, riskier and more real than the things the rest of us do, and that makes them a pretty dark tribe who don't motivate so much as challenge, or dare, us to follow in their footsteps.

If that feels a bit preciously elitist (and it does, at times, in the book, especially when House quotes supposedly real conversations in which tribe members baldly pat each other on the back and dismiss everyone else), House is in good company. Many of the great alpinists' books—those by Buhl and Terray in particular—made it perfectly clear that the authors were better climbers than anyone else in the arena at the time. False modesty, after all, is its own sin.

There have been few climbers of House's calibre playing any of the climbing games over the past decade, and, it happily turns out, few mountain writers as good. The book is not only challenging, in places it's beautifully written, and the combination kept me thinking long after I'd finished reading. I learned more about myself—including some things I wasn't too happy to acknowledge—reading *Beyond the Mountain,* than I've learned on an actual climb in years. Best mountain book I've read in ages, hands down.

—Geoff Powter

The Forgotten Explorer: Samuel Prescott Fay's 1914 Expedition to the Northern Rockies

edited by Charles Helm and Mike Murtha, Rocky Mountain Books (2009)

During a five-month period in 1914, a member of the American Alpine Club, Samuel Prescott Fay, with Canadian outfitter Fred Brewster and three other men, travelled through the largely unexplored territory of the northern Rocky Mountains between Jasper and the Peace River. En route, Fay found occasional signs left by native and non-native hunters, trappers and surveyors, but as far as is known, his was the first party to make a continuous south-to-north traverse. He travelled against the grain of the land, on a route so arduous that it has never been exactly duplicated. With five men, five saddle horses and 16 pack horses, Fay's outfit arrived intact at Hudson's Hope in mid-October after travelling and clearing trail for 16 weeks and 1,200 kilometres through Canada's northern Rockies. There, late in the season, he rested, resupplied, and returned to Jasper via established routes, walking most of the way over the Edson Trail.

Fay explored, mapped, and photographed many features, keeping detailed journals that are currently held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and that have never before been published in a single work. His party collected important wildlife information and specimens for the US Biological Survey, and various Canadian agencies. The geographical names that he proposed included key features of present-day Kakwa Provincial Park: Mount Alexander Mackenzie (later Mount Sir Alexander), Babette Lake, Mount Cross (named for his friend and member of his party killed in France in 1915) and Kakwa Lake. His party was the first to photograph some outstanding features of the region, notably Kinuseo Falls (which Fay also named), Gwillim Lake, Sukunka Falls and Wapiti Lake, all now in provincial parks around the present-day community of Tumbler Ridge. Particularly stunning are the photographs of Mount Ida taken from what Fay called Matterhorn Camp on Moonias Pass in Kakwa. It was there, on a hot summer day in 1983, that I bushwhacked with a 30-kilogram pack up the same slope that Fay toiled over with his horses. On gaining Moonias Pass he said: "This is without doubt the most magnificent, the grandest view we shall ever have from a camp and it is something worth going thousands of miles to see." Indeed, a similar photograph of Fay's Matterhorn taken in the mid-1980s from Moonias Pass by George Evanoff was featured on the cover of B.C.'s northern parks map.

Dr. Charles Helm is a Tumbler Ridge physician and author and has devoted nearly 20 years to passionately exploring and promoting that community's mountains and history. Mike Murtha is a former parks planner in Prince George whence he took a personal interest in researching the histories of

northern B.C.'s mountain parks. Helm and Murtha had earlier collaborated on researching the travels of Prentiss Gray who, drawing on Fay's 1914 trip, journeyed in 1927 and 1928 from the Peace to the Fraser River. In 2002, Helm and Murtha accompanied 84-year-old Sherman Gray on a helicopter reenactment of his father's historic travels; and they later wrote a feature article summarizing the history of this part of the eastern flanks of the north Rockies in the 2004 *CAJ*. So it's not hard to appreciate where they got their enthusiasm to see Fay's journals into print, thus filling the last, previously unpublished gap in the history of the exploration of Canada's Rocky Mountains.

The Forgotten Explorer contains Fay's day-by-day journals as well as 54 high-quality photographs and five harder-to-fathom maps. Fay's journey is meticulously recorded, regardless of trials of weather, travel and camp life. His descriptions of the geography and the flora and fauna (especially birds and mammals) are extensive, making the book interesting to a broad range of readers. The editors consulted a local naturalist to put these sightings in a modern context; and it is evident in the endnotes that they correlated Fay's route details with Brewster's journal and their own knowledge on the ground. Geological details, though, were not Fay's forte, and he missed recording features such as fossils and caves that are known to be along parts of his route.

The book opens with an introduction by Bob Sandford, followed by an in-depth foreword by the editors. Fay's journal, plus five appendices also written by him, fills most of the book; followed by biographies of Fay's party, present-day route access and comprehensive endnotes. If there is a weakness with the book, it's with the maps. Fay's hand-drawn route map is small and difficult to make much of, and a future edition of the book cries out for a larger, foldout or pocket-insert version, plus a series of contemporary route maps. However, the editors have provided a fine endnotes section; and by carefully reading this in conjunction with Fay's journal and a topographical map one can pinpoint much of the route. The font size for the endnotes and index is small, but readers should not be deterred by this to get the most out of the book. Fay's journals alone are sufficiently engaging that I felt like I was there with them—mostly wishing that I was, and occasionally thankful that I wasn't. The 96 years that have passed since their journey seem to melt away, especially having visited some of the places they travelled through.

An interesting side-story is that Fay's party only heard of the war in Europe in October from a trapper they chanced upon when they emerged from the mountains. Soon after their adventure, all five men volunteered for service there, where two of them, Bob Cross and Jack Symes, were killed. It is hard to reconcile the transformation that the world has undergone since 1914, while much of Fay's route and the types of adventures that he and his companions had there remain pretty much unchanged today.

In summary, I highly recommend this book to anyone with an interest in history, natural history and especially in getting out and exploring the northern Rockies through Jasper, Willmore, Kakwa, Monkman, Tumbler Ridge and the B.C. and Alberta Peace Region.

—Mike Nash

Espresso Lessons from the Rock Warrior's Way

by Arno Ilgner, Desiderata Institute (2009)

You stand perched on downward-slanted footholds, your right hand outstretched and crimping a hold as small as a pebble while your left hand grips nothing at all. Your rope is stretched about two metres above and one metre to the right of your last piece of protection. With no way to go up, you remain frozen, unable to move because you know that a fall will send you swinging on a pendulum with a number of obstacles in the way.

How did you get there in the first place? What steps could you have taken to reduce the risks you now find yourself facing? Did you even take the time to look where you were going before you started up the wall? These are the kinds of questions that Arno Ilgner explores in *Espresso Lessons from the Rock Warrior's Way* by offering a series of practices that climbers can adopt to ensure they are taking appropriate risks.

With a less than revealing title, this is the kind of book that would go unnoticed on a book shelf unless a curious reader took the time to read the back cover or even the first few pages. Coming out of the Desiderata Institute in Tennessee, *Espresso Lessons* is a follow-up to *The Rock Warrior's Way: Mental Training for Climbers*, a book that outlines the foundation of the Warrior's Way, which is a program developed by Ilgner to increase the awareness of climbers within the rock-climbing process. While surely enhanced by the lessons and content in the previous publication, *Espresso Lessons* still stands on its own and offers important insight into the climbing experience. It is well worth grabbing off that bookshelf.

The lessons in this short manifesto are valuable to any climber wishing to further understand the psychology of climbing, when to listen to the mind and the body, when to act on analytical versus intuitive intelligence and how to make good decisions while climbing. By applying these lessons, climbers can reduce the risks that are inherent to the sport and become better climbers overall.

Ilgner breaks down the rock-climbing process into various stages that each require a series of steps to determine whether or not the grade, the next move

or the next potential fall are appropriate to the individual climber. Using handy acronyms, diagrams and surprisingly funny cartoons, he guides the reader through the methods, offering different approaches depending on the type of climbing. By interspersing anecdotes from climbers, including Jean-Pierre "Pee Wee" Ouellet, Sonnie Trotter and Steph Davis, the lessons within *Espresso Lessons* are applied to real climbing scenarios and are made more tangible.

The power of this book lies in its ability to make you feel the rock you have climbed on in the past, visualize scenarios you have found yourself in and even take falls again—all while you are reading through the steps that may have helped you in those previous situations. *Espresso Lessons* gives you the opportunity to rewind and re-engage in previous climbing scenarios while preparing you for new ones. It is a must-read for any climber wanting to tackle their nagging thoughts and deal with the stress of climbing so that they can confidently and appropriately continue upward instead of surrendering to the beckoning escape of a rappel.

—Meghan J. Ward

The B.C. Mountaineer: 100 Years of Mountaineering, 1907-2007

edited by Michael Feller, British Columbia Mountaineering Club (2009)

When the tale of Canadian mountaineering is told, we are often inundated by the role of the Swiss guides and the adventuresome life of Austrian-born guide Conrad Kain. But, there is much more to the history than an excessive focus on these important actors in the drama. It is this history that has been organized, recounted and retold so well by Michael Feller's steady and sure-footed editorial skills in *The B.C Mountaineer: 100 Years of Mountaineering.*

The British Columbia Mountaineering Club (BCMC) celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2007 (1907-2007). Eyes were eager and minds were poised to read the tale and drama of a century of BCMC life. Most were accustomed to the fine and predictable publication of *The B.C. Mountaineer* every couple of years. The wait was longer for the anniversary volume, but the wait was rewarded by a splendid book that is already a collector's item.

Michael Feller and other able and gifted assistants have done a superb job of bringing a variety of mountaineering essays together to tell the fascinating history of BCMC. The book is replete with essays and excellent photographs from various decades. Its 14 chapters include:

1) The B.C. Mountaineering Club: Beginnings
2) The South Coast Mountains
3) Mountains North of Vancouver
4) Vancouver Island
5) Poetry and Songs
6) The Central Coast Mountains
7) The Northern Coast Mountains
8) The Cascade Mountains
9) Thinker and Philosopher
10) The Columbia Mountains
11) The Rocky Mountains
12) The North
13) Outside Canada and Alaska, and
14) Perspectives on the B.C. Mountaineering Club.

The narrative is a comprehensive and balanced presentation of climbing events and the more political and reflective aspects of mountaineering. Most of the photographs in the weighty volume are real keepers and can be described as visual delights that will inspire one and all to take to the rock guardians of old—frigid glaciers and white towers. The history of BCMC and mountaineering in B.C. is generously covered, but the many trips by BCMC members that have challenged peaks outside Canada are also touched on.

The Central Coast Mountains chapter receives the bulk of attention. It is in this glacier-endowed region that the reigning peak of the Coast Mountains is located—Mount Waddington. There are nine articles on Waddington alone beginning with Don Munday's "Mystery Mountain" and concluding with Brian Gavin's "Mount Waddington: A Dream Fulfilled". Feller and team were correct to linger on the Central Coast Mountains as there is so much about this alluring and spacious fortress that holds mind, body and imagination. It is, in a sense, the Himalayas of B.C.

The shorter sections on Poetry and Songs, Thinker and Philosopher, and Perspectives on the B.C. Mountaineering Club are thoughtfully placed in the broader text, but it might have enriched the book if these sections were lengthier.

The B.C. Mountaineer: 100 Years of Mountaineering, 1907-2007 is a tome that each and all who are interested in West Coast mountaineering should have. Much gratefulness should be offered to those that put in countless hours to make this historic document a keeper for generations to come.

—Ron Dart

Remembrances

Dave Thomson
1955-2009

On a warm night last summer, one of Canada's most prolific outdoor adventurers, Dave Thomson, got ready for his final trip. He gathered a climbing rope, a pack and a bottle of whisky. None of these things were unusual for a Thomson adventure, but this outing would be different. Earlier in the spring, Dave had fallen off a roof he was working on. The accident—which seemed deeply ironic considering his climbing ability—left him paralyzed from roughly the waist down. When I saw him in Calgary's Foothills Hospital immediately after his fall, he looked me in the eye and said, "I'm going to give this two months and see how I feel about it."

It was now two months later. Dave took his rope and his whisky and headed off to a creek that descended from one of the many rock-climbing areas he had developed over the years. By the next morning, he was dead. A hiker found Dave's 54-year-old body at around 11 a.m., half floating in the icy cold water. He was roped into a tree, his wheelchair overturned nearby. Dave had been hypothermic enough in his life to know that a death from hypothermia was better than some other options; he had even talked about it long before his accident. As always, Dave had figured out how he felt about something and acted on that decision.

It would be easy to dismiss Dave's decision to end his life if you didn't know a little about how he lived it. Some people live for the weekend; Dave lived for the year, for the decade. His nickname was "Everday Dave," a title he earned for skiing every single day of the season when he held a pass, year in and out. But to call Dave a ski bum, or any other kind of bum, would be insulting.

Dave refined the equation of "money in, adventure out" better than anyone I've ever known. He wasn't cheap; he just didn't believe in spending money unnecessarily. A friend tells the story of driving back from climbing with Dave one slushy spring day and being totally unable to see out her side of the grime-covered windshield. Frustrated, she asked Dave how long the windshield sprayer on the passenger side of the car had been broken. "It's not broken," said Dave. "I filled it in with silicone so I wouldn't waste money spraying a side of the windshield I don't look out of."

For a few years, Dave lived in a tent in the Canadian Rockies—during winter, too. Now, unless you've spent a week or two living in a tent in winter, it's really hard to understand how difficult that life can be, especially if you're also outside skiing, climbing and generally playing all the time. Dave could easily have worked a little more and lived in heated comfort, but living "large" would have taken away from his ability to be outside, preferably every day.

Some would call Dave crazy, and it's true that hiding your most prized possessions (photos, books) in Tupperware containers in the ground isn't normal. But from Dave's perspective, the way he lived his life made sense. He was like a voluntary refugee in a developed country; his extremely low cost of living combined with first-world wages—from roofing and other jobs—allowed him to take massive trips around the world. He sea-kayaked for months at a time, ice climbed more than anyone else I know and travelled widely. Dave was one of the sanest people I've ever known.

If Dave cared to, he could easily have put together an adventure résumé that none of us could touch. He did the first ascents of some of the biggest and hardest mixed routes in the world, including the line that made me move back home to Canada when I first saw a picture of it: Real Big Drip in the Ghost. He did some of the toughest cave exploration on the planet back in the 1980s. And then there were his sea-kayaking marathons. I once helped Dave edit a short film he dismissively called his "Seaweed movie" due to the beautiful, if long, shots of seaweed waving under the ocean water. Bears, fish, seaweed, pounding surf—these were the things Dave saw while paddling alone for weeks at a time in his kayak. I felt deeply privileged to have seen a slice of his mind through his video lens, both for the sights but more deeply for the purity of the existence.

Dave Thomson at the Arctic Circle on Baffin Island. Photo: Sean Isaac

Work never weighed heavily on Dave, so it's a real tragedy that it was work that robbed him of what he valued most—his independence. Dave's friends were important to him and he had many, but if any man can ever claim to have owned his life, it would be Dave Thomson. While Dave left us a massive legacy of bold new routes on water, ice, rock and snow, he really leaves behind a challenge: To live life on our own terms. Dave did so, all the way to the end.

—Will Gadd

Note: Originally appeared in *Explore Magazine*. Printed with permission.

Guy Lacelle
1955-2009

When a freak avalanche swept Guy Lacelle off the top of an ice climb in Bozeman, Montana, on December 9, 2009, the world lost one of its truly great climbers.

And yet while that last summary of Guy as a "great climber" is unquestionably true—he had probably climbed more ice than anyone on the planet, with more passion and commitment, with the purest attention to style and the least demand for attention; he put up hundreds of first ascents, from the Alps to the Rockies to the Eastern Himalaya, and had hundreds more on his big list; even in his 50s, he was still winning climbing competitions against kids in their 20s; and after 30-plus years, he still absolutely loved to climb, day in and day out—while all of that made him a great climber, there was so much more that you might never know if you'd only tied into a rope with him. It was understandable: Climb with Guy and his enthusiasm did make it seem that climbing was everything to him, that he ate, breathed and dreamed ice. He could race, without a shake, or doubt or a shudder, often not bothering to break the flow with a screw, often just foregoing the rope completely because he was so at home up there on vertical ice that he needed to up the ante to challenge himself in more honest terms. For five months every year, just about every day, Guy was the perfect climber.

It's perhaps hard for mortals like the rest of us, then, to understand how he found the energy to be just as accomplished, committed and true in other parts of his life when the ice melted in the spring. I knew Guy for years before I came to hear that he was just as renowned, and revered, in the tree-planting world as he was in the mountains. There, he'd planted more trees (nearly a million), in better time, with greater commitment to making sure each one was honestly in, still charging ahead of the 20-year-olds, leaving them panting in his tracks. Tree planters talked about him with just as much awe as climbers did, and Guy loved helping those forests absolutely as much as he loved his climbing, or his dogs, or his family.

It was hard for a lot of us to understand that Guy could really, truly make a marriage work when he was gone off on his admittedly selfish adventures for so long every year, but I watched for years as he and his lovely wife, Marge, approached that challenge with just as much grace and resolve as Guy approached any of his best climbs. I'd hold up that smiling success in his relationship as one his very best (first?) ascents.

There were other sides of Guy, too, that I loved seeing him mature into. He had always been a great teacher—especially through his work at Outward Bound, where he was uniquely able to infect others with his passions for living right in the outdoors—and in the last decade of his life, Guy smiled, if a little bashfully, as he settled into a role as something of a sage, mentoring so many young people who approached him because of physical skills, but left with the greater blessing of his simple wisdom about life itself. I can't tell you how many people have told me in the last few months how they've learned to "do what Guy would do" as the best way to guide their lives, on the mountains and off. What Guy would do was the right thing. Love, laugh, don't take things—especially yourself—too seriously, try, try harder.

He wasn't perfect, our friend: he had a temper that could melt ice caps, cursed like a rabid priest when things got in his way, had blind spots and prejudices that were landmines he stepped on too often, and didn't easily understand or accept some other people's human failings, but he always seemed to be on a journey towards a better place with all those flaws, and in the end, that was all that mattered.

Just a few weeks before he died, I had my yearly honour of time away with Guy, up in the mountains, caught up in that flow that was so easy with him, climb, laugh, dream, plan, climb, laugh even more. At the top of our longest climb that week, one that had been on Guy's list for a long time, he had the biggest Guy smile that I ever remember seeing. The desert fanned out way below us, the sun was tapping the top of the peaks to the west, we'd been completely in sync all day, and the ice season was about to begin. "It doesn't," he said, "get much better than this." I smiled back, set up the anchor and asked if he wanted to go down first. "No," he said, sitting back, looking off in the distance, "I want to stay a little longer."

Many, many people wish he had.

— Geoff Powter

Guy Lacelle soloing Fearful Symmetry in The Ghost Valley, Canadian Rockies. Photo: Andrew Querner

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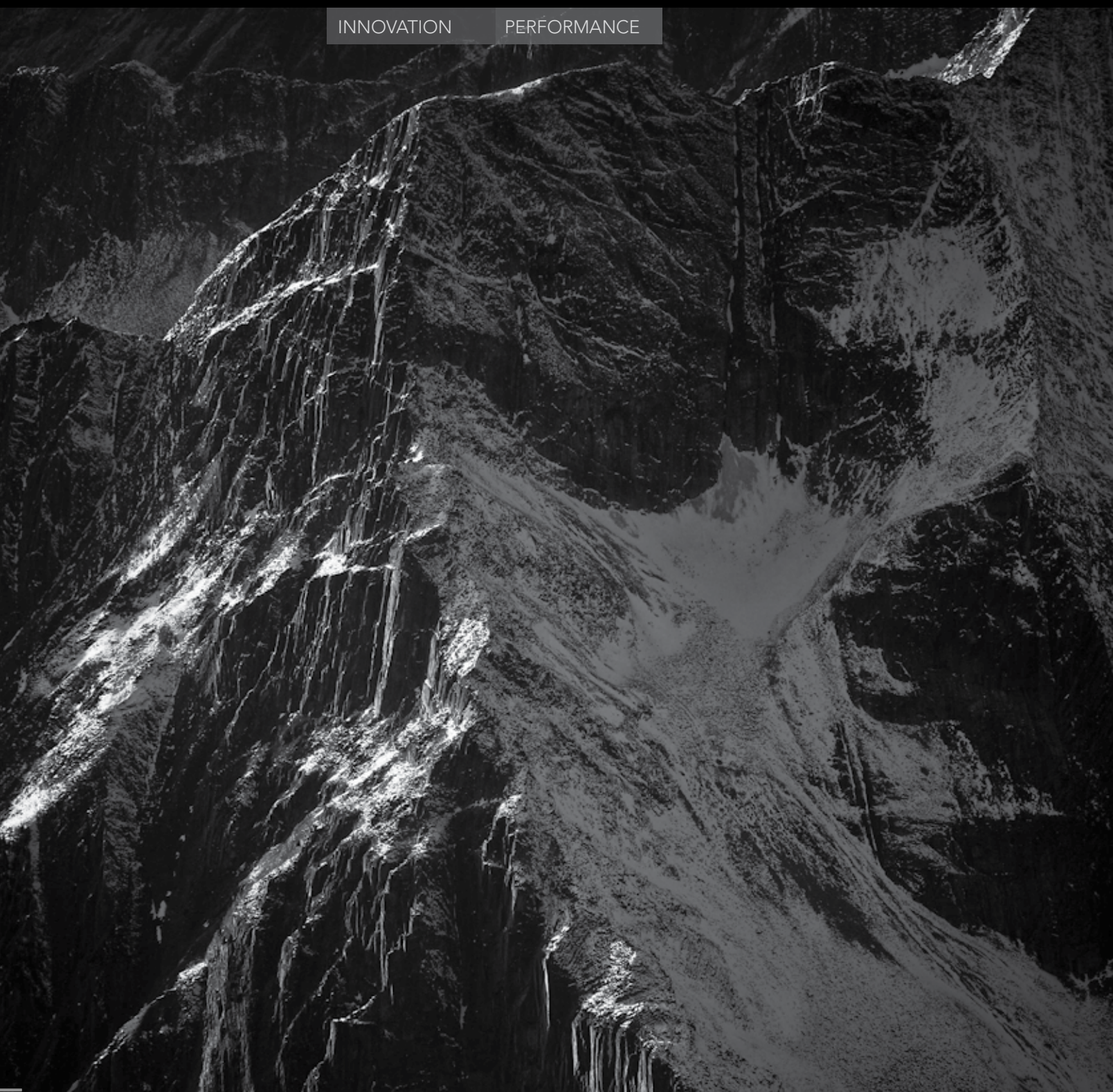

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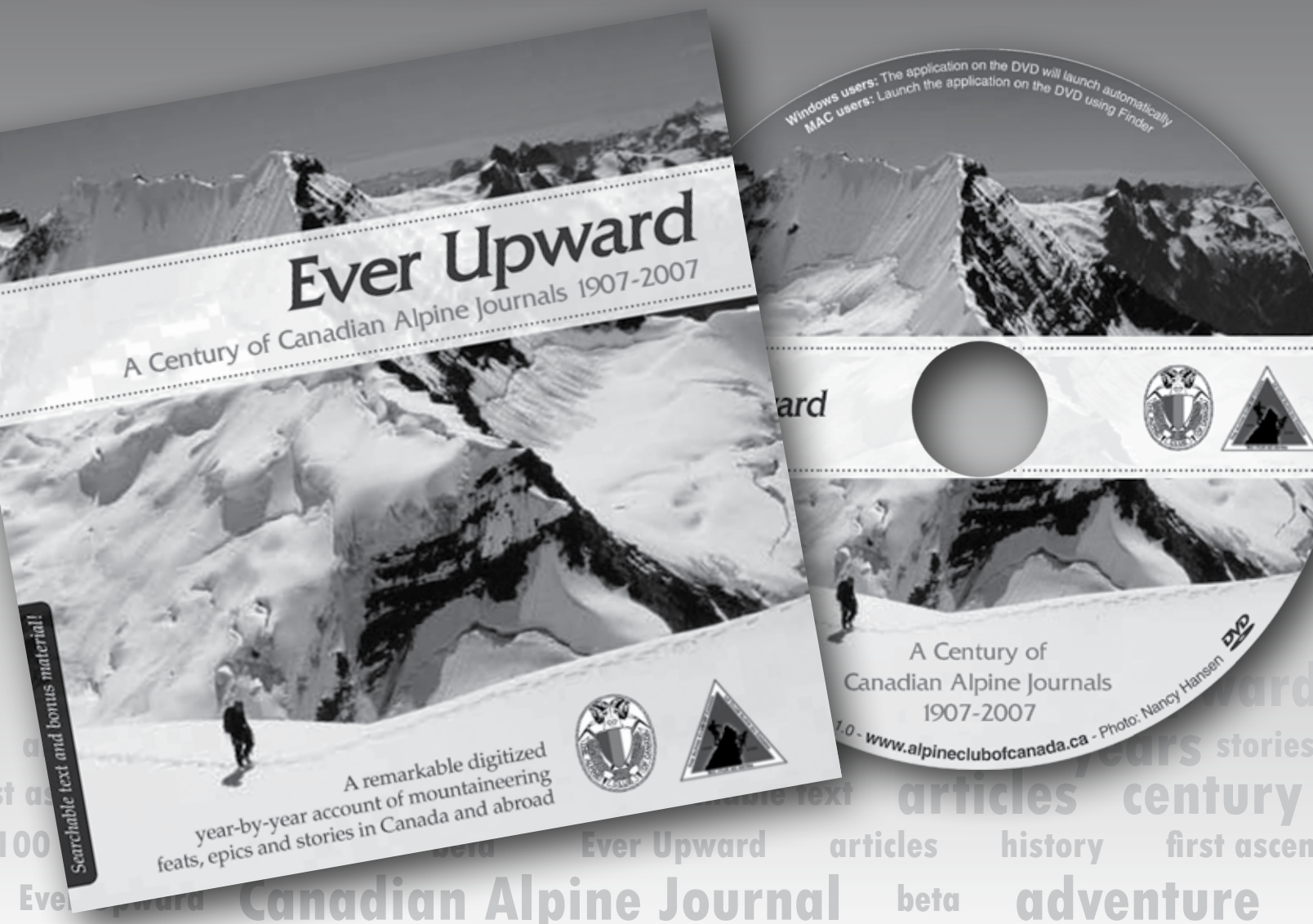

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